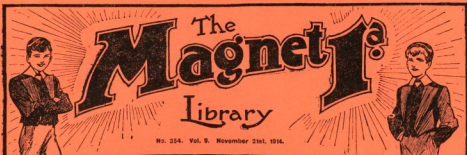


"THE BLACK FOOTBALLERS!"

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in This Issue

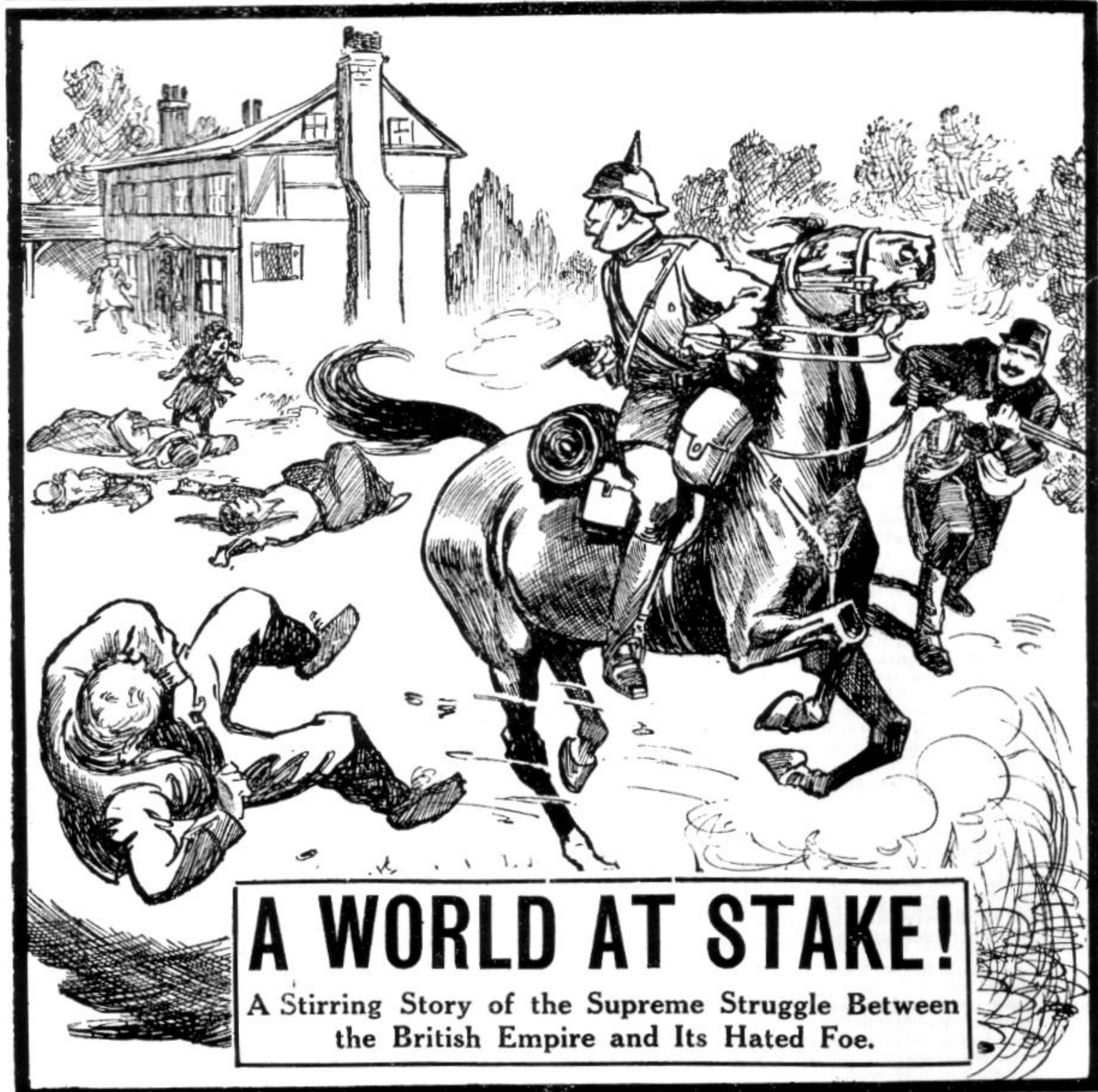


THE CROWD OF FELLOWS CAME TOWARDS THE FOOTBALL GROUND, AND ONE BLACK YOUTH RAISED A FLARING CAP TO TRUMPER. "OSH-KOSH!" HE EXCLAIMED GENIALLY. "WHAT?" GASPED TRUMPER. "GOLLY-WOLLY! BISH-BOSH!" (A startling incident in the splendid long complete school tale in this number.)

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The German War Lord is ever ready to strike terror into the hearts of his weaker adversaries. He has laid waste practically the whole of Belgium, and the above picture is a typical demonstration of his brutality. A few poor heartbroken peasants are mercilessly massacred, and the Hun leaves a dreadful scene of devastation behind him, for which he must surely be called to account when Right has proved triumphant!

READ THIS FIRST.

A wonderful airship, named the Falcon, is constructed by two brothers, Thorpe and Dick Thornhill. It is offered to the British Government, but they remain indifferent to the Falcon's qualities. Major Seigner, a German officer, manages to steal the Falcon, and, despite all efforts made by Dick and his brother, the Falcon is retained by the Germans, who build a fleet of airships of the same pattern. Dick and Thorpe learn of this, and return to England to give the alarm. In London the Germans endeavour to capture Liverpool Street Station, but are repulsed. A great naval engagement takes place off the Nore. The Germans are confident of victory, having practically disabled the Channel Fleet, when Thorpe Thornhill appears in the Night Hawk, and heads straight for the nearest enemy. The Channel Fleet springs to life again, and attacks the enemy.

(Now go on with the story.)

In the Thick of the Fray!

Although numerically inferior, the British ships had held their own by the superior pluck and dash of their officers, and the quickness with which the men loaded and fired the guns. Three shots to the Germans' two was the regular average, and now that the battle was renewed with redoubled violence, the British fire was twice that of their opponents; and, after losing two ships by well-placed projectiles from the Night Hawk, the Germans sullenly retreated towards Harwich.

In vain the British Fleet tried to follow them. The majority of both cruisers and battleships were enveloped in their own steam from broken pipe or pierced boiler. Not that the Germans were in a much better position with regard to their hulls, but the plunging fire of the airships had reached the British engine-rooms, whilst the shells from their foes had alighted on the projected sides of the Germans.

Flying swiftly from ship to ship, pouring an annihilating fire upon their devoted decks as he passed, Thorpe Thornhill dealt death to every German ship in turn, until the whole were thoroughly demoralised.

Then he turned his attention upon the first-class battleship Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse. His first shot, missing the engine-room, plunged into the starboard turret amidships, and, exploding, hurled a long four-inch gun from its carriage into the sea, and killed every one of its crew.

Then with his own hands he dropped a bomb through the well of the flying ship with such unerring aim that it alighted exactly between the battleship's two funnels.

There was a loud roar, a blinding flash, and Thornhill caught a momentary glimpse of the huge mass of floating steel, with its funnels and derricks wrenched away, its masts tottering to their fall, and one of its fighting-tops cut completely in halves.

He knew that his one bomb could not have done so much damage, and guessed that the lucky shot had fallen upon some unprotected ammunition. Indeed, such proved to be the case, for the Germans had, with great labour, succeeded in getting one of their smaller guns into position to fire upwards, when Thorpe, all unconscious of the great work he was accomplishing, spoilt their labour and saved his own ship at one blow.

Next moment the ironclad was hidden beneath a mass of steam and smoke. In vain Thorpe steered his airship to right or left, backwards or forwards; he could not pierce the veil of steam which hid his victim from his view.

In vain he tried to signal a British ship to come and complete the work he had so well begun; but they were already being left behind by the fleeing Germans. And, unwilling to allow his prey to escape, he touched a lever, and the Night Hawk swooped down alongside the smoke-hidden wreck.

"Man the port torpedo-tube!" he commanded.

And his boatswain, with a couple of men, hastened to obey him.

Then, floating some hundred feet above the sea, Thorpe tilted his vessel over to port until the tube pointed directly at the doomed ship's bow, then touched a lever, which released the aerial torpedo from its narrow resting-place.

Even as he did so a warning cry came from a look-out in the bows, and the next minute the air seemed alive with whistling bullets and roaring and shrieking shells, plunging over, under, and on either side of the airship.

As the aerial torpedo clashed its message of death, Thorpe turned to see two of the enemy's third-class cruisers coming full speed towards him, firing with the utmost rapidity of their armament.

Clang—clang! Sharp, clear, and ominous the sound fell on Thorpe Thornhill's ears, and he felt the Night Hawk tremble beneath the blows of two well-directed shells, which had struck her fore and aft, but, fortunately, at such an angle that they glided off her rounded keel.

However, the blows were sufficient to temporarily disorganise the delicate mass of machinery by which she was propelled. To his horror, Thorpe found that the fans failed to respond to his levers, and, although the wings were moving swiftly, they were not sufficient to carry them upwards out of the zone of fire.

"What's wrong below?" he cried through the telephone.

"Starboard engine working irregularly, sir. I am repairing as quick as possible," came back the answer.

By this time the Maxim guns and rifles of the German sailors had begun to play upon the almost helpless airship, several of whose crew already littered the bloodstained deck.

"Quick, Benson! Hurry up, or we're lost!" cried Thorpe.

Save for the affirmative grunt, there was no answer from the engine-room; but Thornhill knew that his engineer was doing all that man could do.

Still, he doubted the outcome of what he feared would prove his last adventure, for a glance through the well showed him that the Night Hawk was sinking perilously near the sea; but, fortunately, whilst the German ships rolled to the swell, the Night Hawk's turret was as steady as on dry land, and she fired not a shot but reached its mark.

Lower and lower sank the Night Hawk, until, with a groan of despair, Thorpe felt the salt spray splash on his cheek as she skimmed the top of an enormous wave. Once let the water enter the shot-holes with which the vessel was now riddled, and no earthly power could save her.

"Work the engines for all they're worth, Benson, no matter if they break down ten minutes afterwards!" shouted Thorpe. And, although his repairs were not completed, Benson guessed from the tone of his commander's voice that the need was imperative.

And imperative indeed it was, for already the Night Hawk's hull was resting on the waves, and the water was pouring in like miniature fountains through a score of different rents and tears.

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Still the torrent of shot and shell was poured upon her decks, and still her gallant crew hurled back defiance to the foe.

"What report, carpenter?" cried Thorpe, turning to the telephone which communicated with what, in an ocean-going ship, would have been the hold of the vessel.

"The water still gaining, sir," was the fearful reply.

"More power—to the utmost pound!" roared Thornhill anxiously.

"It's all on, sir," was the reply. And Thorpe's chin sank for a moment on his breast, as he awaited the annihilation which he felt assured must shortly come.

Suddenly he started as the bell of the hold telephone tinkled. Eagerly he pressed its receiver to his ear, and a cry of exultation burst from his lips as the welcome message came over the wires.

"The water receding."

He looked through the well. Already the leaping waves which had touched its polished mirrors had left them high and dry; then, as in miniature cascades, the water poured from the holes in the hull through which it had gained admittance, and, lightening the vessel with every revolution of her fans, the airship sped swiftly upwards.

Conscious that their most dangerous foe was escaping, the German cruisers redoubled their fire; but in less than half a minute the airship had risen above the utmost elevation of their guns, and Thorpe Thornhill and the Night Hawk were safe.

Not so the cruisers. So intent had they been on the destruction of the airship that they had not noticed the turbine cruiser Our King swooping down upon them, until, unable to withstand this new assailant, they turned to flee.

But it was too late. One sank, pierced by the trebly strengthened ram of the cruiser; the second, finding escape hopeless, struck her flag.

"How go the engines?" asked Thorpe, as soon as he was at an altitude the German guns could not reach.

"As well as ever, sir," was the welcome reply. And, hastening to the bows to survey the scene through his glasses, Thorpe gave the order to proceed at full speed after the German fleet, which by this time was within easy distance of Harwich.

Thorpe, in whose ears the sound of firing round Harwich had been ringing throughout the day, was prepared to see some German ships in the estuary of the Orwell; but he was dumbfounded to find all approach to Harwich blockaded by an enormous fleet of warships and transports, and he realised that Germany must have denuded her ports of their guard-ships to have provided such an enormous armada.

It was a bold stroke, for now the rich German seaports were at the mercy of a British fleet, but not so foolhardy as it appeared at the first glance, for everything pointed to the undoubted fact that the Germans reckoned upon bringing Great Britain to her knees in one fierce, well-directed blow.

Little she appreciated the reserve strength of our mighty Empire, which has never yet exerted itself until disaster has awakened the lion from his drowsy sleep.

For a moment Thornhill hesitated, then was reluctantly obliged to admit himself that it would be folly amounting to madness to attack the Germans at present, for the crippled British fleet, steaming bravely towards their foes, must, even though he assisted them with his wondrous craft, meet their doom if they attached this new and untouched fleet.

Thus resolved, he turned the airship's head towards where the smoke of the Channel Fleet could be already seen in the distance.

Ten minutes later he had sunk to within a few feet of the vice-admiral's ship.

"A strong German fleet is anchored off Harwich, sir," he reported. "It will be folly, in your present condition, to attack it."

"But with your aid, Mr. Thornhill—" began the admiral, when Thorpe pointed to where, high up in the heavens, appeared two dark specks.

"You must not count upon my assistance until I have driven off yonder vultures," he replied.

The admiral nodded. Bitterly his proud spirit chafed at having an enemy before him, and yet having to delay the attack; but well he knew that the sick-bay on every British ship was full with wounded and dying, whilst the ships themselves required the exertion of the greater part of their crew to keep them afloat, leaving very few to work their guns.

"But your own vessel needs repairs," he objected.

Thorpe Thornhill smiled.

"And so will yonder craft," he cried, pointing to the approaching German airships, "before I have finished with them."

Then, anxious to drive the airships away ere they could renew their attack upon his consorts on the sea, he gave the signal. The Night Hawk rose magically in the air, then, assuming invisibility as she went, rushed straight at the

coming Germans, who, ashamed of their previous flight, were eagerly hastening to resume the attack on the British, or to assist the German troops in their landing on British soil.

But Thorpe Thornhill was destined to be the bane of the German race. He it was who had prevented the destruction of the British Fleet, and he it was who now flung himself between the British Army and their aerial foes.

Despite his laughing reply to the vice-admiral of the British Fleet, none knew better than himself the terrible danger into which he was rushing.

Before him were two airships, probably uninjured, as well armed as the Night Hawk, and every way as well equipped for the fight, save that the Germans had not learnt the secret of rendering their craft the colour of the surrounding atmosphere at will.

However, battles are never won by slavish attention to chances, and, without swerving a point from her course, the Night Hawk continued on her way.

It was evident that the German airships were making for Harwich, so Thorpe experienced little difficulty in putting himself directly in their path.

Unable to detect the presence of a foe, the German vessels came swiftly on.

"Steady, boys! Wait until I give the word!" commanded Thorpe, turning to the men in the forward turret. "Are you ready?"

Then, ere the words to fire could leave his lips, an exclamation of anger arose to his lips, for in his eagerness to meet his foe he had not noticed that a black storm-cloud had rapidly formed behind the Night Hawk, revealing her every outline to the astonished eyes of the Germans, who, ere the British guns could be brought to bear upon them, opened fire upon their solitary foe, filling the air at the same time with loud, triumphant "Hochs!" for they felt confident that the British airship was doomed.

In fact, for a moment, Thorpe Thornhill shared their opinion, but only for a moment. As his well-trained crew responded with vigour to the German fire his spirits rose, and within five minutes of the commencement of the fight the Germans realised that they had indeed caught a tartar.

Despite the shells which now and again exploded with terrific violence on the steel armour of her turret, the Night Hawk's crew, firing quickly but coolly, had planted so many shells upon the hulls of both airships that already their fire was slackening. Then a well-aimed projectile from the Night Hawk's turret pierced the ammunition-room of the foremost German airship.

A blinding flash paled for a moment the dim light of the mist-hidden sun, and the horror-stricken observers saw the German airship, rent in twain, falling in two distinct parts into the sea, whilst her consort, stricken with sudden terror, fired one parting shot, then turned and fled seawards, her crew casting frightened glances over their shoulders at where the Night Hawk had been but a moment before. Now she had vanished, and her disappearance, with the expectation of her swooping down upon them from some unexpected quarter, completed the panic into which they had fallen.

Had they but known it, their last shot had put the Night Hawk at their mercy, for it had wrenched asunder her star-board wing, rendering her incapable of moving either backwards or forwards, her swiftly revolving fans only keeping her from following her victim into the sea.

But fortune still fought on Thorpe Thornhill's side, for at the very moment he was struck a dark storm-cloud drifted over the Night Hawk, the colour of which she rapidly assumed, and thus hidden, although unable to fly, drifted slowly with the wind towards the shore.

Bitterly Thorpe Thornhill bewailed his inability to pursue his foe and make his victory complete. But regrets were useless; he could do nothing but keep afloat until the wind carried him on shore, when he descended to the ground near a small fishing-village, and immediately commenced overhauling his battered airship, eager to put it once more in fighting trim, and to take his part in the strenuous fight which the constant roar of artillery and rifle fire told him was taking place between Harwich and Colchester.

Dick's Baptism of Fire!

Whilst the Battle of the Nore was being fought and won, the British Army at the little village of Chepperton had a moment's breathing space. The Germans were too busy disembarking their troops to risk an engagement which might throw them into fatal disorder, whilst General Smythe dare not attack with the numerically inferior troops at his disposal, and so, with the exception of a few trifling affairs of outposts, the first day of the German invasion passed.

Slowly the sun rose over the thin red, khaki, and blue lines stretched from Chepperton Church to the village of Ballicton, two miles away, as, from beneath a thick sea-haze covering the district immediately around Harwich, crept huge masses of German infantry, heralded by a salvo of artillery, which sent a score of shells, hissing and shrieking like lost fiends, hurtling over the British position.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FAGGING FOR COKER!"

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The next moment an answering roar reverberated from the Chepperton lines, as the British artillery, admirably posted, and served as only British artillerymen can serve guns, answered back the defiant death-challenge.

It was not an ideal position, but it blocked the direct route to London, and, therefore, Lord Roberts had given General Smythe orders to hold on to Chepperton until the very last.

To describe one-tenth of the stirring deeds that were done on that day would in itself fill a volume, even did not the exigencies of our tale compel us to confine our attention to Chepperton Hall, which the Government had recently purchased, and leased to Thorpe Thornhill as a building-yard for his airships.

It was the key to the British position, and was garrisoned by a battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, which during the night had been reinforced by its Territorial company and two companies of the 6th Battalion Suffolk Regiment.

As the sun burst through the fog, Dick, perched, glass in hand, amongst the boughs of a walnut-tree within the walled orchard belonging to the old Hall, saw the Germans approaching in three divisions, with a large force of cavalry on their left flank, and, although he was no soldier, he knew that the brunt of the fighting would fall on the right wing, which, resting on Chepperton Church, was held by Territorials, Lord Walter Kerry's sailors, and two regiments of Regulars to give them the necessary stiffening. Altogether some twenty thousand Britons were under arms, awaiting the first onslaught of their foes.

The main attack was delivered on the British right, but the action soon became general all along the line. Seeing a division of infantry advancing by companies against the Hall, Dick abandoned his elevated position, and hastened to take his part in the coming struggle, reaching the firing-line just as seven hundred rifles rang out in the morning air, and a thrill of exultation ran through his veins as he saw the German line melt away like grass before the mower.

But, fed from an almost inexhaustible supply of reserves, the blue-coated mass crept closer and closer, till but six hundred yards separated them from where the Territorials were firing from the loopholed wall, and the trenches lined by the racoon caps of the Fusiliers. Now five, and now but four hundred yards intervened; then the firing-line of the Germans suddenly thickened as, with loud "Hochs!" they charged, whilst the Fusiliers, springing to their feet, poured in one last volley, and dashed forward to cross bayonets with their hated foes.

For a few minutes all was confusion; then the Fusiliers' bugle sounded the "Retreat!" and sullenly the British returned to their trenches, to increase, by volley firing, the disorder into which they had thrown the foe, until, despite the crowds pressing them on from the rear, the foremost Germans broke and fled.

Dick, being unattached, was at liberty to go where he would, and, seeing the Fusiliers in the thick of it, had joined their ranks. He was standing by the colonel's side, when he saw the old man clasp his hand to his hip, and sway backwards and forwards in his saddle.

"You are wounded, sir?" he cried anxiously, pressing forward.

"No, no! Don't talk nonsense! It's only a scratch!" cried the gallant old soldier. Then he flushed angrily, as, pointing to the Territorial battalion of the Fusiliers, he added: "Look at those chaps! Here, Hainault— Oh, he's down! Ah, you'll do, youngster! Go to those idiots, and tell them to come back. They'll be cut off to a man! Ah!" A shiver shook his tall, spare frame, but with a mighty effort he drew himself up, and in a voice as clear and firm and calm as though on parade, he addressed an officer standing near: "Major Vickers, you will take over the command of the regiment. Fusiliers, I am proud of you! Remember, no retreat!"

Then the upright frame collapsed, the grey-moustached head bent forward, and he sank, with a long-drawn sigh, into Dick Thornhill's arms.

But there was no time to linger. One glance at the Territorials had shown Dick their danger, and, laying the old veteran gently down, he raced towards where, alone and unsupported, the Territorial battalion of the Royal Fusiliers was driving a regiment of German infantry before them.

But, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, they little recked that behind their immediate foes appeared the waving plumes of a battalion of Prussian Guards, the finest battalion in the Emperor's service.

Soldiers are born, not made. Dick Thornhill, as we know, had had no military training, but instinctively he saw the peril of the Territorials, and also that their brave but indiscreet leader had got them into a muddle from which nothing but the most heroic endeavour could extricate them.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Halt! Halt! Are you mad, sir? Don't you see the Prussian Guards approaching?" he cried, as he elbowed his way to the side of the officer upon whom the command had devolved, a young solicitor, brave as Britons ever are, but lacking the coolness without which bravery is often worse than useless. He had completely lost his head, and answered Dick's appeal with frantic cries of victory which meant defeat.

Dick saw he must act immediately if he would save the gallant little force from destruction.

Throwing himself before the Territorials, who, realising the presence of their new foes, had come to a sudden halt, he cried:

"Steady, men! For Heaven's sake keep your heads! Close up, there—close up! Now, bugler, sound the—"

He paused with the word "Retreat" on his lips; then a wild, a mad idea entered his head. Snatching a sword from the stiffening grasp of a wounded officer, he waved it above his head, crying:

"Sound the advance!" Then, as even the confused young captain realised the madness of the order, he added, in loud, stirring tones: "Forward, Territorials! Follow me! Charge!"

The retreat of the Germans in other parts of the line had given the British a moment's respite, and the whole army held its breath as a weak battalion of partly-trained British Territorials hurled themselves in a mad, heroic charge against the Grenadiers of the Prussian Guard, men who prided themselves, and not without reason, on being the finest body of infantry in the world.

But fortune always favours the brave. With stubborn pride the colonel of the Prussian Guards was advancing without firing a shot, possibly believing that the very sight of his splendidly-drilled men would cause these "shopkeepers," as the Germans contemptuously called the Territorials, to run like whipped curs.

Had he lived but five minutes longer he would have realised the fallacy of his oft-expressed opinion, for ere he fell from his saddle, pierced by the bayonet of one of his despised foes, the deed was done, and the Territorials, carrying all before them, had forced back the foremost Prussian ranks, throwing the whole battalion into temporary disorder.

But the officers of the flank companies kept their men well in hand, and, wheeling round on their centre, swallowed, as it were, the devoted band at a mouthful.

"Back to back! Show these German conscripts of what stuff the British Territorial is made!" cried Dick, his voice rising loud and clear above the strife.

"Himmel! They are Territorials!" shouted a German field-officer, who, wedged in between his men, was striking at those nearest him with the flat of his sword. "Woe is me that I have lived to see his Imperial Majesty's Prussian Guard thrown into confusion by counterjumpers!"

Despite the numbers against them, or probably because of these very numbers, the Territorials, fighting with a fury akin to madness, were gallantly holding their own in a melee such as the wildest dreamer never thought to behold again on a modern battlefield.

But with terrible swiftness the little band was dwindling slowly but surely away, and the circle of angry-faced foemen growing narrower each moment.

Bleeding from a partly-parried sabre-cut on his forehead, his sword arm aching with continual cut, thrust, and guard, Dick realised that the end must come soon.

Still, he was strangely happy, nay, more than happy. A wild, fierce exultation burnt in his veins—an exultation shared, to judge from their faces, by the men who fought around him.

Suddenly, so suddenly that he could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses, the pressure of their foes relaxed.

At first, with a wild thrill of pride, he thought his Territorials had, by their unaided efforts, gained the victory.

But the next moment the flattering thought was cast aside, as he saw beyond the plumes of the German Guards a line of red-and-white chequered shakos, and a minute later two companies of Highland Light Infantry plunged to the rescue of his war-worn heroes.

At the same moment, as though sprung from the ground, two squadrons of hussars and Dragoon Guards swept down on the German rear, and, cheering wildly as they used their sabres with deadly effect upon the giant infantrymen, scattered them in all directions.

Steadied by the danger they had recently passed through, and, as Dick put it, surprised to find themselves still alive, the Territorials fell back up the hill, leaving a quarter of their number still in death behind, and as many more seriously wounded; whilst from one end of the British line to the other cheer after cheer rang out to greet the return of the heroes who had humbled the pride of the Emperor's Prussian Guard.

Seeing that both the Territorials and the Highland Light

Infantry had regained the British lines, the cavalry sought to return to their own post behind Balliston, but found their way barred by a division of Uhlans, who had ridden forward to intercept them.

A rousing cheer, as the brazen ring of the cavalry trumpet sounded the "Charge!" and they were upon their new foes. A crash, and the foremost Uhlans were sent rolling in the dust.

Right through their foes charged the invincible British cavalry. Nothing could daunt, nothing could stop them. Then they turned, and, reforming, prepared to cut their way back.

But the Uhlans had had enough, and were galloping helter-skelter for the interval between the German infantry. And, well content with what they had already achieved, the dragoons and hussars rejoined the British force.

But little respite was allowed the so far victorious British troops. Reinforced by all arms, the German legions charged the British position several times, each time to be hurled back with heavy loss; but as the day wore on our tired soldiers threw many an anxious glance over their shoulders for the help which, if it did not come soon, would be too late.

But none appeared. If they could hold Chepperton until night, all well and good; if not, Lord Roberts's orders must be obeyed—they must perish where they stood.

And nobly they fulfilled their task. When at last the sun touched the distant horizon, the British still held the position they had occupied in the morning; and Dick Thornhill, who seemed to have sprung from a boy to a man during the strenuous hours of that eventful day, looked with pride on his blackened, war-stained heroes, and felt that he, in common with every man of that little army, had done his duty.

Prepared for a Siege!

The Germans had timed their invasion well. A few weeks later, and Britain would have been as prepared to meet them in the air as on land and sea, for two hundred of the most reliable mechanics the Government had at its disposal were building a fleet of airships in the Chepperton Works when the invaders first set foot on British shores.

Needless to say, but little work had been done on the airships during that eventful day. It is true, until the last moment the sound of hammers falling on iron arose from the works; but as the foe pressed closer the men slipped bandoliers over their blue overalls, and, snatching up rifle and bayonet, had joined the firing-line of the defenders.

That night Dick sought his works, and, calling his workmen together, many of whom had been under him on Seamew Island, made a stirring little speech, concluding with the words:

"And now, lads, it is putting our lives on the hazard of a die, and I ask no man to remain with me who fears death: but if I can get a score of brave hearts to stand by my side I will barricade this place and hold out to the end. The works are comparatively small, but they represent at this moment the safety or destruction of our country. Let all who will join hands with me step forward."

A loud, stirring British cheer shook the rafters of the workshop as every man stepped eagerly forward.

Dick looked with pride upon his followers.

"Pshaw, lads! Does the German Emperor think he can subdue England when it holds such men as you?" he cried proudly. "Now, fall in under your foremen. I will divide you into watches, one for each side of the building; then to sleep, and let the morrow bring forth work or fighting, life or death, we will do our duty!"

"Should we post sentries, sir?" asked the head foreman, whom Dick had nominated as his second in command, when the men had been divided as he ordered.

Dick hesitated.

"I think not, Henry," he said at last. "We need every minute's sleep we can get. A British army is without, and that will suffice to keep the Germans at a respectful distance."

The decision, under the circumstances, was a wise one. How could he tell that already Lord Roberts, having gained the time he needed to bring men from all parts of Britain to the front, had ordered the evacuation of Chepperton, or that the Germans, anticipating some movement of the kind, should have determined upon a midnight assault?

Tired though he was, it was not until Dick had made the round of the building and seen his men, each with his rifle by his side, sleeping on the spot where at the first alarm he would be needed, that he laid himself down to sleep the sleep of utter exhaustion.

(Another splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)

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THE BLACK FOOTBALLERS

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, and Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Gurgles of laughter came from the juniors as they looked at one another's darkening faces. Hurree Singh's beautiful brown complexion disappeared under a new one of dead black. As for the other fellows, they did not know themselves when they looked in the glass. (See Chapter 11.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Comes Down Heavy!

MR. QUELCH was late. It was, as Bob Cherry described it, a case of "war jaw."

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, and Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form-master, were standing before the big wall map of Europe in the passage warmly discussing the position of the Allies and the Germans in the light of the latest news in the "Daily Mail."

And, in his keenness to prove to Mr. Prout that, given such and such a position, the Kaiser's hordes were simply bound to get it "in the neck," the Remove-master had forgotten all about his Form.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FAGGING FOR COKER!"

It was very unusual, for Mr. Quelch was as a rule the most punctual of masters. But there it was! While the "war jaw" proceeded warmly in the Form-room passage, the Remove were left "on their own."

They waited for Mr. Quelch with exemplary patience for a good three minutes. But he did not come. Then they began to grow restive, as junior schoolboys will when they are left to themselves.

Harry Wharton & Co., sitting on their desks instead of their forms, talked football.

The Remove footer-match with St. Jim's was coming off on the following Saturday, and as to-day was Wednesday, their thoughts were chiefly concentrated on that match. For this special afternoon—which, being Wednesday, was a half-

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

holiday—they had arranged a final practice match, to test the eleven for the great contest with St. Jim's. Upon that subject they could have talked for hours.

Billy Bunter was improving the shining hour, and was stuffing jam-tarts, of which he had a paper bag full hidden in his desk. Bolsover major and Skinner amused themselves by projecting paper pellets at Alonzo Todd, catching him first on one ear, and then on the other, much to Alonzo's surprise.

Some of the fellows who had been studying maps and things were also indulging in "war jaw," like the Form-masters in the passage.

The Remove Form-room was in a buzz of voices. And still Mr. Quelch did not come. At that hour in the morning the Remove should have been deep in first lesson. Instead of which, the following might have been heard, most of the fellows talking at once:

"We haven't had much practice lately, owing to the rotten rain——"

"St. Jim's are pretty certain to be in great form——"

"I tell you the Germans are simply getting squashed——"

"Bulstrode in goal, I suppose——"

"Then there are the Russians——"

"My dear Bolsover, please do not throw things at me——"

"I say, you fellows, old Quelch's late——"

"Besides, they're sending lots of Russians down through Scotland——"

"Through Wales, you mean?"

"Three hundred thousand of them—big fellows——"

"Half a million, you mean—through Wales——"

"Aye!"

"Fathead!"

"I tell you," roared Bolsover major, "I've got a cousin in Scotland who actually saw them being landed at—Aberdeen!"

"And I've got an uncle who knows a man who saw a fellow who actually heard them marching through Cardiff in the dead of night!" retorted Skinner.

"Look here, you duffer——"

"Half a million of them—all Cossacks," said Skinner positively.

"Oh, cheese it!" called out Bob Cherry. "I'm fed up with those Russians! Are you two chaps playing in the scratch team this afternoon?"

"Blow the scratch team! I'll play in the Form eleven if you like!" growled Bolsover major.

"Bow-wow!"

"They were landed at Aberdeen, and they marched down through—through Newcastle and—Penzance," said Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Skinner.

Skinner's knowledge of geography was a little more extensive than Bolsover major's.

"I—I don't mean Penzance—I mean, Bristol——"

"He, he, he!" cackled Skinner.

But that cackle was too much for Bolsover major. As the biggest fellow in the Remove, and the bully of the Form, Bolsover considered that his opinion ought to have great weight.

He was always ready to back up his opinion with his fists; and he forthwith rushed upon Skinner, and got his head into chancery, and Skinner's irritating cackle changed into a yell of wrath.

"Yarook! Leggo! Yah! Take that!"

"Go it!" sang out Peter Todd. "File in, Bolsover! File in, Skinner!"

"Trump—trump—trump!"

"Thump—thump—thump!"

"Yah!"

"Grooh!"

"Hooray! Go it!"

And the delighted Removeites formed a ring round the combatants in the middle of the Form-room. This was much better than morning lessons! Skinner's head was in chancery, and he was receiving severe punishment; but he was digging away frantically at Bolsover's ribs, and the bully of the Remove was gasping.

The cheerful juniors cheered them on enthusiastically. In the excitement of the moment they forgot all about Mr. Quelch.

"Go it, Skinner! Pitch into him!"

"Whop him, Bolsover!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Form-room door suddenly opened. The uproar had reached Mr. Quelch's ears, and put a sudden stop to the "war jaw" in the passage. Mr. Quelch strode into the Form-room, a quarter of an hour late, his gown rustling, his eyes gleaming, and his jaw looking very square and grim. For a moment the excited juniors did not notice him, and the Form-master gazed at the scene with speechless wrath.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," &c.

Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2

"Go it, ye cripples!" roared Bob Cherry. "Give him socks, Skinny! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Cave!"

There was a wild rush of the juniors back to their places as they caught sight of Mr. Quelch.

"Boys!" thundered the Remove-master, finding his voice at last.

"My hat!"

"Cave!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"How dare you?" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "This is disgraceful! Bolsover—Skinner—all of you! This disgraceful scene——"

Bolsover major and Skinner released one another as suddenly as if both had become red-hot. They dived for their seats.

An abashed and apprehensive Remove faced the angry eyes of the Form-master.

"This is disgraceful! I cannot leave you to yourselves for a few minutes—ahem!—without your turning the Form-room into a bear-garden! Only one boy in the whole Form is his place! Disgraceful!"

The only boy in the Form in his place was Billy Bunter. He had set tight, but not from a sense of duty, only because he had not yet finished his tartar. But he had thrust the tartar quickly into his desk as Mr. Quelch came in. Billy Bunter assumed a very virtuous expression, and smirked at the Form-master. For once the fat junior was an example to the Form!

"Wharton, I am surprised at you! As head boy of the Remove, you should have kept order! Instead of that, what do I find?"

Harry Wharton coughed. He had been deeply interested in the question whether Skinner would be able to put up much of a fight against the burly Bolsover, and he had quite forgotten about keeping order.

"What do I find?" repeated Mr. Quelch witheringly, as Wharton did not answer the question. "I find the Form-room turned into a bear-garden, and you, the head boy of the Remove, actually cheering on your Form-fellows in acting like hooligans! What were you saying as I came in, Wharton?"

"Ahem! I—I——"

"I order you to repeat what you were saying as I came in, Wharton!"

"Ahem! I—I was saying, 'Buck up, Skinner!'" murmured Wharton.

"Disgraceful!"

"Ahem!"

"I am shocked!" said Mr. Quelch. "It is outrageous! The whole Form will be detained this afternoon!"

"Oh!"

"With the exception of Bunter. All the rest of the Form will remain in the Form-room till tea-time, and write Latin exercises!"

"Oh!"

"Now silence!"

The Remove sat crushed. Perhaps they deserved it, but it was a heavy punishment, all the same, for that afternoon was to have taken place the practice match, and it was the last opportunity for real practice before the St. Jim's match. It had been very rainy of late, and footer practice had been "off"; and now that the weather favoured them again, this heavy blow had fallen.

The junior footballers looked at one another in dismay. Some of them fixed their eyes meaningly upon Wharton. As captain of the Remove, they felt that it was up to him to do something. Harry Wharton made the attempt.

"If you please, sir——"

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"We—ahem—we forgot where we were, sir—ahem——"

"I imagine you did!" said Mr. Quelch witheringly.

"And—and—we haven't had any footer practice for some time, sir——"

"That does not concern me."

"And—and—we're meeting St. Jim's on Saturday, sir——"

"That will do, Wharton."

"We wanted to put in some practice this afternoon, sir——"

"You should have thought of that a little earlier, Wharton. We will now——"

"Yes, sir, but—but if you'd let us off the detention this afternoon, we—we——"

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice.

After that, there was nothing more to be said. The Remove settled down to their morning's work in a state which could only be described as "squashed." There was only one cheerful face, and that was the fat face of William George Bunter. The rest of the Remove were utterly dismayed, and anyone looking into the Form-room that morning, would have been surprised at the number of faces that were expressions of utter gloominess.

"H E. he, he!"

Thus William George Bunter, when the Remove came out after morning lessons.

Bunter seemed to think it very funny. Every fellow in the Form excepting Bunter was detained for the afternoon! All the fellows were glum, but especially the members of the Remove footer eleven. They were hit especially hard by that unexpected detention.

It was the last half-holiday before the St. Jim's match—the last chance of a real practice. And they needed it! St. Jim's was the toughest team they had to meet in the whole season. Practice had been slack lately on account of the rain. They needed all they could get. And now they were detained!

"He, he, he!" Bunter seemed to draw inexhaustible merriment from the glum faces of his Form-fellows. "He, he, he! I must say you look like a set of moulting fowls, you fellows! He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, you're done in the eye, ain't you?" chuckled Bunter. "You should be're yourselves in the Form-room, you know, like me. He, he, he!" I say, Wharton, you're looking jolly down in the mouth."

"Oh, ring off, you fat duffer!" snapped Wharton.

"You couldn't expect Quelch to stand it, you know," said Bunter. "Must keep some sort of order, you know. He, he, he—y-aroooooh!"

Billy Bunter's chuckle changed into a wild yell as Johnny Bull, quite out of patience, smote him forcibly, and he sat down on the floor of the passage.

"Ow! Ow! Beast!"

The Famous Five strode on, leaving the fat junior sitting on the floor and gasping. They were in the blackest humour, growled Bob Cherry.

Bolover major snorted.

"I tell you they're coming down through Scotland, all the same," he declared.

"Oh, rats!"

"Through Wales!" yelled Skinner, and he fled before Bolover major could reach him.

"But what's going to be done?" said Harry Wharton helplessly. "To-day's Wednesday, and we've hardly touched a footer for a week. On Saturday the Saints will be here, at the top of their form, ready to wipe up the ground with us. We don't want it to be a walk over for Tom Merry & Co."

"Rather not!" growled Bob Cherry; and Hurree Jamses Ram Singh sadly declared that the rather-notfulness was terrific.

And only Thursday and Friday for us to pick up form in," said Squiff, the Australian junior. "It's sickening."

"Oh, rotten!"

"No good speaking to Quelch again, either," granted Johnny Bull. "He's as hard as nails! It was his fault, really, for being late this morning; but he won't look at it like that."

"Not likely."

"What about practising all the same?" said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "Quelch goes out this afternoon—we might get out of the Form-room for an hour or two—I mean, the members of the team. The others can stick the detention—they don't matter."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"The footer grounds' in sight of the whole school, ass. Even if we get out of the Form-room without being noticed, we should be seen there, and yanked in again, shouldn't we?"

"I've thought of that," said Tom Brown, with a nod. "We could get some practice outside the school. Trumper's ground, you know. The Courtfield fellows are not playing any matches this week—Trumper told me so, neither to-day nor Saturday. We could use their ground if we liked for practice."

Wharton started.

Trumper & Co., the heroes of Courtfield County Council School, were the old rivals of the Remove; but they were on friendly terms all the same. Trumper & Co., as a matter of fact, did not have a half-holiday that day, and they would not want their ground, which was marked off on Courtfield Common, and easy of access from the school.

"By Jove!" said Harry. "If we could get out of the Form-room it might be worth trying. Quelch will tell a prefect to keep an eye on the Form-room, but all the other fellows will be there, and it might not be noticed—"

"Let's try it!" said Bob desperately.

The chums of the Remove thought it over very seriously till dinner-time. There was no doubt that they were badly in want of practice. There was still less doubt that they wanted to spend that keen, sunny autumn afternoon in playing football. It was worth some risk, surely.

By the time they had had dinner, the junior footballers

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EVERY
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ONE
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had made up their minds. They were going to risk it. At the usual time for afternoon lessons, all the other Forms at Greyfriars were preparing to enjoy their half-holiday. But the unhappy Remove had to march into their Form-room, just as if it wasn't a half-holiday at all, with the solitary exception of William George Bunter. They marched in under the stern eye of Mr. Quelch, and followed by a cackle from Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was still very much amused, and this time he could not be floored by the indignant juniors.

"You will remain here until tea-time," said Mr. Quelch severely. "I am going out, but I shall ask Wingate to see that you keep your detention. I have already told you what work you are to do. If there is any disturbance of any kind in the Form-room, you will be severely punished. I trust this will be a lesson to you."

And Mr. Quelch walked away, leaving the juniors plumped in gloomy silence. They began to work in a half-hearted fashion.

Frank Nugent stationed himself at a window. A quarter of an hour later he announced that Mr. Quelch had gone out.

Bob Cherry jumped up from his form.

"Time we were gone out, too, then!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather," said Peter Todd.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Cave!"

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, looked in. The juniors settled down to their desks immediately, looking very docile. The captain of the school ran his eye over them, and then closed the door again. Several juniors clambered to the windows. Wingate was seen again in the Close, walking down to Big Side football ground. The First Eleven were playing that afternoon.

"All serene now," said Nugent.

"It ought to be safe enough," said Wharton musingly.

"Quelch's out, and Wingate will be playing footer. Nobody else is likely to look in, or to care twopence whether we're detained here or not. We can be back before Quelch comes in."

"Come on," said Vernon-Smith briskly. "They've kicked off already. It's as safe as houses. Only members of the team, of course."

"That's all jolly well!" exclaimed Bolover major. "No reason why the rest of us should stick here, if we don't choose."

"My dear Bolover," said Alonzo Todd, with his mild, benevolent glance, "surely it is our duty to respect the wishes of our kind teacher—"

"Br-e-e! Shut up!"

"Chaps who are not members of the team ought to stay in," said Wharton, "and get some exercises done, so that we can all have something to show up if Quelch wants to see."

"Catch me!" said Bolover.

"Sure, and I don't mind, for one," said Micky Desmond.

"Me velley gladdee obliged," murmured Wan Lung, the little Chinese.

And most of the Remove fellows who weren't in the team declared their willingness to make that sacrifice. Harry Wharton took another survey from the Form-room window. The First Eleven were already playing in the distance.

"It's safe enough," decided Wharton. "Look here, we'll get out one at a time, and dodge up to the dorm and change. Then we can put our coats on, and sneak out by the servants' entrance, and get round to the road. No need for anybody to see us."

"Good egg!"

The juniors had made up their minds. Harry Wharton cautiously opened the Form-room door, and looked out into the passage. It was deserted. The House was empty on that fine, sunny half-holiday—save for the persecuted heroes of the Remove.

"All serene," said Harry.

One after another, the eleven members of the Remove team dodged quietly out of the Form-room, and settled up to the Remove dormitory. There they changed into their footer rig, and put on their overcoats and mufflers. The rest of the Remove stayed in the Form-room, even Bolover major, on second thoughts, deciding not to risk it. But for the members of the eleven, the risk was worth while, or so they deemed.

From the dormitory, they slipped quietly downstairs, one at a time, and quitted the house at the back, and scudded out by the side-entrance usually used by the tradesmen. They passed no one but Trotter, the page, who grinned and winked reassuringly. Harry Wharton drew a deep breath of relief when the whole party were gathered outside the school wall.

Wharton had a football under his arm.

"Right as rain!" said Bob Cherry. "Now for Courtfield Common!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"My hat! Bunter!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds!

BILLY BUNTER came toddling up, with a grin on his fat face. Evidently the Paul Pry of Greyfriars had discovered the "masterly retreat" of the Remove. There were few things that escaped Billy Bunter's observation, short-sighted as he was. The footballers glared at him as he came up with a grin on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows—"

"What do you want, porpoise?" growled Bob Cherry.

"I spotted you, you know," said Bunter cheerfully. "This won't do, you know! Disobedience is very wrong. You ought to go back to the Form-room. I'm really shocked, you know. I have lately been reading 'Eric; or, Bit by Bit—'"

"Oh, shut up!"

"And I really think it is my duty to warn Wingate that you are breaking detention," said Bunter firmly.

Johnny Bull clenched his big fists.

"There will be a dead porpoise lying about soon afterwards, if you do, you fat sneak!" he growled.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The uselessness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," murmured Hurreo Singh. "I suggest that the bumpfulness is the proper caper!"

Billy Bunter backed away.

"I—I say, you fellows, I don't want to be hard on you, you know, I'll tell you what. One good turn deserves another. I was expecting a postal-order this afternoon—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Owing to the delay caused by the war, it hasn't come yet," said Bunter. "It was a postal-order for five shillings."

"Oh, come on!" said Peter Todd. "We can't stay here listening to that fat ass outdoing Ananias!"

"I say," roared Bunter, as the juniors began to move away. "I say, you fellows—look here, Wharton, can you advance me five bob on my postal-order?"

"No fear!"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Squiff, old man—"

"Rats!"

"Very well; under the circumstances, as you choose to act like mean beasts, I shall consider it my duty to tell Wingate."

"Will you?" said Bob Cherry grimly, turning upon Bunter and taking hold on his arm. "Come on, William! Come on, George! You're coming with us."

"Leggo! Leggo!"

"Take his other arm, Johnny!"

Johnny Bull grinned, and took Bunter's other arm. Between the two sturdy juniors the Owl of the Remove was marched forcibly along. They walked very quickly, surrounded by the rest of the footballers, and Bunter was hard put to it to keep pace with his little fat legs.

"I say, you fellows— Yow-ow! Hold on! I was only j-j-joking!" gasped Bunter.

"Kim on!"

"I—I won't say a word, you know! Ow! I can't keep up with you!" howled Bunter, as he lost step, and was dragged along, with his boots clawing at the ground. "Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! I won't say a word! Yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yarrah! Help! Wingate—Loder— Yah!"

"Bump! Bump! Bump!"

Billy Bunter descended upon the ground in a series of rough concussions, amid loud laughter from the junior footballers. After that he did not yell any more. He kept on between Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, his legs going like clockwork, and loud gasps proceeding from him at every step. Billy Bunter was not to be trusted, and the juniors did not intend to trust him. But the fat junior was not accustomed to exercise. His attempt to extract cash from Harry Wharton & Co. was costing him dear. His spectacles slid down his fat little nose, his cap slid on the back of his head, and his complexion became like that of a freshly-baked beetroot. And not for a moment did the Removees slacken pace; they kept on steadily at a rapid tramp, and Billy Bunter had to keep pace somehow.

"Ow, ow, ow! Yow! Grooooh!" came from Bunter, in anguished accents. "Oh, you beasts! I'm tired! Yow! I'm exhausted! Groo! I'm dying!"

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry. "We'll chuck you into a ditch when you're quite dead! But you're not dead yet! Kim on!"

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"Grooooh!"

"Help him with your boot, Marky!"

"Yow—ow! Don't kick me, you beast!" roared Bunter, as Mark Lanley assisted him from behind. "I—yah—oh— I'm bucking up! Ow! Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was in a state of breathlessness and perspiration when the common was reached. He sat down in the grass with a gasp like air escaping from a punctured tyre. The footballers threw off their coats and mufflers. They had the common to themselves save for a few nursemaids with perambulators in the distance.

"You can mind these things for us, Bunter," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "As you've come with us, you can make yourself useful."

"Yow! I won't! Yah! I—I mean I will! I—I'll do it with pleasure!" roared Bunter, as Bob raised his boot.

"Good! Mind you stay there with them! If you try to cut off, I'll be after you like a shot, and I'll yank you back by your ears!" warned Bob.

"Ow! Ow!"

And Billy Bunter sat dismally to mind the coats and mufflers while the Remove footballers started their practice. Several times Bunter cast longing glances towards the long white road that ran from Courtfield town past the common. But he dared not seek safety in flight. He knew that any member of the Remove eleven could run him down easily, however long a start he might have. So he sat and gasped, and grunted, and muttered dire threats.

Meanwhile, the Remove eleven were piling into the game. They made up two teams, a six and a five, for practice, and lost no time in getting to work. The Courtfield ground was excellent for practice, and they were soon enjoying themselves—watched morosely by William George Bunter.

The practice match was soon going strong.

Having been deprived of almost all practice for a week, the juniors were exceedingly glad to get to work again. As they passed and dribbled and shot for goal they forgot all about Mr. Quelch and the fact that they were supposed to be detained in the Form-room that afternoon.

Indeed, they were so keen on the game that they did not notice the approach of a little crowd of fellows from the direction of Courtfield. Those fellows were also in footer rig under their overcoats, and at the sight of the Removees they simply stared. For they were Trumper & Co., of Courtfield County Council School, and the ground belonged to them. School was over for the afternoon, and Trumper and his friends had hurried out to do a little footer practice, and they were astounded to find their ground already occupied, and by their old rivals of Greyfriars.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Trumper. "What awful nerve!"

"Frightful cheek!" said Grahame. "Collaring our ground, by Jove, without so much as saying by your leave!"

"Collar the bounders, and chuck 'em out on their necks!" said Wickers.

"What-ho!" said Trumper emphatically. "Come on—follow your leader, and rush 'em!"

"Hurrah!"

The Courtfield fellows—there were more than a dozen of them—came up to the footer field with a rush. A tussle was going on before goal. Trumper & Co. joined in the tussle, suddenly rushing the footballers and sweeping them off the ball. There was a roar from the surprised Greyfriars juniors.

"Look out! Courtfield ends!"

"Suck it to 'em!" roared Trumper.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hold on!"

"Kick 'em out!"

The football practice was changed into a wild scrap. Harry Wharton & Co. had been at practice for more than an hour, but they had plenty of energy left for dealing with the Courtfielders.

"Line up!" roared Harry Wharton. "Give 'em socks!"

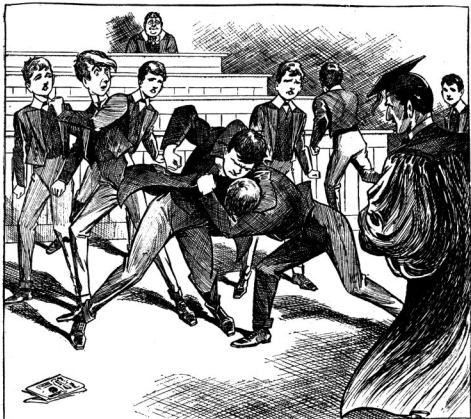
"Play up, Greyfriars!"

The Courtfield rush had carried the Removees right into touch, but they rallied, and drove the enemy back into the field of play. There was a terrific struggle on the football-ground, in the midst of which the footer itself lay unheeded, till suddenly Trumper sprawled upon it, and then there was a sudden report.

"Go it, Courtfield!"

"Buck up, Greyfriars!"

Billy Bunter looked on at the scene with a grin for some minutes, and then rolled away. It was his chance to escape. He rolled off the field and rushed into the road, and collided with a gentleman in a frock-coat and silk hat who was walking from the direction of Courtfield. That gentleman staggered back with a gasp as he felt the heavy impact of the fat junior.



"Go it, ye cripples!" roared Bob Cherry. "Give him socks, Skinny! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Cave!" There was a wild rush of the juniors back to their places as they caught sight of Mr. Quelch. "Boys!" thundered the Remove-master. (See Chapter I.)

"Dear me! Bless my soul! You clumsy boy! Ah, it is Bunter! Bunter, you clumsy young rascal!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter, as Mr. Quelch grasped him, and proceeded to shake him with vigour. "Yow! Yow! Yow! after me! Ow!"

"Nonsense! Who are after you, Bunter?"

"Yow! Bob Cherry and Bull and— Yow! Ow!"

"What!"

Mr. Quelch's brows grew thunderous as he heard the names of the juniors who were supposed to be detained in the Form-room of Greyfriars. He released Bunter—who promptly scuttled away—and swung round, staring across the common towards the football-ground. He had observed the scrimmage going on there, but had not recognised any of the combatants, seen from the road. Muddy and rumped and flushed, and locked in combat, the juniors were not indeed easy to recognise excepting very close at hand. But Mr. Quelch had the clue now, and he crossed the intervening stretch of grass towards the football-ground, with frowning brow and compressed lips.

"Wharton! Cherry! Bull! All of you! Cease this at once! Do you hear me? So you have come out to play football against my express orders! Cease instantly!"

"My hat, it's Quelch!"

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Thunderbolt!

"MR. QUELCH!"

The combat stopped at once. Muddy and rumped, gasping for breath, some of them with "claret" streaming from their noses, the footballers stared at the unexpected apparition of the Remove-master. Trumper & Co. exchanged dismayed glances. They had themselves nothing to fear from a Greyfriars master, of course, but they were concerned for the Removites. They had very naturally wanted to clear their ground of the invaders who had taken possession, but they did not want to get their rivals into a "row" with their Form-master. But it looked as if it had been done now.

As for the Removites, they were utterly dismayed. They had not expected to see Mr. Quelch there. Even if he walked home from Courtfield, the football-ground was not close by the road, and if they had seen him coming they could have taken cover. But the tussle with the Courtfielders had fully occupied their thoughts, and the Remove-master had come upon them. They stared at him blankly. They were fairly caught; there was no doubt about that.

"Oh, crumbs," murmured Bob Cherry, "we're in for it now!"

"The infuseness is terrific, my worthy chum!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FAGGING FOR COKER!"

"This is where we get it in the neck!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch regarded them, with thunder in his looks.

"You are here?" he said grimly.

"Er—yes, sir, we—we are here," murmured Wharton feebly.

"Playing football, against my orders!"

Wharton grinned; he could not help it. In the innocence of his heart Mr. Quelch had taken that terrific scrap for a football match.

"There is nothing to laugh at, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "You will find that this is not a laughing matter before all is over. You came here to play football?"

"To practice, sir."

"I ordered you to be detained in your Form-room. You have deliberately disregarded my orders!"

Wharton was silent. Put like that, it did sound rather a serious thing. To the juniors, that escape from the Form-room seemed very much in the nature of a "lark." Mr. Quelch apparently did not see anything like a "lark" in it. The juniors had seldom seen such concentrated anger in his face. They all looked decidedly sheepish and apprehensive. The thunder was about to burst upon them.

"And you came here," resumed Mr. Quelch, "because you would have been seen and sent back to your detention if you had played on your own ground at the school. Is that so, Wharton?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"I regard it as an unworthy trick, Wharton."

"Oh, sir!"

"I hold you chiefly responsible."

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

"Silence! I will follow me at once to Greyfriars! Not a word more! I will speak to you at Greyfriars!"

Mr. Quelch marched majestically away. Harry Wharton & Co. donned their coats and mufflers, with lugubrious looks. Trumper & Co. were sympathetic.

"I say, we're awfully sorry about this, you chaps," Trumper said repentantly. "We didn't know anything about your being out of bounds, of course—"

"Can't be helped!" groaned Wharton. "It's just our rotten luck! You see, we borrowed your ground because we couldn't play at Greyfriars, under the circumstances."

Trumper nodded.

"I understand. If we'd known, you'd have been jolly welcome. We thought you were raiding our ground, you know, and we just went for you."

"Awfully sorry!" said Solly Lazarus.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's all right. It's all in the day's work. Only we're going to get it in the neck now. Quelch is awfully ratty. Who the dickens would have expected him to come trotting along here! Good-bye, you chaps!"

And the Remove footballers lugubriously followed Mr. Quelch.

It was a gloomy procession that returned to Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch walked on ahead, stiff and majestic, and the disconsolate footballers followed in a line, some of them dabbing at their noses with stained handkerchiefs. There was no doubt that the afternoon's excursion had been a hopeless "muck-up." They had had their practice that they had arranged for, and a scrap that they had not arranged for, and now there was the piper to pay. And it was not only the punishment that Harry Wharton was thinking of. The Removites were tough, and they could stand a licking. But Mr. Quelch was unusually incensed, and it might make a difference to the St. Jim's match. Suppose they were detained for Saturday afternoon!

A good many fellows saw them come into the school. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth greeted them with unsympathetic grins. Temple, Dabney, & Co. were very much up against the Remove, especially on account of the St. Jim's match. Temple & Co. considered it sheer cheek for the Remove to bag a fixture like that; indeed, the Fourth-Formers had once made an attempt to "collar" it for themselves, when Tom Merry & Co. came over to play cricket. And so Temple, Dabney, & Co. smiled at them as they filed into the School House, and chuckled. Quite a number of fellows, in fact, seemed to think that it was funny. But the discomfited Removites could not see anything funny in it.

"Go and change into somewhat more civilised attire," said Mr. Quelch harshly, "and then come to my study, all of you!"

Without a word, the Removites went up to their dormitory to change. Mr. Quelch looked into the Remove Form-room, and found the rest of the Form there, hard at work. Russell had spotted the Form-master from the window, and so they had had time to leave off playing leapfrog and settle down to work again. Mr. Quelch gave them a glance of grim approval.

"You may go now!" he rapped out.

Having thus bestowed the reward of virtue upon the juniors who had not gone out to play footer, but who had only stayed in to play leapfrog, Mr. Quelch went to his study to wait for Harry Wharton & Co. They did not keep him waiting long; they knew better than that. They changed in record time, and in a few minutes there was a timid and respectful tap at the study door.

"Come in!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

The footballers filed in, pretty well filling up the study. The eleven of them faced Mr. Quelch with very respectful looks. But if they hoped that timid and respectful looks would have the effect of turning away wrath, they were woefully disappointed. Mr. Quelch's wrath was not to be quite so easily turned away. As a matter of fact, he had good cause to be incensed, and he felt that it was his duty to be especially severe. Like the prophet of old, he said to himself that he did well to be angry.

He surveyed them with a grim, harsh glance.

"I must speak very seriously to you," he said. "I hold you most to blame, Wharton, as head boy of the Form. You have done very wrong."

"We—we're sorry, sir!" said Wharton meekly.

"Awfully sorry, sir!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

Mr. Quelch made an angry gesture.

"I ordered you to be detained in your Form-room," he said. "You have disobeyed my commands in the most deliberate manner. Have you any excuse whatever to offer?"

"Ahem!"

"We—we didn't mean any harm, sir," said Nugent feebly. "Perhaps you did not realise the seriousness of the offence!"

"That's it, sir," said Squiff eagerly; "we didn't sir."

"Then it is my duty to make you realise it—thoroughly," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"I quite understand," resumed the Form-master, "that it is this mania for football—I call it a mania adversely—which has led you into this serious breach of discipline. You are aware that I approve of healthy games—within bounds. But I cannot allow all order and discipline to be sacrificed for the sake of games. It is in this direction that I must seek to correct you, as I see very well. You deliberately broke bounds this afternoon to play football."

"It wasn't exactly that, sir," stammered Johnny Bull. "We—we were in need of practice, you see, sir. It wasn't a match. It's because we're meeting St. Jim's team on Saturday."

"It's our biggest fixture, sir," murmured Peter Todd.

"Indeed! Is it a more important matter than obedience to your Form-master?" asked Mr. Quelch sarcastically.

It was, as a matter of fact, from the juniors' point of view; but they could hardly say so, so they left that question unanswered.

"I have thought this matter over," said the Form-master, his frown deepening. "I am convinced that you need a severe lesson on this subject. I shall not cane you—"

The Removites brightened up. That was so much to the good, at all events. Mr. Quelch smiled grimly as he noted the change in their looks.

"I shall not give you lines—"

"Oh, good!" murmured Bob Cherry involuntarily.

"I shall not detain you. Detention seems no use in your case—"

The juniors were almost smiling now. If Mr. Quelch was not going to cane them, give them lines, or inflict detention, it was a little difficult to see what he was going to do. The list of punishments was exhausted, and at the idea that their Form-master was only going to lecture them, after all, the delinquents felt quite cheerful. They could stand any amount of lecturing without turning a hair.

But the thunderbolt was about to fall. Mr. Quelch paused for one moment, as if for due effect, before he launched it.

"But I shall not allow you to play that match which you place before all order and discipline and the respect due to your Form-master!"

They gasped. They had no words left.

Not play the St. Jim's match! Canings and lines and detention would have been a joke in comparison to that.

ANSWERS

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They stared at Mr. Quelch speechlessly, their jaws dropping. He had hit them very hard this time.

"You will write to the school you were to play—St. James's," resumed Mr. Quelch, his voice hard as iron. "You will tell them that the match is cancelled, Wharton."

"Oh!"

"You will tell them not to come to Greyfriars on Saturday."

"Oh!"

"The match will not be played. I shall not punish you, as I have said. But I give you this command as a lesson to impress upon your mind the fact that you must not place more games before your duty. You may go."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Quelch pointed to the door. Utterly crushed, the juniors moved away. Harry Wharton turned back to make a last appeal, though he knew it would be useless.

"Mr. Quelch—we—the match has been fixed up a long time—"

"Say no more, Wharton! My decision is irrevocable."

"The St. Jim's fellows will be disappointed—"

"You are at liberty to explain to them that it is by your own fault, Wharton. Moreover, you can write to them at once, and I have no doubt they can make some other arrangement for their half-holiday."

Mr. Quelch evidently didn't understand the tremendous importance of a football fixture.

"But, sir—but we've been looking forward to it. We—we've got ready for it—"

"By defying authority and disobeying orders, Wharton."

"Ahem! We—we— Oh, sir—"

Mr. Quelch waved his hand.

"Understand, Wharton, that my decision on this subject is quite irrevocable. I shall not change it under any circumstances whatever. I mean to be just, and when it is necessary to be severe, I will be severe. I refuse to listen to another word on the matter. Any boy who utters a single word on the subject to me from now to Saturday will be caught."

Mr. Quelch turned his back on the juniors.

There was evidently nothing more to be said or done. The juniors retreated from the study looking—and feeling—as if life were not worth living.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Not To Be Stood!

"ROTTEN!"

"Horrible!"

"Disgusting!"

"It's a rotten shame!"

"The shamefulness is terrific!"

There was an angry and gloomy meeting in No. 1 Study. The Famous Five were there, and Squiff and Tom Brown and Peter Todd. They had met over a late tea to talk the matter over. They had talked it over. Something had to be done. They were all agreed upon that. The trouble was that they couldn't think of anything that was to be done.

Give up the St. Jim's match, the biggest fixture of the football season? Why, it was more important than the English Cup competition—from the point of view of the Greyfriars Remove, that is to say. Tell Tom Merry not to bring his team over? It was impossible, unheard of, unthinkable! But it had to be done. There was the rub. It had to be done!

So the discussion degenerated into growls and groans and uncomplimentary remarks concerning Mr. Quelch. Of course old Quelch didn't understand, as Bob Cherry dolefully remarked. He wasn't a footballer. Football had really come up since his time. He couldn't grasp the importance of an important fixture. He meant to be giving the juniors a somewhat drastic lesson, but he had no idea how exceedingly drastic it was. Therefore, they would be justified in "dodging" the sentence, if they could, and playing St. Jim's after all. But could they? They had to admit that they couldn't.

All the same, something had to be done.

"We're not going to scratch the match," said Wharton desperately. "We can't! We shan't! We won't!"

"The won'tfulness is terrific."

"We'll see him blowed first!" hooted Peter Todd.

"He's a beast!" growled Tom Brown. "A simple beast! Why didn't his pater make him play footer when he was a kid? Then he'd understand. His education's been neglected."

"Oh, it's rotten—rotten! But we won't stand it!"

"Blessed if I know what's to be done!" said Vernon-Smith moodily. "It's rough on the St. Jim's chaps, too! Tom Merry's lot are as keen on the match as we are. It'll be a big disappointment to them. Can't even ask them to play it another date. Quelch was clear enough about it. The match isn't to be played at all. He means it."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

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"Quelch isn't really a bad sort," he said; "but he doesn't understand. We've a right to play that match. He can cane us, give us impots, detain us, but he hasn't a right to make us cancel a footer fixture. No good telling him so. But there it is. Somehow or other we've got to work it."

"How?" said Johnny Bull hopelessly.

"We must put our heads together and think it out somehow. Why, the Fourth are cackling over it already!" said Wharton fiercely. "The whole school knows now that we've been told to cancel the match. Temple and Dabney and the rest were cackling like hyenas when I had to take the list down off the notice-board. Quelch told Loder to make me do that, and Loder was glad of the chance—the cad!"

"We won't stand it!" howled Squiff.

There was a tap at the study door.

"Oh, come in, father!" snapped Wharton. His temper was not sweet just then.

Loder, the prefect, looked in. There was a grin on the face of the bully of the Sixth as he looked at the gloomy and exasperated countenances in the study. The juniors glared at him. They were not inclined to stand much from Loder just then, prefect as he was. For very little they would have pitched him neck and crop out of the study, and chanced the consequences. Perhaps Loder saw that, for he spoke with unusual civility.

"Mr. Quelch requires to see your letter to St. Jim's before it is posted," he said. "He must know that his orders have been carried out."

"Tain't written yet!" growled Wharton.

"Well, what am I to tell him?"

"Tell him we're writing to them to-morrow."

Loder nodded, and quitted the study. Johnny Bull kicked the door shut after him.

"No chance of wriggling out of it!" said Nugent bitterly.

"Quelch means to see the letter—blow him!"

Tap again.

The juniors turned exasperated faces to the door. This time it was Temple of the Fourth who came in. Dabney and Fry were with him. Temple was smiling, and the Removites replied to his smiles with looks of thunder.

"I've heard the giddy news," said Temple, with great cheerfulness. "You kids seem to have got it right on the crumplet—what?"

"Oh, get out!"

"Wait a bit! I've got something to say."

"Say it, and clear, then!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You see, this will be rather a disappointment for St. Jim's," said the captain of the Fourth. "They're looking forward to a match with Greyfriars on Saturday—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But it stands to reason," went on Temple, "that they'd rather play with a real junior team than with a set of fags in the Lower Fourth. Excuse me. You don't mind my speaking plainly, do you? As the real junior team, we really ought to have that fixture. I've told you that before, haven't I?"

"And I've told you before that you're a thumping ass, haven't I?" growled Wharton.

"Ahem! Now, under the circumstances, as you can't play, of course you'd like to pass the match on to us?" said Temple airily. "You'll have the satisfaction of knowing that it will be played better—in a way that will really do Greyfriars credit—"

Temple of the Fourth got no further. The feelings of the Removites were already exasperated to boiling-point. They did not wait for the army Temple to finish. They hurled themselves upon him, collared him on all sides, and swept him off his feet. There was a wild yell from Temple as he went sailing through the doorway, to land in the passage with a terrific bump.

"Here, I say—" gasped Dabney. "Hee! Hands off! Yarsooh!"

Dabney sailed out after Temple. Fry jumped back, but he was collared the next moment, and in a moment more he was sprawling over Dabney and Temple. There was a chorus of wild yells in the Remove passage. Bob Cherry slammed the door, and left the heroes of the Fourth to sort themselves out.

"There! That makes me feel a little better!" said Bob, breathing hard. "This isn't a time to stand Temple's gas."

The door flew open, and Cecil Temple brandished a furious fist into the study.

"You cheeky fags! I'll—"

There was a rush of the exasperated Removites, and Temple, Dabney & Co. disappeared down the passage at top speed. Bob slammed the door again, and this time it was not reopened.

"Now, what's going to be done?"

What was going to be done? It was a hopeless question! St. Jim's had to be written to, cancelling the match. There was no help for it. It had to be so; and yet the juniors were determined that it should not be so.

Squiff was sitting silent while the angry and excited discussion went on. His brow was wrinkled; he was thinking deeply. And suddenly Squiff uttered an exclamation that drew all eyes upon him eagerly:

"I've got it!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Really Rippling!

SAMPSON QUINCY IFFLEY FIELD, the cheerful junior from New South Wales, was the cynosure of all eyes at once. Harry Wharton & Co. had great faith in the sagacity of the Australian junior, and his declaration that he had "got it" raised their hopes at once. They regarded him eagerly.

"Go it, Squiff!"

"Pile in, old chap!"

"Advance, Australia!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I think we can work it," said Squiff meditatively. "I suppose you fellows are agreed that we're going to play St. Jim's all the same, if it can be worked. We must simply regard Quelchly as temporarily off his rocker, and take no notice!"

"Exactly!" said Wharton. "Only we can't let him know. If he had a suspicion that we were going to play the match all the same he would be down on us like a hundred of bricks. Of course, we should have to keep it dark, and that's where the rub comes in. We can't play St. Jim's without Quelchly knowing?"

"That's my idea, though," said Squiff.

"My dear chap, when they come here—if they do come here—Quelchly will see them; we can't expect him to keep his eyes shut!"

"Not need for them to come here," said Squiff. "More ways than one of killing a cat, and playing a footer-match!"

"Can't go over to St. Jim's," said Bob Cherry. "Tom Merry might agree to play the match at home, instead of away, if he knew the fix we were in. But if we made a journey like that Quelchly would know, of course. In fact, we should have to have our dinner specially early to get a train in time."

"I wasn't thinking of going over to St. Jim's, fathhead!"

"Oh! What's the programme, then?"

"What's the matter with the Courtfield ground?" asked Squiff.

"The Courtfield ground?" repeated Wharton.

"Why not? We did our practice there to-day. Trumper is a good sort, and we happen to know that they're not using the ground on Saturday afternoon; they're going on a scout run. We could ask Trumper, and he'd agree like a shot. Then you can write to Tom Merry, or to the St. Jim's sec, whoever he is, and ask them to come to Courtfield instead of Greyfriars!"

"My hat!"

"You see, we're not detained on Saturday," said Squiff. "We can go out if we like. I know Quelchly will very likely keep an eye on us. But we can go out in our Boy Scout rig, as if we were going on a scout run!"

"My hat!"

"We can have our footer clobber put all ready on Trumper's ground. They have a tin dressing-room there, you know, and they'll let us use it, of course."

"Oh, good!"

"Quelchly sees us off," grinned Squiff—"sees us march forth as Boy Scouts in all our glory. Forgets all about us then. We clear off to Courtfield, change from Boy Scouts into our footer rig; St. Jim's comes along there; and there you are!"

"By Jove!" said Wharton.

Bob Cherry rushed at Squiff, and hugged him in the exuberance of his joy and satisfaction.

"Hooray! Hip-hip! Saved!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Leggo, you fathhead!" gasped Squiff. "Well, what do you chaps think of the idea?"

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"Think of it!" ejaculated Wharton. "Why, it's topping—first chop! Blessed if I know why I didn't think of it myself!"

"We think of things in New South Wales, you know," murmured Squiff modestly.

"It's topping!" said Peter Todd enthusiastically. "Quelchly is pretty certain to be busy with his giddy literary work on Saturday afternoon, and he won't give us the decimal fraction of a thought after he's once seen us go out as Boy Scouts. It's ripping!"

"Hold on!" remarked Nugent. "We've got to write to Tom Merry cancelling the match, and Quelchly's got to see the letter!"

"Oh!" said all the juniors together.

But Squiff smiled serenely.

"That's all right," he said easily. "You can write that letter to-morrow, and let Quelchly see it. But to-night you can write, explaining the matter to Tom Merry, and telling him to take no notice of the letter he'll receive to-morrow. Of course, he'll get to-night's letter first, so that will be all right. You can explain the circus!"

The juniors looked at Sampson Quincy Iffley Field in great admiration. The youth with many names thought of everything.

Wharton sat down at the table at once, and drew pen and paper and ink towards him.

"We'll strike the iron while it's hot," he remarked. "Plenty of time to catch this evening's collection, and Tom Merry will get the letter some time to-morrow!"

"I suppose they won't object to playing the match, under the circus," said Frank Nugent thoughtfully. "May feel a bit doubtful about playing against the permission of our Form-master, you know!"

Harry Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"Well, I won't give them too many details," he said. "I'll put it down to circumstances. I won't tell him that Quelchly is the circumstances!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors put their heads together over the composition of that letter. When it was finished it ran:

"Dear Merry,—Owing to circumstances, we shall not be able to play the match on our own ground on Saturday. We are borrowing the Courtfield ground, which is just as good. Come by your usual train to Courtfield Junction, and some of us will meet you there and take you to the ground."

"You will get another letter to-morrow cancelling the match; but don't take any notice of it, as it will only be a joke, which I will explain to you afterwards. I know you will think this rather odd, but it is due to circumstances over which we have no control."

"Remember, we shall expect you at Courtfield on Saturday, as arranged, and don't fail to turn up.—Always yours,

"HARRY WHARTON."

"That does the trick," said Wharton. "We can let them know later that Quelchly is the circumstances, and they will understand that he is circumstances over which we have no control."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will puzzle them a bit," remarked Bob Cherry. "But they'll come; it will be all right. We'll play the match at Courtfield, and Quelchly will be none the wiser."

"Hear, hear!"

"And, mind, keep it dark," said Squiff. "Not a word outside the eleven! If Bunter should get hold of it, it would be all over the school in a jiffy."

"Dead secret!" said Bob. "Not a word—not a whisper!"

"Now buzz off and post the letter!"

Harry Wharton strolled out of the School House with the letter in his pocket. In the dusky Close, he sauntered down to the school letter-box, quite unobserved, and slipped in the letter. Then he came back, and the juniors, in much more cheerful spirits, went to their preparation.

Squiff's scheme had taken a load from their minds.

That they were justified in playing the match all the same, in spite of Mr. Quelch's prohibition, the juniors felt satisfied.

They realised that Mr. Quelch didn't understand the importance of the matter.

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Bolsover major cast a look over the gathering crowd. He could see no sign of Harry Wharton & Co. "Blessed if I see them!" he said. "Ha, ha, ha! Look a little closer!" grinned Trumper. "What do you mean? I tell you they're not here!" "Osh-kosh—bang-wallop—koosh!" cried out one of the Maoris. (See Chapter 13.)

If he had understood it—as they did—he wouldn't have acted in such an entirely unreasoning manner.

As Bob Cherry said, he was an awful beast, but he didn't really mean to be a beast. They were, in fact, saving him from being a beast; they were really entitled to his gratitude, if he had only known.

All the same, it was very important that he should not know, for if he discovered the little game of the Remove footballers there was no doubt that he would come down with a heavy hand.

Floggings all round were the least that could be expected—indeed, it was quite on the cards that the leaders of the mutiny might be expelled from the school.

They were willing to take the risk, but it was evidently necessary to keep the matter a dead secret.

Outside the Remove eleven, not a word was breathed on the subject. It would be necessary to tell Trumper, but Trumper was to be fully trusted. Within Greyfriars, mum was the word!

But the unexpectedly cheerful looks of the Remove foot-

ballers attracted attention that evening. The fellows had expected to see them looking dismayed and furious, but they looked nothing of the sort.

"You seem to have got over it pretty soon," sniffed Bolsover major. "Pretty set of asses the Remove will look to the St. Jim's fellows, won't they?"

"I hope not," said Wharton cheerily.

"The match can't come off now. No good talking to Quelch!"

"No good at all!" agreed Wharton.

"You call yourself captain of the Form, don't you?" demanded Bolsover disagreeably.

Wharton admitted that he did.

"Well, you ought to be able to do something," said Bolsover.

"I must think it out," said Wharton solemnly. "If there's anything to be done, Bolsover, you may depend upon it I'll do it!"

Bolsover grunted.

"Blessed if I see anything to grin at, anyway!" he said, with a glare at Bob Cherry.

"Look in the glass, then, old chap!" suggested Bob.

"Oh, rats!"

And Bolsover major stalked away, leaving all the chums of the Remove grinning.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. All Serene!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you written the letter?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Kindly show it to me!"

Harry Wharton demurely and respectfully laid a letter upon Mr. Quelch's desk. The Remove-master glanced over it. It ran:

"Dear Merry,—I am sorry to say that, owing to circumstances, I must ask you to cancel the football match on Saturday. I hope this won't put you out a lot. It's very unfortunate, as we badly wanted to see you here. We hope you will excuse us."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"Kindly seal and address that letter, Wharton."

"Very well, sir!"

Mr. Quelch called in Trotter, the page, and gave him the letter to post. He motioned Harry Wharton to go to his place, and morning lessons began. Wharton's manner was very quiet and submissive.

But it was clear that Mr. Quelch was very much on the alert.

Although he did not understand what a crushing blow it was to the Remove team to have their football fixture cancelled in this high-handed manner, he evidently suspected that the juniors would play the match all the same, if they could.

Hence his carefulness to see the letter written and posted to the junior captain of St. Jim's.

The match being now cancelled by post, as Mr. Quelch believed, the matter was at an end. The Saints would not come to Greyfriars on Saturday. If they had come, they could not, of course, have escaped Mr. Quelch's observation. He would have had no hesitation whatever in that case in forbidding the match, and sending them bootless home. But he did not, of course, wish to act with that discourtesy towards the juniors of another school. It was better to make sure that the match was cancelled in good order and beyond doubt. And that he had done—as he believed.

Probably Mr. Quelch expected some sulking on the part of the Remove fellows, following his drastic punishment.

But they were not sulky. Indeed, they were on their good behaviour. Mr. Quelch had no fault to find with them all Thursday morning.

He dismissed them kindly enough after lessons, but without any relenting in his heart. He only considered from their meekness that they realised the justice of their punishment—which was really very far from being the case.

As a matter of fact, the Removes had resolved to be unusually good for the next few days. Mr. Quelch was fairly on the war-path now, and the juniors did not want to risk being detained on Saturday afternoon. Detention would have knocked Squiff's beautiful little scheme entirely on the head.

In the afternoon they were equally good. When they were dismissed for the day, Mr. Quelch made a sign to Wharton to pause, as the juniors were going out. Harry stopped at his desk with an inward tremor. The Remove-master was very keen, and the uncomfortable thought flashed into Wharton's mind that perhaps he suspected that two letters instead of one had been written to St. Jim's.

But no suspicion of the kind was in Mr. Quelch's thoughts. His look was almost genial.

"About Saturday, Wharton," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

He looked hopeful. Was his Form-master about to remove his prohibition of the match?

"I am glad to see that you have taken your punishment in a proper spirit, Wharton—you and the others," said Mr. Quelch graciously. "Doubtless you realise that my action was, if somewhat severe, quite just. You realise, too, that I cannot depart from it in the slightest degree."

"Oh!" murmured Wharton, his momentary hope vanishing again.

"However," said Mr. Quelch, "if you choose to play among yourselves on Saturday afternoon, I shall raise no objection to that. I have no desire to waste your half."

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holiday. You may play a match among yourselves if you choose."

"Thank you, sir! But—but——"

Mr. Quelch looked at him very sharply.

"Perhaps you have some other project on foot, Wharton, for Saturday afternoon?"

Wharton realised that he was treading on dangerous ground. It needed only a single false step to fan the form-master's vague suspicions into a flame.

"We were thinking of going out, sir," said Harry.

"Indeed! Where, may I ask?"

"We haven't had much scout practice, sir," explained Wharton.

"We are going to change into our scout rig immediately after dinner, and go out—if you have no objection, sir."

"None at all!" said Mr. Quelch. "I fully approve of the Boy Scout movement, Wharton, and I commend your keenness. You may go."

Wharton felt a little "rotten" as he went. He had told Mr. Quelch nothing but the truth. The juniors did certainly intend to change into their scout rig immediately after dinner on Saturday, and go out. What they were going to do afterwards was another matter. But although Wharton had kept to the exact truth, he felt that he had sailed very near to the wind, so to speak, and he did not feel comfortable. Yet it was hard to say what else he could have replied without confessing the whole plan to his Form-master, which, of course, was impossible.

"He's as keen as mustard!" he muttered, as he joined his chums in the passage. "I believe he's got some idea in his head that we haven't quite given up hope about the match."

"He knows we've written to Merry cancelling it!" grinned Bob Cherry. "What the deuce can he want more than that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will have to be kept awfully dark," said Wharton uneasily. "We're doing a jolly risky thing—awfully risky. If it wasn't such an important match I should feel inclined to chuck it up, after all. But we've got to go through with it now."

"You bet!"

There was no hesitation on that point; the junior footballers were determined on that. At whatever risk, they were going to play the fixture with St. Jim's.

Wharton waited rather anxiously for the reply to his letter to Tom Merry. It came by the evening post, and the chums of the Remove gathered in Study 1 to read it.

"Dear Wharton,—I've received both your letters. I must say, I'm blessed if I understand the second one, but as you've explained it in advance in your first, it's all right. Any ground will suit us that suits you, and we'll play on the Courtfield ground with pleasure, if it's more convenient. We arrive at Courtfield Junction on Saturday, at two o'clock, and shall be glad to see some of you there. Kindest regards,
"TOM MERRY."

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry. "Shove that letter into the fire, in case Quelch should ask to see the answer to yours, old chap."

"Good idea!"

Tom Merry's letter was promptly burnt.

The junior footballers were satisfied. "Everything in the garden," as Bob Cherry said, "was lovely." The weather was splendid, and looked like keeping dry and fine over the week-end. Trumper had been seen—Bob had cycled down to Courtfield to visit him—and he had agreed heartily to lend them the ground, and had handed Bob the key of the "tin" dressing-room there. Indeed, he had offered his services to referee the match, and they had been gratefully accepted. Everything looked promising for the young rascals of the Remove, and they congratulated Squiff, and one another, on that really excellent and topping scheme.

And they looked forward eagerly to Saturday!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At the Last Moment!

IN the brief time that remained before the St. Jim's match Harry Wharton & Co. put in as much time as they could at football practice.

Upon the whole, Wharton was very well satisfied with his team.

Squiff was a regular player in all the important Remove matches, and he was a first-rate forward, and a "rod in pickle" for the Saints. The rest of the team were quite up to the mark. There was every reason to look for a victory on Saturday afternoon—if everything went well, and the match came off as arranged.

The secret had been well kept. It was not till Friday

morning that some of the Remove fellows outside the eleven were taken into the secret, so that they could come along and see the match. And only fellows who could be absolutely relied upon were told. Fellows like Snop and Skinner and Billy Bunter were left quite out of it. Other fellows like Alonso Todd and Fisher T. Fish were kept in the dark, not because they might have squeaked, but because they might have chattered. Harry Wharton was determined to run no risks. The closer the day came, the more clearly he realised what a serious matter it was to play the match in disregard of the Form-master's prohibition. It was too late to retreat now—neither did Wharton wish to retreat—but he had a full consciousness of the seriousness of the venture, and he knew that he could not be too careful.

In fact, there was a lurking uneasiness at the back of Wharton's mind. If he had been dealing with Mr. Prout, or Mr. Capper, he would have felt as confident as the other fellows. But Mr. Quelch was so very sharp.

It was impossible to tell whether the Remove-master was wholly satisfied. He said nothing on the subject. But he was so very sharp, and he might suspect! Wharton could not feel quite easy in his mind.

However, there was nothing to do but to go ahead. After school on Friday, the juniors had strolled out of the gates of Greyfriars with their coats on, and little bundles hidden under their coats. Those little bundles, containing their footer things, were safely deposited in the dressing-room on the Courtfield ground, and locked up there.

Saturday morning dawned bright and cold and clear. It was going to be an ideal day for football. It was an ideal day for a scout run, for that matter, and that was the ostensible occupation of the Remove fellows that afternoon.

After dinner nearly all the Remove adjourned to the dormitory to change into their Boy Scout attire.

Half a dozen patrols were going out together, in order to keep up their appearances.

The members of the team, and the fellows who were only going to watch the game, donned their scout rig in the dormitory. They were changing busily, when William George Bunter trotted in. He blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles, and proceeded to peel off his tight-fitting Etona.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Going to bed, Bunter?"

Bunter snorted.

"I'm coming out with the scouts," he said.

"Wha-a-a!"

"I'm a scout, ain't I?" said Bunter, wrathfully. "Just like you fellows to start a scout run without me. I'm jolly well not going to be left out, I can tell you. I'm willing to carry grub, if you like."

"There isn't going to be any grub, porpoise!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I suppose you're not going to be out all the afternoon without anything to eat?"

"Go and eat cake."

"If you're thinking of having tea out somewhere, I'm on," said Bunter. "Of course, I'll stand my whack! The afternoon post will be in before we start, and I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, Bunter, you stay at home," said Harry Wharton. "You don't care for scouting, and you're too fat to run, and you're only after a feed. Ring off!"

"I'm coming!" said Bunter.

"Look here, you fat duffer—"

"I'm coming!"

"You can't come!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him inquisitively.

"I say, you fellows, what have you got on this afternoon?" he demanded. "What are you going to do besides scouting?"

"Oh, rats!"

"I jolly well know there's something, or you wouldn't be so jolly anxious to keep me out of it," said Bunter, with a sniff.

The Removites glared at Bunter. They were dismayed by the prospect of the addition of Bunter to the party.

The fat junior was "on the make" as usual, of course—and now that his curiosity was excited, it was impossible to shake him off. And the Removites did not intend to "scout" at all, but to play footer, the presence of Bunter would be decidedly awkward.

If Bunter got "on" to the wheeze, there was no telling what would happen. The juniors would be under his fat thumb immediately, and Bunter would at once proceed to make himself offensive. And he was such a chatterbox, that he was certain to let out the secret, even if he did not intend to do so. Already, in their mind's eye, the juniors seemed to see Mr. Quelch striding upon the match-ground, with Jove-like thunder in his brow. And to settle the matter by kicking Bunter out of the dormitory would not do. The fat junior would make a row at once, and if Mr. Quelch held half a cord on the subject, it would be enough to make him suspicious.

Bunter had to come!

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NEXT MONDAY—**"FAGGING FOR COKER!"**

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

The fat junior proceeded to put on his scouting garb, which looked as if it were ready to burst at every point as his fat limbs were shoved into it. The juniors gave him grim looks, but Bunter did not mind that. Already he was convinced that he was "on" to something which had been kept secret from him, and his curiosity was at burning point. He was quite determined not to be shaken off.

"Are you hungry, Bunter?" asked Vernon-Smith, in a honeyed voice.

"Well, I could do with something to eat," said Bunter, with a grunt. "I didn't get much at dinner—I never do—only four helpings, and— Look here, Smithy, if you care to lend me five bob on my postal order—"

"I'll make it one bob, if you like," said Smithy, "on condition that you cut off to the tuckshop at once."

"Done!" said Bunter promptly.

The Bouncer carelessly tossed over the shilling, and the fat scout rolled out of the dormitory. Vernon-Smith closed the door after him.

"Rid of him for a few minutes, anyway," he said.

"He'll watch for us from the tuckshop," said Bob Cherry.

"No chance of getting out without the fat boulder spotting us."

"Oh, I know that—I've got something to say that I don't want him to hear, that's all," said the Bouncer cheerfully.

"Some of us who are not playing can take charge of him when we get out. Say, Hazeldene and Russell and Ogilvy. You three chaps can take care of Bunter and lose him in the wood, and come on to Courtfield afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm on," said Hazel, grinning. "Anything to oblige!"

"Good," said Harry Wharton, with a breath of relief.

"We can't have Bunter there—he would be sure to give us away, and then all the fat would be in the fire. You fellows ready?"

"Ready, O Chief!" said Tom Brown.

"Come on, then!"

The crowd of scouts marched out of the dormitory, some of them carrying coats on their arms. The scouts did not usually take coats out with them, but as Bolsover major remarked, watching a footer match in scout rig would be a bit chilly. They descended the stairs, and marched out into the close—and met Mr. Quelch just outside the School House. There was a very keen expression on the face of the Remove-master, and it occurred to the Co. at once that he intended to see them start on that scout run, in order, as it were, to make assurance doubly sure.

But his expression was quite genial as he nodded to them, and they saluted him respectfully. Seeing was believing, and here he saw them, nearly all the Remove in Boy Scout rig-outs, just going forth. He could hardly have wanted any further proof that the St. Jim's match was really quite "off."

"Ah, you are going out scouting?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, off, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"You have very fine weather—h'm!—for your little run, my boys," said the Form-master, graciously.

"Oh, ripping, sir!"

Billy Bunter came whizzing across from the tuckshop with an unfinished bat in his hand. There was no danger of Bunter being left behind.

"Ah, you are going, too, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, with a smile.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter. "I'm a scout, sir!"

"I hope you will have a very pleasant run," said Mr. Quelch. "What direction are you taking?"

"We—we are going to begin in Friarsdale Wood, sir!"

"And perhaps after that you may go over the common?" suggested Mr. Quelch. "Courtfield Common offers excellent facilities for these—ahem!—operations."

Wharton started; he could not help it. Was it possible that the Form-master suspected the little game, after all?

"Courtfield Common, sir?" murmured Wharton.

"Yes, I mention it because if you take that direction, I may have the pleasure of seeing you at work, perhaps," explained Mr. Quelch pleasantly.

"S-s-seeing us, sir?"

"Yes; as I am taking a walk there this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch. "Well, good-bye, my boys."

And the Remove-master went into the house.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes a Rest!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked at one another. They were all ready to start.

But they could not!

Mr. Quelch's last words had had the effect of rooting them to the ground. They could only look at one another in blank dismay.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Wharton was the first to recover himself.
 "Not a word here!" he whispered hurriedly. "Come on, for goodness' sake—and don't look like a set of boiled ovis! Quick march!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I say, you fellows, what's the matter? What——"

"March!" rapped out Wharton.

The scouts marched. In utter dismay, they tramped on towards the school gates. Billy Bunter was the only fellow who did not look as if he had received a serious shock. But it was not safe to discuss the matter within the school walls—and above all in the presence of Bunter. With gloomy faces, the juniors tramped away down the road. They did not speak in the lane. It had been previously arranged that Bob Cherry and Wharton should cut off at once to Courtfield Station, to make sure of being in good time to meet the St. Jim's party. But they did not carry out that programme now. Something had to be decided on first.

Mr. Quelch was taking a walk on Courtfield Common that afternoon. Was it merely by chance, or did he suspect something? On Wednesday, he had found the Removites playing on the Courtfield ground. Did he suspect that they had abandoned the match at Greyfriars with the purpose of playing it there, and did he intend to keep his eyes open? It was impossible to be certain on that point. But whether the Remove-master would be there by chance or by design, it was quite certain that he would "spot" the Removites if they were playing St. Jim's there. There would be no doubt at all about that. It a footer match was going on there, Mr. Quelch would see it, and he would, of course, instantly recognise the Remove players. He would not recognise the St. Jim's fellows, no doubt, having seen little or nothing of them. Then it would all be out. The mere fact that the Removites had pretended to go out scouting, would make him quite assured—if he saw them playing footer—that it was the St. Jim's team they were playing!

And he would see them.

Squiff's scheme, so excellent as it had seemed to the Removites, had crumbled away into dust and ashes!

And the worst of it was, that their last state was worse than their first.

For the match could not be played; and yet it was too late to stop the Saints from coming over. Tom Merry & Co. were due at Courtfield Junction at two o'clock, and it was already just one o'clock.

If they had cancelled the match, as their Form-master had ordered them, at all events the St. Jim's fellows would not have come over for nothing. Now they had come. And it was left to the Famous Five to meet them at the station, and tell them the match was "off," after they had made a long and troublesome railway journey, with another long and troublesome railway journey home again to look forward to. It was too bad! The juniors felt that they simply could not face Tom Merry & Co. and tell them that.

Yet the alternative—to play the match, and have Mr. Quelch come swooping down on them! He would order them off the field instantly; there was not the slightest doubt of that. It would be like the scene of Wednesday afternoon over again, only ten times worse. The match would be unfinished. The St. Jim's fellows would be left stranded. The Removites would be humiliated in the presence of the visiting team. It was too rotten to be thought of.

"Oh, crumbe!" said Bob Cherry, at last, breaking the painful silence. "My only hat! This fairly puts the lid on it!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors in surprise. He did not understand their downcast looks, but he knew there was something very much the matter. And he meant to know what it was.

"I—I say, you haven't forgotten the grub, have you?" asked Bunter uneasily. To his mind that was the greatest calamity that could possibly have happened, and was really the only way of accounting for the dismay of the scouts.

"We've got to think it out!" muttered Squiff.

"Think what out?" demanded Bunter, at once.

"Oh, ring off!"

"But I say, you fellows——"

"Here, it's time we began scouting!" exclaimed Squiff. "Get a move on! Four of us to go through the wood, and the rest to follow their track—what? Hazel, Ogilvy, Russell, and Bunter to start."

"Good!"

"Oh, really?" began Bunter.

"Order!" rapped out Wharton.

"But, I say—oh—yow—owow!" "Start, I tell you!"

Several scout staves prodded Bunter, and he started. Hazel took one of his arms, and Ogilvy the other, and Russell walked behind him, prodding him with his staff. The four

juniors disappeared into the wood, only the wild howls of Bunter coming back.

"I say, you fellows, I—I don't like this," howled Bunter.

"I'd rather keep with the party, you know——"

"Never mind what you'd rather, said Hazel cheerfully.

"Come on!"

"Look here, I wop!"

"Give him a pro, Russell!"

"What-ho!" said Russell.

"Yow-ow-ow! You horrid beast! Chuck it! I'm going ain't I!" wailed Bunter.

"Keep going, then," grinned Russell.

And Billy Bunter was inexorably marched off into the very heart of the wood. The three juniors gave him no rest. Bunter's little fat legs were aching with fatigue in the course of a quarter of an hour.

"Here, you're not keeping up!" exclaimed Hazel.

"Blessed if I'm going to drag you on like this, Bunter."

"Yow-ow! Leggo, then, you beast!" howled Bunter.

"Do you think I want you to drag me, you silly fathead!"

"Well, keep up, then," said Hazel, with a wink to Ogilvy. And the two juniors released the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter promptly plumped his fat person down in the grass, and refused to budge again. He had "bellows to mend."

"Buck up!" shouted Russell.

"Yow! I'm not going to move!" yelled Bunter. "Keep that stuff away, you beast! I'm tired! I—I've sprained my ankle! I'm going to have a rest."

"You'll be captured," said Hazel.

"I don't care!"

"Now, buck up!"

"Sha'n't!"

"We shall go on, and leave you," threatened Hazel.

"Go on, and be blowed!" retorted Bunter.

And he sat tight, while the three juniors tramped on into the wood. As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter wanted to be captured. He wanted to get back to the provisions. So he sat in the grass to rest. Hazel and Ogilvy and Russell, chucking, made a detour through the wood, as soon as they were out of Bunter's sight, to get back to the place where they had left the scouts.

Billy Bunter sat contentedly in the grass, waiting for the main body to come up and capture him.

But they did not arrive. It was quite an hour before it fully dawned upon Bunter that they weren't coming at all. Then, with deep wrath in his breast, the Owl of the Remove set out to search for the scouts. But by that time there were no scouts to be found.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

HARRY WHARTON stood with knitted brows as the fat junior was led away and disappeared. It was necessary for Bunter to be got rid of before the Removites could discuss the situation. Not that discussion was likely to do much good. They had, as Bob Cherry dolefully remarked, got it fairly in the neck.

Squiff looked the most lugubrious of all. It had been his idea to play the match with St. Jim's all the same, on the Courtfield ground. The idea had been hailed with enthusiasm, and it was very bitter to realise that they would have been better off without that idea at all. Without that ripping scheme, at least the Saints would not have been brought on a long railway journey for nothing. Now the match was off, just the same—right off, and Tom Merry & Co. would have had their journey from St. Jim's for their pains.

"Oh, it's rotten!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Can't anything be done? What about playing the match and chancing it?"

"And having old Quelchy walk on the field and order us off!" growled Johnny Bull. "Pretty set of idiots, we should look!"

"To say nothing of what would follow at Greyfriars," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "I'm not exactly pining for a flogging."

"Or the sack!" granted Blustrade.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Looks as if we're fairly done," he said. "We simply can't play the match, if Quelchy is going to be there, or near there. Looks to me as if he suspects, and is going to look in on the Courtfield ground on purpose. But whether he suspects or not, he will jolly soon know when he sees us there."

"The knowfulness will be terrific!"

"No good beginning a match we can't finish, either," said Nugent.

"N. G.!" growled Tom Brown. "We're done!"



The scouts marched out into the Close, and met Mr. Quelch just outside the School House. There was a very keen expression upon the face of the Remove-master, and it occurred to the juniors at once that he intended to see them start on that scout run, in order to make assurance doubly sure. (See Chapter 8.)

"Hasn't anybody got a suggestion to make?" exclaimed Bob Cherry desperately. "It's up to you, Squiff. Haven't you got any more ideas?"

The Australian junior shook his head.

"Blessed if I have!" he said lugubriously. "We can't kidnap Quelch and tie him up in the barn, I suppose."

"I'd jolly well like to!" snorted Peter Todd vengefully. "Why the deuce can't he go on with his silly literary work this afternoon, and leave us alone? We've taken any amount of trouble to throw dust in his eyes—the ungrateful beast!"

"And the St. Jim's fellows will be at Courtfield at two," said Harry Wharton. "We've got to meet them there, anyway."

"And tell 'em the match is off!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Oh, it's too sickening!"

The discussion went angrily and dearly on. The juniors looked at it under all aspects, and discussed it thoroughly. But they could find no solution. The match could not be played under the nose of Mr. Quelch; so it could not be played at all. There was nothing for it but to meet the Saints at the station, and tell them the wretched news, and ask them to excuse the Removes, owing to circumstances over which most undoubtedly they had no control.

Hazel and Ogilvy and Russell came back out of the wood, grinning.

"Decided anything?" asked Hazeldene.

"Only that there's nothing to be done!" growled Wharton.

"The match is off."

"The off-fulness is terrific."

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"Oh, rotten!" said Ogilvy. "Haven't you got another idea, Squiff?"

"Not the ghost of one," snapped Squiff.

Wharton looked at his watch.

"Not much time to get to Courtfield," he remarked. "No good keeping Tom Merry waiting at the station there, anyway. Better get a move on."

Disconsolately enough the scouts moved off on the way to Courtfield. Their faces were moody and their thoughts bitter. It was a crushing blow that had descended on them at the very moment when every prospect seemed to smile.

The footballers had not yet quite given up hope. In spite of the apparent hopelessness of the position, they clung to the lingering possibility that something might turn up, somehow. But the hope was slight—very slight. The football eleven tramped away towards Courtfield, but most of the other fellows went their own ways. There was no football match to see, and Bolsover major and Russell and Ogilvy, proposed a scout run after all; as Bolsover observed, it was no good wasting the afternoon hanging about like a lot of moulting fowls.

"May as well," said Wharton. "Keep with me, you chaps in the team, in case there's a chance after all, though."

"No chance of playing the match," said Bolsover major, with a snort. "You've mucked it up too thoroughly for that among you."

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

Bolsover major grunted and walked off with the scouts.

Harry Wharton and the rest of the footballers tramped on towards Courtfield.

All of them were thinking it over keenly, trying to find some way out of the difficulty. But they reached Courtfield without having found a way out.

It was close on two o'clock, and the Greyfriars fellows proceeded at once to the station. They had the unpleasant task before them of meeting the team from St. Jim's, and informing them that the match was off. But the train was not yet in, and the eleven waited on the platform for its arrival.

Some of the juniors looked at Squiff every now and then hopefully. Squiff had made the first suggestion of a scheme which had landed them in this trouble. They felt that it was up to the enterprising youth from New South Wales to think of some further dodge by which matters might yet be set right. Sampson Quincy Illey Field felt that it was so himself, and he was thinking hard, but without much result apparently. He sat on one of the benches on the platform, with his muscular legs stretched out, his hands jammed in his pockets, and his brow deeply wrinkled. There was a gloomy silence among the juniors. The train was not yet signalled. They were almost dreading its arrival. How were they to face the St. Jim's fellows with such a story? Tom Merry & Co. would naturally think that they ought to have cancelled the match, instead of bringing a team on such a long journey on a wild-goose chase. It would be extremely awkward to tell them that they had come all that way for nothing. But it had to be done.

"Can't be helped," grunted Bob Cherry at last. "No good cudgelling your poor old brains over it, Squiffey. There's no way out."

The Australian junior looked up.

"I've been thinking," he said slowly.

"Yes, I thought so, by that giddy furore in your noble brow," said Bob, with a faint grin; "but 'tain't much use, old scout."

"I'm a new chap at Greyfriars, and don't know those St. Jim's fellows so well as you do," Squiff went on. "I've been over to see you once to play cricket, that's all. I haven't met them here. They're rather decent chaps, ain't they?"

"First-rate," said Bob, a little puzzled by the question. "They won't cut up rusty about this, if that's what you mean. They'll be badly disappointed, of course."

"That isn't what I mean. I mean they're the kind of fellows to help you out of a hole if they could?"

"Oh, yes. They're all topping! Tom Merry, and Blake, and Figgins, and D'Arcy—in fact, all of them—simply IT!" said Bob confidently.

"The itfulness is terrific!" assured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Squiff smiled.

"Good!" he said. "I've been thinking."

"So you said before!" grunted Bulstrode.

"Shut up! I give Squiff a chance!" said Wharton. "If he can think of a way out of this blessed scrape, we'll give him an Order of Merit and a putty medal. Go it, Squiff!"

"I suppose Quelchy knows those fellows by sight?"

"Quelchy? I—I suppose so," said Wharton, perplexed.

"He's seen them when they've been over to play us before. I don't suppose he's noticed them particularly. He's not very keen on games, and doesn't honour us by watching the matches often. And we have lots of teams come to play us, of course. I don't suppose he's noticed the St. Jim's fellows particularly. Why?"

"Suppose he saw them playing, would he be likely to guess they were the St. Jim's chaps?"

"If we were playing with them, of course."

"But if we weren't? Suppose they were playing another team?"

"Then I don't suppose he would notice them," said Wharton, more and more puzzled. "But I must say I can't see what you're driving at."

"Talking out of his blessed neck!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Oh, I see!" said Bob. "You think we can give the Saints a match after all, though not with us? If we put it to Trumper, he'd play them on a Courtfield team, so as not to let them have their journey for nothing. I dare say they'd like to meet Courtfield. They'd get a good game. That's better than nothing, you fellows."

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Squiff.

"Then what the dickens were you thinking of?" ejaculated Bob.

"Suppose the St. Jim's team played a strange team on the Courtfield ground? Quelchy might trot by and never notice them?" said Squiff.

"Probably."

"Well, then—Squiff drew a deep breath—"I think we might work it. It will be risky, but it's a chance, if you fellows care to take the chance."

"We'd take half a chance rather than lose the match!"

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growled Johnny Bull. "But get it off your chest! What's the wheeze?"

The juniors all looked eagerly at Squiff. Was it possible that S. Q. I. Field had hit on a way out? Evidently he had thought of something.

"Dile in, Squiff!" said the Bounder. "We're on giddy tenterhooks."

"The tenterhookfulness is simply terrific!"

"Suppose there were a foreign team touring this country?" Squiff went on, with almost provoking deliberation. "Tain't an uncommon thing in these days. For instance, a team of Maoris from New Zealand."

Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, gave a jump.

"Blessed if I ever heard of a Maori football team—not real Maoris," he said. "Of course, there are Maoris who play both footer and cricket, but there jolly well ain't any over here—not that I've heard of."

"But there might be."

"I suppose there might," said Tom. "But what the dickens—"

"Get at it, Squiff!"

"That's the idea," said Squiff calmly.

"What is?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Blessed if I see it yet!" said Bob.

"Don't you see? The Saints will come, and they'll play a Maori team; and if Quelchy walks by and sees a team playing a Maori team on the Courtfield ground, he won't be any the wiser—what?"

The chums of the Remove stared at Squiff. Unless the junior from New South Wales had taken leave of his senses, they could only conclude that he was pulling their leg. But he looked serious enough.

"If you're not talking out of your silly neck, tell us what you're driving at," said Bulstrode tartly.

"Where is the Maori team to come from?" demanded Nugent.

"Here."

"What?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Squiff impatiently. "Haven't you ever blacked your faces in private theatricals or in a sinner minstrel show?"

"B-b-b-black our faces!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Great Scott!"

"Our f-f-f-faces!" jerked out Wharton.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"Oh, what a wheeze! What a stunning jape! Ha, ha, ha!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Black, But Not Comely!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at Squiff almost speechless.

It took them some minutes to realise his idea in all its stupendous cheek.

Yet it was simple enough.

Mr. Quelch intended to stroll by the Courtfield lower ground, to make assurance doubly sure that the Remove players were not there playing St. Jim's.

If he found a team unknown to him playing a Maori eleven, there was no reason why he should associate the latter with the Removees who had gone out scouting.

As for the make-up, that was quite easy.

The required make-up they already possessed in the property-box in Study No. 1 at Greyfriars. They had only to black their faces, wear different colours, and—there they were! The exact tint of the Maori complexion they did not know, but black would do. Mr. Quelch didn't know it any better than they did, for that matter.

"He'd know our clothes," said Bulstrode.

Squiff grunted.

"Couldn't play in these trousers, aa! We can buy or borrow a second-hand set of footer things at old Lazarus's. He's got plenty. This isn't a time to save a little money. I suppose?"

"There's plenty of tin, if that's all that's wanted," said Vernon-Smith quickly.

"Something very bright—red and yellow stripes, or something," said Squiff. "Old Lazarus has lots to choose from. Never mind about the fit exactly. One of us can buzz into the town and get the—in fact, we can all go down to old Lazarus's and change there. He can lend us the make-up—he sells that kind of stuff. We'll all make ourselves as black as the ace of spades."

"Maori's ain't black," said Tom Brown.

"Black will do, my son—the thicker the better," said Squiff. "A set of black mugs, in red and yellow-striped footer togs. It would want a lot of looking at to recognise them as Greyfriars chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"By Jove! It's a ripping idea!" exclaimed Wharton.
"It will make the St. Jim's chaps nearly kill themselves with laughter, I should think."

"Let 'em!" said Bob Cherry briskly. "They'll help us out all they can, I know that. They're as good as gold."

"Yes, rather!"

"Think it out," said Squiff. "I'm game, if you fellows are. If we're bowled out, it's a flogging; if we're not, we get our match with St. Jim's. And Tom Merry won't care whether he plays us with black faces or white, in our own colours or in red-and-yellow."

Wharton made a resolute gesture.

"It's risky," he said, "but we'll do it. It's the only chance. Are all you fellows game?"

"Game as pie!" said Bob Cherry promptly.

"Another point," said Squiff. "If the St. Jim's chaps don't object, they can play in the Courtfield colours. Trumper's waiting for us on the ground now, and he's got the things in the dressing-room there, and he'll lend them like a shot. Quelchy knows the Courtfield colours well enough, though he doesn't know all the Courtfield fells. He'll take them for a Courtfield team when he sees them, especially as Trumper will be there refereeing—and he knows Trumper jolly well."

"Oh, good!"

"If they'll do it——"

"Well, you can put it to them nicely," said Squiff. "They're decent chaps, and you can tell them what an awful fix we're in. I think they'll play up."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I think so," he said. "That would make all as safe as houses. A team in Courtfield colours playing a black team—Quelchy couldn't possibly suspect that that was St. Jim's, playing Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha! No!"

Wharton rose.

"The train's signalled," he said. "You fellows buzz down to old Lazarus's, and get ready as fast as you can. I'll come along as soon as I've explained to the St. Jim's chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

No time was lost. Ten grinning juniors hurried out of the railway-station, leaving Harry Wharton alone on the platform to greet Tom Merry & Co. when they arrived. They hurried down the street to the shop of Mr. Lazarus, the second-hand clobber, whose establishment included a little of everything. It was Mr. Lazarus who supplied the Junior Dramatic Society at Greyfriars with most of their costumes and their make-up; and he had an almost unlimited assortment of all kinds of second-hand garments, and ready-made garments that were not second-hand, but painfully new.

Mr. Lazarus greeted the Greyfriars juniors with a smile as they came in, and rubbed his hands. The visit of ten Greyfriars fellows at once seemed to indicate that business was going to be very brisk.

"What can I do for you, young shentlemen?" he asked.

"We want to borrow some clobber," explained Squiff.

"Football clobber."

"Yeh!"

"We want you to lend us a rig-out for eleven—new or old, it doesn't matter—must be bright and gaudy," said Squiff.

"I have the ferry ting," said Mr. Lazarus.

He produced a football shirt that, as Bob Cherry said, simply shrieked. It looked like a particularly vivid advertisement of a grate polish. Squiff chuckled.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed heartily. "My hat! They'll see us coming when we've got these things on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We want to change into 'em here, Mr. Lazarus," said Bob Cherry.

"Gum into my little room at the back, young shentlemen."

"Good egg!"

Mr. Lazarus showed them into the room at the back. He returned to the shop, and the juniors promptly changed. The Boy Scout garb was laid aside, and they tumbled into their new garments. There was no doubt that they would be "seen coming." The bright red and yellow stripes on the footer shirts and knickers were very conspicuous. Indeed, they gave the stuffy little room quite a gorgeous Eastern effect when the juniors were clad. Squiff put his head into the shop again.

"Now we want some make-up, Mr. Lazarus."

"My cootness!" said Mr. Lazarus.

"We're playing as a black team—it's a lark," Squiff explained. "We've got all to look like Hurree Singh—only a little more so."

"My esteemed chum——" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Lazarus grinned. He was not unaccustomed to the "asks" of the cheery Remorites, and he was ready to furnish anything that might be required. The make-up was promptly handed in, and the juniors proceeded to make a new another up.

Most of them were considerably skilled in that work, owing to the

to their experience in the Remove Dramatic Society. The work proceeded apace, amid gurgles of laughter from the fellows as they looked at one another's darkening faces. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's beautiful brown complexion disappeared under a new one of jet-black, and he was quite unrecognisable. As for the other fellows, they were still more utterly unrecognisable. They did not know one another. They did not know themselves when they looked in the glass.

Faces and hands and arms and legs were carefully blackened, every part that was likely to show. But Squiff was not finished yet. With an artistic hand, he touched up their lips with red, increasing the size of their mouths most effectively, and then he proceeded to rumple and darken their hair. Tom Brown declared that they didn't look much like Maoris, but it was certain that they looked still less like Greyfriars fellows.

"Now, all in Lazarus to see us!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I rather think he'll have a fit."

Mr. Lazarus came very near having a fit as he looked at the transformed juniors. He staggered back gasping at the sight of the black faces and huge red mouths.

"My cootness!" he gasped. "My cootness! Is it really you, young shentlemen? My cootness!"

"Think you'd know us out?" asked Vernon-Smith, grinning—a grin that his tinted lips made perfectly hideous.

"My cootness!" gasped Mr. Lazarus. "Oh, no! My cootness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I don't think Quelchy will, either," grinned Bob Cherry. "Now we're all ready! I can hear the brake!"

And the juniors swarmed out into the street.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. The Maoris!

"HEAH we are, deah boys!"
It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth-Form at St. Jim's, who made that remark.

The train was in Courtfield Station. It stopped, and the St. Jim's eleven turned out. There were fourteen fellows in all, in the St. Jim's party.

Tom Merry glanced up and down the platform. An athletic figure in Boy Scout's garb came speeding to meet him.

"Hallo, Wharton!" Tom Merry shook hands with the captain of the Greyfriars Remove with rather a curious look. "Been scouting?"

Wharton smiled.

"No—not exactly. I'm jolly glad to see you fellows. Are you looking for something, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn, the goalkeeper of the St. Jim's team, was looking round him.

"I think I remember there's a buffet at this station," said Wynn.

"Catch you forgetting it," grunted Figgins.

"So there is," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "This way! I want to have a jaw with you chaps before we go down to the ground, and we can talk in the buffet. We've got a brake outside, and it won't take long to get to the field."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded in the buffet. All of them were ready for a little refreshment after their long journey—especially Fatty Wynn. They were a little curious to know what Wharton had to say. His letters to St. Jim's had considerably surprised them, and his coming to meet them in Boy Scout costume was curious. They felt that there was something a little unusual on.

"Nothin' wong with the team, I twost, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his celebrated eye-glass inquiringly upon Wharton.

"Not at all!"

"But there's something up?" asked Blake shrewdly.

"Yes," confessed Harry. "That's what I want to explain to you chaps. We want you to help us out of a fix."

"Bai Juvie!"

"Anything we can do," said Tom Merry politely. "I hope the match is coming off?"

"Certainly—if you are willing to play it under rather unusual circumstances," said Wharton, colouring a little.

"Circumstances over which you have no control," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Exactly. The fact is, our Form-master has got his back up; he isn't a bad sort, as a rule, but he's got his back up now, and we can't see reason."

"Let our Form-master like that!" said Monty Lowther, with a solemn shake of the head. "Don't I know it? We've been there, old chap."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And the long and the short if it is, he came down heavy on us, and as a punishment, he ordered us to chuck 'this match'" said Harry.

"Oh!"

"Under the cires, we feel justified in telling him to go and eat coke—"

"Bai Jove! You haven't told your Form-mastah that!" ejaculated D'Arcy in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We haven't exactly told him," grinned Wharton. "But it amounts to that. That's why we couldn't have the game at Greyfriars as usual. The Courtfield fellows have lent us their ground, and we're playing the match there. Of course, you fellows don't mind playing under the cires? If you were in a scrape like us, we'd play all the same."

"Oh, count on us!" said Tom Merry. "It's no business of ours, anyway. If you want us to play the match according to agreement, we're on."

"Yass, wathah! Wely on us, deah boy."

"Of course, I don't mean that our Form-master is a tyrant, or anything of that sort," said Wharton hastily. "He's really a good chap, and we respect him. But he doesn't understand about footer. In this case we really sincerely think that he has gone too far and exceeded his rights. The match has been a fixture for a long time, and we think we have a right to play it. We're standing up for our rights. That's all about it."

"Bravo!" said Noble.

"Yass, wathah. I quite approve, deah boy. I should not approve of disrespect to a Form-master, of course, but in a case like this you have a right to declare that Bwitons nevah shall be slavek," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cordially.

"Good. We fixed it up to play on the Courtfield ground, and arranged it with you," said Harry. "It was all right so far, but at the last minute, when it was too late even to telegraph to you, we found that Quechey would most likely look in on the Courtfield ground this afternoon."

"My hat!"

"If he caught us out, it wouldn't hurt you fellows, of course; only it would muck up the match, and we should get it in the neck," said Harry. "So we've thought of a little dodge. We're going to play as Maoris."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Which?"

"Gwest Scott!"

Fatty Wynn nearly choked over his ginger-beer. Figgins dropped a blink in his astonishment, and Kerr swallowed his last drop of the wrong way. The St. Jim's juniors stared at Wharton blankly.

"You don't mind what colour we are, I suppose?" said Wharton anxiously.

"N-n-n-no!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Any old colour," murmured Blake. "Blue or green, if you like, or pink with spots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's all right," said Harry. "The fellows have gone to make up now. I'm going after them. You can come along in the brake. It won't take long. We shall be in lots of time for the match."

"But—but—but Great Scott, you really mean it!" exclaimed Manners.

"What a thumping jape!" murmured Redfern. "Oh, my hat! This will make 'em yell when we tell 'em about it at St. Jim."

"Yass, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yass, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anything you like," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"It's barely possible that Quechey might know your colours if he sees you, as you've played us at Greyfriars. Trumper—you know Trumper of Courtfield—is there. He's going to referee the match. He would lend you the clobber belonging to his club, if you fellows would wear it. Would you mind very much?"

"Any old thing," said Tom Merry.

"Wely on us, my deah chap."

"Anything to help a lame dog over a stile," grinned Blake. "We'll beat you in any colours you like."

"Thanks!" said Wharton, relieved. "That's about all. When you fellows are ready we'll get out to the brake."

The St. Jim's fellows were grinning as they followed Wharton from the station. They had guessed that something was "up," but they had hardly surmised anything of this sort. But they were ready and willing to do anything they could to help fellow-footballers out of a scrape. The Remove's trouble with its Form-master was no business of theirs. Their business was to play the match they had come to play. That was clear. And the daring nature of the jape appealed to them, too. It was quite in keeping with the ideas of the heroes of St. Jim's.

The brake which the Remove club had hired to convey

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the visitors to the ground was waiting outside the station. The footballers, with their bags, clambered into it, and Wharton told the driver to head for Mr. Lazarus's. The brake rolled away, and came to a halt outside the shop. And as it halted, a swarm of black-faced youths in glaring footer garb came out of the shop on to the pavement. The St. Jim's fellows gasped, and Harry Wharton gasped, too. He was prepared for it, but it almost took his breath away.

"My hat!" shrieked Blake. "Is this the crowd?"

"We're the Maori team," said Bob Cherry, coming up to the brake. "Me Kalingsalunga, great chief in Maoriland."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No speak English—speak Maori," said Nugent cheerfully.

"Ong, bang, koooh, goosh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your things are ready, Harry, old man. Slip in!"

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton ran into Mr. Lazarus's shop, and proceeded to make-up and change in the little parlour. Meanwhile, the swarm of Maoris chatted with the grinning St. Jim's juniors in the brake. Tom Brown declared that they looked more like Hottentots than Maoris, but that was not of the slightest consequence. They were not likely to meet anybody who had a close acquaintance with the genuine article.

But genuine or not, Maoris were an extremely uncommon sight in the streets of the market town, and the persons who sighted them there gathered round to stare. Two or three boys stopped to look at them, passing remarks on their complexion; then others, then loungers from the Red Cow and the Bull selected the crowd, then nurses with perambulators, and workmen going home, and all sorts and conditions of people. The crowd outside Mr. Lazarus's shop blocked the pavement in a few minutes, and the amateur Maoris were the cynosure of all eyes.

"No pushy," said Bob Cherry severely to a street urchin who came too close. "Me great Maori chief! Whip, whup, scoot, bangy-bangy!"

"My 'at!" said the youth.

"Kally, bally, aplooshi!" said Bob severely.

"My 'at! My heye! Wot is it?" gasped a grocer's boy, halting with his basket.

Monty Louthier grinned down from the brake.

"The famous Maori football team—the All Cracks!" he said. "Haven't you heard of them? Gentlemen, there is no admission fee. Every inhabitant of this distinguished town is at liberty to come along and see the match between us and the famous Maori team, specially sent over—ahem!—to knit closer the bonds of Empire."

"Ooray!"

The news spread like wildfire among the growing crowd. The announcement that the black youths were footballers from a Colony naturally made them popular at once. The crowd gave them a cheer. The black youths grinned, and it must be confessed that their grins were simply hideous. But they were loudly cheered.

"This is ripping!" murmured Squiff.

"Seems to me we shall have the whole blessed town after us," muttered Vernon-Smith.

"All the better. Don't you see?" Squiff chuckled. "If we get a crowd round the ground cheering us as Maoris, that will prevent anybody from suspecting that we're not really Maoris—what?"

"My hat, so it will!"

"The more the merrier," chuckled Squiff. "Blessed if I don't make them a speech!"

Squiff jumped up into the brake and waved his hand. There were a hundred people round the brake now, and more were coming up on all sides.

"Noble gentlemen and lords," said Squiff, "me no talky good English—"

"Far, 'er!"

"Yes, you da. Go on! Hooray!"

"But me loyal British subject. Play football top-side first-chop—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hooray!"

"Loyal Maoris back up old country first-chop. Down with the Kaiser!"

"Hooray!"

"Ash-bash, bong-bong, wallop!"

"My 'at! Wot's he saying now?"

"Me speak Maori language. No speak lot English. Me say all patriotic Britishers come and see Maori boys play football. Shushy, bishy-boshy, wip-wop!"

"Hooray!"

"We'll come!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bravo!"

Harry Wharton came dashing out of Mr. Lazarus's shop. He was as black as the arc of spades, and resplendent in

red-and-yellow-striped shorts, and jersey and cap. The crowd gave him a cheer as he dashed across the pavement and clambered into the brake. The rest of the "Maoris" had crammed themselves into it. The driver stared at his peculiar passengers. But he already had his instructions, and he drove away in the direction of the Courtfield football-ground. And after the brake, which went at a moderate speed, came a numerous and motley crowd, still cheering, and very keen to see the Maori team play football.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Black and White!

TRUMPER jumped.

He was on the Courtfield ground, according to promise, and he had been waiting some little time. The footballers were late. Trumper was looking for them in the direction of Courtfield, but what he saw at last made him jump almost clear of the ground. It was the brake he expected, and the St. Jim's fellows were in it; but beside them there were eleven fellows with coal-black countenances, and costumes that could have been seen almost by a blind man. Trumper stared at them blankly. And around the brake and following it, came a crowd of Courtfield people—men and boys and girls, all sorts and conditions of people, cheering.

"My word!" murmured Dick Trumper. "What the—who the—how the—" Words failed him.

The brake rolled up, and the crowd of fellows alighted from it. They came towards the football-ground, and a black youth raised a flaring cap to Trumper.

"Osh-kosh!" he exclaimed genially.

"What?" gasped Trumper.

"Thumpy-bumpy, koo-ko, keep!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Golly-wolly, bish-bosh!"

"My hat!"

"Shake hand! Osh-kosh, koosh!"

Trumper mechanically shook the black hand that was extended to him. As he shook hands, the black youth bent forward and whispered:

"Mum's the word, Trumper, old man!"

Trumper nearly fell down.

"Wharton!" he gasped.

"Sh! Come into the dressing-room. Osh-kosh, splosh, wallop!" added Wharton, more loudly, for the benefit of the onlookers, who marvelled as they heard that strange language and wondered how even a Maori could understand it. As a matter of fact, a Maori would have been very puzzled indeed to understand it. Fortunately, there was no one in Courtfield who could speak Maori.

Trumper led the way into the dressing-room, in a dazed state. Once inside, out of view of the crowd, the Removites burst into a yell of laughter.

"You didn't know us!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Know you! My hat! Rather not! Oh, crumbs! What's the little game?" gasped Trumper.

"Queelchy on the look-out!" explained Wharton. "We're a Maori team—"

"Great Scott!"

"And if Quelchy comes along, I don't think he will know us now—"

"We want you to lend these chaps some clobber. They're going to play in the Courtfield colours, if you don't mind?"

"Not a bit! Here you are!"

The St. Jim's juniors proceeded to change.

Meanwhile the crowd was thickening round the Courtfield ground. The news that a native Maori team was there spread far and wide. The crowd gathered from far and near, all anxious to see the black team playing. A number of the Greyfriars scouts, who were on the common, came along when they heard the news, and they looked on in great surprise as the two teams came out into the field.

Tom Merry & Co. were in the Courtfield colours, but most of the Remove fellows knew them at once, and there was a buzz of surprise. But the black footballers escaped recognition. Bolsover major and Russell and Hazel and the rest stared at them—hard—but they did not recognise them. Their black faces were quite unrecognisable, and the fuzziness of their hair and the glaring red-and-yellow stripes of their footer jerseys and knickers added to their disguise. Not one of the juniors suspected the presence of Harry Wharton & Co. And only Tom Brown could have told them that real Maoris do not have coal-black skins or fuzzy hair. And Tom Brown had become a "Maori" himself.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bolsover major. "Who are they? What are they? Look like a team of Christy Minstrels."

"They're going to play the St. Jim's chaps," remarked Hazel. "I know some of them. The skipper's Tom Merry, and that chap with the eyeglass is D'Arcy."

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Well, we knew they were coming," remarked Ogilvy. "But what are they playing these niggers for?"

"It's a giddy mystery! Where have Wharton and the rest got to?"

"Sure, and they've vanished intirely!" said Micky Desmond, puzzled. "They were going to meet the Saints at the station."

"Queer where they've got to!" said Penfold.

"Let's ask Trumper."

Bolsover major shoved his way towards Trumper, who, in Norfolk and whistle complete, was to referee the match. Trumper was chatting with the black footballers. The latter grinned as the perplexed Bolsover came up.

"I say, Trumper, do you know where our fellows are?" Bolsover asked.

Trumper chuckled.

"They're not far away," he said.

Bolsover cast a look over the gathering crowd. He could not see any sign of Harry Wharton & Co. there.

"Blessed if I see them!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" asked Bolsover crossly. "I can't see them. They're jolly well not near here! I know that!"

"Look a little closer!" grinned Trumper.

"What on earth do you mean? I tell you they're not about here!"

"Osh-kosh—bang-wallop—koosh!" said one of the Maoris.

"How do you do? Koosh—kop—skoosh!"

Bolsover major stared at him.

"These chaps speak English, Trumper?" he asked.

"I think so—a little—just a few words!" chuckled Trumper.

"Skimmy-jimmy—tooral-looral!" said the Maori cordially.

"My hat! What language is that?" gasped Bolsover.

"Maori," said Trumper—"the latest thing in Maori."

Bolsover major stared at the Maoris. Still he did not recognise them.

"I didn't know Maoris were as black as that," he said.

"Oh, they differ!" said Trumper. "In New Zealand they're a bit lighter, perhaps; but here they're quite dark—perfect brunettes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bolsover, old man—"

Bolsover major jumped.

"I—I know that voice!" he stuttered. "What on earth—"

"Koosh-woosh—boggley-woggley!" said Bob Cherry affably. "That's all the Maori I know, and I have to make it up as I go along."

"Bob Cherry!" gasped Bolsover.

"Keep it dark!" grinned Bob. "We're keeping it dark very dark!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And pass the word on to the chaps not to let on that the St. Jim's team is here," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If Quelchy comes along, we don't want him to know anything about the Saints. He's to take them for a Courtfield team—see?"

"Oh!" gasped Bolsover. "I—I see! You—you fellows—you're got up— Oh, my hat! Blessed if I should have known you!"

"Mind you don't give us away, that's all. And pass the word to the other chaps," said Wharton.

"You bet!" chuckled Bolsover. "Ha, ha, ha! This beats the band! All right. Rely on me."

And Bolsover major hurried away to rejoin the other scouts and pass the word. The Removites gasped when they heard it. Not one of them had recognised the Maoris, and it was pretty certain that Mr. Quelch would not do so if he came along. And the secret was in safe keeping.

The ground was at a good distance from the school, and no other Greyfriars fellows were likely to come here, only the Remove scouts, and they were on their guard.

When Mr. Quelch arrived on the scene he would see what appeared to be a Courtfield team playing a Maori team, and, unless he was blessed with the gift of second-sight, he would hardly suspect the real state of affairs.

The fact that their own Form-fellows had not recognised them gave the Remove eleven a feeling of perfect security. They walked cheerfully into the field, and the crowd gave them a cheer as they lined up. Harry Wharton and Tom Merry tossed, and the kick-off fell to St. Jim's.

There were two or three hundred people round the football-ground when the ball rolled from Tom Merry's foot, and the match began in great style.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Looks On!

GOAL!"

"Well kicked, Snowball!"

"Bravo, the Maoris!"

The black footballers were starting well. Harry Wharton had put the ball into the net in the first ten minutes, in spite of Fatty Wynn. There was a loud cheer for the Maoris.

They walked back to the centre of the field in great spirits. The Remove scouts in the crowd joined lustily in the cheering, but they were careful not to mention names. They cheered the "Maoris" like the rest.

"Go it, darkies!" roared Bolsover major. "Play up, New Zealand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" murmured Hazeldene, looking round. "Here comes Quelch! He has turned up after all!"

The players had re-started, and the black footballers had no eyes for their Form-master. But the Greyfriars fellows in the crowd were keenly interested in the approach of Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master was taking an afternoon stroll with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Whether he intended to look in at the Courtfield ground or not, whether he was suspicious of his Form or not, certainly his steps led him in that direction. He was discussing the war with Mr. Prout. He had a "Daily Mail" in his hand, and was illustrating his remarks by reference to the map printed there. Deep in "war jaw," he did not notice the crowd gathered round the football-ground for some time—not till he was quite close at hand. In fact, it was Mr. Prout who drew his attention to it.

"There seems to be some excitement here," the Fifth Form master remarked.

"Take the line Liege-Cologne—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite a large crowd!" said Mr. Prout.

"Eh? Yes, indeed!" said the Remove-master, looking towards the football-ground, and frowning. "It is a football match, I suppose. Ahem!"

A suspicious expression came over Mr. Quelch's face. Whether he had been suspicious before or not, he was suspicious now.

"I wonder—" he murmured.

"What are they shouting?" said the Fifth Form-master, with a look of interest. "Maoris! Some Colonial team, I presume. I should like to see them."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I should like to see them also," he remarked. "I have a suspicion—ahem! Let us see them by all means."

The two masters approached the football-ground. Bolsover took off his hat with a polite salute.

"Come to see the Maoris play, sir?" he asked.

"Maoris!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"A New Zealand native team, sir," explained Bolsover. "They're touring in this country, and they're playing a Courtfield team."

"Indeed!"

"Some of us have chucked the scouting for a bit to watch the match, sir," said Bolsover. "Never seen a native Maori team before."

"Never, sir," said Hazeldene. "They seem to play up jolly well, too. I wish Brown were here. He might be able to speak to them. Do you know Maori, sir?"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"No, Hazeldene; I am afraid that I haven't the slightest acquaintance with that language," he said.

"Some of them spake a little English, sorr," said Micky Desmond.

"Yes; I heard one of them speaking English—of sorts," said Bolsover major, with a nod. "Their own language sounds awfully queer."

The Maori goalkeeper had caught sight of Mr. Quelch now. Mr. Quelch was at the Greyfriars end of the field, and he was looking curiously at the goalie. The Maori team were well advanced, attacking the enemy's goal. The goalie was temporarily unoccupied, and he was smiting his chest to keep warm.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "Although I have never seen a Maori, I certainly had an impression that they were lighter in complexion than this—somewhat like the Malays. What exceedingly striking—ahem!—colours they wear!"

"Naturally!" said Mr. Prout, with a sage expression. "The natural desire of the barbaric races is for bright colours."

"Quite so!" assented Mr. Quelch.

"When I was in the Rockies in '85—" Mr. Prout went on reminiscently.

"Hurrah! Play up, darkies! On the ball!"

"Kick, you black bounders, kick!"

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"Oh, well saved!"

Fatty Wynn had sent out the ball again, but there succeeded a sharp tussle before the goal. The black goalkeeper continued to thump his chest.

"Probably they feel the sharpness of the climate here, after the more genial clime they are accustomed to in New Zealand," Mr. Quelch remarked. "Very fine and well-formed lads—quite athletic."

"Yes, ain't they, sir?" murmured Bolsover.

"Feeling cold, what?" called out Ogilvy to the black goalkeeper.

Bulstrode looked round, and grinned—a big grin.

"Shoosh—wacky—ish—boohoo!" he replied.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Icky—chicky—hook—gooh—woosh!" went on the black goalkeeper affably. "Snicky—krook—hook—wang!"

"I should like to know what that may mean," remarked Mr. Prout, who had listened to the goalkeeper's remark with deep attention. "A very interesting language—very! You observe that there are a great many consonants—the effect is somewhat harsh—very natural in a barbaric tongue."

"Very!" agreed Mr. Quelch.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Bolsover, as the St. Jim's team came sweeping down the field. "Courtfield are holding them well, sir!"

"Very fine lads!" said Mr. Prout, with a glance at Tom Merry & Co. "These are—ahem!—boys of the Courtfield County Council School, I presume?"

"Do their school credit, don't they, sir?" said Bolsover.

"Indeed they do—a very fine set of lads!"

"Indeed, yes," said Mr. Quelch. "They have played the boys in my Form many times, Mr. Prout. I do not remember their faces, but I know their colours very well. By the way, Bolsover, where are Wharton and the others?"

"I think they're seeing this match, sir," said Bolsover. "It's a bit more exciting than scouting—don't often see Maoris play, sir."

"Yes, quite so."

The two Form-masters, very much interested in the Maori players, stood there watching the match. Tom Merry & Co. were advancing now, and there was a sharp tussle before the Maori goal. The black goal-keeper was called upon to defend, and he defended very well, but the ball came in from the wing—from the foot of the St. Jim's outside-left. It whizzed in past the post, and just beat Bulstrode.

"Goal!" shouted the Saints.

"Goal, by gum!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, breathlessly.

"Ah, they know that word in English, at all events!" remarked Mr. Prout.

"Chuck it out!" said Harry Wharton.

Then he caught sight of the two Form-masters, standing close to the ropes, and near up to the goal.

"Hooshy-koooshy—gum!" he shouted to the black goalkeeper. "Lucky-nucky—hook!"

"Snooko-booko!" replied the goalkeeper, as he tossed the ball out.

"Shamshoo-boosh!" called out the Maori captain.

"Lucky-nucky—hullaballo!"

And the Maoris went back to the centre of the field. The score was level now.

It remained level till Trumper blew the whistle for half-time. Then the teams had a well-earned rest. The way the black footballers had played up was a testimony to the energy of the native race of New Zealand, as Mr. Prout remarked.

"This is indeed a sight of which we may be proud, as Britons," said Mr. Prout sagely. "It is not so very many years since the Maoris were in arms against us—and now, behold the beneficent results of the British system of colonisation. The descendants of the noble savages who faced us in arms—ahem!—have taken up our national game, and even sent a team to our shores—ahem! It is a very inspiring sight—full of hope and promise for the future—ahem!—of the British Empire. Dear me, Bolsover, are you catching a cold?"

"N-n-no, sir," gurgled Bolsover. He had barely succeeded in turning a giggle into a cough.

"Your attire is somewhat scanty for standing about in cold weather," remarked Mr. Prout. "You should be careful not to catch a cold. I thought you coughed very violently!"

"Ahem! I'm all right, sir!"

The two masters, however, were getting a little cold in the feet, and they resumed their walk.

"We will return this way, and see the finish of the match," Mr. Quelch observed. "It is a very interesting occasion—very interesting indeed!"

"Decidedly so!" assented Mr. Prout.

"A very clear proof of the superiority of our system of colonisation over the German system, for instance," Mr. Quelch remarked, as they walked away. "The capture of the German colonies during the present war will be a great

boon to the natives there, placing them under a more intelligent and civilised system of administration. And now that the final defeat of the Kaiser's hordes appears imminent—"

And they walked away, once more deep in "war jaw."
"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Bolsover major, gurgling helplessly. "I—I couldn't have stood it much longer without bursting my buttons! Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the black footballers chuckled too as they watched Mr. Quelch disappear over the common. They had passed through the ordeal, and passed through it safely. And they lined up for the second half without a care on their minds.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal!

TOM MERRY & CO. piled in in the second half with great energy.

But they found the black team "all there."

Harry Wharton & Co., in fact, seemed to be at the top of their form. And their great success in playing the match after all, after so many difficulties, had an exhilarating effect upon them, and they were in a winning mood.

The tussle was hard-contested, and fortune smiled first upon one eleven and then on the other. Fatty Wynn, in the visitors' goal, was a tower of strength, and time and again he saved the shots sent in by Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Squiff. Bulstrode was good, too, though his defence was hardly equal to that of the Welsh junior from St. Jim's; but in Johnny Bull and Mark Linley the Removites had two strong and reliable backs, whose defence was thoroughly sound.

The Remove eleven played as well black as white—in fact, in the excitement of the game, they forgot all about their change of colour. But in the second half they were reminded of it. The game was hard and fast, and the players were very warm, and when Bob Cherry paused to wipe his brow on one occasion, he wiped away a streak of his complexion. A greyish bar across his forehead was the result, and if Mr. Quelch had been on the spot, and had observed it, there might have been trouble for the black footballers.

Fortunately he was at a distance just then. Harry Wharton grinned as he noticed it, and called out to his comrade:

"Bob, you ass, you're losing your complexion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dab it on again before it's noticed," grinned the Bounder.

"Phew!" ejaculated Bob. "Blessed if I thought of that. I gave it a touch up at half-time, too!"

And Bob retired to the dressing-room for a few moments to "touch up" his beautiful complexion.

The play went on, and so evenly were the teams matched that Bob's momentary retirement gave the enemy a chance, and they came swooping down the field. A hard tussle was going on before the Greyfriars' goal when Bob returned. The defence, hard-pressed, was forced to concede a corner. But the corner fortunately did not materialise. Bob, with a fresh daub of black on his manly brow, threw himself into the game again with great vigour.

The ball went to midfield, and the Greyfriars forwards advanced again, and there was a struggle on the halfway line. But Greyfriars were not to be denied, and they rushed for goal, and Fatty Wynn was called upon to defend again. But this time the fat Fourth-Former was found, for once, wanting. The ball went in from Squiff's boot, and a loud cheer from the crowd greeted the performance of the "Maori" inside-left.

"Bravo, darkey!"

"Hurrah! Goal! Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the fat goalkeeper glumly tossed out the ball. "Bai Jove, you know, they are wathah in good form—what? Back me up, you fellows; we've simply got to beat them!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Put your beef into it, you chaps—only twenty minutes more to go, and they're one ahead. Pile in!"

St. Jim's piled in with great energy; but that one goal behind was not easy to make up. The Greyfriars' defence was sound, and their attacks were fast and incessant. The minutes ticked away, and Greyfriars were still one ahead. Tom Merry & Co. exerted themselves to the utmost, putting all they knew into the game. But the Maoris were impenetrable.

The fight was fast and furious, with only ten minutes to go, when Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout were seen walking back towards the field.

"Here they come again!" murmured Bolsover. "Just in time to see Greyfriars win! If they only knew—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah, I am glad we are here in time to see the finish!" Mr. Prout remarked. "How is the score now, Bolsover?"

"Two to one, sir," said Bolsover major. "The Maoris look like winning, sir."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 354.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FAGGING FOR COKER!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"Very good! Courtfield are playing very hard, though."

"Courtfield? Oh—oh, yes, sir; they are, ain't they?"

"A very good match," said Mr. Prout wisely. "It is surprising and gratifying to see a team of Maoris playing a British game in this splendid manner. I should like to have a few words with their captain after the match."

"I was just thinking the same," remarked Mr. Quelch.

Bolsover's jaw dropped.

"They—they don't speak English, sir," he stammered.

"That—that is, only a few words."

"Nevertheless, I should like to speak to them," Mr. Quelch observed.

Trumper was seen to look at his watch.

Tom Merry & Co. were attacking hard now, determined to equalise at least in the few minutes that remained. But the black footballers were playing up for all they were worth. The struggle was hard and fast; but the minutes passed, and the Saints could not get the ball through.

Trumper's whistle went to his lips.

Pheep!

It was the finish.

"Hurrah!" roared the crowd. "The Maoris win! Bravo, darkies! Bray-vo!"

"Hip-pip-pip!"

The footballers, pretty nearly exhausted by the long and hard struggle, cleared off the field. Greyfriars Remove had won, by two goals to one, after one of the hardest tussles they remembered. They had played the St. Jim's match after all, and they had won it, and their satisfaction was unbounded. The crowd cheered the victors loudly and heartily as they crowded off.

"Your match, Wharton," said Tom Merry cheerily. "Better luck for us next time. I must say you put up a topping game."

"Yaas, wathah! I congwatulate you, deah boy."

Bolsover major hurried into the dressing-room after the players. He was looking and feeling anxious. The footballers were rubbing themselves down, and the complexions of the Maoris were suffering in the process.

"Look out!" gasped Bolsover.

"What's the twouble, deah boys?"

"Quelch there again?" asked Harry Wharton quickly.

"Yes. If he saw you like that—"

"He won't see us like this," grinned Bob Cherry. "We've got plenty of complexion with us, and we're going to put some more on before we come out into view."

"Quelch wants to see you."

"Wha-a-at!"

"My hat!"

"He—he suspects—" gasped Todd.

"Not yet. He wants to speak to the captain of the Maoris—that's all. He's outside now, with Prouty. If you're not jolly careful—"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Thanks for the warning," he said. "We'll be on our guard. Mind you don't talk English, you chaps. Leave the jawing to me. And get into the brake as quickly as you can. Is the brake there, Bolsover?"

"Yes; it's ready in the road."

"We'll all go back to Courtfield in the brake," said Wharton. "We sha'n't be able to take you fellows to Greyfriars, of course; but I've arranged for a feed at the bunshop in Courtfield, near the station. You've lots of time before your train goes. We shall have to change at Lazarus's first. These giddy complexions attract rather too much attention."

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I twust you will not get bowled out wight at the finish, deah boy. It would be too wotten!"

The St. Jim's fellows changed and put on their coats. The Maoris had to remain in their footer rig, but they put on the coats they had borrowed from Mr. Lazarus, and the red-and-yellow caps on their fuzzy hair. Bolsover strolled down to the brake. It would not have done for him to be seen in talk with the Maoris, who did not speak English.

"Ready, you chaps?" asked Wharton.

"Ready," said Bob Cherry. "Mind you only talk Maori."

"Ha, ha! All right."

And the footballers marched out.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

All's Well That Ends Well!

HOORAY!"

Some of the crowd had lingered to watch the Maoris come out, and they gave them a cheer. The two Form-masters of Greyfriars were there, too, and they looked with curious interest at the black footballers.

Mr. Quelch was speaking to Trumper. He had told the Courtfield referee of his desire to speak to the Maori captain. Trumper showed no sign of his inward dismay. He nodded cheerfully.

"Certainly, sir! I'll tell their skipper when he comes out. I'm afraid they don't speak very much English."

Trumper hurried towards the black footballers as they came out.

"I say, Kalingalunga!" he exclaimed, addressing Harry Wharton.

"Koosh?"

"A gentleman from Greyfriars School wishes to speak to you—a Mr. Quelch."

"Hari-kari-hop!"

Mr. Quelch raised his hat politely to the black footballers. They responded by raising their red-and-yellow caps. Then the team hurried on towards the brake with the St. Jim's fellows, leaving only Wharton to deal with his Form-master.

Harry Wharton felt an inward tremor, in spite of his nerve. Close at hand, there was more danger of Mr. Quelch recognising his voice, if not his complexion.

But there was no suspicion in the Remove master's look. He was very cordial and affable.

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance," he said, holding out his hand.

Wharton almost shivered. If he touched Mr. Quelch's hand, he had a horrid foreboding that some of his black would come off and leave a stain there. It was not to be thought of. But his wits worked quickly. As a Maori, he was entitled to have a unique and barbaric mode of greeting.

Instead of shaking hands with Mr. Quelch, therefore, he bowed to the ground three times in solemn succession.

Mr. Quelch regarded the performance with some surprise.

"Probably a Maori mode of greeting," murmured Mr. Prout. "Very curious and interesting."

"Very," murmured Mr. Quelch, as his hand dropped to his side. "I desire to congratulate you, my young friend."

"Osh-kosh—wooral koosh!" said his young friend.

"You do not speak English?"

"Me speak English little bit—speak Maori good!" said the black footballer. "Hi-ki-nooral koosh kish—wop!"

"That means that he's glad to see you, sir," said Trumper. "I can make it out a bit now. I've heard some of it lately."

"I congratulate you upon your victory," said Mr. Quelch. "It is a great pleasure and satisfaction to see a Maori team playing in this country."

"Yashy—bash—kop, hop!"

"Does he understand me?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a rather perplexed look at Trumper.

"Oh, yes, sir, he understands; but he can't answer in English," explained Trumper. "But Kalingalunga understands what is said to him."

"Koody kashy mash!"

"That means he's satisfied, sir," said Trumper.

"A very curious language," said Mr. Quelch. "If you are playing another match in this district, Kalingalunga, it would be a great pleasure to the boys of my school to come and see you."

"Hookey cook koosh!"

"In fact," said Mr. Quelch, with a really generous thought in his mind, "the boys of my Form—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—would, I am sure, be very happy to arrange a match with your team, Kalingalunga."

Kalingalunga nearly choked. The idea of the black footballers playing a match with themselves almost overcame him.

"Boosh—loooooosh—crash!" he stammered.

"They're leaving Courtfield at once, sir," said Trumper. "This is their last day—ahem!—in this part of the country."

"Ah! Very well. Good-bye, Kalingalunga! I am very pleased indeed to have made your acquaintance," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"Kedgy-wedgy—sloosh!"

And the black footballer salaamed solemnly three times before Mr. Quelch, and walked on after his comrades, who were already in the brake.

"A very interesting lad," said Mr. Quelch, as he started to walk towards Greyfriars with Mr. Prout; "somewhat singular, but very interesting. I am indeed glad that we have seen these very interesting Maoris."

The interesting Maoris were driving off to Courtfield at a good rate. They were anxious to get out of danger.

Some of the crowd, still interested in the black footballers, were following them; but Bolsover major, who had mounted into the brake with them, made the driver proceed at a gallop, and the followers were soon left behind.

The footballers chuckled as they drove into Courtfield. They had come through the last ordeal safely, and everything in the garden, as Bob Cherry said, was lovely. And

Squiff was the hero of the hour. The whole scheme had been Squiff's, and it had been a glorious success.

They stopped at Mr. Lazarus's, and hurried into the little shop, and changed in Mr. Lazarus's back parlour; and the amount of washing that was required to get their complexions off was tremendous. But it was all off at last, and Harry Wharton & Co. resumed their native colour and their scout garb, their other clothes not being obtainable. There was quite a little bill to be settled with Mr. Lazarus, but the Remove chums did not grudge it.

Tom Merry & Co. waited for them cheerfully until they were finished. The brake had been dismissed, and the whole party walked to the bun-shop. In that festive establishment they were joined by most of the Remove scouts, and about forty fellows in all sat down to a tremendous feed. Upon the fat face of Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's there was a beatific expression. St. Jim's had lost the match; but from Fatty Wynn's point of view, at least, that loss was fully compensated for in the delights of the present moment. The Remove were doing the thing very handsomely.

The feast was at its merriest when a fat figure in scout garb, extremely dusty, rolled into the bun-shop, and joined the feasters.

There was a howl from the Removites.

"Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles. "So this was the little game, was it? I jolly well knew you had something on! I've found you out, you see. So the St. Jim's chaps have come, after all. How do you do, Gussy, old man?"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Bunter cheerfully took a seat.

"These bounders dodged me in the wood," he explained.

"Thanks! I'll begin on that pie, Bob Cherry. But I'm a jolly good scout. I've run 'em down. Pepper and salt, please, Nugent! You can pass the pickles, Toddy. So that was the idea—to have the St. Jim's chaps to a feed instead of a football match, was it? Pass the potatoes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at the chuckling Removites in surprise.

"Wasn't that the little game?" he demanded. "I knew there was something on when you dodged me in the wood. But you couldn't throw dust in my eyes. I'm a bit too sharp for that. I'll have some more of that pie."

Billy Bunter went on with his mouth full:

"Of course, I wasn't going to miss seeing my old pals from St. Jim's. In fact, I guessed from the start that you meant to make it a feed instead of a footer match, as the match was off."

"Go hon!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I'm pretty keen, you know," said Bunter, with a chuckle. "By the way, have you heard the news? Pass the butter, Smithy."

"What's the news?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"There's a native Maori team in this town, and they've been playing a Courtfield team this afternoon," said Bunter. "I say, this is a ripping pie! I've heard all about it. I suppose you fellows missed that—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No; we were there!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, I didn't hear of it till I got into Courtfield just now," said Bunter. "I mean, I guessed all along that you fellows meant to see a footer match, as you couldn't play one, and have a feed afterwards. You can't take me in!"

The roars of laughter from the Removites and the St. Jim's fellows somewhat surprised Billy Bunter. But they did not explain where the joke came in, and Bunter was left mystified. However, the chief business of the hour, for Bunter, was to make the most of the feed, and he quite distinguished himself, even Fatty Wynn regarding his performances with admiration.

Harry Wharton & Co. saw the St. Jim's team off at the station, with great goodwill on both sides, Tom Merry promising to turn the tables on them when they came to St. Jim's for the return match. The express steamed out of the station, and the cheerful Removites walked home to Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch met them as they came into the School House. He gave the crowd of Remove scouts a kindly nod.

"I hope you have had a pleasant afternoon, my boys!" he remarked.

And the Removites replied in a cheery chorus:

"Very pleasant, sir; thank you, sir!"

And they marched in merrily. Mr. Quelch had quite got over his annoyance with his Form, and he was very genial. But the heroes of the Remove could not help wondering what he would have said if he had known. But the Remove-master was never likely to learn the secret of the identity of the Black Footballers.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled "FAGGING FOR COKER!" Order in advance!)

Our Grand Ferrers Lord Serial Story.



THE UNCONQUERABLE.

A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure

By SIDNEY DREW.

Prout's Present — The Yacht Arrives — Chan-Song-Pu in Disgrace — A Quicer Craft — Gan Presents the Steersman With Some Hair-Restorer.

Holidays are very pleasant things, and Ferrers Hall was a very pleasant place to spend them in. All the same, after a week of idleness, Ching-Lung began to yawn, and Gan-Waga began to sigh. They saw little of Ferrers Lord, and still less of Harold Honour. Two powerful traction-engines were incessantly puffing and grinding their way to and from the railway-station. They went away empty, and returned dragging heavy and mysterious loads behind them. Night and day all approach to the great house was strictly guarded. Prout, Barry O'Rourke, Ben Maddock, and Joe helped with the haymaking, bathed, fished, and milked the cows, but as the novelty wore off they also began to yawn.

"Another month of this, Tom," said Barry to the steersman, "and Oi shall be as fat as a prize pig. Oi can hardly button my waistcoat wid any comfort. U's the strenuous loife we made, a loife on the rowlin' say. Ate and slape — ate and slape! Troth, Oi shall exspore in the flower of my youth!"

There was a glorious blue sky above them, and a glassy sea below, and all the birds were singing. Still, they were discontented.

"By honey, it's too tame!" said the steersman, who was using the millionaire's Newfoundland as a pillow. "I'd sooner be down there, knocking in rivets if I knowed how to do it. I wonder 'ow they're gettin' on underneath in the cave!"

Thump! A large pollock sailed over the stone wall, and alighted on Prout's waistcoat. Prout bounded up with a wrathful yell. Gan-Waga was smiling at him sweetly over the wall.

"Ain't he a butterfles fishes, Tommy?" grinned the Eskimo. "I gives him yo' fo' a presents, Tommy. He quite freshfules, too, 'cos I only catches him five days before yesterday, only I forgot him, and leaves him in do boats. He all just like violets, Hunk! Hoo, hoo, hoo!"

Prout shuddered, held his nose, and kicked the boater over the cliff. It left a lingering perfume behind it that made Barry O'Rourke and his comrade stagger away to a fresher atmosphere. Even the dog found it too much. Of course, Gan had not waited to be thanked for his gift.

"Tom," said the boy from Ballybanion, his nose buried in a cluster of early roses, "how would ye loike to howld a wake?"

"By honey, if Gan-Waga was the corpse, I'd give the toes off my feet to attend it!" said Prout fervently. "A joke's a joke, but a fish of that age ain't a joke, but a arid and cruel tragedy. However, and also therefore — Hallo! That yacht's comin' pretty close in!"

Barry removed his nose from the blossoms, and looked seaward. Then he put his eye to the telescope that stood on the lawn.

"Boded, she's flyin' the Chinese colours," he cried, "and Ching-Lung's pennant! U's the Fatality, for oranges and nuts!"

"Sheer off, by honey, and let's have a squint," said Prout. "You ain't bought the spyglass."

It was Ching-Lung's yacht, without a doubt. She dropped her anchor and lowered a boat. Though Barry and Tom Prout persuaded themselves that they were longing for some healthy exercise, they did not go to meet the boat down a couple of hundred hot and weary steps. They were quite content to wait in the cool shade, and at last a fat and perspiring Chinaman came waddling across the lawn.

"Do me blue oies came me, or is it visions?" said Barry. "Can ut be that slender form, that willowy figure?"

The Grecian nose is his, the tender smile is his, that complexion of sour milk and milked roses in his. How do — how do, swate Chan-Song-Pu? Why, Tom, he's awake!"

"Of ri, of ri, of ri!" granted the perspiring Celestial. "Velly hottee, but velly muchee topsolee of ri, Bully Leony!"

Chan-Song-Pu flopped down on a rustic seat, and fanned himself with a paper fan. Then he opened his umbrella, and immediately fell asleep.

"By honey!" remarked Prout. "I thought he wouldn't be awake long. Dormice ain't in it w' that chap?"

"O'rl! tell the prince he's arrived," said Barry. "Pleas! Oi don't blame anybody for clapsing this weather. Heigh! Oi wish it would fraze."

It was certainly drowsy weather, and Barry mopped his face as he slowly made his way to the house. He felt rather sorry for the two footmen whose fate it was to stand gazing down the carriage-drive. The raftered hall was the pleasantest place in the mansion, for it was delightfully cool and shady. An enchantment seemed to have fallen on the story of the Sleeping Beauty, for Rupert Thurston was dozing in one chair, Mr. Maddock in another, while Gan-Waga and his dog Schwartz snored on the hearthrug.

"Lazy bastes!" said Barry. "Troth, they might all have had opium stew for lunch! Redad, Oi'll wake 'em, or break every bone in my arm!"

Barry snote the great copper dinner-gong until it resounded like a thunderclap. One stroke was ample; but Barry was just about to smite a second time, when a third and unexpected smite in the small of the back sent him staggering forward. A fusillade of cushions, fired at him by Thurston and Prout, made him stagger still more.

"Face!" he yelled. "O'm touchin' wood and Oi've got me fingers crossed! Lave off, Oi tell ye. Phwat black-guard hit me in the back, rid a cack-hammer when Oi wasn't lookin'? Show him to me, and Oi'll swallow him widout aytur salt or pepper!"

"Awfully sorry," said Ching-Lung. "I was sliding down the banisters, and the brake wouldn't act. I hope I haven't knocked any of your teeth out. What's the row? Is tea ready?"

"Souse me, you villain! What do you want to kick up that shindy for?" growled Maddock. "I thought the place was a-fire."

"You really ought to have some respect for people's nerves, Barry," added Rupert Thurston. "We're not made of iron."

"Aye, ut's cooshing-syrup ye nade," growled Barry, rubbing his spine. "I'll buy ye a few barrels! I'm sorry ye're all so nervous. Oi just come along to tell ye that there's a yacht at anchor and that Chan-Song-Pu is snorin' like a grampus under on the lawn."

"Good old Chan; he's before his time!" said Ching-Lung. "Pack your bags and bagsets, my boys, and we'll get affoot and find some real salt air."

"Ray, dat de butterfles ticket, Chingy!" chirped the Eskimo. "I sickful ob dis silly places. Dere's we lay till nexts day in de Bay ob Biscuits O! Come along, Schwartz. We goings on our Chingy's ole boats, and we eats cangles alls do day. Packs up yo' backs and bagsets, boys, and den we goes aboard. Oh mi, I so gleefless I could sings and hunk de wonders. Where ole Chan? Chan! Ah-o-o-oy! Where are yo', hunk?"

Gan's hollow was answered by a husky "Of ri, of ri!" from the garden. As a rule, Chan-Song-Pu's face was as full of expression as a lump of putty of the same shape with a couple of gooseberries in it to do duty for eyes, but Chan's features relaxed as he sighted Gan. He thrust out his hand in joyous welcome, and waved his closed paper umbrella round his head.

"Of ri, of ri, of ri!" he trilled. "Velly muchee nicee mootee you, Gan. Velly muchee — Once-—once! Pullee offee! Once-—once!"

Chan-Song-Pu shrieked and tottered backwards with Schwartz, the dog, clinging firmly to the end of his long pigtail. Schwartz seemed to think that Chan intended to brain Gan-Waga with the umbrella, and that it was time to interfere. Before the Eskimo could call him off, frop came galloping up. Failing to see why Schwartz should have all the fun to himself, or fancying perhaps that he needed help, Imp took one grip, and gave one tug, and Chan-Song-Pu stood on his head, with his fat legs in the air.

"Pick him up," said Ching-Lung sternly. "What is the meaning of that, you villain? How did these things get there?"

There was a roar of laughter. Chan-Song-Pu was not very much hurt, but he was betrayed. An odd collection of articles that had dropped out of the pockets of his baggy trousers lay on the grass. There were a pair of silver candlesticks, five watches, a number of tobacco pipes that had never been smoked, some china figures and various trinkets, cigarette-cases, matchboxes, teaspoons, a police-

(Continued on page iv. of cover.)

man's whistle, a small handbell, three dog-collars, eight luncheon-pots, and a bottle of scotch.

"I not knowed, son of the stars," said Chan-Song-Pu, in astonished tones. "It velly top-of-the-line remarkable!"

"Yes, very remarkable indeed," said Ching-Lung. "If I wasn't pretty sure pilfering is a disease with you, I'd send you aboard, and give you a dose of the bastinado. Pick all these ill-gotten things up, and fasten them to your pigtail, with the bell at the bottom. And hank the bell on so that it will ring. You're a disgrace to me, Chan—an ugly kleptomaniac! Get to work now, and put on your ornaments!"

"Son of the stars, your humble slave, he obey!" signed Chan-Song-Pu wearily. "Of er, of er, of er!"

"Let him off the candlesticks and scents; they're too heavy," Ching-Lung said. "He deserves a headache, but he won't be too hard. Now, lad, get your bundles, for I'm eager to be aboard."

Chan-Song-Pu had rather a curious appearance. He tried to walk without picking up his feet, but the bell insisted upon making itself heard, and at the first notes three grinning faces appeared at the bed-room windows.

"Muffins!" yelled three voices. "Muffins and cranberrys!"

"Ring out, noid bells!" cried Barry. "O say, you down there, who don't you go and get your hair cut!"

The Chinaman looked up, winked mournfully, and tucked the bell into his pocket. They could still hear its muffled tinkling as he waddled away, the other ornaments glistening in the sunshine. Then, shouldering their portmanteaux and boxes, Frost, Barry, Maddock, and Herr Schwartz went down to the boat, and were promptly rowed out towards the yacht by the yellow-faced crew. Maddock amused himself by winding up the five watches attached to Chan's pigtail.

"If you wanted to know the time, you used to have to ask a policeman," he grinned. "but now you've only got to ask Chan to turn round. Souse me; you can even tell what! Listen, boys, and hear the clock strike!"

He gave the Celestial a shake, and the bell in Chan's pocket tinkled three.

"Hoo, hoo! Hoo-ee! Stop dat cartload of monkeys!" cried a voice from the sea. "Coo-ee! Sling me a rope, Tommy Prouts!"

Gan-Waga was charming himself along in their wake, with the dog squatting behind at his shoulder-blades.

"Och, shoy the anchor at ut!" said Barry. "Haven't we got a harpoon aboard? Give me the boat-hook, and O'll puncture the reptile!"

"Oh, for a brick and a bit of string!" sighed the steersman of the Drop. "By horey, we'll never have such a chance as this again! Pull away, butter-faces! D'ye call that pullin'! Why, you ain't got as much muscle on your arm as a bunch of sea devils!"

"Yah," yelled Gan-Waga scoldingly. "Devs all frightened of us, dawgine! We not care, hunk? Och, cowardly custardies! Dey tink we gives dem a good thrashings. Owers we goes! Dat de styles! Up wid de sails! How yo' likes dat, Schwartz, hunk?"

As he rolled over the dog scrambled upon his chest, and Gan opened a soaked umbrella. A warm breeze was blowing off the shore. It hardly ruffled the water, but it was strong enough to drive the buoyant Eskimo forward. He closed his eyes, and sailed gently on.

"Yo' de captain, oh dis butterfuss ships, Schwartz," murmured Gan-Waga, "so yo' gives de orders. Barko ones fo' starboards, and tocses fo' ports, and ifs de mansteers no obeys quickful, yo' bite him noses off. He, ha, hi! I stop yo' marner bones and biscuits ifs yo' wreckchip us!"

Even the stolid Chinaman seemed interested in the curious craft and its crew. It came closer and closer, and Schwartz barked.

"Aho, souse me! What ship is that?" roared Maddock. "Schaf! Dot vas der Sossidge und Mashed, Pen!" said the cook. "Aho, Sossidge und Mashed! Vere you vas pound for, is ud; and vat vas der gargo, yes?"

The mainmast went down, and the craft hunched on to the occasional-ladder, and the crew climbed aboard. Another boat had put up from the shore. Gan plunged his wet hand into Chan-Song-Pu's pocket, and pulled out the bell.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" he shouted, ringing the bell violently. "Dis am to inform all de peoples Tom Brussel Sprouts haye got a big red necks, and dats he gots to paints dat reds necks blue! Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Dis also me informs yo' alls dat ifs I tie dem in big knotes, Oyez! Oyez! I am a great boss Gan-Waga, and I sees my Chingy comings. And I gesses some butterfuss hair-restores for Tommy Prouts to makes de wooliness grow on him ole bald heads. And dere's it ans. Ho-o-o-o!"

With a dexterous flip Gan knocked off Prout's yacht-cup, placed the hair-restorer—a bunch of dripping seaweed—on the steersman's polished head, and leapt overboard, followed by his dog, to intercept Ching-Lung and find protection.

How Barry O'Rooney Made a Nice, Comfortable Bed for Gan-Waga, and Very Foolishly Lay in It Himself.

"Here's we got gatherings ices in May—
Ices in May—ices in May.
Oh, here's we got gatherings ices in May,
At ninety o'clocks in de mornings!"

Herr Schwartz stopped suddenly, with a fine shiver of chilled beef in his hands. He hung up the beef again, and glared at the closed door of the best refrigerator. The melody came from behind that sacred door.

"Dunder!" muttered the chef. "He go into mine ice-house mitout der permission of me, is ud? Arr-er! He sit on mine ice, he roll on mine ice, he gover himself up mit mine ice. And he zing! Ach, yes; he zing and melt der stuff! If I want to run ven he zing, is ud any vonder dot dey poor ice vant to run also? Shaf! I vill drag him out mit der hair of his head! Ja, ja! Ach, ricked aground!"

Schwartz was a genius as a cook, and no one—not even his employer—had any business to be in his galley or his ice-room. Ching-Lung would have been quite as much out of place there as the cook would have been on the captain's bridge. Where Gan-Waga was concerned, it was quite useless to lodge any complaint. The cook was brave, and he was angry, but his wrath did not make him overlook the stern fact that thirteen or fourteen stone of Eskimo was rather a large order to deal with single-handed.

"Sittings on de bergies! Oh, I am so butterfuss happiness!" warbled the interloper. "I laffs and laffs; it was so loofidial coolness! I almost tink I hunting de walruses and de bears in de ole homes where de snow was! Och, de butterfuss joy and the jolly gladful I came! Ole silly Short! He made of he knowk their case in me in! Ohmi, ohmi! I laffs and laffs, and I tink I go to sleep!"

"Yes, yes; go to sleep!" hissed the cook. "Ach, how I vish dot I vind you asleep, is ud! Ach, vat I do mit you!"

The chef scratched his head in perplexity, and turned round to find the meat-chopper. The door opened, and Gan-Waga caught sight of the enemy. He seized a square slab of ice, and sent it skimming across the floor. The cook made a frantic attempt to catch hold of nothing at all as the slab swept his feet from under him, but did no good. He sat down promptly with a force that filled his eyes with tears and jarred him to the finger-tips.

Gan pressed a loving kiss on the cook's brow, forced a few cooling chips of ice down his back, and departed.

"I tink I gives yo' some lessons in skating, Mistrs Short!" he grinned, glancing back. "It very usefulness to know how to skates on de butterfuss ices! Ohmi! I sorrys yo' so tiredful, Short! Yo' sits on yo'selfs, and keeps yo'selfs quiet, and haves a nice butterfuss rest!"

Herr Schwartz said never a word; but, like the parrot, he thought deeply. "Fatality," murmured along merrily, and Ching-Lung and Rupert took their ease in a couple of dock-chairs. Frost, O'Rooney, and Maddock, very spruce in flannels and pipe-clayed canvas boots, indulged in a game of quoits, while Captain Kennedy took charge of the bridge.

"Chan!" called out the prince.

The bell tinkled as Chan-Song-Pu approached, and bent till his forehead almost touched the boards.

"You may take those things out of your hair," said Ching-Lung. "The next time I catch you at the same game, I'll cut off your netail!"

"Of er, of er," said Chan; "Gan helps me pullee them off! You helps—oh, Gan?"

"Yo' can haves de whistles, Chan," said Gan-Waga; "so dat de nexts times yo' stumbles yo' just whistles fo' de policeman and get yo'selfs locks up. I nots wants de bells neithers. Yo' takes him to bed and rings him when it times to waken, and yo' nots overdeeps yo'selfs. Ohmi! I gesses some loofidil cigarette-cases! Who gives me some cigarettes to puts in them?"

Two large tears trickled down Chan-Song-Pu's face. He lay down in the scuppers and slept to forget his anguish. With so many nice things to give away, Gan-Waga thought it would be wise to make his peace with Herr Schwartz, for the cook was a useful man to be on good terms with. So Gan-Waga descended once more and approached the galley.

"Mistrs Short," he said, tapping at the closed door, "I wants to speak to yo', my butterfuss cooksey! Are yo' sinsides, hunk?"

There was no reply. Gan gently turned the handle. Then his snub nose was forced hard against the door, and a wet moan was thrust violently into the nape of his neck.

Gan howled "Ohmi!" and dropped on hands and knees, and on hands and knees he promptly retreated backwards.

"Ah, yes, yes, yes! I had tell you, is ud!" roared the cook, who was leaning over the faintlight, flourishing the mop. "So, I get you in der neck, is ud? Away, or I shall plow der brains out of der punkin head of you!—How you tare come near mine galley? I haf not forget—der Schwartz nefer forget. Come nearer, and den I grack your face open mit da stick. Forward, forward!"

(Another splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order in advance.)

