

BACK TO THE FACTORY AGAIN!

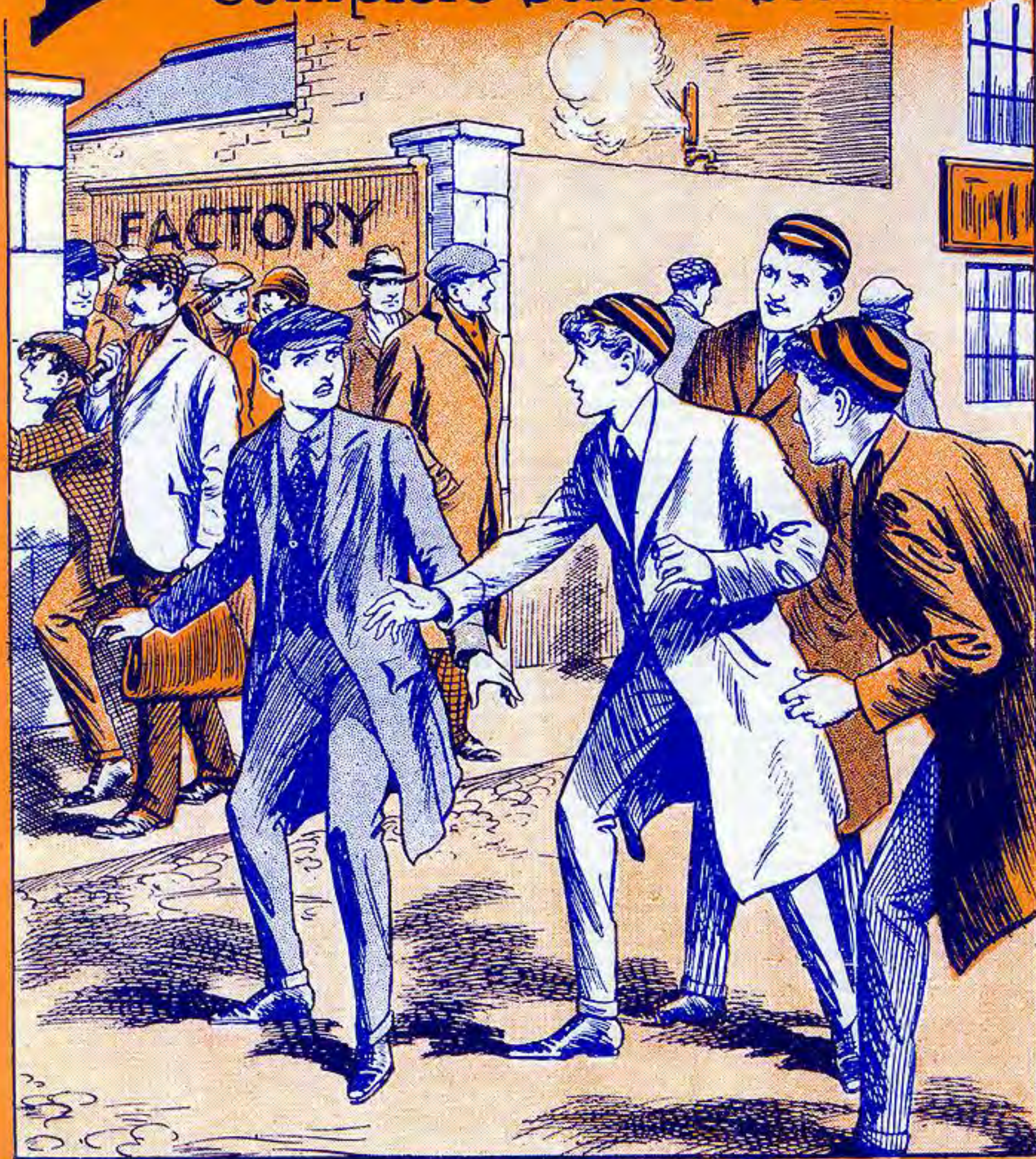
(THIS WEEK'S GRAND SCHOOL STORY—INSIDE.)

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The Magnet 2^d

Library of
Complete School Stories

EVERY
MONDAY.



A SURPRISE FOR MARK LINLEY AT THE GATES OF THE FACTORY!

Mark Linley, back at work at the factory, never dreamed that he would see his old school chum Bob Cherry again so soon.

(An appealing incident from the long complete story inside.)

POOR—BUT PROUD! Mark Linley, expelled from Greyfriars, would much prefer to remain amongst the honest folk of a Lancashire factory than go back to the school to stand a fresh trial. But Bob Cherry, his chum, large in the feet and larger still in the heart, thinks otherwise!



BY
FRANK
RICHARDS

A New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, describing Bob Cherry's plucky fight in defence of his absent chum.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Cherry Speaks Out!

WHARTON!" "Yes, sir!" Harry Wharton stood up in his place in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars. He looked rather anxiously at Mr. Quelch. He fancied he could guess what the Remove master wanted.

"It is now ten minutes since lessons began," said Mr. Quelch, "and Cherry has not yet put in an appearance, Wharton. Do you know where he is?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Have you any idea as to the reason for Cherry's absence, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton coloured. Though he did not know where Bob Cherry was, he fancied he knew why Bob had not turned up for morning classes yet.

"I—I— That is, not exactly, sir."

"That is no answer, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch testily. "You are a chum of his, I understand?"

Again Harry Wharton coloured. Until a few days ago he could have answered that question promptly in the affirmative. But he could not do so now. Neither he, Bull, Nugent, nor Marree Singh were on speaking terms with Bob Cherry. There was a "split" in that select circle known as the Famous Five.

"I—I was, sir," he stammered.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, apparently not noticing the past tense in the junior's reply. "Then for that reason and because you seem unwilling to give me a direct answer, I strongly suspect that you have some knowledge of Cherry's whereabouts."

"I don't know where he is, sir!"

"But you suspect?" said Mr. Quelch, eyeing the captain of the Remove fixedly.

"I—I—sir—"

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"Answer me, Wharton!"

There was an ominous note in the master's command. Harry Wharton groaned. At loggerheads with Bob Cherry as he was, his one desire was to shield him. But there was no help for it.

"I—I think he must be saying good-bye to—to Linley, sir!" blurted out Wharton. "Linley was his best chum; he's awfully cut up about him going."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Nonsense!" he said, though his tone was milder. "Linley has been expelled. He has been escorted to the station this morning by Wingate, and should be in the train by now. Cherry has had ample time to say good-bye before lessons. You will go and search for him without delay, Wharton. Possibly he is in his study or dormitory."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Harry Wharton started to leave his place. As he did so the door opened, and a junior came in.

It was Bob Cherry, and at sight of him the Form stared. He appeared to be drenched through to the skin; his clothes glistened with rain and sleet; his hair was wet and bedraggled; his face was white and strained, and his eyes were red-rimmed.

"Great pip!" murmured Skinner, grinning and winking at his chum Stott. "He's been piping his eyes—fancy Bob Cherry snivelling! Oh, my hat!"

As he came into the room the juniors stared at Bob Cherry. Bob was the "fighting man" of the Remove, and it was something quite new and amazing for him to show signs of having been "piping his eyes," as Skinner termed it. Fellows like Skinner grinned; but most of the Remove looked uncomfortable and sympathetic. Though Bob was "in Coventry," they felt no enmity towards him. He had

been sent to join Mark Linley there because he had persisted in defying the Form by speaking to Mark, who was his chum. It was the just rule of the Form. Mr. Quelch gazed at the drenched figure as if thunderstruck.

"Cherry!" he gasped. "Where have you been until now? How dare you appear in class in this state?"

"I've been to the station, sir," said Bob, in a voice that trembled slightly. "I've been seeing Mark Linley off."

"You—you've what?"

"I've been seeing Mark Linley off at the station, sir!" said Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "You dare to—to—"

He broke off abruptly. He had just noted the significant redness of Bob Cherry's eyes. When he spoke again, Mr. Quelch's voice had lost its sharpness.

"You have seen Linley off at Friar-dale Station, Cherry?" he exclaimed quietly.

"Yes, sir!"

"Was not Wingate with Linley?"

"Yes, sir. It was not Wingate's fault; he ordered me to return to school at once. I defied him, and refused to return," said Bob simply.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, rather taken aback. "And—and why did you do this, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry raised his head and stared about him with glistening eyes.

"Because Mark Linley was my chum, sir," he said, and his voice broke a little. "I wasn't going to let him leave Greyfriars without a friend to see him off. Linley has been treated shamefully. He was innocent; and he was condemned without a fair hearing. He has been treated unjustly!"

"Cherry!"

"I don't care, sir," said Bob thickly. "I'm speaking the truth! Some day the truth will be known, I'm certain."

Linley was the victim of a plot—a foul plot to ruin him. He has gone, but—

"That is enough, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I can make allowances for the fact that Linley is your friend. But you must not speak like that. Linley was proved guilty of theft, and he received the only possible sentence—that of expulsion. His own parent was the means of bringing him to justice. I deeply regret—"

"He is innocent, sir—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch, raising his hand. "This is neither the time nor place to discuss that, Cherry. You had better change your clothes without delay. Why, you are drenched, boy! Is it possible that you went to the station without cap or coat, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir!" said Cherry, in a low tone. "I didn't intend to go, sir; I'd already said good-bye. But—but I couldn't bear the thought of nobody seeing him off. At the last moment I rushed out, and I caught them up at the station. But—but I know I've done wrong, and I'm ready to take my punishment, sir."

Mr. Quelch eyed him steadily. Bob Cherry's lips were quivering, and the master could not fail to see that he was unnerved and overwrought.

"I shall not punish you, Cherry," he said quietly. "You have committed a serious offence. Yet I cannot help admiring you for your loyalty and belief in your chum, and I understand. You are excused lessons this morning, Cherry. You may go."

"Oh, sir!" whispered Bob Cherry. "Thank you, sir."

He walked out slowly. There was an immediate buzz of whispering, a buzz that ceased as Mr. Quelch's glance went round the class.

"We will now resume lessons," said the Remove master frigidly. "Any boy who speaks will be caned."

Nobody did speak. There was a note in the master's voice that discouraged talking. And after that the lesson proceeded.

But there were very few fellows in the Remove who could give their minds to lessons that morning. Bob Cherry's strange conduct, and his unexpected outburst, had amazed them, and in the case of Harry Wharton & Co., at least, had made them strangely uneasy.

It was not only on Bob Cherry's account, however. More than one of the juniors, during that long morning, felt their thoughts dwelling upon Mark Linley, the scholarship boy, who even then was rushing northwards and homewards, expelled from Greyfriars, and sent home in disgrace, a convicted thief.

And more than one felt a strange lump in his throat at the memory of Mark Linley's quiet good-nature, his steady, honest gaze, and frank, cheerful face. More than one, also, remembered him on footer field and cricket-pitch—always steady and reliable—a good bat and a useful forward, and a fellow who always played the game as it should be played. They remembered when he had first come to Greyfriars on a scholarship, how he had fought a gallant and uphill fight against prejudice, against the snobbish set who affected to look down on the "factory cad."

But hard work and perseverance, allied to pluck and good temper, had won the day, and very soon the Lancashire lad had counted the best fellows in the Remove as his chums—until this had happened. Now Linley was gone, never to return; gone in deep disgrace, scorned by all, even by the fellows who had called him friend—all, that is, with the exception of Bob Cherry.

And now that outburst had made many of the Removites strangely uneasy and disturbed. Was it possible that Bob Cherry was right—that Mark Linley was innocent, and that he had been treated unjustly? They could not help wondering a little.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Friends Divided!

"BOB, old chap!"

Harry Wharton spoke awkwardly. He was standing in the doorway of Study No. 13 in the Remove passage, and behind him were his chums, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh. And he was speaking to the fellow who had been, until recently, the remaining member of the chums known as Harry Wharton & Co.

Bob Cherry was alone in the study. He was seated at the table, head in hands and elbows on the table. His face, or what could be seen of it, was dark and bitter.

It was just after morning lessons. Immediately after leaving the Form-room the four chums had repaired to Study No. 1 to discuss the situation. And they had very quickly arrived at a decision, and that was to speak to Bob at the earliest possible moment, and to do their utmost to "bring him round."

True, Bob was still in Coventry. They were not supposed to speak to him. But now Linley had gone there was no reason why Bob Cherry should remain in Coventry any longer. He had been sent there merely because he had insisted upon defying the Form, and speaking to Mark Linley. Now Mark Linley was gone.

As a matter of fact, they would have spoken to Bob long ago, despite the Form's decree, had they been sure that Bob would have answered them. But Bob's attitude had been unmistakable. He had refused to speak to them because they had refused to speak to Mark Linley.

That was why Harry Wharton spoke awkwardly and hesitatingly now.

"Bob, old chap!" he repeated. "For goodness' sake let's drop this rot and be friends again. We're quite ready to shake and make it up, if you are."

"Yes, rather!"

"The readyfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bob," said Hurree Singh softly.

Bob did not move, but his old chums entered the study grimly. Harry Wharton closed the door.

"We ought never to have fallen out," went on Harry Wharton quietly. "Just at first we were a bit sore at your attitude over Linley. But we understood it afterwards, old chap. You honestly believed Linley innocent, and you did the only thing you could do by backing him up. I only wish I could have believed in him as you did. I always liked the chap, and believed him a jolly decent sort. But—but—" Harry Wharton paused, and went on pleadingly: "Look here, Bob, let's forget it. Poor old Linley's gone, and it's ended."

Bob Cherry looked round then. He turned burning eyes on his old chums.

"So you think it's ended, do you?" he said in a hard voice.

"Well, yes; he's gone!"

"Well, it hasn't ended!" said Bob Cherry through clenched teeth. "Linley's gone, but he's coming back, I tell you—coming back with a clean name! I'm going to see to that, Wharton. It's not ended yet, I tell you. No! Ponsonby's won the first round, Wharton. He's

done what he vowed to do—hounded poor old Marky from Greyfriars. But the game isn't ended. Ponsonby has me to reckon with yet!"

"Ponsonby?" said Wharton with a start.

"Yes, Ponsonby—that Highcliffe cad!" said Bob Cherry, his eyes blazing. "The dastardly scoundrel who's at the bottom of this. Oh, you fools! Cannot you see that this is Ponsonby's revenge for the hiding Linley gave him the other day? Hasn't he always hated Linley, just as he's always hated us, the treacherous snake?"

"Yes. But—but—"

"You've known old Marky for terms," said Bob huskily. "Have you ever known him to be anything but a white man? Have you ever known him not to play the game, to do an underhand trick or shady action, let alone to be dishonest or cowardly? Answer me that!"

"Well, no," said Harry Wharton promptly, but uneasily.

"Of course you haven't! And have you ever known that rascal Ponsonby to be anything else but a treacherous snake—a dirty trickster and spiteful, vengeful cad? No, you haven't! And I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that it's possible that this theft business was all a plant—all a dastardly scheme to get Linley disgraced?" said Bob bitterly.

"But that banknote—" Harry Wharton was beginning, when Bob Cherry cut him short savagely.

"Banknote!" he said. "Isn't Ponsonby the sort of fellow who'd lose a dozen five-pound notes to get his revenge? Yes! Now listen to me, you fellows. You know how this affair started? It started when Linley caught Ponsonby ill-treating that village kid in Friardale Lane in the snow. He chipped in, and gave the bully a well-deserved thrashing, didn't he?"

"That's so, I believe," said Harry. "That is Linley's story, anyway."

"And it was true," said Bob Cherry. "Well, twenty minutes later we come into the picture. We happen along the lane, and we catch Ponsonby bullying again—this time poor old Alonzo Todd. We also find Mark Linley on the spot, just returning from the village."

"And he ran away and left Alonzo to it!" said Harry Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

Bob Cherry nodded, his face grim.

"Yes, Linley ran away. We saw him bolt, though he didn't see us. Everybody thought then that he had played the funk—had funkled a scrap with those four Highcliffe cads. You fellows said he was a disgrace to the Remove, and you sent him to Coventry. You also sent me to Coventry, because I backed my chum up—because I accepted his word that he had not funkled, and because I insisted on speaking to him."

"It's the rule when a chap's in Coventry, Bob. You know that."

"Never mind that now," said Bob quietly. "Well, Linley refused to say why he ran away, and he was condemned because of that. He was scorned and shunned, and in deep disgrace. But was Ponsonby satisfied with that? Not a bit of it! He came along to Greyfriars that same evening, and charged Marky with theft—said he had picked up a banknote of his and kept it. What did some of the fellows think then? They changed their minds. They agreed with Ponsonby that Linley had not funkled, but that he had run away because he dare not risk being captured for fear of the five-pound note being found on him."

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"They didn't think that at first," said Frank Nugent.

"I know that. Ponsonby kicked up a fuss, and Quelch ordered a search to be made of Linley's belongings. But nothing was found—no trace of the banknote. And Ponsonby went away, and the fellows didn't know what to make of it. I myself didn't. I wondered what Ponsonby's game was. I didn't dream then that that spoof search was all part of the rascal's deep scheme."

"But, hang it all, Bob—"

"Wait, and let me finish," exclaimed Bob Cherry, holding up his hand. "Well, several days passed, and then the bombshell fell. A letter came for you, Wharton—a letter supposed to be from Linley's mother, thanking you for the gift of a fiver sent on by Mark, but saying that things were better now, and that the money was not needed. Inside the letter was a banknote for five pounds."

Bob Cherry paused a moment. Then he went on bitterly:

"Well, that did it. Everybody knew Linley hadn't a penny to bless himself with. They jumped at the same conclusion that you did, Wharton. They said that Linley had stolen Ponsonby's fiver, after all, and had sent it home to his people, knowing they were hard up. Then his mother, not needing the money, and little dreaming how she was bringing ruin on Marky, sent it back to you."

"How could we think anything else?" said Harry Wharton gruffly.

"You didn't, anyway. You went to Linley, and there was a row. Quelch compared the number of the banknote with the number of the note Ponsonby said he had lost. The numbers were the same. Linley was taken before the Head, and scarcely given a dog's chance to defend himself. He was sacked, and he went home this morning," Bob concluded with a gulp.

"That's all true; we know it all," said Harry Wharton, a trifle impatiently. "Why are you going into it all again like this? I can't see what good—"

"I'll tell you why," said Bob Cherry savagely. "I'm telling you it all because I don't want you to forget the facts. I want you to think it all over again. I'm trying to make you see what I see—that the whole thing is a dastardly scheme of Ponsonby's to ruin poor old Marky!"

"But—but that's all rot, Bob," said Harry Wharton slowly. "The thing was plain enough. Linley was given every chance to defend himself. He refused even to give a reason for running away that afternoon. He refused to open his mouth and make any excuse. Why?"

"I wish I knew that," said Bob huskily. "But he refused to tell me—why, goodness only knows! But that made no difference to me. I knew he could never funk, and I knew he could never, never be a thief."

"But facts are facts," said Frank Nugent quietly. "Linley himself admitted that the handwriting of the letter was his mother's, or like it. You can't get over that, Bob. And the postmark on the envelope was the postmark of Linley's town in Lancashire."

"I don't care," said Bob fiercely. "I don't pretend to understand how it was worked. But I'm certain it was worked by that scoundrel Ponsonby. Either he sent the banknote up to Linley's mother, and imitated Mark's handwriting, or else he imitated Mark's mother's writing, and had the letter posted in Linley's town."

Harry Wharton started. He had not even thought of such possibilities. But

they seemed too wild and improbable to be seriously considered.

"Bob," he said, in amazement, "that's impossible. Even Ponsonby would never try such a rascally scheme as that. He might, I'll admit, be able to imitate Linley's fist. But even if he did know anyone in Bowdley—which isn't likely—how would he know Linley's address? Besides, he would never have the nerve to carry through such a deep plot. It's impossible, Bob."

"It's not, I tell you! That rascal is capable of anything. I tell you the whole thing has been worked, and nothing will ever make me believe otherwise," vowed Bob Cherry. "And what's more," he went on, banging his fist on the table, "I mean to prove what I believe. I don't mean to rest until I've cleared old Marky, and shown that Highcliffe cad up for the rascally, plotting hound that he is!"

There was a silence. The others looked at each other uncomfortably. Certainly Bob Cherry's words had raised vague doubts, dim suspicions in their minds. Yet they were far from being convinced. They could not get over the facts—as they knew them. They could not believe even Ponsonby to be capable of such a deep, villainous plot.

Bob read their thoughts as he watched their faces, and his own face grew dark and bitter again.

"You're not convinced?" he exclaimed harshly. "You still believe old Marky guilty?"

"I'm sorry, Bob," said Harry Wharton. "I—I only wish I honestly could believe him innocent."

"Even though you've always known him to be as straight as a die—a fellow who would never do anything but play the game?" insisted Bob bitterly.

"It—it was just a moment's temptation, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "He was thinking of his people, poor beggar. It wasn't for himself, I know. I'm sorry for him, Bob; but—but—"

"But you can't believe him innocent?"

"I only wish I could!"

"You mean that?"

"I—I suppose so!"

Bob's face was red now, and his eyes glowed strangely.

"Right!" he snapped. "That settles it, then. You came to offer me the hand of friendship again. But I tell you that it's impossible—"

"Bob, old man—"

"It's impossible. I should feel I was not being loyal to poor old Marky if I accepted," said Bob thickly. "I refuse to be friendly with fellows who believe Linley a thief. That's my answer, Wharton. When you can come to me and say honestly that you believe he was innocent, after all, and that you were wrong, I will be friends again—not before."

"Bob! You—you don't mean that, Bob?" gasped Harry, in utter dismay.

"Yes, I do mean it! The Form has sent me to Coventry. I'm going to remain in Coventry until the fellows see that they were wrong—until I've proved Marky innocent, and shown up Ponsonby for the scoundrel that he is!"

And with that Bob Cherry marched out, his eyes shining strangely. The door opened and closed upon him. Harry Wharton and his chums looked at each other blankly, in utter dismay. They had taken it for granted that, now Linley was gone, Bob would come round—would be friends again. And they had badly wanted him to be friends again. But they realised now that, unless a miracle happened, Bob Cherry's friendship was lost to them for ever!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

What Skinner & Co. Knew!

"WELL, that factory cad's gone!" remarked Skinner.

"And you're not sorry, I bet!" grinned Stott. "He's made that boko of yours swell more than once, I fancy, Skinner, old chap. You always were up against him."

"Well, I won't go so far as to say I'm sorry he's gone," smiled Skinner carelessly. "In fact—"

"In fact, you're thundering glad," grinned Snoop. "Jolly good riddance—what?"

"Well, now you come to mention it, those are my views exactly," agreed Skinner. "Still, it was rather thick, you know. Old Pon's fairly a goer when it comes to the giddy vengeance bizney. Blessed if I ever expected this!"

"We understand now what that spoof search meant the other night," grinned Stott. "Old Pon knew jolly well the fiver wouldn't be found, of course. It was just to prepare the way for his little surprise."

"Of course, it was," smiled Skinner, rubbing his rather long nose reflectively. "Still, I'm thumped if I know how he wangled the whole bizney, chaps. It beats me hollow—unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless that letter explains it," said Skinner, his eyes gleaming. "My hat! That's it, chaps! You remember Pon found a letter of Linley's just after their scrap. It was a letter from Linley's mother. He wanted us to plant that fiver in it and shove it among Linley's belongings, didn't he? He wanted us to plant the fiver on Linley like that—to do his dirty work for him. Well, we refused, of course. And this is how he's wangled it."

"Thumped if I see," said Snoop.

"It's plain enough," said Skinner. "He's copied the dashed handwriting in that letter, of course—copied Linley's mater's handwriting. That's why even Linley himself thought it must be his mother's letter."

"But—but—"

"It's as plain as a pikestaff," said Skinner, with a sniff. "That letter was written by Ponsonby himself to Wharton, and Ponsonby himself shoved the fiver in it. He had the address, of course, from the other letter."

"Yes, but how did Pon get it posted in Bowdley?"

"That's the question," said Skinner reflectively. "But if Pon happened to know anyone who lived near there, it would be easy enough, of course. That was easily got over, I fancy. Anyway, that's how Pon worked it, there's not the slightest doubt about that. He knows all about Linley's people being poor, and all that."

"Jolly good thing for us it came off," said Stott.

"Well, it was a jolly good thing for us Pon didn't fail, at all events," said Skinner, in a low tone. "You know what he is; he's as dangerous a friend as an enemy. He wouldn't have hesitated to drag us down with him if he had failed. I didn't approve of the scheme at all, and don't. But—it's a good thing for us it came off."

"We're safe enough now," grinned Stott.

"I wish I could be sure about that," said Skinner uneasily. "I hear that interfering fool Cherry's vowing to go into the dashed bizney again, hang him! And then there's that fool Bunter."

"Bunter won't dare to let it out—"

"He's ass enough to do it accidentally, though," said Skinner glumly. "It was rotten luck that he happened to

overhear Ponsonby asking us to plant that fiver for him. The fat fool may let it out any time. We're all in the soup if he does."

"He daren't," repeated Snoop, though his voice was uneasy. "He's screwed ten bob out of Pon already. Pon has his dashed signature proving that the fat fool tried to blackmail him. Bunter knows that if Pon showed the Head that, it would be the sack for him, too."

"All the same, I don't like it, chaps. The fat—"

Skinner broke off abruptly as the door-knob rattled. Then the door opened and a junior entered. He was a tall, languid, elegantly dressed junior, and he wore the Highcliffe colours. He also wore a gleaming monocle, fixed in a slightly discoloured eye. His features were rather cynical and haughty, and they bore more than one sign of having recently been knocked about.

It was Cecil Ponsonby, the Highcliffe dandy.

Skinner & Co. jumped up and stared at him in some alarm.

"You here again so soon, Pon!" gasped Skinner. "Oh, you idiot! You're asking for trouble!"

"Think so?" smiled Ponsonby.

"Of course. You've just got one of our fellows sacked, and you're not very welcome here, I can tell you. I don't mean this study, you ass! I mean the rest of the fellows."

"My dear man, I know you mean them," remarked Ponsonby carelessly. "The fact is, I've just biked over before dinner to see you, Skinner. I had to come, to get to know how things are going. Has Linley gone?"

Skinner nodded.

"Yes, he's gone," he said grimly.

"Anythin' come out?" asked Ponsonby carelessly. "Any danger at all?"

Skinner smiled slightly. He saw that Ponsonby's apparent carelessness was all put on, that he was almost trembling with anxiety.

"Nothin's come out," he said, with a slight sneer. "You're safe enough, Pon. Your scheme's come off absolutely! Linley went home by the first train this morning. You've done what you set out to do—you've hounded the poor beggar from Greyfriars."

"Poor beggar!" echoed Ponsonby, raising his eyebrows slightly. "My dear man, you talk as if you were sorry for the factory cad. I imagined you would have been delighted, by gad!"

"I'm not sorry," scowled Skinner. "Come to that, I'm glad to see the back of the cad. But—but it was a bit thick, Pon! How did you work it?" he added, glancing curiously at the Highcliffe dandy.

Ponsonby smiled, and sat on the table. "Best for you not to know that, Skinner," he remarked.

"I suppose you copied the handwriting in the letter—Linley's mater's writing?"

"Did I?"

"But how you got the dashed thing posted in Bowdley beats me," said Skinner. "Have you any friends near there, Ponsonby? I suppose you have?"

"So long as you only suppose, and don't know, you're all right, Skinner," smiled Ponsonby blandly. "Take my tip, old beans, and don't worry your little heads about it. Forget it. And the less you say about it the better," he added meaningly. "What about Bunter?"

Skinner frowned.

"I've talked to the fat little cad," he said. "But it's up to you, Pon, not to get his back up again."

Ponsonby's eyes glinted.



"Out with the cheeky rotter!" cried Harry Wharton. There was a combined rush, and Ponsonby went down with a crash, with the Greyfriars juniors sprawling over him. The dandy from Highcliffe was rolled over and over, and his head was rammed in the cinders on the hearth. "Yowp! Oough! Oh, you hounds!" spluttered Ponsonby, struggling furiously. "I—groooh!"

(See Chapter 3.)

"I'll soon settle his hash, if he comes any games!" he said, his face becoming suddenly ugly. "I'll teach the fat little worm to try his dashed blackmailing dodges on me! I'll make him—"

Ponsonby broke off abruptly, and slipped from the table. For at that moment the door opened, and a fat face, adorned by a huge pair of glimmering spectacles, looked into the study.

"Bunter!" snapped Skinner.

It was Bunter. He rolled into the room, and closed the door after him, giving Ponsonby a grinning, familiar nod as he did so.

"How do, Pon?" he asked cheerily. "I was wondering when I should see you again, old top. Lucky I just happened to spot you come along here."

Ponsonby breathed hard, and he set his lips. To be addressed as "Pon" and "old top" by the fat and fatuous Billy Bunter made the haughty and aristocratic dandy inwardly writhe with rage. But only the glint in his eyes showed his real feelings.

"How do, Bunter?" he smiled back. "So you spotted me coming along, did you?"

"Trust me not to miss much!" grinned Bunter. "I say, Linley's gone. Did you know, Pon?"

"Yes."

"He, he, he!" grinned Billy Bunter. "Wouldn't there be a rare old rumpus if the fellows got to know what we know—what? I must say, you worked it jolly neatly, Pon."

"Did I?"

"Yes, rather! I knew you'd some deep game on when you started that jolly old search the other night. I was surprised when the giddy banknote wasn't found after all. You could have knocked me down with a feather. But I knew you hadn't finished at that. He, he, he!"

"I don't understand you, Bunter," said Ponsonby carelessly.

Bunter winked.

"You can't pull the wool over my eyes like that, Pon!" he grinned. "I'm just a bit too wide, you know. You couldn't persuade Skinner to do your dirty work, so you did it yourself. He, he, he! I spotted it at once. But I'm not going to give you away, old chap."

"Aren't you?" said Ponsonby smoothly.

"No, not as long as you treat me decently, of course," said Bunter, shaking a fat finger at the Highcliffe dandy. "Mind you, I never did like that factory bounder; I don't approve of scholarship chaps at all, in fact. I'm glad Linley's gone. He kicked me more than once, the low cad! But I don't approve of

the dirty, low-down, criminal trick you played Linley, Pon."

"Don't you?" said Ponsonby thickly. "Not at all. In fact, it's really only a fellow's bare duty to report the matter. But I've also a duty to my pals, Pon. As long as we're pals, I'm going to stand by you, Pon. Only you've got to toe the line, mind you!"

"I think I see," said Ponsonby, in low, concentrated tones. "So—so you propose to go on blackmailing me, Bunter?"

"Certainly not!" said Bunter indignantly. "That—that ten bob you gave me was only a loan. Nothing else! And all I want you to do now is just to change a postal-order for me, Pon."

"Let me see the postal-order, Bunter." "I haven't got it yet, old fellow," explained Bunter. "I expected it by the first post this morning, but it didn't come. It's bound to be here to-morrow at latest. These postal people are dashed slow, but sure, you know," explained Bunter, shaking his head. "Just a little loan between pals, Pon. You hand me a quid note now, and I'll hand you the postal-order when it comes to-morrow, old chap—see?"

"Yes, I see," said Ponsonby, eyeing Bunter with glittering eyes. "But you're forgetting one thing, Bunter. You're forgetting that paper you signed the other day—the paper which proves that you blackmailed me. If Dr. Locke saw that—"

Bunter grinned.

"I should just deny it," he jeered. "I should swear it was your giddy revenge against me for giving you away, just as you treated Linley. You forged Mrs. Linley's name to get your own back, and I should swear you'd forged my signature just to get your own back out of me. See?"

"You—you fat sweep!" hissed Ponsonby.

"He, he, he! Pon, I fancy—Yarrooop!"

Apparently Bunter had fancied himself the master of the situation. But his glee was short-lived. That fat cackle proved too much for Ponsonby. Never a fellow with much control over his temper, he lost it completely now. He was on Bunter with the spring of a tiger, and Bunter went reeling back with a wild howl, and crashed down with Ponsonby on top of him.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

Mad with rage, the Highcliffe dandy thumped and pommelled Bunter's fat form with all his savage force. And Bunter's wild howls awoke the echoes—or they would have done but for the fact that Bunter's fat face was jammed deep into the hearthrug.

"Stop it, Pon, you fool! Oh, you fool!" shouted Skinner, almost beside himself with fear and apprehension. "You'll have the beaks here, and it will all have to come out then. Oh, you fool! Let Bunter alone! You fellows help me—quick!"

Skinner sprang on Ponsonby and tried to wrench him from his yelling victim. Snoop and Stott, as terrified as their leader, sprang to his aid; together they wrenched Ponsonby away, and sent him reeling. And as they did so the door flew open and Harry Wharton, followed by half a dozen more juniors, looked in.

"Hallo! Who's killing Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton. "Oh! You, Ponsonby!"

Harry Wharton's voice ended on an angry note as he recognised the Highcliffe junior. The sight of Ponsonby

just then was like a red rag to a bull to Harry Wharton—and to the rest of the Removites there also. Ponsonby was cordially disliked by all the decent fellows in the Remove. And though they believed Linley guilty, they felt bitter and angry with Ponsonby for having been the means of getting a Remove fellow sacked. Ponsonby had done a dangerous thing by visiting Greyfriars that morning.

The fact that Ponsonby had obviously been bullying Bunter was not likely to make the Greyfriars juniors feel any better disposed towards him either.

"You, Ponsonby!" snapped Harry Wharton, his eyes glinting. "You've dared to come here so soon after what's happened? I should think you would have had more decency than to venture here."

"And bullying a Remove chap, too!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Smash the cad—kick him out of Greyfriars, the mischief-making hound!"

Cecil Ponsonby panted, and glowered at the juniors in the doorway. Skinner & Co. were white, and their eyes were fixed on Bunter. That fat junior scrambled up, his eyes glittering with rage behind his big spectacles.

"Ow! Oh dear! Oh, the awful beast!" he gasped. "Ow! He's nearly killed me! Ow-wow! Groooh! All right, Ponsonby, you beast! I'll make you sit up for this! I'll tell everybody what I know. I'll give you away for this, you plotting rotter! I know all about it, and—"

"Bunter!" hissed Skinner. "You—"

"You shut up, Skinner. I don't care!" raved Bunter, glaring fiendishly at the cowering Ponsonby. "I'm going to give him away. He's—"

Bunter got no further than that—unfortunately. At that moment Ponsonby, terrified himself now, sprang on the fat junior again, this time with the obvious intention of stopping his mouth at all costs.

As he did so there was a yell from Harry Wharton and his chums.

"Smash the cad! Out with the cheeky rotter!"

There was a combined rush, and Ponsonby went down with a crash, and with half a dozen fellows swarming over him. And after that Ponsonby scarcely knew what happened to him. It was the biggest ragging the Highcliffe cad had ever received at Greyfriars. He was rolled over and over, and his head was rammed in the cinders of the hearth. Then red and black ink was poured over his head and face, and rubbed into his hair.

"Yowp! Oouch! Oh, you hounds!" spluttered Ponsonby, struggling furiously. "I—Grough!"

When at last the Highcliffe dandy emerged from the melee, he was a sight. His clothes were elegant no longer, and he was no longer a dandy—far from it. His features streamed with red and black ink, and his collar and tie were torn away, and his coat and waistcoat torn open.

Skinner & Co. looked on in terrified silence. They expected their own turn to come for having harboured the rascally Highcliffe junior.

But it didn't. The Removites had forgotten Skinner & Co.—they had forgotten Bunter. They were naturally incensed at a Highcliffe fellow—most of all Ponsonby—daring to practise his bullying games at Greyfriars.

"Out with him—frogs-march him out, chaps!" ordered Harry Wharton. "We'll teach the rotter a lesson—we'll teach him to steer clear of Greyfriars

after this. He's caused enough trouble already. Out with him!"

"Yes, rather!"

Other fellows had come along now, and with angry faces on all sides, Ponsonby was twisted over despite his furious struggles, and then he was rushed out into the passage. Luckily there happened to be no masters or prefects about, and Ponsonby was frogs-marched with a rush down the stairs, and out into the Close. Then he was rushed out to the gates and flung neck-and-crop into the lane without.

He lay there gasping and groaning. Then he scrambled up, and, turning a face fiendish with fury to the juniors, he shook his fist towards them and limped away. It was more than likely that Ponsonby bitterly regretted his thoughtless and indelicate visit to Greyfriars that morning.

The crowd of Removites trooped indoors—the bell for dinner was just ringing. But now the excitement was over, Harry Wharton suddenly remembered the significant words Billy Bunter had uttered. And the captain of the Remove hurried back to Skinner's study. He found Skinner & Co. there, and he also found Bunter there. The Owl was eating a large cake, and was being helped to more by Harold Skinner. Stott and Snoop hovered round with anxious looks at Bunter.

Harry Wharton stared at the strange, unexpected sight. Then he stepped towards the fat junior.

"Bunter," he said quietly, "you said some peculiar things a few moments ago. You said you knew all about it. You said you'd give that plotting rascal Ponsonby away and that you'd tell everybody. What did you mean?"

Billy Bunter swallowed a chunk of cake, and took another slice from Skinner.

"Nothing!" he said calmly. "Nothing at all, Wharton. You mind your own dashed business. It's just like you to come buttin' in here, you know, like this. Isn't it, Skinner, old chap?"

Harold Skinner said nothing. His face was white and strained, and his eyes fell before Wharton's steady look. He could find nothing to say—nor could Stott and Snoop.

"Then you've nothing to say, Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton grimly.

"Nothing! Why should I? I just meant that I'd tell you fellows that Pon was bullying me—that's all. Yes, that's it."

"That's a lie, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Harry Wharton turned abruptly and walked out. He knew it was useless to ask further questions. He saw quite clearly what had happened. Bunter had been about to let something out in his rage and pain—something Skinner & Co. did not want to become common knowledge, as it were. And, while the juniors had been dealing with Ponsonby, Skinner & Co. had been dealing with Bunter. They had, probably by means of the cake, probably by means of money and the cake, succeeded in persuading the fat junior to keep his mouth closed.

Harry Wharton felt quite certain about that. But what was it Bunter had been about to divulge? Wharton wondered and as he wondered, his suspicions grew. Was it something to do with the Linley affair? Was Bob Cherry right after all—was Ponsonby's scheming at the bottom of Mark Linley's downfall?

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Chums Again!

LETTER for you, Master Cherry! Master Wharton asked me to bring it up, sir."

Trotter the page handed the letter over to Bob Cherry as that junior leaped eagerly to his feet, and then he withdrew from Study No. 13.

Bob Cherry tore open the letter almost feverishly. A shade of bitterness crossed his face for a moment as he reflected on Trotter's words: "Master Wharton asked me to bring it up!" In the ordinary way, Harry Wharton would have brought the letter up himself—cheerfully, and willingly. But things were different now—though it was Bob's own attitude that kept his old chum at arm's length.

But Bob did not reflect long on the matter. He was far too anxious to read the letter. A glance had shown him that the envelope bore the Bowdley postmark, and he knew it was from Mark Linley. It was now two days since Mark had left Greyfriars, and Bob had been anxiously waiting to hear from him.

It was from Mark Linley, and Bob's eyes shone as he read it. The letter ran as follows:

"Dear Bob,—Just a few lines to let you know that I got home all right, and to tell you how I found things. I will write a longer letter soon.

"Well, as I expected, my people were terribly cut up. It was hard, Bob, after the way they had scraped and worked to allow me to stay at Greyfriars—hard to have me come home like this—in deep disgrace. They had such great hopes of me—hopes that I should do well, and be a credit to them. And it has all ended in this. To-morrow morning, I start work at the factory again. But it will go against the grain after Greyfriars, as you can imagine.

"Need I tell you, Bob, that that infamous letter was all a trick? It was! My mother had never written such a letter, nor had she seen anything of the banknote. It was a dirty trick, as I suspected. My father and mother were amazed when I told them about it. My father was angry, too—very angry. It was all I could do to prevent his bringing me back to Greyfriars to demand justice. But I persuaded him against doing so—I did not want any more trouble. He is writing to the Head, of course; but it will be useless.

"It was Ponsonby who worked the scheme I have not the slightest doubt. I can only suspect how. He must have had someone here to post the letter for him, of course. But I have a suspicion as to how he managed it—to copy my mother's handwriting, and how he got hold of my address, I mean. That day it all started a letter came for me from my mother. I glanced through it quickly, and shoved it in my pocket just before starting for the village that afternoon. I have not seen it since. It is not in my clothes or belongings; and I'm certain I did not destroy it because I wanted to read it again. Well, if Ponsonby found that letter—if I dropped it during that scrap and he picked it up—then that will explain just how he could have worked this despicable trick. He wrote that letter, imitating my mother's handwriting, and enclosed that fiver, addressing it to Wharton, and getting it posted by someone here in Bowdley. That is the only explanation I can think of. Ah, well, it is useless going into it now again. It is ended. Ponsonby has won—he has had his revenge, gained

it by low scheming and dastardly trickery.

"But, Bob, old chap, there is one thing I feel I must explain to you—to you alone; and I want you to keep it secret. It is the real reason why I ran away that afternoon, leaving poor old Lonzy to his fate. You will remember that when you chaps rushed up you saw me standing on that high bank beyond the hedge—I was just about to jump down into the lane to Lonzy's help. I swear that, just as I was going to do so, however, I heard a cry behind me—a cry for help in a girl's voice. I turned round and saw a girl struggling in the lake of Friardale Grange grounds. You know it, Bob. Well, what could I do? It was either leaving Lonzy to those brutes, or leaving that kiddie to drown. I decided promptly, and rushed across the field to the lake. I managed to fish the kiddie out—it was what any chap would have done. She was excited and upset. She seemed terribly afraid of anyone knowing that she had been in the water; her mother was seriously ill, or something. Any-

and Inky, the Indian junior. They came into the study, and Harry Wharton closed the door quietly.

"Bob, old man," he said gently. "We want a few words with you."

Bob Cherry looked up, but did not speak. He had not exchanged words with a fellow in the Remove for two days.

"Bob," went on Harry steadily, "the other day you said that when we came to you and said that we honestly believed we had been wrong, and that Linley was innocent, you would be friends with us again—and not before."

Bob Cherry nodded, a sudden eager look on his face. But he did not speak.

"Well," went on Harry, "that time has now come, Bob. I believe we can honestly say that we were wrong; we can honestly say now that we believe old Marky to be innocent—that he has been the victim of a rotten, despicable plot to ruin him."

"What?"

Bob started up from his seat, his eyes shining. He knew his old chums better than to doubt the sincerity of Harry's words.

"We were wrong at first—until the day Marky went," said Harry quietly. "You heard about that rumpus in Skinner's study that day—when we caught Ponsonby there bullying Bunter, and slung him out neck and crop?"

"Yes, I heard about it," said Bob.

"Well, Bunter let something out then—something that started us thinking seriously about things. It was nothing actually; Bunter just lost his head—said he'd give Ponsonby away, sort of thing. But it made us very suspicious—especially when we saw that Skinner also was terrified of Bunter letting out what he knew. Anyway, Skinner managed to shut Bunter up, and it didn't come out. But in my mind, at least, there's no doubt whatever that it concerned Linley's affair. Ponsonby has some guilty secret, and Bunter knows what it is."

"Go on!"

"That started us thinking. We remembered what Ponsonby is—that he's capable of any rascality. We also remembered what a splendid fellow old Linley has always proved to be. We've talked it over for hours, Bob—and the more we've talked it over the more certain we've become that we had made a ghastly blunder. I see now that Marky isn't the sort to fall for a moment's temptation, however powerful. He couldn't do it."

"I'm glad—thankful to hear you say that, Harry," breathed Bob.

"That's not all, though. We had a bit of good luck this morning, Bob," went on Wharton. "We met that Friardale chap in the village—the chap Mark rescued from Ponsonby's hands. We asked him if he remembered whether Marky picked anything up as they were leaving Ponsonby & Co. He said he was absolutely sure Marky picked nothing up whatever. He said Ponsonby was lying—that his claim to have seen Marky pick the banknote up was utterly false. The village chap said he was ready and eager to swear to that before our Head, or before a magistrate if necessary."

"Oh, good!" panted Bob. "I—I never thought of that—I never thought of questioning him about it."

"Well, that settled us," said Harry. "We feel convinced now that poor old Marky is innocent, Bob. We've come now to tell you this, and to ask you to be friends again. If you will, old man, we'll work together, and we'll never rest until we've proved what we believe to

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way, she begged me not to tell a soul about it, and I promised. I haven't told a soul until now. In any case, it wasn't a thing a chap would make a song about. Well, that's the truth, old man. I'm telling you now because I think you have a right to know the circumstances. I know you will say nothing.

"I will close now—I can't say any more, old chap. Good-bye, and thanks for all the kindness you have shown me. You have been a true pal, Bob!"

"Ever your pal,

"MARK LINLEY."

Bob Cherry read the letter again, and a queer lump rose in his throat. His eyes, too, were strangely moist.

"Poor old Marky," he whispered. "So—so that was it. And—and we never dreamed of the truth."

For a long time Bob Cherry sat at the table, his eyes fixed mistily on the letter. He had vowed to clear his chum's good name—to bring him back to Greyfriars. But he had done nothing yet—he had not known where to start. But here, at last, was something to start on.

A knock sounded at the door, and it opened quietly, revealing Harry Wharton; behind Wharton were Bull, Nugent

be true. There's my hand on it, old chap!"

He held out his hand frankly, and Bob fairly leaped to grasp it. He shook, and then he shook hands with the others. His heart was thumping with a strange feeling of gladness. The faces of the others were bright.

"Good man, Bob!" said Frank Nugent thankfully. "This is ripping. So everything's all right now."

"Not yet," said Bob. "Not until Marky is back at Greyfriars, you fellows. I'm glad—thankful that you came to me like this, before you saw this letter. I meant to show it to you. It's from Marky, and it's just come. Read it!"

He handed the letter to Harry Wharton. Harry read it with a growing expression of amazement on his face. Then he passed it silently to the others. They read it and whistled. There was silence for a moment.

"So—so that was why Marky ran away!" breathed Harry at last, his voice husky. "And—and we never dreamed of such a thing."

"And we called him coward?" muttered Frank Nugent, his eyes shining strangely. "Oh, poor old Marky!"

"Nobody could have guessed that," said Bob quietly. "I never guessed such a thing myself, though I believed in him. But—but you fellows saw that about the letter—Linley's mother's letter? That was how Ponsonby did it."

"No doubt about that!"

"The scoundrel!"

"He's all that," said Bob fiercely. "Well, we've got something to go on now. Do you know what I am going to do? I'm going with this letter to Quelch, and I'm going to demand that the inquiry be reopened."

"But—but Marky asks you to—"

"He asks me to keep that rescue matter a secret, I know. But for Marky's own sake I don't intend to. I'm going to see justice done, I tell you."

"I agree with you there, Bob," said Harry. "Marky doesn't realise what that means to him. I'll come with you."

"There's the bell," said Johnny Bull. "Better leave it until after afternoon class, then."

And as the bell for afternoon classes was ringing Bob gave way, and the Co. settled upon that. Bob's heart was lighter now than it had been for days. He had vowed to clear his chum, and he began to see a faint prospect of keeping his vow now. Moreover, the breach was healed—once again the Famous Five were united.

Bob and Harry went into classes arm-in-arm, and many fellows noticed it and wondered. Skinner observed it, and he felt a vague sense of uneasiness. Bob Cherry alone he did not fear; but Harry Wharton & Co., united, he did fear. The cad of the Remove had good reason to feel uneasy had he only known it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Remove!

"ATTENTION, boys!"

Mr. Quelch's voice rapped sharply in the Remove Form-room. The juniors were mapping at the time, but as that sharp order rang through the quiet room, they looked up from their mapping-books. Then they understood, and there was a hurried scraping of feet as every boy in the room scrambled up to attention.

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The Form-room door had opened quietly, and Dr. Locke had entered; and he was followed by a gentleman and a pretty girl of about fourteen years of age.

The juniors stared in wonderment. What such a visit meant in the middle of afternoon classes was a puzzle. Most of them knew both the gentleman and the girl by sight.

"Phew!" whispered Harry Wharton to Bob Cherry. "It—it's Mr. Walsh, from Friardale Grange, and that's his daughter. She's the kiddie old Marky mentions in his letter."

Bob Cherry nodded. His eyes were gleaming with sudden hope and expectation. What did this mean? Could this visit possibly be in connection with Mark—with the incident Mark Linley had mentioned in his letter?

Bob was very soon to know.

The Head moved towards Mr. Quelch and spoke quietly to that astonished gentleman. Then he faced the Form.

"You may sit down, boys," he said.

With a rippling rustle and scraping, the Removites resumed their seats.

"Boys," exclaimed Dr. Locke, with a glance towards the visitors, "this gentleman, as you doubtless know, is Mr. Walsh, of Friardale Grange, and this young lady is his daughter. They have called upon a matter that concerns, I understand, a member of this Form."

The Head paused and smiled on the Form.

"Last Wednesday," he went on, "Miss Walsh was sliding on a small lake in the Grange grounds when the ice gave way, and she was only saved from the deadliest danger by the promptness and gallantry of a Greyfriars boy. That boy, whose name is unknown, but whose age Miss Walsh assures me must be fifteen or thereabouts, is evidently a member of this Form. I have already visited the Upper Fourth Form, but the boy is not a member of the Fourth. He is apparently seated amongst you, and I will ask him now to stand up."

Every fellow in the Remove looked at his neighbour; but no fellow stood up. Miss Ethel was scanning the juniors with a puzzled face.

"I should add," went on Dr. Locke, as there were no signs of anyone moving, "that at the time of the occurrence Miss Walsh's mother was very seriously ill. Naturally, Miss Walsh was terrified at the thought that her mother would learn that she had been in such danger. She feared the knowledge would have grave results; she was also, as one can imagine, unnerved and agitated. Miss Walsh, therefore, begged her rescuer to keep the matter a close secret, and the boy gave his word that he would not mention the incident to anyone."

"Since then, happily, her mother has recovered, and Miss Walsh has told her of the accident. She has also realised that it was somewhat unfair and ungrateful of her to extract such a promise from the boy who had saved her life at the risk of his own, and she is here to-day to seek out that boy and thank him in public for his undoubted heroism. I again ask the boy to stand up."

There was no movement, and Dr. Locke smiled again, and glanced at Mr. Walsh.

"The boy is apparently too modest to admit his heroism, Mr. Walsh," he remarked. "Perhaps Miss Walsh will pick the modest fellow out for us. We cannot allow him to hide his light under a bushel."

There was a dutiful laugh. But Miss Ethel did not laugh. She was looking bitterly disappointed.

"The boy is not here, sir," she answered.

"Are you sure?" asked the Head in surprise.

"Yes; quite sure."

There was a silence. A junior suddenly stood up, his face red but determined. It was Bob Cherry.

"Ah! It was you, Cherry?" exclaimed the Head quickly.

"No, sir!" Bob Cherry's voice rang out clearly in the silent room. "It was Mark Linley who did it!"

"Linley!" exclaimed Dr. Locke in astonishment. "How do you know that, boy? Did Linley tell you?"

"No, sir. But I'm certain—in fact, I know it was Linley. That was the real reason why he ran away last Wednesday afternoon, sir," added Bob bitterly, glancing about at the startled faces of his Form-fellows. "It was not because he feared being searched by Ponsonby, or because he funked—I mean, feared him. From where he stood on the bank overlooking the lane he could see the lake. He saw Miss Walsh struggling in the water, and he dashed off to her aid. That is the truth, sir."

There was dead silence in the room. Mr. Quelch had glanced quickly at Dr. Locke, who was eyeing Bob Cherry like one petrified. Mr. Walsh and his daughter stared in puzzled astonishment at the junior. But the Remove were not puzzled—nor were the two masters. They understood what Bob Cherry meant only too well.

"Cherry!" gasped the Head, scarcely knowing whether to be angry or otherwise. "Is that true, my boy? Can you prove what you say?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob steadily. "Linley wrote me a letter—it came to-day—in which he told me about it, mentioning no names, of course, and in strict confidence. But—but it can be very easily proved, sir. I have a photograph of Linley in my study. May I bring it so that Miss—Miss Walsh can identify him? Please let me bring it, sir."

The Head was silent for a moment, then he nodded.

"Certainly, Cherry. You may bring the photograph. If it should prove to be Linley who did that act of gallantry I shall be very, very glad indeed. You may go."

Bob Cherry almost ran out of the room. He was back again in less than a minute. He handed a photograph, in a silver frame, to the Head, who glanced at it and handed it to Miss Walsh.

As the girl's eyes fell upon the face of the photograph they lit up joyfully.

"Yes; that is the boy who saved me," she gasped impulsively. "Oh, I am so glad we have discovered him at last!"

"You are sure?" asked the Head.

"Absolutely certain," said the girl excitedly. "I could not possibly make a mistake. But—but where is he?"

The Head's face went suddenly grim.

"I am sorry, Miss Walsh," he exclaimed quietly. "But Linley, the boy who saved you last Wednesday, has now left this school. He left—ahem!—Greyfriars two days ago! I can quite understand your desire to thank the boy personally, and I am only too sorry that he is not at present a member of this school." He paused, and then went on as if a sudden thought had struck him. "By the way, Miss Walsh, may I ask what time the accident took place last Wednesday?"

"It happened about three o'clock—yes, yes," she went on eagerly. "I remember hearing the church clock strike three."

"Thank you very much."

The Head spoke quietly for a moment to Mr. Walsh, and then he led the way

out of the room. There was a sudden murmur of excited voices as the door closed. Mr. Quelch raised a hand for silence.

"That will do, boys," he said grimly. "You may discuss this—this matter after lessons—not now. Silence!"

There was silence, and lessons proceeded amidst a tense atmosphere. But for the remainder of that afternoon Bob Cherry was the recipient of glances from all parts of the room—curious glances. And more than once Mr. Quelch himself eyed him very curiously. But Bob scarcely noticed these attentions. He was inwardly shaking with suppressed excitement. He longed for lessons to finish, and when at last they did finish he did not leave the room with the rest of the Remove. He walked up to the Form master's desk, his face set and determined. He meant to strike again while the iron was hot—strike another blow for his absent chum.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Head Agrees!

"WELL, Cherry?"

Mr. Quelch eyed the junior rather grimly. As a matter of fact, the Remove master had been about to call Cherry back to speak to him, in any case.

"I wanted to speak to you, sir," said Bob Cherry calmly. "You—you know now that it was Mark Linley who saved Miss Walsh from drowning, and you know now why Linley refused to say why he ran away from that hound—that—that Highcliffe fellow, Ponsonby?"

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "I know now, Cherry. You should, perhaps, not have said quite so much as you did before strangers, Cherry; but I am exceedingly thankful that you did speak up, for all that. I have no doubt that Dr. Locke will wish to speak to you in regard to this matter, my boy."

"That is just what I want, sir," said Bob eagerly. "I—I was going to ask you to take me before him, sir. I—I know it's cheek, sir, but—but you don't know what Linley's going has meant to me. And there is something else in that letter from Linley that I think you ought to see. Here is the letter."

Bob Cherry drew Mark Linley's letter from his pocket and handed it to the master. He watched Mr. Quelch's face almost feverishly as he read it. But Mr. Quelch showed little amazement. His eyes grew a trifle steely—that was all.

"I am very glad indeed that you showed me this letter, Cherry!" he exclaimed. "It has added strength and clearness to a vague suspicion that has been growing in my mind for days. The expulsion of Linley was a great blow to me, my boy. He was a boy in whom I had every hope—every confidence. Despite the overwhelming evidence I could not convince myself that a boy of such sterling character and worth could fail to resist a moment's temptation. Yet his guilt seemed certain. His refusal to state why he ran away that afternoon was a very strong point against him. What has transpired this afternoon—what you have brought to light, Cherry—has now made his silence understandable."

"You—you have read that paragraph—the one relating to the lost letter?" said Bob earnestly.

"Yes. I attach a great deal of importance to that matter, Cherry. The Head must certainly see this letter. It rings with sincerity, and its truth cannot be doubted. Have you anything more to tell me, Cherry?"



"The boy who rescued me from the lake," said Miss Walsh, a perplexed frown on her pretty face, "is not here!" "Are you sure?" asked Dr. Locke. Suddenly Bob Cherry jumped to his feet. "I know who it was, sir," he said. "You, Cherry?" said the Head. "No, sir," replied Bob. "It was Mark Linley!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Nothing, sir—except that, if only you knew the sort of fellow Ponsonby is, you would never hesitate to accept Linley's view of how the plot was worked. Ponsonby is a heartless rascal, sir."

Bob Cherry did not trouble to wonder if he was sneaking or not in speaking thus of a fellow from another school. Bob was fighting for his chum's honour and career, and he meant to fight with every available weapon.

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"I think I understand, Cherry," he said grimly. "I had already formed my opinion of Ponsonby's character. Yet I can scarcely credit that any boy could be so wicked as to do such a dastardly thing as you and Linley himself suggest. And you say that this boy—this Friardale boy—is willing to come and give evidence if necessary?"

"More than willing, sir!"

"Very well. I will see Dr. Locke without delay, though I must warn you that it is unlikely he will take any drastic action in the matter. I will, however, do my utmost to convince him that these new developments warrant the reopening of the case. You had better remain here until you are sent for."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch rustled out, and Bob remained alone in the Form-room. The minutes ticked by, and it seemed an age

to the anxious junior before Trotter, the page-boy, brought the message.

"Which the Headmaster wants to see you, Master Cherry," he announced.

Bob nodded and hurried away to the Head's study. He found Mr. Quelch seated in earnest conversation with Dr. Locke.

"Ah, come in, Cherry!" said the Head in his quiet way. "I was about to send for you, my boy, when Mr. Quelch came to me. He has informed me of what transpired between you, and I have read Linley's letter to you. I am very thankful indeed that you spoke up in your Form-room this afternoon. The news that Linley was the boy who rescued Miss Walsh from the lake was a great surprise to me—and a pleasant surprise. Had I been aware of this before Linley left Greyfriars it would doubtless have made a considerable difference to his sentence."

The Head paused, and Bob's hopes ran high.

"That is not all, however," went on Dr. Locke grimly. "By making known the reason why Linley ran away that afternoon you have also completely shaken my conviction that the boy was guilty. His refusal to speak on that point weighed heavily against him in my view. And Linley's own statements in that letter have shaken my conviction still more, my boy. Indeed,

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they have satisfied me that I shall be justified in reopening the case."

"Oh, sir!"

"I propose to write to Linley's father, asking him to allow his son to return to Greyfriars for another trial. I have discussed the matter now with Mr. Quelch, and we are agreed that a strict and thorough investigation is called for. I shall also consult with Dr. Voysey, of Highcliffe, regarding this boy Ponsonby. You may go now, Cherry. Your staunch loyalty and honest belief in your chum does you the greatest credit, my boy. I sincerely trust that your intervention will lead to our discovering the truth of this regrettable affair."

The Head nodded his dismissal. But Cherry did not go. He stood where he was, his face scarlet.

"Well, Cherry?" said Dr. Locke, raising his eyebrows slightly.

"It—it's this, sir," stammered Bob Cherry. "You speak of writing to Linley's father, asking him to allow Mark to return for another trial. I'm afraid it's useless, sir. I know my chum too well. He's proud, and so is his father. He would never return to go through the humiliation and strain of another trial. I'm certain he wouldn't. His father would not allow it."

"Then I fail to see what can be done," said the Head a trifle testily. "What is it you wish me to do, Cherry?"

"I—I know it sounds cheeky, sir!" gasped Bob. "But—but could you allow me time to go up to Lancashire to see him? I know I could persuade him to come down again—I'm certain I could. I know I could persuade his father to allow him, too. Marky—I mean Linley—will do anything for me, sir. It sounds cheeky, but—but—"

"Bless my soul!"

The Head gazed at Bob Cherry as if thunderstruck.

"Cherry," he gasped, "such a course is impossible, my boy! I could certainly not allow a junior boy to go such a distance for such a purpose! It is absurd!"

"I could do it, sir! And Wharton, or someone else, could accompany me!" pleaded Bob eagerly. "I'd pay my own fare willingly, sir! Oh, please, let me go—please do! It need not take more than a day, and I'm certain I should bring Linley back with me. Please let me go, sir! I have been there once before, with Marky—Linley—on holidays, sir."

The Head raised his hand.

"That will do, Cherry. Kindly leave the room. I will discuss with Mr. Quelch what is to be done in this matter. You may go."

And Bob Cherry went, his head bowed. His hopes were drooping now. He knew only too well his chum's proud nature. And he felt convinced that no dignified and official letter would ever bring Mark Linley back for such a purpose—even though it did clear his good name. It was hopeless.

Out in the passage Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh were anxiously waiting, and they surrounded Bob at once, bombarding him with eager questions.

"Come along to our study," muttered Bob. "I'll tell you there."

A few seconds later, in Study No. 1, Bob was relating his interview to his chums, and they whistled loud and long when he finished at last.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Harry Wharton, staring aghast at Bob. "You—you had a nerve, Bob, to ask the Head that! Great pip, as if he would

let you trot all that way up to Lancashire! But—but it certainly looks more hopeful."

"Yes, rather!"

"It was jolly decent of the Head to talk like that, after all," said Harry. "It was rather a climb-down for him, you know. He sentenced him, and it must have made him wince to acknowledge even the possibility of poor old Marky having been treated unjustly."

"He—he ought to let me go!" said Bob thickly. "It's the only chance. I know it is! It's pretty hopeless even now."

But Bob was wrong there—quite wrong. Five minutes later he was again summoned to the Head's study—and this time Harry Wharton was summoned also. They found Wingate of the Sixth in the study with Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch.

"Cherry," began the Head quietly, "I have discussed this matter with Mr. Quelch, and we have agreed that the course you suggest is the better one. You will go to Bowdley, in Lancashire, and will do your best to persuade Linley to return. Wharton will go with you, as will Wingate, who has been instructed to return at the earliest possible moment on completion of your task. I have instructed Wingate fully as to what you will say and do, and you will, of course, obey Wingate in everything. You will get together all personal articles necessary for the journey, and you will travel by the first train from here in the morning. That is all—excepting that I sincerely hope and trust that your visit will be successful and that it will result in the complete exoneration of Linley. You may go."

The juniors withdrew, confusedly, hardly believing what they had heard. But it was true enough. That evening the Remove buzzed with the strange news, and the evening to Wharton and Cherry seemed endless, and they got little sleep that night. But they were up early the next morning, for all that, and after a hasty breakfast they started out for the station with Wingate. Before morning lessons had started at Greyfriars the trio were in the train, en route for London, where they caught the train at Euston, and were soon speeding Northwards for Lancashire.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Meeting!

"**B**OWDSLEY!"

"Here we are, kids! Out you get!" called Wingate.

"Thank goodness!" said Bob Cherry, yawning. "Phew! I'm stiff all over. Now for Marky!"

And Bob Cherry grabbed for his handbag on the luggage-rack, and he was the first out of the carriage as the train steamed into the station of the Lancashire town and slowed to a standstill at the platform.

Harry Wharton followed him out just as thankfully, and Wingate jumped out after him.

In the dull February afternoon the somewhat dingy station of Bowdley did not seem at all a cheery sort of place—far from it. And seen from the train as they steamed in, the town did not seem an inviting sort of place, either. A drizzling rain was falling, and the town looked dingy and smoky and dismal.

It was not the first visit of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry to Mark Linley's home town—they had spent part of their summer vacation with Mark once; so the place was not new to them.

But it was new to Wingate, and he glanced about him with a grimace.

"So this is the place," he remarked. "Let's get a move on."

"Make straight for Linley's home, I suppose?" remarked Bob Cherry eagerly.

"Let's get some tea first," said Harry Wharton. "It's well after four."

"We'll do neither yet," grinned Wingate. "Our first job is to get rooms, kids. We had a good feed in Manchester, and you chaps had something to eat and drink at every dashed station—not to mention lunch in the train. Come on!"

The juniors followed Wingate as he gave the tickets up and left the station. They were tired and stiff after their long journey, but they stepped out briskly and eagerly enough into the wet, glistening street of the Lancashire town.

A policeman was standing just outside the station, and Wingate crossed to him. He came back a moment later, and pointed to a small, drab hotel across the street.

"There we are, kids," he said. "Doesn't look much of a show, but the bobby says it's the best hotel in the town. That's our place."

The three Greyfriars fellows crossed the street, and entered the hotel. Wingate sought out the manager and fixed up rooms for the party, while Harry and Bob waited in the vestibule. Then, after a well-needed wash and brush-up, the three had tea, and turned out into the street again.

"Sure you know the place all right?" said Wingate, as they tramped along with coat-collars turned up. "What about a taxi, anyway—if there are any to be got in this show?"

"Scarcely worth it," smiled Harry Wharton. "It isn't far to Marky's home, and in any case we don't want to get there just as they're having tea."

"My hat! Supposing Marky isn't there?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He said in his letter something about starting at the factory."

"We'll have to risk that," grunted Wingate. "Sooner we get this business over the better, anyway."

The three hurried on, traversing several streets, and passing one or two huge factories, humming and whirring with busy activity. They soon reached the outskirts of the town. Bob and Harry stopped at last before a small, neat villa, one of a row of semi-detached houses in a pleasant, tree-lined road.

"Ivydene—this is it, Wingate," said Bob. "At last!"

Wingate nodded, though he looked surprised—apparently at the smallness of the house. He followed as Bob Cherry led the way up the little front path, and knocked on the knocker.

The door opened suddenly, and a pleasant-faced, homely-looking woman opened the door. She started back at sight of the Greyfriars fellows. Harry Wharton raised his cap, as did the others.

"You remember Cherry and myself, Mrs. Linley?" he said, smiling. "We're from Greyfriars. Is Mark—"

"Of course I remember you!" Mrs. Linley exclaimed, smiling, though a shade crossed her face. "Please come inside!"

"This is Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars," said Harry Wharton. "Mark will have told you about him, I'm sure."

He presented Wingate, and the skipper of Greyfriars shook hands smilingly. Then Mrs. Linley led the way through to the cosy front room.

"I am naturally amazed to see you here," she said, her voice still showing

her astonishment. "You—you have come to see Mark—"

"We've come to see him, of course," said Bob Cherry grimly. "And we hope to take him back to Greyfriars with us, Mrs. Linley. You've heard all about the trouble there—why Mark left?"

Mrs. Linley nodded, a cloud over her kindly face.

"Mark has told us all about it," she said quietly. "It was a blow to us—a severe blow! It is a wicked shame—the poor boy has been treated shamefully. Mark's father was very angry indeed, and he would have written protesting strongly against such unjust treatment. But Mark persuaded him not to. You—you say you have come to take him back—"

"We want him to return with us, Mrs. Linley," said Wingate. "Certain things have come out that make the case look better for your son—the Head wishes Linley to return, when the matter will be investigated more thoroughly. Is Linley at home?" he went on quickly.

"No. He is at the factory! He was taken on again at once, as, of course, he will have to earn his own living now. It is hard after what he has been used to at Greyfriars, poor boy. But he has a better job now—is in the office. But I am forgetting; have you had tea yet, boys?"

"We've had tea at the Railway Hotel," said Wingate, smiling. "When will Linley be home?"

"In twenty minutes or so," said Mrs. Linley, looking at the clock. "But do stay and make yourselves at home."

"I think it wouldn't be a bad idea for us to go and meet Linley," said Wingate. "If you will tell us how to get there—"

"Why not wait? You must be tired after your long journey. Sit here. Besides, it is raining—"

"We're not afraid of a drop of rain, Mrs. Linley," said Bob Cherry. "We're only too anxious to see old Marky. And we're going to make him return with us."

Mrs. Linley frowned. "I'm afraid you won't find that easy," she said uneasily. "The boy is feeling very bitter, and he says he will never return until his name is cleared. I do hope he will, though, and that all will come right."

"We hope so, too," said Wingate quietly.

The Greyfriars fellows left the house, after Mrs. Linley had directed them to the factory, and they very easily found it. It was a huge, ugly brick building, and even as they reached the big double gates scores of youths and men and girls came pouring out.

"Just in time, I fancy," said Wingate. "Hallo, that looks like the office!"

They moved over to the offices which looked on to the street, and they waited there eagerly. Several men and youths came out, and at last Linley appeared.

He was dressed in a neat lounge suit, and wore an ordinary cloth cap, but they recognised him at once.

"Marky!" cried Bob Cherry, jumping forward. "Marky, old-fellow!"

Mark Linley started violently, and a look of amazement came over his face as he recognised the Greyfriars fellows.

"Bob—Bob Cherry—you?" he gasped, as Bob grabbed at his hand and wrung it. "What are you fellows doing here?"

He shook hands dazedly with Harry Wharton and Wingate.

"You—you've come to see me?" he said huskily. "Has—has something come out?"



"Look out!" Wingate yelled the warning in a frightened voice; he was too late to do anything. But Mark Linley was not. He was the nearest, and in a flash he was off the pavement. Leaping into the roadway, he made a wild grab at the sprawling youth, and pushed him out of the path of the approaching lorry. (See Chapter 7.)

"Yes, it has, kid," said Wingate grimly. "It isn't much, but it's enough to convince the Head that there's more behind this business than he thought. He's sent us to fetch you back to Greyfriars, Linley. The matter is going to be threshed out again—more thoroughly this time."

Mark Linley's eyes blazed, and he set his teeth.

"I won't come!" he said.

"Don't be a fool, kid!" said Wingate sharply. "You've got to come. I think I can promise you that however things turn, your expulsion will be cancelled. You've got to come!"

"I won't come!" repeated Mark fiercely. "I've been condemned—condemned without a proper trial, and sacked. I'm not going through it all again."

"Marky, old man," begged Bob Cherry. "Do be sensible! You'll find things different when you return, I can promise you, old fellow. Listen."

He told the white-faced Lancashire lad all that had transpired since he had left Greyfriars.

"I hope you won't be upset about my showing that letter to the Head," said Bob quietly. "But I did it for your sake—I simply had to do it. Marky, don't forget—you've got good pals at Greyfriars to back you up now. Quelch means to back you up, too. Don't feel like that about it."

"We mean to clear you—and we will," said Harry Wharton. "It—it's

good of you to shake hands like this after—after the way I've treated you, Marky. Old Bob was right, and we were wrong. We see it now. You'll come?"

Mark Linley was silent, his face pale and set.

"Let's go home!" he said thickly. "We'll see what my people say. You've been there, I suppose?"

"Yes. We only saw your mother, though."

"The pater will be home by now," said Mark Linley. "We'll see what he has to say. I want to come; you fellows don't know what a wrench it's been leaving Greyfriars. But—but—"

"Never mind that now, Marky," said Bob gently. "Come on."

They turned and walked away. Mark Linley's eyes glistening strangely. It was plain that, despite his bitter feeling, he was excited and filled with new hope at their unexpected visit. They walked along the pavement, and then they stepped off to cross the road. As they did so a heavy, lumbering dray came rumbling round the corner, and the juniors stepped back on to the pavement again.

A rather elegantly clad youth who was just in front of them stopped as if to step back on to the pavement, and then, changing his mind, he made a dash across the road.

Then it happened. His feet slipped on the wet cobbled street, and he went

crashing down—full in the path of the huge, lumbering dray.

"Look out!"

Wingate yelled the warning in affright, but he was too late to do anything. But Mark Linley was not. He was the nearest, and in a flash he was off the pavement. Leaping into the roadway, he made a wild grab at the sprawling youth.

That was all the Greyfriars fellows saw. The next instant the brewer's dray had thundered over the spot, amid a wild shouting and a shrieking of hastily applied brakes.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Plot Revealed!

"GOOD heavens!"

With a hissing of steam the big tractor drew up to a lumbering halt. And just for one terrible moment it seemed to the stunned juniors that Mark Linley and the fellow he had leaped forward to save were crushed beneath it. But as they rushed round, with blanched faces, Harry Wharton and his companions gave cries of heartfelt relief.

The stranger was just scrambling to his feet on the far side, apparently unhurt. Mark Linley was lying in the glistening roadway; but as they rushed to him he staggered up, gasping and rubbing his shoulder.

"I'm all right!" he panted, as Wingate gripped his arm, in an agony of apprehension. "The—the lamp, or something just caught my shoulder. It's all serene!"

"Sure, Linley?" said Wingate.

"Yes, but— Oh, my hat! I'm in a mess, and no mistake! That—that chap all right?"

Apparently he was. The lorry-driver was storming at the youth angrily as he stood trying to brush some of the mud from his clothes. A crowd was already beginning to gather, and a policeman was seen to be making his way towards the scene.

"Come on out of this, chaps!" gasped Mark Linley, in alarm. "That fellow seems to be O.K. Let's get on."

"Yes, rather!" said Wingate grimly.

"Sure you're all serene?"

"Yes, yes! Buck up!"

Mark Linley fairly rushed them away, and they hurried along the wet street, shining in the dim lights from the street-lamps. Wingate, Bob Cherry, and Harry Wharton seemed far more excited and agitated than Linley himself.

"Jove!" panted Bob Cherry. "That was a jolly narrow squeak, Marky! Another inch and you must have been squashed to a jelly! Good for you, old man!"

"Jolly good!" said Wingate, glancing with no little admiration at the Lancashire lad. "And—and a few days ago I believe some of you Remove chaps were calling Linley a funk, Wharton."

"We—we were fools!" said Harry Wharton. "The fellows shall hear about this when we get back."

"The Head shall, too!" said Wingate grimly.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't go and make a song about that!" exclaimed Linley, in great dismay. "I just happened to be nearest, you asses! It was only what—"

He broke off abruptly, for at that moment running footsteps sounded behind them, and a youth caught them up and gripped Linley by the arm. The four halted.

"Hold on!" cried the newcomer eagerly. "I've something to say to you." He peered into Linley's face in the light from the street-lamp. "Yes, you're the chap who saved my bacon just now." I was too busy slanging that rotten driver merchant to notice that you'd faded away. Luckily, I just spotted you along the street."

"Well, what about it?" said Linley, smiling faintly. "Is it a scrap you want, or what? I admit I handled you a bit roughly—"

"Great jumping snakes, no!" snorted the youth, snatching at Linley's hand and shaking it. "What do you take me for? I want to thank you for saving my giddy life, my pippin! But for you I should have been worth a little less than mince-meat. You yanked me out of that mess in fine style. I want to tell you I'm grateful."

"That's all right," said Mark Linley awkwardly. "Glad I was in time, you know. You're not hurt, I hope? I'm afraid I sent you rolling a bit."

"Not hurt a scrap, thanks to you! It was jolly pluck—"

"Good!" said Mark hastily. "We were lucky!"

He was walking on, when the youth gripped his arm again.

"Hold on a bit!" he said, smiling good-humouredly. "I'd like you to have a little of my fascinating society a bit longer. I'd like to know the name of the chap who did that for me. One doesn't get one's life saved every day. It's rather an event. Would you mind telling me your name?"

"We'll tell you that," grinned Bob Cherry, as Linley remained silent. "His name's Linley—Mark Linley—not Modesty, though you might think so."

"Linley," exclaimed the youth, wrinkling his brows. "I've heard that name before—recently, too. You fellows don't live here, I fancy?"

"We don't," said Wingate, cutting in suddenly. He was staring rather hard at the strange youth. "Linley's home is here. But we come from Greyfriars—a school in the south of England."

"Greyfriars!" said the youth, with a start. "You fellows come from Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"That's funny—jolly funny!" went on the stranger, staring at Linley rather curiously. "It was only a few days ago that I posted a letter to a fellow named Wharton at Greyfriars. Jolly curious coincidence."

"What?"

There was a simultaneous gasp—a gasp of utter amazement.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "I'm Wharton!"

"You are?"

The Greyfriars fellows looked quickly at each other. Wingate was the first to recover himself, and he gripped the stranger's arm fiercely.

"You posted a letter to Wharton at Greyfriars?" he said in a hard voice.

"You posted a letter to him from this town—Bowdsey?"

"Yes, I did. Why? Is anything wrong?" he exclaimed, staring at the suddenly white faces of the juniors. "It was a letter a cousin of mine—a fellow who's at Highcliffe School, in Kent—sent to me, asking me to post it here. Why, goodness only knows!"

"Was his name Ponsonby?"

"Yes. My name's Ponsonby, too. I'm what my dear cousin calls a 'poor relation,' the youth went on, with a faint grin. "He fairly rolls in filthy lucre; I slog out a living in a dashed bank here. The only time the dear chap ever wrote to me was when he wanted

me to do something for him. You chaps happen to know him, then?"

"Know him?" hissed Bob Cherry, unable to restrain himself. "Yes, we've thundering good reason to know the scoundrel! We'll soon tell—"

"Shut up, Cherry!" snapped Wingate, raising his voice sharply. "You can leave this to me now."

He turned to the youth quietly, though his eyes gleamed strangely in the yellow lamplight.

"You say you addressed a letter to a chap named Wharton, at Greyfriars School, Kent, and that you posted it here?"

"Certainly!" was the astonished reply. "Why? Do you know anything about it? Was—was there anything wrong in it? I'm dashed if I understand this!"

Wingate looked hard at the youth before answering. What he saw satisfied him very quickly. The fellow's face certainly bore a striking likeness to Cecil Ponsonby, of Highcliffe. It was refined and handsome, but it lacked the weakness and signs of dissipation in Ponsonby's own features. The eyes were bright and clear, the face open and frank and good-natured.

"Yes," said Wingate quietly, "there was something wrong with that letter. By posting it you have—unknowingly, I'm certain—done the fellow who has just saved your life a cruel injustice. A few days ago he was at Greyfriars—a fellow liked by all, or nearly all—with good prospects of doing well. That letter was the cause of getting him disgraced and sacked—expelled as a convicted thief!"

Walter Ponsonby—for that was his name—staggered back, his face dark.

"You—you mean that?" he stammered. "I—I thought at the time there was something funny about it. I never got on with my cousin—couldn't stand him at any price. But when he wrote to me, enclosing that letter and asking me to post it here I couldn't very well refuse; it seemed a little thing to do."

"You'd no idea, then, what was in the letter?"

"Of course not! I remember noticing that the writing on the envelope was in a woman's hand, and I certainly wondered. Cecil said something about playing a practical joke on a chap named Linley. I—I didn't dream that there was dirty work afoot. But I couldn't understand where the joke came in if the letter was addressed to Wharton. Look here, tell me all about it."

"I'll soon tell you that," said Wingate grimly.

And he did, helped by the eager and excited Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton. Mark Linley stood by, saying nothing. But his face was strangely flushed.

Wingate finished at last, and Walter Ponsonby's eyes were ablaze by then.

"Oh, the rotter!" he cried. "The unspeakable worm! Oh, if I had my hands on the howling cad now I'd—I'd wring his dashed neck! I'd teach the frightful blighter to make a fool of me for his dirty plotting! Look here," he went on earnestly, turning to Linley. "You believe me when I swear to you that I knew nothing of this—that I acted absolutely innocently in the matter?"

Mark Linley nodded.

"Yes, I do," he said quietly and composedly.

"Thanks!" breathed Walter Ponsonby. "And to think you are the chap who just saved my bacon, and I happen to be the chap who all but ruined

(Continued on page 17.)



Harry Wharton's Football Supplement

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I have managed to secure the services of some of the finest football experts in the country as contributors to our new Supplement. MAGNET readers who follow it regularly can be sure of getting the very latest and most exclusive news, interesting gossip and information.—H. Wharton, Ed.

Flag-Kicks and Penalties

PARS ABOUT FOOTBALL MEN AND MATTERS.

By The Man in the Street.

JACK HILL, the famous centre-half, has started a gents' outfitters business in Burnley, where he plays. But it should not be assumed that this is the reason why some of Burnley's games have ended in a tie.

Mr. John Lewis, the famous football legislator, once said that all players of games would be more successful if they were teetotal. Obviously, a firm believer in lemon-aid.

Did you know that in America they play football on motor-cars? They'll be using railway-engines for cricket next!

Forty years ago Arbroath beat Bon Accord in the Scottish Cup 56 goals to nil. That's a record! Somebody says that the Bon Accord goalie had dropped a threepenny-piece in the grass and was busy looking for it, with the backs helping him; but there's no truth in the rumour.

The Fourth Round of the Cup has just been played. Lord Mauleverer wants to know why the dooce they can't raffle the thing instead of making all this fuss about it.

A gentleman named Mr. Brodie invented goal-nets in 1890. One or two goalies wish he'd invented a net that hangs down in front of the goal; he'd have made a real job of it then.

During frosty weather of last year the Spurs covered their playing-pitch with 3,000 trusses of straw. We understand that it was only with the greatest difficulty that local chickens were restrained from rushing out and laying eggs all over the ground.

It is estimated that 118,795 people will go to see the Cup Final this year. Billy Bunter calculates that if everybody passing through the turnstiles brings him a doughnut, he will have enough to see him through until the start of the cricket season.

In Scotland there is a football team which goes by the name of Clachnacuddin. With a name like that they ought to be able to beat any ordinary eleven.

It is said that £6,500 was paid by Sunderland when Bob Kelly was transferred from Burnley a few weeks ago. We understand that the Burnley directors will now wear silk hats instead of bowlers.

This is supposed to be the coldest winter we have had for 140 years. We sha'n't believe it until we see the Wigan directors using hot-water bottles to thaw out the touchlines.

We have an inquiry from a reader who wants to know why some players wear bandages round their knees. Sorry, but this is a trade secret.

"SHOULD CHARGING BE ABOLISHED?" asks a newspaper. We have asked the opinion of Aberdeen supporters, and they all agree that charging at the turnstiles *should* be abolished.

A suggestion has been made that International teams should play matches in national costume. This is all right up to a point. Scotsmen could wear kilts, Americans could wear horn-rimmed spectacles and chew gum; but Italians would be rather handicapped in macaroni muffers, and you couldn't expect a Swiss team to play in edelweiss and skis!

A little while ago the Arsenal were invited to dinner at the House of Commons. We wonder if they would have been invited if they "Haden" got "Brain" in the team!

QUAINT & QUEER FOOTBALL RULES!

GOALPOSTS, ROUND OR SQUARE?

SIZE OF THE GROUND.

THERE are some very funny things about this game of football, as anybody who reads the rules carefully must realise. It is years and years since these rules were first framed, and additions, subtractions, and alterations of all sorts have been made from time to time. Yet there are some points which are still badly worded, and in other directions it is amazing to find that they are like elastic—stretchable.

Take a glance at Rule 8 with me. It says quite distinctly there that "after a goal has been scored the losing side shall kick off." Of course, the rule doesn't mean anything like it says. A side which is ten goals up may have a goal scored against them, and when the ball is taken back to the centre of the field that side has to kick off. But as they are then leading by ten goals to one, how on earth can they be called the losing side? What the rule means is that the side which has just lost a goal shall kick off, but it is amazing that it doesn't say so.

The goalposts and the crossbar are clearly important features of football, and yet we find that clubs are allowed to please themselves what sort of goalposts they have, so long as definite dimensions as to thickness are observed. Not only are the clubs allowed to choose for themselves, but they do, and consequently there are various kinds of posts in use on the big grounds on which the most important clubs in the biggest League play. The majority have square posts, as my readers are no doubt aware, but some have oval ones, and some have round ones. Among the clubs which have installed the round posts are Manchester City, Notts Forest, and West Ham United, and I find that the tendency to use this sort of posts as distinct from the square ones is spreading.

It can be argued that the sort of posts used doesn't matter a great deal; but it does matter in some cases, and I am surprised that the rule-makers have not laid down definitely the sort of posts which ought to be adopted.

In the first place, the square post is more dangerous, and apt to result in a more serious injury to the player who runs his head or his body into them than the round posts. In the Cup Final of 1924 I saw Billy Walker, the famous inside-left of Aston Villa, knock himself clean out by dashing his chest into the sharp corner of the post. The hurt might have been less serious if the post had been round.

Then, too, the matter of square or round posts affects the results of some matches. When the ball from certain angles strikes a rounded post it goes into the net, whereas the same ball, driven against a square post, would come back into the field of play. Early in the present season I saw West Ham score a goal of this sort against Newcastle—a goal which would not have been scored if the Hammers had been using square posts. I say they ought to be standardised.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the rules so far as the big games are concerned, though, is the fact that, roughly speaking, the clubs are allowed to play their matches on grounds of all sizes and shapes. It may surprise those of you who haven't read the rules to know that a pitch may be as long as 130 yards or as short as 100 yards, that the maximum breadth is 100 yards and the minimum 50 yards. I don't know of any pitch which is absolutely square, but from the foregoing it will be seen that a club could play on a pitch 100 yards wide and 100 yards square, and yet keep within the rules.

We often wonder why, in the majority of first-class games, the home teams usually succeed. Surely the size of the pitches may be one explanation. Imagine a team, accustomed to play their matches on a pitch of the maximum length and width, suddenly called upon to perform on a pitch of the minimum size. They would feel all on top of each other. Indeed, the difference to a forward line between playing on a pitch 100 yards wide and on one 50 yards in width is so obvious that the point need not be emphasised. Strictly speaking, it is a different game.

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USEFUL HINTS FOR THE CENTRE HALF!

SOCCKER'S NEVER-STOP.

Tricks of the Trade.

H E'S the lad who knows what football really is! Of all the positions on the field, not one can compare with centre-half so far as continuous work is concerned.

The wingers may frequently have opportunities of discussing the play with touch-line spectators, or even partaking of a little refreshment. The goalie, if he's lucky, may have a quiet snooze up against one of the uprights. But the centre-half—he's in the very thick of it from the kick-off to the walk-off.

Obviously, therefore, he must have almost the stamina of a Sahara camel, the strength of an elephant, the speed of an antelope, and the brains of a professor!

That sounds a tall order, but it's not far off the mark.

One must remember that when the defence finds itself working up a sweat, the centre-half has got to be right there; in midfield play he's the pivot around which the tussle revolves; in attack he must keep up to lend the forwards a hand—or, rather, a foot, of course.

On the face of it, the centre-half seems to be in for a rough time all round. But the right chap glories in the position, for he's a player right through the match. Never does he become a spectator. If the opposing side are far superior, he's kept busy attempting to hold back their forwards; if the others are inferior, he's backing up his own forwards.

The ability to tackle well is essential. This entails both neat footwork and clean shoulder charging. And as a dribble often follows, another art is added to the list.

The centre-half should not indulge in a lot of dribbling. If one of his forwards is unmarked and in a favourable position, in fact, he should not retain the ball at all, but punt it across. Judicious passing is always better than dribbling.

Speed is vitally important, as it is the centre-half's business to help to break up opponents' attacks before they are able to meet the full-backs. Oftentimes he may have a centre and two inside forwards to deal with, and find it necessary to sprint from one to the other. If he were slow, therefore, he would be left in the lurch every time.

It is an excellent plan to have a definite understanding with the other two halves and the backs. For instance, the centre-half may agree to tackle the opposing centre-forward every time the latter gets the ball, whilst the other halves mark the wing men, and the backs concentrate on the inside forwards. Combination movements could often be broken up in that way.

Another wheeze is for the centre-half to tackle a dribbling forward with a charge whilst one of the backs goes for the ball.

Naturally, such pre-arranged plans can only "come off" when the conditions are favourable. But with practice and perseverance each defender would get to know his partner's method of attack.

The centre-half should be able to use the outside of his head as well as the inside—that is, his head should be as useful as a third foot in propelling the ball, whilst his brains should always be working overtime.

Just stopping the ball with the head is not sufficient. His aim should be to direct the flight of the leather in any desired direction. This can come only through practice.

Endeavour to catch the ball just on the spot where the hair begins on the forehead—unless you are bald, of course, in which case you must remember where the hair used to start!

Heading practice with a tennis-ball is most useful. Get a pal to pitch the ball into the air, dodge to one side, and then let you attempt to head it back to him; or, if you are alone, you could try heading the ball at a mark on a wall.

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Make your head meet the ball and add impetus to its rebound, otherwise it will be propelled only a few feet.

The centre-half can be of enormous assistance during an attack on his opponents' goal. He should not hang back in case of a break-away, but add his efforts to those of the forwards. As soon as the ball comes out he must punt it back, and if he sees half a chance he should let drive at the goal itself.

On days when the ball is heavy and greasy long shots are well worth while. Likewise they are particularly dangerous when there is a strong following wind. Ask any goalie how he feels in such cases!

There is a strong temptation to the centre-half to wander, especially if the opposing centre-forward is of a roving disposition. To a certain extent he may follow the play to various parts of the field, but he must always bear in mind that he is responsible for the centre section.

High passes to the forwards are not nearly so acceptable as shots along the ground. In some cases it is necessary to lob the ball over an opponent's head. As a rule, however, the best pass is that which travels low, and is directed ahead of the intended recipient.

The importance of "sticking it" cannot be over emphasised. Should you be beaten in a tussle for the ball, do not give it up as a bad job, even if your chances of retrieving the ball are remote. Peg away after your opponent, and hang on to him either until you beat him or force him to pass.

Continually be prepared to take up the position of one of the other halves should he be tricked. Make it your object to worry the rival attack as a dog does a rat. Intercept every pass possible; attack instantly any opponent who has the ball in your section of the field.

Keep your eyes skinned for opportunities immediately following goal-kicks from either end. Although in such cases the ball should be directed to the wings, it more often than not is ballooned to the centre. The half thus has a chance of trapping it and starting a movement amongst the forwards which might easily lead to a goal.

Lastly, as his position is the veritable backbone of a team, the centre-half should keep in strict training, and avoid like the plague anything which may endanger his fitness.

LIGHTNING SKETCHES OF FOOTER CELEBRITIES.



Jimmy Seed gives us an impression of Stanley Seymour, the Famous Outside-left of Newcastle United.

TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL

HOW TO BEAT THE WEATHER.

By Percy Longhurst.

E VER heard of "Still Running"? W. G. George, the man who made and kept the world's mile running record for twenty-five years, took hold of this wonderful exercise, named it the "100 Up," and trained himself by means of it for his races. The 100 Up will help you beat even the vagaries of the English climate, for you can practise it at home.

There are evenings when outdoor running is out of the question, I know; but the 100 Up will give you your run just the same. It is just ordinary running, with the exception that you don't throw your feet forward at every step, but bring them down on the same place each time. It's not a bad plan to mark a chalk-mark or something on the floor, so that you can hit the same place each time. If you can get the use of a school-room, meeting-hall, gym—any place with four walls and a roof—practise the 100 Up there. You move just as you should in running—head up, arms working, knees well lifted each time—but don't carry your heels up too far behind. You can run thus either slow or fast. But for your footer training you don't want to run fast, unless—when you're well used to the exercise—you care to put in a "sprint" of ten or twenty steps now and again. One hundred steps with each leg will make a nice spell. Rest for a few minutes, and then indulge in another spell. That will do quite well for an evening's work, though if you like—and it's a good plan—you can follow up with a few minutes' skipping. It may be considered a "girl's game," but skipping enters largely into the training of both sprinters and boxers, athletes who know the value of quickness, good wind, and stout leg muscles.

But, to return to the running, I don't advise you, chums, to take the full hundred steps with each leg the first time you try this exercise. Begin with a spell of forty; for, simple as it is, it is a powerful exercise and it takes some getting used to.

Oh, and here's another tip! Wherever it is you do your 100 Up, see that the room in which you are exercising is well ventilated. Get into your togs just as if you were going for an outdoor run, work honestly, and, even if there isn't a fire going, you'll soon be warm enough. Practise the 100 Up every day, morning or evening—the first for choice—and just as regularly as you have your breakfast. Do it, anyway, even if you can work in your two-mile trot twice a week. I do it every morning of my life to help me keep fit.

If you are so lucky that you don't have to leave home very early in the morning to go to work, there's another tip you can take advantage of. Go for an early-morning run before breakfast. Yes, even if it means getting up ten minutes earlier. And the run need not take more than ten minutes. Start it by walking fast, as fast as you can for a quarter-mile—half a mile if you've the time. Then turn and trot quietly home. Finish the run with a thirty yards sprint, and you'll tackle your breakfast with a keener relish.

The slow run, the 100 Up, and the skipping are means to fitness that every footer player should adopt. In addition, there are training hints suited to every position on the field I want to tell you about. Carrying them out means more strength, more staying power, increase of activity, and an all-over soundness and fitness. These combined produce the well-trained player, and no player can do himself justice if he isn't fit.

So many remarks had been addressed to the referee by one particular spectator at a recent match that eventually the man with the whistle stopped the game and went up to the talkative critic. "Who is refereeing this match, you or me?" he asked. Quick as lightning came the reply: "Well, you're not."



(Continued from page 12.)

you. Look here," he went on savagely. "I'm going to put this right, if I have to come down to Greyfriars myself—if I have to take my cousin by the neck and drag him before the headmaster."

"That won't be necessary, I fancy," said Wingate smiling. "I suppose you won't mind writing and signing a note saying what you did—some proof that I can show our Head."

"I'll do more than that," said the youth, breathing hard. "If you'll come along to my digs now I'll give you all the proof you want. I've got the letter he sent me still in my writing-case, luckily—the letter Cecil wrote me asking me to do the job. Come on!"

He led the way without waiting for an answer. Wingate nodded to the juniors, and they followed quickly enough. They were fairly trembling with excitement, and no wonder. It seemed like a miracle, and yet it was nothing strange, after all. Mark Linley's face was still composed, and he seemed the least excited of anyone. Bob Cherry squeezed his arm more than once. His own heart was too full of thankfulness for words just then.

They had not to go far. Walter Ponsonby stopped at last before the front door of a small villa and let himself in with a latch-key. He took them into the front room, where a cheery fire was blazing. On the table tea was set, but Walter shoved it to one side.

The next moment he had a writing-case open on the table, and was rummaging among the litter of papers within. He withdrew a letter and handed it to Wingate. Wingate read it and after letting the juniors read it he shoved it carefully in his pocket—wallet—at Walter Ponsonby's request. Then the bank clerk seated himself at the table and started to write, and the letter he wrote was addressed to Dr. Loake, at Greyfriars. It was a short letter, but it told quite enough, and after signing it Walter Ponsonby handed it to Wingate, who placed it with the other.

"There you are!" snapped the youth then. "If that isn't enough evidence to clear your friend I'm more than willing to come down personally and give evidence. You've only got to wire for me."

"I don't think that will be necessary at all—in fact, I give you my word it won't," said Wingate grimly. "We're thundering grateful to you for this, though. It's good of you, after all!"

"You're not half so grateful to me as I am to this chap," said Ponsonby with a laugh. "The giddy bank very nearly lost a member of the staff to-night."

The juniors laughed, and after declining an invitation to stay to tea, they said good-bye to Walter Ponsonby and left the house. In the street again, Wingate turned to Mark Linley and laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"I fancy you'll come back with us now, kid," he said. "Neither the Head nor that cad Ponsonby can dispute this

evidence. It clears you completely, Linley. You'll come, of course?"

"We'll thumping well scrag him bald-headed if he doesn't agree to come!" said Bob Cherry darkly. "We'll yank him to the station ourselves by the scruff of the neck. Understand, Marky, you old mule?"

Mark Linley laughed—his old, cheery laugh.

"Well, if you chaps really want me to come, I suppose I ought to; I can't be so ungrateful as to refuse. You're good chaps—true pals. Bob, old man, I've you chiefly to thank for this. I know it! You're the best pal—"

"Cut it short!" said Wingate gruffly, though he chuckled as he spoke. "Thumped if I can see why we're standing in this dashed rain gassing. If we're going to Linley's home let's be moving. I suppose we'd better trot along there in case Linley's pater needs persuading."

"I don't think he will—after this," laughed Mark Linley.

Nor did he. When the four reached Ivydene they found Mr. Linley at home, also Mabel, Mark's sister. And a right royal welcome they all got! Their amazing news was received with deep thankfulness by Linley's people. There was no question of not getting Mr. Linley's permission after that. Linley's parents insisted upon the Greyfriars fellows having another tea—they were true, hospitable Lancashire people—and after tea the whole party went to the local cinema. Then back again to supper, after which Wingate, Wharton and Cherry tramped back to their hotel, tired out, but happy.

"I'm glad we came, kids—jolly glad!" said Wingate, as the three went up to bed that night. "Everything will be as right as rain now, I feel certain. But we're risking nothing. We'll make a job of it. When we get off the train at Friardale I'm going straight to Highcliffe, and I'm going to tackle friend Ponsonby. I shall tell him what cards we hold, and give the dirty hound a chance to confess on his own—though he doesn't deserve it. But if he won't own up, then we go to our Head and let him do the rest. Night-night!"

And the three Greyfriars fellows turned in to make sure of a good night's sleep in preparation for their long journey on the morrow. Their expedition had been successful—far more successful than they had dreamed it would be. There was a surprise for Cecil Ponsonby in store—a very unpleasant surprise.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Apprehension I

"I DON'T like it, you fellows!"

Harold Skinner muttered the words in a low tone.

Skinner & Co. had just finished tea, and they were discussing matters with glum looks on their faces. Since that scene in the Form-room and the revelation of Linley's heroism, Skinner & Co. had been more than worried.

They had been more worried still when the news leaked out that Wingate, Wharton, and Cherry were to go North in order to bring Linley back for a more thorough investigation of the banknote affair.

It filled the guilty trio with apprehension. They were not afraid on Ponsonby's behalf. It was more likely than not that Skinner & Co. would have been more relieved than otherwise to see disaster overtake Cecil Ponsonby, if such could come about without affecting themselves.

But they knew it would affect them. They knew Ponsonby's vengeful, spiteful nature only too well. Ponsonby had vowed that if he went down Skinner & Co. should also go down with him. They had stood by without speaking and allowed a grave injustice to be committed. That alone was serious enough. But that was not all. Ponsonby knew far too much concerning Skinner & Co.'s little shady games for their comfort and safety. Skinner & Co. had very guilty consciences on that score.

And Skinner was thinking about this now when he stated gloomily that he didn't like it.

"We ought to warn Ponsonby," went on Skinner moodily. "He thinks he's safe. He isn't safe, by any means. With Linley back again there's no knowing what may come out. I don't like it!"

"Neither do I!" muttered Snoop.

"The fellows here have turned since it came out about that dashed rescue bizney," said Stott, with a sneer. "It was that cad Linley before; it's poor old Linley now. Now they know just why Linley ran away, they're beginning to think, and they're beginning to suspect old Pon."

Skinner got up from the table suddenly.

"Come on!" he snapped. "We've got to warn Pon to look out, you chaps! We'll walk over to Highcliffe. Plenty of time before call-over. We'll tell him what to expect, and we'll warn him to keep his peepers open for danger. Oh, the fool! Why did he risk such a dangerous game?"

"And why did he drag us into it, hang him!" snarled Stott. "Anyway, you're right, Skinner. We'd better go!"

"Yes, rather!"

Skinner & Co. lost no time. They left the tea-things on the table, and snatched their caps, and made their way out into the dusky Close. As they passed out of the School House a fat junior came running after them, cramming his cap on his head as he ran.

"I say, you fellows, wait for me!" he called out. "I'm coming, you know!"

"You're not!" snapped Snoop. "Here, back you get, you fat worm!"

He grasped Billy Bunter, and was about to plant a boot behind him, when Skinner interposed.

"Let the fat ass come if he wants to!" he grunted. "It'll remind Pon of his danger when that burbling duffer starts gassing."

"Oh, really, Skinner—" began Bunter.

"Come on, hang you!" hissed Skinner, giving Bunter a glare. "I'm going to tell Pon to talk to you, my pippin. You jolly nearly gave the game away the other day when he was here!"

The Owl of the Remove grinned a fat grin.

"Oh, really, Skinner, that's all rot, you know!" he said. "I'm too wide for Wharton's lot, or anyone else. They've got nothing out of me, though they tried to. I'll talk to old Pon all right. I want him to change a postal-order for me. I think he will, don't you? Especially now the Head's on the giddy war-path. He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up!" hissed Skinner.

Days ago Skinner would have kicked Bunter away with more force than politeness had he tried to tack himself on to them for a walk. But he did not do so now. He knew that the chief danger lay in Bunter's wagging tongue. It was policy to keep in with Billy Bunter just

now. A few blundering or spiteful words from him and they were done.

In gloomy silence the juniors tramped along Friardale Lane. Bunter trotted alongside them, but he was not gloomy or silent. He chatted cheerfully, without getting, or expecting, a reply. The lights of Highcliffe loomed up at length, and soon they were tramping into the hall-way of the rival school.

A number of Highcliffe juniors were in the lighted hall, and they stared in no little astonishment and with no little hostility at Skinner & Co. A visit from Greyfriars fellows was unusual, especially in the evening. Skinner & Co. ignored them, and walked on towards the Fourth Form quarters, and knocked on the door of Ponsonby's study.

There came sounds of hurried scuffling from within the study, and then suddenly the door opened, and Ponsonby looked out.

"Good gad! It's you, Skinney!" he gasped, staring in some alarm at the Greyfriars juniors. "What's up? Nothin' wrong, I hope?"

Skinner walked into the room, with Stott and Snoop at his heels, and Bunter trotting behind. Skinner grinned faintly as he sniffed the aroma of cigarettes. Apparently they had disturbed Ponsonby & Co. in a surreptitious smoke. In the study with Ponsonby were Gadsby and Vavasour.

"Here," snapped Ponsonby, glowering at Bunter, "get out of this, you fat clam! No fat pigs allowed in here! Outside!"

He raised his boot towards Bunter, but Skinner held up his hand.

"Let the fat ass stay!" he exclaimed significantly. "You were asking if anything was wrong, Pon?"

"Eh? Yes, yes. Is anythin' wrong, Skinner? You look——"

Skinner closed the door coolly, and sat on the table.

"You're not so thundering safe as you thought you were, Pon!" he announced grimly. "We've walked over to warn you to look out."

"Rot!" said Ponsonby, though he eyed Skinner uneasily. "I'm safe enough, you fool! You're a funk, Skinney! Linley's gone now, and——"

"And he'll most likely be back again this evening, Pon!" said Skinner deliberately.

"What?"

The cad of the Remove nodded, rather enjoying Ponsonby's startled face.

"It's all right—so far," he said quietly. "But something came out two days ago—the real reason why Linley bunked the other afternoon. He'd happened to spot a kiddie fall through the ice on the Grange Lake, and he rushed across that field and yanked her out. That was why he bunked."

"What d'you mean!" muttered Ponsonby. "I don't see——"

"I'll explain, then," said Skinner. And he explained.

Ponsonby's face cleared a little at the end.

"Well, that won't affect me," he sneered. "He's sacked now. But—but you said something about his coming back——"

"I did," said Skinner. "That dashed rescue affair's made the Head look at things differently; he's suspicious of you now, Pon. He's sent Wingate, Wharton, and Cherry up north to bring Linley back again. They're expected at Greyfriars to-night. The Head's going to hold another investigation into the whole bizney. Now do you understand?"

Ponsonby went a trifle white.

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"Oh gad!" he breathed. "They—they've gone up to Bowdley? If—if they happen to stumble against my dashed cousin——"

He broke off, and gritted his teeth.

"So that's how you managed it?" said Skinner, opening his eyes wide. "You have a cousin there, then? You got him to post the letter there for you—what?"

"Yes, I did!" snarled Ponsonby. "I don't see why you shouldn't know how I worked it. I imitated Linley's mother's handwriting—you remember that letter I found?—and I sent my letter with the banknote up to my cousin. He posted it for me. It was all beautifully easy."

Ponsonby spoke boastfully, but Skinner frowned.

"I hope you've destroyed that letter, Pon," he exclaimed suddenly—"the letter of Linley's you found, I mean! If that's discovered in your possession——"

"I haven't destroyed it yet, but I'm going to," said Ponsonby, taking out his pocket-wallet and extracting a crumpled letter. "There it is. I was hoping to make further use of it if the other wheeze failed."

He shoved the letter carelessly back into his pocket.

"Hang it all, why should I fear anything!" he growled. "The cads are not likely to hit up against him, after all. I'm safe enough, Skinner. They can prove nothing, even if they do suspect, you fool! Kick that fat worm out, and let's have a game of banker now you're here!"

"Oh, really, Pon!" grumbled Billy Bunter. "That's not the way to treat a pal. I tell you I'm not standing any nonsense. If you won't toe the line I shall know what to do. I've only got to speak a word and you'd be in a nice hole, wouldn't you?"

"Shut up, Bunter!" hissed Skinner.

"I sha'n't shut up," grinned Bunter. "I've got something to tell you fellows—something you'll be jolly interested to hear. You fellows back me up, and I'll back you up, you know. But I just want old Pon to understand that I'm not standing any nonsense first. Old Pon had better toe—Yaroooh! Keep him off! Wait! I tell you——"

But Ponsonby didn't wait. With eyes blazing with fury he rushed at Billy Bunter, and sent him spinning across the room with a vicious clout. Then he grabbed the fat youth, and started to punch him unmercifully.

"Leggo!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I know something! If you don't lemme go it'll be too late, and—— Yaroooh! Ow, ow!"

"I'll teach you to talk to me like that!" hissed Ponsonby. "You got me a ragging the other day, you fat worm, and I'm going to take it out of your hide now!"

Skinner jumped forward and grasped Ponsonby, dragging him away by sheer force.

"Let him alone, Pon, you fool!" he cried. "Can't you see the fat worm knows something? What is it, Bunter?"

Ponsonby drew away, breathing hard, his eyes glittering with ungovernable fury. Bunter glared at him.

"Yaroooh! I've a jolly good mind—grough!—not to tell you now!" he groaned. "And if it wasn't for that paper you've got of mine——"

"Better tell us, Bunter," said Skinner, eyeing him curiously. "You're in this with us, you know."

The Owl of the Remove evidently realised that only too well.

"Oh, all right!" he grunted. "I say, it's all up with you, Pon, unless you do something. Wingate's bringing Linley back, and, what's more, he's bringing

proof back—proof of what you did. They met a chap at Linley's town—that cousin you spoke about. You said they wouldn't hit up against him. Well, they must have done. He's given them your letter asking him to post that letter in Bowdley, and he's written a letter to the Head explaining how and why he did it—a blessed confession! Fact!"

Ponsonby staggered back, his face ashen.

"It—it isn't true—it can't be true!" he panted.

"It's a fact, I tell you!" gasped Bunter. "He's a blessed bank clerk, isn't he, named Walter Ponsonby? He's sick about your tricking him into doing it, you know."

"How did you get to know this, Bunter?" panted Ponsonby. "Nobody knew I had a cousin there—a bank clerk. And that's his name. Good gad! It must be true!"

"I heard Nugent on the phone," said Bunter. "I—I happened to overhear what he was saying. They'd rung him up from somewhere, saying they were on their way home, and what they'd done. I heard Nugent telling Bull and the others afterwards, too. They were jolly excited, I can tell you!"

There was a silence. Ponsonby was looking dazed and shaken. He knew that nobody at Greyfriars could possibly have known about his cousin, and he knew that Bunter must be speaking the truth now. Skinner & Co., and Gadsby and Vavasour were looking more than scared.

"Good gad!" breathed Ponsonby. "I'm done! That—that letter I wrote to my dashed cousin will finish me. I—I——"

He broke off suddenly, his eyes gleaming desperately.

"What time are they expected to arrive, Bunter?" he hissed. "Do you know?"

"Six-fifteen, Nugent said."

"Oh, you fat fool! Why didn't you tell us before this?" groaned Ponsonby.

"I rushed out after Skinner as soon as I knew," grunted Bunter. "You never gave me a chance, though, when we got here. And—and I was going to make you gimme that signed paper back before I told you."

"Hang you!" snarled Ponsonby. "Listen, you chaps. There's only one chance. You've got to back me up in this! If you don't, I'll see to it that you'll all be sorry for it. Rush and get Monson and Drury here, Gaddy. They've got to help, too. We'll be eight to four, not counting that fat fool. He'd better keep out of it."

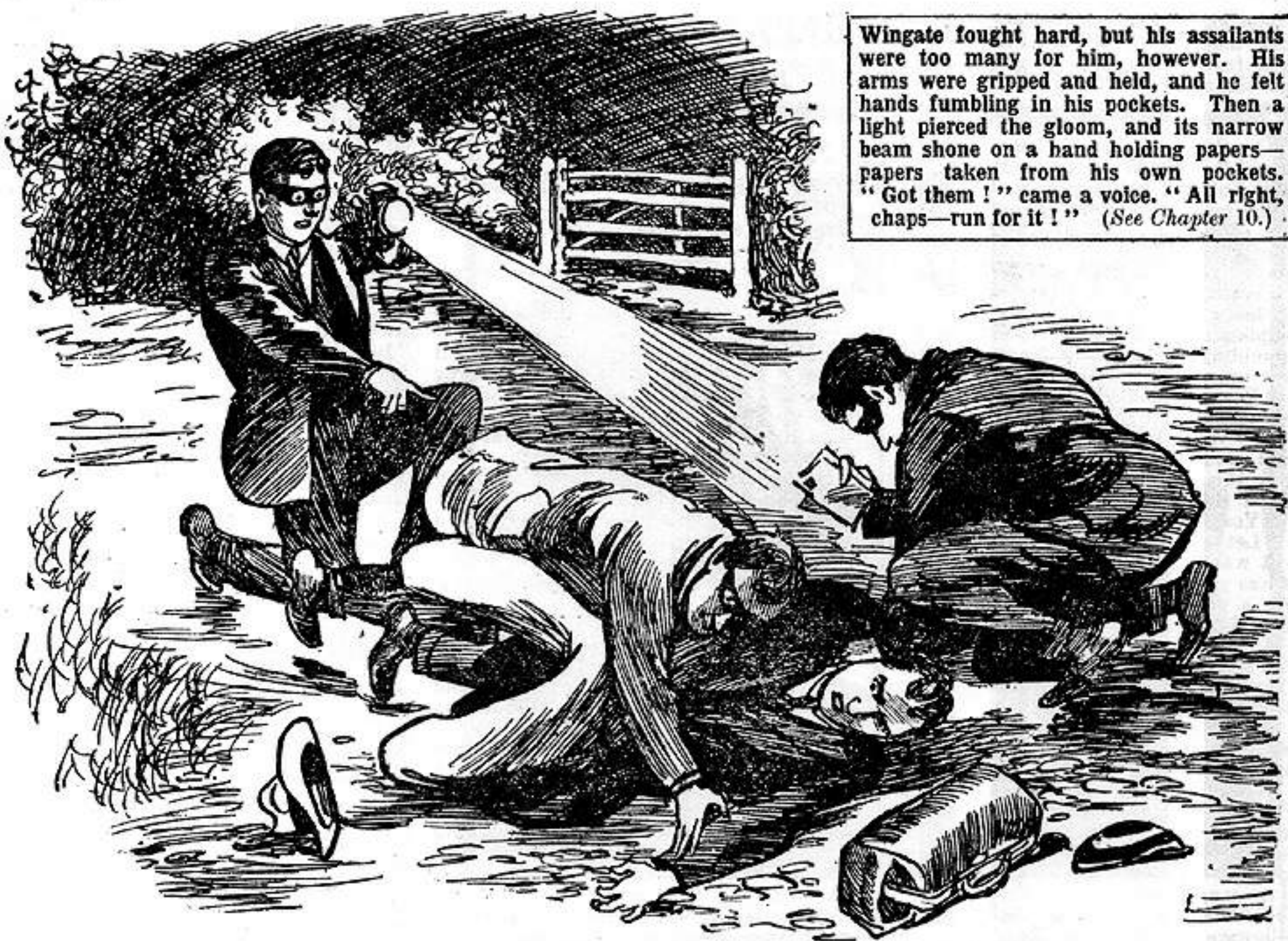
"But—but what——"

"There's only one thing for it," snarled Ponsonby, snatching out his handkerchief. "We've got to waylay those cads when they leave the station, and we've got to get those confounded proofs. There's nothing else for it. We can make masks out of our handkerchiefs, and we'll take 'em by surprise. You chaps can leave the rest to me."

"But——" began Skinner again, aghast.

"There's no 'but' about it," said Ponsonby through his teeth. "It's got to be done. Without that proof—that letter of mine—they can prove nothing, absolutely nothing. We've got to get it. If we don't, it's the high jump for most of us."

Ponsonby's "friends" were staggered at the scheme. But there was nothing else for it, they saw that. Ponsonby was in deadly earnest, and they knew him too well to refuse. They saw that his danger was their danger. Gadsby rushed out to bring Monson and Drury,



Wingate fought hard, but his assailants were too many for him, however. His arms were gripped and held, and he felt hands fumbling in his pockets. Then a light pierced the gloom, and its narrow beam shone on a hand holding papers—papers taken from his own pockets. "Got them!" came a voice. "All right, chaps—run for it!" (See Chapter 10.)

and those shady juniors soon saw the wisdom of obeying the rascally Ponsonby. They dare not refuse to obey.

They were ready at last. There was none too much time. After tearing holes in their handkerchiefs they donned coats and caps, and left the school, leaving Bunter to his own devices. And that fat youth, feeling more than a little apprehensive now, started homewards for Greyfriars.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Last Card!

WINGATE and the three Remove juniors stepped from the train at Friardale with grunts of relief, and glanced about the badly-lighted but familiar platform.

"Thank goodness!" growled George Wingate. "Lancashire's not a bad show, Linley, but give me Friardale and Greyfriars. Buck up, kids, and let's be moving."

"You told Nugent what time to expect us when you phoned, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry, glancing about him. "I hoped the asses would be here to welcome old Marky back again."

"Yes, I told them all serene," grinned Harry Wharton. "They'll be along presently. Look out for them."

The party left the station, and started out cheerfully on the tramp for Greyfriars, swinging their bags as they walked. It was a cheerful home-coming, and a successful end to their expedition, and they all felt thankful and light-hearted. Even Mark Linley's face was bright now. He knew that it was only a matter of time now before his good name was restored. Moreover, Wharton and Cherry had assured him that a welcome awaited him in the Remove, and that alone was more than comforting.

The juniors kept their eyes open for a sight of their chums coming to meet them. They knew Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh would not fail to meet them if they could. But the outskirts of Friardale was reached, and the three did not put in an appearance.

"Blow them!" grunted Harry Wharton. "I suppose Quelchy or someone's stopped them coming. Anyway—Hullo!"

Harry Wharton stopped suddenly as a quick series of rustles sounded from the hedge on either side of the dark lane. The lamps had been left behind on the outskirts of the village, and deep darkness lay around the Greyfriars fellows. But it did not prevent them seeing the dim forms that leaped suddenly from the hedges the next instant.

"Look out!" yelled Harry Wharton in great alarm.

He caught a swift glimpse of dark forms with gleaming eyes showing through holes in masks, and the next instant he was struggling fiercely with two unknown assailants.

Harry was the only fellow who had glimpsed the attackers, and he held his own for a time, fighting fiercely. But the others were taken completely by surprise, and they went crashing down, dazed and bewildered.

Wingate found himself on his back in the muddy roadway, struggling in the grip of three attackers. The sudden attack had dazed him for the moment, and the heavy fall had almost stunned him.

He fought hard, nevertheless, but his assailants were too many for him, however. His arms were gripped and held, and he felt hands fumbling in his pockets. Then a light pierced the gloom, and its narrow beam shone on a hand holding papers—papers taken from Wingate's pockets.

"Got them!" came a voice. "All right, chaps. Run for it!"

Ponsonby, for he it was, crammed the papers—letters they were—into his coat-pocket, and was about to leap up himself, when there came a whirring of cycle wheels, and three lights flashed into view round the bend nearby.

Harry Wharton knew in an instant what they meant, and his voice rang out:

"Rescue, Remove! Rescue, Johnny, Nugent, Inky! Quick!"

What followed was confusing. There sounded the grinding of hastily-applied brakes and the clatter of falling machines. Then three juniors rushed up, one of them flooding the scene with light from his bicycle lamp.

It was Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh. They were just in time to glimpse five dark forms as they vanished into the trees bordering the shadowy lane, but only five.

"Quick with the light!" came Wingate's voice sharply. "I've got one of the rascals!"

"And I've got another!" sang out Harry Wharton.

"So've I!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "And I fancy I know the merchant. No you don't!"

He held on grimly to his wriggling captive. Frank Nugent jumped to obey Wingate, and he flashed the light on to the captain of Greyfriars. He was still on the ground, and he had a masked fellow held tightly. As the light flashed on them, Wingate released one hand and snatched the mask away.

"Ponsonby!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Yes, it's friend Ponsonby," said Wingate grimly. "He was jumping away, but I just grabbed him in time. Who are the other masked beauties?"

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The light soon shone on them, and their masks were wrenched away despite their frantic struggles. One was Gadsby and the other was Harold Skinner. The faces of all three captives were livid with fear and apprehension.

"I think I can guess what this means," said Wingate, getting to his feet, but still holding on to his captive. "The merchants must have got wind of our coming and all about it—goodness knows how! Well, Ponsonby, you've played your last card, and lost!"

Ponsonby groaned. He had lost, and he knew it. He ground his teeth with helpless rage. Skinner and Gadsby were trembling. They also knew the game was up.

"You chaps leave your bikes in the hedge. They'll be all right there for a bit. We'll keep to our original intention, and visit Highcliffe, I think. We'll get this business fixed up to-night. Yank them along!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Let me go!" hissed Ponsonby. "It—it was only a joke! I—I didn't know it was you, Wingate. I—I was just playing a prank on these Remove chaps, I thought."

"You weren't after these letters, were you?" grinned Wingate. "Oh, no! Come on, or I'll boot you along, you precious highway robber!"

And Ponsonby, Skinner, and Gadsby went along. They had no choice in the matter.

With their captives, Wingate and the Famous Five and Mark Linley tramped into the hall of Highcliffe School. There was a shout as they entered, and several fellows who were standing about chatting came rushing up. They stared at the amazing sight of the Greyfriars fellows and their prisoners.

Langton, the skipper of Highcliffe, came hurrying up, his face showing his amazement.

"What's this, Wingate?" he gasped.

"Take us somewhere where we can talk, and I'll explain," said Wingate.

Langton, though captain of the rival school, was on friendly terms with Wingate; and, after staring for a moment, he nodded.

"Bring them along here," he said grimly. "I suppose Ponsonby's been up to some of his usual rotten games!"

He led the way along the passage, and Wingate and the rest followed, a staring crowd of Highcliffe fellows behind them. Langton pushed open the door of a large room, and they went inside. It was the junior Common-room, and a swarm of juniors were round the fire. They jumped up and stared in astonishment.

"Now, what's this game?" asked Langton. "What's Ponsonby been up to—losing more fivers?"

Wingate smiled grimly.

"It's in connection with that fiver, Langton," he said. "That precious fiver was never lost. Ponsonby enclosed it in a lying letter, and got his cousin in Lancashire to post it there."

"Wha-a-at?"

There was a deep murmur.

"You've heard the story, I expect," said Wingate, his face going grave. "Ponsonby charged a Greyfriars fellow with stealing it. That fellow was Linley here. He was convicted, and expelled from Greyfriars for it. I've now got proof that the fiver was never stolen, but that the whole thing was a dirty, rascally plot on Ponsonby's part—revenge on Linley here."

There was another amazed and angry murmur. Ponsonby shivered as he met the glances of his own schoolfellows.

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"It—it's a lie!" he breathed, his face livid with fear. "It's a lie! It's all rot! I deny it utterly. I defy Wingate to prove a word of it!"

Wingate gave him a glance of scorn.

"You mean to deny it, then—to bluff it out?"

"Yes, of course I do deny it."

"Even though you know I hold the letter you wrote to your cousin at Bowdley, asking him to post that letter for you?"

"I know nothing about any letter, hang you!"

Wingate set his lips, and his eyes gleamed.

"Very well," he snapped. "We'll have it out before your headmaster or ours. I've given you the chance to own up yourself. If you won't take it, then that's your look-out. Look at this letter, Langton, and this!"

He handed Ponsonby's letter to Langton, also Walter Ponsonby's letter, exposing his cousin's rascality. As he did so Ponsonby gave a snarl, and then, with a sudden leap, he snatched the letters from Langton's hand and leaped for the fire.

But someone else was quicker. It was Bob Cherry. Like lightning his foot shot out, and Ponsonby took a header over it, crashing down on hands and knees. Bob Cherry snatched the letters out of his hand as he sprawled there.

But the rascally junior was up again in a flash, and he flung himself in a fury at Bob Cherry.

There was a struggle, but Bob Cherry sent the desperate schemer spinning away. In a moment a dozen hands were holding him back. Ponsonby's face was like that of a fiend now.

"If anything were wanted to prove his guilt, that does," said Wingate quietly. "But you'd better read the letters, Langton. You know the full story, of course, how Linley was supposed to have sent the money home to his people, and how his mother was supposed to have written a letter, sending the money back, and thus giving her son away."

"Yes, yes; everybody's heard that," said Langton. He took the letters and glanced at them, though he was already convinced. "I don't understand quite how it was worked, though."

"That's easy enough," said Wingate.

"He had found a letter of Linley's from his mother, and he copied her handwriting, taking the address from that."

"Phew!"

Few failed to understand it now.

"But what's Gadsby and Skinner got to do with it?" demanded Langton.

"That's what I'd like and mean to know," said Wingate, eyeing Skinner's trembling face sharply. "Skinner, if you'll take my advice, you'll own up to what you know of this. It's bound to come out now."

Skinner licked his dry lips. He saw that only too clearly now. Ponsonby was done; it would have to come out. He knew that Ponsonby would give them away, and he knew he could never hoodwink Dr. Locke over the matter. He gave a hunted look about him.

"I—I'll own up," he panted. "But—but I swear I had no hand in the plot. Ponsonby worked it himself. He came to us first—Stott and Snoop and myself—and asked us to plant that fiver among Linley's belongings at Greyfriars. We refused, and he did that—he worked it

on his own. But—but we daren't let it out; he swore to ruin us if we did. You know what he is."

"Well, the rotter!"

"If any of the fellows present had doubted Ponsonby's guilt, they could not doubt any longer. Ponsonby simply shrivelled under the glances of scorn and contempt."

"And that attack on us in Friardale Lane to-night," said Wingate. "I suppose that was to get the evidence from me?"

"Yes, yes. Bunter overheard Nugent on the phone, and we hurried over to warn Ponsonby," stammered Skinner. "Bunter knew about it all; he was listening when Ponsonby asked us to plant that fiver that afternoon, and Ponsonby frightened him into keeping silent about it, too. He made us all help him to-night to attack you to get the proofs. That's the truth; I swear it. Isn't it, Gaddy?"

Gadsby nodded dumbly. He was shivering.

"Well, upon my word!" breathed Langton, gazing at Ponsonby's livid face with utter scorn. "You—you worm! The Head shall know all this. I shall—"

He paused as the door swung open, and two gowned figures entered the room. One was Dr. Voysey, the Head of Highcliffe, and the other was Mr. Mobbs, the unpopular master of the Fourth.

Dr. Voysey glanced round, him in amazement.

"What does this mean, Langton?" he asked sternly. "What are these Greyfriars boys doing here?"

Langton explained in cool, level tones, and the two masters listened—Mr. Mobbs in horrified alarm, and Dr. Voysey grimly, with an ever darkening frown on his brow. His face was thunderous as Langton finished and handed him the two letters.

"Ponsonby!" he gasped, after reading the letters. "I am shocked—scandalised! Is it possible that you can have been so incredibly wicked as to do this thing?"

"It—it's all lies, sir!" whispered Ponsonby. "Lies!"

"I do not believe that such is the case, Ponsonby," thundered Dr. Voysey. "Bitter it is to me to realise it, but I have not the slightest doubt that Langton's story is the truth. Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars, has already related to me the story of this boy, Linley's, heroism on the Grange Lake, and he has suggested to me already that there was a possibility of a grave miscarriage of justice having taken place. Dr. Locke and myself were only waiting for the return of this unfortunate boy to have the matter thoroughly thrashed out. Such a course will not be necessary now. Do you still persist in denying the truth of this story told me by Langton?"

Ponsonby's eyes glittered like a snake's.

"Yes, sir," he said, almost insolently. "I do."

Dr. Voysey turned to Wingate and questioned him closely, after which he questioned each of the Greyfriars juniors in turn, finishing up with Skinner. Then he questioned Gadsby. That cowardly youth could scarcely speak, but he gasped out the truth at last.

Dr. Voysey bent a grave, almost haggard look on Ponsonby.

"Ponsonby," he said, his voice terrible in its icy sternness. "It would have been better for you had you confessed,

ANSWERS
Every Saturday—PRICE 2:

rather than adopted this defiant attitude. You have disgraced your school, you have acted the part of a scoundrel! There is not a redeeming feature in your conduct throughout. There is no need for me to consult with Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars. I am quite satisfied that you did this thing in a cold, calculating spirit of base revenge. This school is no place for you. You will leave Highcliffe by the first train in the morning. I will write and explain the full circumstances to your father."

Ponsonby stared at the Highcliffe Head as if turned suddenly to stone. Then quite abruptly he seemed to crumple up and his insolent defiance left him. He fairly grovelled before Dr. Voysey.

"Not that, sir!" he muttered hoarsely. "Not expulsion! My father—my father would kill me! He's hard—hard as iron. He—he'd horsewhip me if he knew. Oh, please don't expel me, sir! I simply daren't go home!"

"You should have considered that before entering upon such a rascally course of conduct, Ponsonby," said Dr. Voysey, glancing down at the grovelling coward. "You deserve neither pity nor mercy. Mr. Mobbs, will you kindly see this boy to the punishment-room?"

"Y-es, sir," stammered Mr. Mobbs.

He led the panting Ponsonby away—his smug face showing his dismay. Dr. Voysey turned to Wingate.

"You may return to your school, my boys," he said a trifle stiffly. "I will ring up Dr. Locke without delay and acquaint him with the facts. I am glad the truth has come to light," he added, glancing at Mark Linley.

"Yes, sir," said Wingate.

Wingate nodded to the Greyfriars juniors, and they followed him out.

"Well, that's that!" breathed Wingate, as they started for Greyfriars. "All's well that ends well, Linley. Glad you came now, what?"

Mark Linley said nothing, but his eyes were shining with thankfulness, and he linked his arm in Bob Cherry's. It was Bob Cherry who had done it all—Bob Cherry who had proved staunch and true in the hour of trouble—a true chum. Mark Linley felt he had a lot to be thankful for. Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Inky found their bikes in the hedge, and the party tramped back to Greyfriars—all of them happy with the exception of Harold Skinner. That junior was silent and white-faced. He had always known that Cecil Ponsonby was a dangerous friend as well as an enemy, and he had good reason to know it more so now.

"You'd better go to your study and remain there in case you are wanted," said Wingate to him, as they entered the School House. "Linley, you'd better come along to the Head with me. You other chaps can report to Mr. Quelch."

Wingate and Linley found the Head in his study, and they discovered that he was already in possession of the facts. He was just putting the telephone receiver down as they entered the study.

He listened to Wingate's report in silence, and then he turned a smiling face to Mark Linley, and held out his hand.

"Linley, my boy," he said quietly, "you have been through a trying, wretched time. I am only thankful to be able to welcome you back to Greyfriars, and to be grateful to Providence that I am able to adjust a grave miscarriage of justice. You are fortunate indeed, I may add, in having such a stalwart champion as Robert Cherry for a chum. I will say no more at the moment, but to-morrow morning I pro-

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY

No. 22—Mark Linley (of the Remove).



The central figure in the present series of stories, Mark Linley's photo holds, perhaps, a double attraction for you. Despite the "faked" evidence of such a base and misguided youth as Ponsonby of Highcliffe, Mark Linley is a fellow with a heart of gold, straight as a die, and as hard-working as a thousand Ponsonbys put together. A good sportsman, Mark is a prominent member of the footer and cricket elevens under the captaincy of Harry Wharton & Co. Whatever Mark puts his hand to he does thoroughly, and this wholehearted enthusiasm of his has earned him the respect of his Form fellows since he won his way to Greyfriars on a scholarship—leaving out the cloud which has temporarily estranged him from them—and the admiration of his Form master. Shares Study No. 13 with Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and Wun Lung.

pose to place the full facts before the school, also to commend you publicly for the two acts of heroism you have shown in the past few days. You may go."

Linley left the study, and a few minutes later he was listening with a crimson face to kindly words of welcome and congratulation from Mr. Quelch. Later still, in the rag that evening, the Remove had a great deal to say to the Lancashire lad. They had given Linley a rough time, and they realised it now, and they were only too anxious to make amends.

There were two public ceremonies in Big Hall the next morning. One was in honour of Mark Linley, and the other was in honour—or, rather, dishonour—of Skinner, Stott, Snoop, and Bunter. Being an exceedingly modest fellow, Marky would have escaped his ceremony if he could have done. And being very modest fellows—on such occasions—the shady quartette would have escaped theirs could they have done so. But there was no escape for them. Certainly they had not been an active party to Ponsonby's plot, but they had stood by and allowed an innocent fellow to suffer when they could have spoken out and saved him. And a public flogging each was the least Dr. Locke decided he could

administer. So they were flogged—and a severe flogging it was. It was lucky for Bunter that it did not come out how he had "blackmailed" Ponsonby, or it would have been something worse than a flogging for Billy Bunter.

That morning the news came through to Greyfriars that Ponsonby had been expelled—that he had gone from Highcliffe. And all that day Skinner, Stott, and Snoop shivered in apprehension, lest the spiteful Ponsonby should "sneak" to Dr. Locke of their shady proceedings, for Ponsonby held ample proof of Skinner & Co.'s excursions into blackguardism. But he had not done so apparently, for the expected call from the Head did not materialise, and by bed-time that night the guilty trio began to feel safe.

They had little to be thankful for, however, had they only known. For, though expelled, Cecil Ponsonby was not finished with. Skinner & Co. and Greyfriars were to hear more of Ponsonby before many days were out.

THE END.

(This is not the end of Cecil Ponsonby—not by any means! Mind you read "The Hidden Foe!" by Frank Richards, in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 939.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN is it who will stand by and hear nasty things said about his mother? *Lionel Speedlow* wakes up the wrong passenger when he taunts *Curly Taylor* with his mother's humble circumstances!



The CASE of THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS



A Powerful New Football and Detective Story, featuring Ferrers Locke, the private investigator, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake.

Engaged by the Crown!

INSPECTOR TOWLEY eyed that letter for quite ten minutes and scratched his head by way of seeking inspiration. But the only conclusion that he came to was that the writer of the message was responsible for the murder of Marchant Taylor, as a glance at his notes told him that the time the tragedy had been discovered was a minute after half-past five!

And yet if an unknown had been Marchant Taylor's assailant, how came it that Sanky Badger should be found upon the scene? Why was it that he had flown? Why had he been holding a smoking revolver in his hand?

Inspector Towley might well have scratched his head, a far more competent officer would have had ample mystery upon which to exploit his powers of deduction.

He turned to Curly Taylor, who was standing there, the shock of the whole affair still written upon his youthful and honest countenance.

"It's a mystery with a capital 'M,'" the inspector grunted. "But this letter will satisfy the coroner that foul play was premeditated."

"Yes, but it won't explain what's happened to the body of my uncle," said Curly. "If we could pierce that part of the mystery the rest would unfold itself."

And the only answer Inspector Towley could make to that sage remark was a non-committal grunt!

It was exactly three weeks after the tragic end of Marchant Taylor and the finding of the mysterious missive which, from a point of evidence, seemed to prophesy his death, that Ferrers Locke, the celebrated private investigator, received a summons from Mr. Jefferson Beeks, the Home Secretary.

Without loss of time Ferrers Locke ordered a taxicab, and was soon speeding towards the drab building in Whitehall that sheltered one of the highest officials in the land.

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After what seemed a lengthy formality of red tape, Ferrers Locke was at last shown in to the great man's room.

"Ah, Mr. Locke!" greeted Mr. Jefferson Beeks. "You have lost no time."

The great detective bowed, and then seated himself in a red-leather chair pushed forward for his benefit. For some few minutes silence reigned in that official-looking room, during which time Ferrers Locke had opportunity to note the careworn expression on the intellectual face before him.

Mr. Jefferson Beeks was undoubtedly a hard-worked man, for the duties of Home Secretary seemed to embrace everything that went on in the public and official world around him.

He looked up at last from a pile of papers on his desk and sat back in his chair.

"I expect you are wondering what business has brought you here?" he said at length, and his long, tapering fingers played a nervous tattoo one upon the other.

"I am presumptuous enough to think that I know already," returned the great detective shrewdly.

"The dickens you do!" Jefferson Beeks was mildly surprised.

"I have taken the liberty to watch your lips while I have been sitting here these few seconds," said Locke quietly, "and twice they have formed the name of Marchant Taylor."

"Ah!" The Home Secretary was more surprised than ever.

"Also," continued the detective, "there are two sheaves of papers lying upon your desk, each of which bears the typewritten name of Marchant Taylor. They are, presumably, the reports of the special sitting of their lordships at the High Court."

"You are indeed an observant man," exclaimed the Home Secretary in admiration.

Ferrers Locke inclined his head at the compliment.

"In my profession, sir, one has to be observant."

"Yes, yes! But to business, Mr. Locke," said Jefferson Beeks hurriedly. "You are no doubt acquainted with the remarkable facts of the shooting of this

—er—Marchant Taylor, and of the amazing disappearance of his body."

"I have gleaned that much from the newspaper reports," said Locke gravely.

"Then you know about this peculiar letter that was found at the deceased man's house that seems to throw some light upon the whole remarkable affair?"

"I have seen a reproduction of it in the newspapers, sir."

"Ah, and what is your opinion of it, Mr. Locke?"

"My mind is open," came the reply. "But the letter would certainly seem to supply a starting-point to the motive for Marchant Taylor's tragic end."

"Then you think, as do their lordships who have tried this amazing case, that the letter came from the head of a secret organisation?" queried the Home Secretary eagerly.

"I have yet to be convinced," came the answer. "But for the moment that theory will provide a starting-point."

"But this man Sanky?" said Jefferson Beeks. "Do you think—I am asking you your unofficial opinion—that he killed Marchant Taylor?"

Ferrers Locke was a few seconds in replying.

"You asked for my personal opinion, sir?" he said gravely. "I, personally, don't think this man Sanky did kill his master and benefactor. But, again, the evidence almost proves conclusively that he did, for he took to flight."

"Yes, yes. But I am wandering from the point at issue," exclaimed the Home Secretary. "I have called you here to ask you to investigate the case generally, but to pay most attention to the letter found at the house of the dead man, foretelling his death. In the opinion of the police the whole affair is the dreadful work of a secret organisation that is a menace to the country. Newspaperdom, too, has developed what was an opinion in the first place into a practical certainty. As Home Secretary, therefore, it falls to my lot to stamp out secret organisations of this kind. If you will oblige me by taking up this case you will be doing your country a service, and will, incidentally, earn the everlasting gratitude of a harassed Home Secretary."

"I am at your service," said Locke quietly.

"Thank you, Mr. Locke—thank you, indeed! I say without flattery that if you can't get to the bottom of this affair, then no one will. You see," he added, with a radiant smile, "your excellent reputation has even reached the ears of a Government official surrounded by red tape."

"You are very kind, sir."

The Home Secretary smiled. The worried look had left his handsome face.

"Of course, you may have carte blanche in the matter of expenses," he said. "And at the satisfactory conclusion of the case I am empowered by his Majesty's Government to hand you a cheque for two thousand pounds."

But Ferrers Locke was on his feet now, and his hands waved a protest.

"If I may be permitted to say so, that two thousand could be put to better use," he said respectfully. "If I can be of service to my country, and," he added with a flicker of a smile, "earn the everlasting gratitude of its Home Secretary, my reward will be great enough."

"As you will," smiled the official, rising to his feet.

The movement indicated that the interview was at an end, and Ferrers Locke reached for his hat and gloves.

"I feel much lighter in my mind now," remarked Jefferson Beeks, as he shook the celebrated detective warmly by the hand. "You will, of course, keep me posted from time to time as to the success of your investigations?"

"That I most certainly will," said Locke. "You are optimistic in thus speaking of my success beforehand. I will endeavour to justify your encouragement, sir."

Five minutes later the great detective was being driven back to his chambers in Baker Street.

Jack Drake, his boy assistant, awaited him in the sitting-room.

"Jack, my lad," said Locke, pulling off his gloves, "we are motoring to Langsdale within the hour."

"Langsdale!" exclaimed Drake, his eyes opening wide with excitement. "Why, that's where this fellow Taylor was killed."

"Exactly!" said Locke. "And we have been commissioned by the Home Secretary to round up the secret organisation that brought about his end—if it exists," he added beneath his breath.

"Topping!" exclaimed Drake. "We've had a week's rest since that Lone Manor affair, and I'm beginning to pine for a little more excitement than filing newspaper cuttings."

The great detective smiled indulgently.

"No doubt you'll find all the excitement you want," he said. "And there'll be plenty to keep you busy, for all we've got to start us on our quest is that brief letter the Langsdale local inspector found at the deceased man's house."

"Talking of that," said Drake, unfolding a newspaper, "I see the verdict of the High Court concerning the death and the mysterious disappearance of the body of old Taylor is 'wilful murder against Sanky.' Does that mean that the estate will be wound up, and that the will of the murdered man will be proved?"

"It does," said Locke. "For it was upon the unique, although not unprecedented circumstance of an inquest being held upon an imaginary dead body, that the case was referred by the Langsdale coroner to the High Courts. If their lordships were satisfied that Marchant Taylor was killed, the estate would be wound up in the usual way."

"H'm!" ejaculated Drake. "Their

lordships, after a three days' sitting, appear to be satisfied, but I'm blessed if I am," he added thoughtfully.

Ferrers Locke looked up sharply.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Well, there's something jolly fishy about the whole affair," replied his assistant. "I can't say where, how, or why, but my instincts tell me that there's more in this Marchant business than their lordships have heard up till now."

"Maybe you're right!" Ferrers Locke was voicing his thoughts aloud unknowingly, and Drake, as he heard them, felt a thrill of satisfaction run through him. And then, in his usual voice:

"Get the car out, my lad."

And Drake, whistling the air of a popular dance tune, hastened to do his master's bidding.

The Cousins!

AT the same time that Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake set out for Langsdale, a smart two-seater car pulled up outside the late Marchant Taylor's house. Scarcely had the auto been brought to a standstill than the man at the wheel started to make the air hideous with a series of piercing shrieks from the Klaxon horn at his elbow.

"Confounded sleepy hole!" he growled.

In less than two seconds after the initial shriek from the Klaxon, the door of the old house was opened and the surprised figure of Turville stood framed in the aperture.

There was an expression of disapproval on his face, for, in all his years of service, the ancient retainer of the Taylors had never been summoned in so peremptory a fashion.

But as his eyes rested on the man at the wheel, the expression changed from annoyance to impassive civility, for he recognised his late master's nephew, Lionel Speedlow.

"Welcome home, sir, if I might use the words in all respect," he greeted.

Lionel Speedlow's lips curved in a scornful smile, and with an overdone gesture of affectation, he caught up the black silk ribbon of his monocle and slipped the eyeglass in his eye. Really,

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

MARCHANT TAYLOR, an eccentric old gentleman, whose only interest in life appears to be the Langsdale Wanderers, which team he founded and nursed to its present stage of popularity and success.

SILAS CHISHOLM, his fellow-director.

CURLY TAYLOR, Marchant Taylor's nephew, a lad of eighteen who lives up at his uncle's house, the Rookery, and plays centre-forward for the Wanderers.

SANKY BADGER, the trainer.

At the close of a thrilling match between the Wanderers and Treadwell F.C. the home side find a shock awaiting them in their dressing-room, for stretched upon the floor is the lifeless figure of their managing-director, Marchant Taylor, and over him, holding a smoking revolver, is Badger, the trainer. Badger is accused of the crime, which he stoutly denies, and succeeds in making his escape from the ground astride a motor-bike. The footballers and Silas Chisholm give chase, but Sanky eludes them. Returning to the dressing-room, the Wanderers find another shock awaiting them, for the body of Marchant Taylor has disappeared. Inspector Towley, a local police officer, takes charge of the affair, and, accompanied by Curly, visits the Rookery. Here a mystifying piece of evidence is picked up in the shape of a letter bearing the following words: "To-day at five-thirty we strike." And Marchant Taylor received that letter a few hours before his end!

Speedlow had no cause to wear a monocle, for his eyesight was, of the best, but a certain clique amongst whom he had moved had adopted the monocle as a mark of distinction befitting the gentleman.

The action with the monocle brought back the frown of disapproval to Turville's wrinkled features, but as the glass was smeared with moisture, Speedlow saw not that frown. Indeed, all his attention was taken up in keeping this refractory eyeglass in his eye. Eyeglasses have their uses after all.

After that initial survey through the monocle, Lionel Speedlow climbed from his seat on the car and stretched himself. He was a tall fellow, well proportioned. His clothes fitted him like a glove, and bore the outward and visible sign of a high-class tailor. His features were handsome enough, but hard living had left its mark upon them, and weakened the mouth for all time.

Taken altogether in a quick survey, Lionel Speedlow's clothes were the best part about him.

He murmured something unintelligible to the servant, and walked into the hall of the great house. He sniffed the air deprecatingly, and once again the monocle came into requisition.

"Beastly dirty hole!" he remarked in a languid voice, turning to the servant, who stood at a respectful distance from him. "Hasn't had a clean for years, I should say."

It was on the tip of Turville's lips to say something to this dude of a fellow with a piece of ordinary glass stuck in his eye, for the old servant had kept that great house clean day in and day out regularly. But the sensitiveness of the human was buried under the coat of a paid servant, and Turville said nothing, although doubtless he thought the more.

"Where is Mr. Taylor?" drawled Speedlow, at length. "I believe he is my cousin—or somethin'."

"I am here, Lionel," came the words in a far from welcome tone. "How goes it?"

Out came the monocle, and Curly was treated to a survey as if he were some strange insect from a naturalist's collection.

"How goes it?" muttered Speedlow.

"How—how goes what?"

Curly Taylor crimsoned. It was the first rebuff of the many he had anticipated when he had learned that old man Taylor had left the management of the estate to his eldest nephew.

"You!" explained Curly. "How are you?"

"Oh, quite well," came the ungracious reply. "I understand that you are living here—er—Taylor—"

"Correct!" Curly Taylor's answer couldn't have been more brief, and he turned on his heel and walked back into the room.

Lionel Speedlow followed him in. Curly stood with his back to the fire, a scornful expression on his face that he took no pains to hide. He didn't like this newcomer to the house that had sheltered him for three years. Come to that, he hadn't got on well with his late uncle; but Marchant Taylor, with all his eccentricity, was more preferable to this well-dressed bundle of affectation.

The new master of the Rookery looked about him with interest. His rather beady eyes were swiftly making a valuation of all the room contained. They dwelt on the wonderful oil-paintings that graced the walls, the cabinet of antique Chinese silver, the enormous Satsuma vases with their inlay patterns wrought in gold. The massive furniture of the comfortable suite appealed to him, for

he reckoned it must have cost at least five hundred pounds. And the thick pile carpet that gave pleasantly to the feet must have cost a like sum.

Lionel Speedlow was well pleased with his new possessions, and he turned a greedy face to his less fortunate cousin that reflected his obsession for pounds, shillings, and pence—chiefly pounds!

"Not a bad old hole, you know," he remarked. "I should say this room alone would fetch five thousand of the best under the hammer."

"Indeed!"

Curly's tone was not inviting further valuations, as it were. He had made up his mind now that he and Lionel would never "hit it."

Speedlow sank languidly into a chair.

"You might give a fellow a glass of something," he said meaningly.

"It's there, if you want it," said Curly, with equal meaning. "The house is yours, you know."

"Ah, that reminds me," remarked Lionel, dragging himself to his feet and walking over to the sideboard. "We must have talk, cousin, you an' I."

But the "talk" was a secondary matter, for Speedlow emptied two tumblers of a fiery liquid before he reseated himself.

Curly had looked on in growing disgust. He didn't despise a man for having a drink—the world has grown out of that hypocritical stage—but two tumblers in as many minutes—

"That's better!" exclaimed Speedlow, stretching his legs to the blaze. "Now let's talk."

Curly inclined his head.

"You know, old man Taylor was a peculiar cuss!" started Speedlow. "His blessed will is wrapped up in all sorts of conditions. You, for instance"—he paused, and fished for his monocle—"are to stay in this house until such time as you marry. Devilish queer way of leaving his money. Old Taylor says that we are to be friends, dear cousin, that you are to receive from me—from me, you get that?—an allowance of ten pounds a week."

Curly Taylor felt a wave of crimson flushing his face. He hated the idea of being beholden in any way to this fop of humanity. But he said nothing.

"But you've got to earn your salt," continued Speedlow, with a smile that Curly would dearly have loved to punch

into eternity. "According to the will, you are to continue playing for the Langsdale Wanderers—"

"I am quite aware of the terms of that extraordinary will," said Curly, at length. "I know that I am pledged to play for Langsdale as long as I can play football at all. That was understood between uncle and I when he stopped me joining the Arsenal—"

"You play for the Arsenal?" echoed Speedlow, in a tone that was meant to be insulting. "My dear chap—"

"I had practically signed on!" retorted Curly. "And if the Arsenal management had insisted, I could doubtless have been made to keep to my word to play for them. But uncle brought pressure to bear, and they released me."

"Indeed?" Speedlow rose to his feet and yawned. "Well, I give you to understand, Mr. Taylor, that although a confounded uncle has insisted that you remain here at this house of mine, I'll brook no interference from you. Remember, too," he added, waving a well-manicured hand to stem the hot retort that rose to his cousin's lips, "you've got to work for your living—"

"You're a bigger cad than your reputation at Oxford told us!" said Curly, in a sudden blaze of temper. "You've lost no time in showing yourself in your true colours! Uncle desired that we should be friends—"

Lionel Speedlow interrupted with a flourish of his hand.

"Cut that out!" he said curtly. "Friends—friends with a country hobbledehoy? Look at your hands! Look at your clothes! Friends with Lionel Speedlow, of the Oxford smart set? Haw, haw, haw! I don't pal on with low fellows. I've not forgotten how your mother came to us and asked for charity when—"

But Speedlow got no further. If there was one thing that Curly had clung to in an up-and-down life of adversity, it was faith in his mother—the grey-haired old lady who had worked hard for him, and died working so that he might be educated enough to bear his name proudly.

Smack!

Speedlow staggered back with his hand to his insipid mouth. A stream of crimson gushed out upon his well-manicured fingers.

"You low cur!" he almost screamed. "You dare to lay your filthy hands upon me!"

"I'll more than dare if ever you speak of my mother like you did!" said Curly.

So masterful was he, so formidable in his passionate defence of his mother, that the craven in Speedlow came to the surface.

But blood had been spilt between these cousins. It was war; Speedlow had already, in his spiteful, malicious nature, decided on that. But whereas Curly's weapons were and would be his fists, those of Speedlow's were of unprincipled pattern, in keeping with his shallow character and spiteful mentality. When they clashed, it would be time enough to see their merits, but of these tussles to come Curly Taylor gave no thought as, with head erect, he strode fiercely from the room.

Speedlow watched him go, all the hate that a damaged pride and a damaged lip could muster showing in the mean face turned upon Curly's broad back.

"The cub!" he hissed between clenched teeth. "I'll made him sorry for that blow, or my name isn't Lionel Speedlow!"

The Yellow Streak!

FOR quite half an hour Lionel Speedlow stared moodily into the fire, brooding upon his fancied wrongs; and with the passing of the minutes so grew his unreasonable hatred of Curly Taylor.

So preoccupied was he that he failed to hear a respectful cough that proceeded from Turville as he entered the room.

The servant coughed again.

Lionel Speedlow started guiltily and slewed round in his chair. His face grew crimson with annoyance.

"What the thunder do you mean by padding into a gentleman's room?" he demanded.

Turville's face set hard.

"Begging your pardon, sir, I knocked twice, and then I took the liberty"—the sarcasm dwelling on this last word was marked to a degree—"to enter when I received no reply."

"Well, what do you want?"

For answer the man handed his master the salver he was carrying. On it, looking ridiculously small, was a piece of pasteboard.

Speedlow snatched it up, with glowering brows. His face grew dark as he read the inscription on the card.

"Show him in!" he snapped at length.

The servant bowed, and retired. A few moments elapsed and then he ushered in a florid-faced gentleman of the bookmaking variety whose loud check suit spoke eloquently enough of his profession and his tastes. A bowler hat was set at a rakish angle on his bullet head, and a foul-smelling cigar hung loosely from his thick lips.

"'Allo, Lionel!" was his affectionate greeting. "My, I am glad to see yer!"

The gladness seemed to be all on the one side, for Speedlow's brow was black as he motioned his visitor to a chair.

"My, this is a grand place!" exclaimed the gentleman in the check suit, pushing his bowler hat back on his head. "You're a lucky cove, Lionel!"

Speedlow frowned, as if mentally censuring himself for ever having tolerated this use of his Christian name from such a specimen of humanity. Why, the fellow was worse than his confounded cousin, he reckoned.

"Do you mind removing your hat?" Speedlow said curtly. "We are not at the Coach and Horses at Oxford now, Slatey."

Slatey willingly obliged.

"Now what do you want with me?" snapped Speedlow.

Slatey looked injured.

"Well, I likes that!" he ejaculated, almost swallowing a quantity of smoke from his foul cigar in his agitation. "Ain't I always pleased ter see yer? Ain't I always been a pal, Lionel?"

Lionel winced.

"You have certainly helped me out of a few difficulties," he replied. "But, Slatey, I've always paid you well—"

"That you 'ave, sir. There ain't a more generous gentleman than young Lionel Speedlow in all the bloomin' world. But"—and Slatey winked slyly—"business is business! You knows that you owe me a hundred quid—"

"Oh, that!" said Speedlow, with a sneer. "A trifle like that!"

"Just that," smiled Slatey. "Maybe a trifle to a grand young gentleman like yourself who's 'erited over a million, but a young fortune to your old pal Slatey."

"Right-ho, old man!" Speedlow's tone was more cheerful as his hand



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dwelt and fastened on a new cheque-book in his pocket. "I'll write you out a cheque for a hundred now."

Slatey rubbed his hands together with great satisfaction, and then looking round, began to smack his lips after the manner of his kind. The hint was not lost upon his host, for Lionel smiled and sauntered over to the sideboard.

Two minutes later the pair of them were partaking of refreshment.

"'Ere's to yer, Lionel," said the bookmaker. "May your shadow never grow less. Lumme!" he suddenly ejaculated. "Leavin' your shadow out of it, what's happened to yer lip?"

A scowl flashed across Speedlow's face, to be replaced in an instant by a cunning grin. Fate had sent him along the very man to give his pugilistic cousin a tousing! And at that very moment a shadow was thrown across the window. Looking up, Lionel Speedlow saw Curly walking out of the house.

Slatey followed his host's gaze, and saw the changing expressions in his face.

"Did 'e do that?" demanded Slatey, jerking his thumb in the direction of Curly Taylor.

"Yes, confound him!" said Speedlow savagely. "I'd give fifty quid to the fellow who could return that blow for me," he added insinuatingly.

Slatey rose to the occasion.

Fifty quid for "wiping a youngster a catcher across the jaw," to quote his own parlance, was easy money.

Lionel Speedlow from half-closed lids saw that the bait had been snapped up. He pulled a cheque-book from his pocket and uncapped his fountain-pen.

"Let me see," he muttered half aloud. "It was a hundred quid, wasn't it, Slatey?"

"Make it a hundred an' fifty while you're about it," said Slatey evilly, "an' I'll give that young fellow wot dared to lay hands on a gentleman friend of mine the lesson of his life."

With a feeling of satisfaction Lionel Speedlow wrote a cheque for the requisite amount—his first dissipation of the large fortune his uncle had left him. It was a bad start; but it was Lionel Speedlow to the life.

Slatey watched him with a cunning grin. The bookmaker was beginning to think that his friendship with this fop was worth a considerable amount to him if he played his cards carefully.

Curly Taylor tramped along at a swinging stride, and the rush of the keen air upon his handsome features brought the colour to his cheeks and drove away the fit of depression that had settled upon him since the arrival of his cousin.

He headed for the spacious enclosure of the Langsdale Wanderers Club, for a new trainer had been called in to take the place of Sanky, and the newcomer was a stickler for practice.

Curly arrived at the ground a full five minutes before the scheduled time of the practice, and found Mr. Silas Chisholm waiting in the dressing-room. The director was moody, but his face brightened considerably when he saw Curly.

"Hallo, my lad!" he exclaimed, giving Curly a warm handshake. "Have you met your cousin?"

At mention of his cousin it was Curly's turn to front a moody face.

"Yes!"

Silas was a man of quick perceptions,



"What!" cried Speedlow furiously. "Be friends with a country hobbledehoy? I've not forgotten how your mother came to us and asked for charity—"
Smack! Speedlow got no further, for Curly Taylor's fist suddenly shot out and sent him staggering back with a stinging cut to the mouth. (See page 24.)

and he saw at a glance that the meeting between the cousins had brought trouble in its wake. He was not surprised really. Indeed, Silas Chisholm was anticipating a lot of trouble now that Lionel Speedlow had dawned upon Langsdale, for the fellow's unenviable reputation had preceded him. More than that, according to the strange terms of Marchant Taylor's will, Lionel Speedlow was the virtual owner of the Wanderers Club.

When Marchant Taylor had founded the club and had seen it prosper, he had converted it into a limited company. The bulk of the shares were held by him, and according to the terms of the contract entered into between the hundred shareholders the club boasted, the management of the club was to remain for all time in the hands of Marchant Taylor and his heirs.

With Marchant Taylor as the chairman and managing-director, this scheme had proved entirely to the satisfaction of the shareholders, for with all his eccentricity Taylor had been an honest man. But this Lionel Speedlow—with all the airs and graces that were said to be his stock-in-trade, his unwarrantable extravagance and loose principles—where were they going to take a footer club that was noted for its good management and efficiency?

Curly seemed to read some of the thoughts passing in his director's mind.

"Perhaps it won't be so bad as we all expect," he said gently.

"Just like you to be charitable to the fellow who has superseded you," muttered Silas. "You could have knocked

me down with a feather when I read the terms of your uncle's will. In fact, all Langsdale is still talking about it. They fully expected to see you step into your uncle's shoes and Langsdale to a man were glad."

"It's nice of you to say so," replied Curly. "But, after all, a man is entitled to dispose of his fortune as he likes—not as other people like. I'm not grumbling. My uncle has left me provided for—only if he could have foreseen the unpleasantness that will arise out of this provision, perhaps he would regret having made it so. Still, that's up to me now."

"I'm thinking it's a bad day for Langsdale when this foppish dude Speedlow takes charge of the club."

Curly was thinking the same, but he refrained from voicing his thoughts aloud. And at that juncture the rest of the players turned up. They came forward to a man and commiserated with what they termed Curly's bad luck; but he gave them the answer as he had given Silas:

"A man is entitled to dispose of his money as he likes."

"True!" grunted Woodward, the captain of the side grudgingly. "We might have known that old man Taylor would do the opposite to what we all expected. Hallo, here's the trainer!"

A man in a sweater entered the dressing-room, and Silas Chisholm walked towards him. He was a powerful chap, this new trainer, and one and all liked his breezy friendliness and never-ending energy. Already at the

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top of the League, Langsdale Wanderers, with Bulldog Dunstan training them, were likely to remain at the top throughout the season.

"Come on, you fellows!" he thundered, rubbing his great hands together. "There's a nice cold snap in the air that'll do you a power of good! Turn out!"

The echoes of his powerful voice were still ringing in the dressing-room after the Wanderers had "turned out." And for the next hour his voice boomed backwards and forwards across the playing-pitch, encouraging here and instructing there, in the same good-natured, patient spirit that had marked his arrival in Langsdale.

"You'll do!" he roared at the conclusion of the hour. "You're a fighting crowd, an' if you can't wallop Peterham Rangers on Saturday I'll chuck up my job!"

The players surged back into the dressing-room for a tub and a rub-down; and then, receiving orders for the practice due on the morrow, they went their different ways.

Outside the gates of the club a man in a loud check suit was lounging, making several ineffectual attempts to light the stub of his cigar.

Curly noticed him as he passed and thought no more about him, stranger as he was to Langsdale. But he was to be reminded of that coarse, dissipated face before many minutes passed.

The young footballer strode out across the fields, over which a thin mist was coming up, taking a short cut to his home. And at a safe distance behind him trailed Slaty, the bookmaker—for such the man in the check suit outside the club was.

"Easy!" he muttered. "Fifty quids for this. Lumme, I'll chuck up making an honest living after this!"

Honesty and Slaty not being acquainted, the bookmaker was speaking of the impossible; but the reflection pleased him, for he smiled, showing a row of dirty, uneven teeth.

All unconscious of the menacing figure in his rear, Curly strode on.

For quite ten minutes Slaty trailed his man; and then, thinking that the right moment was approaching, he quickened his stride. Curly glanced over his shoulder once and saw the figure of the bookmaker, but paid little attention to it, for the ground he was traversing was common land, and any one possessed the right to tread it.

And then, as those heavy footsteps in his wake grew louder, Curly began to sense instinctively that there was danger in the air. He slackened his pace purposely and waited for the man to pass him.

But Slaty didn't pass him. He drew level with the young footballer and roughly gripped him by the shoulder.

A Timely Intervention!

"**E**RE, I want you!" he growled. Curly tore the rough hand from his shoulder and straightened himself.

"The want is all on your side," he replied, measuring his man, for that sense of danger was very pronounced now.

"None of your cheek, now," exclaimed Slaty fiercely, "or I'll dot you one!"

Curly's lip curled scornfully.

"Go home, man!" he answered.

"You're the worse for drink; you positively reek of it!"

He spoke the truth, for Speedlow had well primed his man before setting him out on his fell purpose.

"Worse for drink, am I?" declared Slaty. "You cheeky young cub! 'Old that!"

"That" was a ferocious sweep of his clenched fist that would in all probability have stretched young Curly in a heap at his assailant's feet. But the footballer moved with the speed of lightning, and the massive fist, crashing through the air, did no more damage than to send its owner swivelling round.

A torrent of savage imprecations flowed from the thick lips of Slaty.

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your hand.

His fifty pounds was not being earned so easily as he had bargained.

"That's enough!" said Curly, his eyes flashing. "If you are asking for trouble you can have as much as you like! If you're drunk, take my advice and go home."

"You young cub!" Slaty ground his teeth together and rushed at his youthful victim. "I'll learn yer!"

But he met with more resistance than he reckoned with. Curly was not the type of fellow to hit a drunken man without ample cause, but he saw now that Slaty was determined to row with him. A straight left, therefore, flashed out as the bookmaker advanced, and it caught the man full between the eyes.

"Ooooooh!"

Slaty was surprised—painfully surprised—at the strength behind that blow, but his rage overcame his astonishment and he sailed in with flashing fists.

It was a strange sight this fight in the solitude of Wrexton Common between the boy of eighteen and the hulking man of forty, and would have provided thrills in plenty for screen lovers. But this was no play, as Slaty could have told you when he staggered back, cowering for a second at a rapidly swelling eye.

Curly, too, had signs to show of the struggle. With all his skill and agility the footballer was fighting an uneven battle. The weight of his assailant was compelling; it drove Curly back step by step. And the bookmaker's thick skin, like his thick nature, was made to stand pain. Blows rained on him at every second; but he shook them off, with grunts, as if they had been mere flicks.

Thud, thud! Patter, patter!

Their feet made strange music on the carpet of needles that had dropped from the tall pines that grew around them, and their breath came hot and fast. But, for all Curly's pluck, for all the strength in those clenched hands of his, he knew the end was in sight; Slaty was gradually gaining the upper hand.

And then it happened!

As Curly retreated before that smashing onslaught his foot caught in a twisted root of a tree. Down he went, a terrific drive helping him in his descent.

"Ah!"

The note of exultation in that ejaculation sent a cold shudder down Curly's spine. The man was out to injure him; it was written in that gloating face, in the narrow, cruel eyes.

And they were alone!

Fresh energy came to the young footballer as he realised the fact—the energy of despair. Why he had been set upon in this manner he had not the slightest idea. Indeed, he had had hardly time to ponder over that circumstance.

A heavy fist came down at him that would have felled him like an ox; but in the nick of time Curly turned it aside, and then struck upwards at that gloating face. The blow landed on Slaty's mouth and sent a spurt of crimson from it.

And in that moment Curly scrambled to his feet.

With a roar like a wild animal that has been deprived of its prey Slaty rebounded to the attack, his leg-of-mutton fists lashing his victim's face in a never-ending tattoo.

"Help!" Curly knew he was a beaten man. He could make but poor impression upon the mountain of flesh that loomed in front of him.

"You can cry for 'elp!" roared Slaty, licking his broken lips. "But by the time help comes, me cocky feller, you'll be past wanting it!"

He followed up his words by driving a set of ugly knuckles full in the young footballer's face.

"Help!"

Curly Taylor had just time enough to send out that appeal before he collapsed into unconsciousness. But even so he had been heard. For from the main road, twenty yards to the right of the scene that had just been enacted, came the sound of a motorist applying his brakes. Slaty heard them and licked his broken lips the more. He stared first at the prostrate figure at his feet, and then in the direction of the road.

And as he stood there undecided two

figures burst through the hedge lining the road. That was enough for Slaty. With a muttered curse he took to his heels and ran for his life.

"Look after that fellow on the ground!" said the taller of the two motorists who had appeared. "I'm going after that lumbering brute ahead! Sha'n't be long, my lad."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" came the reply. Ferrers Locke—for he the tall motorist was, and Jack Drake was his companion—sprinted across the carpet of pine-needles in chase of Slaty. It was an easy task, for the celebrated detective was in the best of trim, whereas Slaty's wind was impaired by hard living. Added to that, the bookmaker's wind hadn't yet recovered from the calls that energetic scrap had made upon it.

Slaty stopped, and wheeled round abruptly as the footsteps in his rear drew too near to be pleasant. His big fists came up menacingly, and his red face broke into a fierce, challenging scowl. But as his bleary eyes caught sight of the man who had chased him Slaty's lower jaw dropped, and he felt his fierceness oozing from him.

"Lord!" he muttered huskily. "Ferrers Locke!"

The detective drew level, and his memory at once supplied the criminal history of the man before him.

"Slaty, alias Markham, alias Wringer!" he said pleasantly. "And what brings you to Langsdale—eh?"

Slaty was silent. If there was one person in the whole wide world Slaty was afraid of it was Ferrers Locke, the detective. Three times had the bookmaker sampled the pleasures, or otherwise, of his Majesty's prisons, and each time the man responsible for his incarceration had been Ferrers Locke.

"What brings you here?" repeated Locke sharply. "Or perhaps I should say 'who?' " he added.

Slaty was still silent, but for all that he commenced to retrace his steps at the detective's request. And, needless to say, he took three times as long to arrive at the scene of his savagery as he had taken to flee from it.

By this time Jack Drake had revived Curly Taylor, and the young footballer was on his feet, supported by Drake's strong arm. He clenched his fists as he saw his late assistant returning.

"That's the scoundrel!" he exclaimed to Drake. "If you and your friend hadn't arrived on the scene I don't know what would have happened. That brute was prepared to mark me for life, I'll swear!"

"Mr. Locke will see that the brute answers for it," said Drake. "You trust the guv'nor!"

Taylor was yet to learn that the tall motorist who had come to his rescue was the famous detective himself, and that the lad supporting him was his youthful assistant, Jack Drake.

Slaty was sullen and silent as he came to a standstill before Curly Taylor. He was recalling, as a matter of fact, the drab surroundings of his prison life, and already repenting him of his eagerness to earn Speedlow's fifty quid.

"And so you've never had the pleasure of meeting our friend Slaty before?" said Ferrers Locke, when the young footballer had recounted the events of the last twenty minutes. "I'll wager your cousin couldn't say the same."

Both Slaty and Taylor shot the detective a keen look.

"My cousin—" began Curly.
"Your cousin, Lionel Speedlow," said Ferrers Locke. "He knows Slaty well. Doesn't he, Slaty?"

(Continued on page 28.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply.

THE NEW SUPPLEMENT.

NOW that you have sampled the first two issues of the new Supplement, I feel confident that you will be looking forward to Number Three. As the weeks roll by you footer fans will be able to collect a lot of useful information concerning the great winter game, for the footer field is viewed from every aspect by Harry Wharton's contributors—contributors, let it be said, who specialise in this type of work, and therefore know their job thoroughly. The cartoons by Jimmy Seed, the famous International forward of the 'Spurs, will be well worth keeping, likewise the aerial pictures of the various football grounds. If any of you are struck by brilliant ideas that will be interesting to your fellow-readers, do me the favour of jotting them down on a postcard, and then send them along. Now I want you all to spread the good news. There must be hundreds of chaps in your district who don't read the MAGNET. Well, it's been their misfortune, their loss. We are told that it is never too late to mend. It isn't. These non-readers must be given a chance of seeing for themselves exactly what fare is offered in our grand paper from week to week. I personally would like to talk to them individually. There wouldn't be much persuasion needed. But that course is impracticable. This is where I rely on you chaps. Just once a week single out a non-reader pal and see if you can convert him to our circle. If you do this no one will be more grateful than myself, or more grateful than the fellow who, up to now, has missed the MAGNET's wonderful attractions.

AND THE NEW SERIAL.

While we are on the subject of football, a reference must be made to the excellent serial story now running in our pages. The author knows the game inside out, and knows just how to weave sufficient plot into a footer yarn without spoiling the sporting interest. Ferrers Locke figures in this story, likewise Jack Drake, and between them they unravel as pretty a plot as has ever seen the light of day. This new feature, too, should be recommended to your non-reader pals, for surely there isn't a boy on earth who hasn't seen a game of football, who isn't interested in this healthy sport, at some time or another.

AND THE GREYFRIARS STORIES.

In this number you have just read of the entanglements that have gripped Mark Linley in a very tight embrace. The story is well told, and is "full of meat." There's a sequel to it, chums, that must not on any account be missed. Frank Richards is here shown at his best, and that should be sufficient recommendation for you to make certain of reading this coming treat.

A FILM SUPPLEMENT.

There comes a suggestion from Northampton that the MAGNET should devote four pages a week to the doings of celebrities in the film world. A good idea, but at the moment, of course, it is impracticable. We couldn't very well have a four-page Footer Supplement and a four-page Film Supplement at one and the same time. Still, I'll remember the notion, and when an opportune time arrives will put it again before you all for your consideration. Many thanks, my Northampton chum, for the suggestion.

FOR AMATEUR JOURNALISTS.

I have a letter to hand from F. A. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, London, N. 15. In this he asks me to tell Magnetites about the United Amateur Press Association. I am glad to do as he requests. Hosts of MAGNET readers are keen on the subject. My Tottenham chum tells me that the U.A.P. offers many advantages. These include a correspondence, exchange and back number section, and help with the business of story writing.

KEEPING COOL.

I'm not trying to be funny—never was much of a success in the humorous line—but merely referring to the subject of control. The boy who can keep cool in emergency is going to develop into the right sort of man. The lesson of control is a hard one and irksome to a degree, but it can be practised from very small beginnings. Take, for instance, the chap who quarrels with his neighbour—and we've all done that at some time or another. If he blazes up so much that his temper obscures his common-sense, his power of control vanishes. Often as not, in these cases the weaker fellow, providing he's got a grip of himself, surprises everyone by making the bigger chap look silly. Then again, the chap who won't, or can't, keep cool, often jumps to conclusions and acts upon them, only to find, sometimes when it's too late, that he has made a terrific mistake. It's just a question of control.

For Next Monday!

"THE HIDDEN FOE!"
By Frank Richards.

"THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE
WANDERERS!"

SPECIAL FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT!
By Harry Wharton.

And another topping portrait of a Greyfriars celebrity to add to your Gallery. Order early, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

The Case of the Langsdale Wanderers!

(Continued from page 27.)

"Aw, cut it out!" said the bookmaker, who was anxious to know his fate.

"And if Slaty's in Langsdale it's fairly safe to say that Speedlow is," remarked the detective.

"Well, you're right there," admitted Carly. "He came about a couple of hours ago."

The great detective seemed interested.

"Indeed! It's remarkable that Slaty should be up to his tricks with you so soon after Speedlow comes to Langsdale. One might almost imagine that you had quarrelled with your cousin, and—"

"Well, we did have a few words," said Carly, "and I biffed him in the chivvy for speaking ill of my mother."

"Ah!" ejaculated the detective. "Then it is easy to see that you have to thank your kind-hearted cousin for the unwelcome attentions of friend Slaty."

And he shot the bookmaker a challenging glance.

The scoundrel wilted beneath it—better testimony to the truth of Locke's bold statement than any words.

Curly started.

"But surely he wouldn't be worm enough to get a hulking brute like this to set about me?" he exclaimed.

"I am afraid you don't know your cousin yet," came Locke's answer. "And neither does Langsdale. But, changing

the subject, are you going to charge this man?" he added, indicating Slaty.

Curly Taylor shook his head.

"No; let the brute go. After all, I gave him nearly as good as he gave me. And in the future I shall know how to deal with Mr. Slaty. Let him go!"

Slaty did not lose any time. He was away like the wind.

Ferrers Locke watched him disappear, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"If I can give you a lift to your home, Mr. Taylor," he said at length, "my car is at your service."

"You are very kind," answered the footballer, "but I have only a couple of hundred yards to go now. But before I go, may I ask you, with all due respect, how it is you know of my cousin's association with the man Slaty?"

"Nothing remarkable in that," remarked Ferrers Locke. "A detective's business brings him into touch with rogues of all sorts."

"Then you are a detective?" exclaimed Carly. "I heard your companion refer to you as Mr. Locke. Are you, then, Ferrers Locke, the famous detective?"

"I am called that," replied Locke, smiling gently.

Curly Taylor's delight was manifest. He had read about the criminologist,

had followed his successes as recorded by the newspapers, with glowing interest. But he had never dreamed that he would meet him in Langsdale, and certainly never under the conditions in which he had.

Ferrers Locke looked on at the youngster's confusion with twinkling eyes. Then he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and drew out a visiting-card. Scribbling his new address beneath his Baker Street one, he handed the card to Carly.

"When you've got an evening to spare, come along and have a bite of grub with us, Mr. Taylor," he said.

"I'll be delighted!" exclaimed Carly joyously.

He pocketed the card, and then shook hands with his two rescuers, reiterating his thanks time and time again.

And when Locke and Drake had sauntered back to their car Carly felt for the piece of pasteboard. It nestled like a friend in his waistcoat-pocket, and it cheered him considerably.

"Fine fellow!" he muttered, as he strode out for home. "But I wonder what he's doing down here? Doesn't think much of cousin Lionel. Which reminds me I've something to say to that rotter!"

And ten minutes later young Carly was saying it!

(Lionel Speedlow has lost no time in showing himself in his true colours! See how he fares in his attempt to "manage" the Wanderers, in next week's fine instalment, boys.)

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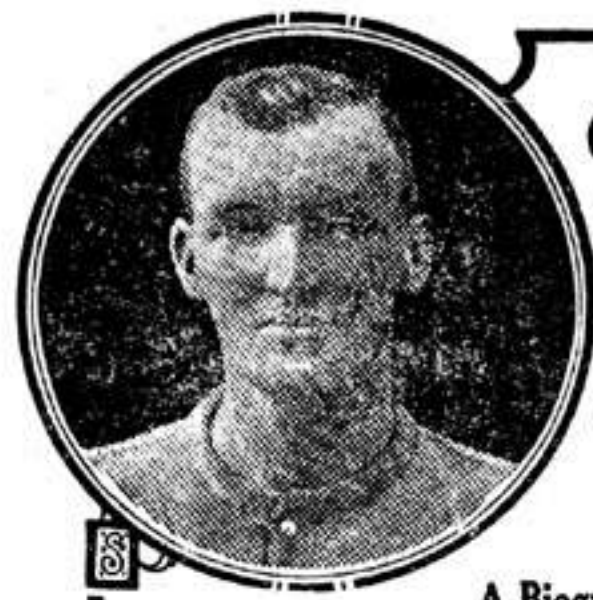
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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS
PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER



The CRAFT of CUNNINGHAM!

The Rise to Fame of Glasgow Rangers' Celebrated International

A Biography of this Famous Inside-Right. Contributed Specially by "REFEREE."

THERE is a little town in Ayrshire, Scotland, which is called Galston. They do many things in Galston, chief among which is the manufacture of lace curtains of filmy and extravagant design; they play many games, chief of which is football. They have a fine body of police and an expert collection of firemen, complete with hose and engines. Nevertheless, it is for none of these things that the township of Galston is famous.

For Galston is famous—oh, very! And the secret of its fame is—Cunningham!

I refer to Andrew of that ilk, more familiarly termed Andy. Andy was born in Galston, you see, and in Galston learned his football. And our friends north of the Tweed, who have seen it so often at Ibrox Park, will tell you, in glowing terms and with warm enthusiasm, that it is the most wonderful football in the world!

Is it? Well, honestly speaking, I can't make up my mind. I've seen Andy play at Ibrox Park, which is the Rangers' native home; I've also seen Buchan play, both for the Arsenal and Sunderland; and I've seen Kelly, the Sunderland stalwart, play, not only at Burnley and Roker Park, but on a dozen other grounds. Now, each of those, did not modestly in each case forbid, might lay claims to being the greatest inside-right in the world.

It is not for me to judge. I am not here as a football critic, but simply to write Mr. Cunningham's history. But if you want my opinion—I give it for what it's worth—there's not a snap of the finger to judge between the three of them.

No, indeed. In many ways Andy is reminiscent of Charlie Buchan; in many ways is he reminiscent of Kelly. He might be a dash of both, with a lump of Cunningham versatility and craftiness chucked in. You can't tell Andy anything about his job, and neither can I or anybody else, though I'm not saying, mind you, that he wouldn't be prepared to listen.

If you saw Andy you'd take to him at once. I did. He's one of the big sort, you know, with ever a welcome smile and ever a ready handshake. He's tall—stands five foot eleven in his socks—and his fresh-complexioned face, framed in a medium-cropped head of fair hair, impresses you as the face of a gentleman at once. And that's just what Andy is—both on the field and off.

Well, then, to get on with the washing. Andy, as I say, was born in this famous Galston place. When? On January 21st, 1891, if you must have the date. He went to school there, and played such a lot of football that, early in 1903, we find him figuring with conspicuous success in a strong local junior side called Newmilns—so conspicuous, indeed, that before that year was out he had earned junior International honours. It was while playing with this team in the following year—1909—that a Kilmarnock scout, keenly searching the district for promising talent, spotted Andy, and, fancying what a dash he would cut in the ranks of his famous Scottish League club, immediately snapped him up.

Strange, indeed, how the wheel of coincidence turns! Andy's first game with the seniors was against the club that he was destined to serve so ably in future years—the great Glasgow Rangers, indeed! And if one is to judge by the reports of the time, right well did Andy acquit himself in that match.

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Right well did he play in every match, indeed. Having taken to footer as a profession, Andy was determined to shine at it or bust. For six long years he delighted the Kilmarnock crowd, and during those six years his first big honour in the shape of an inter-League medal, came to him; for in 1912 Andy was picked by the Scottish League to play against the English League. That he did well in the match seems to be indicated by the fact that the selectors called upon him again in 1914, when the Scottish League played the Irish League. A proud man was Andy in those days, just approaching the zenith of his fame.

Had he pursued that career unhampered the honours list which concludes this article might have been twice the length it is; but you will remember that 1913 was a perilous year for budding Steve Bloomers, for it was during the following year that the War, that great upsetter of so many promising careers, football and otherwise, broke out. It did not immediately affect Andy, however, for ere it absorbed him two great events happened to him. One was his transfer to Glasgow Rangers, the other his marriage.

The first happened in 1915. For long the Rangers had cast envious eyes at this superb footballer, and in this year they clinched the bargain by paying Kilmarnock £1,100 for him—not an exorbitant fee as present transfers go, but reckoned to be high in those days, when the English record of £2,500—which Manchester City had paid to Derby County for Barnes the year before—was still a figure to be discussed among millionaires only. The second event—his marriage—being a purely personal affair, has not so much interest for us, but it is worth mentioning in passing, seeing that this is a biography. It took place on April 5th, 1916, when, having apparently profited in more than one sense from his association with his junior team, Newmilns, Andy married Miss Jessie Shields of that town.

After that, one gathers, Cunningham went for a soldier. He joined up in the R.G.A., and while training for a commission for that corps in London, threw in his war-time lot with West Ham. Football was an easy-coming, easy-going affair then, and clubs, while not taking part in competitive football, were anxious to get anybody to play for them. Andy opened the eyes of the London footballers, and 'tis said that the directorate round West Ham was still sighing for a sight of the Scots International in a claret-and-blue jersey again.

But 'twas not to be. In the fulness of time, having done his bit, Andy returned to the ranks of the Rangers, to show that, despite the interruption to his career, the War had done him little damage. In 1919 he started collecting International caps, and to-day he still goes on.

But Andy's collection is not confined to caps. Oh dear, no! Quite an impressive collection of other trophies fills his football museum, and among these are five League Championship medals. Right well has Andy earned those medals, too, for had it not been for his craft, his brilliance, and his prolific goal-scoring ability, it is safe to say that the Rangers would not have lifted the championship five times since the War. Many a time has Andy turned a possible draw into victory with a deft and bewildering turn of that amazing right foot of his.

In Scotland Andy, despite his growing years, still stands supreme as the master

inside forward. I say inside forward advisedly, for Andy has distinguished himself in both the inside-right and the inside-left positions, and has even played for his country in both positions.

As ever, rumour and Cunningham's name are busy. For the last five or six years, according to the people who are supposed to know, Andy has been on the point of becoming transferred South. The same yarn is going the rounds now, and will do, I s'pose, until it either actually happens, or Cunningham retires. I cannot see much likelihood of it, however. Andy is doing quite well as he is, thank you; for, in addition to playing regularly for the Rangers, he is proprietor of a thriving tobacconists and sports outfitting establishment in Govan.

His chief hobbies, apart from Soccer, are golf and tennis, in both of which he is an adept.

A full list of his honours follows here:

INTERNATIONALS.

1921-23-24.—For Scotland v. England.
1921-23.—For Scotland v. Wales.
1920-22-24.—For Scotland v. Ireland.

INTER-LEAGUE.

1912-20-21-22-24.—For Scottish League v. Football League.
1914-20-22.—For Scottish League v. Irish League.

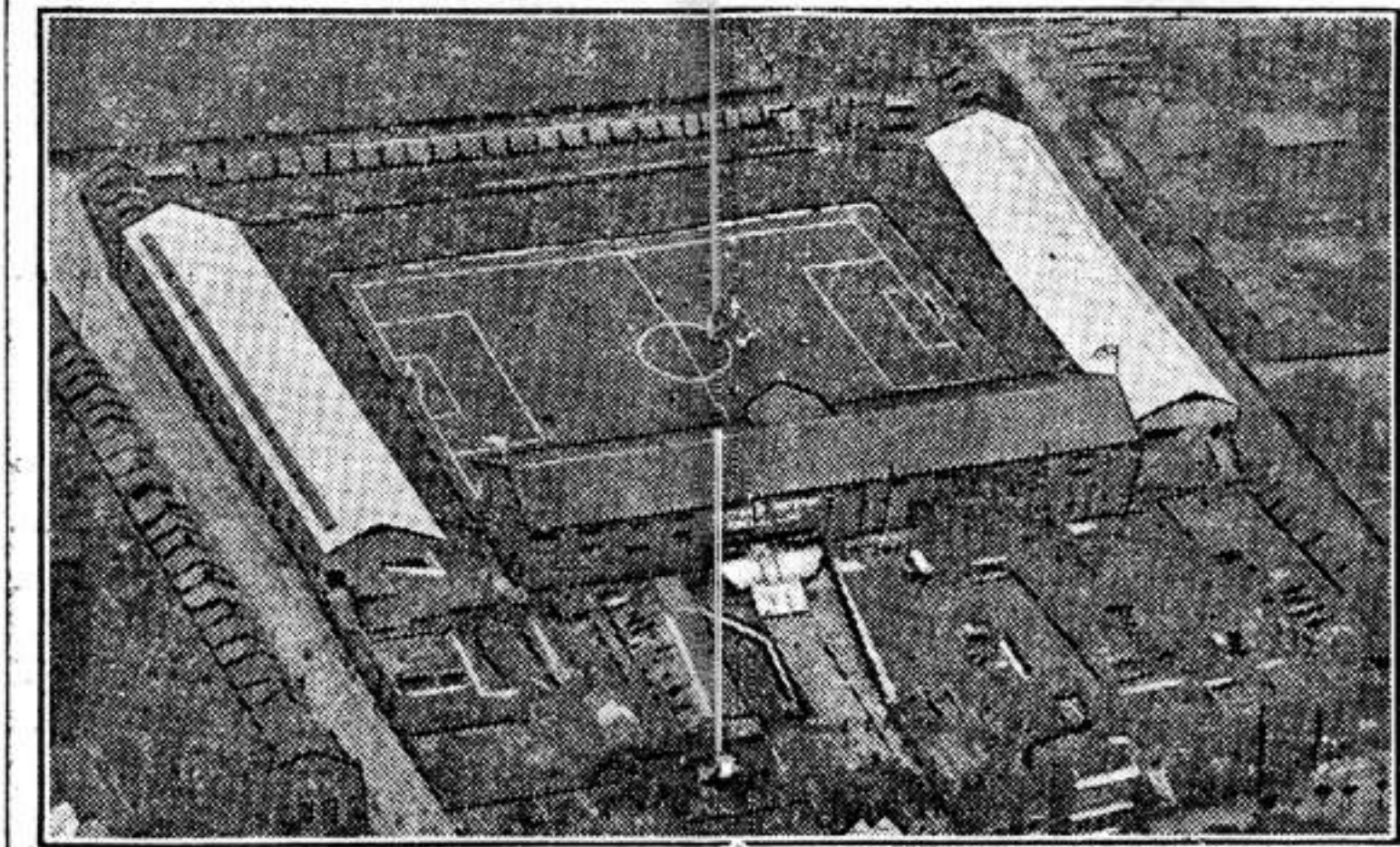
CUP FINALS.

1922.—Runners-up medal.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP MEDALS.

1919-20, 1920-21, 1922-23, 1923-24, 1924-25.

WHAT THE 'SPURS FOOTBALL GROUND LOOKS LIKE FROM ABOVE.



A bird's-eye view of the Club's ground at White Hart Lane.

The FOOTBALL NURSERY!

How to Get into First Class Football - and Stay there



A Few Useful Hints for you Footer Fans. By "OLD 'UN."

I EXPECT every lad who plays football at all—and there are few who don't play—dreams his dreams. In imagination he sees the day when he is in a big side, a popular hero in a Cup-winning team, or member of a side which carries off the First Division championship. Not all of us realise these youthful dreams, of course; but it is just as well that we should have them, because you cannot be any worse off for hitching your wagon to a star.

There follows on the dream a perfectly natural question—the way to set about the business of realising that dream. How does a lad ascend the ladder from obscurity to fame, and what are the things he must do to enable him to take those steps with any degree of certainty?

As a matter of fact, so far as the first few steps are concerned, it isn't as difficult as many people believe. The lads of to-day are lucky, for this reason—that the supply of good footballers is quite unequal to the demand. Never were the managers of the big clubs so nearly at their wits' end to find the sort of footballers they require, and never was the organisation for finding and training these young footballers so highly developed. Every big club has a small army of scouts searching the highways and the byways for the young players of ability, and the general organisation is so complete that there is precious little chance of a player of real promise going for long unseen or without a chance to show what he can do in better company.

Here's the rub, though. Far too many lads, promising players at school, are just allowed to drift hither and thither during the years between leaving school and the time they are old enough to play in men's

teams. In those years of drift the lads don't develop as they should. There is nobody to tell them the things they are doing wrong, and many of them are actually worse footballers, in the real sense, at the age of eighteen than they were at fourteen.

Well, thank goodness the people responsible for running the big football clubs are beginning to realise at long last that it pays to look after these lads. Several of the big clubs are now running what they call "nursery" teams, and from these they hope to find their first-class footballers of the future.

The case of the Fulham club can be taken as typical. Let me tell you what Fulham have done since "Andy" Ducat took over the managementship. They have got together a lads' team, up to sixteen years of age, given those lads a ground, and arranged a complete list of fixtures for them. Thus they have regular matches, but this is not the most important point. Those matches and those lads are watched from time to time by one of the several experts on the staff at Craven Cottage—Manager Ducat himself, Fred Spinksley, the old International winger of the Wednesday, or James Sharp, one-time Scottish International full-back of Chelsea.

These lads are given expert advice, taught little tricks, given ideas of team play and tactics generally, and are carefully watched lest they develop in the wrong way. It's a jolly good idea; for, in addition to getting the right sort of advice, the lads know that they have their feet on the ladder, and that if they don't climb it is their own fault. As yet it is impossible to say what sort of harvest will be eventually gathered, because it is only a few months since the idea was started. But I don't know the stuff of which young lads are made if this nursery of Fulham, and the nurseries run by other clubs, don't produce the really finished article in due season.

In a recent West Ham team there were six young players who had first been noticed when they were playing as schoolboys. And the minute they left school they were taken in hand by people connected with the West Ham club, coached, and trained until ready for real promotion. I have no patience with the folk who declare that we can't produce the footballers like we used to produce them. You lads of to-day are as good as the lads of any other day. What is wanted is for the managers to spend more time looking at the youngsters playing on their own doorstep and less time dashing up and down the country for the ready-made material. If my readers who want to get on in the football world know of big clubs near at hand which are developing this nursery idea, they should apply for a trial or two. And when they get those trials they must not forget that it will pay to listen to the advice of the experts.

I am not suggesting that it will be possible for every fellow who is dreaming his dreams to get right into one of these nursery teams immediately. Some of you will have to develop "on your own," as it were. Here is a bit of advice I want you to follow. Never lose an opportunity of watching the fellows who have made a name at the game. Watch for the way they do things—their tricks, their tactics, the way they trap the ball—and when you go from the match to play in your own lad's team, remember the things you saw and mould your play accordingly. You won't be a Charlie Buchan, a Bob Kelly, a Frank Osborne, or an Elisha

Scott in five minutes, but you must inevitably improve your game in the long run if you keep on trying to copy the masters.

Let me tell you what the Glasgow Rangers club did a year or two back. They signed on a young inside-right, but for a whole season they never let him play in one Saturday match. What they did was to provide this young player with a seat in the stand for every one of the Glasgow Rangers games, and they told him to watch the team play, and keep a special eye on the doings of Andy Cunningham, who played at inside-right, the position which the lad favoured. They were wise people, the directors of Glasgow Rangers, because they realised the value of giving the lad the opportunity of watching a master-hand at work.

Now, let us suppose that you have got your chance of showing what you can do with a side high up in the football world. There is need for care as to how the chance is used. Don't try to do too much in the trial run which may be given. The expert who is watching will not be impressed by the amount of dashing up and down the field done by the young player. Anybody can run about. He will be watching for signs of real football.

And if, as I hope, you do get your foot well planted on the ladder which leads to football fame, always remember this—that, although it may not be easy to get on the ladder, it is very easy to slip off again. "Billy" Meredith played first-class football in his fiftieth year. This is what he said to me when he was on the verge of retirement: "I wish I hadn't got old, because there are still so many things about football I want to learn." That's the spirit—the idea that there is always something to learn—which gets the lad right to the top of the ladder.

The prosperity of Newcastle depends upon two important things, and, happily, they seem to be getting both in plenty. Goals—and goals!

Unhappily, however, the price of both is dear. Don't forget the Novocastrians are reported to have paid £6,000 for Hugh Gallacher!

Baker, Buchan, Brain, Blyth, Butler—these are the Arsenal's busy B.'s!

A nickname conferred on Stoke is the "Potters." Would not a better name be the "Pot-shotters"?

Sunderland still have a right to be dubbed the team of all the "talents" when they can pay £6,500 for an inside forward.

Leicester City's ground is in Filbert Street, Leicester—which accounts, probably, for their reputation of being hard nuts to crack!

"Bedford scores three goals off his own boot," says a contemporary. Rather astonishing if he scored 'em off somebody else's!

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