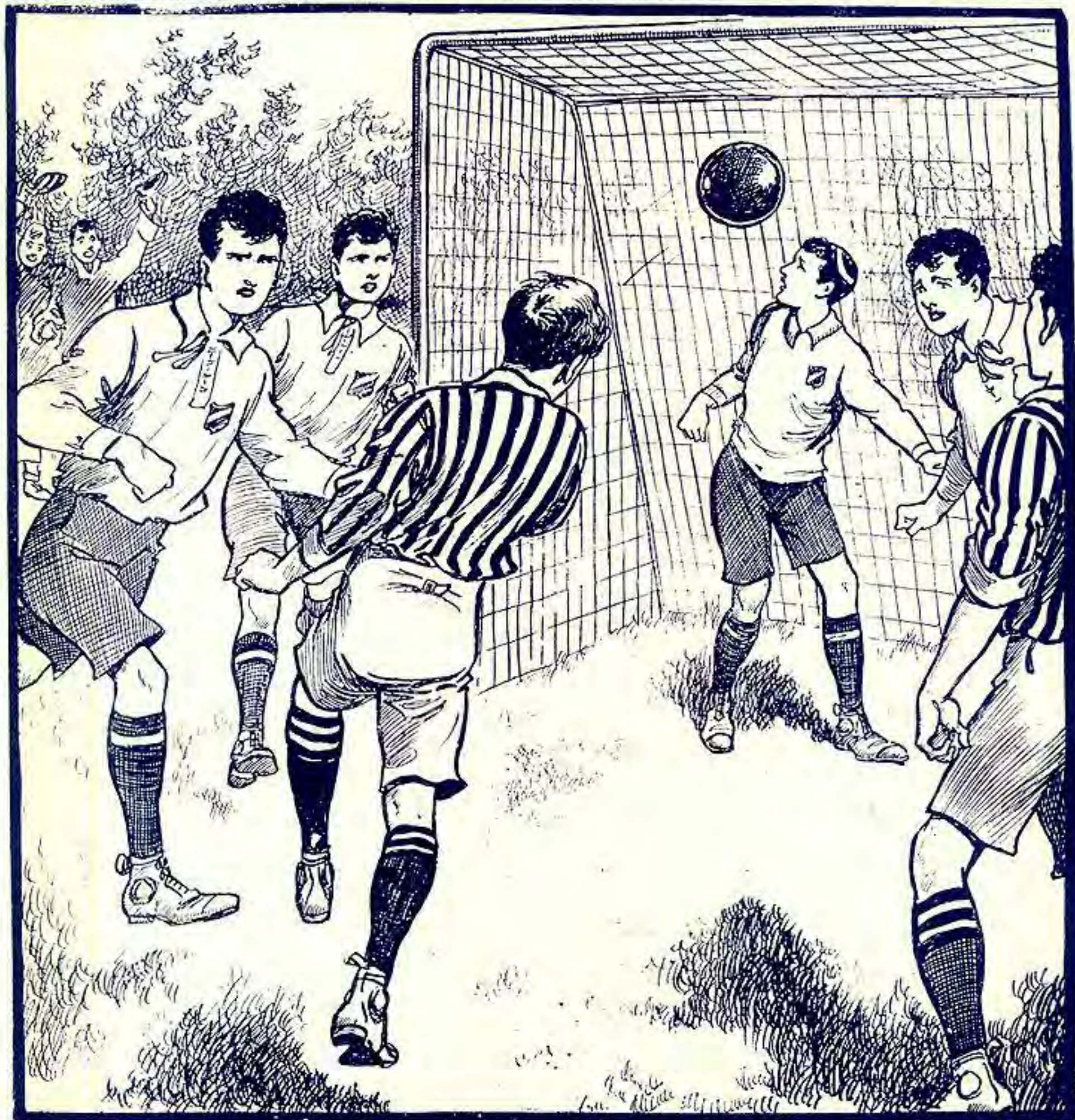


AN OLD BOY AT GREYFRIARS!



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FRANK LEVISON SCORES THE WINNING GOAL!

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A Magnificent New
Long Complete Tale
of
Harry Wharton & Co.
at
Greyfriars School.

AN OLD BOY AT GREYFRIARS!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wharton Says "No!"

VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came along from the stairs, and stopped at Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

There he hesitated.

There were cheery voices in the study, and a clatter of tea-cups. Harry Wharton & Co. were at tea, and they were discussing a matter of great interest to the Remove fellows—the forthcoming football match with St. Jim's.

It was Tuesday, and on the following day Tom Merry's team was expected at Greyfriars.

The Famous Five were discussing the coming match, and the fact that Levison of St. Jim's, formerly of Greyfriars, was coming over in Tom Merry's eleven to play his old school.

The Bounder stood outside the study, evidently unable to make up his mind whether to enter.

It was not like Smithy to hesitate about anything. His character was a very decided one. But he was hesitating now, and his hand, raised to tap at the door, dropped to his side again.

"Hallo, Smithy!" Skinner came along the passage. "Coming out?"

"No."

"Oh, come along!" said Skinner. "You're not going in there, I suppose? You're not in the team to-morrow, by any chance?"

The Bounder shook his head.

"I thought not," said Skinner, with a shrug. "Mr. Magnificent Wharton isn't likely to give you a chance again, if he can help it."

"Oh, rot!"

"I hear that Levison's coming over with Tom Merry's lot," went on Skinner, with a grin. "Merry doesn't seem so jolly particular as Wharton, does he? Levison was a regular scorcher when he was here—quite in your line, Smithy. His old pals at the Cross Keys would be glad to see him again. Fancy Levison taking up footer!"

"Bother Levison!" grunted Smithy.

"You're in a sweet temper this afternoon, Smithy!"

"Oh, rats!"

Skinner laughed, and went on towards the stairs. His study-mate did not seem in a humour for his company.

Vernon-Smith turned to Study No. 1 again, and, having apparently made up his mind, he tapped at the door and pushed it open.

Harry Wharton looked up.

"Come in, Smithy!" he said cordially.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Just in time for the last shrimp!" said Bob Cherry.

"I haven't come to tea," said Vernon-Smith. "I wanted to speak to you about to-morrow, Wharton."

"Yes?" said Harry.

"Have you made up the eleven to meet St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Oh! No good asking for a place, then?"

Wharton frowned a little.

"Well, no; it's rather too late, Smithy," he said. "I'd have been glad, only—only, you see—" He paused.

The Bounder laughed sarcastically.

"Only you don't want a smoky waster in the select eleven! I understand!" he said. "All serene!"

"Oh, don't get on the high horse, Smithy," said Johnny Bull, with a snort.

"You had a regular place in the eleven before you started playing the giddy ox. If Wharton put you in for the St. Jim's match we'd scalp him. How do we know that you won't be out on the tiles to-night, and as seedy as Skinner or Snoop to-morrow?"

"Ahem!" murmured Nugent. Frank Nugent quite agreed with Johnny, but he was much more polite.

"The ahemfulness is terrific, my esteemed Johnny!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The preachfulness is not the proper caper."

"Rats!" grunted Johnny.

"Oh, let him run on!" sneered the Bounder. "It's quite entertaining. And any excuse for keeping a chap out of the footer is better than none."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton reddened.

"It's not like that, and you know it, Vernon-Smith!" he exclaimed. "But Johnny's right, if it comes to that. You couldn't be depended on to keep yourself fit for the match, and that's why I never thought of you for to-morrow. But for that, I'd be glad to have you. We want our best men against St. Jim's. You can't expect to play in important matches unless you're more careful."

"Tom Merry doesn't seem to be so grandfatherly about his men," said the Bounder with a sneer. "I hear that Levison, who used to be here, is coming over with them. Levison's reputation is pretty well known."

"Levison's changed a lot since he was here," said Harry. "I understand that he's a good bit different from what he was when we knew him. Anyway, what Tom Merry does is no business of mine. My business is to put a winning team into the field, if I can do it; and a player who may crack up any minute isn't much use to the Remove."

"That's enough!"

Vernon-Smith turned on his heel and walked out of the study.

Harry Wharton was left with a clouded and troubled look.

Blackguard as Smithy was in many ways, different from Wharton as he was in almost every way, the captain of the Remove could not help having a keen regard for him.

Wharton, at least, had never failed to see the good there was in Smithy, and to make allowances for a bad training and a passionate and unruly temper.

"Cheero!" said Bob Cherry, glancing at Wharton. "No bones broken, you know. It's best to let Smithy have it straight."

Wharton nodded without speaking.

"As for Levison, we know he's quite a different chap, now," said Bob. "We saw him at St. Jim's last time we were there. He looked a new man—and that young brother of his is a ripping little chap. The Bounder might do a good deal worse than follow Levison's example."

"I—I suppose I couldn't very well put Smithy in now," said Wharton musingly. Johnny Bull snorted.

"Of course, it would be understood, if I did, that he was fit," said Wharton. "He would keep his word, if he promised not to play the fool again before the match."

"And who are you going to leave out, to make room for his blackguardly lordship, if he condescends to keep fit?" demanded Johnny Bull, with heavy sarcasm.

"Oh, draw it mild, Johnny!" said Nugent. "Leave me out, if you like, Harry—Smithy can play my head off when he likes."

Wharton smiled.

It was like his best chum to come to his rescue like that, and he knew how keenly Nugent was looking forward to the first big match of the season.

"I'm not going to leave anybody out," he said. "It can't be done; it wouldn't be fair on the team. But there's always a possibility of a fellow having to stand out, and there's no reason why Smithy shouldn't be down as first reserve in case of accidents. I'll tell him so, and keep him off smoking and breaking bounds after dark, before the match, at any rate."

Wharton rose, and left the study.

The refusal he had been compelled to utter troubled him. Of late he had seen some signs of amendment in the Bounder, and he hoped that Smithy was beginning to see that the blackguardly game was not worth the candle. And if he should take up footer keenly it might make a great deal of difference.

Harry went along to the Bounder's study, tapped, and opened the door.

A smell of tobacco greeted him as he entered.

Vernon-Smith was there, with Snoop. They were playing banker and smoking cigarettes. The Bounder glanced at Wharton through a haze of smoke, and grinned in a sardonic way.

"Hallo! Come to take a hand?" he asked, and Snoop chortled.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"I came to speak to you, Smithy," he said quietly, "but it's not necessary now."

He stepped back into the passage and shut the door. The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, and went on with his game.

Harry Wharton returned to the tea-party in Study No. 1. He did not refer to the Bounder, and the talk ran on the coming footer match. There was no chance of the Bounder of Greyfriars figuring on the football-field against St. Jim's.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smithy Offers the Odds!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter looked into Study No. 1, where Wharton and Nugent were at work on their prep. Bunter ought to have been at work on his, too, but he was chancing it with Mr. Quelch in the morning, as he often did, with painful results to his fat palms.

Wharton and Nugent were not chancing it, however, and they waved the fat junior away.

But Bunter rolled into the study. His little round eyes were gleaming behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, I simply must have a quid!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Buzz off!"

"Can you lend me a quid, Wharton, till my postal-order comes?"

"Scat!"

"Can you, Nugent? You're not such a mean beast as Wharton, old chap!"

"I'll lend you this inkpot if you don't clear, you Owl!" growled Frank Nugent.

"Look here, you fellows, I simply must have it!" said Bunter. "I'll settle up to-morrow afternoon without fail! Honour bright!"

"Is your postal-order coming to-morrow?" snorted Nugent.

"As a matter of fact, I am expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations. But anyway, I shall have plenty of tin to-morrow—two whole quids!" said Bunter impressively. "Do lend me a sov, one of you! It's a dead cert!"

"A what?" ejaculated Wharton.

"A dead cert!" said Bunter. "In fact, a sure snip!"

"You silly Owl!" shouted Wharton.

"Are you going in for geegees, like Skinner and Snoop?"

"I dare say I could make a lot of money that way if I liked," said Bunter. "With my keenness and cool judgment I've no doubt I could skin the bookies."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But it isn't that this time. It's a dead cert—right on the wicket, you know! Look here, you expect to beat St. Jim's to-morrow, don't you?"

"We hope to."

"But you will!" urged Bunter. "The Remove team is first-class. The only weakness is in the forward line, where you've left out your best player."

"Smithy isn't exactly the best player in the Remove," remarked Nugent.

"Eh? Who's talking about Smithy? Wharton's left me out—"

"You?"

"Yes, me!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "Jealousy apart, you can't deny that I'm the best forward in the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "But I haven't come here to teach Wharton his business—"

"Thanks!" said Harry.

"In fact, I'm not specially keen on playing. I shall be looking after Marjorie, if she comes over to see the match. Greyfriars will win—all the fellows think so. I'm sure of it, though I've doubts about some of the players. Your passing is a bit wild, Nugent—"

"Mine?"

"Yes. And Wharton isn't exactly the chap I should select as a footer captain," said Bunter, with a sage shake of the head.

The chums of Study No. 1 chuckled. William George Bunter on the subject of Soccer was very entertaining.

"However," resumed Bunter, "to come to the point—"

"Oh, you're coming to a point, are you?"

"Yes, of course! I—"

"Would you mind coming to the point in some other study?" asked Wharton politely. "You see, you're interrupting prep."

"Bother prep! I haven't done my prep yet. Blow prep! I simply must have a quid, and by to-morrow afternoon I shall turn it into two quids. I'll settle up, with half-a-crown extra for interest on the loan! There!"

"Do you mean to say that you are making bets on the footer match?" asked Harry Wharton sharply.

"What-ho!"

"You fat rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild! You ought to feel flattered at my being willing to risk my quid on you!" said Bunter.

"But it isn't your quid you want to risk—it's mine!" said Harry, with a laugh. It was not much use being angry with the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, it will be mine if you lend it to me, won't it?" said Bunter. "Look here, you shell out a quid, and you make half-a-crown extra—see? It's a dead cert! I'm sure Greyfriars Remove will win the match!"

"Is somebody laying money against Greyfriars, then?" demanded Nugent.

"Yes, rather! The Bouncer's giving the odds."

"Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton and Nugent together.

"Yes. There's a regular scene in the Common-room now—like the bookies at work on the racecourse," said Bunter. "Smithy offering the odds to everybody who will take them."

"A pity Mr. Quelch doesn't drop in to take the odds!" growled Nugent.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Smithy would look queer if he did! But it's all right. Stott's in the passage, keeping an eye open for masters and prefects. Buck up and shell out a quid, you fellows, or it may be too late! Smithy's got bets on with Skinner and Snoop and Bolsover major and Hazel-dene, and some other chaps. I don't want to be left out."

Harry Wharton brows were knitted.

He thought he could understand the Bouncer's motive. He was deeply annoyed at being refused a place in the team. He thought that the Remove would be beaten, and the wish was father to the thought.

But the kind of thing Bunter described was beyond all bounds, and Wharton was exasperated.

With a grim expression on his face, he laid down his pen and rose from the table. Nugent gave him a quick look.

"Let's go down," said Harry.

"All right."

Prep was left for the time. Wharton and Nugent left the study, unheeding Billy Bunter's excited demands for a loan. The Owl of the Remove ran after them to the stairs, and caught Wharton by the arm.

"I say, old fellow, what about that quid—"

The captain of the Remove turned round angrily, caught the fat junior by the shoulders, and sat him down forcibly on the floor. Billy Bunter was left there, gasping, as the chums went downstairs.

Stott was in the passage outside the Common-room, and he grinned at them.

"You're in time," he said. "Got your oof about you? Only cash bets booked."

Wharton and Nugent went in without replying.

There were a good many fellows of the Remove and the Fourth in the junior Common-room.

The Bouncer, with a grin on his hard face, was the centre of a little group of Removites. He was making an entry in a pocket-book.

He looked up, and the sardonic ex-

pression intensified on his face as he caught Wharton's grim glance.

"Gentlemen, now's your chance!" he said. "Two to one against Greyfriars Remove to-morrow, in quids, bobs, half-crowns, or fivers—just as you like! Any takers?"

There was a buzz in the room. The Bouncer's recklessness was a proverb in the Remove. But this was rather thick, even for the Bouncer.

"Look here, Smithy! Does this mean that you've got some information?" asked Fisher T. Fish. "Has anything happened to the team? Some galoot off his form—what?"

"Something has happened to the team," said the Bouncer calmly. "The best forward in the Form is left out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Therefore, in my opinion, St. Jim's will win. I'm ready to back my opinion with hard cash, and give the odds. Two to one on St. Jim's! Wharton, are you ready to back up your chances?"

"I'm not willing to make bets," said Wharton coldly. "Only blackguards make bets on football matches."

"Thanks!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Bolsover major angrily. "I've laid ten bob on Greyfriars."

"Then you know my opinion of you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent, laughing.

"Dash it all, it's a compliment to you, Wharton!" said Skinner. "I'm backing your team! I've laid a fiver on you!"

"Where on earth did you get a fiver from?" ejaculated Nugent.

Skinner sneered.

"A chap does get a fiver sometimes," he said. "I've got it from my uncle for my birthday. I'm going to turn it into a tenner."

"Or into nix!" grinned the Bouncer.

"Rot!" said Skinner. "Greyfriars Remove will win! Why don't you dub up some of your dollars, Fishy? It's a dead sure thing!"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head wisely.

"I guess Smithy knows something, or he wouldn't splash about his durocks like this!" he said. "He's had some news from St. Jim's, perhaps, that Tom Merry's team is in specially fine fettle. Something of the sort, I calculate."

"Not at all," said the Bouncer. "I haven't heard a word from St. Jim's."

"Then you're backing St. Jim's because you think Greyfriars can't win without your help!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Exactly."

"Well, then, you're a conceited ass!"

"Thanks! Any more takers?"

Some of the fellows looked curiously at Wharton. They knew well enough how strongly he disapproved of this kind of thing; and, as he was captain of the Form, it was a doubtful point whether he ought not to interfere.

The Bouncer was watching him, too. He was in a reckless mood, and quite prepared for trouble with the captain of the Remove.

But Wharton, angered as he was, did not want a quarrel with Smithy; and he was chary about taking too much authority into his hands.

"This is rather rotten, Smithy," he said, in a quiet tone. "You know what it would mean if Mr. Quelch or Wingate found this was going on—or the Head. You know it's not decent."

"Go hon!"

"Are you going to stop us?" sneered Bolsover major.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"I don't know that I have the right to stop you. So long as no member of the football team joins in it it's not my business."

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"Your goalkeeper's in it," said Skinner, with a laugh.

Wharton looked at Hazeldene. The latter coloured uncomfortably.

"Only ten bob on it!" he muttered.

"Haven't you better call that bet off, Hazel?" said Harry. "It's not worth your while to go in for this sort of thing."

"I don't see—" began Hazel, with a sullen look.

"You can see that members of the team can't be allowed to make bets on the matches, I suppose? I can't play a man who puts money on the game."

"I've done it now."

"Smithy will call off the bet."

"I don't want him to," said Hazel sulkily. "I don't see any harm in it. I'm sure to win, too."

"That's not the point," Wharton glanced round at the Removites. "I haven't come here to interfere. I don't want to meddle. I think it's all rotten, and you're welcome to my opinion, that's all. But any chap who lays bets on the match doesn't play for the Remove to-morrow—that's flat!"

And with that Harry Wharton walked out of the Common-room.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Skinner's Scheme!

THERE was a buzz in the room after the captain of the Remove had gone. Vernon-Smith smiled sarcastically.

Hazel was red and angry and uncomfortable. Skinner and Snoop exchanged glances and grinned.

But it was easy to see that most of the fellows there fully agreed with Harry Wharton's views.

"Well, any more takers?" asked the Bounder. "What price you, Brownie?"

"Go and eat coke!" was the reply of the New Zealand junior.

"You trying your luck, Toddy?"

"Rats!" said Peter Todd.

"Oh, don't let Wharton frighten you off!" sneered Skinner. "Who the merry dickens is Wharton, anyway? He isn't Kaiser of Greyfriars!"

Peter Todd came over to Skinner.

"My dear Skinner, I am not frightened—I'm merely decent," he said. "I do not like a fellow to suggest otherwise. Under such circumstances, I generally pull a fellow's nose—like that!"

Skinner gave a muffled yell as Peter's finger and thumb suddenly gripped his long, thin nose like a vice.

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Skinner jerked his nose away, and rubbed it furiously. Peter Todd strolled away to do his prep, and Skinner did not follow him. He was not a fighting-man; and he took that tweak of the nose free, gratis, and for nothing, as Squiff remarked.

Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth was acting as stakeholder for the merry sportsmen, and he was looking rather uncomfortable now. Temple was rather a sporting youth, in a thoughtless way; not at all on the lines of Skinner or the Bounder. He began to wish that he had had nothing to do with the affair; but he did not care to withdraw.

"Well, is that the lot?" he asked rather gruffly.

"Any more merry sportsmen prepared to back up the Remove?" yawned the Bounder. "Two to one, you know."

"I'm your man, Smithy!" jerked out Billy Bunter. "I'll take you on, in tenners."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder grinned.

"Produce your tenner," he said.

"I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow—"

For ten quid?" chuckled Skinner.

"Ahem! Not exactly. But, of course, you can trust me to pay up, Smithy. Besides, it won't be necessary for me to pay up, as I shall win. I'll hand Temple my IOU for the amount—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Now, look here, Smith—" urged Bunter.

"Oh, rats!"

Vernon-Smith turned his back on the Owl of the Remove; and Temple walked away. Billy Bunter bore down on Lord Mauleverer, who was looking on at the scene from the sofa.

"Mauly, old chap, you've got a tenner about you, I know—"

"Yaas!" said Mauly.

"Lend it to me."

"By gad! What a humorist you are, Bunter!" said his lordship.

"I'm not joking, Mauly—"

"Yaas, you are!"

"Look here, you ass, I want a tenner—"

Lord Mauleverer got up and strolled away. Billy Bunter gave a snort of disgust, and rolled out of the Common-room. He was quite furious at having to let that great chance slip for want of a little ready cash; and at that moment he fully endorsed Brutus' bitter remarks on those who "look such rascal counters from their friends."

He made his way to Study No. 7, to try Peter Todd as a last chance. He found Peter and Tom Dutton there, at work.

"You'll never get your prep done at this rate, Bunter," said Todd.

"Bother prep! Look here, Peter, it's a sin and a shame to miss a chance like this! The Bounder's offering two to one against Greyfriars to-morrow, and Greyfriars will win."

"There's a good chance, anyway," agreed Todd. "I'm in the team."

"Well, then, lend me a quid—"

"To make bets with?"

"Yes."

Peter Todd looked round the study. He was not looking for a quid, however, but for a cricket-stump. Bunter blinked at him angrily, and turned to Tom Dutton, the deaf junior.

"Will you lend me a quid?" he roared in Dutton's ear.

"Eh?"

"Lend me a quid."

"What kid?"

"Not kid—quid!" shrieked Bunter. "I want to lay it on the footer-match to-morrow. I'll settle up after the match."

"There's some on the mantelpiece."

"Eh? Some what?"

"Matches."

"You silly ass!" yelled Bunter.

"Eh? Didn't you ask me for a match?"

Bunter gasped.

"I asked you for a quid to lay on the match, you howling ass!"

"I don't see that it's the business of this study to provide a kid with matches," said Dutton, shaking his head.

"Let him get his matches himself."

"Oh, crumbs! You deaf idiot—"

"Eh?"

"You—silly jabberwock—"

"What?"

"Oh, you chump! Will you lend me a pound?" raved Bunter.

"A pound?"

"Yes."

"Matches are not sold by the pound, are they?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, what on earth does any kid want a pound of matches for?" asked Tom Dutton argumentatively.

Bunter glared at him, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Tom

Dutton was certainly deaf; but Bunter did not believe he was quite so deaf as this. But the fat junior gave it up, and turned to the door again. Peter Todd stepped in the way, with a cricket-stump in his hand.

The fat junior eyed that stump apprehensively.

"Look here, Peter—" he began.

"You haven't done your prep, Bunter."

"I'm not going to do it; I'm chancing it. I've got more important matters to attend to!" snorted Bunter. "Talk about Nebuchadnezzar fiddling while Carthage was burning!" he added witheringly.

Peter chuckled.

"Never mind Nebuchadnezzar," he said. "You're going to do your prep, and you're not going to make bets on the St. Jim's match. Bold blades and merry dogs are barred in this study; likewise slackers and work-shys. Sit down!"

"I'm not going to! I—Yaroooh!"

Whack!

"Are you going to do your prep?"

"I'll—I'll lick you, you skinny beast!" roared Bunter.

Whack!

"Yow-ow-woooop! Leave off, you rotter! I—I don't mind doing my prep!" wailed Bunter. "In—in fact, I was just going to begin, you beast!"

"Better begin, then, or you'll get another lick—like that!"

"Yooooop!"

Billy Bunter sat down to work, with a face like a wild Hun. Peter sat down, too, keeping the cricket-stump handy. There was no arguing with Peter Todd, or with the stump, and Bunter had to do his prep, and leave over his sporting speculations for a more favourable opportunity.

Meanwhile, there was much discussion in the Remove on the subject of the Bounder and his essay in the role of a bookmaker. The general opinion of the Remove was that Vernon-Smith was an ass. The fellows naturally favoured their own team's chances in the match, and it certainly looked as if the Bounder had allowed his resentment to cloud his usually clear judgment. Harry Wharton's eleven was in splendid form; and they were to play on their own ground, which was something of an advantage. They were very likely indeed to win; and if they won the Bounder stood to lose quite a considerable sum of money. Money came easily to the millionaire's son; but twenty pounds was a serious amount, even for Herbert Vernon-Smith.

And the fact that the Bounder evidently hoped for the defeat of Wharton's team did not add to his popularity.

The Bounder, however, sat reading in the armchair, with a complete indifference to the remarks and the looks of his Form-fellows. He went on his own wilful way regardless of their opinion.

Skinner had joined Snoop in the latter's study, after scamping his prep. Both of the black sheep of the Remove were in cheery spirits. Snoop had a small sum staked on the match, Skinner a large one. It was a little odd that so cautious a fellow as Skinner should stake the whole of his birthday fiver on what was, after all, a chance; but he appeared to have no uneasiness.

"Ten quid to-morrow, Snoopey!" said Skinner, as he lighted a cigarette. "Good old Smithy! He's got his back up after being left out of the eleven, and it's made him play the giddy ox! This is the chance of a lifetime. Two to one in fivers! What?"

Snoop nodded.

"Smithy's an ass!" he said. "But, after all, St. Jim's may pull off a win, Skinney. You stand to lose your fiver if they do!"

Skinner closed one eye.

"I'm risking ten bob," said Snoop. "But a fiver! I should think twice about that—or three times, in fact!"

"I'm not risking much," said Skinner coolly.

"But St. Jim's are a good team; I've seen them play. They've got some first-rate men—Tom Merry, Talbot, Figgins; and their goalkeeper, that fat Wynn, is a regular corker. I wouldn't have taken on the bet if the Bounder hadn't offered odds!"

Skinner smiled.

"Blessed if I see your game!" said Snoop, with a very curious look at his chum. "Nothing's happened to the St. Jim's team, I suppose, that you've got secret news of?"

"They're playing Levison, who used to be in the Remove here," smiled Skinner.

"He must be pretty good, or Tom Merry wouldn't play him," said Snoop. "And, even if he was only so-so, one man wouldn't make much difference."

"He might, if he liked."

"Phew!"

"I got on pretty well with Levison here," yawned Skinner. "Birds of a feather, you know. Levison, as I knew him, would have sold his own grandfather for a quid. He would sell a footer match cheaper than that."

"Oh, my hat!"

"A tip to Levison, and I fancy we shall have a man in the St. Jim's team who will see that Greyfriars wins," said Skinner coolly. "Suppose he bargains for a quid—well, we can afford it. You can stand five bob towards it, as you stand to score if it comes off."

Snoop whistled.

"And you think he'll do it?"

"I know he will. Levison's always hard up, owing to geegaws and things; he's a regular rip-snorter, as Fishy would say, when it comes to sporting matters. He could give the Bounder points and beat him in that line. He will jump at the offer. I fancy the teams are about equally balanced; and one man playing to lose will make all the difference. Smithy's tenner is as safe as if I had it in my pocket at this minute!"

"I—I say, Skinner, it's rather thick!"

"Are you going to preach?" grinned Skinner. "If Smithy splashes his money about like this he must expect to get some of it annexed. He shouldn't play the ox if he doesn't want to get rooked. Besides, this will be a lesson to Smithy. It's wrong to make bets on football matches, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

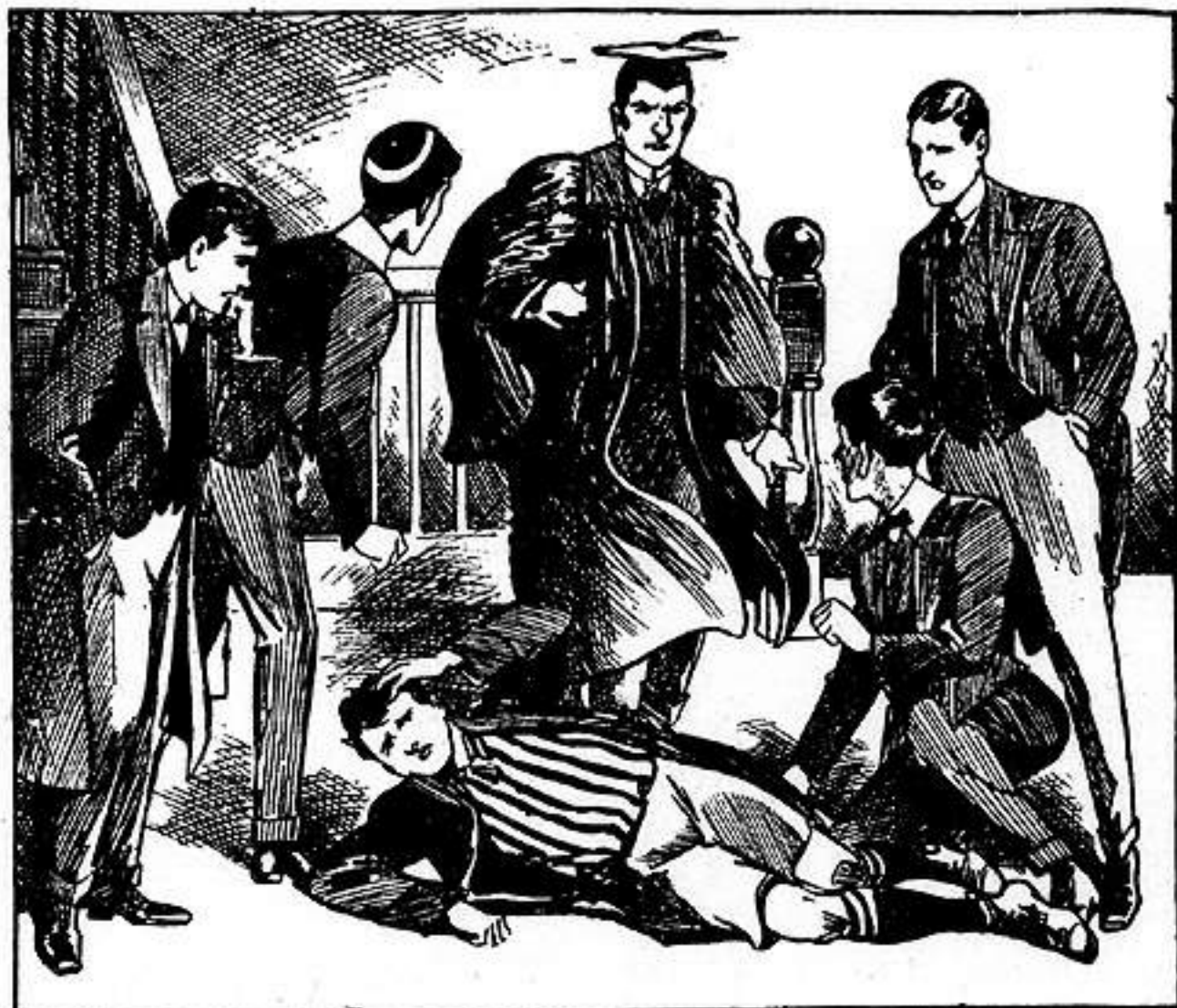
And, whoever else might be doubtful on the point, Skinner of the Remove looked forward to the morrow's match with serene confidence. It did not occur to him that, with all his astuteness, he was in danger of over-reaching himself.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Chips In!

HARRY WHARTON was looking a little less cheery than usual when the Remove came up to their dormitory. The matter of Hazeldene weighed on his mind. Hazel was to keep goal for the Remove against Tom Merry's team—at least, that had been the arrangement. Wharton did not want to drop him out at the last moment, especially as his sister Marjorie was coming over from Cliff House to see the match. But if Hazel's bet with the Bounder stood, the captain of the Remove had no choice about the matter. It was necessary to draw the line somewhere.

Hazel gave him a sullen look in the dormitory, but he did not speak. The Bounder glanced at both of them with an ironical smile. If his object was to sow



Crocked! (See Chapter 8.)

discord in the football eleven, he had succeeded. Wharton wondered whether that was his object. It would have been very like the Bounder of the old days, but Harry could not quite think so now. But, whether he intended it or not, that was what Vernon-Smith had done, and it placed Wharton in an awkward position. Bulstrode, who could have kept goal, was crocked by a cycling accident, and could not take Hazel's place. It would be necessary to play a reserve who was not up to the form of either, and the Remove's prospects of a win would be considerably modified. And that, by the way, would improve the Bounder's chances of winning his reckless wagers.

The next morning Hazeldene joined the Famous Five as they went out into the quad together before breakfast. His face was angry and sulky.

"Am I playing this afternoon?" he asked, plunging into the subject at once.

"I hope so," said Wharton.

"It depends on you, I suppose? Yes or no?"

"I can't play a man who makes bets on the matches," said Harry quietly. "You ought to be able to see that for yourself."

"The bet's made."

"You can call it off."

"That's for Smithy to say. I can't without his permission."

"Well, ask him."

"I don't care to."

"Then you can take it that you're not in the eleven!" said Wharton.

"That's enough!"

Hazeldene walked away, with a savage frown. The Famous Five exchanged uncomfortable glances.

"Silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"It's rotten!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Marjorie will think there's been a row. Can't be helped, though!"

"I couldn't do anything else," said Harry.

But his face was clouded.

"Who's going to keep goal?"

"Rake, of course!"

"The esteemed Rake can keep goal," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It is pitiful that the excellent Bulstrode

is off his colour. But we shall beat St. Jim's all the samefully."

"I hope so."

Dick Rake was willing enough to play. He was good in goal, though it was not his favourite position. But the captain of the Remove still hoped that Hazel would come round and do the sensible thing.

The Bounder spoke to him as the Remove were going in to morning lessons.

"You've got your goalie, I hear," he remarked.

"All your fault!" said Harry tartly.

"Yes; it looks a bit better for my prospects, doesn't it?" grinned the Bounder. "I shall make quite a haul over this match! Rake lets the ball through often enough; and he's not a champion goalie, is he?"

Wharton opened his lips, but closed them again without speaking. It was useless to utter bitter words.

The Bounder laughed, and went into the Form-room.

After morning lessons, however, Vernon-Smith followed Hazeldene into the quadrangle. Hazel was looking sullen. He felt sorely his exclusion from the team, though a wrong-headed pride prevented him from meeting his skipper's views.

"About that bet, Hazel?" began Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, hang the bet!" broke out Hazel irritably. "Confound the bet, and confound you, Smithy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel gave him a moody look.

"You can cackle!" he said. "I wanted to play to-day. It's rotten! After all, Wharton's not so very far wrong. A member of a team oughtn't to make bets on the result: it's bound to affect his play. I'm not going to be dictated to; but it's rotten!"

"Your sister will be disappointed at not seeing you in the team," the Bounder remarked.

"A lot you care about that!" sneered Hazel.

"Why should I?"

"Well, you don't, anyway!"

The Bounder laughed again.

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"You ought to keep goal this afternoon, Hazel. Bulstrode's out of it, and Rake isn't up to your form in goal, though he can play your head off anywhere else in the team."

"I suppose that's what was in your mind!" said Hazel sarcastically. "You want to win your filthy bets by making trouble in the team!"

"Did I ask you to lay your bet?" drawled the Bounder. "You jumped at the chance."

"I did it without thinking."

"Well, have it off, then!"

"Oh!" said Hazel.

"I've spoken to Temple," smiled the Bounder. "In fact, I've told him that the bet's off. Come along with me, and get your stake back, and then go and tell Wharton it's all right."

Hazel brightened up very considerably. "I say, Smithy, that's jolly decent of you! I—I'm sorry I spoke as I did just now—"

"All serene! Hard words break no bones."

"But you're dishing yourself, though," said Hazel. "If the Remove wins, you lose all your other bets. You can't want the Remove to win."

"Naturally."

"Yet you're making it possible for me to play, and you say yourself that I can keep goal better than Rake!"

"Quite so!"

"Blessed if I understand you, then! What are you doing it for?"

"There's such a thing as playing the game, you know," said the Bounder. Hazel laughed.

"There is; but it's not much in your line!" he said.

"Thanks! Now let us go and see Temple," said the Bounder, unmoved.

"Right you are!"

Ten minutes later Hazel came down to the footer-field with a very bright face. The Remove footballers were punting a ball about there before dinner.

"Have you fixed it with Rake yet, Wharton?" Hazel asked.

"I've told him he will be wanted if you don't keep goal," said Harry curtly. "It depends on you. The place is yours if you want it."

"If the bet's off, you mean?"

"Yes; that's understood."

"Well, it's off!"

"Good!" said Harry, his face clearing. "I'm jolly glad you've decided like this, Hazel!"

"It was Smithy who decided, as a matter of fact. He made me the offer, so that I could play."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Well, of all the queer fishes, I think Smithy is about the queerest!" said Bob Cherry. "I was really beginning to think that he had bagged our goalkeeper on purpose, because of his rotten bets on the match."

"I didn't think so," said Harry quietly; "and it's like Smithy to do us a good turn like this, too. He is a queer fish, and no mistake; but he's a sportsman—in our way as well as the other way. It's jolly decent of him!"

And the captain of the Remove spoke to the Bounder on the subject when the juniors went in to dinner.

The Bounder laughed.

"All serene!" he said. "As a matter of fact, I didn't want to bet with Hazel; but as I offered the odds to everybody, I couldn't refuse him. I'm glad he agreed to have the bet off. And you've got a ripping goalie in Hazel—he's at the top of his form for once!"

"It's decent of you," said Harry. "I wish—"

He paused.

"You wish—what?"

"I wish you'd give up playing the

shady goat, and be as you used to be," said Harry frankly. "It's all very well for a waster like Snoop, but it's not good enough for you, Smithy!"

The Bounder went into the dining-room without an answer. But Harry Wharton's words had found an echo in his breast.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Old Acquaintances!

"FIARDALE, deah boys!"

The train stopped in the little station as D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made the remark.

Tom Merry & Co. poured out of the train.

There were three Greyfriars fellows on the platform to meet them.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came towards the St. Jim's footballers. Skinner was there, but he was lounging at a distance, looking on.

Wharton had noticed his presence, and he had rather wondered what Skinner was doing there. Skinner was not, as a rule, interested in visiting teams. The chums of the Remove had found him there when they arrived at the station, but they had not spoken to him.

Wharton shook hands with Tom Merry. He knew all the fellows in the St. Jim's Eleven well, and he glanced rather curiously at Ernest Levison, who had once been a Greyfriars fellow.

Levison coloured a little as he met Wharton's glance, but he smiled.

"You haven't forgotten me, Wharton?" he remarked.

"Not a bit," said Harry. "I'm glad to see you here again, Levison!"

"In the footer team, too!" Bob Cherry remarked.

Levison laughed.

"Yes; rather a change since I was at Greyfriars. This kid is my minor."

Frank Levison shyly shook hands with Wharton.

He was very like his brother, though his young, cheery face had a franker expression than Levison's.

"Frank's come over with us to see the match," explained Levison. "He's not in the eleven, of course."

"No, I suppose not," said Harry, with a smile. He turned to Tom Merry. "We haven't been able to bag a brake; you don't mind a walk to the school?"

"Not at all."

"Wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cheerfully. "Fellows have to be prepared to face these fearful hardships in war-time. Are you goin' to cawwy my bag, Blake?"

"No fear!" said Jack Blake promptly.

"Are you, Lowthah?"

"Ask me another!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"All sewene! I can cawwy it myself," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am quite weady to face my share of the sacrifices demanded by the war!"

"I'll carry it," said Levison minor, taking the bag.

"Thank you vewy much, Fwanky! It is vewy good form for a fag to make himself useful to his eldahs!"

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Frank. And he marched off with the great Gussy's bag.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

The footballers left the station, and Skinner joined the crowd, and attached himself to Ernest Levison.

Levison gave him a cool nod, but did not appear anxious to enter into conversation with him.

Skinner was not to be rebuffed by a cool look, however. He had come there to talk to Levison, and he intended to do it.

"Don't hurry, old scout," he remarked.

"Lots of time! I've been looking forward to a chat with you, over old times."

"You're very good," said Levison, with some constraint in his tone.

"Well, we used to be good friends."

"Yes, I remember."

"You look a bit different," said Skinner, eyeing him.

As Skinner walked slowly, Levison had to drop behind the rest of the party to keep pace with him, or else walk on and leave him alone. He slackened down.

"Do I? In what way?"

"Well, you look more fit than you used," said Skinner. "Are you going in much for games?"

"Yes."

"Football as a regular thing?"

"That's it."

"You never cared for it at Greyfriars."

"Perhaps I've got more sense now."

"H'm! I never saw much in the game," said Skinner. "Lot of fag chasing a muddy ball about a field."

"It keeps you fit."

"Yes, I dare say it does," said Skinner, with a yawn. "I prefer something a bit less strenuous myself."

"Everybody to his taste," said Levison. "Still, you admit I look more fit. You might try it yourself."

"Not in my line, thanks!" said Skinner, with a laugh. "I leave the strenuous life to muscular prodigies like Bob Cherry and Wharton. Still, I'm pretty keen on this afternoon's match."

"Yes?" said Levison inquiringly.

Skinner eyed him. There was a change in Levison, he could see that, and it made him feel a little uneasy. This was not exactly the Ernest Levison he had known—the smoky, card-playing, reckless black sheep, who had made the Greyfriars Remove too warm for him.

It was not only in looks that Levison had altered—though in looks the difference was very marked.

His old-time slouch was gone—his once sallow face was ruddy and healthy. He walked with a springy stride, his shoulders well up. His eyes had lost their sharp, suspicious look, and their gaze was clear and fearless. Only the slightly sarcastic curl of his lip reminded Skinner of the old Levison.

But there was more than that. There was a more subtle change in him, which Skinner rather felt than saw. It came as a shock to Skinner, who was counting upon Levison being the same shady fellow as of old.

Levison quickened his pace a little.

"No hurry," muttered Skinner.

"We're dropping behind!"

"That doesn't matter—kick-off isn't till three."

"Oh, all right!"

Levison's evident desire to avoid a heart-to-heart talk with his old acquaintance added to Skinner's uneasiness. It seemed only too clear that there was little or nothing in common between them now.

"It was a surprise to me when I heard you were in Tom Merry's team," said Skinner, at last. "How did you work it?"

"I was given the place, of course!"

"On your merits?"

"Naturally."

"Then you are taking the game seriously?"

"Quite."

"What's your place in the team?"

"I'm playing inside-right to-day; Figgins couldn't come. It's Figgins' place really; but he's home."

"Oh, you're not a regular member of the eleven, then?"

"I play in a good many matches. Of course, a chap can't play every time—unless he's a very special man, like Talbot or Tom Merry or Fatty Wynn."

"And you're a good forward?"
Levison laughed.
"Tom Merry thinks so, or he wouldn't play me."

"I—I suppose so. I noticed your minor just now." Skinner glanced up the road, where Frank Levison was trotting along cheerily with D'Arcy's bag. "What on earth have you brought him here for?"

"Why shouldn't I? He wanted to see the game."

"Blessed if I should have thought you were the kind of chap to coddle a young brother!"

"Oh, rot!"
"Is he much in your line?"
Levison compressed his lips.
"I don't quite see what you mean, Skinner."

"I mean, in the way of smokes and geegees and billiards and things."

"Not in the least."
"Well, he looks it," said Skinner, with a sneer. "Looks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. And you—you've taken to having a goody-goody minor hanging about you! It beats me!"

Skinner was puzzled, and he was annoyed as well. Instinctively he knew that Levison's regard for his young brother boded no good to his scheme. Frank's honest, candid young face irritated him and made him vaguely uneasy. Levison was about the last fellow in the world he would have expected to be influenced by his young brother's opinion of him; yet he could see—he realised at once—that Levison thought a good deal of his minor's opinion. A dismaying thought was in Skinner's mind, that his scheme for bagging Smithy's tenner was not such a dead cert as he had believed.

Levison was quickening his pace again. He had not answered Skinner's remark, and did not seem inclined for further talk.

"Oh, don't hurry!" snapped Skinner. "Look here, Levison, I took the trouble to come along here just to have a talk with you."

"Oh, all right," said Levison, slowing down once more, with obvious reluctance. "We don't want them to get out of sight, you know."

"I've got some smokes about me," hinted Skinner. "A fag wouldn't do you any harm, under the trees here, and there's lots of time."

"It would do me a good deal of harm, when I'm just going to play footer," said Levison, laughing. "I shall want all my wind in the match. No, thanks!"

"Perhaps you've given up smoking?" asked Skinner, with a sneer.

"Right on the wicket."
"By gad! Honest?"
"Yes."

"But why?"
"I don't care for it. It's a fool's game, anyway."

"And perhaps it's a fool's game to have a quid on a geegee for a race, or ten bob on a hundred up?" sneered Skinner.

"Yes, I think so."
"My hat! Have you given that up, too?"

"Quite."
"Oh!"

Levison paused, and looked at Skinner. "I'd better speak out, Skinner," he said quietly. "I'm a bit different chap from what I was at Greyfriars, and—and I don't intend to begin the old game again at any price. There's precious few things we should agree on, I fancy, and it's not much good jawing. Let's get after the others."

Levison strode on rapidly, and Skinner remained standing in the road, his hands clenched and his eyes gleaming under his

knitted brows. This was a facer for him! It fairly took his breath away for some moments.

"By gad!" he muttered. "By gad!"
He broke into a run, and caught up with Levison before the latter could join the footballers.

"Hold on a minute!"
He caught Levison by the arm and stopped him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

TOM MERRY & CO. were well ahead, chatting with Wharton and Cherry as they walked on towards Greyfriars. Some of the juniors had noticed that Levison had dropped behind with Skinner, but only supposed that he wanted a chat with an old acquaintance. Only Frank had glanced back once or twice, with a little frown on his brow. Frank did not like Skinner's looks. But he went on with the juniors, and did not think of interrupting the talk between his brother and the latter's former schoolfellow.

Levison looked impatient as Skinner brought him to a stop. But he bore it as civilly as he could.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I haven't finished yet," said Skinner. "Dash it all, Levison, you might be a bit more friendly with an old pal!"

"I don't know that we were pals when I was at Greyfriars," said Levison. "I don't remember your showing me much sympathy when I had to clear out!"

"Well, we were friends," said Skinner. "I was jolly interested when I heard you were in the St. Jim's team, and coming over here. Have you got anything on this match?"

"Do you mean a bet?"

"Yes."

"No, I haven't!"

"You haven't backed your own team?"

"No."

"That's good."

"Our skipper would have something to say to any chap who made bets on the matches," said Levison. "But I tell you I've chucked all that kind of thing. It's a mug's game, and I've done with it."

"Well, I've not done with it," said Skinner sulkily. "I like to see life a bit, myself. I've got something on this game."

"You'll lose it, most likely, if you're backing Greyfriars. We're going all out to win," said Levison, with a smile.

"One of our chaps is backing your team, two to one. You know Vernon-Smith?"

"The fellow you call the Bounder—yes."

"He's laid two to one on St. Jim's in fivers."

"That's rather a compliment to us."

"Oh, he did it because he was ratty at being pushed out of the eleven. He's been offering the odds up and down the Remove like a blessed bookie. Well, I've taken him on—in fivers."

"Phew! You're a lucky chap to have fivers to play with, in war-time."

"I don't have any, as a rule; but I got this one on my birthday from my uncle. I've laid it on Greyfriars, and I stand to bag a tenner if Greyfriars wins."

"You may bag the tenner; but I should say that it's at least equal chances that you'll lose your fiver."

"I don't want to lose it! I can't afford to lose it! I shouldn't have booked the bet if I'd thought it was a matter of chance, of course. I can't afford to gamble to that tune!"

"But you've done it, you say."

"Because I looked on it as a dead cert."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see why you should, Skinner. Did you think we were the sort of team to be walked over?"

"Not exactly. I reckoned that the teams were about equally matched."

"I think that's about right."

"But with an old pal in the St. Jim's Eleven I thought I could count on a Greyfriars win as a cert."

It was out now!

Levison stopped dead, staring at Skinner.

"You thought—what?" he ejaculated.

"Oh, don't come the conscientious objector with me!" said Skinner savagely. "Of course I thought so, when I knew you were in the St. Jim's team. I'm ready to treat you well—a quid out of the fiver, for doing nothing but let the Remove through. That's good enough, I suppose?"

"Why, you rotter—"

Levison clenched his hands, and his eyes blazed.

There had been a time when such a proposal would not have shocked and angered Levison. But that time was past, as his looks clearly showed.

Skinner looked at him with mingled surprise and anger. He was quite as angry as Levison. He had counted on this as a certainty. He had risked his birthday fiver on it. Never for a moment had he doubted that Ernest Levison would be willing to enter into the rascally scheme, and pocket his share of the plunder.

"You want me to sell the match so that you can swindle the fellow you've made a bet with!" exclaimed Levison.

Skinner reddened.

"All's fair in war," he said sullenly. "I'm out to win, of course. I can't afford to take risks with fivers; I'm not a millionaire."

"And you thought I'd help you?"

"Of course I did!" said Skinner angrily. "Why shouldn't I? Have you joined the conscientious objectors since I last saw you?"

Levison's hands unclenched.

"I suppose you'd a right to think so," he said slowly. "I won't punch your head for insulting me, Skinner—"

"You'd better not, hang you!"

"I suppose, when I was the fellow you knew, I might have played such a dirty trick. I don't know. But, anyway, I shouldn't play it now. Nothing more to be said. Good-bye!"

"Hold on, Levison! Look here, I'll go halves!"

"Halves in what?"

"In Smithy's tenner. If St. Jim's lose, I get a tenner from the Bounder. Five quid each—there!"

"Oh, I suppose you can't understand!" said Levison impatiently. "It's not a question of money. I wouldn't do as you want for a hundred pounds!"

"You wouldn't?"

"No! Is that plain enough for you?"

Skinner bit his lip till it almost bled.

"You mean you're going to leave me in the lurch, when I've depended on you, and staked my money on you?" he muttered.

"You shouldn't have done it. I'm certainly not going to leave my team in the lurch to help you win your rotten bets!"

"I—I say, Levison,"—Skinner was almost husky with rage and alarm—"I—I say, you can't fail me like this! That fiver's all I've got—and I've put it on the Remove for the match! I can't afford to lose it. I—I owe money. Look here, you drive a hard bargain, but I'm in your hands if you choose to bleed me. Lose the match for St. Jim's, and you

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"I shall have all the winnings—the whole tenner. I shall only keep my stake."

Levison gave him one look, turned on his heel, and strode after the footballers.

"Levison!" called Skinner.

Levison did not answer. He hurried on, and rejoined Tom Merry & Co. Skinner followed more slowly, his thin face quite pale. It was only too clear now that he had been egregiously mistaken in counting upon Ernest Levison to betray his side in the match. His dead cert had turned out extremely uncertain, as dead certs so often do. His birthday fiver depended now upon the chance that the Remove would win on their merits as players; just about an even chance. That was not good enough for a sportsman of Skinner's kidney; but it was all that was left to him.

As the cad of the Remove tramped on, his face white and his eyes glinting, a deadly hatred burned in his heart for the fellow who had failed him—by refusing to play a treacherous game for his profit.

Vernon-Smith was lounging in the gateway when the juniors arrived at the school. He nodded to Tom Merry & Co., glancing rather curiously at Levison minor. He gave a friendly word to Ernest Levison as he passed. The footballers went in, and a few minutes later Harold Skinner arrived.

"Waiting for you, dear boy," said the Bounder. "Are you staying in for the match this afternoon? I was thinking of a run over to Highcliffe. There's a game on in Ponsonby's study."

"I—I'm going to watch the game, I think!" muttered Skinner.

"Thinking of your merry fiver?" asked the Bounder. "That was rather a reckless plunge for you, wasn't it, Skinner? You quite took my breath away."

Skinner paused.

"Perhaps it was," he said. "If you want to call the bet off, Smithy—"

"I don't!"

"You're risking a tenner—and Greyfriars will win, you know!"

Vernon-Smith gave him a keen look.

"You thought Greyfriars had a dead cert yesterday," he said. "And if you thought it was a dead cert now you wouldn't want the bet called off. What's occurred to alter your opinion of the Remove's prospects?"

"Nothing," said Skinner hastily, quite taken aback by the ease with which the keen-eyed Bounder saw through him. "I think Greyfriars will win."

"Then you'll bag my tenner," smiled the Bounder.

"I—I don't want to rob you," said Skinner lamely. "If you'd like to call off the bet, I'm agreeable."

"Only out of regard for me?"

"Ye-es."

"Dear old chap! What a pal to have!" said the Bounder, with sarcastic affection. "You booked the bet because you wanted my tenner; but since then you've developed a conscientious objection, and you want to call off the bet because you're certain to win my tenner! This is really kind. Generous, in fact!"

Skinner winced under the Bounder's sarcasm.

"Now, why do you want the bet called off?" asked Vernon-Smith coolly.

"Rotting apart, what's your reason?"

"I—I don't want it—"

"Let it stand, then."

"Look here, Smithy, I—I'd rather call it off!" blurted out Skinner, driven to the truth at last. "If you don't mind—"

"But I do," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "If you want to call it off, it's because you've lost faith in Greyfriars. And THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 510.

you're a keen judge, dear boy. Something's happened to your dead cert. Do the St. Jim's fellows strike you as being a team of regular International champions?"

"N-no!"

"Then why these sudden doubts? You hadn't any doubts yesterday."

Skinner bit his lip and was silent. He could hardly explain to the fellow he had betted with why he had counted on that win as a cert. But the Bounder, as a matter of fact, did not need any explanation. His keen brain was already thinking it out.

"You went down to the station to meet the party! Did you have a jaw with your merry old pal Levison?"

Skinner started.

"Did you ask him, as a friendly favour, to make it a cert for you?"

"No. I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder. "You silly ass! I could see that Levison was looking ratty when he came in—and I heard Talbot ask him if it was an old friend he'd stopped behind to talk to. So that was your game, old scout—a friend in the enemy's camp, and a certain win; and the ghost has refused to walk, so you want to call the bet off!"

Skinner stood biting his lips with rage. It was not much use denying it. The Bounder read him like an open book.

"And you were going to swindle me out of my tenner," said Vernon-Smith,



greatly amused, "and share out the proceeds with Levison, if he played your game. I say, Skinner, that was playing it rather low-down on a pal, wasn't it?"

"I—I—"

"Well, I won't call the bet off," said the Bounder deliberately. "You've got an even chance now—a fair chance; and it's all you'd have expected if you'd been commonly decent. But, by gad, what a fool—what a silly fool I am to get mixed up with a rotten bizney like this! Skinner, dear boy, you've done more to make me see the error of my cheery ways than a hundred sermons would have done. I'm dashed if I think it's quite good enough, by gad!"

The Bounder lounged away, leaving Skinner pale and disturbed. The exposure of his rascality did not trouble him so much as the peril to his birthday fiver; but, nevertheless, the Bounder's contempt penetrated his thick skin.

Vernon-Smith walked away to the football-ground, his hands driven deep into his pockets. The sardonic amusement had died out of his face. The wretched swindle Skinner had attempted did not shock him, but the dingy meanness of it got on his nerves, somehow. He knew that there was seldom any gambling without an accompaniment of petty swindlery—that the quest of "something for nothing" naturally roused all the meanest and most unscrupulous feelings in the human breast. It gave him an

intolerable sense of the meanness of the whole thing—a feeling that it was not clean to be mixed up in such transactions. Skinner, quite unintentionally, had done the Bounder good!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

"ALL serene—what?" Sidney James Snoop asked that question as he met Skinner in the quadrangle. Skinner's gloomy look rather alarmed him.

"No!" snapped Skinner.

"You've spoken to Levison?"

"Yes."

"Well, then—"

"He's refused!"

"Oh! Well, you're an ass, Skinner; you didn't offer him enough!" growled Snoop. "Just like you to spoil a good thing by being stingy! You should have offered him halves."

"I offered him the lot, if he'd make my fiver safe for me," said Skinner moodily.

"He refused."

"Refused the tenner?" exclaimed Snoop, opening his eyes wide.

"Yes. He's changed since we knew him."

"He must have!" said Snoop in astonishment. "The Levison I know would have sold his whole family, to the thirtieth and fortieth generation, for a tenner. Then the game's up?"

"Looks like it."

"Well, I'm glad I've only got ten bob on it, after all. I was going to raise another quid and put on. I'm glad I didn't, now. After all, very likely Greyfriars will win. No reason why they shouldn't."

"That's not good enough for me. I can't afford to lose my fiver if Wharton gets beaten."

"Perhaps Smithy will let you cry off!"

"He won't. I've asked him. He—he's spotted the game! He's as keen as a razor," muttered Skinner. "He's guessed that I tried to fix it with Levison for St. Jim's to lose."

"Phew! He certainly won't let you call it off, then. You'll have to grin and bear it, Skinney. There isn't any other chap in the St. Jim's team you could try to get at, I suppose?"

"Yes—if I wanted my nose smashed!" snarled Skinner. "But I don't!"

Snoop laughed.

"Well, I must say there's nobody in that gang I should care to tackle with a suggestion of the kind," he admitted. "But what about that kid—they've got a fag with them who looks like Levison!"

"It's Levison minor. He's not in the eleven."

"Oh! Nothing doing there, then!"

"I believe that little beast is at the bottom of it, somehow!" growled Skinner. "I could see the kind of brat he was when I first saw him. Levison's fond of him. I could see that. He can't play a shady trick now because his dear, good young brother would be shocked at such naughty things—that's how it is!" Skinner clenched his hands. "Oh, I'd like to make the pair of them squirm for it!"

Stott of the Remove joined the precious pair.

"All serene?" he asked gaily. "I say, I've booked another two quid with the Bounder while you were out, Skinner. Temple's holding the stakes. Smithy never even thought of smelling a mouse. Ha, ha!"

Stott's merriment was checked suddenly by Skinner's grim look.

"Anything wrong?" he asked. "I suppose Levison's playing up?"

"No!"

"Oh, holy smoke!"

Stott looked utterly dismayed.

"I—I say, I can't afford to lose," he said blankly. "You thumping fool, Skinner! You told me it was a cert—you'd fix it with Levison!"

"I've tried to, and he's not taking any," said Skinner savagely. "It's not my fault."

"But it is your fault! You led me to suppose—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Sidney James Snoop strolled away, rather amused than otherwise. The way Skinner, in his cunning, had overreached himself struck him as comic. But there was nothing comic in the matter to Skinner and Stott, who were in much more deeply than either of them could afford.

Stott seemed to find some solace in slanging his associate. Skinner heard him in moody silence, unheeding.

"Look here, it's no good rowing, Stott," he said at last. "Can't something be done?"

"Yes! I can lose three quids, and you can lose five!" said Stott savagely. "Of all the thundering fools—"

"The kick-off isn't till three," said Skinner. "Look here, don't jaw—there's no time to waste jawing! Can't something be done, I say?"

"What can be done, then?"

"Levison's let us down!" hissed Skinner. "I had a right to expect that he would play up. He's turned us down—for nothing. He ought to be made to smart for it!"

"That won't save our money."

"It might!" said Skinner, lowering his voice, after a cautious glance round. "The St. Jim's fellows haven't brought any reserves with them—there's no followers at all, excepting that fag, Frank Levison. Railway fares, you know. Well, suppose something happened to one of them?"

"My hat!"

"I tell you I'm going to make Levison smart for putting me in this fix!" said Skinner, between his teeth. "Two birds with one stone! If Tom Merry were a man short, he'd have to play that fag, or else borrow a player from Whar-ton. In either case he's at a big disadvantage. You've seen them play. They act together like clockwork, and a new man at the last moment—and a poor player at that—might make all the difference."

"The—the fellows would lynch us if they thought—" faltered Stott.

"I mean under the rose, of course, fathead! I'm not thinking of going up to Levison on the footer field and knocking him on the head!" growled Skinner.

"Well, what can you do?"

"You used to be friendly with him," whispered Skinner. "He doesn't know you're in this game with me. You could get him away from the others, somehow. It's nearly half an hour to kick-off, anyway. Their train got in early."

"But—but then—"

"Then an accident will happen. Levison will fall over something! Nothing serious, of course—only enough to crock him for the match!"

There was a long silence. Stott breathed hard.

"He deserves it, for leaving us in the lurch like this!" he muttered at last.

"He's fairly asked for it," said Skinner.

"We—we can't afford to lose—"

"I know that I can't."

"Well, I can't, either. I shall be stony for the rest of the term if the

Bounder bags my three quids," said Stott dismally. "You were an ass—"

"Oh, don't start that again! Will you help me make it a cert, instead of a loss?" snarled Skinner.

"Yes, if there's anything doing."

"Get Levison to come to your study, and I'll see to the rest."

"Well, I dare say I could do that."

"Do it, then. Leave the rest to me."

"It's a go!"

Skinner went into the School House, and Stott made his way to the football-ground. The Remove footballers were not all there yet. Tom Merry's train had come in early, and kick-off was not yet due. Levison was chatting with some of the Greyfriars fellows, who gave him a very cordial reception at his old school, politely concealing their surprise that he was there at all as a footballer.

Stott joined the group.

"Hallo, Levison! You haven't forgotten me?" asked Stott, with great heartiness; and he shook hands with the

passage, Levison?" he smiled. "Here you are—up the second staircase."

"I remember," said Levison, with a smile.

"We had a barring-out here," said Stott. "This staircase was barricaded, you know, and there was a terrific shindy. That was while Dr. Locke was away. You'd have enjoyed it, Levison."

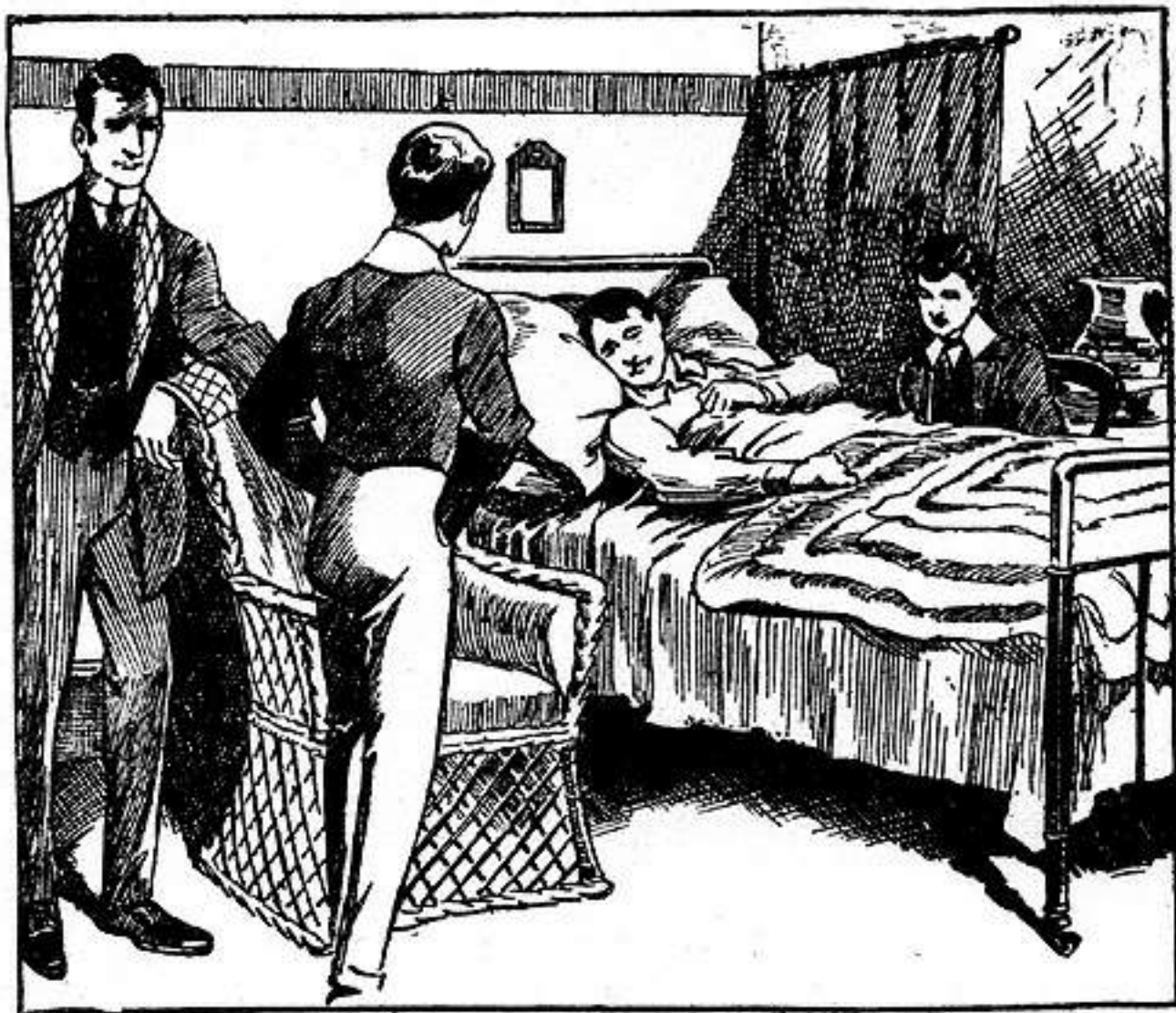
"Very likely."

"Come on!"

The three juniors reached the top of the Remove staircase. There was a sudden rush of feet, and Skinner came from the Remove passage in a great hurry, and ran blindly into Levison.

"Look out!" gasped Levison.

Skinner threw his arms round the St. Jim's junior, as if to save himself. He reeled on the landing, and the two went rolling down the stairs together. There was a loud bumping and gasping, and Levison landed on the lower landing, and Skinner, with a heavy thud, landed on him.



Back in the old fold! (See Chapter 9.)

former Greyfriars fellow. "We used to have some good times when you were here. I'm jolly glad to see you again!"

"I'm glad to see Greyfriars again," said Levison.

"You ought to see Mr. Quelch while you're here," remarked Stott. "Rather a surprise for old Quelch—what? You never got on with him, did you?"

"I'm afraid not."

"He's still the same crusty old codger," said Stott. "Come and have a look at your old study, Levison, as you're not playing yet. It's my study, now. Bring your minor—he'd like to see your old quarters."

"Yes, I would," said Frank brightly.

"All serene!" said Levison.

Stott walked them off the football ground, chatting cheerily as they went to the School House. What plan Skinner had in mind Stott did not know. He was content to leave all active measures to Skinner. They entered the School House together, and Stott led them up the broad staircase.

"You remember the old Remove

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Badly Crocked!

"**E**RNIE!" panted Frank.

Stott stood transfixed.

He stared down at the writhing figures on the lower landing, his eyes almost starting from his head.

He had wondered what scheme Skinner had in mind for crocking Levison. But he had never dreamed of so reckless and desperate a measure as this. He was scared, dumbfounded!

Skinner, panting, lay across the St. Jim's junior. Frank Levison raced down the stairs, grasped Skinner's shoulder, and dragged him roughly aside. He threw himself down beside his brother, who was stretched on the landing, white, and groaning faintly.

"Ernie!"

"I—I'm sorry!" stammered Skinner. "I—I didn't see you! Who is it? Levison? I—I say, you're not hurt, are you?"

Skinner was bruised and breathless himself. He staggered to his feet, white

himself, as he saw Levison lying helpless. He had intended to hurt the junior; but a dreadful fear seized upon him now that he had hurt him too much.

"Ernie!" muttered Frank. "Ernie, old chap—"

"All right, Franky." Levison spoke in gasping tones, his lips white with pain. "I—I've hurt my leg! It's not much, I think. But I—I can't get up."

"Good heavens!" muttered Stott. "You—you fool, Skinner!"

Skinner was terrified himself now.

"Levison, what's the matter with you? You—you're not hurt?"

Levison looked at him, the old sardonic expression creeping upon his colourless face.

"You've done your job too thoroughly, Skinner," he said, in faint tones.

"It—it was an accident! I didn't see you—"

"Liar!"

Skinner panted.

"I—I'll get help, Levison—I'll get a doctor—I—"

"You fool!" muttered Levison. "You might have broken my neck. I believe you've broken my leg as it is!"

"You villain!" muttered Frank, his eyes burning at Skinner. "Then you did it on purpose!"

"I—I didn't! Why should I? Levison, if you dare to say—"

"Help!" shouted Frank.

The crash of the falling juniors had brought attention to the spot. Wingate of the Sixth came hurrying up the lower stairs. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, followed him. Both of them uttered startled exclamations at the sight of Levison lying helpless and deadly pale on his back.

"What has happened?" exclaimed the Remove-master.

"An—an accident, sir!" stammered Skinner. "Levison fell downstairs. I ran into him by accident—"

Levison's eyes had a mocking light. Skinner was looking at him imploringly. He had little right to expect consideration from Levison, though it was true that he had not intended the accident to be so serious. But he had taken the chance of that, with utter recklessness and unscrupulousness.

If Levison told the facts now—

But Levison did not.

"My leg's hurt, sir," he said. "I can't get up! I'm sorry to be giving a lot of trouble."

Skinner breathed more freely. Frank was silent. It was not for him to speak if his brother did not choose to do so.

Mr. Quelch peered more closely at the junior.

"Bless my soul! It is Levison!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. I used to be in your Form here." Levison compressed his lips as a sharp throb of pain shot through him.

"I—I'm afraid I shall have to give you some more trouble, sir."

"My poor boy! Don't speak like that. You are hurt. Wingate, will you go to my study and telephone for Dr. Pillbury at once?"

Wingate hurried away.

A number of fellows were gathering on the stairs now, attracted by the scene. Mr. Quelch, who knew something of first aid, was making a hurried examination of Levison's injury as he lay. His face grew very grave.

Levison was evidently in great pain, but he bore it with the cool stoicism which was a part of his nature.

Under Mr. Quelch's directions, he was lifted by Gwynne and Wingate and carried into a bed-room, to await the arrival of the medical man. Frank was with him, his face pale, his eyes heavy with unshed tears. The fag seemed to feel the

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disaster even more than the chief sufferer felt it. He was still in the room when Dr. Pillbury arrived.

Meanwhile, the news had spread to the football-field, where the footballers were getting ready for the match.

Billy Bunter brought the news.

It caused dismay among the footballers.

"Levison hurt!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "But how on earth—"

"Poor old Levison!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Howevah did it happen, deah boy?"

"Fell downstairs!" said Bunter. "Skinner ran into him on the landing—"

"Skinner did?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, who was listening with keen interest to the information imparted by the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes. Clumsy ass, you know," said Bunter. "Skinner always was clumsy. Knocked Levison fairly down the Remove stairs by rushing into him. Never saw him, you know. Levison's leg's broken."

"His leg broken!" exclaimed Tom Merry, aghast.

"Bai Jove!"

"So the fellows are saying," said Bunter. "Rough on Levison, ain't it? I say, you fellows, you'll want a substitute for Levison now. I'll play, if you like. I don't mind playing for St. Jim's—"

Yow-ow! What are you tramping on my feet for, Peter Todd, you beast?"

The St. Jim's fellows were not thinking of football for the moment. They were deeply concerned for Levison. They moved off towards the House, and Harry Wharton & Co. went with them. The kick-off was postponed without discussion. In the passage outside the room where Levison lay they gathered in a silent and dismayed crowd, waiting for the doctor to emerge.

Dr. Pillbury had arrived as fast as his car could bring him, and he was shut up with Levison now. Mr. Quelch and Frank were there, too.

Skinner paced the passage, white and restless. Stott had gone out, carefully avoiding Skinner. Stott was angry and disgusted with his precious pal, and fearful of the facts coming to light. From what Levison had said on the landing he knew that the St. Jim's junior was not deceived. Levison was quite aware that Skinner had harmed him intentionally.

If Levison chose to talk, there was black trouble ahead for the plotters. And why should he not?

But he had not talked yet, at all events. Skinner was wondering uneasily how it was to end, when he felt a tap on his elbow, and glanced round to see the cynical face of the Bounder beside him.

"Waitin' for news of your victim, dear boy?" asked the Bounder, in low, sarcastic tones.

"Shut up!" muttered Skinner hurriedly.

"Come along, then!"

Skinner followed him. The Bounder stopped in a window-recess, out of hearing of the anxious crowd in the passage.

His eyes were fixed on Skinner's pale, scared face with a scorn that made even the cad of the Remove wince.

"So you've come to this?" The Bounder's voice was low and contemptuous. "Levison wouldn't take your bribe, you cad, and you've done this to him!"

"It—it was an accident!" muttered Skinner, licking his dry lips.

"You rushed into him by accident?"

"Yes."

"Where were you rushing?"

Skinner did not reply.

"And how did Levison come to be there?"

"He—he came in with Stott, I think—"

"Yes, it's plain enough. Stott brought him there, and you did the rest," nodded

the Bounder. "Levison's no fool. Skinner. He can put two and two together and make four of it. It looks to me as if you're in a bad box, if Levison chooses!"

"He—he can't prove anything," muttered Skinner huskily. "I shall deny—"

"And all this for the sake of a rotten bet!" said the Bounder bitterly. "You've risked killing a chap for that!"

Skinner shuddered.

"I—I never thought—I—you fool, Smithy, I thought he would get a bit knocked about, that's all, and put him off his form. You know it!"

"Yes, I know that's what you intended—but you risked more than that. He may be a cripple for life now."

"It's your fault!" said Skinner desperately.

Vernon-Smith started.

"Mine? How? You rotter, I had no hand in it!"

"I can't afford to bet with fivers and lose them," muttered Skinner. "You can. If you hadn't been making rotten bets about the match I should never have entered into the thing at all. You started the whole business, with your dashed blackguardism. If you'd been decent it would never have happened. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Vernon-Smith!"

And Skinner walked savagely away. Vernon-Smith stood very still.

Skinner's accusation was not just; but yet there was an element of truth in it. If the Bounder had not been a betting blackguard the whole affair would never have happened; that was a certainty. True, the Bounder himself would have drawn a very strict line at such rascality as Skinner's. But the fact was there all the same—the lesser rascality had led to the greater, and if the Bounder had been decent, as Skinner put it, Levison of St. Jim's would have been sound and whole upon his feet, instead of lying in pain and danger, helpless on his back. The Bounder's conscience was stirring.

He moved back to the crowded passage at last. Dr. Pillbury had come out. Tom Merry had asked him about Levison.

"Is it serious, sir?"

The doctor nodded.

"Yes—there is an injury to the knee, and it will be necessary for the lad to remain in bed at least for a week. Fortunately, he is in the very best of condition, and we shall pull him round. I am glad to say that lameness is not likely, after all." It was evident that the medical man had feared that at first.

"He has been very fortunate, upon the whole."

"Is it serious, sir?"

The doctor nodded.

"Yes—there is an injury to the knee, and it will be necessary for the lad to remain in bed at least for a week. Fortunately, he is in the very best of condition, and we shall pull him round. I am glad to say that lameness is not likely, after all." It was evident that the medical man had feared that at first.

"He has been very fortunate, upon the whole."

"Lame!" muttered Wharton. "Good heavens!"

"He will not be able to come home with us to-day, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

"Impossible! He cannot be moved for a week at least!"

"Can we see him, sir?" asked Talbot.

"He must be left very quiet. But he wishes to speak to Tom Merry, if he is here—"

"I am Tom Merry," said the St. Jim's junior skipper.

"You may go in, then. Do not stay more than two or three minutes. Quiet is essential for my patient."

"Very well, sir."

Tom Merry entered the room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Levison's Substitute!

LEVISON lay in the bed, his face almost as white as the pillow on which it lay. But he was quiet and calm. There was a reserve of quiet strength in Levison which en-

abled him to bear this heavy and unexpected misfortune with steady fortitude.

Frank was sitting beside the bed, his face the picture of utter misery. Mr. Quelch was in the room.

Levison smiled faintly as Tom Merry came to the bedside.

"How do you feel, old chap?" asked Tom.

"Rotten! But I can stand it. This leaves you in rather a fix for the match, doesn't it?"

"Never mind that!"

"But I do mind it," said Levison. "I've been thinking about that. You haven't a reserve with you."

"It's all right."

"But what are you going to do?"

"I—I suppose we shall play the match," said Tom.

"Of course you will! But you want another man," said Levison. "You could borrow a Greyfriars chap; but you want a St. Jim's fellow if you can get one. What about Frank?"

"I hadn't thought about it—"

"Well, it's high time to think about it. It's past the time for kick-off, a good deal, and you'll have to begin pretty soon, or it will be too dark to finish!"

Tom looked at him rather curiously.

Levison seemed almost to have forgotten his own injury in his concern for the football match.

"You're a tough nut, Levison!" he said. "Most fellows would be thinking about themselves, in your place."

"Well, we came over here to play Greyfriars," said Levison. "This doesn't make any difference to that. Of course, you'll use your own judgment, Merry; but you might do worse than play Frank. He isn't up to the Greyfriars forwards, of course, but he's quick, and he knows the game, and I think he's better than a chance man picked up on the ground. It's only a suggestion, of course."

"A jolly good suggestion!" said Tom Merry. "It's about the best thing I can do under the circumstances!"

"Good egg! You hear that, Frank?"

"I'm staying here with you, Ernie."

"You're going to play in my place, you young ass! Get a move on you! One of the fags here will lend you some clobber!"

"But—"

"I want you to, Frank!"

"I'll do as you want, Ernie, of course."

"And mind you play a good game," said Levison anxiously. "If you want to buck me up, you can't do it better than by telling me you've helped to win for St. Jim's, Franky. Put your beef into it, you know!"

"I'll do my best," said Frank earnestly. "But—but after the match, Ernie—you can't go back to St. Jim's."

"No fear! I suppose they'll have to let me stay here," said Levison, with a grin. "It can't be helped; it's not my fault."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Quelch, in a moved voice, "of course you will remain here, very welcome, and under the best of care. You will certainly not leave Greyfriars until you are completely restored. I shall telephone to your headmaster and explain."

"Thank you, sir!"

Frank's eyes were on the Form-master's face with quite a beseeching look. He opened his lips, but closed them again without speaking. But Mr. Quelch understood. The severe Form-master had a kind heart.

"If your brother would care to remain here also, Levison, with you, it can doubtless be arranged."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" breathed Frank. "I—I want to—"

"I'd like it more than anything, sir,"

said Levison gratefully. "It will be giving a lot of trouble—"

"Not at all! I will mention the matter to Dr. Holmes, and I have no doubt he will accede. Levison minor is in the Third Form at his school, I understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it can be arranged for him to take his lessons with the Third Form here while he remains at Greyfriars, in order not to waste his time. He may certainly remain as long as you do, my boy. I will telephone to Dr. Holmes immediately."

And the Remove-master left the bedroom.

"Good old sort, Quelch!" said Levison, when he was gone. "I never got on with him when I was here; but he doesn't seem to remember that against me. You fellows buzz off now; I'm going to sleep. Mind you play up, Franky!"

"Yes, Ernie."

Tom Merry and Levison minor followed the Form-master, and Levison was left alone.

"How is he?" asked Harry Wharton, as Tom closed the door behind him.

"Pretty bad, I'm afraid," said Tom.

"I'm awfully sorry it was a Greyfriars chap caused it," said Harry. "Skinner was a clumsy ass, and no mistake!"

Frank's eyes gleamed at the mention of Skinner; but he did not speak.

"What about the match, dear boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"We're ready," said Tom. "Levison minor is going to play in his major's place; it's lucky he was here. If you could lend us some clobber for him, Wharton—"

"Easily done!" said Harry, at once.

"My minor's things will fit him to a hair, I should say," remarked Nugent. "I'll get them in two jiffies!"

Nugent hurried away, and in a few minutes followed the footballers down to the ground with Dicky Nugent's clobber.

Tom Merry & Co. went into their dressing-room to change.

The accident to Levison had cast something of a cloud over the merry party. But both the teams were prepared to play up, all the same. Tom Merry's prospects of a win, with a Third-Form fag in the front line, were a good deal more doubtful now, and the St. Jim's skipper warned his men that they would have to pull up their socks.

Vernon-Smith joined the crowd looking on, his face very thoughtful and grim. Skinner and Stott were there, with Snoop, and the Bounder looked at them very sarcastically. The precious trio seemed in good spirits once more. Levison had been silent about the "accident"; and Skinner, while he was surprised, was greatly relieved. There were no serious consequences to fear from the "accident". And Levison, though badly hurt, was in no danger; and Skinner's conscience was tough enough to bear the burden that was upon it. And his scheme, after all, was a success. There was comfort in that for the rascal of the Remove. Greyfriars were practically certain to win; and the birthday fiver was safe—and the Bounder's tenner along with it.

So Skinner took comfort, and was quite cheery.

He met Vernon-Smith's glance, and smiled sneeringly. The Bounder came over to the precious group.

"Do you still want the bet called off, Skinner?" he asked, with a sneer.

"No, I don't," said Skinner coolly. "I certainly sha'n't consent to call it off, Vernon-Smith!"

"Same here!" said Stott. "No calling

off for me! You've got to stand your chance, Smithy!"

"He, he, he!" came from Snoop.

The Bounder's lip curled contemptuously.

"It's a paying proposition, the way you fellows make bets," he said. "You'd look a bit different if Levison chose to open his mouth about the accident!"

"Well, he hasn't; and he couldn't prove anything, anyway," said Skinner, with a shrug. "And if you choose to make any silly accusations, Smithy, you'll be called a liar. Do you think anybody would believe you?"

"You admitted it to me."

"Any witnesses?" drawled Skinner.

"Oh, I don't intend to give you away!" said the Bounder scornfully. "I don't want to start a scandal. If Levison chooses to take it quietly, the matter drops, so far as I'm concerned."

"And you'll pay up if St. Jim's loses," said Skinner coolly. "Temple's got the stakes, and you can't crawl out of it, I assure you!"

"I shall pay up if I lose," said the Bounder quietly. "If I win, I sha'n't touch a penny of the stakes. So your money's safe, Skinner. You've only got to ask Temple for it if you want it, win or lose!"

"Why, what the merry dickens—" exclaimed Skinner, in astonishment.

The Bounder turned his back on him without another word. The footballers were in the field now, and Potter of the Fifth, who was referee, blew his whistle.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal!

"PLAY up, Greyfriars!"

"On the ball!"

The kick-off had fallen to Tom Merry. The St. Jim's forwards got away at once, and Frank Levison, at inside-right, played his part well. The game was in the home half for some time, and Fatty Wynn, the plump goalkeeper of St. Jim's, stamped about in his citadel and waved his plump arms to keep himself warm.

In the first ten minutes there was a hot attack on goal. But Hazeldene, between the posts, was all there. He fisted out the ball twice, and the third time kicked it well away to the halves. And there was a shout of "Well saved, Hazel!"

Three girls came on to the foot-ground just as that shout rang out—Marjorie Hazeldene, and her friends Clara and Phyllis, of Cliff House School. Marjorie smiled as she heard the shouts of the Greyfriars crowd.

Billy Bunter joined the girl chums at once, prepared to act as squire of dames. But Marjorie & Co. did not seem to see the fat junior, and Bunter puffed after them in vain, as Ogilvy and some other fellows showed them to their seats to watch the match. Vernon-Smith, after some hesitation, joined them there.

Marjorie gave him a smile and a nod.

"Hazel's playing up well to-day," the Bounder remarked. "The Remove are lucky to have him in goal."

"Jolly lucky!" said Miss Clara heartily. "My hat! Who's the kid playing for the other side?"

The Bounder smiled.

"Levison minor. He's taking his brother's place—Levison's crooked. Chap who used to be here, you know."

"Not much use in a match like this—a kid like that!" chimed in Bolsover major.

"He won't be able to stand the pace."

"There he goes!" said Ogilvy.

Frank Levison was on his back, bowled over by a charge. He staggered up, to find the game sweeping away from him on to the St. Jim's goal.

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Fatty Wynn, between the posts, had some work to do now.

The ball came in from Harry Wharton, and Fatty just saved; and it bumbled in again from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark head, and just beat the goalkeeper. A thunderous roar arose up round the field.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Well headed, Inky!"

"Good old Jampot!"

Skinner & Co. joined in the cheering. The birthday fiver was more than safe, at this rate. Frank Levison was panting a little when the sides lined up after the Greyfriars goal.

"By gad, it's going well!" Skinner remarked. "I don't know how Levison major would have played, but his minor is no good."

"Absolutely N.G.!" assented Stott.

"Rotten!" agreed Snoop.

And the precious trio grinned with satisfaction. As a rule, the fate of Greyfriars was a matter of supreme indifference to the three; but now all their hopes were fixed on Harry Wharton & Co.'s success. And undoubtedly the Remove had started well.

"Bad luck for you, Smithy!" grinned Bolsover major.

Vernon-Smith gave him a warning look. He did not want his sporting transactions mentioned in the presence of the Cliff House girls. But Bolsover was obtuse, or unheeding.

"You'll have to cash up all round," he went on. "You were an ass to lay money against Greyfriars—solid quids, too! What made you do it?"

"Oh, ring off, you ass!" muttered the Bounder. He felt, rather than saw, the change of expression that came over Marjorie Hazeldene's face. She did not look at him.

He could have scalped the obtuse Bolsover with pleasure. He moved away from the seats with a clouded brow.

Bolsover stared after him, and then he understood, and chuckled.

Marjorie's eyes were keenly on the game. Greyfriars were on top for the present. Attack after attack came home on Fatty Wynn's citadel. But there they were foiled. The fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's was not to be beaten a second time. Some of his saves were little short of the miraculous; but he did save every time, and at last, towards half-time, the game was in the home half once more, and stayed there till the whistle.

Frank Levison was looking a little down as he came off with Tom Merry & Co. Keen as he was on the game, he realised that he was not up to such a match. He lacked the size and weight. He was very anxious to do his best in his brother's place. He knew that the news that St. Jim's had won would be the best news he could take to Levison. But it did not look as if he would have a chance.

Tom Merry dropped a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"Cheero, kid!"

Frank looked up at the Shell fellow.

"I'm not much good," he said.

"My dear kid, you've done jolly well, considering!" said Tom. "We don't expect goals from you, you know; some of your passing was jolly good. Don't get charged if you can help it, that's all."

"I'm going to do my best," said Frank.

"Right-ho! Nobody can do more," said Tom cheerily.

Frank, at all events, looked fresh enough when the teams lined up for the second half. Bob Cherry detached himself from the group round Marjorie just in time for the whistle.

Greyfriars kicked off, and the second half began.

The Greyfriars crowd were looking con-

fidently forward to a win now, and at the start the second half seemed like fulfilling their expectations. But, hard pressed as the Saints were, they did not quite let the home forwards through. The blue-and-white shirts were incessantly in the St. Jim's half; but Fatty Wynn was a tower of strength in goal.

At last the red shirts of St. Jim's were seen getting away in great style, and from an irresistible attack the ball went in from Talbot's foot, beating Hazeldene all the way.

"Goal!"

There was a generous cheer from the Greyfriars crowd. They could appreciate good play against themselves.

This time Skinner & Co.'s voices did not join in the cheering. They did not like Talbot's goal for St. Jim's, at all. The score was equal now, and if Levison major had been in his place it would have been anybody's game. But with a Third Form fag in the forward lines St. Jim's had a hard row to hoe, and Skinner was still feeling pretty confident.

Hammer and tongs the game went after the equalising goal. There was no slackness on either side; and it was good football, too, fast and furious.

Fatty Wynn had another narrow escape, this time from Peter Todd; but he just did it. Hazel only just saved a deadly shot from Tom Merry; but he saved it, and the crowd shouted their approval.

Marjorie looked up at the clock-tower over the elms.

"Ten minutes to go," said Ogilvy.

"Your brother's first-rate to-day, Miss Hazeldene. They'll never beat him."

"Isn't he splendid?" said Marjorie brightly.

"There they go! By Jove! That fat bounder will never stop them now!" exclaimed the Scottish junior.

St. Jim's were facing a furious attack. Fatty Wynn in goal seemed all eyes and hands. Tom Merry & Co. were hard pressed; and the ball went in thrice, only to come out again like a pip from an orange. The third time it came to Kangaroo of St. Jim's, who cleared to midfield, and the game swayed away. And there was a buzz of excitement round the field.

"The fag's got it!"

"Bravo, baby-face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars players had rather neglected Frank Levison. He had his chance, and he was on it like a shot. He was speeding up the field with the ball at his feet, and Tom Merry came running up in time to take a pass as Frank dodged Johnny Bull at back. Whiz! The leather went in from Tom Merry's foot, but Hazel was there, all eyes and hands—and he drove the ball out again before it was fairly in.

Frank bounded forward. He got his head to the ball, and sent it back, and Hazel, who was not quite ready for that prompt return, clutched at it a second too late.

There was a gasp round the field.

"Goal!"

"Oh, holy smoke! Goal! That kid!"

"Great pip!" roared Bolsover major.

"Goal!" The fag's done it, by gum!

Frank Levison stood panting. Tom Merry clapped him on the back, in huge delight.

"Bravo, kid! Good old Third Form!" chuckled the St. Jim's skipper. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Bwavo!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bwavo, Fwanky, deah boy! It was wippin'! A wegulah toppah, bai Jove!"

"Goal, goal!"

"My Aunt Selina!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Two to one against, and only

a minute to go! This is where we don't smile."

"All ovah bar shoutin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus cheerily. "Come on and put the boundahs out of their misery!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The final whistle rang out. The score stood two to one—for St. Jim's. Frank Levison's lucky goal had been the winning goal, and St. Jim's had won. The Greyfriars fellows cheered him cordially enough; but there were three, at least, who looked very blue. Skinner was gritting his teeth. Once more he had been too clever by half! He had crooked Levison, and put a winning forward into the St. Jim's team instead, and his birthday fiver, after all his cunning scheming, was the Bounder's to claim.

"You've got a promising kid there," Harry Wharton remarked to Tom Merry as the footballers came off the field, breathing hard after a gruelling game.

"Bai Jove! Performin' as well as pwomisin', deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There will be a wegulah twiump in the Third Form when we tell them this at St. Jim's!"

There were plenty of congratulations for Frank. The fag's cheeks burned under the many eyes that were turned upon him. But he was elated. It was good news for Ernest, at least. And Frank's face was very sunny when he stood by his brother's bedside, a little later, to announce the victory. Levison was wide awake, and eager for news.

"We've won!" Frank announced.

"Two goals to one."

"Good egg!" said Levison heartily.

"Who kicked them?"

"Talbot kicked one—and—"

"And Tom Merry the other?"

"No."

"D'Arcy or Blake?"

"No," said Frank, laughing. "You'll never guess."

"Not you!" ejaculated Levison.

"Little me!" grinned Frank. "At least, I didn't kick it, I headed it in. Just luck, you know, Ernie."

"My hat!" That was all Levison could say for a moment. Then he chuckled. "Lucky you came, Franky! What jolly good news for Skinner!"

"Smithy!" Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth was looking for the Bounder, and he found him in the Common-room. The St. Jim's fellows had gone, leaving Levison major and minor at Greyfriars. And it was time to settle up; and Cecil Reginald had quite heavy stakes to hand over to the sportsman of the Remove.

Skinner & Co. followed Temple in. They had lost their bets, after all their rascality; but they remembered what the Bounder had said on the footer ground, and Skinner still had a faint hope for his birthday fiver.

The Bounder was staring moodily out of the window into the dusk, his hands in his pockets. He looked round as Temple called to him.

"Hallo! What is it?"

"I've been looking for you. Don't you want your stakes?"

"No."

"Eh?" ejaculated Temple, in astonishment.

"The bets are off!" said the Bounder coolly. "You'll hand me back my own stakes, and hand the other fellows theirs, if you don't mind."

"Well, my only winter bonnet!" exclaimed Temple. "If that's the way you make bets, Smithy, I don't see how you make it pay."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I'm done with making bets. I've had a bit of a lesson on that subject to-day."

"I'm not fool enough to get mixed up in that kind of shady rot again. Give the fellows their money, and let the matter drop!"

"Oh, all right! It's for you to say!"

"What rot!" broke in Bolsover major.

"I'm not going to take my money back. I've lost it, haven't I? It's yours, Smithy, you howling ass!"

"Not at all!"

"You've won it, haven't you?"

"Winning money on a bet doesn't make it mine," said the Bounder, unmoved. "Not if I don't claim it—and I don't!"

"Rats! It's yours."

"Well, who's going to have it?" said Temple, shrugging his shoulders.

"Put it in the school poor-box if Bolsover doesn't want it," said the Bounder. And he turned away.

"That's not a bad idea. Same with yours, Skinner?" grinned Temple.

"No jolly fear!" said Skinner promptly. "Shell out my fiver, please."

Skinner pocketed his birthday fiver in great relief. Bolsover major was the only

"sportsman" who refused to take his money back; and his stake went clinking into the school poor-box. Later that evening Harry Wharton looked into the Bounder's study, with a very friendly smile.

"Hallo!" said Smithy coolly. "Have a smoke?"

"Thanks, no. I've heard how you settled your bets, Smithy, and I think you've done the decent thing," said Wharton. "I thought I'd say so—and also ask you whether you hadn't better go the whole hog, now you've started? Look here, make it a point to stick to footer practice with us, and take back your old place in the Remove Eleven. We shall be glad to have you. What do you say?"

There was a long pause.

"It's a good offer," said the Bounder at last. "I may as well tell you—" He hesitated a moment. "I've had a bitter, hard lesson to-day, Wharton. It was owing to my bets on the match that Levison got hurt!"

"What?"

"Never mind details. Levison's not complaining, and there's no need to have any scandal about it. But I sha'n't forget it. I've been thinking it over. I've done with that. Done with the whole silly, rotten game—for good! And—and if I can get clear of some things I'm rather mixed up in, there's going to be a fresh start—a clean slate. So—if you mean what you said just now—I'm your man!"

"Good!" said Wharton, with great satisfaction. "That's jolly good news, Smithy! It's a go!"

And a go it was! It was Levison's visit to his old school that had brought the Bounder to the parting of the ways; and at the parting he had chosen the right path!

(DON'T MISS "SAVING THE BOUNDER!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 46.—PIET DELAREY.

DELAHEY is a comparatively late comer to the stories, but he has established himself as a favourite with a good many readers, and no one is likely to complain of his being given precedence in this series to earlier friends of ours, such as Desmond and Morgan, Potter and Greene, Dabney and Fry, Hobson, and others who have figured less prominently than he.

He came to Greyfriars from South Africa at a time when the land of his birth was troubled by a misguided and foolish rebellion, in the inception of which a man of his name was suspected of having had a part. There was no absolute proof against General Delarey, and he was accidentally shot before the rebellion broke out; but he was shot in very bad company, and some odium attached to his name in consequence.

When Squiff and Tom Brown were sent to meet Delarey at the station they were by no means keen on their task. His name was against him, and they were not too willing to recognise a Boer as a fellow-Colonial. They did not know that Delarey had had an English mother, and that though his father had fought for the enemy in the war of fifteen or so years ago, he was now a loyal supporter of the British cause, and with the Union forces in German East Africa.

Rattenstein, the rascally Hun, was before the two, and had poured his poison into Delarey's mind before they met the new-comer. Piet was told that he could expect no fair play at Greyfriars; and, though he did not believe all that Rattenstein said, that stuck.

He went to the rescue of Squiff and Tom Brown when they were attacked by several of the Highcliffe nuts, and showed that he was a fighting-man of no mean order. They thought better of him then, and would have been friendly, but they found themselves up against a stiff hedge of pride and obstinacy. Piet Delarey is a good fellow, but he has his faults, and there is more than a fair share of obstinacy in his make-up.

He fought Bolsover and licked him. He fought Squiff, and helped him to rescue Phyllis Howell from deadly peril, and was himself rescued by Squiff from peril not less deadly. From that day on there grew up among the three Colonial boys a firm and enduring friendship.

We saw it tested when Delarey behaved so mysteriously in insisting upon breaking bounds after lights-out, in spite of all that could be said to stop him. He was at odds with Wharton then, through what he considered Harry's unwarranted interference with his affairs; but, though he and the skipper of the Remove exchanged blows, there was



Piet Delarey

never any hatred or malice. Not even Squiff or Tom Brown was told at first what the secret was, but when they knew that their chum was helping a man who had saved his life in South Africa they were with him, despite the fact that the man was a deserter. In the long run it was Wharton and Wibley between them—with aid from Mr. Quelch—who saved Jim Sorrell; and, like Squiff and Tom Brown and Peter Todd, Delarey repented of his opposition to Harry, who may sometimes seem interfering, but always means well, and has a heart of gold.

During that trouble Bob Cherry and Delarey fell foul of one another, and were to have fought in the gymnasium. But when the time came Piet was locked up in the punishment-room, with expulsion hanging over his head for flat disobedience to Mr. Quelch's orders; and, though he got out and came to keep the appointment, the fight never took place—there was a reconciliation instead.

And matters were put right between the junior and Mr. Quelch, too. They had misunderstood one another. Delarey thought the Form-master unfairly down on him. Mr. Quelch saw more stubborn wrongfulness in Piet than was really there. Skinner helped to precipitate trouble, and suffered for it. Skinner has never been able to understand why Delarey does not hate him for that; and it mystified Skinner when, later, the Afrikaner took his part against Bolsover,

and even claimed him as a friend. There is not much affection for anyone in Harold Skinner's hard heart, but he has a queer sort of liking for Delarey that may bear fruit some day.

From the first Delarey has shared the study in which lazy Lord Mauleverer slacks and snoozes, and from the first he and Mauly have been on good terms. Mauly actually woke up out of his sloth and insisted upon accompanying Tom Brown and Squiff in a night expedition to look after Piet; and nothing would be more certain to rouse him again than the knowledge that Delarey was in trouble.

For a very brief space of time they had Rattenstein with them. But the Hun went, and a little later came that queer waif from the slums of London, Sir Jimmy Vivian. A schoolboy baronet without money, and without an "h" to his outfit—Skinner and Bunter and snobs of that kind had no use for that sort of baronet! But he was Mauly's relative, and Mauly felt that he must stand by him. He was not of Piet Delarey's kin, but Piet stood by him, too; never once grumbled at his crudeness and somewhat objectionable manners, but for Mauly's sake looked for the best in the waif, and found much that was good. In return Sir Jimmy, while liking Mauly, grew to worship his other study-mate. There are several fellows in the Remove for whom Sir Jimmy would do much, for they have been good to him, but there is no other who commands his whole devotion as Delarey does. He will get his chance to repay some day, perhaps—and he will do it!

Since the Remove has learned to know Delarey he has taken his proper place as one of its leading spirits. There is no fellow in the Form against whom he could not stand up with a chance of victory, though he himself admits that his chance against Bob Cherry would not be too big. He is a good all-round man on the playing-fields, with every sign of training on into a better one. And the fellows have come to understand that his sarcasm is no more bitter than Peter Todd's—not so bitter as the Bounder's often is—and that his cynical smile is more often a veil to his real thoughts than a clue to them. There are depths in Delarey; one cannot read him as easily as either of his two closest chums, the japing, capable Squiff and honest, fun-loving, straightforward Tom Brown; but he is as keen on a jape as they are, and as essentially as straight, if not as open. The Cliff House girls like him, and that is a good sign.

We shall hear more of him in the near future, I think.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 510.

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE OLD BOYS!

By R. A. DIGBY.

GRUNDY had seen the notice-board, and he was disappointed. But as the name of Grundy never did happen to settle on the footer list, the owner of the name of Grundy lived a life of disappointments.

As he entered Study No. 3 his face was a curious mixture of happiness and rattiness.

"Stop gorging for a minute, you pigs!" he grunted.

Gunn and Wilkins stared. "Gorging" is hardly the proper word to apply to a limited meal of bread-and-scrape. But as they were in hourly expectation of a feed at the expense of the great G, they only stared.

"You've seen the list, I suppose?" Grundy said. "Merry's left my name out again."

"Strange!" murmured Wilkins.

"I've nothing to say against Tom Merry, mind," said Grundy generously—"save, of course, that he's an ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For goodness' sake don't cackle!" said Grundy irritably. "Tom Merry's all right, but he lacks—well, I might say he has no eye for talent. Utterly blind to it. You chaps have seen me play—"

"The ox!" breathed Gunn.

"What did you say, Gunn?"

"That we had seen you play, Grundy, old chap, and the way you tackle the ball is simply—"

"No need to pile it on, you know," said Grundy, mollified. "But you can see for yourselves that the obvious point is, to play where Merry can't help but see me. So why shouldn't I play against him—run rings round him—"

Gunn and Wilkins were exchanging winks.

"Then he can't help seeing my form. We meet Greyfriars on Saturday; I want to play in that match. Wednesday is an open date. Suppose we raise a team, and challenge him to play us on Wednesday—"

"But he wouldn't accept a challenge from us!" gasped Wilkins.

"No!" said Grundy scornfully. "With a couple of duffers like you in the team—"

"Eh?"

"But I've thought of an idea—that is, that kid Piggott thought—what I mean to say is," said Grundy, raising his voice—Grundy is not the only joker whose voice grows stronger as his arguments grow weaker—"it's my idea, but Piggott suggested it!"

Really, war-bread has deteriorated shockingly of late. The trouble Wilkins was experiencing with his portion was quite pathetic.

Gunn seemed to be indulging in the somewhat infantile sport of blowing bubbles with his tea. Grundy glared exasperatedly.

"William Gunn," he snapped, "I suppose you aren't aware"—this bit is heavy sarcasm on Grundy's part, and it took him some time to get it out—"I suppose you aren't aware that the best way of refreshing oneself with a cup of tea is by drinking it, and not by blowing it all over the tablecloth!"

"Only cooling it, sir," replied Gunn respectfully.

"This is my idea—"

"That Piggott suggested!" murmured Gunn.

"What's that, Gunn?"

"Nothing. Go on!"

"Including you two, I have scraped together eleven. What with Piggott and Mellish, and a few more slackers, they are rather a rotten lot. That's of no consequence, though. My play is all that counts."

"You've collected eleven willing players, then?" said Wilkins, opening his eyes.

"Yes. I did that easily enough, such as they are. There's going to be no smoking, or any of that rot. Hard training is our maxim till after the match. We want to win if possible. Then there's a spread when the match is over—"

"Oh!"

"Piggott was pretty particular about that," said Grundy thoughtfully. "He was watching me at practice, you know, and said that if Merry only opened his eyes he would see something. Then he—"Grundy coughed—"made that suggestion. The idea is this. We are to pose as old Greyfriars boys—whiskers and moustachios and things—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We're going to play in disguise. I have my programme all mapped out in my napper. First, I'll take things easy, so that the crowd will think I'm a dud. Then I'll brighten up, cut along the left touch-line, and score from that side. And on the stroke of time, just before the whistle goes," said Grundy, with some excitement, "I'll dash into the penalty area, stop suddenly, right foot on the ball, left hand on my hip, whip off my disguise with my right hand, and ram the ball home—splitting the net if possible! Just imagine Merry's face! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilkins and Gunn laughed heartily, but whether at the thought of Tom's face or Grundy's discourse is not—like Mr. Pickwick's "Theory of Tittlebats"—generally known.

Wilkins suggested that he should shout "I'm Grundy!" as he whipped off his disguise, but a glare froze him into silence.

"We're supposed to come from Abbotsford; that's where we'll send the challenge from. At least, a friend of mine lives there. He'll send the letter, if I stamp and address it. I've been thinking out how to word it without telling a whopper—diplomacy, you know. The war teaches us that a lie which can't be proven a lie is diplomacy. Here goes!"

The result wasn't so bad for an ass like Grundy. It completely took us in, anyway. Here is the letter which Tommy received:

"125, High Street,

"Abbotsford.

"T. Merry, Esq., (Captain of the St. Jim's Junior Eleven).

"Dear Boy,—I take the liberty of writing you, though perhaps you have never heard my name. You may call me an old boy if you choose. I don't suppose the old school has altered much since I was there. Is Dr. Holmes still Head?"

"I understand that your Eleven is not booked for Wednesday. I am captaining a team—'The Old Boys,'—which I candidly tell you is hot stuff. Please write per return, and let us know if we may meet you on your ground on Wednesday afternoon. We should like just one more game before going into the firing-line.

"Yours in all sincerity,

"GEORGE GRUKINS."

The signature was of peculiar origin. Grundy signed with the first half of his name. Wilkins signed with the second half of his. Grukins was the result.

Somehow, the name seemed to afford Grundy some satisfaction. A few objections which Gunn raised were peremptorily disposed of by the threat of a brace of thick ears from his leader.

"As to 125, High Street, Abbotsford," said Grundy, as he sealed up the letter and enclosed it with another to his friend in that town, "there is no such number. So by the time Merry's reply finds its way back here I'll have shown him my mettle, been picked for the Greyfriars match, and all will be O.K."

Wilkins and Gunn and their prize chump of a study-mate went out to post the letter. The first thing they ran into was Piggott, sitting beneath the elms and smoking away like a factory chimney.

"You smoky little rotter!" roared Grundy, catching him by the scruff of the neck. "Do

you call this training for the match? Consider yourself dropped—in more than one sense. Bump him! We'll find someone else to fill his place."

It's queer how little things like that bring about great changes. Piggott had been congratulating himself all the morning on dropping into something soft; now he spent all the afternoon in bemoaning his dropping on to something hard!

And leaving the ingenious suggester of Grundy's great idea reclining on the ground, they proceeded to the Friardale post-office, arriving in time for the next collection.

II.

PROPELLED by our leisurely old friend Father Time, Wednesday came round, and arrived here, as usual, on the fourth day of the week.

But a few things had happened before then.

Full of pride, we had accepted the challenge of the "Old Boys," and Merry had replied. The whole school knew it, so there was no need for the written reply to reach Grundy.

Piggott was anything but pleased at seeing the feed he had taken such pains to secure slip out of his grasp. Even in war-time money can place pretty good things on the festive board. Tinned salmon, pineapple, and fresh eggs faded away from Piggott's mental vision like a bee-au-tiful dree-am!

He had taken to smoking like a dozen factory chimneys instead of one, and the Terrible Three had—like Grundy—caught him in the act. And, to save himself from being ducked in the fountain, he unfolded Grundy's scheme.

At first they were incredulous. They remembered that the writing of Grukins was somehow familiar, but still— But when he informed them that the disguises were hidden in readiness in the old barn, and they found them there, that settled it!

They made a few alterations in the Old Boys' footer-togger. They removed the black shorts, and replaced them with eleven pairs of large cycling-knickers, hired from Solomon Isaacs in Wayland.

These knickers may have been invaluable from an antiquarian point of view, but from no other. Possibly they dated back to when the human race were of mammoth size, and robustness—the age and size of them suggested that. However, Tom Merry & Co. didn't trouble to speculate, neither did they think of questioning Mr. Solomon Isaacs as to how he came to have them.

All they did was to pin a brief note on the pile of sportive garments, saying:

"Yores yewmerusly,

"P."

"P." might stand for anything. If the Old Boys chose to ascribe it to Piggott, it was nobody's fault but their own. Thus reasoned the Three.

And all this took place, as I say, while Wednesday was on its way. (If at any time I lapse into rhyme—I've done it again—it is quite unintentional).

Now, I don't want anybody to run away with the idea that Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther are on pally terms with the members of the Second Form at St. Jim's. I merely state the fact that there was a consultation held by these two parties in the Second Form-room after brekker on Wednesday.

The result was, that eleven of the smallest—and cheekiest—of the fags agreed to meet the Old Boys on the field of battle in the afternoon, attired in frock-coats, trousers which might have fitted Kildare & Co. of the Sixth, if they had been cut down a little and not so wide; and long moustachios which had been worn by German soldiers in a representation of the Battle of Mons—vide St.

James' Junior Dramatic Society Engagement Book, Christmas Vac., 1916.

The mysterious air with which Grundy and his fellow Old Boys set off after dinner for the barn was very impressive. But I doubt it not that when they saw their substituted apparel their remarks were anything but friendly towards Piggott.

By the time the rumble of the brake announced the arrival of the Old Boys the whole school was aware of their identity. It was universally agreed that there should be no scoter-knickers to spare for the visitors "from Abbotsford."

Grukins, the captain, an individual with a completely bald head, heavy moustachios, side-whiskers, and bushy beard—which any man in his senses, even if he could have developed such a thing, would have shaved off after a single glance in the mirror—made several inquiries concerning footer-knickers, but they were fruitless.

All the Old Boys wore long overcoats, but sometimes the breezy separated the tails; and one veteran with scraggy legs, and in features resembling a cross between the late Charles Peace and Percy Mellish of St. Jim's, disclosed large-checked sporting-knickers nearly down to his ankles. Evidently he had been unable to button them tightly enough to fit his legs.

It was a sportsmanlike platoon of Old Boys which marched on to the field. But they looked a little uncomfortable. The wind blew the cycling-knickers up into the shape of balloons, but they were greeted with a storm of reassuring applause.

"Anyway," they consoled themselves, "none of them know who we are, so it doesn't matter."

But when their opponents marched on they forgot everything else, and stared in wonder-struck amazement. A cheeky little beggar named Tibbles captained the "Junior Eleven,"

and swaggered up to Mr. Grukins, frock-coat, cuffs, and moustachios all complete.

"Look—look here!" gasped Grundy, as soon as he could find his voice. "Who—who are you? What on earth—"

"Junior Eleven," responded Tibbles.

"You're not the Eleven!" exclaimed Grundy, in bewilderment.

"Eh? Who says we're not?" demanded Tibbles cheekily; and Grundy realised that it was impossible to argue without giving himself away.

"Squibb!" Tibbles beckoned to the referee, who was in the same form—and was almost as small—as himself.

Squibb, by the way, was dressed in something very much like Grundy's Sunday suit. Grundy noticed it—a few contortions of the beard and other face-fungus showed that—but he simply couldn't say anything.

"Spin the half-crown, Squibb!" said Tibbles. "These gentlemen want to get back to the fringe-line."

Squibb tossed a halfpenny into the air. Tibbles won, kicked off; and the game commenced in earnest.

Mr. Grukins claimed a considerable amount of attention. Grundy is a rummy-looking customer at ordinary times, but when he is attired in baggy cycling-trousers half a dozen sizes too large for him the result is rather remarkable.

It seemed that the one great desire of the frock-coated gentlemen was to hack Mr. Grukins' shins. They swarmed round him, and he stumbled over them every few seconds.

He hardly ever saw the ball. Once, when he was preparing to kick it, Tibbles tripped him up, and he flattened his face against it. Mr. Isaacs would want heavy compensation when the sporting-knickers that Grundy was wearing were returned to him. They were soiled and torn and trampled upon horribly.

At least twice every three minutes Grukins was floored, and his diminutive opponents usually sat upon him for a brief rest. Had it not been for the delicious prospect of a feed, there is no doubt that all the other Old Boys would have walked off. But "no game, no grub" was Grundy's precept; and "no grub" is such a common ailment in these days.

Still, there is a limit to all endurance, and the worm—if anything in cycling-trousers, and such cycling-trousers, can be described as a worm—turned.

Somebody—I think it was Tibbles—had been wiping his feet on Mr. Grukins' face rather too hard. His reluctance to leave off annoyed Grundy—in fact, he got fed up.

With a roar, he rose to his feet, and hit out right and left. The rest of the Old Boys, who had been receiving sundry hacks since the commencement, joined in the onslaught.

The result was such a pandemonium as I have never heard or seen before or since, and at last the fags fled, yelling, from the scene.

Grundy was congratulating himself upon victory when the other ten Old Boys turned upon him.

He was thumped, bumped, and pummelled, barged, biffed, bashed, and squashed, and finally left in solitude and pain.

The victorious visitors were greeted with even louder cheering than their first appearance had elicited; but, following the example set by ancient Rachael, they simply would not be comforted.

Slowly and laboriously Grundy, quondam Grukins, dragged himself after them, leaving a field strewn with moustachios, frock-coats, whiskers, cuffs, and portions of once sportive-looking cycling-knickers.

And I think that is all I need say about the Old Boys!

THE END.

BUNTER'S LITTLE SWINDLE!

By DICK RAKE.

"WHAT'S the matter with Bunter?" The Famous Five were adorning the steps of the School House with their persons when Harry Wharton asked that question.

Billy Bunter was walking slowly across the quad towards them. He did not see them, however. He kept his eyes fixed on the ground and his hands in his pockets, as if he were thinking out some great problem.

He reached the steps, and began mounting them, still without raising his eyes. Bob Cherry stepped to one side noiselessly. Billy Bunter came up the steps unseeing, all unconscious that the five juniors were so close to him. As he came abreast of them Bob Cherry stooped to the level of Bunter's ear and applied his mouth to that organ. Then he yelled:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter came out of a brown study with a jump, and sat down on the hard stone steps with a hump. He blinked furiously at the grinning juniors.

"Ow! You rotters!" he yelled. "What did you do that for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you?" inquired Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Are you ill?"

"Ill? You know I'm not, you rotter! Why should I be ill?"

"Well, you were thinking!" replied Bob Cherry, in a tone of mild surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter picked himself up, and bestowed a wrathful glare upon the Famous Five which ought to have shrivelled them up on the spot, but only made them laugh.

"Shall I brush you down, Bunt?" asked Frank Nugent. "You look rather dusty!"

"Yow! Don't you touch me, Nugent, you rotter!"

"Sure you don't want to be dusted down?"

Bunter did not reply to that question. He growled "Beasts!" and rolled disconsolately up the passage to his study.

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Wonder what that fat ass was looking so serious about?" he remarked.

"Goodness knows!" said Bob Cherry.

"Anyway, he's not worth worrying about! Let's get changed. Stumps are pitched in three-quarters of an hour, and we want to get some practice before we start slaughtering those St. Jude's beggars!"

It was Wednesday—a half-holiday—and the Remove were playing St. Jude's on their own ground.

Billy Bunter made his way along the passage in deep thought. As he turned a corner he collided violently with a bony head, and sat down and gasped.

Somebody else sat down and gasped, too! It was Snoop. Snoop was on his way to Skinner's study for a little flutter. He had received another remittance from his Uncle Huggins in Canada, and consequently was in high feather. He picked himself up furiously now, his good temper quite lost.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "What do you want to come barging into me for? I've a jolly good mind to scrag you!"

"Yow-ow!" roared the hapless Owl. "You rotter! You've dislocated my backbone! It's right out of joint!"

"Oh, is it? Then perhaps another kick the other way will put it right! Keep still while I try!"

On second thoughts Bunter decided that his spinal column was still in its usual position, and he jumped up with alacrity, and bolted down the passage at top speed, Snoop helping him at intervals with a friendly lift from behind.

Snoop retraced his footsteps a little breathlessly, grinning. But the grin died as he caught sight of an object lying near the scene of the collision, and he whistled.

It was a newspaper, and on closer inspection proved to be a current issue of the "Friardale Gazette." Snoop unfolded it curiously. As he did so he noticed a thick black line pencilled under an advertisement in the "Lost and Found" column. He read it eagerly. It ran:

"LOST!"

"£5 REWARD!"

"Somewhere in Friardale, on the evening of July 5th, a brown Irish terrier. Answers to the name of Spot. Anyone returning same to A. Roper, 5, High Street, Friardale, will receive the above reward!"

"My hat!" muttered Snoop. "That's what Bunter's been so mysterious about lately! Or perhaps he's found the little beast. I'll try and pump the silly ass. There may be a chance to bag it if he's really found it."

And with that generous intention Snoop

hurried after the Owl of the Remove. He met him half-way along the corridor. Bunter, it appeared, was looking for the "Gazette." The sight of Snoop calmly reading it made the fat junior bellow with rage.

"Gimme my paper!" he shouted. "That's mine!"

Snoop eyed him curiously.

"You're jolly keen on getting your paper!" he said. "What's the trouble?"

"You gimme it! I—"

Snoop thought bluff was his best policy.

"Now, look here, Bunter," he said, "it's no good you trying to keep it from me. I know all about it!"

"About what?" asked Bunter nervously.

"About old Roper's dog," replied the cad of the Remove.

"You rotter, Snoop! You've been spying on me!"

"Exactly!" said Snoop. "You see, I know all about it."

Bunter groaned. A keener fellow would have required much stronger proof than Snoop had provided. Snoop's word was not to be relied upon at the best of times. But then, Bunter was not a keen fellow.

"L-look here, Snoop," he stammered, "suppose I let you into the game—"

"Then I'll simply take a third of the money."

"And—and if I don't?"

"Then I'll tell all the fellows, and you'll get nothing!" said Snoop promptly.

He had no idea what Bunter's scheme was, but his bluff succeeded. Billy Bunter groaned again.

"All serene!" he said feebly. "Let's get down to the wood-shed."

The wood-shed! Snoop decided that Bunter must have found the dog, and hidden it there to take down to the village.

"Right-ho!" said Snoop cheerfully. And the two young rascals proceeded in the direction of the wood-shed.

Skinner's little party was quite forgotten.

"I say, Snoop," he said, as the pair were crossing the Close, "do you know what Mr. Roper's little mongrel was like?"

Snoop hesitated before replying. Should he say "Yes" or "No"? He decided.

"Yes," he lied.

"Oh, good! Well, d'ye think Gatty's dog would pass for it?"

Snoop started. So that was Bunter's (Continued on page 16.)

Bunter's Little Swindle!

(Continued from page 15.)

secret! He had not found the dog. Instead, he had stolen Gatty's terrier, and was going to "palm" it off on Mr. Roper as the missing animal. Snoop saw it all now, and he answered Bunter with confidence.

"Yes," he replied. "Old Roper's bound to be taken in!"

"You see," went on the Owl of the Remove, "I couldn't take it down at once as those rotters were hanging round the gates, so I thought I'd wait until the fellows went down to cricket. Now the coast's clear!"

"Just so!" agreed Snoop. On the whole, he was rather glad Bunter had decided on that postponement.

They reached the shed, and the fat junior opened the door and stumbled in. Snoop waited outside.

"Got him?" he asked. "Pass him over here!"

Bunter passed a struggling mass into Snoop's outstretched hands. Snoop saw that it was a sack, tied at the top with string. This was very necessary, judging from the liveliness of the contents. Snoop grinned as he received it. The next moment he had slammed the door shut, and slipped the latch. A yell came from the imprisoned Owl.

"What are you doing, you idiot? Let me out!"

"Bow-wow!"

And with that eloquent remark Snoop hurried away, and was soon sprinting out of the gates on his way to Friardale.

"What's that row?"

The Famous Five, with the rest of the cricketers, were coming off the ground. They had won the match with St. Jude's by 10 runs, and consequently were feeling very satisfied with themselves and the world generally. But as they neared the wood-shed, wretched howls rent the air, and they stopped in wonder.

"What's that row?" asked Johnny Bull. "Sounds like a pig being slaughtered!"

"Well, it has some connection with a pig!" grinned Nugent. "If I'm not mistaken, that's Bunter's warble."

"That fat beast is always in trouble!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Listen!"

Kick!

Thud!

"Let me out!"

"Someone's locked him in the wood-shed!" said Harry Wharton, smiling. "I suppose we'd better let him out." He flung open the door.

Bunter came charging out like a bull.

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the hurry, porpoise?"

Bunter gasped for breath.

"I say, you fellows!" he roared. "It's that rotter Snoop! He's swindled me!"

Harry Wharton took Bunter's ear between his finger and thumb and compressed it.

"Now, Bunter, the truth, mind, and nothing but the truth."

"Yow-ow! It's true!" shrieked the Owl of the Remove. "He's got the dog, and he's taking it down to old Roper to get the reward!"

"What's he burbling about?" asked Squiff. "Make him explain!"

"Now, Bunter, what's this all about?"

"Yow! Leggo my ear, Wharton, you beast! I tell you, Mr. Roper's offering a reward for his dog—"

"Yes, I know that. I saw it in the 'Gazette.' You don't mean to say you've found it?"

"N-no! That is to say, yes!" stuttered Bunter. "You see, it's Gatty's dog, and—"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "I can see it now! That fat villain was going to try to make old Roper believe it's his lost dog he's found!"

"Is that true?" said Wharton, shaking the fat junior by the shoulder.

"N-no! It was Snoop who thought of it, not me! And now he's gone to get the five pounds!" Bunter's voice trailed off into a wail of anguish.

"Let's go and see what the giddy young sweep has done," suggested Bob Cherry. "We may be able to stop him before he gets to Roper's. Hallo! There's young Gatty!"

Gatty came rushing up excitedly.

"Anybody seen my dog?" he shouted.

"Snoop's got it at present!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's all right, kid; no harm can come to it. We're just going to run him down. Come on, my pippins!"

And Bob Cherry led the way to the gates, his long legs covering the ground at a great rate. The others followed him. Bunter bringing up the rear, puffing like a pair of very old bellows.

Mr. Roper was in his shop when Snoop entered in haste, and set down the sack on a chair.

"Your dog, sir!" he panted.

"My dog? You've found him? Let me see!" Mr. Roper hurried round the counter. Snoop cut the string of the sack.

Mr. Roper's eyes lighted up as he saw the little terrier, which bounded out like a Jack-in-a-box.

"Ah, yes!" he exclaimed. "Thank you, my boy! But you should not have tied him up in this way!"

"He was struggling, sir!"

"Yes, yes! Where did you find him?"

"In Friardale Lane, sir," said Snoop.

"Just so! Here's the five pounds."

Mr. Roper felt in his hip-pocket, and produced a rustling banknote. He handed it to Snoop, who took it eagerly.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Roper. "Why—why, this is not the dog! This is not my Spot! What do you mean by bringing this to me?"

"Oh, yes, it is, sir! I—"

There was a step at the door, and the beery face of Police-constable Tozer appeared. Snoop turned pale as he noticed that the constable had a dog under his arm. At the same moment Bob Cherry dashed in, followed by Harry Wharton and a crowd of other fellows. Bunter brought up the rear.

Bunter charged straight at Snoop, who stood, banknote in hand, quivering with fear.

"I want my fiver!" he roared, and made a clutch at the note in Snoop's nerveless fingers. The cad of the Remove jerked his hand away, and rushed for the exit. But P.-c. Tozer caught him, and swung him back.

"So you're trying to palm off this 'ere animal on Mr. Roper, are you? 'And that note back!"

Snoop did so.

"I did it for Bunter," he pleaded. "He asked me to bring back the dog and take the money for him."

"A likely tale!" grinned the constable. "You're a pair of young rascals, both as bad as one another. I found Mr. Roper's dog this morning."

Billy Bunter was fuming with rage. He went for Snoop, and the two juniors rolled on the floor together, Bunter uppermost, which was rather painful for Snoop.

"You thief!" roared the exasperated Owl.

"It was all my idea! You—you—"

"What shall I do with them, sir?" asked P.-c. Tozer, grinning. The prospect of the five pounds he was about to receive had put him in a good humour.

"Leave it to us!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll bump them both!"

Mr. Roper was content to let it go at that. So was Tozer. Bunter was dragged off the unfortunate Snoop, who rose painfully to his feet. Then the juniors trooped out of the shop, Snoop following limply.

"Snoop first!" called out Bob Cherry.

And Snoop was accordingly bumped hard. At the twelfth bump he was released, and left groaning.

Then the juniors attended to Bunter.

"I say, you fellows," he began, "it wasn't me, you know—Ow!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Bunter was reaping his reward!

THE END.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"SAVING THE BOUNDER!"

By Frank Richards.

This week's story will suggest to the discerning reader that Vernon-Smith is getting fed up with going the wrong way. No one will be surprised to find that he makes up his mind now to steer a different course.

But there are rocks in the way!

Next week's yarn might have been given the same title as the fine, double-length story in this week's "Gem" bears, though there is only one feature they have in common. That is the fact that the shadow of the past looms darkly over both the Bounder and Valentine Outram. The latter has been violent before, and has suffered for it. He is violent again, but with every excuse. But the excuses that would serve another fellow do not serve him. The past is against him. So with the Bounder. He wants to cut for good and all the shady rascals who have battened upon his ample pocket-money; but he finds it very hard, for they have a hold upon him. How he comes out of it, and by what help you will read next week in a first-rate story.

THIS WEEK'S "GEM."

One of the best numbers of either of my papers that has ever been published, as I am sure you will all admit when you have read it.

DON'T MISS IT ON ANY ACCOUNT!

It contains a splendid double-length story of St. Jim's—

"THE SHADOW OF THE PAST!"

a compendium of information concerning the characters of the stories, which I have called

"GEM" "WHO'S WHO,"

and a ripping instalment of the popular serial—

"THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA!"

"ANSWERS."

You are not all overburdened with pocket-money, I know. But I know, too, that some of you have it to spare, and have a gap in your reading left after you have bought and dealt with the Companion Papers. "Answers" is the very thing to fill this gap. "Inside the Lines," the novel of the great play, is the very story for a boy who likes mystery and adventure and the thrill of war-time. "Carrying On with the First Hundred Thousand" is true; but it has all the thrill of a novel, and he would be a dull boy indeed who did not like it!

TO MY READERS IN NORTH-EAST LONDON.

On the evening of Tuesday, November 13th, a day after most of you get this number, there will be a meeting which I hope every boy reader (between the ages of 14 and 18)

of the MAGNET in N.E. London will try to attend. This meeting is at

THE KING'S HALL, HACKNEY,

at 8.30 in the evening of the day named. The Mayor of Hackney will take the chair, and the meeting will be addressed by

THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

The Rev. Kenneth Ashcroft, Hon. Sec. for Clapton and Hackney of the Bishop of London's Committee for Work among Elder Lads, asks me to insert this notice, and I do so with pleasure, for I know that the Bishop can tell you things that will interest you and do you good. He does not want just to preach to you, you know. He will talk about your future careers, and how to make the best of the chances that come your way, of the qualities that count in the battle of life, and how to fight that battle cleanly and manfully. There is not one of you who could not get good from such an address, and it is a real privilege to hear the Bishop. So I want you to roll up in crowds, you loyal readers of the MAGNET and the "Gem"!

And I feel sure you will not be less disposed to go when you read what Mr. Ashcroft, the gentleman who asked me to insert this invitation, says about the papers that mean so much to you—and to me as well. He has known them for over ten years, he says, and he can testify that they have always been on the side of manliness and decency.

That is the sort of testimony I really value. I think you will know how to appreciate it, too, for I have heard of many cases in which boys have profited by the lessons which Messrs. Richards and Clifford teach without ever seeming to go out of their way to point a moral.

YOUR EDITOR.

17-11-17