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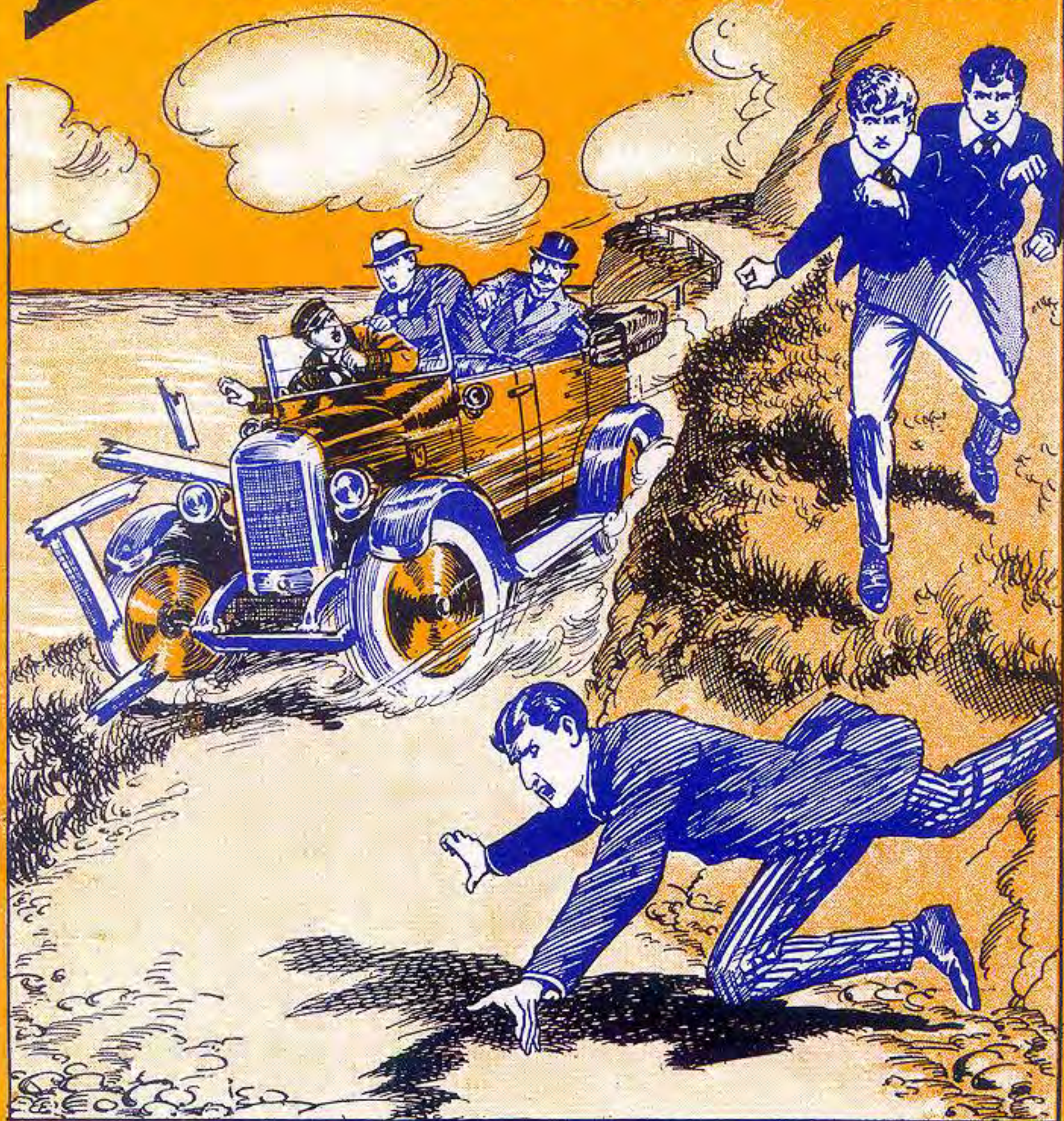
SPECIAL 4-PAGE FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT!

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CECIL PONSONBY CAUSES A SMASH!

As Ponsonby stumbled into the road, the car swerved to avoid running over him and dashed down the cliff slope. Little did Ponsonby know that his father was in it! (See the long complete school tale inside.)

AT DEAD OF NIGHT! While Greyfriars sleeps, a figure, vague and shadowy, steals through the studies of the old school, wreaking havoc wherever it goes! Who is—



A Powerful New Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, which describes the end of the bitter feud between Cecil Ponsonby, late of Highcliffe, and Harry Wharton & Co.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sentenced!

"GENTLEMEN—"
"Hear, hear!"
"Gentlemen—"
"Go it, Wharton—"

"On the ball!"

"Gentlemen, and fellow-Removites—"

"Which are the gentlemen, and which are the fellow-Removites?" asked Micky Desmond, glancing around him curiously. "Faith, and why doesn't he distinguish—"

"Dry up, Micky, and let him get on with the washing!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go it, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton glared round at the grinning juniors. Practically every fellow in the Remove was in the Rag, but not all were grinning.

Four of them were far from grinning. They were Skinner, Stott, and Snoop, and Billy Bunter, the fat junior. Skinner & Co. were looking savage and apprehensive; Billy Bunter was looking dismal and doleful.

All four stood together, in a kind of dock made of forms placed in a square. Outside the forms stood Bolsover, Bulstrode, and Hazeldene, and they were armed with rulers. Apparently they were there as warders to keep watch on the prisoners in the "dock."

It was equally apparent that the prisoners in the dock were being tried for some offence or other by the Remove. And Harry Wharton seemed to be taking the matter seriously, if nobody else was.

"You burbling chumps!" he snorted angrily. "How can a fellow speak with silly asses chipping in all the time? This is not a farce—as Skinner and his precious pals there will jolly soon find out."

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"Faith then, and why did ye—"

"Dry up, Micky!"

"It's meself that won't dry up, begorra!" said Micky Desmond excitedly. "I rise on a point of order. Was Wharton including the prisoners in the dock whin he addressed us as 'gentlemen and fellow-Removites?' Faith an if he was thin I disagree with him intirely. The prisoners are neither gentlemen nor fellow-Removites. They're cads and traitors, the spalpeens!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, Micky!"

"Cads and traitors they are!"

Skinner & Co. paled as the shouts went up. Many of the juniors present seemed unable to resist the chance of being funny, but they knew only too well that underneath it all there was a feeling of deadly earnestness.

"Well, you're quite right there, Micky," said Harry Wharton, with a glance of scorn at the prisoners. "Skinner and his pals have disgraced the Remove—more than disgraced it. They've backed up a rascal from another school in a dirty, rascally plot against a Remove fellow. If that isn't playing the traitor nothing else is."

"Hear, hear!"

Skinner glared savagely at Wharton.

"It isn't true!" he panted. "We didn't back Ponsonby up at all. He asked us to plant a fiver among Linley's belongings, and we refused; we spotted what his game was. He did the rest himself, hang him!"

"That makes no difference," retorted Harry Wharton, in disgust. "Ponsonby did the rest, we know; he planted a theft on Linley; Linley was sent to Coventry by us, and treated rottenly; and the Head sentenced him and he was sacked. You knew he was innocent, and kept your mouths shut, you rotten cads!"

"Yes, but—"

"There's no excuse for you!" snapped Harry Wharton. "You could have saved Linley from being sacked by speaking a word. You knew the fiver had never been stolen, that it was all a rotten scheme of Ponsonby's to pay out Linley. Ponsonby bragged to you afterwards what he had done—you admitted that to the Head. Yet you made no effort to save Linley. You stood by like the sneaking cowards you were and allowed a rotten injustice to take place."

Skinner licked his dry lips.

"We—we daren't speak—we daren't tell the truth," he stammered. "Ponsonby knows—er—too much about us. He vowed to show us up if we split. We had to keep silent."

"Rubbish!"

"It's true, I tell you!"

"It may be true—I suppose it is," said Harry scornfully. "You shouldn't be such smoky, card-playing, dingy cads! If you hadn't been, Ponsonby wouldn't have had this hold on you. Anyway, it makes no difference to us, Skinner. You acted the coward and heartless rotter to stand by and see Linley sacked without telling what you knew."

"If we had, we should have been sacked, too!" said Stott.

"No, you wouldn't," said Harry, his lip curling. "The Head would never have acted on any information that scheming scoundrel Ponsonby might have given—you know that. In any case, I don't believe you would have spoken up. You hate Linley as much as Ponsonby did, and secretly you gloated over his downfall. Anyhow, you've backed up a Highcliffe fellow against one of your own Form; and the Remove aren't standing it."

"Rather not!"

"Look here," said Skinner thickly, "we've already been punished for it. Ponsonby was sacked from Highcliffe and we've been flogged by the Head. Isn't that enough?"

"No, it isn't, Skinner—not for us. You were too lucky to escape with a flogging, my pippins! And a fat lot of good it's done you. Only this morning I happened to hear you sneering about Linley having had to go back to the factory. You've no regrets nor remorse for your caddishness. You imagined you were going to escape without being dealt with by the Remove. Well, you aren't going to escape. We were only waiting until you'd got over your flogging."

"We've had enough, you rotter!" "Not a bit of it," said Harry promptly. "The Head's shown you what he thinks about your conduct, and now we're going to show you what we think about it. You stood by and saw Linley sacked—sacked in disgrace from Greyfriars. He went home and started work in a factory again, and he would have been there now but for Bob Cherry—"

"Good old Cherry!" There was a roar, and Wharton thumped Bob on the back.

"It was all Cherry's doing," he said quietly. "Bob was the only fellow to believe in old Marky, and he stuck up for him through it all, and it was chiefly through him that that rascal, Ponsonby, was bowled out. But he was bowled out. His rotten trickery was exposed, and he was sacked from Highcliffe yesterday."

"And a jolly good riddance!" bawled Bulstrode.

"Yes, it is—for us and Highcliffe," assented Harry. "Anyway, we've seen the last of the rotter, and we've got Linley back again at Greyfriars. We've treated him downright shabbily, and I, for one, am more than sorry. We deserve to be kicked hard for ever believing old Marky capable—Ow! You idiot, Bob! What's the thumping game—"

"Kicking you, of course," said Bob Cherry, lowering his boot. "You said you deserved to be kicked; I'm giving you what you admit you deserve. Besides, I've paid you back for that thump just now."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Don't act the goat!" said Wharton, with a grin. "This isn't the time for silly joking, Bob. We've called this meeting to deal with those rotters."

"Then why don't you deal with 'em instead of gassing?" asked Vernon-Smith with a grunt. "Cut out the chin-wag, and put the rotters through it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Right!" said Harry. "We'll jolly soon do that. The Head's already tried them, and they've owned up to it all; so there's no need for a trial. I vote we sentence Skinner, Stott, and Snoop to a ducking in the fountain, and send 'em to Coventry for a week."

"That's the ticket!"

"Collar 'em!"

"Hold on! What about Bunter?" called Peter Todd, glancing rather compassionately at his fat, shivering study-mate. "We oughtn't to give him the same as the others. He's not quite so bad, after all."

"Well, no," agreed Harry Wharton. "He's more fool than knave, and we know how Ponsonby frightened him. Give the fat ass a dozen with the ruler, and let him go at that."

"Ow! Oh dear! I say, you fellows,

I'd rather you left out the dozen, and let it go at that!" mumbled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" But the Removites did not agree to Bunter's request, though they laughed at it. Bunter had certainly some excuse, being a hopeless funk and a thoughtless duffer. But he had transgressed as Skinner & Co. had done, and he went through it.

Despite his howls and pleadings, he was pulled over a form, and Bulstrode operated with a ruler, giving an extra one above the dozen for luck, as he expressed it. Then a dozen boots helped the yelling Bunter through the open doorway of the Rag.

"Now the others!" said Harry Wharton. "Yank them along!"

"Look—look here!" gasped Skinner, showing his teeth. "If you do it, I'll tell Quelch, you rotters! I've been punished enough!"

"Yank them along!" ordered Wharton.

Sentence of Coventry had been passed, and Harry did not reply to Skinner's remark, neither did anyone else. Dozens of hands gripped the three black sheep of the Remove, and they were hoisted up and spread-eagled, face-downwards. Then, with scouts going ahead to make sure that the coast was clear, the juniors swarmed out with the three condemned juniors in their midst.

Right along the passage, and out of the School House, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were frogs-marched into the Close. Mark Linley was standing at the foot of the steps—he had been purposely kept in ignorance of what was afoot—and he stared at the strange sight. But when he understood, he tried his best to save Skinner & Co. from the fate which threatened them.

But the forgiving Lancashire lad was unheeded, and the three black sheep were whirled towards the fountain. Then Skinner was swung up and let go. Splash!

"Yerrugh! Gug-gug-gug!"

Those unintelligible exclamations came from Skinner as he went under the icy water, and when he crawled out he was gasping and panting too much to add to them.

Then came Stott's turn, and he also went under with a dismal howl and a gasping gurgle, as did Snoop the next moment. All three were out again much quicker than they went in. Then, after standing a moment, gasping and panting to regain their breath, Skinner & Co. dived through the crowd, and tore towards the School House steps, ignoring the grim chuckles of their executioners.

Nobody attempted to stop them, and they vanished inside the Hall doorway, leaving a watery trail behind them.

"And that's that!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "Ponsonby's gone for good, and those rotters have been suitably punished. Thank goodness that ends the whole wretched affair."

"Hear, hear!"

But the matter was far from ended, as Harry Wharton & Co. were to find out in a sensational fashion.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Hand of an Enemy!

"YOU fellows seen Bunter?"

Donald Ogilvy asked the question. He asked it in a tone of concentrated wrath.

Harry Wharton & Co. happened to be walking towards their study the next day, just before dinner, when Ogilvy met them with that question.

The Famous Five stopped and grinned. It was nothing new to be asked that question in the Remove. Someone or other was always looking for Billy Bunter—usually after his "blood."

"Haven't seen the fat joker since class," grinned Harry Wharton. "What's the Owl been up to now, Ogilvy?"

"He's boned some chocolate of mine," growled Ogilvy. "It's missing, anyhow—a bob packet it was. I left it on the mantelpiece last night, like the careless ass I was. It's not there now."

"Serves you right, 'then," grinned Bob Cherry unsympathetically. "You know what Bunter is—always prowling round seeking what he may devour."

"There's a tin of cocoa missing from our cupboard, too," grunted Ogilvy. "I'll—I'll smash that fat thief!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled and passed on, leaving the irate Ogilvy vowing what he would do to Bunter when eventually he caught him. They met Vernon-Smith just coming out of his study, and he stopped them.

"Seen anything of that fat clam Bunter?" he asked grimly.

"Hallo!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You missed grub, too? Ogilvy's after Bunter's blood already."

"Some stuff's gone from my study," said Smithy. "I found the cupboard door open just now, or I shouldn't have been suspicious. Anyhow, a tin of biscuits, about a pound of cheese, and a jar of strawberry jam's vanished."

"Cheese?" echoed Harry Wharton, wrinkling his brows. "Blessed if I knew Bunter was fond of cheese; he usually goes for sweet stuff."

"I thought it rummy, too," said Smithy, nodding. "That's not all, though. A giddy rug and a dashed cushion's gone from the study."

"Phew!"

The Famous Five stared. If grub was missing, it was almost a certainty—indeed, it was usually taken for granted—that Bunter was the culprit. But even Billy Bunter wasn't likely to eat a rug and a cushion.

It certainly was a bit surprising.

"You must be mistaken, Smithy," said Harry Wharton, smiling. "Bunter never bones anything but grub, and he certainly wouldn't dare to tackle a cushion or a rug. Some other fellow's bagged them for a lark. Better tackle Bunter about the grub, though."

"And more power to your giddy elbow," grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter goes beyond the limit sometimes."

The chums of the Remove passed on, leaving the Bounder growling. They were looking thoughtful as they entered Study No. 1.

"Better look inside our giddy cupboard, chaps," said Frank Nugent. "If that fat pilferer is on the warpath—"

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five hurried to their study, alarmed suddenly for the contents of their study cupboard. Their fears were proved to be far from groundless. A tin of peaches, a cake, a tin of pressed beef, and last, and most surprising of all, a loaf of bread had gone.

"Bread!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Fancy Bunter boning bread! Ye gods! What's it mean?"

The juniors did not know what to make of it. And the next moment they made a still more startling discovery than the mere loss of "grub." In the corner of the study Bob Cherry suddenly sighted something—something that made him jump.

It was a pile of books, apparently taken from the bookshelves, most of

them school books. The backs had been ripped off, and the pages torn and scattered on the pile. That was not all. On the pile were two pairs of footer boots, hacked to ribbons. The boots belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent respectively. The pile was swamped with red and black ink.

The juniors blinked at the sight in amazement and growing indignation.

"Well, upon my word!" gasped Harry Wharton at length. "What rotten cads' done this, you fellows? This beats the band!"

The juniors were staring at the havoc when a knock came at the door, and Mark Linley entered quietly. His face was set and his eyes gleamed curiously.

"Look here, you fellows—" he was beginning, when his eyes fell on the havoc in the study, and he gave a start. "My hat!" he went on in astonishment. "So I'm not the only one, then?"

"You don't mean to say that you've had things damaged, too?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Mark Linley nodded.

"All my school books ripped up, a pair of footer boots destroyed, and even a coat that was hanging behind the door ripped up the back," he answered thickly. "That's not all, either. I found a photograph frame of mine in the fender, smashed up, and the photo torn to bits. It was a photograph of my mother," he added, involuntarily clenching his fists.

"Phew!"

"My troubles are not ended yet, apparently," went on Linley, rather bitterly. "One enemy's gone, but I've others left—you fellows have, too, it seems."

"It's too thick, Marky," said Bob Cherry fiercely. "But—but are my things all right? I haven't been to the study yet."

"I think so," said Linley. "Only my stuff seems to have suffered. But you'd better come and see, Bob."

"My hat! Yes!"

Bob Cherry hurried out, followed at once by Inky and the others. They reached Study No. 13, and soon discovered that Mark Linley had been wrong in his surmise. Bob Cherry's camera was found utterly smashed in the coal-scuttle, and Hurree Singh's stamp album was found in a drawer, torn and mutilated.

"Well, I'm hanged!" breathed Bob Cherry, his usually cheery face hard and set. "Someone's on the warpath and no mistake. This is a bit too thick for a ragging. The rotten cads, whoever they are!"

"I'm hanged if I can think of anyone who would—" Harry Wharton was beginning, when he paused, and a dark look came over his face. "Skinner and his pals," he went on suddenly. "The cads are mad about us sending them to Coventry, and for ducking them in the fountain. I wonder if—"

"They wouldn't dare!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Hang it all, Harry, even Skinner wouldn't dare to go to these lengths."

"I don't know," said Harry slowly. "My hat! What about the missing grub, though?"

"Well, Bunter's perhaps taken the grub, and Skinner and his pals have done the damage?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"It's been done either during morning lessons or in the night, of course," said Frank Nugent.

"That's pretty clear," said Harry Wharton. "But—but it's all jolly queer. This rotten outrage, and the missing

grub may have no connection at all, of course. But the funny part is the loaf and cheese and stuff—and the rug and cushion. It's queer all this happening together—"

Crash!

"Help! Yarrrough! I say, you fellows, save me—keep 'em off! Oh crumbs!"

It was Billy Bunter who interrupted Harry Wharton. He came rushing into the study, sending the door crashing back, and he scattered the Famous Five to right and left. Harry Wharton staggered back and sat down on the coal-scuttle, Bob Cherry sat down among the fire-irons with a crash, Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh thudded against the table, whilst Johnny Bull—the luckiest of the lot—staggered backwards and collapsed into the easy-chair.

There was a chorus of angry yells.

"You fat rascal!"

"You silly owl!"

"You podgy lunatic!"

"Collar the fat rotter!" roared Bob Cherry, leaping up wrathfully. "I'll—I'll burst him!"

"Owl! Help! I say, you fellows, I'm sorry! Oh crumbs! They're after me! Leggo, Bob Cherry!" roared Bunter.

There was a rush of feet in the passage even as Bunter spoke, and Ogilvy, Russell, Bulstrode, and Tom Brown dashed into the study. Bunter snatched himself away from Bob's angry grasp, and leaped behind Wharton, who was on his feet now.

"Owl! Help, Wharton!" he yelled in great alarm. "The silly asses are potty! It wasn't me—the rotters won't believe it wasn't me! Keep 'em off! Oh dear!"

Bunter broke off with a gasp as the invading juniors sighted him, and gave a yell of triumph.

"Here he is—the burglarious villain!" howled Bulstrode, making a leap towards Bunter. "Stand aside, Wharton, you ass! We're going to make that fat thief sit up this time!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Stand aside, Wharton!" gasped Donald Ogilvy. "I've found the villain at last. I'll teach the rotter to raid study cupboards to this extent! Now, you fat barrel—"

He made a rush at Bunter, who was hiding behind Wharton, his podgy hands gripping Harry Wharton's coat at the back. The captain of the Remove shoved a hand out and pushed Ogilvy away.

"Hold on!" he cried, grinning despite himself. "Let's go into this. Have all you fellows had grub pinched as well as Ogilvy?"

"Of course we have—and more things than grub!" snorted Bulstrode furiously. "Bunter's getting a bit too thick altogether! He's not only pinched grub from our study, but he's pinched a packet of matches and some candles—"

"And some tinned pears, and some sugar and tea from me," said Tom Brown wrathfully.

"And some condensed milk and butter from me," gasped Oliver Kipps, who had just appeared behind the others. "That fat worm's getting beyond the limit. He's starting—"

"I tell you it wasn't me!" yelled Bunter frantically. "I haven't been in any study since—I mean I haven't raided any studies at all—honour bright! I swear it wasn't me! You silly asses! Think I'd eat candles, and matches, and sugar and tea? I know absolutely nothing about it, I tell you. Smithy's lost a rug and a cushion, too. Think I'd take them? Of course it wasn't me!"

Bunter's voice was tearful, and there was a silence for a moment as they all stared at him. Somehow Bunter's denial rang true to most of them. Bulstrode gave a snort, however.

"The fat ass must have boned the things," he said angrily. "Here, let me get my hands on the fat rotter, I'll jolly soon make him own up."

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton, glancing keenly at Bunter. "I'm blessed if I don't think the fat villain is speaking the truth for once. It's the queerest thing out."

"Rot! Piffle!" snarled Bulstrode furiously. "Let us get at him, Wharton, hang you! If you'd lost the stuff—"

"We have lost stuff," said Harry Wharton calmly. "We've lost some peaches, a cake, a tin of beef, and some bread—"

"Bread? Phew!"

"Yes, bread! That makes it so queer," said Harry. "But that's not all, you fellows. Just look here!"

He indicated the pile of destroyed books and mutilated footer boots in the corner.

"That's been done since last night," said Harry, his eyes gleaming. "And that isn't all. Linley's had things smashed and damaged, too. Have any of you fellows had anything damaged like that?"

There was a general shaking of heads. Apparently only Harry Wharton & Co. and Linley had suffered in that outrageous manner.

"Cherry's had a camera smashed, and Inky's had a stamp album and its contents almost ruined," went on Harry grimly. "Who pinched the grub and stuff goodness knows! But whoever did this damage had a grudge against Linley and us five—that's pretty clear. And it wasn't Bunter—he wouldn't dare to do it."

"But—but it's too thick!" gasped Tom Brown, staring at the pile in the corner. "The grub going is nothing to that. Have you no idea who did it, Wharton?"

"Well, it's been suggested that Skinner, Stott, and Snoop might have done it in revenge," said Harry slowly. "But—but we've no proof whatever, so it's no good saying anything."

"They're the only chaps who've got a motive, though," said Bulstrode, with a grunt. "I should tackle the cads about it, any old how."

"They're in Coventry," reminded Dick Russell.

"This is too jolly serious a matter to think about that," was Harry Wharton's angry comment. "I'm hanged if I don't go and tackle the rotters! We'll be able to tell by their faces if it's them, likely as not. Come on!"

"What about Bunter?" snorted Bulstrode. "Say what you like, it was Bunter who pinched the grub."

"Yow! I didn't, I wasn't!" yelled Bunter, as Bulstrode took a stride towards him. "You fellows are mistaken, I tell you! I swear I haven't touched a single thing. Wharton, old fellow—"

"Yank Bunter along," said Harry Wharton. "We'll have this thing out before Skinner and his precious pals."

"Hear, hear!"

Some of the fellows didn't like the idea of speaking to the fellows who were in Coventry, but they followed for all that. As Harry Wharton explained, the matter was serious, and they were not letting Skinner & Co. escape just because they were in Coventry—if they indeed were guilty.

The Removites tramped in a body to Skinner's study, other fellows joining in on the way, and Bunter was hauled along in their midst. Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were at home, and they scowled at sight of Harry Wharton in the doorway. They looked alarmed, however, on sighting the fellows behind him. Skinner got down from the table where he had been sitting, and faced them, without speaking. His face was sullen and defiant, but if he had a guilty conscience he certainly did not show it now. Stott and Snoop looked frightened, and not a little astonished.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Shock for Skinner & Co.!

"SKINNER, we want a word with you," said Harry Wharton.

He spoke none too confidently, however. Somehow, Harry could not credit that Skinner & Co. were responsible for the outrages. Skinner was an exceedingly crafty youth, and he would hardly have moved in the matter of revenge quite so early after his punishment. Moreover, had Skinner & Co. done it they could hardly have failed to show some signs of guilt now; they would know perfectly well what the visit meant. But they showed no signs of guilt—only sullenness and defiance.

"I thought we were in Coventry," said Skinner, with a sullen sneer. "What do you want with us?"

"We're breaking the rules of Coventry for once, Skinner," said Harry Wharton. "Something serious has happened," went on the captain of the Remove, eyeing Skinner's face keenly. "Last night a lot of grub and stuff was pinched from various studies—or during lessons this morning. But that's not all! Some rotten hound or hounds have done damage in Study No. 1 and Study No. 13. They've ripped up books and done other rotten tricks, too."

"Well," sneered Skinner, though his face showed his surprise, "what have you come to us for? Are we in the habit of boning grub, anyway?"

"No. But it's been suggested that Bunter here boned the grub, and that you might have done the damage—out of revenge for what we did to you yesterday," growled Johnny Bull candidly.

Skinner stared at the juniors, and then his eyes gleamed angrily.

"You rotters!" he hissed savagely. "You're trying to find something else to down us over now. It's just like you, Wharton, to come down on us when anything goes wrong."

"Then you know nothing about it, Skinner?"

"Do we thump!" snarled Skinner. "Think I'm such a fool as to do anything like that just after—after yesterday. I'd know that you would come straight to me about it—just as you have done, hang you! Besides, if you want to know, we've missed some things since last night, too."

"You—you have?"

"Yes. Somebody's been prowling in here last night," said Skinner, his eyes glinting. "I thought it must have been one of you chaps prying round. My letter-case was open on the table, and I know I put it away just before going to bed. And there were some cig—some things taken from a drawer in the table here."



Gripped by many pairs of hands, Skinner was swung up and whirled into the school fountain. Splash! "Yerrugh! Gug-gug-gug!" These unintelligible remarks came from Skinner as he went under the icy cold water. (See Chapter 1.)

"Phew!"

The juniors stared at Skinner in amazement. There was no doubting the fact that Skinner was telling the truth—that he was not merely acting.

"You say there were some things missing from your table drawer—cigarettes, I suppose?" said Harry Wharton, his lip curling almost unconsciously.

"Yes—if you want to know, they were cigarettes!" said Skinner savagely. "I thought it was some of you chaps at first. Anyway, you can clear out. If you suggest I or Stott or Snoop had a hand in it I shall go to Quelch and have the matter thrashed out. So put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

But Harry Wharton did not attempt to suggest it again—nor did he trouble to question the three black sheep further. It was only too clear now that Skinner & Co. had had no hand in the outrages. It wasn't often the Famous Five felt they could take the word of Skinner & Co., but they felt themselves safe in taking it now.

"Well, this beats cock-fighting!" remarked Bob Cherry as they crowded out of Study No. 11. "If it wasn't Skinner, who was it?"

"Bunter!" growled Bulstrode. "He's ass enough, and he can be spiteful when he likes."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Don't talk rot!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "Bunter hasn't got the nerve to do a thing like this."

"Well, he must have boned the grub, anyhow," persisted Bulstrode.

"Perhaps the fat bounder has," said Harry. "But we can't condemn him just on bare suspicion, Bulstrode. Let the fat rotter go now. We'll get to the bottom of this yet, and if it is Bunter—well, he'll be for it."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, kick the fat ass away!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter departed, with Bob Cherry's boot to aid him in departing. Bunter might be innocent on this count, but he had a great many sins to answer for. And the rest of the juniors dispersed, breathing threats against the unknown study-raider. They were mystified as well as angry, however. The stolen "grub" might easily have been looted by Billy Bunter, though the fact that bread and such like foodstuffs had also been purloined was rather astonishing; Bunter usually went for delicacies. He might have had reasons of his own for taking them for all that. But the damaging of books and the other things was a different matter. It could scarcely have been Bunter, and if it wasn't Skinner & Co. then who was it?

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It was a deep mystery.

It was also a deep mystery to Skinner & Co. themselves—had the Famous Five only known it. When their visitors had departed those shady juniors looked at each other blankly.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Skinner. "It couldn't have been any of those chaps who came nosing in here, then."

"I knew it wasn't!" sniffed Stott.

"It's rummy!" said Snoop, staring hard at Skinner. "I suppose it wasn't you who ripped those books and things up, Skinner?"

"Of course it wasn't!" snapped Skinner furiously. "Think I'm such a dashed fool as all that, Snoop?"

"Well, it's queer," said Snoop. "It must have been Bunter, then. He's a spiteful little worm at times."

"Blessed if I know!" grunted Skinner, frowning. "If I thought it was that fat rotter who'd been nosing in my letter-case and boning my cigs, I'd flatten him to dashed jelly! I suppose those cads will suspect us, hang them!"

"Think they'll keep the Coventry stunt up?" said Stott.

"Of course they will!" sneered Skinner. "A fat lot I care if they do. Hanged if I want to speak to any of them! We're dashed lucky to get off with what we did, though," added Skinner, lowering his voice. "It beats me hollow why old Pon didn't split before he went."

"He vowed he would, too," said Snoop thoughtfully. "It was queer. He's such a spiteful, cruel rotter! I thought our number was up when he was sacked. I expected him to let it all out about our dealings with gee-gees and the cards. We were lucky."

"We were," agreed Skinner, suddenly grinning. "I owed the cad over three quid, and you fellows owed him nearly as much. I wonder what his blessed pater said to him when he got home? He's an old terror, I believe. I bet he tanned Ponsonby's dashed hide with a dog-whip."

"Well, he asked for the sack, and he got it!" grinned Stott. "We warned him not to try that dangerous game, and he laughed at us and sneered. Serves the rotter right, I say!"

"Oh, blow him!" said Skinner, getting up and yawning. "Thank goodness we've finished with him! He was useful with his cash, but he was a bit too dangerous a friend for my liking. Well, I'm going to watch out—Hullo, what's this?"

Skinner suddenly took something from behind a vase on the mantelshelf. It was an envelope, and as he looked at it Skinner saw that it was addressed to himself in large block capitals.

"What the thump—I haven't seen this before!" muttered Skinner. "Who shoved it there—either of you chaps?"

"Not me!" said Stott.

"Nor me," added Snoop curiously. "What is it?"

Skinner tore open the envelope, and glanced at the missive enclosed. He stared as he read it. It was written in block letters, and was short, reading as follows:

"Meet me in the Priory ruins at dusk to-morrow the 13th. Do not fail or you and Snoop and Stott will bitterly regret it."

That was all—no signature or anything else.

Skinner blinked at the message, and then he handed the sheet for his curious chums to see.

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"Look at that!" he gasped. "What the thump does it mean?"

Stott and Snoop read the brief message, and they jumped.

"Phew! It—it must be a joke!" breathed Stott. "Some silly ass trying to pull your leg, Skinner."

Skinner was frowning rather uneasily.

"I don't think so," he muttered, looking a trifle scared. "Don't you chaps see? This paper and envelope was taken from my writing-case—I'm certain of that."

He hurried across the room and took out his writing-case. Extracting a sheet of notepaper, he compared the watermark with that on the sheet bearing the message. It was the same—the envelope was also identical with the envelopes in the writing-case.

"Why didn't the idiot write in his own handwriting?" grunted Stott. "We might have known who it was then."

"Ass!" said Skinner. "Can't you see

A STORY YOU SHOULD READ!



NOW ON SALE AT ALL
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it's someone who doesn't want to be known—yet? Can't you see that the fellow who printed that message was the merchant who boned my cigs and messed up my writing-case? And it's pretty clear it was the chap who mucked up those fellows' books and things."

"Phew!"

"It—it's a dashed joke!" insisted Stott, though he did not speak so confidently for all that.

"Mucking up those books and things wasn't a joke," said Skinner impatiently. "I tell you this thing's genuine—I'm certain it is. Who in thunder can it be? And why should he want us to meet him at the old priory at dusk?"

"You're not going to take any notice of it?" gasped Snoop.

"Of course not!" snapped Skinner. "No thundering fear! Well, this beats the band, you chaps!"

He moved as if to throw the note into the fire, and then he drew back and placed it slowly into his pocket.

"It's jolly queer!" he muttered. "I—I don't like the look of it, you

fellows. I wonder if it could be Gaddy, or one of those fellows from Highcliffe?"

"Rot! Why should they do a silly thing like that?"

"They might not want anyone to know— Oh, hang the thing! Let's get out—Hullo! There's the dinner-bell. Good!"

As if relieved at the interruption, Skinner led his chums out of the room, the strange note safe in his pocket. But it was by no means forgotten. He could not forget that ominous threat in the brief message—neither could Stott and Snoop, for that matter. The three black sheep had very guilty consciences, and they feared the threat.

What did it mean? Who had sent it? Skinner puzzled over the problem all through dinner and all through afternoon classes. And the more Skinner worried over the matter the more certain he became that the thing was not spoof. Someone wanted to see them in the priory ruins in Friardale woods at dusk that evening—someone who knew something about them, evidently that was not to their credit.

"We'd better chance it and go, you chaps," said Skinner, as they discussed the strange message over tea. "After all, it may be Gaddy, though it's more likely to be one of those chaps from the Cross Keys in Friardale."

"Phew! I never thought of that," said Stott quickly. "It may be old Cobb, or Hawke. You—you'd better go, Skinner."

"If I go, you chaps go with me!" snapped Skinner, showing his teeth in a sneering grin. "I like that—you fellows advising me to go and funking it yourselves. We'll all go, my pippins, and we'll start out now. Never mind the dashed tea-things! Come on! I'm blessed if I like the idea of being about those rotten ruins at dark, though! Come on!"

"But supposing—"

"Hang it! Come on!" growled Skinner impatiently. "There are three of us, aren't there? Anyway, we've got to go—I feel queer about this somehow. We'll have to risk it and go. I'm jolly curious to see who the merchant is, too. Buck up with your caps."

Stott and Snoop got their caps—with obvious unwillingness. But they did get them, and they accompanied Skinner as he led the way out of doors.

The wintry dusk was just beginning to fall, but it was quite light yet, and Snoop and Stott, now they had started, were only too keen to hurry. Like Skinner, they did not like the idea of the ruins at dark—or late dusk.

It was only a few minutes' walk, and soon the three were picking their way among the fallen blocks of masonry round the ruins in the woods.

The old ruins were very silent and still.

With the stark, wintry trees around, and the dead creepers trailing over shattered walls and through broken casements, it did not present an inviting aspect by any means.

The juniors picked their way slowly, with nervous glances into the shadows cast by the broken walls and trees. In the summer-time the ruined priory was a favourite place for picnics, but in the winter it was deserted and silent.

Skinner pursed up his lips and gave a low whistle—it was very low, and it was very trembly. Still and mysterious the ruins looked, and the juniors' errand was mysterious also. Skinner did not like it any more than his chums did. But another sort of fear had nerved him to obey the command—for command it was.

There was an immediate answer to the whistle.

With a suddenness that made Skinner & Co. almost jump out of their skins a figure emerged from behind a broken wall scarcely a couple of yards from them.

The trio of Removites stared at the figure, and then they gave simultaneous and startled gasps.

They recognised the figure at a glance. It was Cecil Ponsonby—the expelled dandy and rascal, late of Highcliffe School.

But not the Ponsonby they had known—not the elegant, monocled dandy of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, the fellow who had always been the best-dressed fellow at Highcliffe, or at Greyfriars, either, for that matter.

It was a far different Ponsonby. He wore no monocle, nor did he swing a natty, gold-mounted cane. His clothes were muddy and torn and crushed, and his face was dirty, and his hair dishevelled. But his haughty, arrogant, supercilious sneer was still there.

He looked at them with glittering eyes as they stared at him blankly in dumb-founded amazement.

"So you've come, then, Skinner?" he sneered. "I fancied you would somehow, you know. You've got such dashed guilty consciences, haven't you?"

"Ponsonby!" gasped Skinner. "What—what on earth are you doing here like that? What's happened?"

"That's what a good many people would want to know if they saw me," smiled Ponsonby blandly. It was only too clear that Ponsonby himself had not changed, if his clothes and appearance had. "My dear men, did you think I was going home to be flogged like a dashed dog? Not likely! I thought of a better game than that—for a time, at all events. You got that note without anyone spotting it, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes. But—"

"Rather surprised you, what?" smiled Ponsonby, his eyes glinting as he noticed Snoop eyeing him up and down. "Yes, Snoop, I look rather a nut, don't I? This is what those dear, saintly chaps in your confounded Form have brought me to. This is the work of Wharton and Cherry and Linley and that crowd. But I'm not down and out in one way, if I am in another. I've my little account to settle with Wharton's lot before I leave this locality, dear men."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Quarters!

PONSONBY spoke in a smiling, bantering manner, but underneath it the Greyfriars fellows detected a steely note that made them shiver.

"It—it was your own fault, Ponsonby," muttered Skinner, eyeing him uneasily. "I told you it wasn't safe, that trick you tried. I told you—"

"I know you told me so," agreed Ponsonby. "But you'll oblige me by not reminding me of that, friend Skinner. I hope you did not mind me helping myself to your writing-paper and envelopes, likewise the cigs?" he went on calmly. "I've smoked all the cigs; if you've any more on you—"

He paused, smiling. Skinner had given a sudden start. He had forgotten for the moment the strange manner in which he had received the message.

"Ponsonby!" he gasped. "How—how did you put that note there? And how did you get into Greyfriars? It—it was you, then—you who raided the

studies and mucked up those things belonging to Linley and Wharton's lot?"

He spoke as if he could scarcely believe what he stated himself, and he was almost staggered when Ponsonby nodded coolly.

"Yes, it was little me," he assented. "It was the grub and stuff I really came for, of course. But I thought I'd do those little things just to give them a taste of what they're going to get, Skinny. It wouldn't do, I reasoned, to do too much at one fell swoop. I don't want them to get on my trail, y'know."

Skinner & Co. said nothing. They were full of sudden dread and alarm. They knew only too well that Ponsonby was in deadly earnest—they knew he was capable of any rascality. And to think they had only that evening been congratulating themselves that they were "finished" with Cecil Ponsonby, the fellow who was as dangerous a friend as an enemy!

"Ponsonby!" panted Skinner at last, white-faced and trembling. "You—you must be mad to stay about here—and madder still to enter Greyfriars! The—the Head will have no mercy on you if you are caught. For Heaven's sake, drop this mad craving for vengeance! You—you'll drag us into it, too, if you're not careful!"

Ponsonby smiled, showing his well-kept teeth.

"Thinking about your own dashed skins again, Skinner!" he said banteringly. "What a funky little sweep you are, y'know! I suppose you were quite relieved when you knew I hadn't given you away to your Head, as I promised to do if I went under?"

Skinner said nothing.

"I can see you were," said Ponsonby. "Well, as it happened, I never intended to go home from the moment I knew I was sacked. I made other plans. And," went on the rascally junior grimly, "I shall need you three to help me through with them. See?"

Skinner & Co. did see.

"I—I refuse to help you again," said Skinner through his teeth. "You—you go too far for me, Pon.. I won't have anything more to do with you, you rotter!"

"What an error!" said Ponsonby calmly. "My dear man, do you think I will allow you to drop me now I need a few good, kind friends? Not so, Skinner! I may not be so useful to you; I may not have the cash to chuck about that I used to have. But I fancy you won't find it easy—or safe—to throw me over, y'know. Nor will Gaddy and the others at dear old Highcliffe. Ha, ha! I can just imagine how they shivered, expecting me to split on them before I departed. I shall want you to let them know I'm here presently, Skinner."



Crash! "Help! Yarrrough! I say, you fellows, save me—keep 'em off! Oh crumbs!" It was Billy Bunter who interrupted the Famous Five. He came rushing into the study, sending the door crashing back, and scattering the occupants to right and left. There was a chorus of angry yells. "You fat rascal!" "You podgy lunatic!" "Collar the fat rotter!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Where—where are you staying, Ponsonby?" said Skinner.

"Hand me a cig, and I'll escort you to my present quarters," said Ponsonby easily. "They're not quite so comfy as my old study at Highcliffe, of course. But I'm hoping you fellows will help me to make them more comfy."

He took the box of cigarettes Skinner silently handed over, and, after taking one, he slipped the box into his pocket.

"You'll have to indulge in a better brand than these if you're going to keep me supplied in fags, dear man!" he remarked, with a faint sneer. "But—come on!"

He glanced round him quickly, and he led the way among the fallen masses of moss-grown masonry. Skinner was white-faced now. He could not fail to understand the meaning in Ponsonby's remarks about the cigarettes. The three scared Removites followed with growing uneasiness as Ponsonby walked on, stopping at last at the entrance to the vaults beneath the old priory ruins.

Skinner & Co. looked suddenly thunderstruck. They seemed to understand now.

"You—you mean you're hanging out down there, Pon?" gasped Snoop, aghast.

"Exactly," assented Ponsonby. "My dear man, you don't suppose I hang out on the treetops like the merry old birds? Allow me to lead the way."

He descended into the gloomy darkness, and stopped at the big, black door of the vaults. Skinner & Co. hesitated, and then they followed Ponsonby, exchanging blank looks as they did so. Ponsonby picked up a lantern from the flagstones and carefully lighted it. Then he pushed open the old, rotting door. An icy chill of air greeted them, and all three Removites shivered violently. It was like a graveyard down in the shadowy vaults.

"Nice, isn't it?" remarked Ponsonby, his dark eyes glittering strangely in the gloom. "You fellows can imagine how I envy you Remove fellows in your warm little cots at night—especially Wharton and his lot."

Skinner & Co. said nothing.

Ponsonby laughed strangely, and shone the light round the dark, gloomy interior. Then he started across the flagstones, the lantern casting fantastic, grotesque shadows on the gloomy walls of stone. He stopped at last, apparently before a blank wall of stone.

Skinner & Co. understood then.

"The—the secret passage!" faltered Skinner. "You—you're not—"

"Yes, I am," said Ponsonby, with a grim, mirthless chuckle. "You Greyfriars chaps are not the only ones to know the secret passage. My hat! I believe it was you, Skinney, who first showed me it."

Skinner nodded. He remembered now that it was he who had shown Cecil Ponsonby the secret passage that led from the vaults of the old ruined priory under the wood to the vaults beneath the ruined chapel at Greyfriars. He bitterly regretted having shown it to the rascally Ponsonby, now. Most fellows at Greyfriars knew about it, though few had explored it thoroughly. But very few outsiders knew about it at all.

Cecil Ponsonby did, however.

He pressed his hand without hesitation on a certain spot on the flagged wall, and as he did so the large mass of stone swung round on a revolving pivot.

It revealed a passage, dark and silent.

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Ponsonby flashed his light into it, and passed through. Skinner hung back, as did Stott and Snoop.

"Look—look here, Pon!" gasped Skinner, in a low voice. "We're not going in there!" He shuddered.

"Yes, you are," smiled Ponsonby. "My dear man, there's nothing to be frightened of! I came here the night following the day I left dear old Highcliffe. I got out of the train at Courtfield, and simply toddled here."

"This passage leads to the vaults beneath the chapel at Greyfriars!" muttered Skinner.

"Of course, it does. It's on your way home, as it were. It's only a matter of walking home underground instead of above ground," grinned Ponsonby. "I thought it wasn't safe to ask you to meet me near the chapel, y'know. Come on!"

He led the way into the dank passage. Skinner hesitated, and then he stepped through the secret entrance. He was followed by Stott and Snoop very, very gingerly. Ponsonby closed the revolving door. He chuckled, and led the way on through the tunnel beyond.

The darkness was intense, save where the rays from the lantern cut it. As the juniors advanced, the light glimmered on slimy walls, and their feet splashed more than once in pools of water. More and more did Skinner & Co. regret having followed Ponsonby in the first instance. But they dare not go back now. They advanced in silence, Skinner & Co. shivering as with the ague—not only at the coldness of the place.

It was a strange, eerie experience, doubly so to such funks as Skinner, Stott, and Snoop. They had always believed Ponsonby to be more or less of a funk, but they were learning something of that cynical and supercilious youth's twisted character that they had not suspected before.

It was not a long journey, the passage going almost in a direct line, and level all the way. It seemed an age to the shivering, Greyfriars trio, however, before Ponsonby stopped before another apparently blank stone wall. He pushed at it, and the stone revolved with a grinding, scraping sound.

They passed through, finding themselves in a stone, square chamber. Over an arched doorway facing them they were surprised to see a curtain hung. They were still more surprised as Ponsonby smilingly raised the lantern and shone the light around him.

"My new quarters!" he said grimly. "The vaults are just beyond the curtain, as you know—the vaults beneath the ruined chapel of Greyfriars."

But Skinner & Co. scarcely heard Ponsonby's bitter remark. They were staring at a miscellaneous collection of articles on the stone floor. There were a couple of blankets and a rug. Skinner recognised the rug at a glance. It was Smithy's missing rug! On a sheet was a little pile of foodstuffs—tinned beef, and other tinned stuffs; bread-and-butter, and cheese in paper; a kettle and a small spirit-stove, and a large jug of water in addition to many other articles.

"Oh!" said Skinner. "But—but what beats me is how you got into Greyfriars to collar all this stuff, Pon?"

"That's a little secret of my own, friend Skinner," said Ponsonby coolly. "I'm keeping that to myself. I may give you chaps a look-in to-night, though I fancy you won't see me. I've got plenty of grub now, but there are several things I want you to get for me, Skinner. I want a heating-stove—one of those lamp things. It's dashed cold down here. I can tell you! You can

get it to-morrow in Friardale, and bring it along to the priory—see?"

"But—but we daren't!" stammered Skinner. "We'd be seen. Besides, we haven't the cash, Pon."

"You must get it, then!" said Ponsonby, with a cruel grin. "I shall need quite a lot of cash before I'm through with you, my pippins! The stove is only the beginning. I want to make this place comfortable during my short stay here."

"Yes, but—"

"Then you can also bring some playing-cards—or ask Gaddy to bring some. I want you to let Gaddy, Vavasour, Monson, and Drury know how I'm fixed up here. Then we can all have some nobby times down here—what? I sha'n't be lonely out of school hours with you chaps and my old pals from Highcliffe droppin' in now and again—what?"

Skinner & Co. were silent. They saw it all now. Ponsonby meant to live down here—live on them, and on what he could steal from Greyfriars, to put it bluntly. Meanwhile, his strange quarters were to be used as a secret gambling den. That was obviously Ponsonby's amazing idea.

The prospect was not an alluring one to Skinner & Co.

They knew what would happen if they refused, however.

Skinner's face was white. So this was why Ponsonby had not kept his word and turned traitor!

"You must be mad, Pon!" he gasped. "You're safe enough down here, I'll admit, though I'd give myself up before I'd live down in this awful hole. But—but for Heaven's sake stop breaking into Greyfriars! You're bound to get caught sooner or later."

Ponsonby laughed.

"My dear man, I shouldn't be down here at all, if I thought I hadn't Greyfriars at my mercy!" he said, his glinting eyes in strange contrast with his smile. "I'm down and out, but the fellows who're responsible for my dashed plight are going to pay the piper. You'll see things happening in your rotten school soon, Skinney!"

"If you'll take my advice, Pon—"

"I'm not in the habit of taking advice from you, Skinney!" said Ponsonby, with a sneer. "All you've got to do is to do as I ask, and keep mum. Got that?"

Skinner bit his lower lip hard.

"I see you understand," smiled Ponsonby. "Very well! Now listen! I want you to get me a heating-stove by to-morrow night, Skinner—"

"I haven't the money, you fool!"

"You must get it somehow," said Ponsonby. "You will also ask my dear old pals, Gaddy and the others, to come to the old priory with you. Good gad! We ought to have some rare old times down here, after all! Business and pleasure combined—what? Well?"

Skinner looked helplessly at Stott and Snoop, who were obviously in a blue funk about the whole business. Ponsonby watched them, and smiled sarcastically as Skinner nodded slowly at last.

"I suppose we'll have to do it, Pon!" he breathed. "We'll try to get the stove, anyhow, and we'll send a message to Gaddy at Highcliffe. But—but—"

"Never mind the billy-goat stuff," remarked Ponsonby. "You just do it; and be dashed careful you're not seen entering the vaults at the priory. You can leave here through the chapel above; that ought to be safe enough, anyhow. Now you'd better be sliding."

He picked up the lantern, and Skinner & Co. followed as he led the way to the great oaken, iron-studded door through

the vaults beyond the curtain. He pulled away a great stone and swung the door back.

"I—I thought that door was kept locked. Gosling has the key in his lodge," stammered Snoop. "How did you get it open, Pon?"

"It was open," grinned Ponsonby. "Some merry individual must have left it unlocked by accident. Anyway, there you are—now hook it!"

And Skinner & Co. "hooked it"; they were only too thankful to do that. They ran up the old steps into the chapel ruins, and thence out into the open air. It was deep dusk now, and the three shivering black sheep ran across to the cloisters, and very soon they were inside the warm, lighted hall of Greyfriars. They did not discuss the matter until they were safe in their own study, and then Skinner closed the door and turned a white, glum face to his companions.

"Well, that's done it!" he breathed. "We're in for something now, you fellows. That dangerous, reckless fool will get us all sacked before he's finished."

"I—I don't like it at all!" groaned Stott.

"Like it of course you don't like it!" snarled Skinner savagely. "The brute's mad—mad as a hatter! He's out to do all the damage and harm he possibly can. I—I wish we'd never seen the dashed rotter! I wish we dare defy him!"

"We daren't!" stammered Snoop.

"I know we daren't," groaned Skinner. "My hat! We shall have to walk warily now."

"You—you really mean to give way to the rotter?" said Stott.

"Yes; we've got to unless we want to be sacked. One's a certainty, and the other's a risk—though a big risk. But we're taking the risk, chaps. You fellows agreeable?"

And Stott and Snoop groaned and nodded. There was nothing else for them to do—being, like Skinner, hopeless cowards with guilty consciences. But they dreaded what the future held in store.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Worse Still!

"GREAT Scott!"

Harry Wharton staggered back into the arms of Frank Nugent as he made that startled exclamation.

It was before morning lessons two days later. Nothing as yet had been discovered in regard to the authors of the outrages on the Remove studies. But other things had been discovered. Before that day was out other fellows found that they had lost things. Peter Todd announced that some knives, forks, and spoons had gone from his study; Micky Desmond made a terrific outcry over the loss of a teapot and some cups and saucers and a plate. Morgan and Rake, from the same study, had lost an electric pocket-torch and a bike-lantern between them. Fisher T. Fish almost went into hysterics over the loss of a spirit-stove and a saucepan. It was raiding on a wholesale scale, and it was all most mysterious and perplexing.

But the most puzzling point about the whole business was the fact that only in Study No. 1 and Study No. 13 had any malicious damage been done.

It was only too clear that the miscreant, whoever he was, was a bitter enemy of the Famous Five and Mark

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 23—Percy Bolsover (of the Remove).



Taller, stronger, and heavier than anyone else in the Greyfriars Remove, Bolsover major is very much given to bullying. In his early days his blustering, swaggering manner earned him the title of the cock of the walk. But every dog has its day, and Bolsover's days as the champion fighting man of the Remove are o'er. For all that, he is still the terror of the "non-combatant" class in the Remove. Yet, in spite of it all, Bolsover major is not an out-and-out rotter. If we were characterising him in colour we would say that he is neither white nor black, but a blend of each, making grey. A mixed character, indeed, with good and bad in him. And at present we are seeing more of the good than the bad. Shares Study No. 10 with Napoleon Dupont, and has a minor in the Third Form.

Linley. Yet, though suspicion fell upon Skinner & Co. to some extent, few fellows really believed them responsible; especially as Skinner had loudly demanded that Mr. Quelch should be told about it.

The Remove had gone to bed that night buzzing with the queer affair, and wondering if there would be a repetition of the outrages in the night.

But nothing had happened that night, and their fears had come to nothing.

And now, on the morning of the second day later, Harry Wharton gave that startled exclamation as he looked into Study No. 1, and discovered that the raids were not ended by any means.

What he saw was startling in the extreme.

The study was wrecked; no other word could describe it.

Pictures, photo-frames, vases were smashed, and lay on a heaped-up mass of torn books and crockery on the floor. Foodstuffs from the cupboard lay over the floor—jam and butter and sugar and tea and cocoa had been emptied in an obviously deliberate manner over the study carpet, which was also bespattered with ink and gum, and cut in several places. Over the lot coal from the coal-scuttle, and cinders from the hearth had been strewn all about the room.

Altogether it was a shocking sight.

The two juniors stared at it aghast. They could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes.

"Franky!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Am I dreaming? Oh, my hat, what an awful mess! Great Scott!"

With growing anger and indignation in their faces the owners of Study No. 1 stared at the havoc.

"Well, this is the outside edge, Harry!" breathed Frank, finding his voice at last. "What scoundrel can have done this? It isn't a mere rag; look at the spiteful damage done!"

Harry Wharton's eyes were glittering with rage.

"Oh, the scoundrel!" he panted. "Franky, run and bring Bob and the others here!"

Frank Nugent hurried away at once to Study No. 13. He got a second startling shock when he arrived there. The room was full of Removites, and the place was wrecked, like Study No. 1. The room buzzed with indignant voices.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Frank Nugent, eyeing the upheaval aghast. "So we're not the only ones, then?"

"My hat! Has your study been wrecked, too?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, his face red with wrath. "You don't mean to say—"

"Yes, it has!" snapped Frank Nugent.

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"Worse, if anything, than this. Come and have a look."

There was a rush to follow Frank as he led the way back at a run to Study No. 1. Evidently Bob Cherry and his study-mates had discovered their room wrecked first, and had called the attention of other Removites to it. There were startled exclamations on all sides as they saw Harry Wharton standing amid the ruins.

"Phew!" breathed Peter Todd. "This takes the thumping Huntley & Palmer, and no mistake! It's getting too thick altogether."

"Too thick!" repeated Harry Wharton, his voice shaking with fury. "Thick isn't the word for it!"

"Hallo, what's this? Well, I'm hanged!"

It was Wingate, the skipper of Greyfriars. He pushed his way into the study, and he jumped as he saw the state of it.

"What in thunder does this mean, Wharton?" he gasped. "Did you find the place like this?"

Harry Wharton nodded, his face dark. He could scarcely trust himself to speak.

"And ours is just about the same," said Bob Cherry thickly. "What do you make of it, Wingate?"

Wingate set his lips.

"I'll report this to Mr. Quelch," he said grimly. "There's too much of this kind of thing going on. You kids can march off to Big Hall now—sharp! There's the bell for General Assembly going now."

As Wingate spoke, the big bell in the school tower began to ring. The juniors gazed blankly at Wingate.

"A General Assembly!" echoed Harry Wharton. "Why, what—"

"You'll know soon enough," said Wingate grimly. "Cut off—sharp!"

The juniors hurried away to Big Hall, joining the swarm of questioning fellows making their way there. Soon the big hall was filling with seniors and juniors, excited and expectant. Several of the prefects looked as if they knew what was "on," but the school in general was absolutely "in the dark."

All were seated at last, and as silence fell Wingate began to call the roll. When this was done, Dr. Locke stepped forward on the raised platform, and raised a hand for silence. His face was stern.

"Boys!" he began, his quiet, steady voice carrying to every corner of the packed assembly. "I have called you together on a very serious matter. During the night a number of sports trophies, won at various times by this school, have disappeared."

The Head paused, and there was a deep murmur of anger and amazement.

"For certain reasons," went on the Head grimly, "I do not believe burglars are responsible for the happening. At the same time outrages were also committed in certain of the junior studies, I understand. It is more than possible that the acts were committed by the same person, or persons. For this reason, if for no other, I do not propose to bring the police into the matter—yet. I am disposed to believe that the person, or persons responsible took the silver cups and other trophies, not for their intrinsic value, but as an act of malice against this school. If any boy present knows anything whatever about the matter, I strongly advise him to stand up here and now."

Dr. Locke waited, his keen glance scanning the rows of scared faces. He

waited a full minute, but no boy stood up.

"Very well," the Head continued grimly. "I am convinced from the—er—hem—unprofessional manner in which the cases were broken open, that they were taken by someone other than a burglar. Either they have been removed as a foolish practical joke—which seems to me an improbable theory—or they have been taken away out of sheer malice by some person or persons unknown. I will give the culprit or culprits until to-morrow evening to confess. If the trophies have not been replaced by then I shall inform the police, and leave the matter in their hands."

The Head ceased speaking, and for another minute he waited. Then he signed to Mr. Prout, and left the platform, his gown rustling. The bell rang, and the next moment the signal for dismissal was given, and the fellows began to file out of Big Hall amid a hubbub of excited chattering.

The news had astounded them all.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Harry Wharton, as the Remove went to their Form-room. "What the thump is going to happen next? Wingate must have reported the state of our studies, as he said he would."

"The Head's right, I think," said Johnny Bull. "Those cups and things were pinched by the same fellow who mucked your studies up. It's a wonder he's left me alone so far—though grub from our study has gone, and Fishy's lost a spirit-stove. I couldn't help suspecting that it was Skinner until now. But this wholesale lifting of the trophies proves it wasn't Skinner."

"Yes, rather! It wasn't done by any fellow in the Remove."

That was the general opinion. Whoever was responsible for the amazing events, it was certainly no fellow belonging to the Remove. Even Skinner & Co. at their worst would never have dared to tamper with the school sports trophies.

That morning lessons were gone through in a suppressed state of excitement by the Remove, and the juniors longed for break in order to discuss the matter and thus give vent to their pent-up excitement. But three members of the Remove had something more than excited conjecture to fill their thoughts that morning. Skinner, Stott, and Snoop spent the time in a state of trembling fear.

"Oh, the fool—the mad-brained fool!" muttered Skinner to his chums as they came out at break. "He'll be burning the dashed school down next!"

"You—you don't think it's Pon, do you?" whispered Stott.

"Of course it's Pon—the raving lunatic!" breathed Skinner. "He's going too far. I tell you! He'll be caught yet! My hat! I'll tell the fool what I think of him this afternoon! The police—Oh, my hat! We'd better warn the fool!"

"You—you mean to go this afternoon, then?"

"Yes—we'll have to, if only to warn that mad-brained, vengeful cad! We'll make him replace those cups and things somehow."

"It'll take some doing. You know what he is!" groaned Snoop.

And Skinner groaned and agreed dimly. Cecil Ponsonby was as unbending as he was ruthless and cruel, and they really had little hope of being able to overrule his passionate, vengeful nature. That morning was not a happy morning for the guilty trio.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Father!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's old Courtenay and the Caterpillar!"

Bob Cherry made the remark as the Famous Five and Mark Linley were strolling along the Highcliffe Road that same afternoon. It was a Wednesday, and, there being no footer on, the juniors had started for a stroll. Of late, Mark Linley had been a great deal in the company of the Famous Five.

Coming towards them were two well-known figures. One was the brisk and alert form of Courtenay, the junior captain at Highcliffe, and the other was the elegant, lounging figure of De Courcy—commonly known at Highcliffe as the "Caterpillar"—Courtenay's bosom chum.

Both were decent fellows, and great friends with the Greyfriars chums. They stopped to chat. Wharton and his chums looked rather awkwardly at Courtenay. Ponsonby was a cousin of Courtenay's, and they knew he would feel the disgrace his cousin had brought on him.

"You know about our merry old Pon?" said De Courcy presently, with a glance at his chum.

"We know he's left Highcliffe, of course," said Harry.

"You don't know he's missing, then?" said Courtenay, in surprise.

"Great pip—no!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ponsonby missing?" exclaimed Wharton, with a start. "My hat!"

"He was seen into the train from this end, but he never landed home," said Courtenay quietly. "He hasn't been seen since, either."

"You said he would never go home, Franky, old chap," said De Courcy.

"I did," agreed Frank Courtenay. "I know what a hard, heavy-handed old chap his pater is. I knew Ponsonby would never dare to meet him after being expelled for such rascality. Anyhow, he's never landed home, and nobody's seen him since."

"Phew!"

The Famous Five and Mark Linley looked shocked and staggered.

"You needn't worry on his behalf," said Frank Courtenay, with rather a strained laugh. "Pon can take care of himself, never fear. He's all right wherever he is. It's whoever's sheltering him that I'm sorry for."

"It—it's rather queer," said Harry Wharton, wrinkling his brows.

"It's not queer at all," said Courtenay grimly. "Pon daren't go home, and he's hanging out somewhere. What he'll do when his money runs out, goodness only knows. His pater's at Highcliffe now, and he's in a fine old bato. I hope he—Hallo! Talk of angels!"

Courtenay stopped speaking, his eyes on a large, luxurious car that was speeding towards them from the direction of Highcliffe School. In the car was an elderly gentleman with a hard, grim face and fierce moustaches. He sighted the juniors on the roadway, and at a word from him the car hummed to a halt.

The juniors raised their caps, the Greyfriars fellows guessing from Courtenay's last words who the old gentleman was. Courtenay stepped towards the car.

"They told me at the school that you had gone out, Frank," said the old gentleman, in a harsh voice. "You should have waited to see if I wished to speak further with you, my boy. I have decided to stay with my old friend Major Thresher for a few days. I am

convinced that that wretched boy is somewhere in this locality still. If you have any communication to make to me you will find me at Major Thresher's house. You understand, Frank?"

"Yes, uncle! If I hear or find out anything I'll come to you at once, sir."

The old gentleman nodded curtly, and spoke again to his chauffeur. The car hummed on, Ponsonby's father not troubling to bestow a glance at Courtenay's companions.

"Talk of angels," repeated Frank Courtenay, rejoining his friends with a chuckle, "and see who turns up. That's old Pon's pater."

"I thought as much," said Bob Cherry. "Well, he doesn't look much of an angel, Franky, any-old-how. I'm rather sorry for Pon, after seeing him. I don't wonder he wouldn't go home!"

Out of consideration for the feelings of Courtenay, Harry changed the subject then—though, from Courtenay's looks and remarks, he was certainly not troubling much on Ponsonby's behalf. Very few fellows knew Cecil Ponsonby as did his cousin.

The subject was deftly turned to affairs at Greyfriars, and soon the Remove juniors were telling of the recent amazing happenings at Greyfriars. Do Courcy was astonished, but Courtenay was strangely disturbed and keenly interested. He asked numerous questions, and when the Highcliffe juniors strolled on at length the face of Frank Courtenay was uneasy and thoughtful indeed. His chum glanced at him as they parted from Harry Wharton & Co.

"Anythin' up, Franky, old man?" he asked curiously.

"Well, I was just wondering— Oh, nothing!"

He broke off abruptly, and changed the subject.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton himself was also very thoughtful as the chums of the Remove resumed their walk. The news that Ponsonby had never reached home, after being expelled, had made him vaguely uneasy. Strange thoughts were moving in his mind. He scarcely spoke until the juniors turned and started back for Greyfriars. It was an exclamation from Bob Cherry that broke his chain of thought abruptly.

At the moment the juniors were tramping along the path through Friar-dale Wood, when Bob Cherry suddenly stopped and pointed through the leafless trees.

"Dear old Skinner and his pals!" he said, grinning. "Now, what are those merchants up to in the woods, I wonder?"

"Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour are with them, too," grunted Johnny Bull, with a sniff. "I should think that the Ponsonby affair would have frightened Skinner away from those rotters."

"They're making for the priory," said Harry Wharton suddenly, in a tense voice. "Hold on! Get out of sight—quick!"

He stepped behind a tree-trunk, and his chums wonderingly did likewise.

"What's the game?" asked Bob Cherry. "Not acting the giddy spy in your old age, Harry?"

"It's queer what those fellows are doing round the ruins now," said Harry. "The woods are scarcely the place for an afternoon walk—this path's bad enough. It's rather— Hallo! They've vanished!"

"Phew!" Skinner and his shady gang had certainly vanished.

"Gone down into the vaults," grinned Bob Cherry. "Not the sort of place I



There was an immediate answer to Skinner's whistle, for with a suddenness that made Skinner & Co. almost jump out of their skins, a figure emerged from behind a broken wall, scarcely a couple of yards from them. The trio of Removees stared at the figure, and then they gave simultaneous gasps as they recognised Cecil Ponsonby. (See Chapter 3.)

should choose—even for a giddy smoke and a game of rotten cards."

"Come on, you fellows," said Harry Wharton, setting his lips. "I'm looking into this."

"But, my dear man, why trouble—"

"I won't tell you why—yet," said Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming strangely. "But an idea struck me just now, and I'd rather like to find out what those merchants are up to, for it concerns them."

He did not wait for his chums' approval, but started off through the wet, muddy carpet of dead leaves and ferns, plunging through dripping thickets and leaping ditches and pools. And his chums followed at once—struck by Harry's strange manner. They very soon reached the ruined priory. After a hasty glance about him, the captain of the Remove ran over to the entrance to the vaults.

With his wondering chums at his heels, he descended into the gloom, and pushed at the heavy oaken door. It was fast.

"There's no key or fastening," said Harry. "It must be jammed inside with a stone, or something. Push, chaps!"

The juniors bent their shoulders to the task, and pushed hard at the great black door. It gave slightly, and then stuck. They pushed again with all their force, and suddenly the door swung back, sending with it a big stone that slid over the stone floor behind it.

"Good!" breathed Harry. "Who's got any matches?"

Johnny Bull happened to have a box of matches, and he handed it over. The others watched Harry wonderingly, and rather uneasily as he struck one, and started across the dank, dismal vaults. They did not at all like the idea of spying on Skinner & Co., though they could not help feeling that Harry must have some sound reason for it.

Wharton shone the light of the match about him, and then he advanced towards the great slab of stone that was the door to the secret passage to Greyfriars. The match went out, and he struck another, and, shielding the flame from the draught with his cupped hands, shone the light on the floor. Then he gave a muttered cry of satisfaction.

"Just as I thought," he whispered.

He pointed down at the flagstones at their feet. On the dry floor of the vaults were numerous muddy footprints. They were thick directly before the revolving door of stone.

"You fellows game to explore?" he demanded. "We've only got matches, but we know the tunnel pretty well."

"Ugh!" grunted Bob Cherry. "We know what the cads are up to—a giddy smoking party or something. Not worth getting our boots mucked up for even."

"There's something else behind this," said Harry quietly. "I've got a queer suspicion that I'd like to put to the test."

"Oh! Oh, all serene, then."

"Go ahead, Harry," said Frank Nugent.

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Harry Wharton pressed against the slab, and it revolved slowly, the sudden draught blowing the match out. Harry stepped through, and lit another. As the flame flickered he stooped suddenly and picked up something from the floor. It was a lantern.

"Hold it, Bob," breathed Harry.

Bob held the lantern, and Harry opened the glass and lit the wick. It was a bicycle lamp, and Bob Cherry started violently as he recognised it.

"That's Dick Rake's lamp," he gasped. "The one he lost."

"I noticed that," said Harry quietly. "Perhaps you can follow my suspicion now. Come on, anyhow!"

He led the way with the lamp, and the rest of the Co. trailed after him in silence. Not for the life of them could Harry's chums guess what he meant—unless he meant that Skinner & Co. were the culprits after all. The damp chill of the place and the eerie stillness had a subduing effect upon them, and they asked no questions. The lamp cast dancing, grotesque shapes on the walls as they advanced.

Harry stopped at last—holding a hand back to stop his chums. They halted with a murmur of voices in their ears. Through a slit in the slab of stone facing them came a streak of light; they felt a warm waft of air strike their faces.

It was another revolving slab, and this one was slightly open—kept open by a chunk of stone stuck between the slab and the wall.

Harry Wharton murmured a warning.

"If you see anything that surprises you don't make a row," he muttered. "Here goes!"

He peeped through the slit, and the others crept up after him, and peered as best they could over his shoulder. What they saw was a stunning surprise.

Seated on blankets on the floor, with a heating-stove a yard or so away, and with half a dozen candles and a lamp lighting up the dingy scene were Skinner & Co., and Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour—and another fellow, at sight of whom the chums of Greyfriars almost shouted aloud.

It was Ponsonby, of course—Ponsonby in dirty, dishevelled clothes, but Ponsonby all the same. Just at the moment his eyes were lit up, and his face ablaze with the gambling fever as he dealt out playing-cards on one of the blankets.

It was a strange, bizarre scene, and it held the watchers spellbound.

"Ponsonby!" breathed Nugent, below his breath. "That—that rascal—here!"

For some moments the juniors gazed in through the slit, scarcely daring to breathe. Harry Wharton had no need whatever to tell his chums what his suspicion had been. They knew it now. They saw the foodstuffs on the floor, the lamp and spirit-stove, and they recognised almost every article there. The next moment they had further proof from Ponsonby himself.

He finished dealing out the cards, and then he removed the cigarette from his mouth.

"So you imagine I was the merchant who pinched those cups and things, Skinny?" he remarked, with a chuckle.

"Of course you were," said Skinner, his haggard, strained features showing plainly how much he was enjoying the dingy, wretched business. "You—you must be stark, staring mad, Pon! You're overdoing it, I tell you! Look here, you simply must return those cups and shields. How the thump you got into the dashed school beats me hollow. But

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—but you're going too far. The police —"

"My dear man, I'm not the fellow to be caught so easily," said Ponsonby, yawning. "I'm only just starting the little game, I assure you. There are lots of surprises in store for your precious school—and especially for Wharton and his dashed crowd. Gad! If only I could get that snivelling factory cad in my power—"

His eyes glinted evilly.

"Chuck it, Pon!" said Monson uneasily. "Skinner's quite right. You're overdoing it, you know. You'll get collared as sure as fate! You've forced us to join in this, but remember we've none of us had a hand in your games at Greyfriars."

"My dear fellow," said Ponsonby coolly, "I would never allow you footling idiots to help me in this; you'd only muck things up. Anyway, when I want your advice I'll ask for it. So I've caused rather a sensation, Skinny?" he added, turning to the cad of the Remove.

"Yes, you ass!"

"Thanks, Skinny. I shall be round the Remove dormitory perhaps to-night—one needs a little exercise. By the way, when you come to-morrow, Skinner, perhaps you'll bring me a false moustache from the Remove property box—also some grease-paints and things. I'm getting tired of being stuck in here. Anyhow, let's get on with the game now—we'll discuss business later."

He chuckled, and just then Harry Wharton drew his chums back.

"Let's get out of this," he whispered. "I've had enough. Quiet until we're out in the open air."

"Why not go for the rotters now and smash them?" gritted Johnny Bull.

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Come on," breathed Harry.

He did not stay to argue, neither did he speak until they had all emerged into the open air above the priory vaults again. Then as they looked at each other with excited faces, Harry Wharton spoke.

"It was no good rushing in like that," he said. "They were too many for us in any case, though we could have licked them. But that wouldn't have brought those cups and things back. I've got a better plan than that. We could go straight to Quelch and report all this, of course. But that would get Skinner & Co. sacked as sure as fate. We've got to tackle that scoundrel Pon alone, and we've got to catch him in the act. Look here, I vote we come here late to-night, and keep watch at the end of the tunnel. It's clear Pon has some secret means of entering the school. And if he does move to-night, we'll follow him, and with luck we'll catch the rascal in the act."

"Good wheeze!"

"It's risky, of course," said Harry quietly. "We shall have to break bounds. But it's the only certain way of nabbing the rotter red-handed. Besides, I'm hoping he'll lead us to the place where he's got those cups and things. They weren't in the vault there, I'm certain."

The captain of the Remove paused, and his chums nodded promptly.

"I'm with you, Harry—you're quite right," said Mark Linley. "It's the only certain way of nabbing the scoundrel!"

"I'm with you, too."

It was a general chorus of assent, and Harry nodded.

"Right!" he said, with satisfaction. "We'll do it, then. Mind, though, not a single word to anyone of this. We've bowled out that rascal once, and we'll bowl him out again. Now let's get back for tea."

And the chums of the Remove started back. They were amazed, and they were shocked. But they were also grimly determined to carry through Wharton's plan, and to bowl out Ponsonby.

That night Harry Wharton & Co., and Mark Linley, went to bed with no intention of sleeping. They had other business on—serious business.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

At Dead of Night!

"QUIET, chaps!"

Harry Wharton breathed the warning.

Greyfriars lay silent under the stars. But the Famous Five and Mark Linley of the Remove, fully dressed, were up and about, very much alive and wide awake.

As Harry Wharton gave the warning, he stepped out of the Remove dormitory, and his chums tiptoed after him silently.

That evening they had laid their plans carefully, and now the time had come to put them into effect.

It was not very late yet, and the juniors knew they were running a risk of meeting a prefect or master, but they were taking the risk in the worthy endeavour of being close to Cecil Ponsonby when he started out on his depredations.

The juniors did not dare risk using a light, and they picked their way with infinite caution to the head of the stairs, and descended in single file. Then Harry Wharton led the way to the lower box-room, the window of which was the easiest way of making an unauthorised exit from the school.

They were soon out of the window, and dropping one after the other from the leads into the dark Close.

"Come on!" whispered Harry. "All serene there?"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors' voices thrilled with excitement. Though they knew now whom they were dealing with, the expedition had its excitement, and they were feeling strung up and eager.

Skirting the school building to keep in the deep shadows, the juniors hurried to the school wall, and soon they were standing, safe so far, in Friardale Lane. They trotted away, ears and eyes open for sight or sound from the lane ahead of them. They reached the stile presently which gave admittance to Friardale Woods, and very soon they were swallowed up amid its black and forbidding interior.

It was far from being easy going, but it was safe to use a light now, and with his pocket-torch flashing before him, Harry led the way along the dark woodland path. He branched off suddenly, plunging through the dead undergrowth towards where he knew the ruins lay.

They loomed up before them soon, and eerie and forbidding they looked in the faint, shadowy moonlight.

"Ugh!" growled Bob Cherry. "This place gives one the giddy creeps at

(Continued on page 17.)

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2:



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.

A YOUNG half-back named Virr has come into the Everton team to stay. He was born near the ground and played on it when a schoolboy. Even in those days he was considered "Virry" good. He is now much better, and will soon be one of the best.

In a recent match Preston North End played nine Scotsmen in their team. The other two are said to be doing their best to learn the language.

In a junior match a raw lad was pressed into service at the last minute, and, of course, was put into goal. Six shots went past him in no time, because he really wasn't very good. So one of his backs went up to him. "Isn't it time you stopped one or two?" asked the full-back. "Stop 'em!" said the raw youth. "Why, what's net for?"

For some time in the early part of the season Bury dropped their captain, whose name is Stage. But he soon came back to play a leading part.

Owen Williams, the Middlesbrough man who used to play for Clapton Orient, tells me that, in his opinion, football of the present season is cleaner than ever. I know some laundry-hands who entirely disagree with this summing-up.

There is not an atom of truth in the story that a recent Cup-tie at Aberdeen was held up for twenty minutes because neither of the captains had a penny with which to toss up, and nobody would lend them one.

I hear that right out in New Guinea they are playing a game which is something like football. But there is really no reason to go so far to see some games which are something like football.

A little story, not very true, from Tottenham. Their goalkeeper had let one go past him. "Why didn't you stop it?" asked a pal. "I would have done," replied Kaine, "if I had been Abel."

The rulers of football have recently asked all the referees and linesmen on their list to provide birth certificates showing when they were born. For a long time spectators have been wanting to know why some of them were born.

Just recently it was rumoured that the directors of a certain club which is doing very badly choose their team by putting the names of the men in a hat and playing the first eleven to come out. The directors have given an emphatic denial to this rumour, but the cynics among the supporters are now saying that perhaps the results would be better if this method were adopted.

Prior to a game in the First Round of the Cup, a referee donned football-boots and personally tested the state of the ground before allowing the match to be played. This idea could be elaborated: Why not let linesmen test the air to see if it is soft enough for their flags, and spectators might try the comfort or otherwise of the crush-barriers. If the scheme were carried too far, however, we might get the police around the touchlines refusing to turn out because the grass wasn't long enough to keep their feet warm!

Preston North End once beat Hyde by 26 goals to nil. What a Hyde-ing!

In his spare time a well-known centre-forward does conjuring. His team's supporters are anxiously waiting to see him do the hat-trick.

AT HOME WITH BOLTON WANDERERS.

The First of a Novel Series

By "PAUL PRY."

(Our Travelling Correspondent.)

IF you happen to know Manchester Road, Bolton, you will know quite well why I didn't want to take a walk down it. If you don't happen to know Manchester Road, Bolton, then I can't describe it to you. However, the Editor said I had to go, and, obeying instructions like a good boy, off I went.

It wasn't very early in the morning when I got there, and that may be the reason why I first of all bumped into Charlie Foweraker. Of course, we ought to call him Mr. Foweraker, because he is the big noise at Burnden Park—the manager. But everybody calls him Charlie, and if he doesn't like it you just tell him he doesn't know anything about football, anyway, because he is a Rugby man, really. You see, he was brought up at Warrington, and Bolton adopted him, made him their manager, and he returned thanks by building up a team which won the Cup. That Cup victory of Bolton Wanderers was rather a pity because it robbed us of a good joke. Right up to 1923, whenever anybody asked if the Trotters had ever won the Cup or the championship we always replied: "No, and they never will!"

Talking about the Cup, I am not going to tell you how the Wanderers won it, because you know. But I am going to tell you about an evening when Joe Smith and Ted Vizard thought they had lost it. If these two fellows had let their whiskers grow from the time they joined the Bolton club they would have had Father Christmas beaten hollow.

Out of respect for their years, I suppose, these two left-wingers were put in charge of the Cup on an occasion when they took it to London to show it to the West Ham players who had been beaten by the Wanderers in the Final. When the feasting was over, Captain Joe and Vizard went to pick up the box in which the Cup was supposed to be. Imagine their faces when they found the box empty! But the Cup hadn't really gone. It was only a joke on the part of— But there, I'd better not tell you, because neither Smith nor Vizard has yet found out who did it on them!

Coming down to that occasion, the other morning when I went to Burnden Park to look up old friends, I was glad to see David Jack, because I happened to have my income-tax papers in my pocket; and as David knows more about income-tax than scoring goals—possibly—I got him to help me. He didn't see why he should; but, then, as he had previously helped all the Bolton players with theirs, why shouldn't he help me as well?

There was one question which David put to me which was a bit of a puzzler. He said: "Haven't you got a headache?" I said I hadn't, whereon he insisted that I ought to have. I then discovered that David, whose father used to play for the Wanderers when I was a baby, is interested in a headache cure. They need headache cures, these Wanderers players, so I am told, because Joe Smith puts to them such serious questions about the working of the new offside rule.

For all other ills which these Burnden boys suffer from our old pal, George Eccles, has a cure. He used to play, too, but is now past it. I know I should have had to get there very early in the morning to beat Trainer Eccles, and should have had to stay very late to be there after he had left. I am not sure, but I think Eccles remembers the day when Hurry Nuttall, the present half-back, was actually born at Burnden Park. His father was the trainer then, and lived in a house literally in Burnden Park. Is there any other footballer who can claim to have been born on a football-ground?

What between the Welsh of Bill Jennings and Ted Vizard, the Scotch of John Smith, and the Lancashire dialect of Jimmy Seddon and young Thornborough, it is small wonder that the Devonshire fisherman, Dick Pym, keeps pretty quiet. But he once talked too much, and that was when he told his pals that he was very ill when crossing to Ireland to play for England. Think of it! A fisherman so ill with sailing that he wouldn't have played if there had been anyone else available! But, anyway, even if Dick was neither a good sailor nor a good man at luring fish into the net, he knows how to keep the shots of the other fellows from going into his net.

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WEAK POINTS AND STRONG ONES OF THE LEADING REFEREES.

A Friendly Warning.

"ONE of the things I can never understand about football," said a friend to me the other day, "is that anybody can be found ready and willing to take on the job of refereeing the big matches—or the small ones, either, for that matter. The referee is the nobody's darling of the game."

Now, I suppose we may take it for a fact that the referee has something approaching the world's worst job. Yet clearly somebody has to do it, and, strange as it may seem, there are people who like doing it.

The name of Jack Howcroft is sure to come up whenever the subject of referees is mentioned. He has just retired after twenty-five years with the whistle, and during most of those years he was recognised as the finest referee the game has known. Not so long ago I asked Howcroft what was the saddest day in his career as a football referee. His reply staggered me: "The day I became so old that I had to decide on retirement." Howcroft went on to tell me how he just revelled in the job all his life—how he loved to feel that he was the man in charge, the master of ceremonies, the boss. And my own view is that it was to this feeling that Howcroft owed so much of his success.

There are folk who will tell you that Howcroft was a good referee because he made so few mistakes in his decisions. That, as a summary of Howcroft's success, is just so much moonshine. Howcroft made mistakes like every other referee, but even when he made conscientious mistakes he made them with such a snap, such an air of authority, that I myself have often been convinced against my better judgment that he hadn't made a mistake at all.

There are some referees in the game to-day who are not nearly so quick to put down rough play as they ought to be. The players know these fellows, and they take liberties, naturally. On the other hand, if any game is controlled by a referee with a reputation for stopping all nonsense, the players won't try any nonsense. In twenty-five years Jack Howcroft only sent five players off the field, but I can tell you that on many occasions he saved himself trouble by his first belief in prevention rather than cure.

Just one true story to illustrate Howcroft's methods. It was told me by the player who was the central figure, not by the referee himself. A certain young and very clever outside-left one day came up against a veteran full-back. There were forty thousand spectators at the match, and the youngster soon discovered that he could make the onlookers laugh by tricking the veteran full-back time after time. This youngster wasn't content with beating the full-back and dropping the ball in the middle. He beat him once, waited for him to come back, and then beat him a second and sometimes even a third time. The crowd roared with laughter at the discomfiture of the full-back. This had gone on for some little time when Howcroft went across to the lad, and quietly whispered: "If I were you, I should stop trying to make a fool of that full-back. If you don't, you will be in hospital before the finish of the match and the full-back will be in the dressing-room!"

It can be argued that it was no business of the referee to tell the lad what he should or should not do in actual play, but Howcroft saw that if the youngster persisted in making a fool of the full-back, the latter would lose his temper, and that serious

trouble would surely follow for both.

The successful referee must be a student of human nature, remembering above all things that very few people like being smacked in public. If the referee has to warn a player he should do it quietly.

I have said that the referee who gets on is the man who loves his work and who takes it seriously. One of the best of the present day took the last Cup Final—Mr. Noel Watson, of Nottingham. As showing how seriously he takes the job, when I was on the Nottingham Forest ground the other day I saw Mr. Watson training as conscientiously as any player has ever done, and he told me that he spent several hours a week keeping himself fit for the Saturday

matches which he is called upon to referee. In these days, when football is faster than ever, it behoves every referee to be in such a state of physical fitness that he can at least make a brave show of being up with the play all the time.

Mr. W. E. Russell, of Swindon, is another really good referee of the present day, and here I am going to give him a straight tip which, incidentally, may be followed by every referee. It is that he should cut out the habit of running about the field with his whistle in his mouth. I know that by doing this he is able to blow without a moment's hesitation; but one of these days Mr. Russell, and all referees who copy his example of running about with the whistle in mouth, will find a hard-driven ball hit him in the face. And when this happens he will be lucky if he escapes with his full number of teeth and without serious injury to his mouth.

The referees at the big matches are provided with neutral linesmen. In my view, some of our referees use the linesmen and others abuse them. For a referee to consult a linesman about some incident which has happened under the referee's nose is a sure sign of weakness. The man with the whistle is the boss of the show. He will never succeed in pleasing everybody, and should never try to. He can go home perfectly happy if he succeeds in pleasing himself.

LIGHTNING SKETCHES OF FOOTER CELEBRITIES.



David Halliday, the famous Scottish centre-forward of Sunderland, as seen by Jimmy Seed, the footballer cartoonist of Tottenham Hotspur, who can shoot goals as well as he can caricature anything in football knickers.

TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL

Exercises for the Goalkeeper and the Full-Back.

IF you, chum, happen to be a goalkeeper, you may think that you needn't worry to train as much as the forward who has so much more running about to do. If you do think so, you're making a big mistake. A goalie has to be fit—or be a failure. Which do you want to be?

The goalkeeper doesn't always have to stand with his hands behind his back admiring the way in which his fellows are piling up the goals. It happens sometimes that he has more work on hand than he quite likes. If he's slow of movement, unable to jump, spring, get on the quick move in the fraction of a second, then it's quite likely that his skipper and the selection committee will begin to look for a new goal defender. Ever been dropped from a team? No? You're lucky. I do know what it means, and the feeling isn't pleasant. It's not possible for a goalie to do all that's expected of him—most people expect too much—but if he keeps himself in training he will be able to do all those things that he ought to do.

Quickness is his greatest asset, and no untrained man is, or can be, as quick as one who is trained. Now, the regular performance of suitable exercises will promote quickness just as surely as other suitable movements will develop muscle. Backward and forward jumping, both feet together, will increase a goalie's activity and enable him to make otherwise impossible saves. I don't mean the sort of running for which a twenty yards canter is taken, but standing jumping, also high jumping. Sandow used to say that if only an athlete's muscles were well enough developed, he could beat a more skilful man with weaker muscles. I beg to differ. What counts is knowing how to use to the best advantage the muscles you have. But it is only common-sense to train those muscles so that you can get the best out of them. Therefore, by means of suitable exercises the goalkeeper should train his muscles to do their best work. He should make those muscles stronger, quicker, more elastic by frequent practice in deep knee bending, high kicking, raising the legs high sideways, and, standing quite erect, by bending each knee alternately and bringing it close up to his chest. A spell with the Indian clubs, performing movements that stretch the arms sideways, loosen the shoulder muscles, and increase the reach, is strongly advised.

Backs have some hard kicking to do, and this is regulated by the looseness of the hip-joint and the power of the muscles around it. If you, chum, are a back, and want to become a better kicker, practise all the goalie's special exercises, and also the following: Stand with hands on hips, feet close together. Now rise on your toes, jump upward, and carry feet away out to right and left. Then repeat movement, jumping and carrying feet together again. Repeat this a dozen or more times. Stride jumping it is called, and it is just fine for your legs. And here is a novel and useful exercise that trains your lower limb muscles to ease and quickness of movement. Extend yourself face downward on the ground, letting the body be supported by the hands, palms flat on ground. Now bend the left leg so that the fore part of the foot is flat on the ground, calf touching thigh, and chest just over front of thigh.

So far so good. Now stretch out the right leg straight behind you, keeping the toes on the ground. Getting a spring from both feet, quickly exchange position of legs so that it is the right that is doubled beneath the chest this time and the left that is extended. Repeat this alternate doubling up and extension a dozen times or more. It is in the regularity with which such exercises are performed that their virtue lies. As a daily exercise you'll soon find the benefit of them. Done once a month—well, can you expect much?



(Continued from page 12.)

night! That boulder Ponsonby has more nerve than I expected. I always thought he was no end of a funk."

"He's desperate, and a desire for vengeance will make a chap do a lot," said Harry grimly. "Let's get down."

The juniors descended the entrance to the vaults, Mark Linley coming last down the steps. He had almost reached the bottom step when he slipped suddenly, and fell headlong, giving a stifled cry as he did so.

"Hold on, Harry!" cried Bob Cherry, in alarm. "Back with the light! Marky's fallen!"

The light was flashed back upon Mark Linley in a moment.

"It's all right, chaps!" panted Mark, staggering to his feet. "I slipped, and—Oh!"

He gave a faint gasp of pain as he placed his foot to the ground again.

"Marky!" gasped Bob.

"It's all right," said the scholarship junior again. "I—I've sprained my ankle a little, I think. I'll be all serene in a moment, though."

"Oh, what awful luck! Is it bad, old chap?"

Mark did not answer for a moment. Could the chums have glanced at his face, they would have seen that it was twisted with pain.

"Just give me a second or so," he said as steadily as he could. "It's not bad."

Bob Cherry grasped his arm, and helped to support the Lancashire lad.

"You fellows go on," he said. "I'll stay behind with Marky. If it's bad, old man, you'd better try to get back to Greyfriars, and leave exploring alone. Come on, I'll help you back."

"That's it, Marky!" said Harry Wharton in alarm. "You'd better go back—if you think you can manage it. If not, we'll chuck it up, and come back with you."

"Rot!" said Mark Linley, with a forced laugh. "I'm not mucking up things for you like that. I'll come. I feel almost O.K. now. Lead on, Wharton!"

"You're sure you can?"

"Yes, yes. Go on!"

More than a little doubtfully, Harry led the way again, Mark coming last, with Bob's hand on his arm. But he soon shook Bob's hand off, and hobbled along, seemingly almost all right now. By the time the juniors were in the tunnel they had almost forgotten that Mark had hurt himself at all in their excitement.

But Mark Linley was far from being all right. The pain from his foot was agonising, but he refused to give way or own up to the difficulty he had in keeping up with his chums. He did not want to cause the abandonment of the expedition.

The six juniors reached the end of the tunnel at last, and as before they found the revolving slab of stone slightly open, apparently for ventilation, or for some reason known only to Ponsonby.

As before, also, a light came through to them, and Harry Wharton peered through. He saw Ponsonby at once. He was lying on one of the blankets, his

hands clasped behind his head, a cigarette between his lips.

Even as Harry and his chums peered in, they saw the expelled junior sit up and glance at his watch. Then, with a muttered exclamation, he stood up, yawning and stretching himself.

For a moment he stood thus, and then he reached for a large pocket-torch on the blanket close at hand. He switched on the torch, and blew out the lantern standing on the flags. Then, invisible himself save for the glowing end of his cigarette, he moved away and passed beyond the curtain.

In a flash, Harry Wharton had pushed open the revolving door gently, and his chums followed him through into the now pitch-dark vault, Harry switching on his own torch again as he did so.

"Come on," he whispered. "We mustn't lose sight of the cad!"

The Famous Five trod swiftly and quietly across to the curtain, and passed through it, not one of them noticing that Mark Linley had not followed. As a matter of fact, the Lancashire lad had reached the limit of his endurance. He was about to follow his chums when a sudden feeling of faintness swept over him, and he leaned back against the stone wall, striving to overcome the feeling with all his might.

He dare not call out for fear of Ponsonby hearing, and all was deep blackness before him now, and no sound reached his ears. Sick and dizzy, he leaned against the dank passage wall waiting until the faintness left him.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five had passed beyond the curtain, Harry Wharton switching his light off the moment they were beyond it.

Some distance ahead they saw Ponsonby's light moving like a will-o'-the-wisp, casting flickering shadows on grey walls and ancient stone arches.

"Come on!" breathed Harry. "Quick—and quietly!"

The Co. hurried after the light, fearful of losing it. They were scarcely twenty yards away from it and the dim form behind it when it stopped suddenly, and they saw the white beam reflected on a great, black, iron-studded door. The next instant the light snapped out, and deep darkness fell on the gloomy vaults.

But to the ears of the waiting juniors sounded the creak and grind of a door opening. Then silence fell.

"Come on!" breathed Harry softly. "He's gone into that cell. There must be a secret way out of it."

That thought had also occurred to Harry's chums. They had often explored the vaults, and they knew the cell well enough. That iron-studded door led into it—a bare, stone cell with no other outlet—so they had supposed until now.

Not daring to show a light, the captain of the Remove crept towards the spot where he had seen the door, his hands outstretched. He reached it, the door was open. His fingers closed on the edge of the door. He whispered a warning to his chums at his heels, and then he felt his way into the chilly atmosphere of the cell.

His chums followed his vaguely-seen form into the cell.

Harry halted inside and listened. The darkness was like a velvety cloak about them. After a moment Harry Wharton suddenly switched on his electric-torch, and cast it round the cell.

It was bare and empty.

And barely had the juniors discovered that fact when the door behind crashed to, and a mocking laugh—a well-known laugh—reached their ears faintly through the thick panels.

They were trapped!

"The door!" gasped Harry. "Quick!"

He leaped for it, and grasped the big ring, and twisted madly at it. But he was just a second too late, for as he did so the rasp of a rusty key in a lock was heard. He dragged at the door in vain.

"Done!" panted Bob Cherry. "Done, by jingo! The—the hound must have known we were on his trail!"

There was no doubting that. The juniors stood in silent dismay. Harry suddenly remembered something, and flashed his light on a small, square opening in the wall of the cell just above their heads.

It was just a square hole in the massive thickness of the wall, and had evidently been constructed for ventilation. As Harry's light lit it up a face suddenly appeared at the aperture—Ponsonby's gloating face.

"Got you, my pippins!" he smiled banteringly. "Walked into the trap nicely, Wharton! You fools! Think I didn't spot you spying through that revolving doorway? My hat! This is a real stroke of luck! I wanted nothing better than to get you fellows into my hands. My only dashed regret is that that low hound Linley isn't with you. But I'll get him some time."

Harry Wharton gave a start. Only in that moment did he realise that Mark Linley was not with them. Harry's chums also started.

"Linley—" Bob Cherry was beginning thoughtlessly, when Harry interrupted him.

"Leave this hound to me, Bob," he said quickly. "Ponsonby," he went on fiercely, "open that door, you rotter. You can't keep us fastened up here."

"Can't I?" came Ponsonby's cool, mocking voice through the opening. "My dear man, you are quite mistaken. I can and I fully intend to keep you in there—for quite a long time."

"You scoundrel!"

"You'll get no breakfast in the morning for calling me that," said Ponsonby calmly.

"You—you mean to keep us prisoners in this awful hole?" gasped Frank Nugent.

"You've hit it, Nugent," said Ponsonby genially. "How you do grasp things, old nut! I didn't ask you fellows to enter that merry old cell, did I now? As it happens, though, it is just what I wanted—nothing could have pleased me better." His voice suddenly changed, and became charged with bitter hatred and malice. "Listen, you cads!" he hissed. "I've got you—got you in the hollow of my hands. You got me into this plight—you hounds have ruined me, and made me a hunted outcast! I'm going to put you through the mill! I'm going to make you swim, you rotters! I'm going to make you go on your knees to me for a bite of bread and a drink of water."

"Ponsonby!" panted Harry Wharton. "You—you must be mad! Open that door!"

A mocking laugh answered him, and Ponsonby's face vanished from the opening in the wall. Faint footsteps sounded dying away amid the deep silence of the vaults. The trapped juniors gazed at each other's faces with horror in their eyes. There was no doubting Ponsonby's deadly earnestness.

They were prisoners—prisoners in the hands of their deadliest enemy, in a bare, cold cell in the bowels of the earth. And only the thought of Mark Linley—what had happened to him they

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could only guess—kept them from giving way to dull despair. They knew the bitter animosity of their enemy; they knew he meant every word of his threat. But there was a flicker of hope in their hearts. If Mark Linley were at liberty, they knew he would never desert them. But was he at liberty?

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Struck Down!

IT was some minutes before Mark Linley felt himself again. But the faintness gradually passed off, and he stooped and loosened the laces of his shoe. It brought some measure of relief to his sprained foot.

He waited, wondering what he should do. He had no light, but a dull red spark came from the wick of the lamp that Ponsonby had blown out. As he gazed at it the spark flickered and went out, leaving the place in utter darkness.

But Linley had located the spot where the lamp stood. For a moment he hesitated before moving towards it. He knew that his chums would not leave him if they could help it. They would soon miss him, and Bob Cherry or all of them would come back to look for him.

But after waiting another few minutes the Lancashire lad moved in the darkness towards the lamp. He had no matches on him, but he remembered seeing a packet of boxes among the foodstuffs on the blanket.

The next moment he was fumbling for them. He found the packet at last, and, tearing off the paper, he extracted a box, and struck a match. The light flared up, and, opening the glass of the lamp, Mark lit the wick, throwing the dead match away.

Then he stood again undecided what to do. He had heard only one sound—a dull, echoing thud from somewhere in the distant vaults, and he had guessed it was the closing of a door. With sudden decision he moved to the curtain, placing the lamp on the floor so that the light would not show through.

Only deep darkness met his gaze, and then quite abruptly he saw a white light coming towards him—the light of a torch.

Was it his chums, or was it Cecil Ponsonby?

Mark watched the moving light, fascinated. It danced on the arched roof, and glimmered on stone pillars as the person carrying it approached. Then the light stopped, and to Linley's ears came a low rumble. The light vanished.

Only one person was with the light—Mark was certain of that. What had happened to his chums?

Not a little alarmed now, Mark stepped through into the vaults beyond the curtain. The vaults stretched for a long way beneath Greyfriars and the ruins of the monastery. He hesitated a moment longer. He knew exactly where the door lay that led up to the ruined chapel, but the sound of the closing door had not come from that direction at all. He decided suddenly to make for the spot where the light had vanished.

With the lamp in his hand he hurried forward, careless of caution now. He reached the spot where he judged the light had vanished, and then he gave a sudden cry.

Facing him was an opening in the wall of the vault.

The light from his lamp shone through the aperture on to a blank wall of stone beyond. But as he shone the light into

the opening, he saw a flight of stone steps leading upwards to the right.

"Phew!" breathed Linley.

Though Linley was fairly familiar with the vaults beneath Greyfriars, he had had no knowledge of this secret passage—for it obviously was that.

How a fellow from another school had discovered it, he could only surmise.

He stared at the steps blankly, and then he made his way up them, wincing from the sharp pain in his foot. But he set his teeth and stuck it grimly. There were only a dozen of the steps at most, running apparently between the thick wall of stone.

At the top a tunnel stretched—damp and smelly. It was utterly unlike the other tunnel, being built, apparently of bricks, and crumbling with decay. Stories Linley had heard of smugglers from Pegg who were supposed to have used the vaults ages ago came back to the junior now.

It was not a long tunnel, and it ended abruptly at a big arched door, which was open like the revolving door below.

Mark Linley limped through and found himself in a low, bricked, cellar-like room, empty, and without another exit apparently. But as he swept the light round he saw a flight of wooden steps leading up to an open trapdoor above his head. He limped up them, and found himself in another bricked room—obviously a cellar this time. Boxes and barrels lay about, and packing-cases with labels on them.

"Phew!" muttered Linley.

He knew where he was now—in the cellars beneath Greyfriars. He had once searched for Billy Bunter in this very cellar, and he recognised it at a glance.

So this was how Ponsonby had gained admittance to the school!

A few moments later Linley was in the school basement, the light from his lamp showing up the familiar kitchen. He moved with great caution now, for at any moment he might blunder into Ponsonby.

Mark was feeling faint again, and he had to bite his lip hard to prevent murmurs of pain escaping him. From the kitchen he climbed the stairs leading to the ground floor, and soon he was treading more familiar ground. He made at once for the Remove passage, feeling certain that if Ponsonby was on the warpath he would make for there.

And Mark Linley proved to be right. He had just reached his own study when a dark figure stepped out and Mark blundered right into it.

There was a startled exclamation, and even as Linley thrust out his hand to grasp the dark form, a clenched fist took him full on the temple. He reeled backwards, and as he did so his sprained foot gave way under him. He fell headlong, his head striking the skirting as he fell heavily, a low cry escaping him.

Then he lay there, silent and still.

"Good gad!"

The tall figure leaned over the prostrate junior, and the marauder peered into the white face of the Removite. Then he glanced about him, and switching on the torch he carried, shone the light full in Mark Linley's face.

It was white and set. The eyes were firmly closed. Mark Linley was unconscious.

Ponsonby—for it was he—stared into the face. Then he switched off the light, and his form melted into the surrounding blackness, and his soft footfalls died away.

How long he lay there Mark Linley never knew; but he opened his eyes suddenly, and blinked about him dazedly, his head buzzing, and aching terribly. What had happened, and where he was he did not realise for some moments, and then he staggered dizzily to his feet, reeling against the passage wall.

He stood thus for several dizzy moments, scarcely knowing which ached the most, his sprained foot or his head.

Not a sound broke the deep stillness of the night. Carrying no watch on him Linley had not the faintest idea what time it was. He wondered how long he had lain there in the passage.

It had been Ponsonby who had struck him down, of course. But where was he now? The cowardly rascal had fled obviously, heedless of what had happened to his victim. And where were Harry Wharton and his chums?

With these questions in his buzzing head, Linley made his way along the passage. He was shivering with the chill of the night, and all he wanted to do at that moment was to creep into bed and sleep—if the pain in his foot and in his throbbing head would let him.

He reached the foot of the staircase and mounted the stairs, every step a torture to him. He reached the dormitory at last, however, and his first thought was for his chums. But the first bed he felt in—Bob Cherry's—was empty. Bob evidently had not returned.

What had happened? Were the juniors still searching the vaults for him? As yet Mark Linley had no fears for the safety of his chums. He was puzzled—that was all. They would not search for long, he knew, and then they would of a certainty return, believing he had gone back on his own to the priory, and thence to Greyfriars.

With this in his mind Mark slowly undressed in the darkness and crept into bed, intending to lie awake for the return of Harry Wharton & Co. But he did not remain awake long. The cool sheets seemed to ease the pain in his foot, and the mad throbbing in his head was almost gone now. And gradually he drifted off into unconsciousness and slept.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

RISING-BELL quite failed to wake Mark Linley that morning. It was the buzz of excited voices close to his bed that did awaken him.

His first consciousness was of an ache in his head, and as his fingers touched a lump at the back of his head—a painful process—memory came to him with a rush.

He sat up, and blinked sleepily about him. To his surprise he saw that nearly every fellow in the room was up, most of them dressed. They were standing together near his bed discussing something in excited tones as they finished dressing.

Almost unconsciously Mark glanced quickly at Bob Cherry's bed next his own. It was empty. He gave a start as he looked across at Harry Wharton's bed, and then to the beds of Johnny Bull, Inky, and Frank Nugent, for he saw that they were empty also.

A hurried, alarmed glance about him showed that the five juniors were certainly not in the room. Quite abruptly the reason for the excitement in the Remove dormitory flashed in upon his mind.

Harry Wharton and his chums had not yet returned!

The thought filled Mark Linley with dismay and alarm.

Peter Todd caught his look and nodded grimly.

"More giddy mystery," he remarked. "D'you happen to know where those asses are, Linley? Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Nugent, and old Inky weren't in their little beds when I opened my peepers this morning—and I was the first chap awake."

"Nothing to kick up a fuss about," put in Bulstrode. "They've trotted out for a run before brekker, I expect!"

"Must have been out jolly early then," said Peter Todd grimly. "I was awake before it was daylight."

Mark Linley felt thankful that Toddy had not persisted in his question. He wanted to think—to decide what he should do and say in the matter. It was clear that, though puzzled, even Peter Todd did not think there was anything seriously amiss.

"I say, you fellows," remarked Billy Bunter, who was sitting up in bed hugging his knees upon which his fat chin rested. "I bet I know what this means."

"Well, what does it mean, Fatty?" demanded Peter Todd.

"It's just what I suspected," said Bunter, winking knowingly. "I suspected it all along. It's Wharton and his pals who've been doing all this pinching and damaging. It's plain as anything!"

"You fat ass! Would they be likely to smash up their own happy home, you blithering idiot!" snorted Peter Todd.

"I don't care," said Bunter. "It's my belief the rotters have done a bunk with those cups and the rest of the plunder. You mark my words, Toddy, you'll—"

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Toddy. You'll soon see—Yarroooooh!"

Bump!

A whizzing pillow from Bolsover's bed took Billy Bunter at the side of the head, and sent him toppling off his bed. He rolled in his bedclothes on the dormitory floor, roaring with anguish.

Linley slipped from his bed and started to dress hastily. The rest of the dormitory were chuckling at Bunter's abrupt downfall, but Mark did not feel so disposed. He was greatly alarmed now. Something serious must have happened to Wharton and the others. He wondered what he should do in the matter.

On the face of things the wisest course was certainly to report the whole affair to Mr. Quelch. Yet, on the other hand, it was still possible that Wharton and his chums would return before they were actually missed by anyone in authority. And breaking bounds at night was a very serious matter indeed. He would never forgive himself if they turned up suddenly—to find that they had been reported as missing. They would have serious trouble to face then.

In a very troubled state of mind indeed, the Lancashire lad finished dressing and went downstairs, making straight for his own study. It was empty, and apparently undisturbed.

Mark was puzzled. He had expected to find more damage done, remembering that it was from this study that Ponsonby had stepped the night before delivering the blow that had felled him. Like Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent the chums of Study No. 13 had spent the early part of the previous afternoon attempting to put their study to rights before they had started out for their walk. It had been



Suddenly remembering something, Harry Wharton flashed his light on a small, square opening in the cell just above their heads. As he did so, a face suddenly appeared at the aperture—Ponsonby's gloating face. "Got you, my pippins!" said the Highcliffe dandy banteringly. "You've walked into the trap nicely, you fools!" (See Chapter 7.)

a far from pleasant task and their feelings as they worked had been truly savage against the—then—unknown destroyer. And now Mark had expected to find all their work undone again, and more damage done in addition.

It was evident, however, that his sudden appearance had interrupted the rascal before he had time to do his fell work.

For a moment Mark stood thinking, and then with sudden decision he limped from the study. The few hours rest had made a wonderful difference to his foot, and he scarcely felt the pain at all now, though walking was neither easy nor pleasant.

In the passage outside he suddenly remembered something, however, and returning to the study, he opened the lower cupboard drawer and, after a moment's search, took out an electric torch. The lamp he had used the night before he had hidden under his bed, but now he remembered Bob speaking of leaving his torch in that drawer the night before.

Putting the torch in his pocket, Mark left the room again and made his way downstairs and out of the House. Then he limped round to the Cloisters, making sure first that he was unobserved. He knew he was missing chapel and breakfast, but he scarcely gave the matter a thought in his distress of mind.

He reached the ruined chapel, and

descended quietly the old, time-worn steps. He tried the ring of the door, and pushed.

It moved an inch, and then stuck. Through the opening Mark glimpsed a huge mass of stone against the door. The door was unlocked, but Ponsonby had evidently made it secure for all that. Mark Linley pushed and strove to move it in vain.

It was what Mark had feared, and after resting a moment he limped up the steps and hurried as fast as his sprained foot would allow him away from the ruins. His first thought had been to enter the vaults from the cellars of the school by the secret entrance he had explored the night before, but he had decided it would be too risky, the domestic regions of Greyfriars being strictly out of bounds to the juniors.

There was nothing else for it now but the priory ruins again.

Mark's head was aching violently now, and he felt sick with fatigue and pain. But he set his teeth, and went on, avoiding the school buildings, and making his way to Friardale Lane by skirting the playing fields—deserted at that hour.

He was almost dropping with fatigue by the time he reached the ruins, and after resting on a mass of masonry he descended to the vaults, and started the tramp along the tunnel.

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He switched off his torch on reaching the revolving stone leading into the Greyfriars vaults, and listened intently.

Everything was silent—though he fancied he detected the heavy breathing of a sleeper. A faint gleam of light came through the slightly-opened door.

Mark peered into the vault. Ponsonby was there—he was lying on the blankets, his head resting on his arm, his eyes closed. He was fast asleep. Nobody else was in the vaults.

The Lancashire junior stared at the scene. He could feel only pity in that moment for the wretched runaway. To a fellow like the elegant, supercilious dandy, accustomed as he had always been to luxury and comfort, such a dismal den must have been terrible to tolerate in the extreme. Mark Linley felt a deep pity for Ponsonby, rascal as he undoubtedly was, as he saw the outcast sleeping, his rather aristocratic features dirty and haggard.

But he set his lips and dismissed the feeling very soon. He had come on a far different errand than to feel or show pity and consideration for Cecil Ponsonby. He had come either to find Harry Wharton & Co, or to force the secret of their whereabouts from Ponsonby. Mark did not doubt that the outcast knew what had happened to them.

He stepped quietly through the secret doorway. Yet quiet as he was, he awakened the sleeper.

Ponsonby's eyes opened, and, with a gasping cry, he leaped to his feet.

"You—you, Linley!" he panted, dashing his hand across his eyes. "What—how—"

"Yes, you did not bowl me over altogether last night, Ponsonby," said Linley quietly. "I want to know what you've done with my chums, you cad?"

Ponsonby glowered at him, his features moving queerly. He did not speak, but like a flash he acted.

With a leap like a panther he was upon Mark Linley, and the two crashed to the stone floor, locked in each other's arms. They rolled against the lantern, sending it rolling over, and it went out. But the heating-stove was alight, and in the dim glow from this the fight raged furiously.

In the ordinary way the healthy and vigorous Mark Linley would have very quickly overpowered Ponsonby. But he was far from being in a fit state for the fierce and desperate struggle which followed.

Over and over the two combatants rolled, fighting and struggling furiously, but the pace could not last. Quite suddenly Mark Linley went limp in the other's grasp, and Ponsonby gave a cry. It was only a momentary fit of faintness that had come over the junior. But it had given Ponsonby the ascendancy, and the next moment Linley was flat on his back, with Ponsonby kneeling on his chest. And in that moment hurried footsteps sounded from the tunnel, and three juniors stepped into the vault.

One of them flashed a light on the struggling forms, and a cry sounded.

"Oh, my hat!"

It was the alarmed voice of Skinner, and Mark Linley's heart sank. It was all up now. Against the four of them he would never have a ghost of a chance—and he was already done to the world.

For an instant Skinner stared aghast at the sight, and then he hurriedly drew out a box of matches and lit several of the candles.

"Buck up, hang you!" snarled Ponsonby. "Gad! It's lucky you've turned

up like this, Skinner! But buck up! Collar this cad and hold him!"

Skinner exchanged a look with his chums, and then he nodded.

"Go for him!" he snapped.

He made a rush, and after a moment's hesitation Stott and Snoop followed him. But to the utter amazement of Linley, it was Cecil Ponsonby they grasped, and they whirled him over with a crash and held him flat.

Ponsonby fairly yelled in angry amazement.

"Leggo, you fools! What game's this, Skinner? Oh, you dashed fools!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue and a Chase!

MARK LINLEY staggered to his feet drunkenly. He had never been more surprised in his life before. He had naturally taken it for granted that the arrival of Skinner & Co. meant the end of everything for him. Why this amazing change of front had come about he could not imagine. He stared down at Ponsonby, who was too astounded at the turn of events even to think of struggling.

"We've got the brute!" hissed Skinner. "Get a rope or string or something, and we'll tie the mad fool up, Linley."

Ponsonby's face was a sight—fury and amazement struggling for the mastery.

"Skinner," he gasped, almost choking, "are you mad, you silly fool? Let me go, hang you! What does this rot mean?"

"It means that we're fed-up with you, Ponsonby!" cried Skinner furiously. "You've gone a bit too far for us, you rotter! I'm dashed glad now that I spotted Linley nosing round the old chapel and followed him here. I thought he'd tumbled to where Wharton and the others must be—just as we did."

"You—you treacherous hounds!"

"You can call us just what you like," said Skinner thickly. "It won't make any difference now. We've decided what to do, and we mean to do it. It means the sack for us—or even another flogging. But that's better than the police and prison. If you can't see what this mad business is leading to we can."

"Hang you! Hang you!"

"You can grind your dashed teeth, Ponsonby. I warned you we couldn't stand much more of this. You refused to return those cups and things, and we were determined not to have the bobbies on our trail. We'd be in it as much as you. If this hadn't have happened we should have owned up to Quelch or someone, just the same. I only wish to goodness we'd reported you were here at the beginning and saved all this."

"Oh, you—you dirty traitors!" hissed Ponsonby.

He started to struggle madly, but Linley had grasped the situation now, and had jumped to the aid of Skinner & Co. Some thick string was found among the litter on the floor, and Ponsonby's hands were tied behind him.

"The game's up, Ponsonby," said Linley quietly. "Can't you see that now? You'd better tell us where to find Wharton and the others."

"I'll dashed well tell you nothing!" was the snarling reply. "I'll never tell if they're never found!"

Linley picked up the pocket-torch that was lying on the blanket where it had

fallen from his hand. It was not damaged, and even as he switched it on the light showed him something lying on the blanket.

It was a rusty key of ancient design, and Mark picked it up. He already had a vague suspicion as to what had happened to the Famous Five.

"Keep an eye on that rotter!" said Mark. "I fancy I know where to look for Wharton and the others. I'll go and search—"

"Hold on!" snapped Skinner, his eyes gleaming. "We'll come with you; this brute will be safe enough here. I mean to let Wharton see that I've done my best to make amends over this affair. I don't know how you tumbled to the truth, but I guessed you knew when I saw you trying that door in the chapel, and I guessed where Wharton had vanished to. We found a handkerchief of Wharton's in the vault beneath the priory yonder when we were leaving with Gaddy yesterday. We suspected then that you'd been spy—been scouting round."

Linley nodded. He knew only too well, however, that Skinner & Co.'s desire to make amends was prompted by a still stronger desire to save their own precious skins.

"Come along, then," he said quietly.

He led the way through the curtained entrance into the outer vaults, and made straight for the place where he had entered the secret entrance to the school above the night before. The slab was back in its place, but Mark did not trouble to try to open it. He moved along, shining his light on the wall, and searching for what he wanted—an old oaken door.

He remembered clearly having heard that dull crash of a door closing, and he had remembered seeing Ponsonby's light coming from the direction of the old cell which Mark knew well enough.

He saw the door at last, and as he stopped there sounded a voice from the ventilating hole of the cell just above his head.

"Ponsonby, you hound! Open this door, will you? Oh, you'll pay for this, you scoundrel!"

It was the voice of Harry Wharton—hoarse and trembling.

Mark Linley's heart leaped.

"Wharton! Bob!" he shouted.

"Linley!"

"Oh, what luck! It's old Marky, Bob!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry's voice.

The rusty key grated in the lock, and the next moment the heavy door creaked open, and Harry Wharton, followed by Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh crowded out.

"Good old Marky!"

Mark Linley shone the light on the faces of the released juniors—faces that were white and haggard, but relieved now.

"How on earth—" Harry Wharton was beginning, when he suddenly sighted Skinner, Stott, and Snoop, as Linley moved his torch round.

"It's all right, Harry," said Mark Linley grimly. "These chaps have thought better of the little game. They helped me just now to bowl out Ponsonby. But for them I should have been bowled out myself."

He told the astounded Famous Five all that had happened since he had lost them the night before, ending up with Skinner & Co.'s astonishing arrival and unexpected aid.

"Phew!" breathed Wharton. "You have had a rough time, Marky. So

have we, for that matter. It certainly was lucky these chaps turned up, though," he added, turning to Skinner & Co. "You've done a jolly sensible thing for once in a way, Skinner. I'll try to keep you chaps out of it as much as I can—though we shall be for it ourselves for breaking bounds last night. Anyhow, let's go and have a look at Ponsonby. We'll have to yank him before the beaks, of course. Though I'm hoping we'll get something out of him regarding those cups and things first."

"Yes, rather!"

The party retraced their steps to the end vault, Bob insisting upon helping Mark along, though Mark laughingly assured him he needed no help. They were passing by the curtain when Skinner gave a cry.

"Gone! Quick! He's escaping!"

It was true enough. The light revealed no sight of Ponsonby. But on the blanket was the string they had tied him with. And to their ears came the thudding of departing footsteps in the tunnel beyond.

"Quick!" roared Bob Cherry. "If the rotter escapes we'll never get those trophies back. Quick!"

He was the first through the revolving door, and he sighted a flickering light far ahead along the tunnel. He dashed in pursuit with the others racing at his heels, stumbling and sliding on the lumpy, slippery ground.

It was a wonder none of them came to grief in that mad dash along the gloomy tunnel, for only three of them carried lights, and these were of little use, considering the pace they were travelling. Skinner & Co. brought up the rear, with Linley limping along, though every step caused him great pain.

But the Famous Five had forgotten Linley in the excitement of the moment. Their one desire and thought was to catch the slippery rascal up, and to force him to disclose the hiding-place of the cups and other sporting trophies he had purloined.

The light vanished abruptly, and to their ears came a grinding sound, the sound of the revolving door closing, they knew only too well. Harry was the first to reach it, and as he did so he heard a scraping sound from beyond, faint, but unmistakable. Then came a dull thud.

"He's dragging stones to jam the door!" snapped Harry. "Quick! Shoulders to the wheel!"

The juniors flung themselves against the door of stone, thrusting and straining with bunched muscles and nerves. The door gave slightly, and then it gave with a rush, as the stone beyond slid away over the slippery flagstones.

Ponsonby's attempt to block the door had failed.

They were through the revolving door in a very few seconds, and Harry Wharton caught a swift glimpse of a form vanishing over the top of the steps.

He was bounding up the steps in pursuit in a flash, and the others were at his heels the next instant, at least, Cherry, Bull, Nugent, and Inky were. Skinner & Co. and Marky were still some distance behind in the tunnel.

"There he goes!" bawled Bob Cherry.

They sighted Ponsonby's form just vanishing amid the trees across the clearing. With a rush the Greyfriars juniors went after him, leaping over huge blocks of fallen masonry, and crashing through bare thickets, heedless of aught but the chase.

Every now and again the figure of the fugitive vanished amid the trees, only to reappear again. Once Harry Wharton went headlong, tripping over a



Ponsonby dashed straight at the butcher-boy and fairly whirled the startled youth off his machine. The bicycle crashed over, and the youth went with it, the basket flying across the roadway. "Great pip!" panted Bob Cherry, who, together with the Famous Five, was hard on the track of the Highcliffe dandy. "He'll do us yet if we're not sloppy!" (See Chapter 10.)

trailing creeper, but though badly shaken he was unhurt, and he went on, easily catching the others up again.

They came out of the woods at last, and glimpsed the sea shimmering in the morning sunlight. Across a couple of ploughed fields the chase continued, Ponsonby obviously tiring, and the Greyfriars fellows gaining rapidly now. Indeed, they wondered how Ponsonby could stick it so long, considering his physical slackness, and what he had already gone through.

But it was clear that the rascally runaway was determined to fight hard for his liberty to the last.

Only fifty yards separated them now, and it appeared to be a certain capture for the Famous Five.

Then quite suddenly, for no apparent reason, Ponsonby cut off at a tangent, making for a cart-track that ran across the field he was running across towards a distant farm.

They soon saw the reason, however.

Along the rough road a boy was riding on a bicycle, wearing a butcher's apron, and with a basket on the iron grid on the front of his machine.

Ponsonby dashed straight at him, and fairly whirled the startled youth off the machine. The machine crashed over,

and the youth went with it, the basket flying across the roadway.

In a flash Ponsonby had snatched up the machine, and was in the saddle, pedalling madly away towards the Cliff Road. The boy leaped up, yelling, but obviously not harmed much.

"Great pip!" panted Bob Cherry. "He's game, and no mistake! He'll do us yet, if we're not sloppy."

Ignoring the yelling youth, they pelted in pursuit, though the pace was trying them to the uttermost now. But luck was favouring them, for Ponsonby had reached a stiffish hill and was driving desperately at the pedals, realising that on foot they would soon overtake him.

And they did. Bob Cherry put on a spurt, and he was scarcely a dozen yards behind the fugitive when Ponsonby suddenly leaped from the machine, sending it crashing away from him. Then he bounded up the bank and bore across the grass that separated the cart-track from the Cliff Road.

"After him!" yelled Bob Cherry. "My hat! He'll—"

"Look out, you fool!" roared Harry Wharton.

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The juniors had just seen what Ponsonby had obviously not seen—a touring-car just speeding past towards Pegg, and at the rate Ponsonby was racing, he would dash straight into it as he dropped down into the road, unless he saw it in time.

But Ponsonby did not see it, and what happened next was almost too swift to follow.

Ponsonby dropped down into the lane, sprawling on hands and knees. There were, besides the driver, two elderly gentlemen in the car. One of the gentlemen, seeing the danger, appeared to lose his head. He jumped up, and, leaning over towards the driver, he wrenched at that startled individual's arm, shouting something as he did so.

Then it happened.

The sudden wrench tore the man's hands from the wheel, and the car swerved violently, and crashed through the low fence on the seaward side.

Mounting a low bank, it lurched violently down the far side of it, throwing the driver and one of the gentlemen clean out of the car. The next instant the car and its hapless occupant ran swiftly down the sward beyond and shot over the cliff edge to the depths below.

"Good heavens!" panted Harry Wharton.

They stared, petrified with horror, stunned by the swift tragedy.

To their straining ears sounded a tremendous splash from far below.

The sound roused them from the stunned horror that had gripped them, and they dashed madly to the cliff edge, heedless of the other gentleman and the driver, who did not appear to be hurt badly.

But someone else was before them—Cecil Ponsonby.

He reached the cliff edge, his face like chalk, and he stared wildly down at the foam-flecked waves below. Farther out from the base of the cliff, in deep blue water, some cushions floated amid a medley of rugs and loose articles—that was all. The water welled away in ever-widening circles.

One glance the runaway gave downwards, and the next moment he was gone, sweeping downwards like a falling stone. His body hit the heaving water with a resounding splash.

"Ponsonby—it was Ponsonby!" gasped Bob Cherry. Even in that moment of horror Bob found himself thinking of the amazing thing that had happened. Ponsonby had gone to the rescue—what seemed to be a hopeless attempt at rescue. Ponsonby, who was the last fellow in the world, they would have imagined, to risk his skin for anyone!

It was amazing—astounding!

But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, at all events, did not stay to ponder over the amazing thing. They were over the edge of the low cliff the next moment, shooting downwards like plummets.

A short pause, and then Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Inky came rushing up. They quickly followed their chums.

To fellows like the Famous Five such a dive was nothing new. The cliff at this spot was, happily, fairly low, and the water was deep. Harry Wharton came up, rubbing the water from his eyes. It was icy cold, but he started to swim vigorously, and suddenly, as he glanced swiftly about him, he saw a bulky form in the water scarcely a yard away.

At first he thought it was Nugent, his chum, and then he saw a face with

greyish moustache—the face of the elderly gentleman.

His grasp was on the man in a flash, and he trod water, struggling to avoid the man's grasping hands. Frank Nugent came forging towards him.

"Help, Franky!" gasped Harry. "Oh, look out!"

Even as Frank Nugent's grip closed on the old gentleman he went limp in their combined grasp.

"All serene!" muttered Frank. "Bob and the others have Pon, I think."

He looked round him swiftly. Then his heart leaped. Ponsonby was struggling feebly in the grasps of Johnny Bull and Inky and Bob Cherry. But that was not all. Forging swiftly towards the spot from seawards was a large motor-boat, rising and falling speedily over the hummocks and hollows of the waves.

"My father!" gasped Ponsonby feebly. "See—see to him!"

Bob Cherry saw that the elderly gentleman—they recognised him now with a shock—needed more help, and he went forging to the aid of Harry and Frank. The next moment the motor-boat slowed down a few yards away, and a cheery voice hailed them.

"All right! We'll soon have them out. Good for you, kids! Good lads!"

The boat rocked gently nearer—eager arms reached for Ponsonby's father—it was, indeed, him—and he was lifted, after a struggle, into the boat. There were two men in the boat, and they very quickly hauled Ponsonby in after his father. He collapsed, and lay limp and inert in the bottom of the craft.

"Now, kids," said one of the men.

In turn the almost exhausted juniors were helped into the roomy motor-boat.

"All right?" came a husky, faint voice from the top of the cliff. "All right—hey?"

It was Major Thresher's voice; they recognised it at once.

"All right, sir!" bawled one of the motor-boat men.

"Thank Heaven!"

The motor-boat turned in a sweeping curve, and shot away towards the distant landing-stage at Pegg.

And, as the motor-boat man had said, it was all right. On landing at Pegg the drenched rescuers and rescued were rushed up to the Fisherman's Rest, and soon all were between blankets—a messenger going post-haste for the local doctor. But he was scarcely needed, happily. And comforted with the knowledge that neither Ponsonby nor his father were in any grave danger, the chums of Greyfriars bowled merrily back to school in the friendly innkeeper's trap some time later in the morning.

They reported immediately to Mr. Quelch, who left the staring, amazed Remove in charge of Wingate and took the juniors along to Dr. Locke. The Head listened in astounded surprise to the strange story Harry Wharton had to tell. His face was grim when the story was told.

"Very well," he said, at length. "I think I understand. You have done very wrongly in breaking bounds—even for such a purpose. But—but—I will deal with that matter later. You have undoubtedly been through very trying experiences, and you had better go straight to bed and remain there until you are instructed to get up. You may go!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. went. They found Linley and Skinner, Stott and Snoop waiting in the passage. They told Linley he was to go to the matron to have his hurts attended to without delay.

"What about punishments?" asked Linley.

"It's pretty clear from the way Dr. Locke spoke of you that you jolly well won't get any," grinned Bob Cherry.

"What about us?" asked Skinner, his face white and haggard. "Did he—did he—"

"My dear man, your name wasn't even mentioned by us, or the Head, or Quelch," remarked Harry Wharton. "You're not such important persons as you think, Skinner."

Skinner drew a deep, deep breath.

"Then—then you kept us out of it?" he breathed.

"Yes; little as you deserve it. But don't crow yet. I fancy friend Ponsonby will do all the mentioning in that line. Come on, Marky, old man. We'll yank you along to the matron, and then we'll get to bed."

And, with Bob Cherry's arm linked in Mark Linley's right arm, and Harry Wharton's linked in his left, the juniors wandered to the matron's room.

Harry Wharton proved to be wrong in regard to Skinner & Co. As on a former occasion those shady youths spent a very worrying day indeed, expecting every moment a summons from the Head. And then at teatime a note came for Skinner. It was from Ponsonby. The shady trio blinked at it. It was in Ponsonby's handwriting, but it was utterly unlike Ponsonby's usual style. It ran as follows:

"Dear Skinner,—Keep mum about your share in this matter. I shall not mention your names, and Wharton has told me he will not.

"I am going back to Highcliffe as soon as I have recovered. Dr. Voysey has forgiven me. My father has also forgiven me, and he will settle up with the fellows at your school for all the damage I have done.

"CECIL PONSONBY."

That was the letter, and it almost knocked the cynical Skinner down. He would not believe it at first. But he soon had to believe it when the news went round Greyfriars that the school trophies had all been restored by Ponsonby, and that Ponsonby's father would compensate all the fellows who had lost or had had things damaged by his son. But Harry Wharton, who had had a talk with Ponsonby, knew it was true before then. And he was glad—glad also that Ponsonby had been forgiven and was returning to Highcliffe. Like Dr. Voysey, he felt that by that one final act, the reckless, ruthless outcast had more than made amends. He only hoped that the change in Ponsonby would last. But—alas!—it did not. A few days later the Famous Five met Ponsonby with his nutty pals, and he gave them his old, insolent, supercilious, sneering glance.

Ponsonby was himself again!

THE END.

(Look out for a screamingly funny story of Greyfriars next week, chums, entitled: "Billy Bunter's Legacy!" by Frank Richards. You will laugh loud and long over this masterpiece.)

"SHUT UP!" It isn't often that a footballer pro talks to his managing-director like that, for the simple reason that there's only one Lionel Speedlow in the footer world. And you'll soon learn all about his funny little ways in—



The CASE of THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS



Introduction on
page 24

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

A Bad Beginning!

"A VERY impressive start, I must say!"

Silas Chisholm, director of the Wanderers, ground out the words venomously, and dragged his gold watch from his pocket for the tenth time in thirty minutes. He replaced it on each occasion without consulting it, for over the mantelpiece in the well-appointed board-room of the Langsdale F.C. was a clock big enough for the most short-sighted individual to see.

Silas was annoyed—deeply annoyed—and his features betrayed it.

His fellow-directors—five of them—were no less annoyed, nor were their features better composed. Really, for the chairman and managing director to be a good thirty minutes late for his first board meeting, was, as Thomas Priestley, a mild-tempered shopkeeper of Langsdale, had remarked a score of times, "a bit thick!"

It certainly was!

Lionel Speedlow had fixed the meeting the day after he had arrived in Langsdale, for the express purpose of introducing himself to the board of directors—directors who held that position in name only. He had written to these busy men of Langsdale, convening the meeting for eleven o'clock sharp—sharp! And here it was, turned half-past eleven, and no sign of Speedwell, or any message from him.

"We might have known it!" grunted Ephraim Woodley, the local grocer. "Wasting everybody's time on a busy day like Wednesday, too! It's disgraceful! I'll have something to say to that young waster when he does arrive!"

And Mr. Woodley, with a grunt, subsided into silence, and began to make a mental calculation of the cost of a thousand tins of pineapple at "eight-three" a tin!

Another five minutes went by, and even the most placid of tempers arrayed around that mahogany table, as it were, began to fret and fray.

"This is absolutely the outside edge!" exclaimed Silas Chisholm angrily.

"It is!" murmured Woodley, from the depths of his chair. "They are too dear at 'eight-three'; much too dear!" Mr. Woodley's mind was still running on the cost of pineapples tinned!

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Silas turned and glared at his fellow-director, and as he did so his eyes embraced one of the long plush curtains that was bunched at the window.

Then he started, for beneath the curtain a pair of smart patent leather shoes could be seen!

Silas rubbed his eyes and looked again. No, he had not been mistaken. A pair of patent leather shoes! What the dickens were they doing in the Langsdale board-room?

Silas was not a quick thinker, but a sudden suspicion dawned in his mind, and he determined to try it out. To the astonishment of his fellow-directors he gathered up three large ledgers from the mahogany table, and proceeded to walk towards those patent shoes.

Then, to the further astonishment of the directors, Silas halted about a foot from the curtain, and threw—threw, mark you—those three ledgers.

Crash!

"Ow!"

The noise of their fall was completely blotted out by a terrific howl, and the curtain at the window swayed in a most extraordinary manner.

Chuckling beneath his breath, Silas stooped and picked up the ledgers. The patent leather shoes were not in sight now. And barely had he regained an upright position when the curtain was swung back. To everyone's astonishment—excepting Silas—Lionel Speedlow, the new chairman and managing director stood revealed.

His face was wrinkled in lines of pain, and he clasped almost lovingly one of his patent leather shoe-d feet. Now, to indulge in tricks of this sort requires a good sense of balance, and Speedlow was so occupied with the pain of his big toe, where three heavy ledgers had smitten it, that his sense of balance became a matter of secondary importance.

The result was nothing more nor less than anyone in the room expected. A short impersonation of a hopping kangaroo—very short—and Speedlow collapsed, with a resounding bump, on to a portion of the uncarpeted floor.

"Ow!"

Close upon this second ejaculation of pain came a tinkling of breaking glass, and the remnants of a monocle clattered, and finally came to rest very near that damaged toe!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frayed tempers were forgotten by the directors at this extraordinary appearance of the man they were waiting for. The board-room echoed and re-echoed to roars of uncontrolled laughter. Here and there were interposed roars of wrath. These, of course, proceeded from Lionel Speedlow.

He looked a ridiculous figure sprawled there on the floor, and he fully realised it. But, strangely enough, he chose to remain there, it being easier, no doubt, to caress that damaged big toe in a sitting posture.

Now and again his eyes glared their malice at the directors in general and Silas in particular. But these glares only seemed to prolong the laughter. The Langsdale directors were making the most of it, doubtless as some recompense for the time they had been kept waiting.

But all good things come to an end, and the laughter ceased as Lionel Speedlow, having to some small extent alleviated the pain in his foot, scrambled to his feet and faced his fellow-directors.

"You thunderin' chuckle-headed idiots!" he roared. "You low hounds! You—you—you—"

Words failed the incensed chairman. But he knew it was an impressive thing to bang one's fist on the table.

Speedlow banged!

It must have been his unlucky day, really, for the banging fist came down on the stout mahogany table all right, but it just encountered the edge of a new blotting-pad. And on the blotting-pad was an inkwell, filled with new ink. Of course, the result was no more than a thoughtful person might have expected—the angle of coincidence between the inkwell and Lionel Speedlow's aquiline nose would permit of no other result.

The inkwell flew through the air like a pellet from a catapult as the blotting-pad stirred it. Every bullet has its billet, we are told, and the inkwell was no exception. It was a beautiful shot, landing fair on the tip of Speedlow's nose!

As was natural in the circumstances, the Langsdale directors laughed. Why, it was better than a music-hall turn! And, as was equally natural, Lionel Speedlow roared!

There was no sympathy from the Langsdale men. It was against their code to lie in waiting behind a curtain, to play the eavesdropper, as Speedlow obviously had done, and the punishment attending that despicable action was justly fitting and entertaining.

"Help me out of this mess!" spluttered Speedlow, clawing his fingers down his face, and leaving a peculiar streaky pattern behind him. "You laughin' maniacs!"

It was not exactly a tactful way to ask a service, and no one seemed anxious to comply. But at last Speedlow managed, with the aid of two white handkerchiefs, to remove some of that offending ink.

Then, boiling with rage, he faced the board.

"The meeting is off, you confounded fools!" he almost screamed. "You beastly low hooligans, I'll get rid of the lot of you! Laughin' at a gentleman's misfortunes—"

"Gentlemen don't 'ide behind curtains!" rapped Mr. Woodley, striding forward and shaking a leg-of-mutton fist. "And 'oo are you calling a beastly low 'ooligan—eh?"

Speedlow was too mad with rage to pay heed to the aggressive grocer, or to be taken aback by that leg-of-mutton fist.

"You—I'm talkin' to you—talkin' to you all!" he exclaimed passionately. "I'll get rid of you before I've been here much longer! Low, beastly low lot—"

His voice ended in a gurgle as Mr. Woodley plugged home with his formidable fist. The grocer was not a warlike gentleman, as a rule, but he had his limits of control, the same as the next man. And he prided himself upon being a gentleman, which, it must be stated, in all fairness to him, he was.

Speedlow yelped as the fist landed upon his already outraged aquiline nose, and he staggered back. It was unfortunate that his line of retreat lay in the direction of the fireplace, or, to be more precise, the coal-scuttle. There was a clatter as his feet came in contact with the edge of the scuttle, and then a bump. But the clatter and the bump were easily outclassed by the yell Lionel Speedlow gave utterance to, as, losing his balance, he collapsed fair in the centre of the yawning scuttle with its uneven bed of coal.

The chairman's fresh misfortune was the signal for another howl of merriment from the board, the more pronounced when it was seen that Speedlow was tightly wedged in the scuttle.

And there the Langsdale directors left him. The meeting was "off," the introduction was over, and no one seemed anxious to listen to the string of vituperative abuse Speedlow passionately declaimed from the coal scuttle.

With many chuckles, therefore, the directors trooped out.

Speedlow watched them go with feelings too deep for words. He hated them all—hated Langsdale and all that therein was except perhaps the bank that held to his credit a million or more of the good money left him by Marchant Taylor. Not for one moment did he attach any importance to the fact that the trouble was of his own making; that his despicable trick of hiding behind the curtain in the hope of hearing something derogatory being said of him had met with its just reward.

He struggled out of the coal scuttle at last, and aimed a savage kick at it. But he got the worst of that deal, for an iron scuttle is not exactly the right article to aim kicks at with a patent shoe.

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There was a fresh howl of pain from Speedlow, and again he danced on one foot and caressed its fellow-member. But only the four walls of the board-room heard that howl, and even they seemed to have little liking for the sound of Speedlow's voice, for they hurled it back at him.

Really, Lionel Speedlow could hardly call it his lucky day.

Looking For It!

THE return journey to the Rookery was something in the nature of a nightmare to Speedlow, for his face was as black as the ace of spades, and his temper was of a like colour.

His two-seater car fairly ate up the mile and a quarter journey, and he drove it with a reckless abandon that characterised all his actions. A policeman called on him to stop, but Speedlow never saw or heard him.

Langsdale shoppers stared in amazement at that ink-stained face, and some, who recognised the driver of the car, actually laughed. Speedlow ground his teeth and fumed.

A prolonged shriek of the Klaxon horn brought Turville to the door of the Rookery in double-quick time. He nearly collapsed as he saw his master's face.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

MARCHANT TAYLOR, an eccentric, wealthy old gentleman, founder and managing-director of the Langsdale Wanderers.

CURLY TAYLOR, his nephew, the eighteen-year-old centre-forward of the Wanderers, who lives with his eccentric uncle at the Rookery.

SILAS CHISHOLM, a director of the Wanderers.

LIONEL SPEEDLOW, a young "blood" down from Oxford—Curly's cousin.

PERRERS LOCKE, the famous private detective, and

JACK DRAKE, his clever boy assistant.

At the close of a match between the Wanderers and the Treadwell F.C., the home eleven, upon entering their dressing-room, discover the body of Marchant Taylor stretched out on the floor in an apparently lifeless heap. Over him they see Sanky Badger, the trainer, kneeling, a smoking revolver in his hand. Sanky is accused of murdering the old man, but he stoutly denies the charge, and then, seizing an opportune moment, bolts from the dressing-room. The team gives chase, but Sanky eludes them.

On returning to the dressing-room the Wanderers find that the body of Marchant Taylor has mysteriously disappeared. A visit to the Rookery by a police-inspector elicits the startling information that old man Taylor received an anonymous letter on the day of his death couched in the following terms: "TO-DAY AT FIVE-THIRTY WE STRIKE." The police theory is that Taylor was assassinated by a member of a secret society, and the Home Secretary, who has sworn to exterminate these secret societies, engages Perrers Locke to track down the murderous gang.

After a deal of legal argument in the Law Court's old man Taylor's will is admitted to probate. Then, to everyone's astonishment, it is found that the entire fortune of Marchant Taylor has been left to Lionel Speedlow. Curly Taylor merely receives ten pounds a week from his cousin, on the understanding that he continues to play for the Langsdale Wanderers. Speedlow loses no time in showing himself in his true colours, and the cousins come to blows practically at their first meeting. Then, determined to avenge his fancied wrongs, Speedlow hires a ruffian to "out" young Curly. The "outing" process is going strong when Perrers Locke and Jack Drake unexpectedly turn up. Curly declines to charge his assailant, and the hired ruffian is told to make himself scarce as quickly as possible. (Now read on.)

"Whatever has happened, sir?" he gasped. "I—"

But Speedlow was in no mood to explain to a servant. He brushed him aside with scant ceremony, and tore upstairs to the bath-room. For the next hour he was busy scrubbing his face and changing into a fresh suit of clothes. When he finally presented himself at lunch there still lurked in his flaming countenance traces of the ink.

Curly Taylor looked up in some surprise. He had started his lunch, the gong having sounded a quarter of an hour since. He noted the faint daubs of ink on the bad-tempered face of his cousin, and was vastly intrigued in his mind to account for them.

But Curly and Lionel were hardly on speaking terms. Only the night before Curly had spoken his mind to his rascally cousin on the subject of the vicious attack by Slatey. As he had expected, Speedlow had denied all knowledge of the man and his assault. But he had felt an inward tremor for all that which had grown with the passing of time and the non-appearance and silence of Slatey.

Speedlow disposed of his lunch without so much as a word to his cousin, although black looks were plentifully thrown in his direction. But when he was comfortably-seated in an armchair before the fire, Speedlow deigned to speak. He had been reading a newspaper, which he now cast aside with a gesture of contempt.

"I see the fools of police are still hunting for uncle's body," he remarked.

Curly looked up from a book he was reading.

"Yes; it's a fair mystery," he said, shaking his head. "I've puzzled my head for days to find a solution, but everywhere leads to a blank. Sometimes I wonder if the old man is dead."

Speedlow sat bolt upright in his chair, his head thrust forward challengingly.

"If!" he sneered. "Of course he's dead! Why, you're as bad as the fools of police! Why can't the idiots leave the affair alone?"

"Why, you rotter!" exclaimed Curly indignantly, "don't you want to know what's happened to uncle? Don't you want to give him a respectable burial, if he is dead?"

"Not in the least," sniffed Lionel. "He and I never got on well together. I don't care a twopenny straw what's happened to him!"

"Well, it's not to your credit to talk like that," said Curly, rising to his feet.

"If you don't like it you can get out," snapped Speedlow. "Your face worries me. Why don't you get some digs somewhere?"

Curly's eyes blazed.

"I'm staying here!" he exclaimed. "My instincts tell me that something is wrong with this peculiar end of old man Taylor. My instincts tell me to stay here—at his house, not yours—his house until things are cleared up. And I am acting within my rights in staying here, much as it upsets you and your rotten airs and graces."

"Your instincts!" scoffed Speedlow. "I'll make you sorry for your determination to stay here, my lad. Your instincts. Ugh!"

"Look here, Lionel," said Curly determinedly. "Let's have it straight. We've come to blows once, you and I. Let's know each other."

Speedlow smiled superciliously.

"We don't like each other," continued Curly. "But leave that aside, and think of the Langsdale footer. You are chairman and managing director of the club. You hold the power to push its already

good name to a higher pinnacle of fame than ever it has reached before, for the newspaper men already talk of us as the winners of the cup. If you and I can't agree over things personal, let us at least work together for the sake of the club."

"When will you learn to mind your own business?" roared Speedlow savagely. "Haven't I told you that I'm master here? I'll do what I like without any interference from you. Just remember, my dear fellow, that all you have to do is to play football, that you receive ten pounds a week from me. Go your own way, and keep clear of me. I don't like you. I can't stand the sight of you. You suggested that we should 'have it straight.' Well, you've got it!"

Curly listened to that outburst with tingling ears. The fellow was out to be as unpleasant as he could.

"Very well, Speedlow," said Curly quietly. "But don't overstep the bounds in your dealings with me. I'll not stand for it."

And Curly, with bottled up feelings, vacated the room. Ten minutes later he was strolling down to the Langsdale ground for the afternoon's practice. Lionel Speedlow, in his two-seater, passed him on the way.

When Curly arrived at the ground he found Speedlow trying his airs and graces on the trainer. But Dunstan had scant time or politeness for him.

"My good man," drawled Speedlow, "you've got to wake up this team. They're positively lazy."

"What do you mean?" demanded Dunstan in ringing tones. "There's not a better side than Langsdale in all England. Why," he went on, "you haven't seen the boys yet! What do you know about them being lazy?"

Speedlow, of course, hadn't seen the Langsdale players, but that didn't worry him a jot. He had said they were lazy, and that was good enough.

"Don't argue with me, my man," he said authoritatively.

"I don't want to," came the even response. "I didn't ask to meet you."

Old Dunstan was no respecter of persons. He turned on his heel, and busied himself with lacing a football at the far end of the dressing-room. About five minutes later the Langsdale men arrived. They swarmed into the dressing-room in boisterous fashion, for they were all on the youthful side, and certainly not lacking in cheerful spirits.

Speedlow, who had by this time purchased another monocle, brought it into play.

"Beastly lot of noise!" he remarked. "More like a gang of hooligans than a football team!"

Tony Abbot, the full-back, heard that remark and resented it. He didn't know who the fop was, but he did not approve of him. With studied "carelessness" Tony backed a pace while demonstrating to his colleagues how somebody or other had kicked a goal. His foot swept back and there was a startled howl from Speedlow as a large size in boots came across his shin-bone.

"Clumsy idiot!" he roared. "Why don't you look where you're goin'?"

Tony Abbot glared round.

"Why don't you go where you're

looking?" was his quick response, with a meaning glance at the monocle in Speedlow's eye.

"Confounded impertinence!" snapped Speedlow. "I'll change all this before I'm much older."

Before Tony Abbot could make any reply Silas Chisholm came in. He seemed to have great difficulty in restraining a smile when he looked at Speedlow. Doubtless he was thinking of the scene in the board-room that morning. Speedlow gave him a hostile glare as he entered, but Silas allowed it to pass by.

"Boys," he said good-humouredly, "let me introduce you to your new chairman and managing-director."

With a polite gesture of the hand he indicated Speedlow, and for a moment Tony Abbot felt a thrill run down his spine. He had kicked his managing-director deliberately! More than that, he had "cheeked" him. Tony was going to pay for that kick and that "impertinence" where it would hurt him most—in the pocket. But Speedlow gave no sign of his charitable intentions as he faced the players.

"How do you do, you men?" he



Speedlow never finished what he had to say, for two muscular hands closed upon him. Woodward, rather touchy on the subject of professionalism, had kept his word. Like a kitten in the strong arms of the centre-half, Speedlow was carried to the door of the dressing-room and slung out into the mud. (See Page 26.)

drawled, what time he dallied with the monocle.

"The men" were a trifle taken aback. True, they had heard in advance that the fellow who had inherited old man Taylor's money was a "blade and a goer" from Oxford, but they hadn't expected anything like this. They looked as if a douche of cold water had passed over them.

"Woodward is the skipper of the side," said Silas, motioning to the brawny captain to step forward.

Woodward advanced and held out his hand; but Speedlow preferred not to notice it—or, rather, to notice it and disdain it. Woodward crimsoned and felt rather small.

"So—er—you are the captain—eh?" drawled Speedlow, and there was a sneer in his voice that was not unheeded by the players.

Woodward said nothing. He had taken—as, indeed, all men of Langsdale, it would seem—an instantaneous dislike to the overdressed fellow who was his managing-director.

The process of introduction having been completed, Dunstan called out the two teams—first and second—for a practice game.

Soon the spacious ground was echoing to the pleasant boomph! of the ball and the occasional shriek of Dunstan's whistle. From the grand-stand Speedlow hurled an unending string of criticisms.

"Get a move on, you—you at centre!" he roared. "And put your back into it, Taylor!"

Curly grinned as he heard his cousin's affected speech drifting across the turf. He had made up his mind to stand a lot of that sort of barracking now that Speedlow held the reins. Far better to stand it, to treat it with contempt, than to lose his temper; for that was what Speedlow hoped and wanted him to do.

Speedlow grew tired of criticising his cousin, and began to treat the rest of the first eleven to a collection of scathing remarks. And Tony Abbot and Woodward were given more than an average "whack."

"Come along, Abbot! This is a match, you know; not a funeral!"

"Good job for you, you guy!" breathed Tony. "'Cause if it were a funeral it'd be yours!"

Some of the players grinned as they heard Tony's reply. Then it was Woodward's turn.

"Eh, you, Woodward!" called out Speedlow. "You'll have to buck up if you want to captain this side. Keep your men together. And don't dawdle! Get up the field, man—get up!"

For a moment Woodward stopped playing, and an ugly glint came into his eyes. But he thought better of what was passing in his mind and resumed playing. Speedlow's rather beady eyes glittered vengefully as he marked the effect he had made upon the stalwart skipper.

"Come along, Woodward; don't funk it! Get into it, man!"

Woodward stopped and faced the grand-stand, with clenched fists and shining eyes.

"Shut up!" he bellowed.

"Eh? What—what?" stuttered Speedlow; and then, as he recovered from the shock of a paid footballer having spoken to him, a millionaire, in such a fashion: "What did you say, fellow?"

"I said shut up!" reiterated Woodward; and from the players came a

growl of support. "Run away and hide your face—it's worrying the boys!"

It was not exactly the right kind of expression to use to a managing-director; but Woodward had been provoked into saying some such remark since the game had started, for Speedlow had made a dead set at him.

"I'll have something to say to you after the practice!" yelled back Speedlow. "Now get on with the game!"

The players resumed, but a lot of their keenness had gone. This fellow Speedlow seemed to have a wet-blanket effect upon them. And during the next half-hour the new managing-director had something caustic to say to each and all of them.

When the two teams came off their faces gave an indication of their feelings. Not one of them could muster a smile.

"Woodward!" called out Speedlow.

"Hallo?" replied the skipper, without looking round.

"I want you," drawled Speedlow's voice. "I have been considering whether you are good enough to play on Saturday—"

Silas Chisholm, who had entered the dressing-room at that moment, hurried forward.

"My dear Speedlow," he commenced, "Woodward must play! Why, he's the best centre-half of the three Leagues!"

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted Speedlow. "Woodward can take a rest on Saturday. In fact, I seriously think of putting him in the Reserves for keeps. He's getting stale, you know."

Considering that Woodward was just this side of thirty and that three well-known teams had angled for his transfer without success, Speedlow's estimation of the skipper's merits was a little wide of the mark.

"And he's impertinent," went on Speedlow. "You heard him tell me to shut up surely?"

"I did!" grunted Silas. "And I would have said the same myself if I had been in Woodward's place. Look here, Speedlow," he went on earnestly, "you're heading the right way for disaster. We've never had any trouble with the team before, but already I see the danger-signals in the air. You stop Woodward playing on Saturday and there'll be trouble!"

Speedlow laughed scornfully.

"It seems that Langsdale has up till now been bossed by its players. I'm going to alter that. I don't stand on ceremony with paid professionals, you know. Just watch me, Chisholm. I'll not only suspend Woodward but I'll put that elephant—Abbot—in the reserves."

"Take my advice and don't do it," whispered Silas.

"Woodward!" rapped out Speedlow. "You are suspended for three weeks from the first eleven. You will not turn out for the First, you understand? You will play for the reserves until further orders."

"Shame!"

The cry came from fifteen of the players at least, for Woodward was very popular with them.

"Enough!" shrieked Speedlow. "I will not have this insubordination. You, Abbot, will also turn out for the reserves on Saturday. I'm not so sure that I shall keep you in the club. Beats me, how on earth you ever got into the first eleven."

As Speedlow watched the changing expressions in Abbot's face he felt fully recompensed for the kick on the shins

the full-back had given him. That he was in reality depriving Abbot of his bread-and-butter should he dispense with his services altogether Speedlow didn't worry about. Tony was a trifle on "the old" side to start football with a new club although he was well worth his place in the Langsdale team.

He thought of his wife and two children as Speedlow glanced sneeringly at him. But Speedlow was yet to learn of the big back's responsibilities and to play upon his fears where they were concerned.

"You understand, Abbot?" he rapped. Tony Abbot nodded assent.

"And you, Woodward—" drawled Speedlow.

"A man of my reputation cannot afford to be played with the reserves," said Woodward slowly. "You might or might not know it, Mr. Speedlow, but I am being considered for my place in the English team," he added. "If you are not satisfied with my services I'll resign the club. But I'll not play with the reserves."

A storm of cheering followed the centre-half's words.

"You understand me, you fellows," he said, turning to the players. "It isn't snobbery. But I simply can't afford to be captain and centre-half of the best team in England one day, and a reserve the next. Footballing days are short enough in all conscience, without being monkeyed by a fellow who doesn't understand what he's talking about."

"You impertinent fellow!" exclaimed Speedlow.

"I've told you to shut up once," said Woodward savagely. "If we have any more of your airs and graces I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and pitch you outside. You've got to understand, Speedlow, that, although you've come into old man Taylor's money, that although you're the Big Noise in the management of this club, that we are human beings, with human feelings."

"Hear, hear!"

"Cheek!" rapped Speedlow. "It's coming to something when a paid player talks to his director like—"

But he never finished what he had to say, for two muscular hands closed upon him. Woodward, rather touchy on the subject of professionalism, had kept his word. Like a kitten in the strong arms of the incensed skipper, Speedlow was carried to the door of the dressing-room and slung out into the mud that had collected at the foot of the steps.

There, gasping and spluttering, he was left to sort himself out.

A storm of cheering reached him as he floundered there, for the Langsdale players were a clannish lot and an individual grievance became a "team" one. It was a scene without parallel in the history of Langsdale footer, and yet Silas Chisholm was not surprised. Certain it was he made no move to check the growing indignation of the players. But already he had made up his mind that Langsdale footer was doomed. With this nincompoop at its head any club would fall to pieces.

Curly Taylor, too, was not surprised. He had sampled Mr. Lionel Speedlow off the footer field. But he was worried. To him Langsdale football had always meant everything. Something of its founder's enthusiasm had entered into him. It was a shame for the good work of years to be pulled down in a few months, perhaps weeks.

He tried to talk the players round

to a better state of mind, but for once in a way they would have none of him. Perhaps they kept before them the reflection that Curly was related to this "flash guy."

Lionel Speedlow, meantime, heard the uproar going on in the dressing-room and trembled for his safety. But he knew that he held the whip hand. These men, to a great extent, depended upon him for their livelihood. He would wait his time. He would show them that they couldn't play ducks and drakes with Lionel Speedlow.

Muttering to himself, he lurched towards his two-seater car and headed for home, conscious in some dim fashion that he had upset the result of years of labour that Marchant Taylor had given to Langsdale.

Deep down in him Speedlow felt some satisfaction at what he had done, for his was naturally a destructive character. How destructive he himself had yet to learn—even as the townsfolk of Langsdale were to learn.

Plain Speaking!

THE next day a notice in Speedlow's handwriting was tacked on the notice board at the club when the players arrived for practice. It was the team for Saturday's match.

Woodward's name was conspicuous by its absence, but that was not the most amazing part of the notice, for in Woodward's place appeared the name of Lionel Speedlow.

"He's going to play himself," ejaculated Roberts, the left-half.

"Well, if his play is anything like his appearance I'm not turning out," said Strang, the inside-right.

He did not mean what he said, but it is surprising how soon a crowd with a grievance—real or fancied—will rise to a bait.

"And I sha'n't play either!" grumbled Matthewson, the right-winger.

"Nor I!"

Practically the whole of the team voiced the same thought. Really there was no rhyme or reason in their attitude, for, as Lionel Speedlow was so fond of reminding them, they were paid players, and therefore to a great extent had to do what they were told.

But law and order had passed away from Langsdale F.C. with the coming of Speedlow.

Rank rebellion was in every heart when Speedlow himself strode into the dressing-room. He proceeded to change,

smiling sardonically at the black faces around him.

Dunstan, the trainer, had lost his cheerfulness. Upon that coming practice depended whether he would continue to train for the Langsdale men or resign. He thought the latter.

The men turned out for the practice with surly looks. As if in sympathy with the black looks a small cloud, dark and ominous, hovered above the playing pitch—omen, some thought of the stormy times ahead for Langsdale Wanderers.

The game started in a desultory fashion, and Speedlow lost no time in showing them what sort of footballer he was. He did more talking than kicking, and on the few occasions he essayed to kick the ball his foot met nothing more than the empty air. This was the man who had told Woodward he was too slow. Immaculately-attired when he entered the field, hair well-oiled and brushed, Speedlow left after that game with hardly a speck of dust on his person. This was the man who had yelled to Woodward to "get into it."

He called the team together after he had changed into his civilian clothes.

"Now, you men," he began, "you've got to pull yourselves together for Saturday's match. You're lazy—that's the trouble. And you've yet to learn the lesson of combination."

The faces of the players were grim. Heated replies trembled on the lips of them all, but Speedlow rambled on unheeding:

"And you, Dunstan," he drawled languidly; "you had better show yourself worthy of the job of trainer to Langsdale. These men are unfit—"

"You noodle-faced, Bond Street band-box of lunacy," said Dunstan, and all the team looked up in surprise at this unusual outburst from the good-natured and good-tempered trainer. "You had better look round for a fresh trainer, for I'm not staying to train this team another minute longer. And don't you say they are not fit," he added wrathfully. "Why, there's not a better trained set of fellows in all the world than these chaps, you affected bag of sawdust!"

And, leaving Speedlow to think that out, Dunstan turned on his heel and walked fiercely out of the dressing-room.

(What's going to happen to the Wanderers now? Mind you read next week's thrilling instalment, boys.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

THE STEEPLEJACK!

MAGNETITES always aspire to great heights, which is only right and proper, as a certain gentleman says in one of Gilbert and Sullivan's plays. But, talking of heights brings me to a jolly letter I have just received from a reader at Southampton. He, apparently, idolises the steeplejack—the iron-nerved johnny who can clamber about church spires, etc., without wishing to hurl himself down to the ground, as so many of us would if we tried to emulate his tricky feats. More than that, my correspondent goes on to say that his ambition is to become a steeplejack. Well, he can do a deal worse. But, all the same for that, it is a calling requiring an exceptionally healthy and iron-nerved fellow. Perhaps I should say it requires a fellow without nerves at all. "Is it a well-paid job?" That question comes at the end of the letter. I am not in a position to say exactly how much a steeplejack does earn, but I know I am right in saying that he is paid a very high figure for his dangerous work—and he deserves it! I, too, can admire the steeplejack, for I have often seen him at work, and marvelled at his nonchalance at work up there umpteen feet above my head—where I wouldn't be, not if they paid me a thousand an hour!

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY!

The two new numbers of this popular library now on sale are well worth a mention in this chat, for No. 21, "The Greyfriars Journalists," features, as you can gather from the title, your old favourites, Harry Wharton & Co. It's a tip-top yarn, my chums, and if you don't read it—well, it will be your loss. No. 22 takes us to St. Jim's, amongst those cheery youths Tom Merry & Co., and the story shows Mr. Martin Clifford bang in form. The title? "D'Arcy of St. Jim's." Now you trot round to your nearest newsagent and give him an order for these two value-for-money volumes, boys.

A CORRESPONDENT WANTED!

A true friend of the MAGNET asks me to find him a correspondent in Britain, Canada, Europe, or Africa. My chum is an Australian, and he is spreading the fame of the MAGNET in his country. His address is B. Coghill, Sandgate Road, Albion, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

PROBLEMS AND POETRY!

A Birmingham correspondent sends me an inquiry about the term "the happy mean." He says—and quite rightly—that the mean are not, as a rule, a bit happy. They are too selfish to enjoy life. My chum has got things mixed a bit. "The happy mean" signifies something pretty valuable. It is the middle course, and the safe one to adopt all through life.

(Continued overleaf.)

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A reader in Halifax says he is depressed by having so many things to think about. Shift the worries out of the boat, my chum. A long walk or a spin on the jigger will help to put troubles in their right perspective.

A Surrey enthusiast is so taken with the Famous Five that he has taken a poetic plunge. What about this?

"Nugent, he is another fine chum.

He is a handsome fellow, oh, by gum!"
Absolutely!

For Next Monday!

"BILLY BUNTER'S LEGACY!"

By Frank Richards.

A real scream of a story, featuring W. G.—not 'Grace', but Billy Bunter. If Magnetites don't enjoy this coming story I'll eat my hat!

THE FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT!

Al! Little need for me to preach about this novel addition to our paper.

The first three numbers have told you more can I can say. But No. 4 contains

a special feature in relation to the Fifth Round of the Cup tie. Don't miss it!

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"THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS!"

There will, of course, be another topping instalment of this serial story, also another portrait of a Greyfriars celebrity for your gallery. Don't miss either of them! Cheerio, chums!

WATCHES!

You should all know that our splendid Companion Paper, the "Boys' Friend," is offering to its readers each week Two Handsome Guaranteed Seven-Jewel "Cymrex" Lever Watches and Six Tip-Top Match Footballs for solving a simple picture-puzzle which takes the form of an interesting paragraph about a well-known footballer. If you would like one of these useful watches, or one of the bouncing leathers, then weigh in and secure a copy of the "Boys' Friend" to-day.

Your Editor.

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SLOW MOTION PICTURES WHICH REVEAL THINGS THE EYE CANNOT SEE IN THE ORDINARY WAY.

By "REPORTER."

IN an earlier article in this Supplement, when I was telling my readers how to get on in football, I advised the watching of the masters of the sport. From them there are tips to be gained and tactics which it is worth while to copy. Even as I wrote about watching the masters of football, however, I realised that there are limitations to the things which can be picked up by looking on at the ordinary football match. Many of the things which happen therein are so fast and so furious that it is impossible for the eye to take in the real significance of some of the happenings, or to watch how this or that trick is done. Consequently, I was very delighted the other day to hit on a football film which undoubtedly reveals some of the hidden mysteries, and enables the lad to see on the pictures as clearly as possible how certain things are done by fellows who have made the sport practically a life study.

This particular film, which is booked to appear at most of the big provincial centres during the next month or two, was made under the direction of Harold Fleming, one of the cleverest and the most intelligent footballers of a few years ago. Fleming played for Swindon, and he is a man who not only did things, but knew how to do them, and he has given in this film the benefit of his knowledge and demonstrated his ideas. Such famous players as Pym and David Jack, of Bolton Wanderers, Gillespie and Tunstall, of Sheffield United, Alan Morton and Meiklejohn, of Glasgow Rangers, have been filmed in action.

And as the things which are done on the football field are, in the ordinary way, performed at too fast a pace for the eye to see, the camera, working on the slow-motion idea, has revealed many of the hidden mysteries—shown us the why and the wherefore. I want you to make a point of seeing this film when it is shown at any near-by picture-palace, because you cannot do other than benefit by an intelligent following of the pictures. If I tell you here some of the things which the film reveals, you may be the better prepared about the things for which to watch.

All football is based upon the art of ball control, and the player who stands out above his colleagues is the one who can bring the ball to "earth" in the shortest possible time and start a progressive movement with the same action. Harold Fleming's idea is to check the dropping ball with the outside of one foot or the other, practically using the heel in the doing of it. The foot being sort of dragged under the ball just as it rises from the ground, backward spin is imparted, and the rest is easy.

One of the troubles, from the point of view of the lads who would score goals, is the tendency to balloon the ball over the bar. How many sitters we have all missed in our time! How often have we sent the ball sailing high over the bar from short range when it seemed ever so much easier for us to drive it into the net! This sort of thing happens not only in junior football which the lads play, but in the very highest leagues in the land. The film demonstrates more closely than anything I have yet seen the why and the wherefore of the "over THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 940.

the bar" shots. The fault is not with the way the ball is hit by the foot, but with the position of the body when the ball is so hit. If the body is not bent backward and the foot shot out, then it is long odds that the ball will go over the bar instead of into the net. On the other hand, if the body is kept erect, and over the ball at the moment of shooting, then it is much more likely that the shot will be a low and successful one. Next time you are out on the pitch with a football try this idea—this notion of keeping well on top of the ball, as it were, when making the shot.

The film shows very clearly, too, the right and the wrong ways of charging. This is really a matter of timing, and Harold Fleming advocates delivering a charge at the moment when the foot nearest your opponent is just coming to earth. When the charge is delivered this way there is the whole of the body behind it, and you bowl the other fellow over without losing your balance. On the other hand, if the charge is delivered while on the wrong leg, you are just as likely to go over as the man you are trying to edge off the ball.

There is one phase of football demonstrated in the film which will be sure to give rise to considerable discussion, for the simple reason that the experts are not unanimous on the point. I refer to the method of close dribbling. Fleming declares that most of his success as a dribbler was due to the fact that always, when making

a close dribble, he used the outside of the feet to propel the ball along. In the film he does this at slow-motion time, and it certainly looks very effective, especially when accompanied by the deceptive body-awerfe of the sort employed by David Jack, say.

I noticed when watching the picture, however, that when Alan Morton was dribbling—and Morton is one of the greatest dribblers of the age—he did not slavishly carry out the idea of using only the outside of the feet. Yet I think there is something in the Fleming contention that better control of the ball can be obtained by using the outside of the boot. The same advantages are gained as in trapping explained above—that there is always something of the backward spin imparted to the ball, with the result that it is much less likely to run away from the dribbler and get out of control.

On the goalkeeping side of the game, too, there are several lessons to be learnt from the film. One of the most interesting, as shown by the slow-motion pictures of Dick Pym, the Bolton Wanderers custodian, is the manner in which he invariably contrives to get his body as well as his hands behind the ball when making a save. In other words, he has two lines of defence—his hands and arms first, and then his body if it should happen that the ball eludes his grasp. There are a host of other tips to be learnt from this film entitled "Football."

SEARCHLIGHT FOOTBALL!

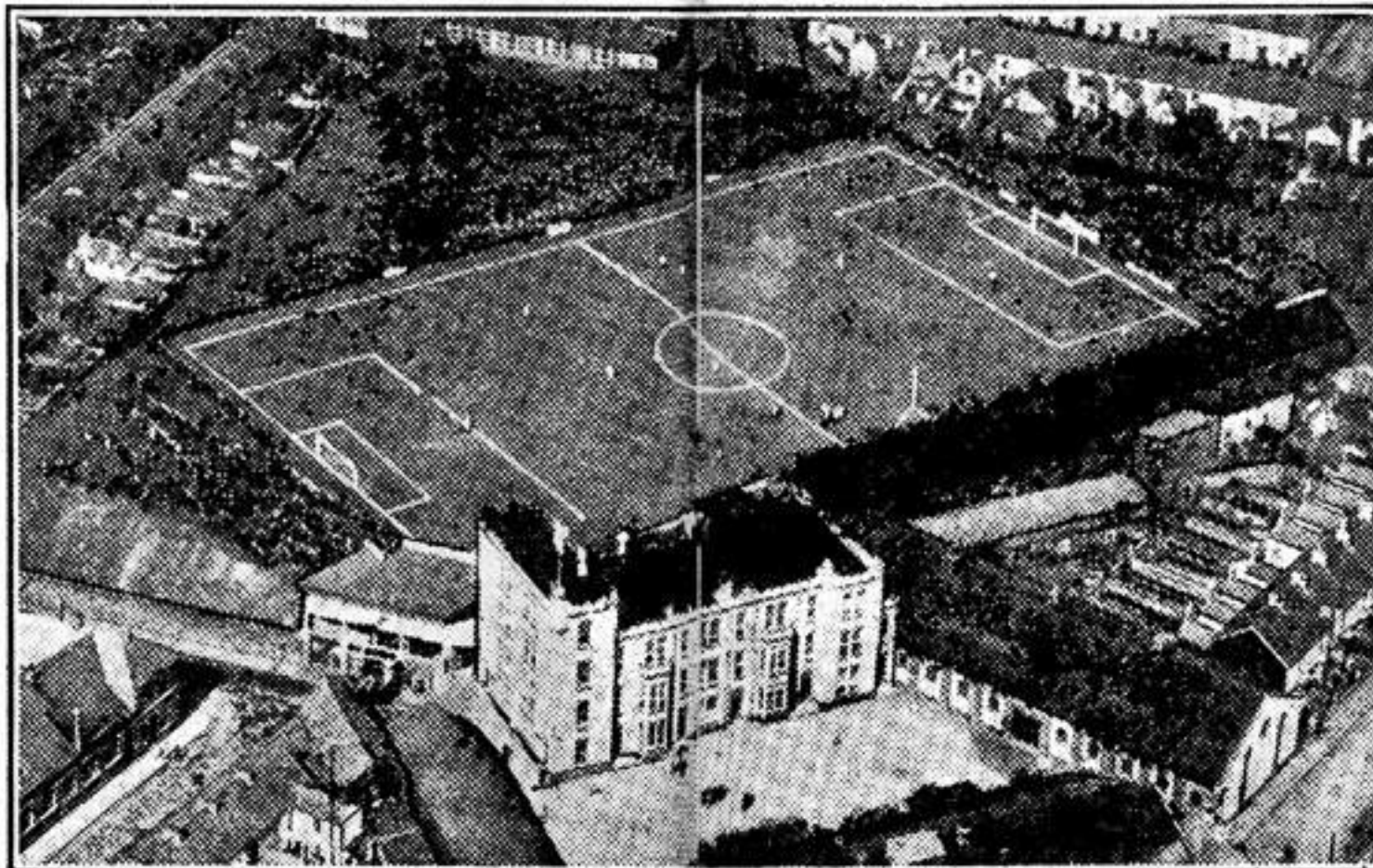
Every now and again the question of playing football by artificial light crops up. It recently appeared again in a weekly contemporary, eagerly put forward by some scribe who very evidently imagines he has got hold of a big idea. He—and others—may be interested to know that searchlight football, so far from being a new notion, is as old as the hills.

To go back to the first time the experiment was tried, we must delve into League history. This happened as far back as November 18th, 1889, when Bolton Wanderers visited Sheffield to play the United of that town. The Wanderers won 2-1, and the match was played by artificial light.

A more recent effort to introduce searchlight football was made by the Dick Kerr's girls' football team six years ago, the ground on this occasion being lit up with two searchlights of 150,000 candle-power. The fact that it was not continued after that match testifies to its failure.

When one considers everything, searchlight football can have more disadvantages than advantages. In the first place, the installation and maintenance of such lighting effects is going to cost an enormous amount; in the second, the black shadows cast by such lights must be disconcerting to the players, to say the least. And what when the ball goes into the air beyond the radius of light? Ah, no! Much as I would like to see some scheme for the continuance of otherwise abandoned games, owing to faulty light or premature darkness, I cannot share our contemporary's enthusiasm for footer by artificial light.

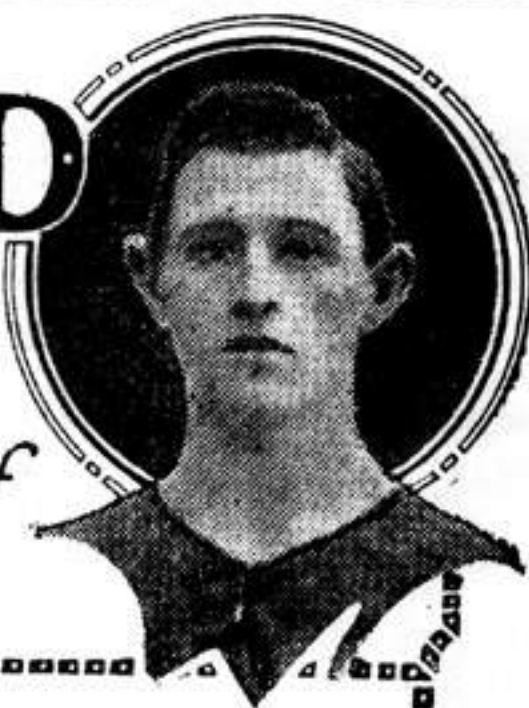
SWANSEA FOOTBALL GROUND AS VIEWED FROM AN AEROPLANE.



A novel peep at the ground of the popular Welsh Club, showing a match in progress.

LION-HEARTED LEN!

The Story of the Rapid Rise to Fame of
Len Davies, Cardiff City's International
Forward



By "REFEREE."

WHEN I was a lad—and it's not so very long ago, either, so don't go thinking I'm a musty-looking old fogey with white whiskers and watery optics—I had three ambitions:

1. To be a professional footballer.
2. To go to sea and be a real sailor.
3. To be a soldier.

No. 1 has never materialised, and never will. No. 2 was gratified to the extent of crossing the Channel six times and being hopelessly sick on each occasion. No. 3 was gratified to the fullest possible extent during the War, and ambition in that direction is now thoroughly dead, thank you! The one aversion I had was journalism, and—well, look at me now!

Still, this is not my life story, is it? It is not. I mention it because I want to introduce you here to a wonderful little Welsh chap who probably also had those three ambitions, but was more successful than I, inasmuch as he gratified two of them. Yes, Len Davies, you know, has been both a sailor and a footballer; he's the latter still, as, of course, you all know, and one of the cleverest, too. His life on the ocean wave was of no long duration, but if his experience there was anything like mine, he finds football rather more pleasant than sailing.

Well, then, this is the way of it. You all know Len Davies—I'll take that for

granted. He is at present the inside-right of Cardiff City, and he is a distinguished and outstanding light for many reasons. Perhaps the one that most readily comes to mind, in the first place, is that he is a real Cardiffian in a Cardiff team.

That sounds a little bit enigmatical, perhaps, but it is not so when you come to consider that the Cardiff team at the moment of going to press consists of about 80 per cent English, Irish, and Scots players and 20 per cent natives. It is remarkable, indeed; for is not lion-hearted Len the only lad with a Cardiff birth certificate who is figuring in the League eleven?

He is! That is what distinguishes him firstly. His second claim to distinction lies in his International record—which is here appended—and his third is the fact that he is probably the best man of his position Wales can put into the field to-day. But not always has Len of the lion heart been an inside-right. Oh dear, no! There was quite a considerable period when he acted as the Welshmen's forward pivot.

Well, then, Len was born, as you will have gathered, in Cardiff, and his age is now twenty-seven.

Splotts is the district of Cardiff which had the honour to usher this distinguished youngster into the world, and here, presumably, he grew up. It is hardly needful for me to tell you that, almost as soon as he knew that an Association football was round, Len took to the game as naturally as a German takes to sausage. Some lad was Len in those days—and some footballer, too! As a forward in the Gladstone Road Council School he made a name for himself.

Ay, a very big name—so big, indeed, that in the 1911-12 season—he wouldn't be thirteen years old then—the Welsh schoolboy authorities selected him as a reserve for the International schoolboy team. He did not actually play in a Welsh shirt that year, but he did the following year, and a jolly good account he gave of himself. It is a pity, really, that Wales only played one International match in 1912-13—against England—otherwise Len might have collected a seasonal basketful of caps.

After that the gate of schoolboy honours was closed upon him. He left school, and drifted out into the hard world in search of a livelihood. Being, as I have hinted, ambitious, he took to marine engineering. He became an apprentice at the Cardiff Docks, and, what between his studies and his football, his time was pretty well occupied.

His adventures in the world of marine engineering, however, does not concern us overmuch here—a thing I'm pretty thankful for on the quiet, because I couldn't tell you anything about marine engineering if you wanted to know it. But as he slowly and surely developed into a M.E. of the first water, he also developed, more quickly and more surely, into a first-class Soccer player.

In the early days of the War, then, we find him adorning the football ranks of Victoria Athletic, a strong local junior side, whose successes at that time were in no small measure due to our lion-heart, and who accumulated quite a respectable "goals-for" column as a result of young Len's shooting ability. But Len, though, one

imagines, enjoying his local football, was not content to score goals for Victoria, and in due course applied to the manager at Ninian Park for a trial.

That was in 1917, when the War had considerably depleted Cardiff City's ranks, and in the absence of competitive matches they were engaging in friendlies. Len was given his trial, and immediately made good. Until the May of 1918 Len assisted the City, and gave such promising displays that wise Cardiffians—and others—nodded their knowing heads, and prophesied a big future for the lad. In the May of 1918, however, Len, answering the call of his real profession, went to sea.

I have remarked that this was the achievement of ambition No. 2. It was. As a marine engineer Len braved the briny, and until the December of the same year "traded" between New York and France on—well, on a ship.

Well, the sailing part of his career did not last long. He returned to civil life at the Mercantile Pontoon, Cardiff, and, being now a fully fledged M.E., settled down to get the best out of life. The best included football, of course, and Len, remembering his old associations with the team of his town, went along to Ninian Park again. Thus in 1919-20 we find him assisting Cardiff City as an amateur, and later, under persuasion, adopting professionalism.

At that time our lion-heart was an outside-right, and as such he played for Cardiff's second string in Welsh League matches. That he was a success goes without saying, but more amazing than even his undoubted skill was his goal-scoring record. It was seldom in those days of the old offside law that outside men ran up a score of more than half a dozen goals in a season. Len did more. He finished with twenty to his credit!

Only once in that first season was he placed in the ranks of the senior eleven, and that was against Luton. A greater achievement than this, however, was his selection by the Welsh International Selection authorities to play in a trial game at Tonypandy.

His next season was another stepping-stone to fame. Here, for the first time with Cardiff, he was tried in the centre-forward position and given several chances with the seniors. Again he had a season of success, and his goal-bag was truly tremendous, for in all matches—senior and reserve—he totalled no less than thirty-three.

But that was only the start. His next season was the best, for it was then that he won his spurs in the senior team as centre-forward, and was also capped for his country.

To-day, as I have said, he still stands supreme, not as a centre-forward, but as an inside-right, and for all the passing of the years his early brilliance has lost nothing of its lustre, as the appended record shows. To-day Len Davies is part and parcel of Cardiff City, and Cardiffians will tell you that, with Len in the forward line, the Citizens have little to fear.

1922-23-24.—For Wales v. England.
1922-23-24.—For Wales v. Scotland.
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