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No. 249.

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Vol. 7.



Bob Cherry gave a shout, and pointed dramatically at Vernon-Smith's new recruit. "My aunt! I know that chap! His name's no more Robinson than mine is. His name's Jimmy Pugg, and he was a professional footballer!"



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- - BY - -

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble Ahead.

THERE'S going to be trouble!"

Bob Cherry made the remark.

He was seated in the armchair in Harry Wharton's study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, with his hands behind his head, and his long legs stretched out, and his feet resting upon the table. In that attitude of unaffected grace, as a novelist would describe it, Bob Cherry was taking part in a most serious discussion of the Remove football committee.

Harry Wharton was leaning against the mantelpiece, with a frown upon his brow. Nugent and Micky Desmond sat in the window, and Bulstrode on the table. And they all looked at Bob Cherry as he made his portentous announcement.

"Trouble!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes," Bob Cherry nodded. "Trouble, my infants. With a capital T."

"It won't be trouble to beat the Fourth," said Frank Nugent.

"I mean, over making up the team," said Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, it's no good disguising the fact that there are some fellows in the Remove—rank outsiders, of course—who aren't satisfied with us, and the way we run things."

"We win matches," said Wharton, rather tartly.

"I know we do, old son; but that isn't enough for the chaps who don't get a chance to play for the Form."

"Every good player gets a chance," said Wharton.

"Quite true. But the worse player a chap is, the more he wants to disport himself on the footer-field—that's human nature."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Micky Desmond, with a nod. "Vernon-Smith has been talking about resigning from the Form club."

"Let him resign, then," said Harry Wharton. "We don't want him. I know he's a good player, but he's no good for the eleven. He wants to be coaxed to play, and made a fuss of—and he doesn't understand that a footballer has to obey his skipper. There can't be two captains in one team."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"If you fellows, and the Form generally, want to change

the skipper, I'm ready to stand down at a minute's notice," said Harry Wharton, turning a little red. "But, while I'm skipper, I'm not going to play Vernon-Smith. Or Bolsover, either. They have had their chance; and they only come into the team to make trouble. If there's going to be trouble, it's better to have it outside the eleven than inside it."

"Quite right!" said Bulstrode. "But—"

"But what?"

"Smith's a ripping player, when he chooses," said Bulstrode hesitatingly.

"Yes; but half the time he doesn't choose."

"A lot of fellows think—" Bulstrode paused.

"Well," said Wharton crossly. "What do a lot of fellows think? You may as well get it off your chest, now you've started."

"Well, they think you're rather rough on the Bounder. Supposing he does smoke cigarettes in his study; it's nobody's business but his own, and the prefects' And if he swanks a bit, that doesn't do any harm, so long as he kicks goals. And he can do that."

"Something in that," said Johnny Bull.

Wharton frowned.

"I tell you I've had some experience of the Bounder, and I'm fed up," he said. "It's not enough for a chap to be able to take goals—it's his business to give other fellows a chance, too. Last time Smith played for the Form he simply wouldn't part with the ball, and when I jawed him in the interval, he told me to go and eat coke. Is that the way a footer eleven is to be run?"

"Well, no."

"He's going to stay out—"

Knock!

The captain of the Remove paused as a loud knock came at the study door.

"Come in!" he snapped.

The study door was pushed open, and a crowd of fellows appeared in the doorway. Vernon-Smith, the junior who was known as the Bounder of Greyfriars, was at the head. Behind him appeared Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, and Snoop, and Stott, and Trevor, and Elliott. There were two or three more fellows in the rear. The Bounder's look showed that he was on the warpath; and he had an unusually large following. For, in spite of the Bounder's efforts to make division in the Form, most of the Remove stuck to Harry Wharton loyally enough, as a rule. But on questions of football there was much acrimonious feeling, and in that matter it was difficult to excite the tempers of fellows who were firmly persuaded that they were good enough to play for the Form, but who couldn't persuade the Form-captain of the fact.

Bob Cherry turned his head towards the crowded doorway, without moving from his elegant position.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "Here they come—the whole family!"

"Yes, the whole family," said Vernon-Smith, coming into the study. "I understand that there is a meeting of the Form footer committee going on here—"

"Quite right," said Harry Wharton.

"Good! We're a deputation."

"A which?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"A deputation," said Vernon-Smith. "We represent the Remove—that part of it that never gets a show in football matters, and doesn't mean to be done any longer."

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover major emphatically.

And the deputation chimed in:

"Hear, hear!"

"We," said Vernon-Smith, with a wave of the hand towards the deputation—"we are all members of the Remove Football Club—"

"We are!" said Stott.

"We pay our subscriptions like anybody else—"

"We do!" said Trevor.

"And we get played—how often?"

"Never!" roared Bolsover major.

"Bolsover and myself get the cold shoulder every time," said the Bounder. "The other chaps are shoved in for little matches that don't matter. But when the Remove are playing the Fourth or the Shell, or some outside school, they are always passed over."

"Hear, hear!" roared the deputation as one man. And the nasal voice of Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, added:

"I guess it's not good enough! Nope!"

"Oh! So you're there, Fishy, are you?" said Bob Cherry.

"Yep!" said Fish cheerily. "I guess I'm as good a footer as you can scare up in this school, my son; and I don't see why I shouldn't have a show. Some!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The fellows are fed up!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm fed up, too! So we've come along, as a deputation, to put it plainly to the committee."

"Hear, hear!"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"If you have anything to say, you can say it," he said.

"I mean to," said the Bounder coolly. "What we want, then, is this—every member of the Form club gets a good show, or he resigns. There's a Form match on Wednesday—now, I'm going to play for the Form, and so is Bolsover. That's our first demand."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Next Saturday the Remove play the Shell. You must put in three of these chaps, at least."

"Hear, hear!"

"And in every match, in the future, the whole body of the Form club has got to have a show," said the Bounder.

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess that's all O. K."

"Fair play!" howled Snoop.

The members of the football committee looked at one another. Harry Wharton was silent for a few moments. But there was no sign of yielding in his face.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes, I think that's about all, at present."

"And you want an answer?"

"Please!"

"And we're jolly well going to have an answer, too!" roared Bolsover major aggressively.

"You'll get it!" said Wharton curtly. "The answer is, that you can go and eat coke! If you want to resign from the club, resign and be hanged!"

"Oh!"

"Some of you can play footer; but you're swanking rotters, and not fit to play in a decent team. The others can't play for toffee; and they're lucky to be shoved in for practise matches. Snoop and Stott, for instance, ought to play marbles, and not footer at all. None of you will be in the Fourth Form match on Wednesday. None of you will be in the Shell match on Saturday. All of you can go and eat coke. Is that a plain answer enough? If it isn't, I'll try to make it a little plainer."

Bob Cherry chuckled. He thought the answer was plain enough. So apparently did the deputation. They glared at Harry Wharton, their breath quite taken away for a moment or two.

"So that's your answer?" demanded the Bounder, at last.

"Yes, that's it."

"Then there'll be trouble."

"I don't care!"

"We'll make you care!" bawled Bolsover. "We'll—"

"You cheeky rotter—"

"You—you—you—"

"When you're finished, would you mind getting out of the study?" suggested Wharton, with great politeness. "We're making up the team for Wednesday, and you're interrupting us!"

"You—you—"

"Rotter!"

"Yah!"

"Shut the door after you!" said Wharton.

The deputation, almost speechless with rage, flung out of the study. They shut the door after them with a terrific slam that rang the whole length of the Remove passage. Excited voices could be heard outside for some minutes.

The football committee in the study looked uncomfortable. Many of the Remove fellows thought that Wharton, with all his good qualities, was a little high-handed. And certainly he had not shown his usual tact in dealing with the aggrieved deputation.

Wharton turned a rather flushed face upon his companions. "Do you think I gave it to them too thick?" he asked.

The other fellows were silent.

"Well, they wanted it, for their cheek!" said Bob Cherry at last. "Gentlemen, I beg to repeat my former remark; there's going to be trouble."

And nobody in No. 1 Study had any doubt of it.

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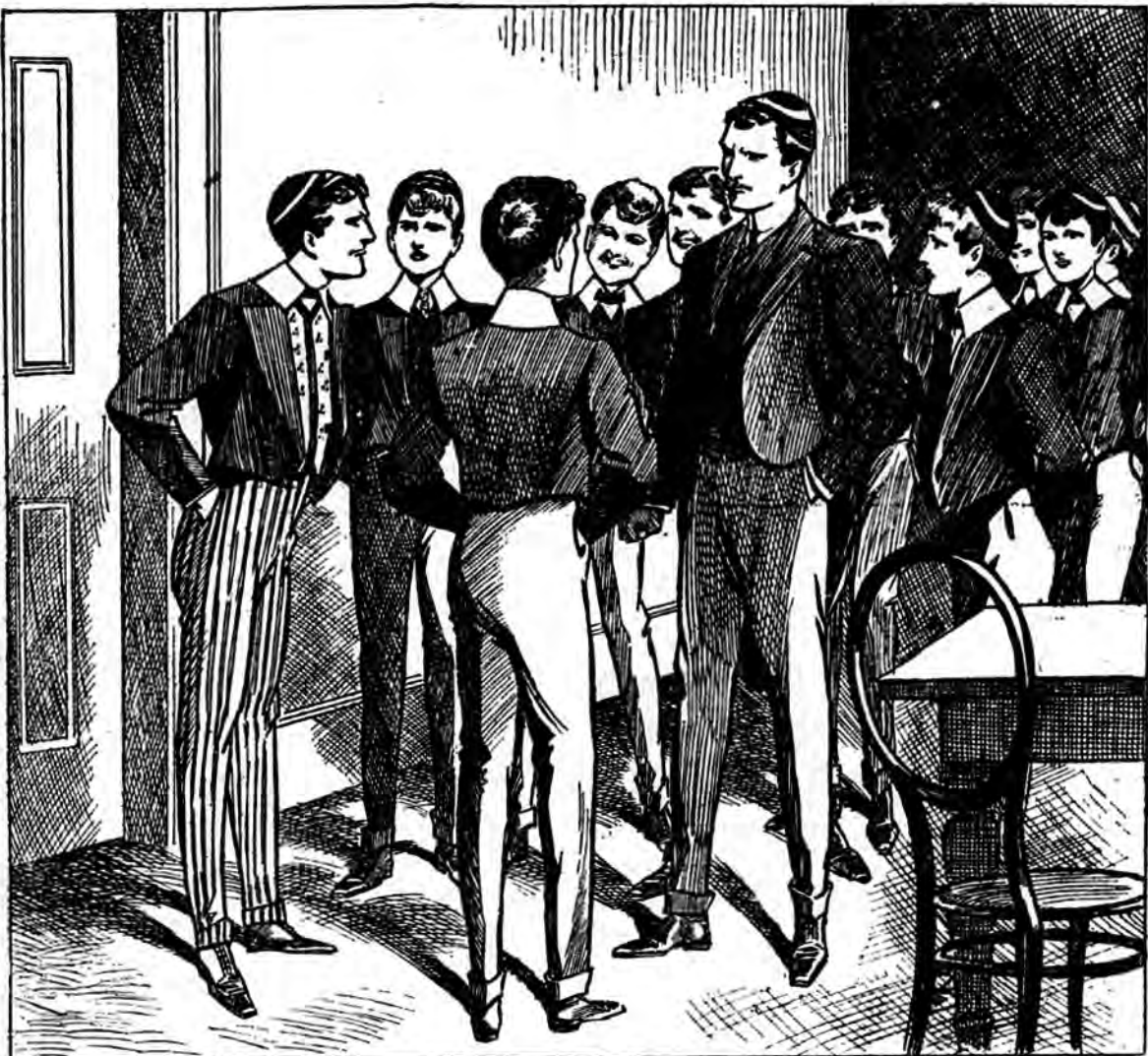
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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 249.

RED-LETTER DAYS—"GEM" WEDNESDAY AND "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY!



"I say you had better play Smith's team!" said Wingate sternly. "You give me the impression that you are suffering a little from swelled head, Wharton." Harry Wharton paled with anger and mortification. "If you order me to do it," he said, biting his lips, "I'll do it!" (See chapter 15.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith's Latest.

A CROWD was gathering in the lower hall before the school notice-board. In No. 1 Study the Remove football committee was still discussing footer. But nearly everybody else belonging to the Remove was crowded round the notice-board.

There was a new notice up, and, to judge by the laughter and exclamations, it was a very interesting one to the Remove.

There were fellows of other Forms, too, all reading the notice and passing remarks upon it. Coker, of the Fifth, had paused there with Potter and Greene. Temple, Dabney and Co., of the Fourth, were chuckling over it. Fags of the Third and Second joined the crowd. It was seldom that a notice on the board aroused so much interest.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, came along the passage and paused as he saw the interested crowd.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the Sixth-Former. "What's all this?"

"I guess it's the notice on the board," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"New notice by the Head?" asked the Greyfriars captain.

"No; something important," said Bolsover major.

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"What!"

"Ahem! I mean something more interesting," said the Removeite. "You can read it if you like."

The juniors made way for the head of the Sixth to approach the board.

Wingate read through the notice, which was in the small, clear handwriting of Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and smiled.

"Is that Smith's work?" he asked.

"Xaos," said Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove.

"Silly ass, don't you think?"

Wingate laughed.

"Well, I wish him luck!" he said. "But he will have some hard work, if he is going to do as he says. But it's a good thing."

Wingate walked away.

"You hear what the skipper says," said Bolsover major, looking round. "He thinks it a good thing for us to back up against No. 1 Study."

"He didn't mean that," said Mark Linley. "He meant that another footer team wouldn't be a bad idea; the more the merrier."

"Where's Wharton?" exclaimed Leigh. "He ought to read this?"

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"Meeting of the footer committee in Wharton's study," said Bolsover major disdainfully. "They're jawing over the team, making a little family party of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled down the passage. "I say, you know, I'm backing up Smithy in this. I think it's high time some of the really good footballers in the Remove had a show."

"Yes; you are about as good as most of the grumblers, Bunter," said Mark Linley, laughing.

"Better than most of them," said Bunter, blinking at the Lancashire lad through his big spectacles. "It's an open secret that I'm left out of the eleven through sheer personal jealousy. There are a lot of fellows who never get a chance, and I'm one of them. My opinion is that Wharton is a jealous beast, and Bob Cherry's another, and—Ow!"

A grasp descended upon the back of Billy Bunter's collar, and he wriggled, and tried to blink over his shoulder to discover who his assailant was.

"Ow! Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You young rotter!"

"Ow! Is it you, Cherry—"

"Yes, it is," said Bob Cherry, shaking Billy Bunter as if he were a rat.

"Ow! If you a-shake me like that, you'll m-m-make my sp-spectacles fall off—ow—ow—ow!—and if you break 'em—ow—ow!—you'll have to pip-pip-pay for 'em! Ow!"

Shake! Shake!

"Ow! Yow!"

"Now, what were you saying about me?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I—I was only saying that you're a—a—a jolly good footballer!" moaned Bunter. "I—I was just telling the fellows that I wished I could play as you do—Ow!"

"Didn't you say I was a jealous beast?"

"Ow! No! That was Wharton!"

"I was it?" demanded Wharton.

"Ow! No! That—that was a slip of the tongue!" gasped the unhappy Bunter. Bunter was a little short-sighted, and he had not seen Wharton close by him. "I meant Nugent—"

"Me!" roared Frank Nugent.

"No—that is to say—Desmond—"

"Faith, and I—"

"Oh, really—I—I—Ahem—"

"You'd better chuck it," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"We're all here, you fathead! Buzz off, and don't jaw!"

And with a swing of his powerful arm, Bob Cherry projected Billy Bunter across the passage. Bunter staggered backwards helplessly, and crashed into a little gentleman who had just come out of a class-room. It was Monsieur Charpentier, the French-master of Greyfriars. Monsieur Charpentier was not prepared for that collision; and Nature had not built him to stand a weight like Bunter's. He collapsed under it and sat down quite suddenly, and Billy Bunter sat on his knees.

"Ciel!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "Mon Dieu! Ow! Ma foi! Grooh!"

"Oh, you clumsy ass—"

"Vat! Vat!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," gasped the unfortunate Owl of the Remove. "I didn't know it was you; I thought it was that chump Wingate—"

"Ciel! Mes jambes—mes jambes—zey are crush! Zat you gerroff my legs!" shrieked the French-master.

Billy Bunter rolled off the French-master's legs. Wingate of the Sixth had hurried up to render the French-master first aid. He helped the panting little gentleman up, and then turned grimly to William George Bunter.

"You alluded to me, I think, Bunter?" he said.

"Oh, no, Wingate!" said Billy Bunter. "Not at all! Quite a mistake!"

"You said you thought it was that chump Wingate, I think."

"Not at all," said Billy Bunter, backing away. "I—I shouldn't think of calling you a chump, Wingate. I—I respect you too much! A chap mustn't say what he thinks about a prefect—"

"What!"

"I—I mean, a chap mustn't think what he says—that is, what I really meant to say was, that I—I—I—I—"

"You will take fifty lines, you young ass," said Wingate; "and if you tell me any more lies, I'll lick you."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

The Greyfriars captain made a motion towards him, and Bunter rolled away.

"Zat garcon is ze biggest donkey in ze school!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "Hélas! My legs zey are crush! Buntair, zat you come into my study!"

But Billy Bunter had a sudden attack of deafness, and he disappeared with great speed round the nearest corner. Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. had made their way through the crowd of fellows towards the notice-board, and were reading the notice in the handwriting of Vernon-Smith. The fellows watched their faces as they read it, curious to see how they would take this latest move of the Bounder's.

The notice was somewhat unusual, and it was not surprising that it caused a great deal of interest and excitement among the juniors. It ran:

"NOTICE TO ALL CONCERNED!"

"Whereas we, the undersigned members of the Remove Football Club, consider that we are being done by our present football captain;

"And whereas we don't see the fun of paying subscriptions without having a run for our money;

"We hereby announce that we withdraw from the said football club, and throw over all connection with it;

"And as H. Wharton and his toadies declare that they are the only fellows in the Remove who can play footer, and keep all the places in the Form Eleven to themselves,

"We hereby declare that we are going to raise a new eleven, and we challenge Wharton and his team to meet us in a match, and undertake to knock them into a cocked hat, if they have the pluck to meet us.

"The New Eleven will be ready for business on Saturday, and if Wharton & Co. meet us, we will show whether we can play footer; and if they don't meet us, we brand them as funks and rotters, and call upon them to resign from the committee, and leave it to better men.

(Signed) "H. VERNON-SMITH.

"P. BOLSOVER.

"S. SNOOP.

"J. STOTT.

"M. TREVOR.

"P. ELLIOTT.

"F. T. FISH.

"ETCETERA."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, as he came to the end of the notice. "Who's that last chap?" He looked round. "Which of you is Etcetera?"

There was a laugh.

"That's to make it look as if there's a crowd of them," said Frank Nugent sagely. "As a matter of fact, I expect they're all the names that Smithy could muster."

"What are you going to say to it, Wharton?" demanded a dozen voices.

Wharton's lip curled.

"I'm not going to say anything," he replied. "We've got a match on with the Shell on Saturday, and we're going to play the Shell. If Vernon-Smith can make up an eleven in the Remove, we'll play it—but he can't! It's all bluff and rubbish!"

"Is that your answer?" demanded Snoop.

"There's no answer necessary," said Wharton. "But I'll put an answer to this precious notice, if you like."

He took a pencil from his pocket, and wrote a single word under the signatures of the grumblers. Then he walked away. There was a general crowding round of the juniors to read what the captain of the Remove had written. And it was with mixed feelings that they read:

"Rats!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Challenge.

VERNON-SMITH came along the passage a little later, and glanced up at his notice. He had a fresh paper in his hand, evidently a new notice for the board. He frowned as he saw the addition the captain of the Remove had made to the notice.

He took an indiarubber from his pocket, and rubbed out the word "Rats" quietly. Then he pinned up his paper. Several fellows came up at once to read the new notice. It was very brief.

"The new Remove team, to be known as the Greyfriars Crusaders, is now being formed. All desirous of joining should apply to H. Vernon-Smith, Study No. 9.

(Signed) "H. VERNON-SMITH, Capt."

Vernon-Smith walked away to the common-room. The Famous Four were there, chatting together, and apparently

ANSWERS

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oblivious of the existence of Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer of Greyfriars walked directly up to them, and there was a general movement in the room. The Bouncer's manner indicated that there was trouble to come. Vernon-Smith's friends gathered round him, and all the fellows looked on from all parts of the room.

"I put a notice on the board some time ago," said the Bouncer, addressing Wharton.

Wharton nodded.

"Yes, I read it," he said.

"Somebody scribbled something on it."

"Yes, I did."

"It's against the rules to interfere with notices on the board," said Vernon-Smith. "I have never interfered with your papers."

Wharton flushed. Vernon-Smith was quite in the right, as a murmur from all round the room showed was the general opinion. Harry Wharton hesitated. It was hard for him to admit that he was in the wrong. But he made the effort.

"You are quite right!" he said. "I beg your pardon!"

There was a buzz of astonishment.

Wharton's manner was so quiet that many of the fellows received an impression that he was faking an encounter with the Bouncer. Bolsover major and Snoop exchanged sneering glances. Wharton caught their looks, and his flush deepened. It was not much use making concessions to the Bouncer & Co. They looked upon a concession simply as a sign of weakness.

"Very good," said the Bouncer. "As you say you're sorry, we won't say any more about that. But what about your answer?"

"I wrote the answer."

"That won't do for me!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm forming a new eleven—the Greyfriars Crusaders. I believe I can make up an eleven as good as the Form Eleven. I've only got second choice in the Form, I know; but with a few fellows from outside the Remove to help, I know I can make up a team to beat yours. Are you going to play us?"

"Yes, we'll play you when we get a vacant date."

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders.

"I know what that means—you've got every date booked up for the rest of the term," he said. "Will you play us on Saturday afternoon?"

"Or are you going to funk it?" sneered Bolsover major.

"We're playing the Shell," said Wharton.

"The Shell will scratch if you like. I've asked Hobson, and he says he can fix up a match with the Friardale fellows, and he's quite willing to do it."

"There you are!" exclaimed Stott. "You can't crawl out of it now, Wharton."

Wharton crimsoned.

"I don't want to crawl out of it, as you call it," he said.

"But you know very well, Smith, that you can't make up an eleven out of the lag-end of the Remove that it would be worth our while to play."

"I may have to take in two or three that don't belong to the Remove," said the Bouncer. "I suppose there would be no objection to that. You've had the pick of the Form for the eleven. And I think we can beat you."

"Oh, rot!"

"You can say rot, and anything else you like," said the Bouncer, with a glitter in his eyes. "But you've got to play."

"What!"

"You heard what I said—you've got to."

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Well, if you put it like that, my answer's soon made," he said. "I won't!"

"You refuse to play?"

"Yes."

"You refuse to meet the Greyfriars Crusaders?"

"Greyfriars rats!" growled Bob Cherry. "Do stop talking piffle, Smithy, and give us a rest. You make us tired."

"The tiredfulness is terrific, my worthy Smithy," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The restfulness from your esteemed jaw would be very welcome."

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull.

"I repeat that you've got to play us, and we're going to beat you," said Vernon-Smith, his eyes fixed upon Harry Wharton. "We're going to show you up to all the Remove. You fellows have kept the footer club in your wastecout-pockets, and made it into a family concern. Any chap who wants to play has got to kow-tow down to the ground at the door of No. 1 Study."

"That's rot!"

"The fellows know it's true. I'm fed up—lots of the chaps are fed up. And now we're making up a new team, you're not going to mount the high horse, and say you won't play us. We insist upon your playing."

"You can insist till you're black in the face, but it won't make any difference," said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "We won't play you, and that settles it."

There was a murmur from the new Co. Vernon-Smith's

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manner and words had been so provoking, that it was no wonder Wharton refused. But the Bouncer chose to take it as another example of the Form-captain's high-handed methods.

"That doesn't settle it," said Vernon-Smith. "I appeal to the Form—all the fellows present." He looked round. "You chaps know how the matter stands. Wharton declares that he's got all the best players in the team, and he won't give the others a show. We challenge him to play us, and undertake to beat him, and he funks it! Is that cricket?"

"No, it isn't!" roared Bolsover.

"Shame!" hooted Snoop.

"Yah!"

"Funk!"

Harry Wharton clenched his hands. His temper was never very patient, and he was very nearly at the end of his patience now.

"The next fellow who says funk will find whether I'm a funk or not!" he exclaimed.

"Funk!" said Snoop.

Wharton strode towards him. Snoop promptly dodged behind the Bouncer. Vernon-Smith put out his hand and pushed Wharton back.

"Hands off Snoop!" he said. "Snoop's only said what every fellow here thinks."

"That's not true," said Mark Linley.

"Not counting factory cads!" said the Bouncer, with a sneer.

Mark Linley clenched his hands.

"Will you stand aside, Vernon-Smith?" said Wharton, with ominous quietness.

"No!"

"I shall shift you, if you don't!"

"Well, I won't!"

"Well, if you want trouble, you can have it!" exclaimed Wharton, his long pent-up temper breaking out.

He sprang upon Vernon-Smith, and caught him by the shoulders. The Bouncer hit out at once, and Harry Wharton staggered as the heavy fist crashed into his face.

But he came on again in a second. The Bouncer's fists were knocked aside, and Harry Wharton's right came crashing into his face, and the Bouncer was fairly lifted off the floor by the terrific drive.

Bump!

Vernon-Smith lay upon his back, with whole solar systems dancing before his eyes. Harry Wharton stood over him, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing.

"Oh!" gasped the Bouncer, panting.

"You cad! Get up and have some more, if you're not satisfied!" said Wharton, between his teeth.

Vernon-Smith scrambled up. He did not care, as a rule, to come into personal conflict with Wharton; but he had plenty of courage, and he did not shrink from the combat. But just as he gained his feet, there was a cry from a junior near the door.

"Cave!"

The juniors' hands dropped to their sides as Wingate strode into the common-room.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ordered to Play.

WINGATE frowned as he strode towards the rivals of the Remove. The Bouncer was calm again in a moment. He had a savage and bitter temper, but he could always keep it in control when it suited him to do so. Wharton was flushed and excited. Wingate eyed them grimly.

"Now what is this about?" he exclaimed. "What are you fighting in the common-room for? What is it about?"

"Only an argument about footer, Wingate," said Bob Cherry.

"It's all Wharton's rotten swank!" exclaimed Bolsover major savagely. "He won't let us into the footer team, and he won't play us!"

"That's it!" said Stott.

"Will you listen to us, and judge between us, Wingate?" said the Bouncer suavely. "I'm willing to leave it to you to decide, as captain of the school, if Wharton is."

Wingate looked puzzled.

"I'm willing to settle any difficulty for you, if I can," he said. "Explain what it's about. In any case, you won't get any forrarder by hammering each other. That's not the way to settle a football matter. You ought to know better."

"Well, all the fellows know I didn't start it," said the Bouncer.

"Never mind that. What's the point in dispute?"

"It's another of Smith's rotten tricks," said Harry Wharton hotly. "He's leading the fellows by the nose to make trouble for me, that's all."

"Wharton wants to lead the Form by the nose himself," said Snoop.

Some of the Removites laughed.

"You explain first," said Wingate to the Bounder. "Let him speak, Wharton."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders, in a way he had that was sometimes irritating to his friends, as well as to his enemies. Wingate knitted his brows.

"Oh, let him run on!" said Harry contemptuously.

"Go on, Smith!" said Wingate quietly.

"There's not much to explain," said Vernon-Smith.

"Wharton and his friends have had the Form footer club in their hands for a long time, and they've made a family concern of it. Wharton plays his study-mates and his personal friends all the time. Other fellows never have a chance in any match of any consequence. When he can't deny that a fellow can play footer, he says he's insubordinate, or something of the sort—insubordinate meaning that he wants to call his soul his own."

"He, he, he!" cackled Snoop.

"Some of us are getting up a new eleven," said Vernon-Smith. "We want it to be proved which is best side, by a match between us; but Wharton refuses to play my team."

Wingate frowned.

"You refuse, Wharton?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Why?"

Wharton hesitated. It seemed absurd to say that he refused because of Vernon-Smith's hectoring manner of making the demand. And it went very much against the grain with the high-spirited lad to explain himself at all, even to the captain of Greyfriars.

"I don't want to play them!" he said.

Wharton was not doing himself justice, and his friends all looked anxious as he made that reply. It was not a reply likely to please Wingate.

"And do you think that's a sufficient reason for refusing to play?" demanded the Greyfriars captain sharply.

"Yes, I do!"

"Any other reason?"

"Smith will make up a rotten team, and I don't care to play it."

"And do all the fellows in the Form Eleven back you up in that?" asked Wingate, looking round at the crowd of Removites.

There was a general silence.

"My opinion is, that you should play," said Wingate. "If there's anything in Vernon-Smith's claim that he can make up as good a team as the Form team, he deserves to be given a chance. I think you're putting yourself in the wrong by refusing to play, Wharton."

Wharton was silent, and his lips set obstinately.

"Now, it occurs to me that I am supposed to have some little authority in this matter, as captain of the school and head of the sports," said Wingate. "I think that you had better meet Smith's Eleven, Wharton."

"I've said that I don't want to meet them."

"And I say you had better meet them," said the Greyfriars captain tartly. "You give me an impression that you are suffering a little from swelled head, Wharton."

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover.

"So you can put your don't-want-into your pipe and smoke it," said Wingate. "I direct you to play Vernon-Smith, and there's an end of it."

"If you order me to, Wingate—"

"Haven't I made it plain enough?"

"Well, that alters the case, of course," said Harry, biting his lip, and his face growing almost pale with anger and mortification. "If you order me to do it as captain of the school, I'll do as you say."

Wingate nodded.

"Well, that's all right," he said, "and don't scowl over it, either. Be a sportsman! If what you say is right about Smith's team you can beat them, and put Smith in his place. And if he's right, you can consider about making some changes in the Form team. And now stop rowing, and play up like good sportsmen."

Wharton was silent.

"I'm quite willing to do that," said the Bounder. "If Wharton means business, we'll meet him like sportsmen, and the best team can win."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good!" said Wingate. "And mind, no more rowing."

"I don't want any more rows," said the Bounder; "I didn't want this one. I only want to be allowed to breathe."

Wingate nodded, and walked out of the common-room. The moment he had gone, Vernon-Smith's expression changed, and a sneering grin came over his face.

"I said you'd have to play!" he remarked.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry angrily.

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The Bounder looked round.

"Fellows who want to join the Greyfriars Crusaders can come up to my study, and talk it over," he remarked, and he went to the door. At the doorway he paused, and looked back, with a bitter sneer upon his face at Harry Wharton. "The time has come for No. 1 Study to take a back seat," he said. "I'm going to put you in your place, Harry Wharton."

Wharton's hands were clenched hard; but he was mindful of what Wingate had said. He knew that the Bounder was trying to provoke him into violence again, and he tried to keep control over his temper.

"Easy does it, Harry," murmured Frank Nugent. "Don't answer the cad."

Wharton nodded without speaking.

"You're going to be made to toe the line," said the Bounder, with biting emphasis. "I'm going to put you right in your place, and keep you there, you swanking cad—"

Wharton made a sudden movement. His hand closed upon a cushion upon a chair near him, and he caught it up, and flung it.

The cushion whizzed through the air to the doorway. It caught the Bounder full on the chest, and bowled him over like a ninepin. Vernon-Smith went sprawling out into the passage with a yell.

Crash!

There was an angry exclamation further along the passage. Wingate had paused there, to speak to a prefect, and he saw Vernon-Smith come whirling out, to fall heavily upon the floor. The Greyfriars captain ran up to the door of the common-room, and looked in with an angry glare.

"Who threw that cushion?" he shouted.

There was an instant's silence.

"Who threw that cushion?" the prefect shouted.

"I did!" said Wharton.

Wingate fixed his eyes upon him.

"After what I said!" he exclaimed. "You had better be careful, Wharton. You will take two hundred lines. Do you hear?"

"I'm not deaf," said Harry.

Nugent pressed his arm.

"Shut up, you ass!" he murmured. "You can't cheek the skipper. Shut up!"

Wharton shook his hand off.

"I've warned you to be careful, Wharton," said Wingate, his eyes flashing. "You will take five hundred lines instead of two, and write them out to-morrow afternoon. And if I have any more of your cheek, I'll cane you! Remember that!"

Wingate strode away.

Harry Wharton made a step towards the doorway of the common-room, evidently with the intention of replying—a reply that would have caused trouble. Bob Cherry divined his intention, and grasped him and dragged him back.

"Let me go!" shouted Harry angrily.

"No fear!"

"Let me go, you ass! Let me go, or—"

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry coolly. "You can punch my head if you like, old son, if it will relieve your feelings. But you're not going to cheek the skipper. It's not good enough! Easy does it!"

Wharton clenched his hands; but he unclenched them again.

"All right!" he said, with a short laugh. "Let me go, Bob; it's all right."

Bob Cherry released him.

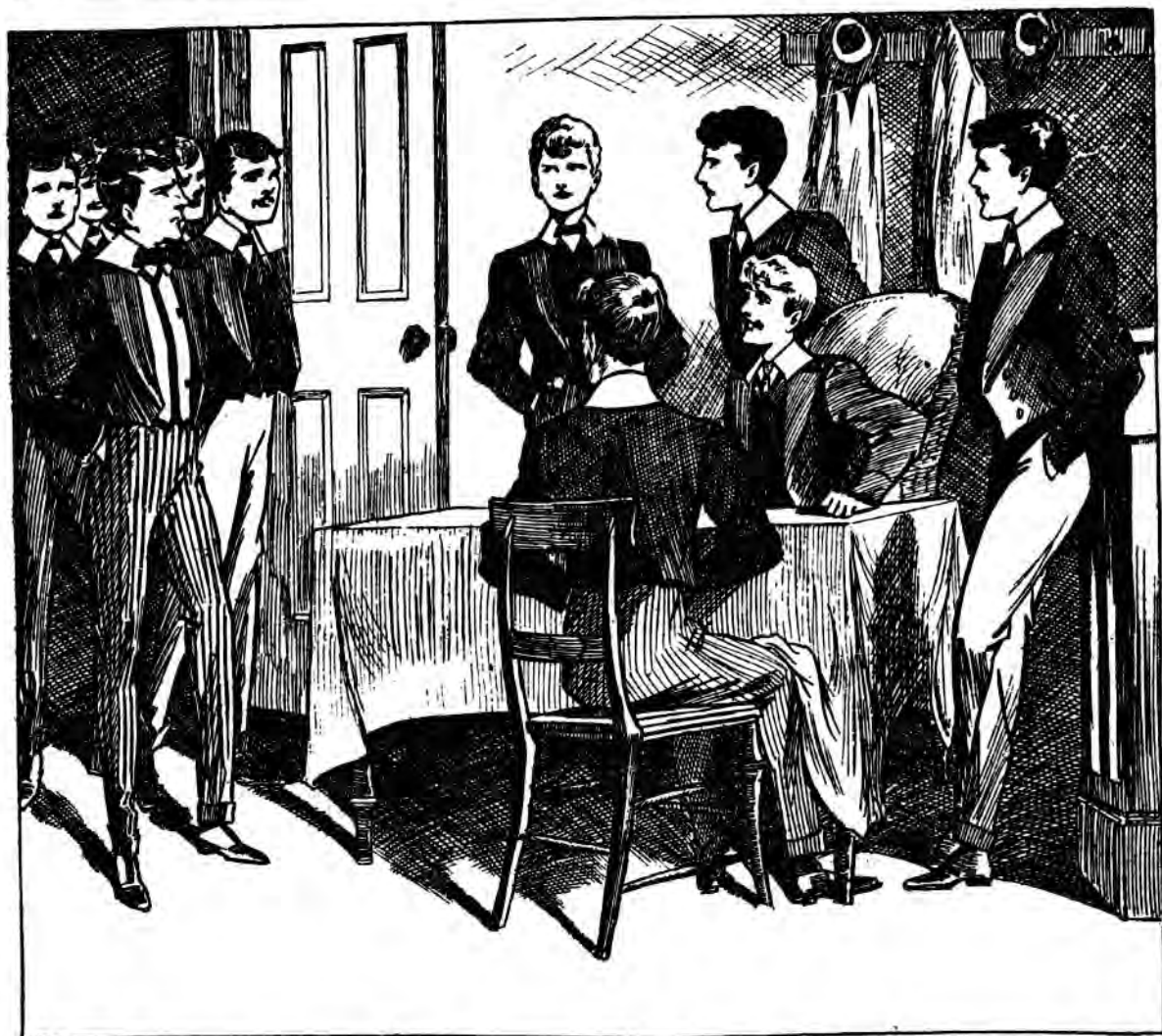
"Don't mind Wingate," he said. "Old Wingate's all right. Smithy twists people round his fingers—it's a way he's got. We'll give the cad and his precious Crusaders a jolly good licking on Saturday; that's the best way of dealing with Smith & Co."

Wharton nodded, and walked away without replying. His chums looked after him rather anxiously, but he was evidently not in a mood to be talked to. In his struggle with the cunning and unscrupulous Bounder, Wharton needed to keep all his wits about him to keep his end up; but it was only too probable that Wharton's temper would be his enemy's ally, and that with right on his side he would only succeed in placing himself in the wrong.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Little Mistake!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, was sitting in his study. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was curled up in the armchair, but otherwise the dusky nabob was alone. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, his study-mates, were down in the common-room. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was writing out an imposition with great patience. It was not often that the quiet,



The study door was pushed open and a crowd of fellows trooped in, headed by Vernon-Smith. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Here comes the whole giddy family." "Yes," said the Bounder. "We're a deputation." "A which?" said Bob. (See chapter 2.)

inoffensive Indian junior had impositions to do, but he owed this one to Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist, and he had imitated the peculiar English of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in the Form-room, and the nabob had been given fifty lines for talking. And as he did not choose to give Bunter away, the nabob had to do the impot. He was grinding away patiently at Virgil when the study door opened and Vernon-Smith came in.

The nabob's pen paused on the paper, and he looked at the Bounder in surprise. Hurree Singh was one of Wharton's closest chums, and had been so all the time he had been at Greyfriars. He was surprised to receive a visit from the fellow who was Wharton's deadliest enemy, and had lately entered upon a campaign against No. 1 Study and its supporters. And the Bounder's manner was so bland and friendly that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was on his guard at once. The nabob, with all his simple ways, was keen enough, and, like the Trojan gentleman of old, he feared the Greeks when they came with gifts in their hands.

"Busy?" said the Bounder cheerfully.

The nabob nodded.

"The busyfulness is terrific," he said.

"I want to speak to you."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh laid down his pen.

"Go aheadfully," he replied.

Vernon-Smith sat on the corner of the table.

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"You're not playing in the Form eleven to-morrow," he remarked.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head.

"Left out?" said the Bounder.

"Yes."

"You'd like to play?"

"The likefulness is terrific."

"But you're left out?"

The nabob made a sign of assent.

"Wharton's left you out," Vernon-Smith said meaningly.

"Quite correctful."

"You don't like it?"

"No, my worthy Smith."

"It's rather rotten, isn't it?"

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"I suppose Wharton's put a friend of his in, in your place?"

"Exactfully."

"Are you going to stand it?"

The nabob looked puzzled.

"What else is there to be done, my esteemed Smith?" he asked.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Yes, that's true," he said. "Wharton is cock of the walk there's no doubt about that. But his time is coming, Inky. Some of the fellows can see that there's going to be a downfall

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in No. 1 Study, and they're getting on the winning side already."

"That is very wise of them, to desert a sinking ship ratfully," remarked the nabob, in his blindest tone.

The Bounder gave him a sharp look.

"Look here, Inky," he said, "you're a jolly good forward. I've never seen a chap play inside-right better than you do."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose to his feet and performed an Oriental salaam to the Bounder.

"My worthy friend overwhelms me," he murmured. "I blushfully acknowledge the esteemed compliment."

And he sat down again.

Vernon-Smith paused a moment. It flashed into his mind that the nabob, with his solemn and serious manner, was solemnly and seriously pulling his leg. But the bland simplicity of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face reassured him.

"I've never seen a better winger," he said. "Now, as Wharton's put another fellow in your place for the match with the Fourth to-morrow, I've got a suggestion to make to you."

"I am listening, my worthy Smith."

"You know I'm making up a rival eleven?"

"The knowfulness is terrific."

"I should like to have you in it."

"My worthy and august friend is overpowering."

"You're a jolly good forward, and I'd like you in my team," said the Bounder. "I'd let you choose your own place."

"I am greatly honoured."

"Let me enrol you among the Greyfriars Crusaders, then," said the Bounder eagerly. "You can play where you like."

The nabob looked thoughtful. Little Wun Lung looked at him curiously from the armchair. The eye of the nabob that was furthest from Vernon-Smith half closed for a moment, and the little Chinese wriggled in silent laughter. Vernon-Smith looked round at him, and Wun Lung became serious again at once. Vernon-Smith fixed his eyes again upon the nabob, and that princely junior became as solemn as a judge about to administer the death sentence.

"You will allow me to playfully take whatever place in the team I please?" the nabob said thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"May I play centre-forward?"

The Bounder hesitated a moment.

"Well, that's my place," he said. "But you can have it if you like."

"My noble and esteemed chum is too good!" murmured the nabob.

"Well, I want you in my team," said the Bounder. "And I'll undertake to treat you better than Wharton does. You'll never be left out of a match excepting of your own free will. I promise that."

"I trust that the promises of the esteemed Smithy are not pie-crustful?" suggested the nabob gently.

"You can rely upon me."

"Honour-brightfully?"

"Honour bright!" said Vernon-Smith.

Promises cost the Bounder very little. He could hardly believe in his good luck. To detach the nabob from Wharton's party would be a triumph indeed; if Hurree Jamset Ram Singh deserted the captain of the Remove, Vernon-Smith need not despair of detaching all his friends from him. No one would ever have dreamed that Hurree Singh would abandon his old chum—least of all Wharton himself. The Bounder chuckled inwardly at the thought of Wharton's feelings when he should hear that the Nabob of Bhanipur had joined the new Crusaders.

"Perhaps, upon the wholefulness, I should preferfully like to play the honourable centre-half," said the nabob thoughtfully.

"Centre-half it is, then!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Or perhaps you might kindly allow me to keep the honourable goal?" suggested Hurree Singh.

"Yes, if you like."

"My worthy chum is too good!"

"Then I can put your name down?" exclaimed the Bounder eagerly.

"My name is quite at the disposefulness of the esteemed and august Bounder."

"Good egg! You'll play on Saturday?"

"The playfulness will be terrific."

"Good! Now, what position will you take? Inside right is your best, you know."

"On Saturday?" asked the nabob.

"Yes."

"I shall playfully take inside right on Saturday."

"All serene! You'll tell Wharton so?"

"Yes, certainly."

"It will be rather a surprise to him," grinned the Bounder.

"But life is full of surprises, isn't it?"

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"The fulness of surprises is terrific."

The study door opened, and Bob Cherry came in, and Harry Wharton came in with him. They stared at seeing the Bounder in the study. Vernon-Smith slid off the table, and nodded to them coolly.

"Well?" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"I'm just putting Inky's name down," said the Bounder carelessly.

"Putting his name down? What for?"

"For my team."

"Your team?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, the Greyfriars Crusaders, you know."

Wharton stared from one to the other. Wun Lung, curled up in the armchair, went off into a convulsion of silent mirth. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled blandly.

"Is this a joke?" asked Bob Cherry. "If it is, I don't quite see where the joke comes in."

"It isn't a joke! Tell him, Inky."

"With pleasurefulness," said the nabob. "The honourable and esteemed Vernon-Smith has expressed the greatest sympathy with me because I am left out of the team to-morrow, and another chap is being playfully put in in my place."

"But you wanted to be left out!" exclaimed Wharton.

"You told me you wanted to go over to Courtfield to-morrow afternoon."

"Quite correctful!"

The Bounder looked a little surprised.

"I didn't know that," he said.

"You did not ask me, my worthy Smith," said the nabob.

"You asked me if I was left out, and another chap played in my place, and I said it was so."

Wun Lung doubled up again. Bob Cherry began to grin.

"Still, that doesn't alter the case," said the Bounder tartly.

"Inky is going to play on Saturday."

"Is that so, Inky?"

"Yes, my esteemed chum."

"As inside right?" said the Bounder.

"Exactful!"

"There you are!" said Vernon-Smith. "That's straight from the horse's mouth. When will you be able to practise with us, Inky? Better put in some practice some time to-morrow."

The nabob looked surprised.

"Practise—with you?" he repeated.

"Yes, of course."

"But whyfully should I practise with you, my esteemed Smith?"

"Because you're going to be a member of my team, the Crusaders, I suppose," said the Bounder, puzzled and angry, and beginning to feel uneasy.

"There is an esteemed mistake somewhere," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I am quite sureful that I did not say I was going to be a member of your honourable and august team, my worthy Smith."

"What?" roared the Bounder angrily. "Didn't you say you were going to play on Saturday?"

"Yes, that is correctful."

"As inside-right?"

"Certainfuly."

"Well, then, if you're going to play—"

"But it is in my esteemed chum Wharton's team that I am going to play inside-rightfully," said the nabob, as gently as a cooing dove. "You have made a slight mistake as to the team, that is all, my respected Smith."

The Bounder's face was a study. It dawned upon him now that the nabob had been gently drawing him on, and allowing him to make a fool of himself; in fact, pulling his leg in the politest and blindest manner. He clenched his hands hard, and for a moment the expression of his hard face was almost murderous. Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You nigger cad!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "Then you were only making a fool of me, were you, you—you black rotter?"

"I did not make a fool of you, my esteemed chum. That was done before I had the great honour of knowing you, my worthy Smith."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beastly nigger!"

"My esteemed chum—"

"You—you Indian cannibal!"

"My honourable friend—"

"You dirty Hindu rotter—"

"My noble Smith—"

Vernon-Smith was almost foaming. The more abusive he grew, the more pompously polite became the nabob. The Bounder made a step towards him, feeling that nothing short of blows would do justice to his feelings. Bob Cherry made a step forward at the same time, and the Bounder thought better of it. He turned towards the door of the study.

"I'll make you sorry for this, you nigger!" he hissed.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific already," purred the nabob. "I am muchfully distressed that my worthy chum has made a slightful mistake about the team I shall play for on Saturday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith flung out of the study, and slammed the door after him. The nabob turned a gentle smile upon his chums.

"Mistakes will occur in the best regulated schemes of mice and men," he said philosophically. "The worthy Bounder has put his honourable foot in it, and the laughfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Vernon-Smith went down the passage with the pleasant sound of the laughter from No. 13 Study ringing in his ears.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Detained.

"WHARTON, old man——"

Bob Cherry began, and left off. The look upon Harry Wharton's face did not encourage him.

It was Wednesday, a bright and breezy day. The Remove had just come out of their Form-room after morning lessons.

"Well, Bob?" said Harry.

"About those lines?"

"Well?"

"They can't be done."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid they've got to be done, Bob. Wingate said I was to stay in this afternoon, and write them out, and he meant it."

"Five hundred lines!" said Frank Nugent. "They'll take you all the afternoon, Harry."

"I suppose so."

"What about the match with the Fourth?"

"You'll have to play without me. The Fourth won't give you very much trouble," said Harry. "You could beat Temple, Dabney & Co. on your heads."

"But you're not going to be left out," said Bob Cherry energetically. "What a silly ass you were to check Wingate!"

Wharton flushed.

"Look here, Bob——" he began.

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You're not going to quarrel with me, Harry, so you can ring off. I shall say what I like, and I won't have a row. It's not a bit of good, so you may as well grin."

Harry Wharton laughed, in spite of himself.

"Don't be an ass, Bob," he said. "I don't see that we're bound to take everything that Wingate chooses to do, without grumbling, simply because he's Wingate."

"Rot!" said Bob. "He was a bit off side last night, I know; but he's a first-rate chap, and he means well, and you ought not to have checked him. My dear kid, I'm only telling you what all the chaps know, and what you really know yourself."

"Oh, bosh!"

"But that doesn't improve matters," said Nugent pacifically. "Wharton did check old Wingate, and he's detained for the afternoon—that's the trouble."

"The troublefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the begfulness of the esteemed pardon would set the matter right."

"That's what I was coming to," said Bob, with rather an uneasy look at Harry Wharton. "If you asked Wingate, Harry, he'd let you off. He's as good as gold, and you've only got to say you're sorry you checked him. He wouldn't stand in the way of a footer match; he's the last fellow in the world to do that."

"That's so!" said Johnny Bull. "Just buzz round to his study, Wharton, and ask him to let you off the lines. He'll do it like a shot."

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ONE
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Wharton shook his head.

"You won't?" asked Bob.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm not going to ask any favours of Wingate or anybody else."

"Oh, my only winter boumet!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"If you're going to get on the giddy high horse, I'm done."

"Don't be an ass, Harry," said Johnny Bull rather unfortunately. "No good getting your ears up over nothing, you know."

"I'm not going to ask Wingate's pardon."

"Then you'll be left out of the Form-match."

"Bob can captain the team. You can play young Penfold instead of me; he's a good man. You'll beat the Fourth all right."

"Well, if it must be so, it must," said Nugent, with a sigh. "You'll allow me to remark that you're an ass."

"You can remark what you like."

"Oh, don't get ratty. We're likely to have rows enough with the Bounder & Co. without rowing among ourselves," said Nugent.

Bulstrode had stopped to join in the talk. Bulstrode, who had been captain of the Remove for a time, was supposed to belong to Harry Wharton's party, and he usually played for the Form. He had had many differences with Harry Wharton at one time, but since the Bounder had come to Greyfriars, Bulstrode and Wharton had pulled together better. There was a rather peculiar expression on Bulstrode's face now.

"You're not playing this afternoon, then?" he asked, looking at Wharton.

Wharton shook his head.

"Vernon-Smith made a suggestion to me about that," Bulstrode remarked.

"I don't want to hear any of Vernon-Smith's suggestions," said Wharton, knitting his brows.

"Well, you'll have to hear this one, because I'm going to tell you," said Bulstrode, rather tartly. "As you can't captain the team this afternoon, I think I ought to do it. I was captain of the Remove before, and the fellows were satisfied with me. I don't want to shove myself forward, but I really think I might have a look-in this time. Smith said he thought so, too."

"I've just asked Bob to do it."

"Well, I think you might have asked me."

"Oh, rot!"

"You may think it rot, but I don't," said Bulstrode, flushing. "And if that's the way you're going to talk, you'll find it pretty hard to get fellows to back you up, Harry Wharton."

"The fellows can please themselves about that."

Bulstrode bit his lip.

"Look here, Wharton's going to captain the eleven," said Bob Cherry. "We've got to manage it somehow. Inky will be out of the team, and Hazeldene keeps goal like a sack of coke now, so it's no good playing him. The team's weaker than it has been for a long time, and the Fourth would crow no end if they beat us. It would break the record."

"Look here——" began Bulstrode.

"Peace, my infant—peace!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. "I'm quite willing to admit that you can skipper the team as well as I can, and if Wharton doesn't skipper us, I'll resign in your favour. No objection to that, Harry?"

"Not that I know of," said Wharton, rather ungraciously. Bulstrode's face cleared.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "I only want a fair show. I'm quite willing to play under Wharton if he can get off; I'll go with you chaps to Wingate and ask him, if you like."

"Don't do anything of the sort," said Harry Wharton hastily. "I'm not going to ask him favours, and I'm not going to have them asked for me by anybody else, either."

And Wharton walked out into the Close.

Bulstrode looked after him, and then at the Co. All of them seemed a little bit uncomfortable.

"What's Wharton got his back up for?" asked Bulstrode.

"Oh, it's that rotter Smith and his rotten tricks!" said Bob Cherry.

"That's no reason why Wharton should bite us, I suppose. We haven't done anything."

"Well, you see——"

"I see one thing—that fellows in the Remove won't stand being shut up and jawed at for nothing!" said Bulstrode angrily. "I've backed Wharton up all right for a long time. I know Smithy won't do the Form any good if he gets the upper hand. But Smithy can be civil to a chap, at any rate; and civility costs nothing!"

And Bulstrode swung away angrily.

Bob Cherry gave a dismal groan.

"I said there was going to be trouble," he remarked. "Blessed if Wharton isn't going round looking for it, without waiting for it to come. Well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

After dinner, when the rest of the Remove were out in the keen air of the Close, Harry Wharton went into the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, met him in the passage, and paused.

"Are you detained, Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I am sorry for that," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "Are you detained by the Head?"

"No, sir; Wingate."

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch frowned a little. It was unusual for even the head prefect of the school to exercise his authority to the extent of detaining a junior for a half-holiday. "If you like, Wharton, I will speak to Wingate about it, and see if I can arrange the matter."

"No, sir, thank you!" said Wharton hastily.

Mr. Quelch elevated his eyebrows.

"Do you want to lose your half-holiday, then?" he demanded.

"I don't want to ask a favour of Wingate, sir."

"Indeed! I approve of proper pride in a lad, Wharton; but you must be careful not to carry pride to the length of arrogance," said the Remove-master severely. "I think you are in danger of doing so. However, I shall certainly not speak to Wingate now!"

He walked away, and Wharton went into the Form-room. The junior's brow was darkly clouded. He had displeased Mr. Quelch, with whom he had always been a favourite, and he realised that it had been very ungracious in him to refuse the kindly mediation of his Form-master. But the boy's stubborn pride was up in arms; he felt that Wingate had been unjust to him, and he would not ask to be pardoned when he considered that he had not offended.

Wharton sat down at his desk, with his books and impot. paper, and dipped his pen in the ink. His impot. was long enough to keep him busy all the afternoon. The shouts of the fellows outside rang in his ears. The Form match would be beginning soon; and here was he, shut up in the Form-room, scribbling away lines in Latin that had lost all sense and meaning to him as he scribbled them.

It was all the fault of the Bouncer—the Bouncer had caused the trouble between him and Wingate—the Bouncer was at the bottom of it all, as usual. Wharton's feelings towards Vernon-Smith were not pleasant. The Form-room fire had gone out; the room was chilly, and his feet were growing cold as he sat at the lonely desk.

Mark Linley looked into the deserted Form-room.

"Hard at it?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Let me do some of your lines," said Mark Linley good-naturedly. "I could whack in a hundred or so before the match starts."

Wharton shook his head.

"That's no good for Wingate," he said. "Wingate always looks at the lines, and he knows our fist!"

"H'm!" Mark was silent for a moment. "Look here, Wharton, Wingate didn't more than half mean what he said to you, you know. If you were to say a word, he'd let you off. You've only got to say that there's a match on—"

"I'm not going to ask him anything."

"I'll go and explain to him, if you like."

"No, thanks!"

Mark looked at Wharton in a very perplexed way for a moment or two, and then nodded rather abruptly and quitted the Remove-room. There was evidently nothing to be done.

Wharton remained alone, with a clouded brow. The scratching of his pen upon the paper was the only sound that broke the silence of the Form-room.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith is Very Good.

WINGATE of the Sixth came out of the House with a ball under his arm, and a very cheery look upon his rugged face. Greyfriars First were playing a senior team from Redclyffe that afternoon, and Wingate was looking forward to a good match. Courtney and Valence and some more of the Sixth were with Wingate, and they were talking football as they strolled down to the playing ground. Vernon-Smith came hurrying across the Close, and he touched Wingate on the arm.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Wingate?" asked the Bouncer.

"Yes, if you buck up."

"It's about Wharton—"

Wingate frowned.

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"Oh, blow Wharton!" he exclaimed. "If you've been having another row, you can settle it without bothering me. Only if there's too much of it, you'll get a licking each. Now, shut up, and buzz off."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"But it isn't a row this time," he said.

"Well, what is it?" growled the captain of Greyfriars.

"You gave Wharton five hundred lines last night."

"Yes; for his cheek!" said Wingate, with a frown.

"He's got to stay in this afternoon and write them out—"

"Yes; it will be a lesson for him."

"I dare say it will, only—"

"Well," said Wingate sarcastically, "I suppose you don't want to do the lines for him, do you, Smith?"

"Not exactly," said Vernon-Smith, laughing. "But you don't know, perhaps, that there's a Form match on this afternoon. The Remove are playing the Upper Fourth."

"Well?"

"Inky is out of the eleven, and Hazeldene has had to be dropped because they say his form isn't any good. If Wharton's left out, too, the Fourth Form will walk over the Remove. They won't play me—I'm conceited enough to think that I could pull the match out of the fire, you know—"

"So you want me to order them to play you, is that it? Well, I can't interfere in the juniors' private affairs," said Wingate. "The Form committee has to decide all that. I can't meddle like a giddy old great-grandmother with everything they do."

"I don't mean that at all."

"Then what do you mean? Don't be so blessed long-winded."

"You see, I'm not in the team, but I'm in the Form, and I want the Form team to win. So I was going to ask you—"

"Oh, get it out!"

"Would you mind—ahem—"

"Great Scott! Why don't you get it out?" exclaimed Wingate impatiently. "Are you going to keep me standing here all the afternoon while you hem and haw?"

"Well, it seems like a cheek to ask you," said Vernon-Smith. "Only it's nothing for myself, you see—it's for the sake of the Form—"

"I suppose you're never coming to the point," said Wingate. "You can tell me the rest to-morrow, or have it published in volume form, and I'll read it. Buzz off!"

As he walked on towards the footer-ground, Vernon-Smith kept pace with him, however. The Bouncer was not yet finished.

"Look here, Wingate, this is it—will you let Wharton off, so that he can captain the eleven this afternoon?"

Wingate stopped, in sheer astonishment.

"So that's it, is it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that's it."

"You're begging Wharton off?"

"Well, yes."

"If he wants to be let off, why can't he come and ask me himself?"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, he won't!" he said. "You know how stiff-necked he is. If he was going to be shot to-morrow morning, he wouldn't ask to be let off. But—"

"Well, if he can't ask me, he can't want it very badly," said Wingate gruffly. "He can stay in and do his lines."

"Yes; but what about the Form match?" said Vernon-Smith. "I don't want to see my Form licked, because Wharton can't put his pride in his pocket. All the fellows are feeling rotten about it, Wingate. They'd all take it very kindly if you'd let Wharton off."

Wingate wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Well, it's decent of you to speak up for him, considering the terms you're on," he said. "Is Wharton going to play you if he gets out?"

"No fear!"

"Then you're doing this out of sheer philanthropy?"

"Well, it was partly my fault you dropped on Wharton," said Vernon-Smith, with an appearance of great frankness. "I've been feeling rather rotten about it. I had been jawing him a bit when he buzzed that cushion at me. But I'm thinking chiefly of the Form. If the Fourth beat us, it goes down in the record of the football season as a defeat, you see. None of us want that."

"I see. Well, you can go and tell Wharton he's let off," said Wingate. "I don't want to stand in the way of a footer match."

"Thanks!"

Vernon-Smith hurried away. He did not go to the Remove-room himself, but sought the Co., who were already gathering on the junior football-ground.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" growled Bob Cherry, as he came up. "We're going to play without our skipper, you rotter; I suppose that's a great satisfaction to you?"

Vernon-Smith smiled.

"You needn't!" he said. "Wingate has just told me that he's letting Wharton off, so that he can play."

"My hat!"

"All of his own accord?" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"No; I asked him."

"You!" yelled the juniors, all together.

"Yes; why not?"

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Bob Cherry elegantly. "Unless it's some more of your rotten underhand tricks, Smithy, it's jolly decent of you."

"Thank you," said the Bounder sarcastically. "I don't see why I can't be supposed to want my Form to win a match."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Micky Desmond. "It's dacent of ye intirely. Sure ye're not such a spalpeen after all, Smithy darling."

"Let's go and get Harry out," said Johnny Bull. "All of you come. It would be just like him to insist upon finishing the lines."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he does, we'll carry him out."

"Yes, rather."

And the juniors trooped off to the School House. It was close upon time for the match, and Temple, Dabney & Co. were already on the football-ground. Bob Cherry & Co. burst into the Remove-room with a shout and a trampling of feet. Wharton's pen paused in the midst of the adventures of the pious Aeneas, and he looked up glumly.

"Time you fellows were on the ground, isn't it?"

"Yes; and time you were there, too," said Bob Cherry.

"I can't come, you ass!"

"Yes, you can; Wingate's let you off."

"Did you ask him?" demanded Wharton, frowning.

"No, most noble, grave, and reverend signor, I didn't!" said Bob Cherry, bowing to the floor of the Form-room.

"Great monarch, let me live!"

The juniors chuckled, and Harry Wharton could not help laughing. It was impossible for the most touchy of mortals to be long angry with Bob Cherry.

"Come on, Wharton," said Bulstrode. "The Fourth are ready."

Wharton rose from his desk. He was still hesitating a little; but it would have been too ridiculous to carry pride to the length of insisting upon finishing his imposition. The juniors settled the matter for him by grasping him and marching him forcibly out of the Form-room.

"Now, buck up and change," said Bob Cherry. "Sharp's the word."

And in five minutes Harry Wharton was ready. The juniors had not mentioned that he owed his release to the intervention of the Bounder. There was no telling how Wharton would take it; and the explanation would come better after the match. It would be too late then for the Form match to be interfered with, at all events.

The clouds were soon chased from Harry Wharton's brow as the Remove Eleven lined up against the Fourth-Formers.

Bob Cherry slapped him on the shoulder.

"This is better than lines, isn't it?" he demanded.

Wharton laughed.

"Lots!" he said.

And all the bitterness of spirit was soon banished in the keenness and excitement of the game.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. On the Football-ground.

VERNON-SMITH stood among the fellows who were watching the Form match. The Bounder had a keen eye, and he knew as much about football as there was to be known. If he had chosen, he would have made as good a player as any junior at Greyfriars. He would have been sure of a place in the Form team for all important matches, if he had been content with a place. But Vernon-Smith was satisfied with nothing short of being "top dog," and unless he could captain the eleven, he did not care to play. And the Form-captain had no intention whatever of stepping aside to oblige the Bounder. Bolsover major and Sidney Snoop were with the Bounder, looking on at the game. Bolsover's face was very dark. He was a keen footballer, and his size and strength made him a very useful back. He bitterly resented being left out of the Form match. But at the same time, Bolsover joined in the cheering that greeted all the good play on the part of the Form champions. He clapped his hands as loudly as anybody when Harry Wharton put the ball in the net, in spite of the strenuous defence of Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth.

"They're hot stuff, there's no mistake about that," the Remove bully remarked, as the teams lined up again. "Blessed if I know how we're going to beat them on Saturday, Smithy."

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"Leave that to me."

"But how are you going to do it?" persisted Bolsover. "They've got the cream of the Form there—the best players in the Remove, excepting yourself and me. And I suppose we two can't play an eleven on our own."

"We have Stott, and Trevor, and Elliott, all good men," said Vernon-Smith. "They're not brilliant, I know; but they can play—if we have some good players to help them out. And Snoop can keep goal, at a pinch."

"Thank you," said Snoop, rather sarcastically.

"But where are you going to get the good players from?" demanded Bolsover. "There's you and I, and nobody else in the Remove up to their form."

"I'm not confined to the Remove for choice," said the Bounder. "I stated in the first place that I should have to go outside the Remove for a few men, as Wharton has had the pick of the Form."

Bolsover shook his head.

"The other fellows won't enter into our Form rows," he said. "As for the Fourth, they're not much good—Wharton's lot are making hay of the Fourth now."

"I'm not thinking of the Fourth."

"Well, you can't ask Shell chaps to play."

"I'm not thinking of the Shell."

"Well, if you're thinking of the Fifth, it's no good. The Fifth are seniors, and that would knock the thing on the head at once."

"I'm not thinking of the Fifth."

"Then what the dickens are you thinking of?" said Bolsover major. "Not going recruiting among the fags in the Third and Second, are you?"

"No," said the Bounder, laughing. "Though, as a matter of fact, your minor in the Third is a clever little beggar, Bolsover, and I was thinking of giving him a chance."

"Good," said Bolsover. "Young Hubert is only a kid, but he's coming on splendidly at footer. He's pretty thick with Wharton, though. Wharton stood by him when he first came here, and he had a bit of a rotten time then, you know."

"That needn't make any difference so far as the game is concerned. Besides, you'll tell him that he's wanted, and he'll do what you tell him."

Bolsover major nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "But Hubert isn't a whole team. Where are the others coming from?"

"Outside the school!"

"Oh!" said Bolsover, with a deep breath. "I didn't think of that."

"It's admitted that I can raise the Crusaders team where I like," said Vernon-Smith, "and some of Wharton's friends won't play for me, though they're in his eleven. Well, it's left for me to pick up players where I can. I'm going to play a couple of the chaps from Highcliffe School—Ponsonby and Gadsby."

"Phew! That will make bitter blood!"

"I can't help that. Ponsonby and Gadsby are both good men—about the only good players in the Highcliffe team. I've asked them, and they're jolly glad of a chance of helping to score against Wharton. They'll come."

"But—" said Bolsover dubiously. "You know the Form have scratched all their fixtures with Highcliffe, because Ponsonby & Co. don't play the game. We don't have matches with Highcliffe now."

"This won't be a Highcliffe match—simply a couple of Highcliffe chaps playing for my team," said the Bounder coolly. "It won't be known, either, till an hour before the match, and it will be too late for Wharton to raise objections then. It will look too much like trying to back out."

"You are a deep beggar, Smithy!" said Bolsover admiringly. "I suppose we'd better keep it dark about Ponsonby and Gadsby, then?"

"Yes, of course."

"Anybody else?" asked Snoop.

"Yes—a player who's worth more than both of them put together—and worth half the Remove team."

"My hat! Who's that?"

"Pugg!"

"Pugg?" repeated Bolsover, puzzled. "I don't know the name. A Highcliffe chap?"

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"No; a barman."

"What?" almost yelled Bolsover.

"He's a retired professional footballer," explained Vernon-Smith. "He's only a young fellow now—not twenty-five yet—but he had to retire from a big league team because he turned up for a match squiffy. He's a wonderful player when he's sober; kicks goals like Bloomer in his best days, and he has a speed on him that's like lightning. He had to chuck professional football, and he keeps the bar now at the Cross Keys."

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Bolsover whistled.

"I've seen him, now I think of it," he said. "A little, thick-set man, with a square jaw, and a bullet-head."

"That's the man."

"I've seen him," said Snoop. "He looks like a prize-fighter. He's as strong as a horse, anyway."

"And he's a first-class footballer," said the Bounder. "He will simply make hay of the Remove."

"But you won't be allowed to play such a man!" exclaimed Bolsover, aghast. "What will the prefects say if you bring a potman here to play?"

"I shan't say who he is. When he's washed and combed and put into football-clothes he'll look decent enough—and he's a young-looking chap for his age, too. I have promised him a couple of quid, if we win, and he's eager to have a go at the old game. If there's any trouble about it, it won't be till after the match. But I don't see why there should be any trouble. I'm not snobbish. Wharton & Co. are very chummy with the County Council School chaps in Court-field, and they have taken up Mark Linley, who used to work in a factory. Why shouldn't I take up a potman if I choose?"

"H'm!" said Bolsover. "That's all very well; but—"

"I can play anybody I like—and I'm going to play Jimmy Pugg," said the Bounder obstinately. "I'm going to lick Wharton's eleven by hook or by crook. I'm going to knock No. 1. Study into a cocked hat in every possible way—and this is only the beginning. Harry Wharton has undertaken to beat any team I can put into the field, and it's understood already that I can get recruits from outside if I like. Well, Jimmy Pugg is my best recruit, and I'm going to play him."

"But suppose he turns up squiffy—as you say he did at a league match?" said Snoop.

"He won't do that for me. I've got some influence with Cobb, who keeps the Cross Keys, and he will keep Jimmy in order on the day of the match. He's drunk most days; but he will be sober for the match, and that's all I care about."

"I shouldn't wonder if there's trouble."

"I don't care if there is! I'm going to beat Wharton."

"We'd better keep this dark, I suppose?"

"Dead secret, of course."

"Hallo! There goes another goal!" said Bolsover, as a burst of shouting rose round the field. "My word, Wharton is in fine form! And, but for you, Smithy, he would be grinding out lines in the Form-room at this very minute."

"Yes," yawned the Bounder. "I'm doing the Eric bizniz now—good for evil, and helping one's enemies, you know. Queer, ain't it?"

"Jolly queer, for you—and I'm blessed if I can see the point! Wharton's winning that match for the Remove, and it will give him a lot of kudos."

"And it will put him under an obligation to me," said the Bounder quietly. "And you know him well enough to know how he'll take that. The best way to get an enemy under your thumb, old man, is to put him in the wrong; and that's what I'm doing. Wharton will cut up rusty, and the whole Form will think him an ungrateful cad."

"Blessed if you're a safe chap to have about!" said Bolsover uneasily. "You're more like a giddy Italian plotter—like that chap Machiavelli we had in class the other day—than a schoolboy. I feel nervous of you sometimes."

The Bounder laughed.

There was a shout from the field again.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Bob Cherry!"

"Three up for the Remove, and nil for the Fourth!" said Bolsover, with a grin. "Look at Temple's chivvy—he'd like to eat somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter joined the Bounder & Co. "I've made up my mind."

"I didn't know you had one," said Bolsover major.

"Oh, really, Bolsover! I say, Smithy, I've made up my mind. I'm going to play for the Crusaders."

The Bounder stared at the Owl of the Remove.

"You're going to play for the Crusaders?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Bunter. "I've made up my mind. I spoke to Wharton to-day, and gave him a last chance. I told him plainly that if I wasn't played in the Form match this afternoon, I should join your eleven."

"And what did he say?" asked the Bounder, with a grin.

"He said I could go and eat coke!" said Bunter indignantly.

"And did you?"

"Oh, really, Smithy! I've done with Wharton," said Billy Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "He doesn't know how to treat a fellow. When I was in No. 1 Study with those chaps I never had enough to eat; Wharton made no end of a fuss if I wanted a little loan in advance on a postal-order. Now, you're not like that, Smithy."

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Vernon-Smith smiled grimly. He knew what was coming now.

"As a matter of fact," went on Bunter, with a burst of confidence, "I'm hard up at the present moment, Smithy."

"Not really!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in great astonishment.

Billy Bunter nodded.

"Yes, really. I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Same old postal-order!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Oh, really, Bolsover! You see, I was expecting it this afternoon, and there's been some delay in the post. I suppose you wouldn't mind advancing me five bob off it, Smithy? And I'll hand you the postal-order as soon as it comes. And, look here, you can put my name down for the Crusaders. I'll play centre-forward."

"Go hon!"

"I mean it!" said Bunter. "You stand by me, and I'll stand by you. One good turn deserves another, you know."

Vernon-Smith turned his glance upon the football-field. The match was nearly over now, and the Remove forwards were making a sharp attack on the Fourth Form goal. It looked as if a fourth goal would be added before the final whistle went.

Billy Bunter blinked at the Bounder through his spectacles, a little puzzled.

"Well, what do you say, Smithy?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"You heard what I said, didn't you?" demanded Bunter.

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, what do you say?"

"Oh, I say the same as Wharton!" replied the Bounder carelessly.

"What? What's that?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major, greatly tickled by the expression of disgust upon Billy Bunter's fat face. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"There goes the whistle!" said Snoop.

There was a roar.

"Bravo Remove!"

"Bravo Wharton!"

"I say, Smithy, if you can't make me a little loan you can't expect me to join your eleven," said Billy Bunter. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

"Thanks, I'd rather have you in Wharton's team!" said the Bounder. "But I'll tell you what, Bunter. Persuade Wharton to play you on Saturday, and I'll make it a quid!"

And the Bounder & Co. strolled away, laughing, leaving Billy Bunter rooted to the ground, and speechless with indignation.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Quite in the Wrong.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had beaten the Fourth by four goals to nil—a score that made the Removes cheer and laugh.

Temple, Dabney & Co. walked off the field, looking glum. As the older team, they always expected to beat the Remove, but they very seldom succeeded. And this crushing defeat made it necessary for Temple, Dabney & Co. to "sing small" for some days at least.

Harry Wharton was looking very cheerful as he came back to the School House, in his coat, with a muffler round his neck. A good hard game had driven away unpleasant thoughts, and he was in the best of tempers again. He passed Wingate as he came in, and paused to speak to him. Things looked different now, and he was feeling grateful to the captain of Greyfriars.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Wingate," he said.

Wingate looked at him rather grimly.

"You ought to be," he said. "Why couldn't you come and tell me you had a Form match on, and were wanted to play?"

Wharton was silent.

"Well, never mind!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Vernon-Smith spoke up for you, and you owe it to him, not to me. It was very decent of him, too, considering the terms you're on."

Wharton started.

"Vernon-Smith!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Vernon-Smith asked you to let me off!"

"Yes," said Wingate, "and I think it was decent of him, don't you?"

Wharton flushed hotly.

"No, I don't!" he exclaimed. "I never asked him to speak for me. I didn't want him to. It's like his cheek to meddle in my business."

Wingate's face hardened.
"That's not the proper way to take it," he said. "If you can't be grateful, you might at least be civil about it, Wharton. Enough said."

And the Greyfriars captain turned angrily away.
Harry Wharton drove his hands deep into his coat-pockets as he strode into the house. His chums were silent and troubled. The good temper was gone from Wharton's face, and his eyes were gleaming under his bent brows. He knew only too well that the Bouncer had interfered from no good motive. He wanted to place Wharton under an obligation, so that the Remove captain should show up in a bad light if he persisted in keeping on bad terms, and that he should have no chance of getting on good terms, Vernon-Smith would take care.

Wharton understood all that clearly enough; but the other fellows, unaccustomed to looking much below the surface, or to weighing motives, Vernon-Smith's action would be taken at its face value. He had begged off his personal enemy, for the sake of the Form—that was how the Removites would look at it, and it was certain to make Vernon-Smith more popular, especially as the Remove had beaten the other team. Wharton would be expected to show some grateful feeling about it—the last thing in the world he was likely to do, under the circumstances. But if he did not, the Bouncer would score all the more.

"Did you chaps know that it was Smith who begged me off from Wingate?" Harry Wharton demanded suddenly, as they entered the house.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry.
"And you never told me!"
"What good would it have done?"
"I wouldn't have taken a favour from that cad!"
"You'd rather the Form team was licked, I suppose?" said Bob tartly.

"Hang the Form team!" said Wharton hastily.
Bob Cherry grunted.
"Well, if that's the way you look at it, I've got no more to say," he growled. "I'll get off till you're in a bit better temper."

And Bob Cherry strode away.
"Of course, all you chaps think me in the wrong," said Wharton bitterly. "Vernon-Smith didn't care twopence whether the Form won or lost. It's only another move in his rotten game—nothing but that!"

"Well, it's turned out all right for us, anyway," said Nugent.
"Here he comes," said Johnny Bull. "Look here, Wharton, you'd better be civil to him. It will look pretty bad if you don't!"

Wharton's eyes blazed.
"Do you think I care how it looks?" he exclaimed hotly.
"Well, you ought to, that's all!" said Bull, with some tartness.

"I'm the best judge about that."
Vernon-Smith came up in a very genial way. Perhaps he had seen the expression upon Wharton's face, and judged that it was the exact moment favourable for provoking an explosion.

"Congratulations," said the Bouncer. "You gave the Fourth a good licking. Lucky for the Remove you got out to play, wasn't it?"

"I wish you had minded your own business," said Wharton.
"Eh!"

"I didn't ask you to interfere?"
"No; I did it without being asked," said the Bouncer. "You won't let me play for the Form, and you were detained and couldn't play. I didn't want to see the Remove licked."

"You didn't care a brass button whether the Remove was licked or not!" flashed out Wharton. "You did it to make things awkward for me, and you know it. You did it because you're a plotting cad!"

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders. He could afford to be patient. The fellows were gathering round, and there was a murmur of indignation as Wharton spoke his rash words. The Bouncer had more than succeeded. Harry Wharton had put himself in the wrong now in the eyes of the whole Form, more completely than the plotting Bouncer had ventured to hope.

"Faith, and that's a bit too thick, Wharton, darling!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure you can give Smithy credit for caring whether the Form's beaten or not."

"You might be a bit grateful, too, if you come to that!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "It was very decent of Smithy to speak up for you."

"Yes, I think it was unusually decent of the Bouncer, Wharton," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, in his frank way. "I don't see anything to get your rag out about, old man."

"I tell you it was one of his rotten schemes!"
"We've only got your word for that," said Bolsover. "I think the fellows know what opinion to hold about it."

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Vernon-Smith cares more for the Form than you do. You'd have missed the match rather than explain to Wingate that you were wanted there."

"Yes, rather," said Leigh.
"Shame!" howled Snoop.
"Shame!" echoed a dozen voices.

Wharton turned crimson.
"I don't want you to thank me, if that's what's worrying you," said Vernon-Smith. "I've helped the Remove to win, and that's all I care about. You won't be my friend; and you seem to complain because I won't treat you as an enemy. Lots of fellows would have been glad to see you forced out of the eleven."

"Sure, that's thrue for ye, Smithy!"
"Smith's been pretty decent, Wharton," said Russell.
"Dash it all, you might acknowledge it!"

"Catch him acknowledging anything of the sort!" sneered Stott.

Wharton bit his lip.
"Oh, say what you like about it!" he growled angrily.
"I've got nothing to say, excepting that Smith's a rotten cad, and I don't consider myself under any obligation to him."

And Wharton strode away.
"I'm willing to leave it to you fellows to decide who's in the right here," said Vernon-Smith, with martyr-like patience. "I've done my best, that's all."

And half the fellows present shouted after Wharton as he went:
"Shame!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith's Recruit.

H AZELDENE came into Vernon-Smith's study a little later. Vernon-Smith was sitting at his table, with a pencil in his hand, and a paper before him. He was making up a list of names. Hazeldene looked down on the list with a sour grin.

"That the eleven?" he asked.
"Yes," said the Bouncer. "Shall I put your name down?"

"Do you think I'm good enough?" asked Hazeldene, with a sneering grin. "Wharton left me out of the eleven this afternoon. He says I can't keep goal."

"All rot!" said Vernon-Smith.
"I should jolly well say so. Simply because he saw me smoking in this study yesterday," said Hazeldene savagely.

"If it hadn't been for my sister Marjorie, I should have broken with No. 1 Study before now. But she won't hear a word against Wharton. But I'm going to chuck them now. I've come to offer to keep goal for you on Saturday, if you like."

"Good egg!" said the Bouncer, and he wrote Hazeldene's name down. "I'll keep you to that, Hazel. And you'll find me a better friend than Wharton. I sha'n't give you a sermon on every cigarette, and a lecture every time you're late for calling-over."

"Wharton helped me out of a scrape you left me in, though," said Hazeldene. "I still owe him the money he paid for me."

"That's no reason why he should put on airs," said Vernon-Smith. "You've kept goal for the Remove all this term, and he had no right to drop you. You won't find me doing it."

"Blessed if I care a straw whether I keep goal or not," said Hazeldene. "I've only taken it up at all to please Marjorie. She likes to see me on good terms with Wharton and Bob Cherry. I'll keep goal for you on Saturday, Smithy, and then I've a jolly good mind to chuck footer altogether. It was really owing to Wharton that I ever took it up."

"Well, it will be some satisfaction to beat Wharton's team, won't it?"

"It would—only—do you think we can do it?"
"I'm certain of it."

"Good!" said Hazeldene. "I'll play my level best, you can bet. Who were you going to put into goal if you hadn't had me?"

"Dutton," said Vernon-Smith. "Dutton's deaf, but he's a good goalie. I was going to ask him. I'll make him a back now, if he'll play. I think he will."

Hazeldene nodded, and left the study.
"You might tell Dutton I want to speak to him, if you see him," the Bouncer called out.

"Right! I will!"
Hazeldene walked down the passage. The door of No. 1 Study was open, and Harry Wharton called to Hazeldene as he passed. Hazel halted, with a very grim expression on his face. He did not enter the study, but stood looking in from the doorway.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

"Come in, old chap," said Frank Nugent.

Hazeldene entered reluctantly.

"I left you out of the team to-day," said Harry Wharton. "Newland kept goal all right. But I don't want to keep you out, Hazel. You have been going off colour a lot lately, and missing footer practice—in fact, ever since—ever since—"

Hazeldene sneered.

"Ever since I've chummed up with Vernon-Smith," he said. "You may as well say it out."

"Yes; that's what I was thinking," said Wharton calmly. "Ever since you've chummed up with the Bounder. I told you plainly last week that if you didn't turn up for regular practice you'd be left out of the eleven to-day, and you didn't turn up."

"I've been busy."

"Busy smoking cigarettes in Vernon-Smith's study, I suppose!" said the Remove captain sharply.

"That's my business."

Wharton's eyes gleamed. But he controlled his temper; he was more patient with Hazeldene than with Vernon-Smith. Hazeldene was Marjorie Hazeldene's brother, and that made a difference, and he was not a bad fellow in the main. But he was weak and easily led; and the Bounder could twist him about his finger with perfect ease. And Wharton, who would never coax or flatter, was at a disadvantage in such a contest. But for Marjorie he would have allowed Hazeldene to go his own way long ago.

"Yes; it's your business, I suppose," he said. "But you didn't want to be dropped out of the team to-day. And I didn't want to leave you out, either. Look here, Hazel, will you stick to the practice, and keep goal on Saturday?"

"Isn't Newland up to the mark?" said Hazel, with a sneer.

"It's not that; Newland is all right. But the place is yours if you choose to keep fit for it. Will you do it?"

"Sorry; I can't!"

"You don't want to play?"

"It's too late."

"Too late?"

Hazeldene nodded.

"I don't understand you," said Wharton.

"I mean I've got another engagement for Saturday."

"I should think you could put most engagements off for a footer match."

"The engagement is a footer match!"

"What!"

"I'm keeping goal for Vernon-Smith!"

And with that Parthian shot, Hazeldene walked out of the study. He left Harry Wharton quite silent, and with gleaming eyes.

Nugent sniffed.

"My hat!" he said. "The Bounder's snapped him up already! As a matter of fact, we might have foreseen that, Harry."

"It couldn't be helped. I couldn't play Hazeldene to-

day after the way he has cut practice lately. The Bounder encouraged him to do this, and now he's taken advantage of Hazel feeling sore about being left out of the team."

"Well, Newland will keep goal all right if Hazel doesn't play. You can keep Newland up to practice, and he's as keen as mustard. He's a good goalie."

"Yes. It's rotten to see Hazel under the Bounder's thumb again, though. He will be getting into some disgraceful scrape again sooner or later."

"The silly ass! We've done all we can."

Wharton moved uneasily. Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House School, was one of his best friends. For her sake he had taken a great deal of trouble with Hazeldene; for her sake he was willing to take more, but it was very hard for his stubborn nature to bend. He had made Hazel a good offer, and Hazel had refused it; he was not called upon to do more. But he thought of Marjorie, and hesitated.

"I know you fellows think I get my back up too soon, and that I'm too stiff-necked in a jolly good many things, Franky," he exclaimed.

Nugent coloured.

"I don't know about that," he said.

"Well, I'm not going to get my back up with Hazel; I'm going after him, and I'll bring him round if I can."

"Dash it all, Harry, you're not called upon to go as far as that!"

"Well, I'm going to do it."

Nugent whistled as Harry Wharton quitted the study. It was so unusual for Wharton to make overtures for friendship towards anybody that his chum could not help being astonished. Even Nugent, good-tempered and kind-hearted fellow as he was, had had trouble with Wharton when the latter first came to Greyfriars.

It was surprising enough that the haughty-spirited lad should make such a concession to a fellow like Hazeldene. Nugent wondered what would come of it.

Wharton was making a great effort. His proud temper had placed him in the wrong often enough, and now he was going to humble himself more than, probably, any other fellow in the Remove would have done. It was the backward swing of the pendulum. At all events, if Hazel proved obstinate, it could not be said that Harry had not done his best to conciliate him. He wished to be able to feel that he had done his best when he saw Marjorie again.

Hazeldene was in the lower passage, talking to Dutton, when Harry Wharton caught sight of him again. Dutton was the deaf boy of the Remove, and Hazel was shouting to make him hear.

"Smith wants to see you in his study."

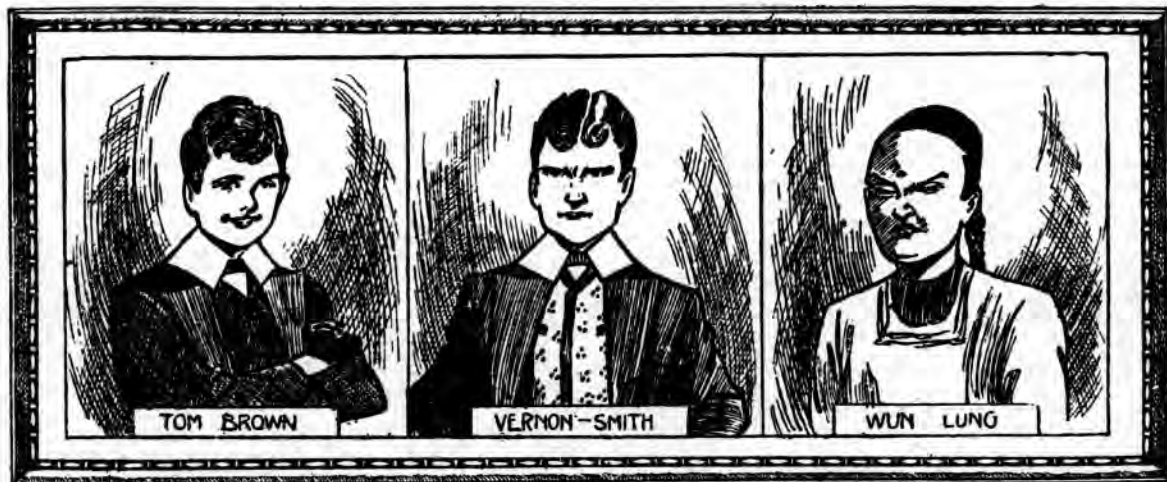
"Eh?" said Dutton.

"Smith wants to speak to you."

"What's a cheek of me?"

"Oh, my hat! Smith wants you!" bawled Hazeldene. "Go to Smith's study; Vernon-Smith is waiting for you!"

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"Ow!" gasped Mr. Pugg, hitting at the Bounder and knocking him down to the ground. "Ow! Assault your old pal, will yer! Take that—and that!" "Ow!" roared Smith. "Help!" Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull ran to the rescue, and grasped the belligerent Mr. Pugg. (See chapter 14.)

"All right; you needn't shout!" said Dutton. "I'm not deaf!"

And he went up the stairs. Hazeldene was turning away when Wharton came up.

"Hold on, Hazel!" said Harry.

"Well, what is it?"

"I want you to think over what you said to me in the study. We want you to play for the Form eleven, Hazel."

"Can't be done now!"

"Hazel, I don't want to see you join Vernon-Smith against me," said Harry, very quietly. "We've always been pretty good friends, old man. And trouble between us will be a worry to Marjorie, you know. Look here, let's say no more about it, and take your place in the team on Saturday."

"I can't!"

"But—"

"I've promised Smithy; that settles it!"

And Hazeldene walked away without waiting for any rejoinder from Wharton. Wharton's face flushed crimson. He did not speak to Hazeldene again; he returned to his

study without another word. Frank Nugent met him with a look of inquiry.

Wharton shook his head without speaking.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success.

"OGILVY! Come in, old chap!" said the Bounder cordially.

Ogilvy, of the Remove, entered Study No. 9. He was looking a little doubtful, but nothing could have been more cordial and cheery than Vernon-Smith's manner.

"Bolsover said you wanted to speak to me," said Ogilvy.

"Yes; that's right. You weren't in the Form eleven to-day."

Ogilvy reddened.

"Well, the whole blessed Form can't play!" he said. "I played in the last Form match, and Wharton put in Russell to-day instead. Russell was entitled to a show."

"Oh, that's all right!" said the Bounder, laughing, with an appearance of great frankness. "I don't want to put

your back up against Wharton, not in the least. Don't make any mistake about that. I haven't got you here to hear me run Wharton down!"

Ogilvy looked relieved.

"Good!" he said. "I stick to Wharton, you know. Chap ought to be loyal to his leader. I know he's got his faults—lots of 'em—but I'm sticking to him! Scotch way, you know!"

"Yes, I know," said the Bounder agreeably. "I don't blame you for it; quite the reverse. I shouldn't care to chum up with a chap who went back on his friends."

"Just it, exactly!" said Ogilvy, his opinion of the Bounder rising. "I don't deny that he is a bit uppish at times. We've all got our faults."

"Quite so. But, as a matter of fact, you're not in the Form team this week; you're not playing on Saturday, I think?"

"No; Russell isn't, either. Morgan gets a show," said Ogilvy. "The fact is, Smithy, there's nothing in what you chaps say about fellows not getting a show. Wharton gives every fellow a chance in turn, so long as he can do it without weakening the team. Yes; I know that doesn't apply to you and Bolsover. But, then, you can't deny that you kick over the traces, and there can't be two skippers in one eleven."

Vernon-Smith did not show the slightest sign of irritation at the Scottish junior's plain speaking. He nodded genially.

"I dare say there's faults on both sides," he said. "That's generally the case in a row anywhere. But to come to business—as you're not playing for Wharton on Saturday, I suppose you don't want to stand with your hands in your pockets, looking on at other chaps playing, do you?"

"I suppose not," said Ogilvy.

"Then will you play for me?"

Ogilvy hesitated.

"I don't know how Wharton will take it if I do," he said.

"My dear chap, is it right to make a football match into a personal matter like that?" said the Bounder persuasively. "To my mind, a thing like footer ought to be far above personalities."

"By Jove, that's quite right!" said Ogilvy. "I don't see that there's any harm in my playing for you, if Wharton doesn't want me."

"Then I'll put your name down for outside right?"

"I—I'll speak to Wharton first, if you don't mind!" said Ogilvy hesitatingly. "I don't want to go behind his back, you know, or to let him think I've done it."

"Right-ho!" said the Bounder, with undiminished cordiality, though he gnawed his lip. "Speak to Wharton, and then come along and tell me."

"Good! I'll do that!"

Ogilvy left Vernon-Smith's study, and Dutton passed him in the doorway. Dutton came into the study, and nodded to the Bounder. Dutton was a powerfully-built junior, with a good-looking face, and he looked so bright and intelligent that only those who knew him suspected that he had the painful affliction of deafness.

Dutton was very touchy on that topic, as people generally are about their personal afflictions, and, although a very good-tempered fellow naturally, he was liable to show temper when he was shouted at. He did not know quite how deaf he was, and that made it rather awkward to talk to him.

"You want to see me, Smithy," he said. "Hazel said so."

"That's right," said Vernon-Smith. "Sit down, Dutton, old man!"

"Eh?" said Dutton.

"Sit down!"

"Get out!" said Dutton. "What did you send for me for, then?"

"I didn't say get out; I said sit down!" bawled Vernon-Smith, getting red in the face.

"Oh," said Dutton, hearing at last, "all right; you needn't shout! I know I'm a little hard of hearing, but I'm not as deaf as a post!"

"I'm not shouting!" shouted Vernon-Smith. "I'm just speaking in an ordinary tone of voice."

Vernon-Smith's ordinary tone of voice could be heard distinctly at the end of the Remove passage, and several fellows down the passage heard it, and chuckled. It was, as Micky Desmond facetiously remarked, not merely ordinary, but extraordinary; but Dutton looked pleased. He could just hear it, and he took Vernon-Smith's word, and he had an impression that Vernon-Smith was a very sensible chap.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Go ahead!"

"Are you playing on Saturday?"

"I haven't any," said Dutton.

"Haven't any what?"

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"Cigarettes."

Vernon-Smith gasped.

Outside in the passage fellows were chuckling. The conversation could be heard by all the Remove, and it was tickling them immensely. Vernon-Smith heard the chuckle, but Frank Dutton did not. He had not the faintest idea that the Bounder's voice could be heard outside the study.

"I didn't ask you for cigarettes," said the Bounder weakly. "I said, are you playing on Saturday?"

"Eh?"

"Are you playing footer on Saturday?"

"Oh, no; I'm not."

"Wharton's left you out, has he?"

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"What?"

"Wharton isn't the chap to say anything of the sort," said Dutton. "As for his saying I'm a lout, it isn't the kind of expression he would use. It's vulgar."

"Dutton, old man—"

"You've said that to make me get my ears up with Wharton," said Dutton. "That's your little game. I know you, Smithy."

"I didn't say Wharton said you were a lout!" shrieked Vernon-Smith. "I said, has Wharton left you out?"

"Seems to me you're potty," said Dutton contemptuously. "What's that about a waterspout? Who's talking about waterspouts?"

"Has Wharton left you out of the team?"

"No need to scream. I tell you I'm not deaf."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

There was a joyous chuckle in the passage. Fellows were gathering there from far and near. As Bob Cherry put it, it was as good as a circus, and cheaper.

"Will you play for me on Saturday, Dutton?"

"Certainly not! Pay for yourself."

"I said play for me; not pay for me."

"Where are you going?" asked Dutton. "If it's to the cinematograph show in Courtfield I don't mind paying for you. They only charge twopence."

"Will you play in my eleven?"

"Seven what?"

"Eleven!" yelled Smith.

"Eleven! Pay for eleven? No fear!"

"Look here, Dutton!"

"Don't shove your head down my throat," said Dutton, drawing back. "I don't like it. Keep your distance, and talk in an ordinary tone of voice. I'm not deaf."

"I want you to play in my team on Saturday. I want you to play as right-back."

"I don't!"

"Eh!"

"I don't owe you anything, so how can I pay it back?"

"I never said you owed me anything!" groaned Vernon-Smith.

"Eh!"

"Oh, crumbs! You'll be dear at the price, if I get you," murmured the Bounder. "I say, Dutton—he put all the strength of his lungs into it—"I say, Dutton, old man—"

"I wish you wouldn't roar like that, Smithy. They'll hear you down the passage, and you'll give an impression that you're talking to somebody stone deaf."

"I jolly well am!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"Eh?"

"I want you to play on Saturday. I want you to play as right-back in my eleven, the Greyfriars Crusaders!" roared the Bounder.

"I don't mind," said Dutton amicably. "Certainly, if you like."

"You'll play for the Crusaders?"

"Yes, I've got nothing to do till I do my prep. Have you got any cards?"

"Cards!" said the Bounder dazedly.

"I know cards aren't allowed in junior studies, but I'm jolly certain you've got some," said Dutton. "Come on. There's no harm in a game of beat your neighbour."

"Beat your grandmother!" shrieked Vernon-Smith. "I said, will you play for the Crusaders?"

"Yes, I hear perfectly well, and there's no need to twist up your face like a silly gargoyle. I said I'll play beat your neighbour, if you like."

Out in the passage, Bob Cherry leaned against the wall and gasped.

"Oh, this is too rich!" he moaned. "Smithy's lungs will go before he gets Dutton in the team. Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith leaned towards the deaf junior.

"I don't want to play a silly fool game of cards!" he yelled. "I want you to play right-back for the Crusaders on Saturday."

"Eh!"

"On Saturday!" bellowed Vernon-Smith. "Got that?"

"What about Saturday?" asked Dutton, in surprise.

"What a fellow you are, Smithy! I believe you're potty. First you talk about water-spouts, and then about beat your neighbour, and now you're talking about Saturday. What about Saturday? You'll start on Robinson Crusoe's man Friday next, I suppose."

"I want you to play."

"Eh?"

"I want you to play for my eleven against Wharton's lot on Saturday."

Dutton jumped up excitedly.

"Look here, Smithy, if you're being funny, I don't see where the joke comes in. How on earth am I to know whether it will be hot on Saturday! It's not likely, in November."

"Oh, great Scott! Look here—"

"Eh?"

"I haven't got my list full yet."

"You rotter!" said Dutton. "So you simply asked me into your study to insult me, did you? I'll show you whether I'm a fool or not. Take that."

He hit out so suddenly that Vernon-Smith had to take it. He had no choice about the matter. He took it on his nose, and went flying.

Crash!

Vernon-Smith sprawled on the study carpet. Dutton kicked his chair back, and stood over the surprised and gasping Bouncer, with his fists clenched.

"Now, get up, and have some more!" he roared. "I'll teach you manners! Just because I didn't believe that Wharton called me a lout. I'll show you whether I'm a fool or not."

"Ow!" gasped the Bouncer. "Oh! I—I'll slaughter you!"

Bob Cherry kicked the study door open. He thought Dutton might need rescuing. The grinning juniors in the passage looked into the study. Dutton stared round; he had not heard the howls of laughter in the passage, and had been quite unaware that a crowd had collected.

"What's the matter?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Who's as mad as a hatter?"

Bob Cherry gasped. But he did not attempt to deny that he had said anybody was as mad as a hatter. Explanations with Dutton only made confusion worse confounded. Bob Cherry pointed to Vernon-Smith. He did not want to quarrel with the unfortunate Dutton, whom he liked, and it was useless to attempt to explain. So he simply pointed to the Bouncer, and Dutton nodded at once.

"Quite right!" he said. "Mad as a hatter and a March hare rolled into one. He brought me into his study to pull my leg. He said Wharton said I was a lout."

"I didn't!" shrieked Vernon-Smith. "The deaf idiot's got it all wrong."

"It's all right, Smithy," grinned Bulstrode. "We know you didn't. But don't try to tell Dutton so; you'll lift the roof off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then he began jawing about water-spouts and beat-your-neighbour, and asked me whether it would be hot on Saturday," said Dutton. "Then he called me a fool! My hat, I'll simply slaughter him if he gets up! Get up, you rotter! I'll teach you to make fun of me because I'm a little bit—a trifle—hard of hearing. Gerrup!"

"Take him away," said Vernon-Smith, as he staggered to his feet. "If he doesn't get out of my study I'll brain him with the poker!"

"Don't you want him to play right-half?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob linked arms with Dutton, and led him gently from the study. The Bouncer sat down, and rubbed his nose. Then he took an indiarubber, and rubbed Dutton's name off his list for the eleven. He felt that he would rather play a man short than play Dutton. In the passage, the deaf junior calmed down a little.

"I don't think he'll lark with me again in a hurry," he remarked.

"No fear!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"I said, no fear!"

"Of course I can hear," said Dutton irritably. "Are you going to start being funny the same as that silly ass, Smith, Bob Cherry? If you are—"

Bob Cherry fled.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Trouble!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were busy with their preparation when Ogilvy looked into No. 1 Study. The Scottish junior hesitated. Wharton looked up, and nodded to him cordially enough. He was on very good terms with Ogilvy.

"Come in, kid!" he said. "Anything up?"

"I want to speak to you about Saturday, that's all," said Ogilvy, turning a little red; not because he felt that there

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was anything amiss in the line he was taking, but because he was uncertain what effect it would have upon Wharton. Harry Wharton's most loyal followers sometimes felt that they never quite knew how to take him.

"I'm putting in Morgan," said Wharton. "It's only fair to give all the chaps a show, you know. Morgan's all right."

"Yes, I know; you won't want me?"

"Oh, no! You've got something else on, do you mean?"

"Well, yes. Smith's asked me to play."

Wharton sat bolt upright, and Nugent looked up from his work.

"Vernon-Smith!" said Harry.

"Yes," said Ogilvy uncomfortably. "I suppose there's no harm in my playing in his eleven. It's good practice, you know; and I don't want to hang round doing nothing when there's a chance of playing footer."

Wharton's brow clouded. Ogilvy's attitude was reasonable enough, but Hazeldene's desertion was fresh in Harry's mind, and he was not in a mood to see things in quite a reasonable light. It seemed to him that this was another of his supporters deserting him to go over to the enemy.

"I don't look at it like that," he said. "You're in the Form club, and you take your turn at playing in the eleven. I don't see what more you want. If you showed extraordinary abilities, you'd play in every match. You know that. I suppose you don't want to be put in every time over the heads of fellows who are as good as you are?"

"No, I don't mean that. It's simply this—Smithy wants me to play, and I'd rather play footer than stand about doing nothing."

"Something in that, Harry," ventured Nugent.

"I don't see it."

"You object?" asked Ogilvy.

"I don't know that I object. You can do as you like, I suppose," said Wharton ungraciously. "I suppose in the long run you'll all be going over to Vernon-Smith's side. I suppose you all think it's the winning side. Goodness knows, I feel sometimes that I can't compete with that cunning rotter. I won't flatter fellows, and butter them up, anyway."

Ogilvy reddened.

"I don't know that Smithy's been buttering me up," he said. "He wants me in the team. If he's going to raise a team at all, I suppose he must put somebody in it. He's going to get two or three fellows from outside as it is; and I'm in the Remove, anyway. I don't see any harm in my playing for him. I look on it simply as a practice match."

"It isn't a practice match. Smithy is going to do everything he can to beat my eleven, to bring me down off my perch, as he puts it. If he beats my team, lots of fellows will start howling out about electing a new footer captain. Not that I care twopence if they do; but I don't expect my friends to back Smith up against me."

"I don't mean to do that—"

"That's what you will be doing, whether you mean it or not," said Wharton tartly. "You can do as you like; don't talk to me about it."

"Anyway, you might be civil about it!" said Ogilvy sharply. "It looks as if what Smithy says is true, and you look upon the Remove as a set of infants bound to obey your orders, and watch for you to wag your finger."

"I don't care twopence what Smithy says, or what you say, either. Go and eat cake!"

Ogilvy clenched his hands.

"Is that all you've got to say?" he asked.

"Yes, that's all."

"Then listen to me. I'm going to play for Smithy on Saturday, and if he keeps up a team, I'll remain in it; and whether or no, I'll never play for the Form eleven again so long as you're captain of it!" said Ogilvy. "I'm fed up with your confounded cheek, same as Smithy is, and a good many other fellows, too. I came here feeling quite friendly; but it would puzzle a saint to keep friendly with you for very long, I think. Blessed if I know how Nugent can stand you. Go and eat cake!"

And Ogilvy slammed out of the study with a face red with anger, and slammed the door after him with a terrific slam.

Wharton bit his under lip.

There was silence in No. 1 Study for some moments, and then Wharton looked at Frank Nugent. Nugent kept his eyes upon his work. Wharton felt inwardly that he was wrong; but he was too angry to admit it at the moment. He fixed his eyes upon Frank; and Frank had to raise his own from his books at last.

"Well?" said Wharton grimly.

"Well?" said Nugent.

"Why don't you speak?"

"I've got nothing to say."

"You know jolly well you're blaming me for speaking to

Ogilvy as I did! I'd much rather a fellow speak out what he has in his mind!" exclaimed Wharton passionately.

Nugent rose to his feet and gathered up his books. Wharton watched him in silence, but he spoke as Nugent moved towards the door.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to do my prep. in Bob Cherry's study!" said Nugent quietly.

"What for?"

"Because we shall quarrel if I stay here."

Wharton bit his lip hard, and Nugent quietly left the study. It was some time before Harry Wharton went on with his work. His lips parted to call to Nugent, to ask him to come back; but pride held him silent.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Jimmy Pugg Turns Up to Practice.

GOSLING, the school porter of Greyfriars, gave an angry snort. A loud ring at the bell had brought Gosling out of his lodge, and instead of a distinguished visitor, he found a short, thick-set man, with a square jaw, peering through the gates. The man had a very red face, his nose being the reddest part of it, and he wore a bowler hat on the side of his bullet head. He was a young man, and he had evidently been brought up early in the way he should not go. For although it was scarcely past midday, the square-jawed young gentleman had evidently been drinking, not wisely, but too well. He held on to the bars of the gate, and blinked at the irate porter solemnly through them. Gosling snorted; he had reason to snort. He was a little addicted to the cup that cheers and inebriates himself, but his duties kept him from the solace of gin-and-water so early in the day.

"Morning!" said the young man.

"You buzz hoff!" said Gosling indignantly. "How dare you stop at this 'ere gate, in that disgustin' state? 'Ow dare you! Wot I says is this 'ere, young man—if you don't buzz hoff, I'll set the dorg on you. You 'ear me?"

The young man blinked at him.

"Morning!" he repeated affably.

"I'll morning yer, if you don't clear hout!" said Gosling angrily. "Wot I says is this 'ere: Har you going to clear hout, or har you not going to clear hout?"

When Gosling was excited his aspirates came out thick and fast. But the young man only hung on to the gate, and regarded him with a bland smile. He nodded his head several times, as if keeping time to Gosling's remarks, and when the porter had finished, he said:

"Fine morning!"

"You beery tramp!" said Gosling. "Har you going to cut hoff?"

"Lemme in!"

"Yes," said Gosling, with heavy sarcasm. "I'm likely to let you in, in that state! You go 'ome and put your 'ead in a pail of cold water. That's the best thing for you!"

"You lemme in!"

"Go 'ome!" roared Gosling. And he stalked back to his lodge fuming with indignation.

Ting-ting-ting!

Gosling could scarcely believe his ears. He swung back to the gate again. There was the young man with the square jaw, ringing the bell as if for a wager.

"Will you go away, or shall I telephone for the perlice?" he demanded.

"Lemme in!"

"Buzz hoff!"

"I wanter see my friend!"

"Yes, you've got friends 'ere, I'm sure of that," said Gosling satirically. "You're a special chum of the doctor's, I ain't any doubt."

"I gotter speak to Master Smith."

"Wot!"

"You call Master Smith," said the young man, blinking at him solemnly. "He'll tell you that I'm his old pal."

"Oh, you're potty!" said Gosling. "You ain't going to beg of Master Smith. You're goin' to cut hoff, or I'll set the dorg on yer. Wot I says is this 'ere——"

"Lemme in!"



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"Hullo!" said Coker, of the Fifth, coming down to the gates. "Hullo! Who's your friend, Gosling, old son?"

Gosling snorted angrily.

"He ain't no friend of mine," he said. "He's a drunken 'ound, that's wot he is. Says he wants ter see Master Smith. I'll Smith 'im!"

Coker chuckled.

"I've seen that merchant before," he said, scanning the stranger closely. "He belongs to a pub. in the village. One of Vernon-Smith's aristocratic friends, I suppose."

"He says Master Smith," said Gosling. "There's a Master Smith as well—"

"Which Smith do you want to see, sir?" asked Coker politely.

The young man fixed fishy eyes upon him.

"Vernon-Smith, my old pal!" he said.

"I thought so," said Coker. "I saw Vernon-Smith just now—I'll go and tell him his old pal has come. Better not let him in, Gosling; it's enough to get Smithy sacked!"

"I ain't going to let him in, no fear!" said Gosling.

"Lemme in!" said the young man. "I wantter see Smith—my old pal Smithy!"

"I'll old pal yer!" growled Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—if the 'Ead knew you 'ad come to see Master Smith, Master Smith would get the order of the boot."

Coker hurried away in search of the Bounder. He was grinning to himself. It was an open secret that the Bounder had all sorts of acquaintances whom he would not have cared to show to the Head. But for an intoxicated potman to pay him a visit at Greyfriars was quite an unexpected novelty. Coker found Vernon-Smith chatting with Bolsover and Ogilvy near the Cloisters. Morning school was over, and most of the fellows were in the Close. Coker tapped the Bounder on the shoulder.

"Friend of yours at the gates," he said. "Gosling won't let him in."

"Hullo! Who is it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Looks like a prizefighter. Professional shifter of whisky, I should say!" replied Coker, with a chuckle.

Vernon-Smith started.

"Phew!" said Bolsover. "Is it—"

The Bounder hurried away. Bolsover and Ogilvy followed him down to the gates, and so did Coker. Two or three other fellows gathered round. The strange young man's talk with Gosling was beginning to attract some attention.

The young man was still holding on to the bars of the gate. He nodded affably to the Bounder.

"Morning!" he remarked.

Vernon-Smith's face was dark with rage.

"You fool!" he said, in a low tone. "What have you come here for?"

"See you, old pal!" said the young man affectionately.

"Ain't I going to play for you on Saturday—eh?"

"My hat!" murmured Bolsover. "It's Jimmy Pugg! Oh, my sainted uncle!"

"To-day's not Saturday, you idiot!" muttered the Bounder.

"Necessary to practise," said Mr. Pugg, with a solemn nod. "When I was with the Wanderers, always kept up practice. Absolutely nesses, you know. I'm come to practise."

"Ho!" snorted Gosling. "Ho! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker. "Is that one of your recruits for Saturday, Smithy? My only uncle Bill!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Ogilvy. "You can't be thinking of such a thing, Smithy."

Vernon-Smith's face was pale with fury.

"Open the gate, Gosling," he said.

"I ain't opening that gate!" said Gosling. "I ain't letting that character in 'ere. If the 'Ead knew about this, Master Smith—"

"I can make him go away," said Vernon-Smith. "Open the gate, and I'll take him away. Do you hear?"

"I'm comin' in!" said Mr. Pugg solemnly. "Absolutely nesses, to keep up practice."

Gosling grumbled, and unlocked the gate. Vernon-Smith stepped out, and put his arm through Mr. Pugg's.

"Come on!" he said.

"Wot about practice?"

"Yes, this way—"

"But ain't we practising on the school ground?" demanded Mr. Pugg.

"Oh, you idiot! Come, will you?"

"Rest of the boys coming?" asked Mr. Pugg. "Can't practice without the rest of the team. Where are the boys?"

"Will you come away?"

"No!" said Mr. Pugg, holding on to the gate. "I will not come away! I'm goin' to stop 'ere. I know my dooty. I ain't goin' to be called over the coals by the trainer for missin' reglar practice. No, sir; I stay 'ere!"

"What a giddy circus!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, arriving

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ONE
PENNY.

upon the scene with several more of the Remove. "Bring your pal in, Smithy."

The Bounder's face was crimson. He was particularly anxious that Harry Wharton & Co. should learn nothing of his intention to play Mr. Pugg. The retired professional had the idea fixed in his fuddled brain that he had to come down to the ground for practice, however. Vernon-Smith had paid him half his fee in advance, and Mr. Pugg had evidently expended it in liquid refreshment. The Bounder was almost at his wits' end. At any moment a master or a prefect might come along to see the cause of the gathering crowd at the school gates.

"Take his other arm, Bolsover," said Vernon-Smith.

"What for?"

"Help me to get him away."

"Blessed if I want to touch him!" said Bolsover, drawing back.

"I ain't going," said Mr. Pugg. "I knows my dooty. I ain't going to be called up afore the directors, you bet! I'm goin' to practice!"

"Who on earth is it?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"It's Pugg, from the Cross Keys," said Temple of the Fourth. "One of Smithy's special chums. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a lie!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "I'm simply trying to get the man away. He thinks he knows me. You can all see he's squiffy."

"Who's squiffy?" demanded Mr. Pugg.

"You are, you drunken fool!"

"Don't you call your old pal names!" said Mr. Pugg, with dignity. "You keep a civil tongue, Master Smith. I says—"

"Will you come along?"

"No," said Mr. Pugg; "I will not come along! I decline to come along! I want you to understand, once for all, that I absolutely refuse to come along! I—"

Vernon-Smith wrenched the man away from the gates. Mr. Pugg let go his hold upon the bars and spun round, staggering. He caught hold of Vernon-Smith to save himself, and only succeeded in rolling over, and dragging the Bounder down into the road with him.

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Pugg. "Ow! Yow! Ah! Assault your old pal, will yer? I'll show yer! Take that—and that!"

"Oh!" roared Vernon-Smith. "Help!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull ran to the rescue. They grasped the belligerent Mr. Pugg, and dragged him off. Mr. Pugg threw his arms round their necks, and hung on for support. His belligerent mood had changed to one of great affection, and he hugged the two juniors as if he loved them dearly.

"Ere you are, old pals!" he murmured. "Come and 'ave another with me! I'm paying, gentlemen! I'd 'ad 'arf-a-quad from my pal Smithy in advance. I 'ope you'll all come round and see me play on Saturday. Admission free!"

"What on earth is the silly chump talking about?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith staggered up.

"Pitch him into the ditch!" he exclaimed. "That will sober him."

"Good egg!" said Bolsover. "It will clean him, too; and he needs it."

"What is all this?" Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, came striding through the gateway. "Who is this man? What does this mean, Cherry?"

"Blessed if I know, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "The chap's clinging to me because I'm his only visible means of support, I suppose."

"Fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, eyeing Jimmy Pugg sternly. "Go!"

"Hey?"

"Go! Depart at once!"

Jimmy Pugg detached himself from Bob Cherry and Bull, and, standing very unsteadily upon his legs, he pushed back his dirty cuffs, and squared up to Mr. Prout. The master of the Fifth started back in alarm.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "Fellow—ruffian—"

There was a rush of the juniors to the rescue of the Fifth-Form master. Five or six pairs of hands were laid upon Jimmy Pugg, just in time to save Mr. Prout from a serious case of assault and battery.

"Take him away!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Goodness gracious! The dreadful ruffian! Take him away!"

"We'll take him, sir," said Coker. "Now then, you chaps, the frog's-march!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" roared Mr. Pugg. "Yow! Lemme go! Smithy,

stand by your old pal! I'm come down for practice. Ow, ow, ow!"

Mr. Pugg's complaining voice died away down the road. The Greyfriars fellows marched him along a hundred yards down the road, and dumped him down in the grass by the roadside. Mr. Pugg sat up in the grass, and blinked at them stupidly. Coker shook a warning forefinger at him.

"If you come back, you go into the ditch!" he said.

"My 'at!" said Mr. Pugg.

Mr. Pugg blinked at the juniors as they walked back to the school gates. He made an effort to rise, and rolled over instead. He did not make another effort. He went to sleep.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Crusaders.

SATURDAY dawned bright and clear.

All the Remove were looking forward to that day very keenly, and a good many more of the Lower School besides the Remove.

The match between the rivals of the Remove excited the keenest interest.

The Shell match had been postponed, and Harry Wharton & Co. were to meet the Greyfriars Crusaders instead, and the match was certain to be a keenly-contested one. Vernon-Smith had been recruiting with great energy, and he had done very well. He had two excellent players in Bolsover and Ogilvy, and Hazeldene was a good goalie. Bolsover minor, of the Third, was very good, too, and he was delighted at the chance of playing in the same team with his major. Bolsover minor was not much like his major—he was a better fellow in every way—but to little Billy, Bolsover major represented all that was admirable, and his major's influence over him was unbounded. Bolsover had asked him to play, and the minor had jumped at it.

That made four good men besides the Bounder himself; and Trevor, Elliott, and Stott were average players. Snoop was left out, but he did not mind that at all; he preferred it. Football was not in his line. And Billy Bunter, in spite of his generous offers, was not included in the Crusaders' team. Three places were yet to be filled, and only the Bounder and his most intimate associates knew how they were to be filled. The secret was well kept.

If it had been known that the Bounder had asked two Highcliffe fellows to play, there would probably have been trouble at once; but if the discovery was made only just before the match started it would be too late to object. The same applied to Jimmy Pugg, the retired professional.

The Bounder had succeeded in keeping Pugg away from Greyfriars since the visit that had caused so much excitement.

The professional was to appear on Saturday, and take his place in the team just before the match started. Vernon-Smith had provided him with clothes, had insisted upon careful washing and shaving; and Mr. Cobb, the landlord of the Cross Keys, who had his own reasons for obliging Vernon-Smith, had promised that Jimmy should turn up in the most spick-and-span condition. The Bounder had also provided that some little artistic changes should be made in the appearance of Mr. Pugg, so that he should not be easily recognised.

On Saturday morning the Bounder was cheerful and confident. He was looking forward to a victory—and a victory on the football-field was the hardest blow he could strike at the influence of No. 1 Study.

It would prove to all the Lower School that there were good players besides those who were played in the Form team, and that there was at least one fellow in the Form who could captain a team to victory as well as Harry Wharton.

On Wharton's side there was as much confidence, or more; but Harry Wharton himself did not look cheerful that morning.

He was annoyed and exasperated by the whole business.

Hazeldene's desertion troubled him a great deal, and he had repented of his hasty words to Ogilvy. He had said as much to the Scottish junior after he was calm again, but Ogilvy was cold about it. He had thrown in his lot with the Bounder now, and was not inclined to change back. As for his trouble with Nugent, that had blown over; Frank had said nothing about it, and the chums pulled together as well as ever. But for Frank's good temper and tact it might have developed into a real quarrel, but Nugent had not let it come to that.

Wharton's popularity in the Form seemed to be on the ebb.

Most of the fellows considered that he had taken up an attitude of unreasonable dislike and suspicion towards the Bounder. And the Bounder was very careful just now to conciliate everybody's good opinion.

Even the Bounder, however, could not please everybody. Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, had joined his party, intending to play in the Crusaders, and show Greyfriars

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fellows generally what footer was really like. To his surprise, he found that the name of Fisher Tarleton Fish was not in the list.

After morning school on Saturday he approached the Bounder on the subject in a very emphatic way.

"I guess it's time the list was put up, Smithy," he remarked, tapping the Bounder on the shoulder with a bony forefinger.

"No need for that," said Vernon-Smith. "The team will be known when it shows up on the ground, and that's near enough. All the Remove fellows who are playing know."

"You haven't mentioned what place you want me to take," Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Behind the goal posts, to cheer," he said.

"I guess I'm a pretty good centre-forward."

"I think you've guessed wrong this time, Fishy."

"Or I'm all O.K. at half."

"Ahem!"

"Yep! But I shouldn't mind playing back. Take your choice."

"I've taken it," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm playing seven of the Remove, one of the Third, and three chaps from outside. You're not one of the seven, I'm sorry to say."

"Nope?"

"No—I'm sorry."

"I guess you're making a mistake," said Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess I want to show this old school how we play footer over there."

"Sorry, Fishy! But I'll see about giving you a chance another time—"

"I guess that's not good enough."

"Best I can do," said the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You see, I've got to win this match. Football comes before friendship."

"I guess if you don't want me, I'll offer my services to Wharton."

"Do?" said the Bounder.

And Fisher T. Fish did.

He came up to Harry Wharton as the captain of the Remove and his men were going down to the footer-ground in the afternoon.

"I guess I'm on your side, Wharton," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Thanks!" said Wharton, not at all gratefully.

"I've been given the cold shoulder, when I was led to expect the glad hand," said Fisher T. Fish.

"The which?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The glad hand."

"What on earth's that?"

"Means a welcome," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess you don't know English."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Not that kind of English," he admitted.

"I guess I'm willing to play for your team if you like. Wharton," said Fisher T. Fish, with the manner of a fellow making a very generous offer.

"Team's full up," said Wharton shortly.

"You could leave one of the others out," suggested Fish.

"Well, I suppose I could," agreed Wharton. "But I'm jolly well not going to!"

"I guess—"

"Why on earth should I leave out a good player to put a bad one in?" demanded Wharton.

And, leaving Fisher T. Fish to solve that conundrum at his leisure, Harry Wharton & Co. strode on to the football-ground.

Bob Cherry looked up at the clock in the old tower of Greyfriars.

"Quarter-past two," he remarked. "Kick off in a quarter of an hour. The Bounder's eleven ain't here yet."

The Form team were all on the ground in good time. Harry Wharton glanced over his team, and he was very well satisfied with them. Newland was goal; Bulstrode and Morgan backs; Tom Brown, Johnny Bull, and Micky Desmond halves; Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Mark Linley, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh forwards. It was a very good team, and Wharton did not think it possible that the Bounder could come anywhere near beating it.

The footballers were waiting, with a great deal of curiosity, to see the Bounder's eleven. They knew eight members of it; but the other three were only known to be outsiders, and their names were not known. The general impression was that Vernon-Smith had called on three of the village footballers for aid; and the Remove players smiled at the idea. They were accustomed to beating the village team hollow. Wharton had a suspicion that there was some trick concealed in the Bounder's keeping the names of the players back; but even he did not guess the truth.

Vernon-Smith came down to the ground with an overcoat over his football clothes. He looked very fit. The Bounder never took any trouble to keep himself fit; but he had a

constitution of iron, and the most reckless conduct did not seem to have any effect upon him. After a night out of bounds he would turn up in the morning as cool and keen as ever, while his associates looked pale and sick.

The other Remove players were with Vernon-Smith as he came down—Bolsover major, Stott, Ogilvy, Trevor, Elliott, and Hazeldene, and Bolsover minor of the Third. Bolsover minor looked rather timidly at Harry Wharton. He did not wish to appear to be in arms, as it were, against the fellow who had been kinder to him than anybody else at Greyfriars. But Harry Wharton's smile and cheery nod reassured him.

"Well, where are the others?" asked Bob Cherry. "Three more to come—unless the giddy Crusaders are going to play us three men short?"

"They're coming," said Vernon-Smith calmly.

There was a ring of bicycle-bells from the direction of the gates. Two cyclists rode in, and left their machines, and came striding towards the junior ground. There was a buzz of amazement from the crowd.

"Highcliffe cads!"

Wharton turned a blazing look on Vernon-Smith.

"Are these chaps your recruits, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"You're playing Highcliffe cads!"

"I told you I should have to pick up two or three players outside," said Vernon-Smith. "There was no objection raised when I said so."

"You didn't say you were going to Highcliffe for them!"

"Where did you expect me to go?" said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "To Courtfield County Council School?"

"You might have done worse," said Bob Cherry hotly.

"The Courtfield County Council School chaps play the game, and those cads don't!"

Ponsonby and Gadsby arrived upon the ground. They shook hands with Vernon-Smith, and gave the other fellows a careless nod.

"Well, here we are!" said Ponsonby.

"Glad you're come!" said Vernon-Smith. "Take 'em in to change, Bolsover, will you? There's another man to come yet."

Ponsonby and Gadsby went into the dressing-room.

Harry Wharton stood silent, his brows knitted, and his hands clenched. But he felt that nothing was to be done. Ponsonby and Gadsby would have to play; there was no help for it. Wharton had said that he would never play the Highcliffe fellows again; but he had to now.

"Well, Coker's going to ref.," said Frank Nugent. "Coker will be down on them fast enough if they try any of their foul play, Harry."

Wharton nodded.

"We can't raise objections now, just before the match," said Johnny Bull, in a low voice. "It would look like making excuses to get out of playing."

"Smith knows that!" said Wharton bitterly. "All right, we'll take it quietly. We'll give the cads a licking, at all events."

"I wonder who the other chap is?" said Nugent. "I suppose it can't be a Highcliffe chap, or he'd have come over with these two. I wonder—"

"Here he comes, I think," said Mark Linley.

A young man was walking down the football-ground.

Vernon-Smith glanced towards him, and made a brisk movement.

"That's my man!" he said. "We're ready now!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Team.

HARRY WHARTON looked sharply at the new-comer. He was very curious to know whom Vernon-Smith's last recruit might be.

The new arrival was a stranger to him. He was a short, thick-set man, with a square jaw, and very thick and dark eyebrows. Bob Cherry was staring at the man blankly. "My hat! I've seen him before somewhere!" he ejaculated.

"Who is he, Smith?" demanded Bulstrode.

"A Friardale man," said Vernon-Smith carelessly, "named Robinson. He's in employment in Friardale. I suppose you're not going to raise any objections on that account."

"Certainly not. But—"

"He's too big and too old to play in a junior match," said Mark Linley. "He must be well over twenty."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"That's not my fault. I had to get an eleventh man, and he was the only one I could pick up. I'm playing a tag out of the Third Form as well, so that will make it level. I suppose you didn't want me to play half fags, did you?"

"That fellow is quite out of place in a junior team," said Harry Wharton.

"If you're going to raise objections at the last moment, Wharton—"

"I never had a chance of raising them before, as you've kept your man secret until the last minute," said Harry hotly.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Why don't you say out plainly that you're afraid of getting beaten, and you want an excuse for declining the match?" said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"Oh, rot! Whether you play that fellow or not, we're going to beat you, you know that."

"Then what are you objecting to, if you're so jolly certain of winning?"

"I object to a man being played in a junior team on principle."

"It's not the game," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, draw it mild," said Bolsover, coming out with Ponsonby and Gadsby. "If you're funking the match, say so; if you're not, let's get going, for goodness' sake."

"I've seen that man before, and lately, too," said Bob Cherry. "He seems changed, and I can't place him; but—"

"So have I," said Johnny Bull.

"We're ready to play," said the Bounder. "Will you toss, Wharton?"

"Yes, buck up!" said Coker of the Fifth, arriving on the scene with Norfolk jacket and whistle complete, ready to referee. "Time!"

"You see the chap Smith is going to play?" said Harry Wharton.

Coker glanced at the new-comer.

"Yes. What about him?"

"Is he the right man for a junior team?"

"Do you object?"

"Well, I don't know that I object exactly," said Wharton. "I don't want to refuse to play if that is what you mean."

"Well, if you are ready to play, it's no good raising the point at all," said Coker practically. "If you object to a member of Vernon-Smith's team on the ground that he's too grown-up to be played in a junior match, that's all right; but if you don't—"

"I had to fill up the eleven," said Vernon-Smith. "I've only had four days to get ready in. I stated to Wharton from the first that I should have to get in two or three fellows from outside Greyfriars, and he didn't object. Now he's raising objections because I'm playing Highcliffe chaps and this man Robinson."

"I don't see any harm in Highcliffe fellows playing," said Coker. "Personal quarrels have nothing to do with football matches."

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover.

"But the objection to this chap Robinson is good, if Wharton sticks out about it," said the referee. "Chap over twenty. Not that it makes much difference, as far as I can see, and if you raised no objection before, Wharton—"

"I'm not objecting."

"Well, if you're not objecting, get on the field and play," said Coker.

Wharton said no more. The Bounder had made his case good. If he was playing a fag, a fellow under thirteen, he was to some extent entitled to play another fellow over the junior age, and an objection raised at the last moment before the kick-off looked like a frivolous excuse to escape playing. That Wharton did not want to play the Crusaders was well-known, and the looks of the fellows around showed that they were not at all inclined to back him up in objecting. The only practical result of an objection was putting the match off, and the fellows who had turned out to play footer did not want to lose the match.

Wharton swallowed his wrath, and tossed up for choice of goals with the Bounder. Vernon-Smith won the toss, and gave the Form eleven the wind to play against. Harry Wharton kicked off against the wind.

The last recruit, whom Vernon-Smith called Robinson, had not spoken a word. He seemed very quiet and subdued. Bob Cherry glanced at his face several times in a puzzled way. He had seen him before, but could not remember where. As a matter of fact, Mr. Jimmy Pugg looked very different now. He was sober, he was clean and cleanly-shaven, and he was in footer clothes, and he had darkened his eyebrows, and made one or two other little changes in his looks. It was most probable that he would be recognised before the match was over; but once the game was started it would be too late for the Form-captain to retreat.

Vernon-Smith whispered instructions to Mr. Pugg before the game started, and the retired professional nodded assent.

He was not to show his strength at the beginning. Vernon-Smith was content, so long as he won the match, and he was willing to raise the hopes of the Famous Four at the start. As a matter of fact, of course, the fellow who had played in League matches was far and away ahead of schoolboy players in every way. Jimmy Pugg could very nearly have won the match on his own, without any assistance from the rest of the Crusaders. He was a kind of trump card that the Bounder could play to win at any moment.

But the opening of the match looked well for Harry Wharton & Co.

Harry Wharton was playing his hardest, and he infused his spirit into the team. He was determined that the scratch eleven, who called themselves the Greyfriars Crusaders, should have the licking of their lives. And all the members of the Remove team, of course, were anxious not to be beaten by a gang of outsiders, as they considered the Bounder's eleven.

For the first ten minutes the play was all in the Bounder's half, and the goal was hotly assaulted. Hazeldene was keeping goal for the Crusaders, and he had plenty of work to do. The training and coaching Harry Wharton had given him was now turned against Wharton, and turned against him with effect. Hazel was on his mettle, and he saved again and again. But at last a long shot from Bob Cherry caught him napping, and the leather buzzed into the net.

There was a shout from Wharton's backers round the junior footer-ground.

"Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"First blood to us!" grinned Nugent, as they lined up again. "Smithy's recruits don't seem to be doing him much good, Harry. That chap Robinson seems half-asleep."

"We shall beat them," said Harry.

"Yes, hands down!"

"The beatfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

The game restarted, and another advantage soon fell to the Removers. Ponsonby of Highcliffe played up in the Highcliffe way. Frank Nugent had robbed him of the ball in the penalty area, and Ponsonby put out his foot, and deliberately hooked him over. Nugent came to the ground with a crash.

There was a yell round the field.

"Foul!"

"Booh!"

"Penalty—penalty!"

The whistle was shrilling out. The play stopped, and Coker of the Fifth came striding up, red with anger.

"Foul!" he bellowed. "If you do that again, Ponsonby, you'll be booted off the ground."

"It was an—accident!" muttered Ponsonby.

"Rot!" said the referee.

"Penalty!" howled the Greyfriars crowd.

"Yes, rather," said Coker.

The penalty was awarded, and Harry Wharton took the kick. Hazeldene was keenly on the watch; but it was no use. Wharton sent the leather right into the net, and the crowd shouted:

"Goal!"

"Two up!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Ponsonby's as good as an extra man for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Feel very sore, Franky?"

Nugent was rubbing his knees.

"Yes, but it's all right, as it's a goal," he said. "The rotter! Smithy doesn't look too pleased with him, either."

Vernon-Smith kicked off. Ponsonby and Gadsby were looking sullen now. Vernon-Smith had spoken rather plainly to them. He had no conscientious objections to fouling, but he did not want to disgrace his new team, especially when the fouls materialised in goals for the other side. Ponsonby and Gadsby whispered together, and from that moment they simply walked through the game, and made no effort. They were very nearly useless to their side, and the jeers of the spectators could not make them buck up.

The interval came, with two goals up for Harry Wharton & Co., and nil for the Crusaders. Vernon-Smith did not look downhearted, however. He talked to Jimmy Pugg in the interval.

"I want you to buck up in the second half," he said. "Don't give it away too much that you could make hay of them if you liked; but take the goals."

Jimmy grinned.

"As many as you like, old pal!" he said.

"Good! Mind, no fouling, or any of those fool tricks like Ponsonby. Play straight, and beat them fair and square."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy. "They make me laugh, they do. They'll stare when they see me wake up."

And when the game restarted after the interval, Jimmy Pugg did indeed "wake up."

Harry Wharton had the ball, and was dribbling it down to goal. He passed to Bob Cherry, and Bob was about to kick, when the ball was taken away from his foot in the neatest possible manner, and sent up the field.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

Jimmy Pugg had the ball. He did not trouble to pass, though there were several fellows ready to take it. He took the ball along by himself, and simply walked round the opposing forwards and halves, and sent the ball in as the backs rushed upon him. Newland, in goal, did his best. But it was a shot that would have beaten many a League.

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custodian, and it was quite above Newland's weight. The leather went in, and there was a shout.

"Goal!"

It was one up for the Bounder. But it did not remain only one. Before another five minutes had passed, "Robinson" had put the leather in again, beating the defence almost on his lonesome. The Bounder gave him a significant look; and next time, instead of scoring himself, he let Vernon-Smith have the ball for an easy shot. The Bounder scored.

Harry Wharton & Co. began to look grim. They played hard, and Nugent succeeded in putting in the ball. The score was level again.

But it did not remain level. Robinson brought the leather right up to the Remove goal with perfect ease, and slammed it in.

"Four!" chuckled Snoop.

Bob Cherry gave a shout, and pointed dramatically at the one-time professional footballer.

"My aunt! I know that chap now. His name's no more Robinson than mine's Smith. His name is Jimmy Pugg, and he's the chap who came here squiffy the other day."

Coker heard the exclamations, and he looked curiously at the champion player. He knew him, now that he had a clue.

"What's that, Vernon-Smith?" he exclaimed. "You're playing a man under an assumed name?"

"Why not?" said the Bounder coolly. "I thought some of the fellows might make a fuss about a potman playing, so I gave him a new name. I'm not snobbish myself."

"I'm not snobbish, either," said Harry Wharton. "I don't care if he's a potman or a chimney-sweep. But you might have told the truth."

"Well, I don't see that it makes any difference."

"Line up!" said Coker.

The game went on. Jimmy Pugg was entering into the spirit of the thing now, and he made hay of the opposing team. He gave an easy goal to Bolsover major, and Bolsover scored.

From that time the result of the match was a foregone conclusion.

Another goal from Vernon-Smith—engineered for him by the obliging Jimmy—and the Crusaders' score was at six—and the Remove score remained at three. The game was getting towards the finish now. The Greyfriars Crusaders were the winning side, there was no doubt about that.

Coker blew the whistle at last.

Harry Wharton & Co., spent with a gruelling game, trooped breathlessly off the field; and Vernon-Smith and the Crusaders marched off in triumph. The Bounder grinned at Wharton as they came off.

"Well, the best team wins!" he remarked.

"You couldn't win honestly!" said Wharton.

"What was wrong with the play, then?" said the Bounder cheerfully. "Coker, did we win that match fairly?"

"Of course you did," said Coker. "The match has been won by the Crusaders, and well won, too."

"Take it like a sportsman, Wharton!" advised Stott.

"Yes, be a sportsman for once," said Bolsover major.

Wharton turned away without speaking. Whatever he said, would only be taken as indicating bitterness at his defeat; he had been outwitted, if not outplayed, and silence was his only resource.

The Famous Four met in Study No. 1 for tea after the match. They were not looking cheerful. Out in the Close could still be heard cheers for the Greyfriars Crusaders. Vernon-Smith had won the victory, and the Remove were cheering the victors.

"Rotten!" said Cherry. "We've been had, you fellows."

"We should have beaten the Crusaders hollow," said Harry Wharton bitterly. "We've been tricked by the Bounder once more. And if we say anything, the fellows will only think we're sore at being licked. It's rotten!"

Bob Cherry meditatively stirred his tea. It was undoubtedly rotten; but there was nothing to be done. The Famous Four had to grin and bear it—to bear it at all events, even if they did not grin. It was the hour of Vernon-Smith's triumph, and the Bounder was making the most of it. Out in the Close, the victorious team—minus Jimmy Pugg, who had prudently left immediately the match was over—paraded triumphantly, and they halted under the study window of No. 1. There was a roar!

"Hurrah! Hurrah for the Greyfriars Crusaders!"

And the Close rang again with cheers for the Greyfriars Crusaders!

THE END.

(Next Monday's issue of "The Magnet" Library will contain another splendid story of the rivalry between Harry Wharton & Co., and Vernon-Smith & Co., entitled "SACKED FROM THE SCHOOL," by Frank Richards. Order a copy in advance—Price 1d.)

RED-LETTER DAYS—"GEM" WEDNESDAY AND "PENNY POPULAR" FRIDAY!

OUR THRILLING NEW SERIAL STORY. START THIS WEEK!

TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!

THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
BY SIDNEY DREWFerrers Lord, millionaire, and owner
of the Lord of the Deep.Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer, and
ventriloquist.Nathan Gore, jewel collector
and multi-millionaire,
Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN!"

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" presently asked the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?" The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart; a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came in a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and bring back my diamond." He begins the chase after the diamond thief, and for five months pursues Nathan Gore through Europe, New Zealand, Tenerife, and back to London, never once being able to catch him up. While in London, he hears that Nathan Gore has bought from the Dutch a remote island named Galpin. Lord immediately purchases an island four miles south of Gore's, christening it Ching-Lung. Learning that Gore is fortifying his island, and has actually fitted out warships for his own use, Ferrers Lord arranges a hurried expedition, and in a few hours the whole party are aboard the Lord of the Deep, bound for the Island of Ching-Lung. When they arrive Ferrers Lord calls Ching-Lung and Rupert down to his cabin, and describes the island he has bought as a wild, worthless place. "Why did you buy such a charming spot?" asks Rupert. "Are you going to build villas on it?"

(Now go on with the Story.)

Loneland.

"No; I bought it as a speculation," said Ferrers Lord. "As a what?" gasped both men, thinking he was jesting. "As a speculation. It is a very good one, too." He rested his chin on his hand, and looked at them in his lazy fashion. "Boys," he went on, "I may as well tell you the truth now. Nathan Gore has done me a great wrong. He has not only robbed me, and tried to kill me, but he has defied me. He has hurt my pride. It may sound foolish to you, but I am very proud—almost conceited."

"Tell it to the marines!" cried Ching-Lung. "Let me speak, Ching. I cannot forgive these wrongs. I have tried to settle the matter, I assure you. I asked for the return of the diamond, and for an apology to me to be printed in the American, British, and Continental papers. The reply I received was a defiance and a bitter insult. I cannot pardon it, and so I shall ruin the man."

"Ching-Lung Island was bought as a speculation. When

Galpin Island was sold, Nathan Gore also tried to purchase the other island. The Norwegian Government put forward some claim to it. I have much influence in Norway. I used it, and bought the island for a song. Gore went mad when he knew he had lost it; but he does not think I have bought it. The unknown purchaser has offered it to him at fifty times what he paid for it. And Gore has taken the offer."

Ching-Lung began to laugh.

"Smart!" he chuckled. "Wonderfully smart! But why was he so keen on getting hold of the place?"

"Because," was the startling answer, "a military expert informed him that Galpin or Loneland could be shelled easily from the second island. With the second island fortified it would be impregnable."

Both men stared at him. What was behind it all?

"You mean to tell us," said Ching-Lung slowly, "that

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Gore is going to fortify this hole—that he is going to throw his money away on it—spill it like water?"

"Emphatically, I do. The three things, Ching, that play most part upon mankind in this world are love, ambition, and hatred. They rule our lives. In Nathan Gore's case, hatred dominates. He hates me villainously. To checkmate me, to snap his fingers at me, and to overcome me, would compensate him for the loss of all his millions. If he is mad, he is mad only on this point. I am not fond of Nathan Gore, but I cannot refuse such a challenge. He has thrown down the glove, and I have picked it up. We are both rich. I am simply staking my dollars against his. It is a fair and even match. Now, lads, I have at last told you the whole truth. You must stand by me."

"To the end," said Rupert.

"Pip, pip!" grinned Ching-Lung. "It's not half so dusty as I thought it was. I'm a sportsman, Lord, and I'll watch the race. In fact, if there are any stakes, I am quite willing to hold them. This is a—"

"Don't say knock-out; it's vulgar."

"Thanks, my most polite Rupert! It's a staggerer. A fortified Republic in the South Pacific, a mad millionaire as perpetual president, and war declared! Dashed if it isn't good enough for a three-volume novel! My boys, I am ready for battle. Ganus, get your gun, your sword, and pistol. There's a Yankee in the island, and he won't get out!"

Ferrers Lord pushed back his chair.

"You seem to take it as a joke, Ching," he said lazily.

"As a whole book of 'em."

"You may be disappointed."

"I hope so."

"Look, then!"

The wall opened. They felt that the vessel was rising. The sunlight burst in dazzlingly.

"Loneland!" cried Ferrers Lord.

Barry Starts a Football Club, and Comes to Grief in the Second Match.

The view was a momentary one, for the waves closed over the vessel swiftly. But they had seen a good deal in the brief space of time. The island on this side rose high from the water in jagged tiers of sandstone cliff. The only harbour was a horseshoe-shaped bay, and the Lord of the Deep had entered it.

On either side the harbour was guarded by two stone forts. The had caught a glimpse of buildings and shipping. Ferrers Lord lifted a camera from the table.

"It is too risky to take another peep," he said, "so we must see what the camera has seen."

"You had it set, then?"

"Two of them, Ching," answered the millionaire. "Come and help to develop the films."

Ching-Lung whistled when the films were developed and fixed. They were rapidly washed and dried in spirit. A couple of bromide prints were taken from them, and the three men bent eagerly over the still wet sun-pictures.

Even Ferrers Lord was a little surprised, while Ching-Lung and Thurston were utterly astounded. There were two armed cruisers lying at anchor in the bay, several cargo steamers, and a large steam-yacht. The unknown island seemed to have been magically converted into a place of importance.

Quite a small town had sprung up at the end of the harbour. The two forts bristled with guns. The sandstone had been tunnelled away behind to make place for solid masonry. A sentry could be seen, and the figures of other men fishing lazily over the parapets.

"Marvellous!" said Thurston.

"You could knock me down with a flag-pole!" said Ching-Lung. "Fancy the idiot building forts! Is he going to start in business as a pirate?"

"I'm convinced he's mad—madder than any hatter," said Rupert. "Those cruisers would not disgrace even the British Navy. Why, the fellow will bankrupt himself!"

"Unless he has found gold or precious stones on the island."

"I must inquire," said Ferrers Lord.

"And take us?"

"Certainly."

"How about our welcome?" asked Ching-Lung.

The millionaire smiled.

"We must go incognito, Ching. If we were recognised we would hardly leave the place alive. All this work has been carried out for my benefit. Nathan Gore would like nothing better than a visit from me. Wait until dark."

Ferrers Lord computed that there were about one thousand souls on the island. It would, therefore, be easy enough to pass unnoticed, with good luck. The vessel was backed out

of the bay, and Prout and Maddock were sent on to explore. They returned, and reported that they could find no trace of mines or torpedoes. A massive chain, however, stretched from fort to fort, and could, no doubt, be raised so as to prevent any vessel from entering or leaving the harbour.

"What an extraordinary fellow Gore is, Ching," said Rupert.

"What Prout would call, 'off his onion,'" answered the prince. "I've been reading up Galpin Island in the Encyclopædia. There isn't much to read. On the other side it is all creeks, lagoons, swamps, and jungles. They couldn't possibly grow enough stuff to feed themselves. Years of draining and steady cultivation are needed first. This is the only harbour fit to take a vessel of any size. I have an idea in my noddle, but I first want to know under what flag the island is."

"Apparently none. It is Gore's private property, and subject to no government."

"In fact, a little tin-pot independent state."

"Just so."

"Then here's my idea," said Ching-Lung. "The chief wants to bring Gore up sharply. Mine the mouth of the harbour, and proclaim a blockade of the island. Keep them in, and everybody else out. When food ran short they'd be glad enough to surrender. We could blow up the forts as easy as eating macaroni."

"But not yet, Ching, I fear."

Ferrers Lord had caught a fragment of the conversation.

"Why not, old chap?"

"We have to go warily, my boy. If we did that, Gore would appeal for protection to the United States, under plea that he was an American citizen. Wherever he was, wherever his property lay, the American Government would come to his aid. We should be the pirates."

Ching-Lung nodded.

"Crafty old brute!" he said. "But, look here, old chap, it seems queer to me that they should allow a man to fortify a place to the teeth, and a navy and a small standing army. They must know all about his doings."

"I hardly see why they should interfere, Ching. A man might fortify his English house in the same way. They would simply call him mad."

Ching-Lung did not like the prospect. The pursuit of Nathan Gore seemed hopeless.

"This is pretty lively!" he growled. "As long as he is an American citizen he can sit and grin at us."

"I did not say that. Our plan is to trap him into attacking us. It must be done very carefully. Even then it will be a delicate matter. By rights, in such a case, we should have to ask the British Government to demand compensation. It is a legal matter, a point in international law. The consequences might be very grave. I do not want to bring two great nations into this private quarrel."

"Oh!" grunted Ching-Lung. "I wish that paltry diamond had never been dug up. It has caused me great pain and grief. Lord, you've got a thick head—forgive the remark, for it's quite true. You'll drive me to China to marry the fat princess before you finish, and then you'll regret it."

"Not so much as the fat princess!" laughed Thurston.

Ching-Lung said something rude, and walked away. He had given up every hope of bringing the great man-hunt to a successful end until the hand of Time had whitened his pigtail and lined his brow. He went sadly down the gallery, and peeped over the engine-room bridge. He neatly dropped an orange into the coffee of a man who was just about to drink, and left.

Sounds of laughter attracted his footsteps to the fore-castle. The laughter was punctuated by violent thuds. Ching-Lung looked in.

A canvas with a circular hole in the centre had been rigged up. A legend in tarry letters informed the world that this was "O'Rooney's Football Gallery." It also stated that threepence was the fee for three kicks, and a shilling cigar was the reward for scoring a goal. Prout, Maddock, Joe, Gan-Waga, and Yard-of-Tape were present. Barry fixed a long string to the ball, and placed it ready.

"Now, me sporting gents," said Barry, "a fortune awaits the bould! A man with a bit of skill can git three bob for threepence. Be jabbers, yez niver had sich a chance of becomin' rich before; yez was niver nearer vast wealth since yez walked past the Bank of England. Walk up! Walk up! All the fun of the fair! Walk up! Walk up!"

"Let's look at one of the cigars," said Joe.

"Do dey smell of cabbagees, hunk?" asked Gan-Waga.

"Wot's the brand—'Flor de Smellibeto'?" queried Prout.

"Is ze death zey bring ze death without ze pain, mon ami?"

"I didn't catch whether he said a bob each, or a bob a gross," remarked Maddock.

Barry gazed at them scornfully, lighted one of the cigars, and blew the smoke into the air.

"Smell the swate aromer!" he cried. "Smell the par-fooin!"

"Murder!" yelled Prout, dropping flat on the floor.

"I ain't going to pay to shoot for sich pizen, that's plain," said Prout, getting to his feet.

"O'll give yez tuppence ivry goal, thin," said Barry.

"Not muches," said Gan.

After a lot of haggling, Barry agreed to pay sixpence for each goal scored.

The odds were quite six to one, for the hole was not much larger than the ball. Barry found himself making money fast. On several occasions excellent shots were made, but instead of passing through, the ball seemed to just graze the sides and wobble back.

"It's a mug's game," said Maddock, at length. He had lost half-a-crown.

"I'm sick of it!" said Joe.

"Then let me have a try, lads."

Ching-Lung paid his three pennies over to Barry. Barry did not look happy just then.

"One to be ready," said Ching-Lung. "Stand a bit out of the light, Barry. Two to be steady, and three to be off!" Thud!

The ball rose with the speed of a rocket. It went nowhere near the hole, but found Barry's face. Barry shrieked. Back came the ball to meet Ching-Lung's foot, which drove it into the Irishman's chest as if it had been fired from a gun.

Barry tried to stand on his left ear, but the ball hit him again, and rolled him up against the bulkhead.

"Cheat!" shouted Ching-Lung. "He's done you, boys! There's a piece of indiarubber on the string. You could pull the ball through, but you couldn't kick it through. The stuff wouldn't stretch enough with a kick. Oh, the cheat!"

"Ow! Marcy!" yelled Barry. "Oi was only jokin'! Oi niver meant to kape the money!"

They knew, of course, that it was a joke. Barry would have explained the trick gleefully, and handed back the ill-gotten gains. They hurled themselves upon him in a body.

"Put him in the pillory!" said Ching-Lung.

"Marcy!" whined Barry.

"Into the pillory!" said the prince sternly. "Push him through."

Screaming with merriment, the men carried out the prince's orders. The hole was widened, and Barry's head and arms were forced through. A mop-handle was then thrust up his left sleeve, across his back, and down his right sleeve. His ankles were fastened to an iron ring behind. The screen made a splendid pillory.

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ONE PENNY.

"Three shots a penny, and a cigar every time you hit!" cried Ching-Lung. "Hi, hi, hi! The finest game ever invented. Screams of laughter. Hi, hi, hi!"

Ching-Lung had shortened the string so that the ball could do no more than tinkle. The roars of mirth brought half the crew. Barry could move his head. He had given up asking for pity. The way he dodged the shots caused wild howls of laughter, and the cheers when a bullseye was made, and Gan paid over the cigars, outrivalled everything. O'Rourke's football gallery proved to be the most popular of all institutions, and all were sorry—except Barry—when a piercing whistle from Ching-Lung brought the game to a close.

The men departed chuckling, and Barry was heard.

Ching-Lung was dressing for dinner when he heard a tap

"Come in!" he cried.

It was Barry. Ching-Lung was startled at the man's woebegone, dejected look.

"What's wrong, my lad?" he asked. "Aren't you well, Barry?"

"O'm not," said Barry.

"Poor old chap! You feel bad, then?"

"In my moind, sir," said Barry. "Ut's the fuiball. Yez see, sor, Oi played the trick on thim. Prout, Ben, Joe, and Gan knowed very well Oi niver meant to chate. They knowed it was a joke. But we have a lot o' men aboard, and some o' thim are almost strangers. They moit think Oi really mint to stale the coppers."

Ching-Lung slapped him on the back.

"Don't be silly, Barry. I knew it was fun—everybody knew it was. You're too honest, and sensitive to live. I couldn't resist showing up the game. Why, my boy, nobody would have thought of such an idiotic thing but yourself. Have you turned up the money?"

"No, sir."

"Then stick to it, and get even with them," said Ching-Lung. "Out you go!"

"Yis, sir. All of ut?"

"All of it? Of course!"

A twinkle crept into Barry's left eye. On a chair stood Gan-Waga's cap. It was piled with coppers—threepennies and sixpences—the whole takings of the second show. Having been advised to keep all the profits, Barry took them.

Ashore at Goretown.

Night came—dark, still, and starless. When the submarine arose, two beams of light were slowly moving over the sea. They were the searchlights from the forts.

"They have the scent of us, Ching!" said Ferrers Lord.

"How can that be, old chap?"

"Well," answered the millionaire quietly, "I presume he knows that I complete what I begin. He is quite certain that I have not given this affair up. We are on a risky mission, but I mean to have a look at Goretown."

"Goretown? Great Scotland Yard! What an ugly name!"

"Nearly as ugly as its owner!" said Thurston.

The Lord of the Deep stole nearer, and then, as the lights moved towards her, she sank. She crept between the forts, and slowed down.

Prout was already in his diving-suit, the pluckiest diver who ever wore a helmet. The door closed behind him, the water poured in, and he opened the door of the diving-chamber. It was his duty to report on the chain.

He was absent so long that they became uneasy. Then a bell rang, telling them to pump out the water, and they hurried below. Maddock answered the nozzle.

"Yes, Prout?"

"It's down, sir," said Prout. "We could slip over it at full tide. But we can't now, sir; and we haven't room to go under. And we can't touch it without givin' the show away. There's an electric wire through it."

"Then we must wait for high tide," said Ferrers Lord.

"Yo' long times gone, Tommy," said Gan-Waga. "Me thinned some ole fools shark swallow you and die oh poisons. Ho, ho, hoo!"

"I seed wuss nor a shark," said Prout.

"What was that?" asked Ferrers Lord sharply.

"A small submarine, sir. I daren't show lights, sir. It wor a kind of shaky feeling in my 'ands that telled me, and a quiver in the water. She come right over me. I grabbed a piece of weed and pulled myself flat, just in time to stop her keel runnin' into my chest."

"Did she pass the chain?"

"I think so, sir. She wor only a cockleshell. That's what kept me. I felt the same quivering when I got back. She's close about, but there's no danger of 'er hitting us 'ere."

Ferrers Lord sprang swiftly up the companion. He touched a button. A small light flashed outside the glass

25

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and burned steadily. It shone on a small instrument like a compass.

"What's the game?" asked Ching-Lung.
"Watch the needle. It is what I call a vibratograph," said Ferrers Lord. "It measures and records and vibrations in the water. If the submarine is near us—ah!"

The needle began to shake. The swaying motion increased. Something was agitating the water.

"The submarine's screw," said Ferrers Lord.
He turned on the light. They slanted upwards.
Ching-Lung gave a cry. A dark object rode slowly into the glare above—the hull of a small submarine.

But, unlike that triumph of scientific skill, the Lord of the Deep, the submarine was blind. It had no eyes, and steered by its compass. It was seen, but could not see. One touch of a button, and the Lord of the Deep moved with it, keeping pace.

"She's running out," said Ching-Lung.
"Yes," said the millionaire.

He beckoned to Prout. The steersman left the wheel. He brought back four rifles, and loaded them silently.

The two boats—the ignorant pursued and the alert pursuer—crept on, the pursuer below, the pursued above.

"Are you going to capture her?" asked Rupert.
"It will save waiting for the tide," said Lord.

The small submarine could easily pass over the cable, where there was not water enough for the bulky Lord of the Deep, without exposing her wheelhouse to the fort.

The hull began to grow indistinct. The submarine had risen a little. The pursuer rose in turn, and the chase went on.

Would she turn? If she did they might lose her. She was steering an erratic course.

"She's aloft," said the millionaire.

The Lord of the Deep crept up until the two vessels were side by side. The millionaire's steering was marvellous. He brought her within a foot of the other.

"Boots off!" he whispered.

A scraping sound was heard, and the manhole was lifted.

"Jump!" came the millionaire's command.

Gripping their weapons, Ching-Lung, Rupert, and Prout sprang.

The next moment three rifle-barrels were thrust down the manhole of the submarine, almost into the horrified faces of the crew, and the order rang out:

"Hands up!"

There was no resistance. The men were too amazed. One by one they came up the iron ladder. They were searched rapidly for concealed weapons, and made to leap aboard the Lord of the Deep. Here they were met by Joe and a dozen sailors, blindfolded, and led below.

"Is not this piracy, old chap?" asked Ching-Lung, as the millionaire joined them.

"Well, it is sailing pretty close to the wind, Ching," admitted Ferrers Lord. "But we are only borrowing the vessel, and it will be hard work to prove that I am the author of the outrage."

"We're glad of that, Ru. We don't want twenty-one years' hard, thank you kindly. Do they have the cheek to call this tank a submarine? It's more like an elongated beer-barrel with the bung knocked out. Forthwith, as the

missionary said to the cannibal, I see I must take a trip into the interior."

He dropped through the manhole. The submarine was of the French pattern. She could be wholly submerged, but only for short periods. These vessels are not really submarines in the true sense of the term. Like whales and seals, they must rise to breathe. No doubt, in time of war, this will prove the ironclad's deadliest foe, creeping in unseen and launching torpedoes.

The well was poky and hot. The vessel, too, was probably one of the first to be built. The millionaire swiftly inspected her machinery.

"She'll take us in and out again," he said. "Ching, change your clothes, and pin up your pigtail. Don't forget your revolvers. Prout!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Run in close to the chain, and wait there."

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the steersman.

"And don't let the prisoners run about."

"They're locked up in the fore-castle, sir; and there's a good guard outside."

Ching-Lung slipped on a European suit in place of his Chinese costume. The manhole was closed. Ferrers Lord carefully took a course between the lights. He set the machinery in motion. It created a hideous din in the narrow place.

"I wouldn't care much for a pleasure-trip in one of these brutes," said Ching-Lung. "I'd sooner be rattled into bits. Mind you don't jerk your false teeth loose, Ru, and swallow them!"

The air rapidly became foul and stifling and hot.

"Open a window, somebody," grinned the prince, "and let some air in!"

"Hang it, I can't stand this!" said Thurston.

At last the atmosphere became unbearable. They let the vessel ascend, and drank in the salt air greedily.

"Why don't we run right in?" asked Rupert. "They'll not expect anything is wrong."

"I intend to run in between the forts. I was only trying what the vessel could do," said Ferrers Lord.

"And you've found out, chappie?" said Ching-Lung. "It would suffocate you quicker than fire-damp. Ain't she a flyer? Shall I get overboard and push the old meat-tin along?"

She made better progress on the surface than when submerged, probably something between three and four knots. The flashing lights grew brighter. In twenty minutes they were gliding between the forts. They passed unchallenged, and were in the bay.

"Now comes the problem," said the millionaire. "How are we to get ashore? We don't know where she usually berths."

"Chance it, and fasten her here," suggested the prince.

To port lay a big tramp steamer, and they had almost scraped the hawser of one of the cruisers. Ferrers Lord took the photograph of the harbour from his pocket-book, and held it near the light.

"No," he said, "I don't care to swim ashore. We ought to be able to run her close under the quay where those lighters are."

(Another long instalment of this grand serial in next Monday's issue of "The Magnet.")



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My Readers' Page.



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"SACKED FROM THE SCHOOL!"

His guilt seems to be established beyond question—except to his chums. They know that the disaster that has befallen him is the result of Vernon-Smith's unscrupulous plotting, and they vow not to rest until the outrage is brought home to its author. Meanwhile, Vernon-Smith goes his way, and it is war to the knife between the rival Companies.

NEXT FRIDAY'S "PENNY POPULAR."

As each number of our new companion paper, "The Penny Popular," is published, the chorus of approval from delighted readers grows and grows. Each week I am inundated with congratulatory letters—a proof that "The Penny Pop." has at one bound leaped into high favour with all who have been hitherto feeling the need for a weekly volume of really good reading matter for consumption during the leisure hours of the week-end.

"That week-end gap," which has been the subject of so many complaints in the past—the gap between "Gem" Wednesday and "Magnet" Monday—is now filled, once and for all, and if the enthusiastic "Penny Pop." readers can be believed, it is very well filled, too. My "Magnet" Library readers will find that the issue of our grand new companion paper, which will be on sale on Friday of this week, will contain three magnificent complete tales of Tom Merry & Co., Jack, Sam, and Pete, and Sexton Blake respectively, which will worthily maintain the wonderful reputation for excellence which the first few issues have won for "The Penny Popular."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"A Flapper" (Liverpool).—If you have carefully read all the tales of Tom Merry which have appeared in "The Penny Popular" each week, you will by now have arrived at the explanation of the mystery which has puzzled you so much.

W. A. (Everton).—Thanks for postcard and idea, which I will consider.

Yorkshireman (Bradford).—Thanks for letter. I am sorry space does not permit me to publish any hints on training for Boxing in this column. There may be an article on the subject at some future date.

A READER'S INGENIOUS VERSES.

One of my Southsea readers sends me the verses printed below on "The Magnet" Library, and asks me what I think of them. He does not request me to publish his verses, as some would-be contributors to this page do, whether they are good or bad, but it gives me great pleasure to publish them, since I think they are a very creditable effort indeed. I am much obliged to my Southsea reader for sending them in, and I send him my congratulations on possessing a distinct talent for rhyming—congratulations in which I am sure very many "Magnetites," after reading the verses, will wish to join.

"The Magnet."

You ask me why I never find
The labour of the day tires;
Because, good friend, my youthful mind
Is with the chums at Greyfriars.

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday.

I love St. Jim's, so full of glee,
I revel in Tom Merry;
But all the same, I'd rather be
With Wharton and Bob Cherry.

I've great regard for Johnny Bull,
Mark Linley, and Frank Nugent;
They take me back to my old school—
Frank Richards, you're a true gent!—
Oh, that your Greyfriars really was!
Then Harrow School and Eton
Would bow their lordly heads, because
By Greyfriars they'd be beaten.

For me, each single working day
Is fraught with one or two fights;
Not physically, I may say,
Like those of the Removites,
But battles which I often fear
Are awkward to contend with;
I then recall the words of cheer
Frank Richards' stories end with.

Dear Editor, if you but knew
The thoughts of each supporter,
And how your book thrills through and through
The globe in ev'ry quarter!
Tis read by many a boy and man
On train-rides, trips, and tramways;
And I'll support it all I can,
As sure as my name's Samways!

SOME HINTS ON STAMP-COLLECTING.

For a stamp-collector to derive any benefit and pleasure from his hobby, the two great things he must observe are cleanliness and method. A person who merely gathers stamps, and there lets the matter end, is not a philatelist in the true sense of the word, for the genuine collector treats his specimens carefully and delicately; and, what is more, he studies them. Outside of the fact that it is only right to treat stamps thus, there is a real pleasure to be derived from discovering the histories of each set of stamps, and in exhibiting to each and every friend a neat and carefully-compiled album, with reference notes well written for each specimen.

The best method of starting

a General Collection

is, undoubtedly, by buying what is termed a "beginner's packet," such as is sold by practically all leading stamp firms. The prices of these vary considerably, according to the class and number of stamps contained in them; but they all, of course, contain the commoner class. A fair average price is three to four shillings for a packet containing about five hundred stamps. If one of these is bought, a good foundation is laid to what might prove to be a large "general" collection. If, however, the reader has already "generalised," and wishes to start a collection limited to one or two countries or so, he will have to buy packets containing the stamps he requires. Of this part of the hobby more will be said later. The reader will have to obtain a few necessary "tools" if he is but just starting. These are, however, few, and cheap, but important. After the stamps have been bought an album has to be purchased in which to place them, and this should not be a large, expensive volume to start with. Next a pair of tweezers have to be obtained. The kind sold by stamp dealers are the best, as they have no points, and are, therefore, less likely to injure the stamp. Two remaining things to get are, firstly, a good, reliable catalogue, such as is sold by Stanley Gibbons for half-a-crown, and, secondly, a packet of stamp mounts or hinges which cost a few pence per hundred.

(Another Stamp-collecting Article Next Monday.)

THE EDITOR.

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BE PREPARED!



1. Pa: "What! You've dared to disobey me again! Go to your room at once and prepare for a caning!"



2. And this is how Freddie prepared. Artful laddie!

EXPLICIT.



Farmer: "How are that first lot of potatoes for size, Harry?"
 Harry: "Oh—er—well, some's bigger'n others, zur."
 Farmer: "What's the size of the biggest, then?"
 Harry: "A bit bigger than the little 'uns."

WHAT HE WAS USED TO.



1. Twiddler, the famous fiddlist, was dining at Jones' the other day, and Mrs. Jones warbled, "Would he mind carving?"



2. He would not! No, indeed! But, being a musician, and a trifle absent-minded, he negotiated the joint in the above funny fashion.

HIS MISTAKE.



1. Now, when young Brown was returning home early one morning, he was quite surprised to see a man standing on the top of the roof. "By Jove!" he murmured. "I'd better go and help him down!" So off he rushed.



2. But when he got round the corner he was still further surprised to find that he had made a mistake, and that it was only Nelson standing as usual. He wondered later why he made that mistake.

SAVED.



1. "Oh, crumbs! This is all right!" said the traveller. "Here's a hearty-looking grizzly bear coming, and I've nothing to defend myself with! A bisection of a moment, though—"



2. "I'll slip into this tree-trunk." And so he did, luckily for him. "Great pip!" said the bear. "Is my eyesight defective, or wotisit? Home, sweet home, for one, please!" and he exited.

PUZZLE: FIND UNCLE JIM.



When Uncle Jim pays a visit and plays hide-and-seek with little Willie, he wonders why he is so easily found.

SHUT UP.



He: "I love the very ground you walk on!"
She: "That's not much: I nearly always ride!"

CHEEKY.



She: "I like your cheek!"
He: "And I like yours!"

WHEN FOXES BECOME EXTINCT.



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