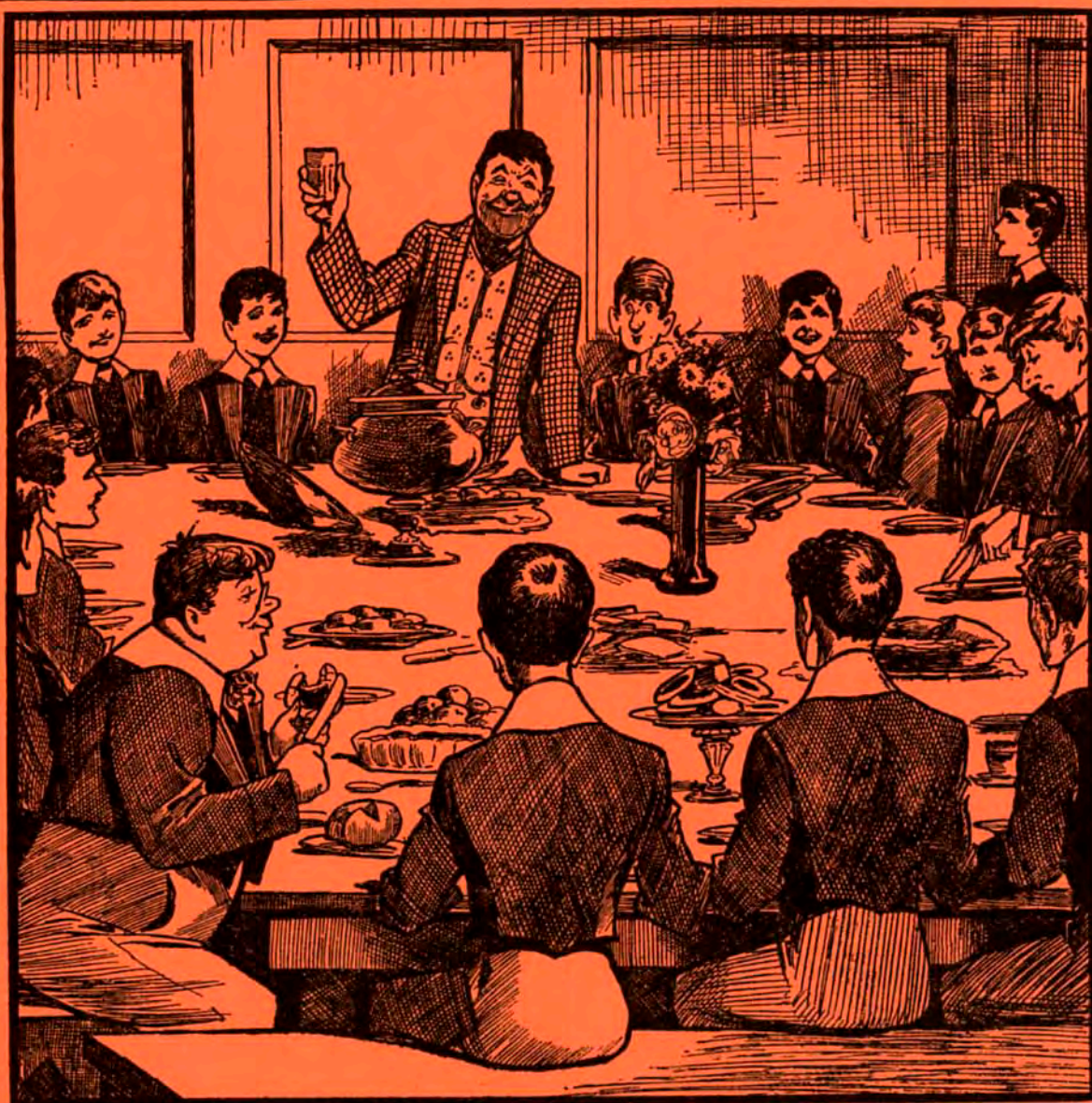


In This "THE SNOB'S LESSON!" Issue :

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale.



"Gents,—I rises to propose the 'ealth of my nevvv, Sidney James Snoop," said Mr. Huggins. "He's 'a good little chap, he is—nothin' snobbish about my nevvv Sidney! 'E knows as 'ow I worked on a ranch as a cowboy, but I know I tried to do 'im credit when I kim 'ere—I bought these 'ere new clothes a-purpose!" (See the grand, long, complete tale of the chams of Greyfriars contained in this issue.)

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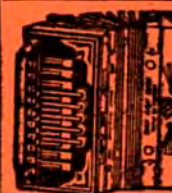
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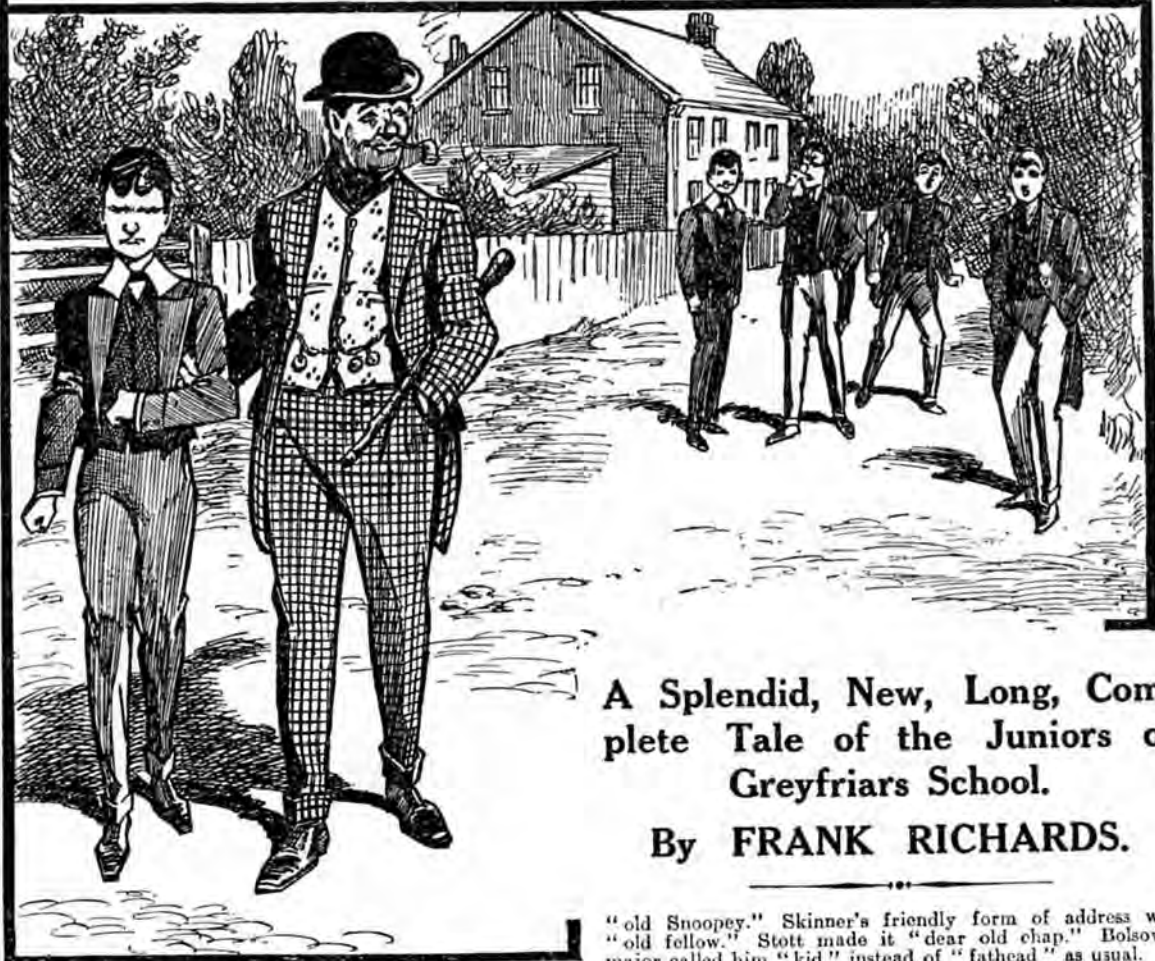
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The Snob's Lesson



A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of the Juniors of Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In the quiet village street all eyes were turned on the flaring, flashy stranger. Two or three Highcliffe fellows passed Vernon-Smith, and they stared at the stranger and grinned. The Bounder turned red, and began to wish he had let Snoop's uncle severely alone. (See Chapter 11.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Snoop is Popular!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, looked particularly cheerful.

As a rule, Snoop's society was not much sought after in the Remove, but on that particular afternoon quite a number of fellows were very attentive, and, indeed, quite affectionate towards Snoop.

Billy Bunter, when he spoke to him, addressed him as

"old Snoopey." Skinner's friendly form of address was "old fellow." Stott made it "dear old chap." Bolsover major called him "kid" instead of "fathead" as usual.

Harry Wharton & Co., when they heard those friendly remarks, guessed that there was something in the wind. Snoop came out of the Remove Form-room after lessons, surrounded by quite a little court. When he lounged in the doorway, waiting for the post to come in, his friends gathered round him, more affectionate than ever. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came along the passage, and they smiled as they heard the remarks that were addressed to Snoop.

"Have some toffee, Snoopey?" asked Billy Bunter.

Snoop sniffed, as he cast a disparaging glance at the sticky mass Bunter produced from his trousers' pocket.

"Thanks! I don't care for that!" he said.

Bunter began to munch it himself.

"Well, I haven't got a rich uncle in Canada like you, Snoopey," said the Owl of the Remove.

"I suppose it's sure to come by this post, Snoopey, old fellow?" Skinner remarked.

"Oh, certain!" said Snoopy.
 "Always comes on the first of the month, doesn't it?" remarked Stott.
 "Always," said Snoopy.
 "Your uncle must be a jolly good sort!" said Bolsover major.
 "So he is," said Snoopy. "Ripping good sort! Rolling in money. Very fond of me, too."
 "No accounting for tastes," murmured Harry Wharton.
 Bob Cherry chuckled, and joined the group of juniors at the door. He clapped Sidney James Snoopy on the shoulder in a very cordial way. Snoopy stared at him. He was not accustomed to friendly advances from Bob Cherry. The big, frank, manly junior had little in common with Snoopy. But Bob's face just now was beaming with effusive friendliness.
 "How do you do, Snoopey?" he asked.
 "Eh?" said Snoopy.
 "Dear old chap!" said Bob.
 "What?"
 "What a nice fellow you are!" went on Bob enthusiastically. "You don't know how fond I am of you, Snoopey!"
 "You ass!"
 "May your shadow never grow less!" said Bob. "How we should miss you if you left us, dear old chap! What a pleasure it is to see you any time, old chum!"
 "Look here—" began Snoopy.
 "Dear old fellow!" said Bob tenderly.
 "You silly ass! Have you gone off your rocker?" demanded Snoopy angrily, jerking his arm away from Bob's.
 "Certainly not!" said Bob innocently. "I'm only joining in the chorus. I don't see why I shouldn't be fond of you as well as Stott and Skinner and Bunter and Bolsover. It's the proper time to show affection, ain't it, when you're getting a whacking good remittance from your uncle?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. "How do you do, Snoopy, dear boy? Feel all right, old pal? Give us your fin, dear old boy!"
 "You rotters can clear off!" said Bolsover major, who had turned a little red. "Snoopy's our pal, not yours!"
 "But we're as fond of him as you are," grinned Bob Cherry. "The dear old chap! Good old Snoopey! Dear old pal!"
 "Oh, shut up!" said Snoopy.
 "Clear off!" roared Bolsover angrily.
 "I say, you fellows, here comes the postman!" chirped Bunter.
 All eyes were turned upon the postman immediately. Snoopy called out to him.
 "You've got a registered letter for me, I think—S. J. Snoopy?"
 "Yes, sir," said the postman.
 "Good egg! Bring it here. I'll sign for it."
 It was a registered letter with the Canadian postmark. Snoopy signed for it with a flourish, and glanced triumphantly towards Wharton and Bob Cherry.
 "You spoofers can clear off!" he said loftily. "I'm standing a feed to my pals to-day, but you won't have anything to do with it."
 "Dear old chap!" said Bob Cherry.
 "Nice old Snoopy!" murmured Wharton.
 "The niceness of the esteemed Snoopy is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Indian junior.
 "How esteemfully dear old chappy he is on the day he receives his remittance from his esteemed uncle!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Snoopy sniffed, and opened the letter, with the eyes of his dear pals fixed upon him. He drew out a money-order.
 "Oh, that's ripping!" said Skinner. "How much, Snoopy?"
 "How much, dear old fellow?" chortled Bob Cherry.
 "How much, beloved youth?" sniggered Frank Nugent.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Two quid," said Snoopy, turning his back on Harry

Wharton & Co., and addressing himself exclusively to his admirers. "Rather decent—what?"
 "Jolly decent!" said Billy Bunter. "This way to the tuckshop, old Snoopey!"
 "Ripping sort of an uncle to have!" said Bolsover major.
 "Same chap who pays your fees here, isn't it?"
 Snoopy nodded.
 "Yes. Rolling in money. I shall be down in his will for thousands and thousands," he said. "He's got thousands of acres in Athabasca, or somewhere, out in Canada."
 Snoopy took the letter from the envelope and glanced at it.
 Then a change came over his face.
 The cheerfulness died out of his countenance, and a worried expression took its place.
 The change in his looks did not escape the notice of his companions, and they regarded him curiously.
 "No bad news—eh?" asked Skinner.
 "Bad news?" said Snoopy. "Oh—oh, no!"
 "You don't look very jolly."
 "Oh, that—that's all right," said Snoopy. "I—I— Let's get along to the tuckshop and have a feed."
 "Hear, hear!"
 And Snoopy's friends marched round him as he crossed the Close towards the tuckshop.
 Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a grin. They did not follow the crowd.
 "Awfully popular Snoopey is to-day, isn't he?" grinned Bob Cherry. "How long do you think it will last?"
 "As long as the two quid," remarked Johnny Bull.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Snoopy & Co. invaded the tuckshop. It was not often that Sidney James Snoopy stood a feed, being, as a rule, remarkably careful with his money. But he "spread" himself this time, and his friends quite enjoyed themselves.
 But Snoopy didn't.
 It was very odd that a fellow who had just received a tip of two pounds from a kind uncle, and who declared himself to be the favourite nephew of a Colonial gentleman who was rolling in money, should not be cheerful about it.
 But there was no doubt that Sidney James Snoopy wasn't cheerful.

Whatever it was he had read in his uncle's letter, had had the effect of counteracting the pleasure derived from the tip. Snoopy looked very thoughtful—in fact, worried.
 He answered the remarks made to him absentmindedly. He hardly noticed whether he was eating tarts or doughnuts, and, in fact, his depression was so acute that it cast quite a damper on the little party.
 However, Snoopy's friends did not mind very much so long as the feed lasted.
 When it was over, Snoopy walked away by himself, and the cloud on his face deepened. In a quiet corner of the Close he took out the letter again, and read it from end to end, the shadow on his face darkening all the time.
 "What rotten, rotten luck!" he muttered. "The old fool!" Sidney James was evidently referring to his kind uncle, and equally evidently he was not a very grateful nephew. "Why can't he stay where he is, and not come here to show me up? Oh, the old duffer! What the dickens am I going to do?"
 And Snoopy thrust the letter savagely into his pocket, and strode away with a moody, discontented brow.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Bunter in Luck!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
 Billy Bunter put his fat face into the bicycle-shed, where Harry Wharton & Co. were getting their machines ready for a spin. Bob Cherry was busily engaged in mending a puncture, an operation which apparently made it necessary for Bob's hands to become very black, his face very red, and his temper very short. His chums were waiting for him with genial patience, occasionally proffering a word of advice, which was received with an expressive grunt by Bob.
 Bunter was looking quite excited and very mysterious as he rolled into the bike-shed. Bob grunted, but did not look up. He had his hands full with the puncture, and was in no mood to be worried by the Owl of the Remove.
 "I say, you fellows—" "Kick that fat idiot out!" said Bob.
 "Anything to oblige," said Johnny Bull, lifting a heavy boot. Billy Bunter dodged away in alarm.
 "Don't be a silly beast, Bull. I say, I've got something to tell you chaps. You remember Snoopey getting that letter the week before last?"
 "Blow Snoopy and his letter!"

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In the silence of the woods, Snoop's voice, though low, was very distinct, and the man who was coming down the footpath from Courtfield stopped. "My Uncle Huggins is coming to Greyfriars this afternoon!" said Snoop. "He's low, and vulgar, and beastly, and he will show me up horribly!" (See Chapter 10.)

"He was awfully down in the dumps after it, though there was a tip of two quid in it," said Bunter. "Jolly funny, wasn't it, considering that his uncle had shelled out so handsomely? Well, he's been looking worried ever since. I dare say you fellows have noticed that?"

"We've been too busy minding our own business," said Harry Wharton politely.

"Ahem! Well, he has, you know. Of course, I take a friendly interest in Snoop."

"On the days he gets his remittances?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter crossly. "He's had another letter to-day, and there wasn't any remittance in it, and he looked blacker than ever when he read it. My impression is that there is something going on."

"Why don't you kick that fat fool out when I'm mending a puncture?" demanded Bob Cherry, in a sulphurous voice.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I suppose I can come into the bike-shed if I like? Look here, you fellows, there's something wrong with Snoop, and I think we ought to look into it and— and help him, you know."

"You mean you're inquisitive about his private affairs, you fat rotter?" asked Harry.

"Well, it's jolly queer, and it looks like trouble of some sort. I asked him if he'd let me read the letter, and he called me names. But I want to see it, you know. I—I mean, I think I ought to see it, so that I can advise him—as a

friend about his troubles. That's what I've come to you chaps for."

"Then you can clear off."

"Snoopy is coming here for his bike," said Bunter, unheeding. "Now, my idea is that you chaps should collar him when he comes in, and I'll have the letter off him in a jiffy. Then we'll soon see what the matter is."

The Famous Five stared at Billy Bunter. Bunter was not troubled with conscientious scruples on any subject whatever. But that he should have the astounding nerve to come to them, of all people, and ask them to help him get hold of a fellow's private letter, in order to read it, took their breath away. Billy Bunter evidently did not consider that he was suggesting anything outrageous. He blinked at the chums of the Remove inquiringly.

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

"Say!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, we don't say anything! We're going to do something, though."

"The dofulness will be terrific, my worthy fat rascally Bunter."

"Squash the fat toad!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Here, I say, chuck it! Yah!" roared Bunter, as the juniors seized him. "Leggo! Bob Cherry, you beast, keep that solution away from my face! Ow, ow, ow, ow-w-w!"

Bob Cherry grinned. The mending of the puncture had tried his temper, and Bunter had come along just in time

to find trouble when he looked for it. Bob had a tube of solution in his hand, and he was quite willing to waste it upon Bunter. The juniors held the Owl of the Remove in a tight grip, as Bob squeezed the sticky solution down his neck.

Bunter roared and struggled and wriggled.

"Owl! Leggo! Help—help! Fire! Murder! Grooh!"

"You fat beast!" said Bob Cherry. "You propose to us to help you steal a letter and read it! You—you unspeakable load!"

"Grooh! Owl!"

"You can have all this solution. It costs money, but it's worth it to give you a lesson about spying into people's letters."

"Grooh-hooh! Owl!"

Bob squeezed what remained of the solution into Bunter's hair, and mixed it there with his fingers.

Bunter roared furiously.

"Beast! Owl! Yaroo! Grooh! Help!"

Snoop came into the bike-shed. He stopped and stared at the Famous Five, and the Owl of the Remove struggling wildly in their grasp.

"Hallo! What are you bullying Bunter for?" he demanded.

"We're not bullying Bunter, and if you give us any cheek you shall have some of the same medicine!" said Bob tartly.

"Owl! Lend me a hand, Snoopey, old man! Grooh! Help! Rescue!"

"Let him alone!" said Snoop.

"Mind your own business!"

"Help!" gurgled Bunter.

"Now kick him out!" said Bob, yanking Bunter round to the doorway. "It will take him some time to get that solution out of his mop, and it will keep his hands from picking and stealing. All together!"

"Yaroo!"

Five feet were planted at the same moment upon the ample person of William George Bunter, and he fairly shot through the doorway of the bike-shed.

He landed outside, and sat up and roared.

"Owl! Owl! Yah! I'm hurt! Owl! You've broken my legs, also my back! Yah!"

"Buzz off!" rapped out Bob Cherry.

"Owl! I can't gerrup! I—"

"Wheel the bikes over him!" said Frank Nugent.

"Good egg! All together!"

Billy Bunter found that he could get up as five bikes were rushed towards him in a row. In fact, he got up with remarkable quickness, and bolted. A roar of laughter from the chums of the Remove followed him.

"Rotten bullying, I call it!" sneered Snoop.

Harry Wharton turned on him.

"You know well enough that we don't bully," he said.

"You know quite well we shouldn't have touched Bunter if he hadn't been a rotter. Shut up!"

"Well, what has he done?"

"He wanted us to help him collar a letter you've had to-day, so that he could read it," said Wharton shortly.

Snoop started and turned very red, and clapped his hand to the pocket where the letter reposed.

"The fat rotter!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"You'd better keep that letter out of Bunter's clutches, if there's any blessed secret in it," said Wharton.

"There—there isn't any secret, of course," stammered Snoop. "You've no right to—suppose—"

"I don't know or care anything about it," said Harry, interrupting him. "I was only giving you a tip. Come on, you chaps!"

And the Famous Five wheeled their bicycles away towards the gates. Snoop stood looking after them, with a thoughtful frown on his brow. It was some time before he took out his own bicycle. It was evident that he was in a worried frame of mind.

He met Bunter as he was wheeling his machine across the Close. Bunter was looking red and furious. He had changed his collar, but his hair was still sticky—with Bob Cherry's liberal application of solution.

"I say, Snoopey—" began Bunter.

Snoop glared at him.

"So you wanted to bone my letter and read it, did you?" he said, between his teeth.

"Ahem! No, certainly not! I—I—in fact—"

"You fat rotter!" said Snoop, and he gave Bunter a back-handed cuff that made the Owl of the Remove stagger.

"Yow!" roared Bunter.

But that was a little too much. Most fellows could rag Billy Bunter with impunity; but there were limits. Even a worm will turn. Bunter, even Bunter, was not to be cuffed by a fellow like Snoop, the sneak of the Lower Fourth. And Bunter was in a very bad temper, and his bad temper made

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him unusually courageous. He recovered himself, and made a wild rush at Snoop.

Snoop, who could not let go his bike without letting it fall, was taken at a disadvantage. He fended Bunter off with one hand; but Bunter was in deadly earnest, and he came furiously on, hitting out with right and left. Snoop had to let the machine go, and it ran on and curled up and collapsed with a crash, while its owner closed with Bunter.

"You fat beast!"

"You skinny rotter!"

"Take that!"

"Grooh! Take that!"

Bunter went down with a bump, and lay gasping; and Snoop, looking considerably dishevelled, left him there and ran after his machine. Bunter sat up dazedly and blinked after him, setting his spectacles straight on his fat little nose.

"Owl! The beast!" groaned Bunter. "Yow! I'm hurt! I've a jolly good mind to go after him and give him a jolly good licking, only—I won't. Owl!"

And Bunter sat gasping till Snoop had disappeared out of the school gates, and then staggered breathlessly to his feet. Then he uttered a sudden exclamation. Almost at his feet a letter lay. He had been lying on it when he was on the ground, and it was out of sight then; but now—Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles as he pounced on the letter. He guessed at once what it was—Snoop's letter, which Sidney James had dropped in his struggle.

"My dear Sidney," So the letter began.

Bunter blinked round hastily, and then thrust the letter into his pocket and rolled away in search of a quiet corner where he could examine his prize without danger of interruption.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Peter Comes Down Heavy!

"WHAT are you cackling about, image?"

Peter Todd asked that question.

Billy Bunter had come into No. 7 Study, in the Remove, to tea. Peter Todd, and his cousin Alonzo, and Tom Dutton—who had the honour of sharing that study with Billy Bunter, were there. They all looked at the Owl of the Remove as he came in. Bunter's fat face was wreathed in grins.

"I say, you fellows, I've found it out," said Bunter.

"Been finding things out, have you?" said Todd, casting his eye round in search of a cricket-stump. "You know what I've told you about spying, Bunter. I'm going to cure you, if I have to break my bat on you!"

And Alonzo shook his head gravely.

"My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at you, Bunter—nay, disgusted. You—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "I tell you, I know all about it now—about Snoop, you know. You know he's been going about the place with a face like a fiddle for the last week or two—ever since he had that letter from Canada, you know."

"I don't know anything of the sort," growled Peter.

"What's Snoop's letter from Canada got to do with you?"

"Oh, rats! I tell you, I know about it now. Snoop's down in the dumps because his uncle is coming to see him."

"Rot!"

"That's what it is—his uncle from Canada, you know. And what do you think the man's name is?"

"Don't know, and don't care."

"Huggins!" chuckled Bunter.

"Well, what's the matter with Huggins?" demanded Peter. "It's a good old English name."

"And he's some awful out-and-out, of course," pursued Bunter, unheeding. "It will be a show-up for Snoopey when he comes here. That's what he's worried about. Won't it be a lark when he comes?"

"You fat beast!" said Peter. "Do you mean to say that Snoop's ashamed of his uncle—the uncle who pays his fees here and sends him handsome tips?"

"That's it."

"Well, if it's true, Snoop's as big a cad as you are," said Peter. "But how do you know anything about it? I'm jolly certain that Snoop hasn't told you that."

"Oh, I know!" said Bunter. "I've found out."

"How did you find out, fatty?"

"What is there for tea?" asked Bunter, changing the subject abruptly. "I was going to stand a feed this time, only I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I hope there's something to eat."

"There's bread-and-butter, and a sardine each," granted Peter. "If you don't like that, you can have butter and bread, and a sardine—or a sardine and bread and butter—put it which way you like."

Bunter sniffed.
 "I used to get better grub than this when I was in No. 1 Study," he said disparagingly.
 "Better go back to No. 1 Study, then," was Peter's suggestion.

Bunter did not seem to hear.
 "Well, pass the sardines," he said.
 "I'll pass one sardine," said Peter. "Here you are! Now shut up!"

"Oh, really, Todd—"
 "Shut up, I tell you. You make me ill. Hallo! What do you want, Snoopey? Looking for tea? You can have Bunter's sardine—"

"Look here," began Bunter wrathfully.
 "Shut up!" roared Peter. "What is it, Snoopey?"

Snoop was looking into the study with an anxious and worried face.

"I—I've lost a letter," he stammered. "I had a letter to-day—it was in my pocket—but I must have dropped it. Any of you chaps seen it?"

"I'm so sorry; I haven't seen it," said Alonzo politely.
 But Peter's gaze was fixed accusingly upon William George Bunter.

"Better ask Bunter," he said. "Bunter seems to know a lot about your affairs just now; and if you've lost a letter, that would account for it. If he's read it, I'll larrup him with a cricket-stump."

"Have you got my letter, you fat rotter?" asked Snoop, his eyes glittering as they turned on Bunter. "I suspected you at once. That's why I've come here."

"I don't know anything about it," said Bunter sullenly.
 "Do you think I go about looking for silly letters you've dropped?"

"Somebody's got it," said Snoop, biting his lip. "I've hunted high and low for it, and asked a lot of fellows. Nobody's seen it. Somebody must have picked it up."

"Better ask again, then," grunted Bunter. "Pass the bread-and-butter, Lonly."

"Hold on!" said Peter. "How did you know anything about Snoop's uncle Huggins, Bunter?"

Snoop caught his breath.
 "Has he been talking about my uncle?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; he says your uncle is coming here to see you."

"Then he's got the letter!" exclaimed Snoop fiercely. "The fat cad—he's read it! I'll slaughter him—I'll—I'll—"

Snoop made a fierce rush at Bunter. Bunter dodged round the table, and Peter Todd jumped up and caught Snoop by the shoulder, and swung him back.

"Easy does it," he remarked calmly.
 "I'm head of this study—and any ragging done in No. 7 Study is done by me!"

"He's read my letter!" howled Snoop, struggling in Peter's powerful grasp.

"That's all right—we'll look into it—but I'm head of this study," said Peter. "You take a back seat. Bunter, have you got Snoop's letter?"

"No!" howled Bunter.
 "Come here!"

"Rats! I won't!"

"Then I'll come to you," said Peter. "If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet has to hike over to the mountain." He crossed the study with two strides of his long legs, and grasped Bunter by the collar. "Snoop, find a cricket-stump! There's one here somewhere."

"Ow! Don't s-s-shake me, you beast! You'll make my glasses fall off—"

"I'll shake you till your silly head falls off, if you don't keep quiet!" said Peter.

"Ow! If they get broken you'll have to pay for them—"

"Got that stump, Snoopey?"

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop.

"Now larrup Bunter, while I hold him. Never mind the stump—if it breaks, I'll make Bunter buy another out of his next postal-order. Pile in!"

Snoop did not need bidding twice. He lashed away with the cricket-stump, on Billy Bunter's fat person, with great energy. Billy Bunter uttered roars that would have done credit to a particularly powerful bull.

"Now, have you got that letter, Buntz?"

"Ow! No! No! Ow!"

"Give him some more, Snoopey."

"You bet!" grinned Snoop.

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"

"Yarrah! Help! Fire!"

"Have you got the letter?"

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"Yow-ow! I—I picked it up in the Close!" wailed Bunter
 "Of course, I haven't read it. I'd scorn to do anything—ow—of the sort! Ow! Leggo, and I'll hand it over. I was really looking for Snoop, to hand it to him. Ow!"

"Hand it over!"

Bunter groaned, and extracted the letter from his pocket, and threw it towards Snoop.

Snoop caught it, and jammed it into his pocket.
 "You've read that letter, Bunter?" said Peter severely.

"Ow! I haven't! Of course, I wouldn't do such a thing. Ow!"

"Did you tell Bunter that your uncle was named Huggins, Snoop?"

"No, I didn't!" snarled Snoop.

"Then how did you know, Bunter?"

"I—I—I guessed it," groaned Bunter.

"I think you must have been looking at Snoop's letter when you guessed it, unless you are a giddy wizard, Buntz. Are you a giddy wizard?"

"Ow! Ow! Leggo!"

"I'm afraid he's read your letter, Snoop. You should be more careful with your letters. But I don't allow these things to happen in No. 7 Study. Will you oblige me by giving Bunter a dozen more with that stump—as hard as you like?"

"Yow-ow!" roared Bunter, in anticipation. "I—I'll go to Wingate—I'll tell Mr. Quelch—I'll complain to the Head-yarrah!"

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"

"Help! Fire! Murder!" yelled Bunter, wriggling under the shower of blows laid on by Snoop, who seemed to be quite enjoying himself. "Ow! Ow! Leave off!"

"Twelve!" counted Peter. "That will do, Snoop. You can clear off, and take your precious letter with you!"

"Haden't I better give him some more?" asked Snoop reluctantly.

"Nuff's as good as a feast. You've had enough, haven't you, Bunter?"

"Ow, yes!" groaned Bunter. "Keep him away! Ow!"

"You can clear off, Snoopey."

And Snoopey cleared off. Peter Todd released the fat junior, and Bunter gasped, and collapsed into the armchair.

But he did not stay there long; he jumped up as if the seat was red-hot. He did not feel inclined to sit down at all just then.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Todd, you beast—Ow!"

Peter Todd pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said briefly.

Bunter blinked at him furiously through his big spectacles.

"I haven't had my tea yet!" he bawled.

"You're not going to have any," said Peter calmly.

"That's part of the penalty. Get out!"

"I'm not going without my tea!" howled Bunter.

"Well, I may be mistaken, but I think you are!" said Peter, picking up the cricket-stump. "I'll give you two seconds—"

One second was enough for Bunter. He had had enough of the cricket-stump. His fat person vanished through the doorway, and the door slammed after him. Peter Todd sat down contentedly.

"Justice is done!" he remarked. "And there is an extra sardine for me. That is the reward of virtue!"

And Peter Todd proceeded to consume the reward of virtue.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major is Emphatic!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were discussing football in No. 1 Study when Sidney James Snoop called in. On the morrow afternoon the Remove eleven were playing the Third Form—not at all an important match from the Remove point of view. The Third Form were merely fags, and the Remove regarded themselves as making a great concession in playing them at all.

Tubb and Paget and Bolsover minor, of the Third, entertained wild hopes of licking the Remove, but the Removes smiled at the idea. They were accustomed to licking the Upper Fourth and the Shell, and the fags were not likely to have an earthly against them. Hence the discussion.

"No need to play a strong team against Tubb & Co." Harry Wharton remarked. "I think the old brigade had

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better stand out, and give the other fellows a chance—what?"

"Well, I suppose they're not up to our form," said Bob Cherry; "but I want to play footer. Still, I don't mind standing out."

"Same here!" said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You see," Wharton explained, "some of the fellows think we keep the Form matches a bit too much in our own hands. Of course, when it's a question of a tough match, we must play the best men we've got. But, when possible, it's a good idea to give the other chaps a show. And this time it's possible. I was thinking of letting Bolsover major skipper the team instead of myself, and putting in some fellows like Skinner and Stott—"

"We don't want to lose the match, you know," said Johnny Bull anxiously. "The Third would crow no end if they beat a Remove team."

"I don't think there's much danger of that; we'll make the team just strong enough to give the little beggars a sporting chance," said Harry. "Hallo, Snoop!"

"Talking about the Third Form match?" said Snoop, as he came in.

"Yes."

"I suppose you don't want a new man in the team?" asked Snoop.

Wharton looked at him curiously. As a rule, Snoop detested footer; he would as soon have construed Horace as played footer. But if he wanted to play it was a sign of improvement in Snoop that Wharton was ready to welcome.

"Well, yes," said Harry; "as it's only a fag match, we were thinking of standing out, and giving the others a show. Do you want to play?"

"Yes; I came to ask you."

"Play footer—you!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in amazement. "My dear chap! It's footer, you know—not marbles or hop-scotch!"

"I can play," said Snoop. "I think I ought to have a chance—I'm a paying member of the Form club."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"If you mean business, we'll give you a chance," he said. "Have you been doing any practice lately?"

"Well, no; but—"

"What sort of form are you in?"

"Good enough to play the Third!" said Snoop.

"Well, I don't know about that; we don't want to play a guy," said Wharton doubtfully.

Snoop bit his lip.

"You chaps are always sneering at me because I don't play games," he said sullenly. "Now you don't want to give me a chance when I'm willing, and keen, too."

"Well, you ought to begin by attending practice regularly, of course," said Harry. "Still, if you really want to stop slacking, and play up like a decent chap, I'm quite willing to do all I can. It's still light enough for some practice. We'll come down to the ground with you, if you like, and put you through your paces."

Snoop hesitated.

"I don't see—" he began.

Wharton interrupted him sharply.

"Look here, I'm going to ask Bolsover major to captain the team, and I'm not going to ask him to play a rank duffer!" he said tartly. "If you like to come down to the ground now, and show what you can do, we'll see about it. Otherwise, you can clear off! That's plain English."

"Oh, all right!" said Snoop. "I'll come. I don't want to give you fellows a lot of trouble, that's all."

"Never mind about that; we're willing to take lots of trouble to turn a lazy slacker into a footballer," said Wharton. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry. "If this isn't a little joke of Snoop's, we'll do our best for him."

"I'm in earnest," said Snoop.

"But what's the little game?" asked Nugent. "It's rather a sudden change, isn't it?"

"Well, perhaps it is; but—well, I mean it!"

The chums of the Remove left the study, and walked down to the footer-ground with Snoop. Bob Cherry carried a ball under his arm. Some of the Remove were at practice on Little Side, and they stared at Snoop when he came on the field. As football practice was compulsory at Greyfriars, Snoop had to turn up for it sometimes; but he was very fertile in excuses, and he frequently avoided it. For Snoop to come down to practice of his own accord was a thing wonderful.

"Hallo! What does Snoop want here?" asked Tom Brown, the New Zealander.

"He's come down to practice," said Wharton, smiling a little.

"Oh, my hat!"

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"Latest thing in jokes—what?" asked Bulstrode. "Oh, pile in, Snoopy!" said Mark Linley good-humouredly. "It will be interesting to watch, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Snoop piled in.

He had no choice about the matter, and during the next quarter of an hour he did more hard practice at running, passing, and shooting than he had done probably since the beginning of the term.

There was no doubt that he was a duffer at the game—he was out of condition, and he was clumsy from want of practice. But it was equally certain that he was doing his best, and that he really wanted to play in the Form match on the morrow. The junior footballers did not spare him, till he was so utterly breathless that he had not a single run left in his legs.

He clung on to a goalpost at last, and gasped helplessly. The Removees grinned round him.

"I—I can't do any more now!" panted Snoop. "I'm a bit out of condition, I know; but I shall be all right to-morrow."

"All right for a fags' match!" said Nugent. "Put him in, Harry!"

"It's a go!" said Wharton.

Snoop's face lighted up.

"You'll play me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Thanks! I'll play up my hardest, I promise you!"

There was a loud and indignant exclamation from Bolsover major. Bolsover major was sometimes played at back in the Remove eleven, but not so often as he firmly believed he deserved. He could have played Snoop's head off, and he was simply bursting with indignation at the idea of Sidney James being played, and himself left out. He strode up to Wharton with a red and angry face.

"You're playing Snoop?" he shouted.

Wharton nodded calmly.

"Yes; I think he will do for a fags' match, if we're pretty careful about the rest of the team, Bolsover."

"Snoop!" roared Bolsover. "Why, he couldn't play a girls' school! Good enough! And what price me?"

"Twopence—and dear at that!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ask that—that image to play—"

"I didn't ask him—he asked me," said Wharton mildly.

"And you're going to play him! And as for me—"

"Well, as for you—"

"I think it's rotten!" howled Bolsover. "I think we want a new footer captain in the Remove! I think it's a silly lot of rot! I think—"

"I say, you're doing a lot of thinking all of a sudden!" exclaimed Nugent. "Ain't you afraid for your brain? These sudden changes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's a shame!" roared Bolsover. "Look at me! You put a skinny worn like Snoop into the Form team, and as for me—"

"Just a minute—" began Wharton.

"Oh, rot! I put it to the fellows— It's a disgrace, that's what it is!"

"But I was going to say—"

"Blow what you were going to say! I think we want a new footer captain!" shouted Bolsover major. "That's what I think! You are an ass!"

"Thanks! But I was going to say—"

"Oh, rats!"

"I want you—"

"Eh?"

"To captain the team to-morrow—"

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, at the sudden change of expression that came over Bolsover major's face. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh—ahem!" murmured Bolsover major. "I didn't know—I—I— Of course—ahem!—that alters the—the case—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I suppose it does," he agreed. "Well, will you play, Bolsover? I want you to skipper the team for the match."

"Yes, rather," said Bolsover promptly; "and—and—and I take back what I said about your being an ass!"

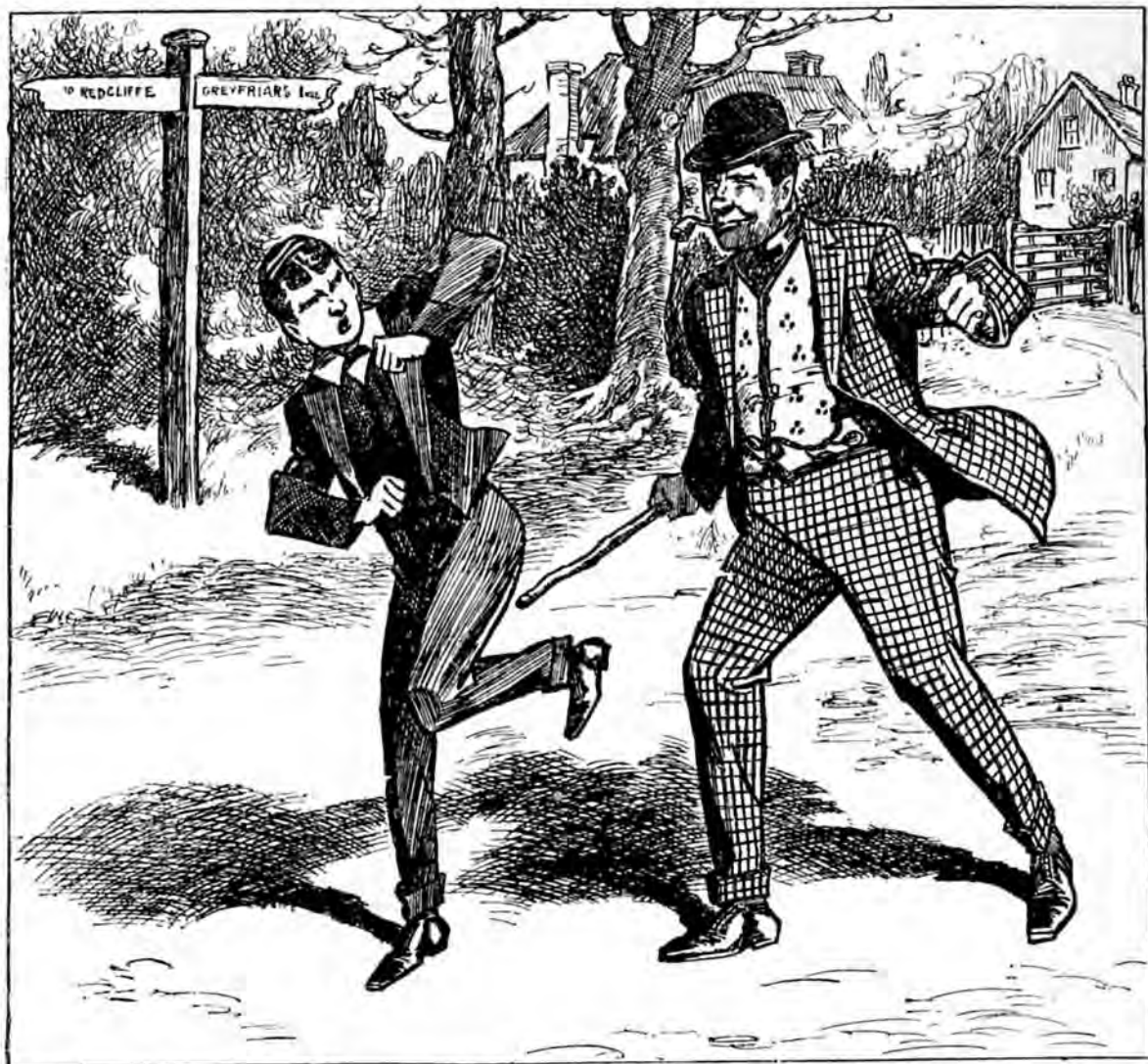
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks!" yawned Wharton. "Then it's settled. Snoop plays, and you captain the team. Keep Bulstrode in goal in case of accidents, and make up the rest of the eleven just as you like."

"Oh, good egg!" said Bolsover. "You're a jolly good sort, Wharton. I must say that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove walked off the ground, leaving Bolsover major extremely satisfied with himself.



Whack! Mr. Huggins's stick lashed round the Bounder, and he gave a jump and a yell. "Do you want another?" asked Mr. Huggins. "Oh, my hat!" gasped the Bounder. "You horrible outsider! You rotter! You hooligan!" (See Chapter 11.)

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Third-Form Match!

IN spite of, or, perhaps, because of his severe punishment in No. 7 Study, Billy Bunter confided his great discovery to everyone who would listen to him. Sidney James Snoop found himself the centre of much interest, and the object of many humorous remarks.

Vernon-Smith asked him if his uncle was really named Buggins, and Skinner wanted to know if the old gentleman's name was really Muggins. Duggins, Guggins, Juggins, and Puggins, and many other changes were rung on the name of Snoop's uncle, till he was sick of the subject. And he was asked what his uncle was like, whether he was a hooligan or a regular out-and-outer, or a wild man from Borneo, and why he didn't want to have the old sport at Greyfriars. Snoop did not satisfy any of his questioners. He lost his temper at every question, and if Sidney James had been a fighting man there would have been regular battles in the Remove that evening. But Sidney James wasn't, and the fellows chipped him without mercy and with impunity.

Everybody agreed that it was disgusting of Bunter to read Snoop's letter, but nearly everybody agreed in hearing what information Bunter had to impart, which was human nature.

And the way Snoop took the matter showed what his THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 315.

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trouble was, that he was ashamed of his uncle, and ashamed for him to be seen at Greyfriars.

And, as Vernon-Smith remarked, if Snoop was ashamed of him he must be a regular scorcher, for Snoop himself wasn't much to be proud of.

Snoop did not admit the soft impeachment. He maintained a sullen silence on the subject when he was not snarling out angry retorts.

The result was that all the Remove fellows were very keen to see Snoop's uncle, and when he came it was certain that the whole Form would make it a point to see him.

"Some awful new-rich beast!" Ogilvy remarked. "He must have plenty of money, for he sends Snoop good tips, and he must be fond of wasting it, or he wouldn't waste it on a worm like Snoop. I want to see him badly."

"He's some awful bounder who's risen in life," said Billy Bunter. "I know he has a ranch out in Canada. Very likely worked on it as a farm hand at first."

"And suppose he did, you fat beast?" said Mark Linley hotly. "Is there anything to be ashamed of in that?"

Bunter snorted.

"Of course, you wouldn't think so," he said loftily. "You worked in a factory yourself before you got here on a rotten scholarship."

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"If nobody worked in factories or on farms where would food and clothes come from?" Mark asked.

"Oh, of course, low people have to!" said Bunter. "That's what they're for. But you low persons ought to be civil to gentlemen."

But the gentleman got no further, for the low person collared him at that point, and bumped his head against the wall, and left him roaring in anything but a gentlemanly manner.

"Well, I agree with Linley," said Bulstrode. "If Snoop's ashamed of the relation who pays his fees here and sends him tips, he's an ungrateful cad! But I don't like to think it even of Snoop."

"Why don't he want him to come, then?" said Trevor.

"We don't know that he doesn't, and I don't take much stock in information from fellows who read other fellows' letters."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Seat!" said Bulstrode.

"Oh, Bunter's a rotten cad, of course!" said Stott. "But he's got it right about Snoop, I believe. Snoop's often gassed about his rich uncle; but I remember he's never described him or mentioned his name. He's some awful bounder not fit to be seen."

"And you're Snoop's pal?" said Bulstrode, in disgust.

"Only on pay days!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Stott won't be Snoop's old pal again till the first of next month, when the next remittance comes."

"Oh, rats!" said Stott, and he walked sulkily away.

It was not only Snoop's mysterious uncle but Snoop's mysterious interest in the great game of footer that caused him to be an object of interest. Many of the fellows wanted to know what was Sidney James's little game. On that point Sidney James did not satisfy them, either.

But whatever might be his motive, certainly he meant business. The next day, after morning school, he turned out to footer practice with Bolsover major's eleven. His practice was watched with interest by many fellows, and especially by a group of fags of the Third Form. Tubb & Co. of the Third were in deep earnest about that match, and they meant to beat the Lower Fourth if they could. And they rejoiced when they saw the changes made in the Remove team.

"We might have found it rather hard to beat the eleven as it stood," Tubb remarked to his chums—Paget and Bolsover minor. "Wharton and Cherry and Linley and Smithy—they are hot stuff, you know. But we've got a jolly good chance now. They're going to play a set of rank duffers. Why, they're even letting your major captain the team, Billy."

Bolsover minor granted. He was very proud of his major.

"Rot!" he said, with Third-Form frankness. "You're an ass, Tubby! My major will wipe up the ground with your blessed fags."

"Look here—" began Tubb wrathfully. But Paget interposed in the cause of peace.

"Order!" said Paget. "Leave Billy's major alone, Tubby. You know Billy is potty on that subject. But they're nearly all duffers, excepting Billy's major."

"That's so," agreed Bolsover minor. "They're even playing Snoop. Look at him fumbling with the ball! My major's slanging him."

"He generally is slanging somebody!" Tubb remarked.

"Well, look at Snoop," said Bolsover minor. "If my major's going to skipper the team it's not cricket to plant that awful ass on him!"

"All the better for us!" grinned Tubb. "They're playing Skinner, too. Awful ass at footer, Skinner!"

"And Stott," said Paget. "Quite a collection of rank outsiders."

"Might as well play Bunter or Mauleverer while they're about it. We're going to wipe that team off the field this afternoon," said Tubb, with conviction.

And the Third Form rejoiced at the prospect.

Bolsover major had no doubts about the result of the match, but he was far from satisfied with his team. He would have preferred to captain the best team the Remove could put into the field. But he had a good goalkeeper in Bulstrode, a good back in Morgan, a good half in Tom Brown the New Zealander, and a good winger in Penfold, and they were quite enough to lead the Third on their own. Snoop's assistance was not likely to be very valuable, but it was not likely to be needed.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned out to see the match, feeling

that they were bound to back up the new team with their presence on the field.

When the time came the Third Form eleven came down to the ground, and all the fags in the school, who had gathered round the ground, gave them a cheer.

Bolsover major came out with his merry men, and humorous remarks were passed upon Sidney James Snoop, who certainly did not appear to advantage in footer rig. Several sarcastic voices asked him if he had left his calves in the dressing-room. But Sidney James only scowled.

Tubb won the toss, and gave the Remove team the wind to kick-off against. Then Temple of the Fourth, who had kindly consented to referee the match, blew his whistle, and the ball rolled.

Third-Form footer was not of the most scientific variety. Tubb & Co. pinned their faith chiefly upon kick and rush. And there was no doubt that they put plenty of energy into the game. Tubb told his men to put their beef into it, and they did. Tubb, who played centre-forward, was here, there, and everywhere. He might have been seen close up to the Remove goal one minute, and way back towards his own goal the next. Indeed, as Bob Cherry remarked, there wasn't a corner of the field that Tubb didn't explore in person. It was not surprising that, after a time, Tubb showed signs of bellows to mend.

Harry Wharton's usual eleven would certainly have wiped Tubb & Co. out of existence in a very short time. But they kicked and rushed their way manfully against Bolsover major's scratch team.

Snoop was played at inside-left, and the way he funkled rushes made the onlookers yell with laughter. They began to shout warnings to Snoop.

"Look out, Snoop! Here comes Tubb!"

"Lie down, Snoop!"

"Jump into touch—quick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But suddenly Snoop seemed to become imbued with the spirit of the game. He rushed into the fray, charged Tubb off the ball, and dribbled it up the field. And the crowd opened their eyes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Snoop's waking up! Look out for a giddy goal—I don't think!"

"The don't-thinkfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janmet Ram Singh.

The Third Form backs closed on Snoop, and charged him. Snoop went rolling over on the ground, and the ball went anywhere.

The backs were rolling over Snoop, and rolling over one another. The Third-Form goalie came out of the "chicken-run," and biffed the ball away up the field. The backs jumped up, but Snoop didn't.

Snoop lay on his side, groaning.

Temple blew the whistle at once. The players gathered round Snoop.

"Get up!" said Bolsover major roughly.

Snoop groaned deeply.

"I—I can't!"

"What's the matter with you?" snorted Bolsover.

Bolsover major was not gifted with a sympathetic nature; and, besides, he suspected Snoop of malingering.

"I—I don't know! I—I'm hurt here!" muttered Snoop, putting his hand to his side. "I—I can't get up!"

"Help him off!" said Temple.

"And you can stay off if you like," said Bolsover major gruffly. "You're no use, and we can play these little beggars a man short—half a dozen men short, for that matter!"

"Can you?" hooted Tubb. "We'll show you!"

Snoop was helped off the field, and play was resumed without him. Harry Wharton came up to the injured player.

He was feeling a little doubtful about Snoop. The fellow was so evidently a funk that it was quite probable that his supposed injury was only an excuse for getting out of the match.

"Are you really hurt, Snoop?" he asked.

"Yes," said Snoop, in a groaning voice. "I—I think one of my ribs must be fractured, or something. One of those young asses brought his knee into my side when he fell on me!"

"That's serious: it will have to be seen to," said Harry.

"Come in, and we'll get a doctor!"

"Oh, no; it's not so bad as that!" said Snoop hastily. "I don't want to make a fuss about it like that!"

"My dear chap, if your rib's fractured, it must be seen to at once!"

"It mayn't be so bad as that. It hurts, that's all. If—if you'd help me into the house, that would be all right, and I'll see how it gets on."

"Well, come on," said Harry dubiously.

And Snoop disappeared from view, leaning heavily on the arm of the captain of the Remove.

ANSWERS

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HARRY WHARTON came back to the field about ten minutes later. The match was still going strong, the Remove being two goals up.

"How's Snoop?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton was looking grave.

"He's lying down in the dorm," he said. "I think he must be really hurt. He's certainly got a bruise on his ribs, but I didn't feel anything wrong with the bone; but it might be out of gear, for all that. If it's serious, he'll have to have it seen to; but he doesn't want the doctor to be sent for."

"Well, I hope he isn't hurt, and I can't help thinking it's gammon," said Bob candidly. "He was funkling like anything, and he really seemed to be asking for trouble when he got that charge—just as if he wanted to be knocked over, and to have an excuse for going off!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I don't want to be suspicious, but that's how it struck me," he agreed. "I'll see him again when the game's over. I don't see why he shouldn't see a doctor if he's hurt. He won't be missed from the game, anyway!"

"Ha, ha! No."

At half-time the Third had succeeded in getting through once, Paget beating Bulstrode in goal with a really good shot. The Remove were two to one when Tempie blew the whistle for a rest.

"We'll make it up in the second half," said Paget. "After all, they're a man short now."

"All the worse for us!" granted Tubb. "Snoop was getting in their way all the time, and now he's out of their way!"

And certainly the Remove eleven—or, rather, ten—did not seem to miss Snoop's services. They made hay of the Third when the second half began.

But the fags put up a good fight, and there was plenty of excitement, and any amount of charging and biffing and rolling over. And although the Third could not get through again, they defended pretty well, and only one more goal had been added to the Remove score when the final whistle went.

"Three to one!" said Bob Cherry. "That's not bad for the Third!"

But Tubb thought it was, and he said things to his followers as they came off the field, and his followers said things to Tubb, and there was a mighty argument among the heroes of the Third, which was continued for quite a long time.

After the match, Harry Wharton went in to see Snoop. He found that youth lying on his bed in the Remove dormitory, reading. Snoop thrust the book hastily away as Wharton came in, and turned a little red.

"Well enough to read—what?" asked Wharton, looking at him sharply.

Snoop groaned.

"I was trying to pass the time," he said. "It's rotten to lie here in pain alone!"

"So you're still in pain?"

"Yes; my rib hurts me."

"Then you'll have to see a doctor," said Wharton decidedly.

Snoop shook his head.

"No, it's not so bad as that. It's not a fracture, I think, but a bad bruise, and I shall be in pain for some days over it, I think."

"Oh, rot! If it's only a bruise, you'll be all right to-morrow. Blessed if I don't think you're as soft as butter!"

"I'm not so strong as you are," said Snoop humbly. "I'm not really very fit, you know!"

"You would be if you took exercise, and played games, and gave up smoking!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, I—I'm going to. But—but everything has to have a beginning, hasn't it?" said Snoop. "I—I'm trying to start on a new line, Wharton. It's unfortunate that I've got knocked up at the start, but there you are!"

"Well," said Harry, disarmed by Snoop's humility, "I'm sorry you're hurt; but, really, you are making a lot of fuss about it, if it's only a bruise, you know. The fellows will cackle if you go around as an invalid, with nothing worse than that the matter with you!"

"Perhaps it is a fracture, after all," said Snoop. "I—I feel a sharp pain whenever I draw a breath. If you think I ought to see a doctor, I will."

"That's better. I'll tell Mr. Quelch, and ask him to telephone for the medical Johnny," said Wharton.

"Thanks!" said Snoop faintly. "Go and ask him now. We'll see what the doctor says, anyway. Then come back, will you?"

"Oh, yes!"

Wharton descended the stairs, and knocked at Mr. Quelch's door. The Remove-master was much concerned when he heard of Snoop's injury, and promised to telephone for the doctor at once, and then to come up and see Snoop. He did

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not lose any time, and he was almost on Wharton's heels as the latter re-entered the dormitory. Snoop's face was screwed up into an expression of patient suffering when Mr. Quelch came in.

"Show me your injury, Snoop!" said Mr. Quelch.

Snoop obeyed. He groaned when Mr. Quelch's finger touched his ribs.

"It appears to be only a bruise," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I feel a pain when I breathe," murmured Snoop.

"Very well; in that case, certainly it is best to have medical advice. The doctor will be here soon. Meanwhile, do not get up."

"I—I don't think I could get up, sir, if I wanted to," said Snoop pathetically.

Mr. Quelch left the dormitory without replying.

"Can I do anything for you, Snoopey?" asked Wharton.

Since Snoop had consented to see the doctor, Wharton had more faith in the genuineness of the injury. If Snoop was malingering, it was not likely that he would be able to deceive an experienced medical man.

"Yes," said Snoop. "If you wouldn't mind doing me a favour, Wharton—"

"Certainly; what is it?"

"Would you write a letter for me?"

"Yes. Any hurry for it?"

"Well, I want it to catch the collection, if possible."

"All serene! I'll get some ink and things up here, and you can dictate it to me," said Harry. "You don't feel up to writing?"

"No, I don't; so if you don't mind—"

"Not a bit. I'll fetch the paper and things."

Wharton left the dormitory, and in the Remove passage his chums captured him.

"Tea in my study!" said Bob Cherry. "Inky's standing a feed—quite a ripper! And it's nearly ready! Come on!"

"Join you later," said Harry.

"No, you won't; you'll join us now," said Bob indignantly.

"What the deuce are you going to do, then?"

"Snoop wants me to write a letter for him."

"Blow Snoop! Why can't one of his own pals write his beastly letters?"

Wharton smiled.

"His pals haven't been up to see him. I suppose he asked me because I was there."

"Good Samaritan!" snorted Bob. "Do you think he's really hurt?"

"Well, why should he pretend to be if he wasn't?"

Bob scratched his curly head thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "Now the match is over, and he hasn't got to face the ferocious Tubb any more, he might as well recover, if he's only gammoning!"

"Well, he's not recovering. He's agreed to see the doctor, and Quelch has telephoned for the medical man."

"Oh! Looks genuine, then," said Bob. "Old Pills will soon bowl him out if he's putting it on. Well, go and write his blessed letter, and then come to the study as quick as you can. Don't let the eggs and the toast get cold, you ass!"

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton carried ink, pen, and paper up to the dormitory. He sat down beside Snoop's bed, with the paper resting on a blotting-pad, to write.

"Pile in, Snoopey!" he said encouragingly.

"Dear Uncle," began Snoop.

"Letter to your uncle—eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, go ahead," said Harry; and he started writing "Dear Uncle."

"I am dictating this letter because I am laid up from a football accident, after playing in the Form match here this afternoon," went on Snoop.

Wharton could not help smiling as he wrote it down. Those lines might have given the impression that Snoop was a regular footballer, and that he had been playing up like a Trojan in a really desperate match. But if Snoop wished to reap a little cheap glory, it was no business of Wharton's. He wrote it down without comment.

"I was so glad to have your letter this morning, and wanted very much to see you at Greyfriars while you are in England, and I'm sorry you are going away so soon. Got that?"

"Yes, I've got that!" said Harry.

"But I shall be in the school sanatorium for some time to come now, so I shan't be able to see you if you come. I can't say how sorry I am. I will write to you immediately I am out, so that if you are still in England you can come down and visit me, if you have time."

Wharton wrote it all down without a word. But there was a very queer expression upon his face. Without being unduly suspicious, he could not help feeling doubts now. Snoop's

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letter to his uncle was a sufficient reason for "gammon" in the matter of the injury.

Was the whole affair simply a pretext for keeping his uncle away from Greyfriars? It seemed a rotten thing to think of any fellow, even Snoop, but—Wharton could not help remembering all the talk there had been on the subject of Snoop's uncle since Billy Bunter's purloining of the letter.

Snoop was looking at Wharton in a sidelong way, as if to calculate the effect of the letter upon him. He did not fail to note Wharton's look.

"This is rotten for me!" he said weakly.

"Is that to go in the letter?"

"No, of course not—I'm saying that to you!" growled Snoop. "You see, my uncle is rich, and he would be certain to give me a good tip if he came."

"Better let him come, then."

"Not much good his coming if I'm laid up," said Snoop hastily. "I—I'm thinking of him, of course!"

"Well, let's get on with the letter. The chaps are waiting for me downstairs!"

Snoop restrained.

"Well, next: I'm so sorry this has happened, uncle, as I was looking forward very much to seeing you. Perhaps you will be coming to England again soon. I feel too weak to dictate any more now, so I will close.—Your affectionate nephew, SIDNEY."

"That's down!" said Harry.

"Now address the envelope—Joshua Huggins, Esq., Hotel Cecil, London."

Wharton did so.

"And—and don't say anything about this to the fellows," said Snoop, still with a sidelong look at Wharton's face. "I—I don't want my uncle to be jawed about any more, you know."

"I shan't say anything, of course."

Snoop nodded—he knew that. If he had asked Skinner or Stott to write that letter for him, it would have been the talk of the common-room half an hour later. But he knew that he could trust Wharton, though he did not like him.

"Would you mind shoving it into the post?" he asked.

"I'll do it now."

"Thanks awfully, Wharton! You're a good chap!"

Wharton made no reply to that. He left the dormitory with the letter, and Snoop grinned as the door closed. The expression of suffering left his face immediately. But he ceased to grin as he remembered that the doctor was coming, and he scowled.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Snoop's Difficulty!

THERE were several fellows with Snoop in the Remove dormitory when Dr. Pillbury arrived. They were not looking either serious or sympathetic. Snoop looked like a sufferer; but somehow or other he was not convincing. Skinner asked him bluntly what the little game was, and Vernon-Smith warned him that Quelch would want a lot of convincing before he let him off lessons. But the medical gentleman "shooed" them all out of the dormitory when he came in with Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Pillbury examined Snoop's injury, and looked at the injured junior very sharply. He felt his ribs, and slapped them, till Snoop gasped.

"So you feel that you can't get up, my boy?" the doctor asked.

"I feel a sharp pain whenever I move," said Snoop.

"And when you breathe—"

"It's like a—dagger, sir!"

"You are out of condition," said the medical man. "But there is certainly no injury that I can discover, with the exception of this bruise. You are quite sure that you are not letting your imagination run away with you?"

"I couldn't imagine a pain like a dagger, sir, could I?" murmured Snoop.

"Well, I suppose not."

"It—it's really awful, sir!"

The doctor regarded him very sharply.

"Very well," he said; "let us go down, Mr. Quelch."

In the Remove-master's study, Dr. Pillbury looked very thoughtful, and Mr. Quelch looked a little curious.

"You do not think the matter is serious?" the Remove-master asked.

"It is not serious at all, Mr. Quelch—but the boy is out of condition, and seems to fancy that he is hurt. If there were any reason why he should want to mangle, I should certainly say that he was pretending to be hurt."

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted.

"It could only be as an excuse to escape lessons, if that were the case," he said. "I hardly think Snoop is the kind

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of boy to think of such a scheme as that, simply to keep out of the Form-room for a few days!"

"Well, it is always possible, of course, that there is some internal injury," said Dr. Pillbury. "It would not do to treat him as a malingerer, if there is a bare chance that he is really ill. He had better be placed in the sanatorium, and I will visit him again to-morrow morning."

"Very well!"

And the medical gentleman took his departure, evidently not at all satisfied in his mind. But that evening Snoop took his place in the school sanatorium, and he was missed from the Remove Form-room on the following morning.

If Sidney James Snoop was playing a game, he was certainly playing it thoroughly. He remained all that day in the sanatorium, and Dr. Pillbury visited him again. Skinner and Stott and Vernon-Smith, who were very curious about Snoop, asked permission to visit him, but they were told that he did not feel equal to seeing anybody.

"Which means that he doesn't want us to bowl him out," said Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton had not said a word about the letter he had written for Snoop. Had he done so, the fellows would all have known what to think. As it was, they were puzzled; but most of them felt quite sure that Snoop was malingering.

Wharton could not help thinking so, too; but he said nothing. In the afternoon a letter came for Snoop, and Bunter, who managed to see the envelope, said that it came from London, and was in the same hand as the previous letter that had worried Snoop so much. Evidently it was from his uncle Huggins—a reply to the letter Wharton had written for Snoop the previous day.

Trotter, the page, took it to the sanatorium for Snoop.

Billy Bunter walked over with Trotter, offering generously to carry the letter in himself, and save Trotter the trouble; and as that offer was declined, he offered Trotter a sticky chunk of toffee to allow him just to look at the envelope. Trotter declined the toffee with thanks—as a matter of fact, it was not a very tempting bait. Bunter could not offer a more valuable bribe, being in his usual state of impecuniosity—but Trotter would not have let him handle the letter in any case, being quite assured that if Bunter's fat hands fell upon the letter, it would come open by accident.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at footer practice at the time, and after his visit to Snoop, Trotter came down to the footer-ground. He called to Wharton.

"Hallo, what's wanted?" asked Harry, coming to the ropes.

"Master Snoop would like to speak to you, sir, if you'd be so kind as to go to the sannytoryum," explained the page.

"Oh, blow!" said Harry. "I'm busy! Is he worse?"

"No, I don't think he's worse, sir."

"Then what does he want me for?"

"He's just had a letter, sir, and it seemed to worrit him," said Trotter. "The matron said he was to 'ave it, but it's excited 'im. I left 'im sitting up in bed, looking like thunder."

"Did he look ill?"

"Well, no; he didn't look werry ill," said Trotter.

"Well, I'll go later," said Harry.

And he turned back to the footer. He did not intend to be called away from his practice because Snoop had some new dodge he wanted to get him to help in. It was half an hour later when Wharton went into the sanatorium, and stopped beside Snoop's bed.

Snoop certainly didn't look ill. He was sitting up in bed, with a letter in his hand, and scowling.

"Feel better?" asked Harry.

"Yes; I'm all right now. I'm not going to stay in here any longer."

"Pain all gone?"

"Yes," growled Snoop.

"Glad to hear it!" said Harry cheerfully. "What did you want to see me for?"

"I—I want to speak to you," faltered Snoop. "I—I want somebody to advise me, and—and I thought of you!"

"Pile in. No extra charge for fatherly advice," said Harry.

"It's not a laughing matter," said Snoop. "I—I can't speak to any of my own pals about it. They'd only snigger at me, and take advantage of it."

"What nice pals!"

"Oh, they're rotters!" growled Snoop. "Skinner, and Stott, and Smithy—all the same. They'd make a stinging joke of it."

"Of what?"

"This rotten trouble I've got into," groaned Snoop. "I don't know what on earth I'm to do. I dare not offend the old fool—"

"What old fool?"



Five feet were planted at the same moment upon the ample person of William George Bunter, and he fairly shot through the doorway of the bike shed. "Ow! Ow! Ow! I'm hurt!" he roared. "You've broken my legs—also my back! Yah!" (See Chapter 2.)

"My Uncle Joshua."

Wharton looked at him sternly.

"If you want to talk of your uncle like that, you can talk to somebody else," he said. "There's such a thing as decency, Snoop."

"Well, he is an old fool. What does he want to come here and disgrace me for? It's all very well for you—your uncle's all right, and you're proud of him; but he's a decent man—"

"I should be just as proud of him, and grateful to him, if he were a crossing-sweeper, I hope."

"You may think so, but you wouldn't be. Suppose you had an uncle who was a regular out-and-outer?"

"A bad man, do you mean?"

"No, no—he's good enough. When my father got into trouble, Uncle Huggins took charge of me, and he's paid all my expenses ever since, and sends me good tips."

"Then I should jolly well think you ought to be grateful to him," said Wharton, warmly.

"Oh, I'm grateful enough, and all that," said Snoop. "But I don't want him here. I don't see why he couldn't stop in Canada."

"But what's the matter with him?"

"He's an out-and-outer!" groaned Snoop. "I'm telling you all this, Wharton. I know you won't give me away. You're a good sort."

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"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

Wharton's lip curled.

"I sha'n't talk about it," he said. "But I don't want to have your blessed secrets to keep. I'd much rather you didn't tell me anything."

"I must tell somebody, and get some advice what to do," said Snoop desperately. "He can't come here. I could never hold my head up in the school afterwards."

"Why not?"

"He's an awful savage, I tell you. You see, my father married below him. The Hugginses are a fearful lot, so I've always heard. Ever since I was a kid I've heard my father talking about his brother-in-law, Huggins—an awful outsider. He went out to Canada years ago, and worked his passage. Think of that!"

"I think it was a plucky and manly thing to do, if you want my opinion."

"Yes, I dare say it was, but it was no class. Then he worked on a ranch as a common herdsman, mixing with all sorts of horrible low people. I've heard my father say that he eats with his knife, and picks his teeth with his fork," said Snoop, with a shudder.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Never mind, so long as his heart's in the right place, never mind his knife and fork."

"But I do mind," said Snoop wretchedly. "I've tried to keep up a decent appearance here, and—and I've swanked

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a bit about my uncle. It's true that he's got lots of money. He's made it himself—a rotten parvenu, you know—rolling in money, and as low and vulgar as a man can possibly be. I've never seen him, of course. He went to Canada before I was born; but I've heard all my father said about him."

Harry Wharton was silent. He had seen Snoop's father, and entertained a far from high opinion of that gentleman. He knew, too, that Snoop's father had got himself into very serious trouble by promoting rotten companies—in a word, by swindling. Mr. Snoop's contempt for his brother-in-law was not of much weight—indeed, it might be testimony in his favour. But Wharton did not say so. Whatever Mr. Snoop might be, it was nobody's business to run him down to his son.

"And now old Huggins is coming here," went on Snoop. "Fancy that! An awful vulgar beast, who eats with his knife, and smokes a filthy black pipe—that's how I've heard my pater describe him. He disliked him awfully. Of course, when my father had bad luck, we were jolly glad that old Huggins came to the rescue. He was very fond of his sister—my mother, you know. But she never said a word for him—she never dared, when father was talking. It's always been a joke in the family about Uncle Huggins, the beastly low bouncer. And now the old idiot's taken it into his head to pay a visit to the old country, and he's coming here to see me. Because he pays my fees here, he thinks he's got a right to come and disgrace me before all the school."

"You don't want him to come?" asked Wharton shortly.

"Want him! Good gracious no."

"Then write and tell him so," said Harry. "You say you want my advice. There it is."

Snoop stared at him.

"Write and tell him so! Oh, you're potty. I tell you I'm dependent on him. I should have to leave Greyfriars. Why, I should starve if I offended him."

"And you talk and think like that about a man who keeps you from starving!" growled Wharton, in disgust.

"I can't help it. He's just as I've described him. I've heard lots about him from my pater and my uncles—the Snoop side, you know. The Snoops are a very good family, and they all felt it very keenly when we became connected with the Hugginses."

"Oh, you're a funny ass!" said Wharton, laughing. "A Huggins is as good as a Montmorency any day; only snobs think that he isn't."

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Snoop. "Besides, if you think so, do you think the other fellows here think so? Do you?"

Wharton was silent. He could not answer Snoop's question in the affirmative.

"He can't come!" said Snoop. "I thought I'd put him off with this dodge—"

"So it was a dodge?" said Harry.

"Of course it was."

"You're not really hurt?"

"Not much—only a bruise. I thought that if I were laid up, old Huggins would let me alone—and not come here; but now he's written—"

"He's coming all the same?"

"Yes," groaned Snoop. "He's written to say he's sorry that I've had a footer accident, but he's glad I'm a footer player, and all that, and he's coming down to see me, all the more because I'm ill."

"He's got a kind heart, anyway."

"Blow his kind heart," said Snoop ungratefully. "I only want him to keep away."

"Well, I can't help you," said Harry. "Perhaps he isn't such an awful bouncer as you think. If your pater disliked him he may have exaggerated a little."

"Oh, I know what he's like—he'd be a disgrace to a crossing-sweeper."

"Look here, Snoop, if you think like that about him you oughtn't to take favours from him," said Wharton bluntly.

"If you take him as a sort of father, you owe him the respect a father is entitled to. He's your uncle, anyway. You can't possibly keep him away. And, depend on it, if he's got any sense at all, he'll see through your dodges for keeping him away, if he's up to snuff. And then you'll find yourself in a bad box. Let him come, and treat him decently, and chance it."

"I can't—I can't!"

"Do you mean you're ashamed of him?"

"Of course I do."

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully. If Snoop's uncle was really as Snoop pictured him, certainly Snoop would be chipped no end if the old gentleman came to Greyfriars. A strong-natured and manly lad would have cared little; but Snoop was not that kind of lad. He was a snob to the fingertips. He had always been in the fore at chipping Linley and Penfold on the subject of their scholarships, and the fact that they came from workmen's homes. Snoop, and other

fellows like Snoop, never allowed Penfold to forget that they knew that his father was the village cobbler in Friardale—not that Penfold cared twopenny what they thought. And now Snoop himself was to be landed with a relation compared with whom old Mr. Penfold might be considered almost dual. It was a fitting punishment for the snob, and Wharton could not feel very sorry for him. And he felt, too, that it was like Snoop's cheek to consult him on the matter. They had never been friends, and if there was one human weakness that Wharton could not sympathise with, it was snobishness.

He stood silent, not knowing what to say. Snoop looked at him anxiously. He had confided in Wharton because he had felt that he must have counsel from somebody, and he could trust Harry not to tattle in the common-room on the subject.

"What can I do, Wharton?"

"I don't know," said Harry. "You can't tell your uncle you're ashamed of him, I suppose, when you're dependent on him, and intend to keep dependent on him. I should think the best-tempered sort of uncle would cut up rusty at that. I should advise you to make the best of it. He must be a very good chap, considering all that he has done for you. You ought to feel grateful and affectionate. If you don't you had better try to. But don't try to keep him away—he will soon tumble to what you are doing."

"Is that all the advice you've got?"

"I can't think of anything else."

"Lot of good it was speaking to you, then," said Snoop bitterly.

"Anyway, don't jaw about this outside."

"I sha'n't say a word," said Harry. "You can depend on that, of course."

Snoop grunted, and Wharton left him. There was nothing more to be said. Snoop tore the letter into little pieces, and flung them across the room, and then sat thinking—thinking—with a black scowl upon his face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Last Resource.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Got well?" Bob Cherry exclaimed, as Sidney James Snoop came into the junior common-room that evening.

"I'm all right," said Snoop shortly.

"Jolly sudden recovery, wasn't it?" asked Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, with a chuckle. "Did old Pillbury give you nasty medicine?"

"Oh, rats!" said Snoop.

"When's your uncle coming, Snoopey?" called out Billy Bunter.

And there was a laugh.

Snoop turned a furious look upon Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, we've got to make up a party to meet Snoop's uncle!" went on Bunter, grinning. "If Snoopey will let us know when he's coming we'll go down to the station and meet him, and escort him to the school with honours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack!

Snoop's open hand caught Bunter on the side of the head, and the fat junior staggered and roared, and fell on the floor. Snoop strode out of the room.

Billy Bunter sat up, roaring.

"Ow, ow, ow! Yow! You beast! Keep him off! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep him away! Yow-ow—"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's gone!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter set his spectacles straight on his fat nose, and jumped up.

"Where is he?" he shouted, brave as a lion now that his assailant was no longer in the room. "Where's that cad Snoop? I'll smash him! I'll slaughter him! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bring him here!" roared Bunter. "I'll smash him! I'll—"

Snoop heard his voice in the passage, and looked back into the room.

"What's that?" he asked. "You want me, Bunter?"

"Pile in!" shouted Johnny Bull. "Now for the smashing and slaughtering! Go for him, Bunter!"

"Ahem! I—I was only going to say, Snoopey, that—that if you did that on purpose, I'd smash you!" stammered Bunter.

"Well, I did—"

"It's all right. I know it was only a joke," said Bunter hastily. "Don't say anything more about it."

"It wasn't a joke," said Snoop. "I did it on purpose."

"Then I've a jolly good mind to smash you," said Bunter.

"But I—I'll let you off, considering. You can clear off!"

"I'm not going to clear off!" said Snoop.

"Then I will!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to stay in the same room with a fellow like you, Snoop!"

And Bunter rolled out of the common-room amid roars of laughter.

But Snoop did not remain long. All the fellows were asking him about his uncle, and he could not treat Bolsover major and the rest as he had treated Bunter.

The scowl hardly left Snoop's brow that evening, and the next morning he was still looking black.

After morning lessons, when the Remove came out, Harry Wharton joined Snoop in the Close. Snoop looked at him moodily.

"You'd better try to buck up a little," said Harry, half laughing. "The thing is getting to be a standing joke."

"Not so bad as it will be when my awful uncle gets here!" groaned Snoop.

"When is he coming?"

"He said he'd come on Saturday afternoon, as that's a half-holiday. I shall have to show him over the school, walk him round and let everybody see him."

"Poor old uncle! He would feel pretty bad if he knew how you think of his visit."

"Oh, blow him!" said Snoop. "I'm thinking of myself. I've a jolly good mind to be called away somewhere on Saturday afternoon."

"He would come all the same."

"Yes; but I shouldn't have to stand him. I say, can't you advise me? What can I do? How could I be called away?"

"You can't expect me to help you make up lies, Snoop. I recommend you to see it through and make the best of it."

"Oh, rats!" said Snoop rudely.

And he walked angrily away.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. He had given the unfortunate snob the best advice he could, and, like most persons who give good advice, he had had it received thanklessly.

He did not offer any more.

Snoop evidently thought the matter out that day, for on Saturday morning he received a telegram. Snoop's correspondence excited great interest in the Remove just now, and fellows asked him whether the telegram was from his famous uncle.

Snoop was quite willing to show the telegram.

"It's from a chap I know in Lantham," he explained. "He's ill, and he wants me to come over and see him this afternoon. If—if my uncle should happen to come to-day, you will explain to him, Wharton?"

"Oh, ask somebody else!" said Wharton shortly.

He knew very well that the telegram was a concoction obligingly sent by Snoop's acquaintance in Lantham to call him away from the school that afternoon, and Wharton did not want to take a share in a falsehood.

Bob Cherry looked at his chum in some surprise. It was not like Wharton to refuse a little service like that.

"I'll tell him, if you like, Snoop," said Bob. "I'm going to be here all the afternoon—or most of the time, anyway."

"Thanks!" said Snoop.

"Awfully kind of Snoop to go all that way to visit a sick friend, isn't it?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Well, I can't very well do anything else," said Snoop.

"But it's a long way to go alone," said the Bounder, chuckling. "Wouldn't you like me to come with you, Snoop?"

"Oh, rats!" said Snoop. "You don't want to come."

"I will, with pleasure. I've got nothing to do."

Snoop hesitated. As he had not the slightest intention of going to Lantham at all, the Bounder's company on the journey was far from welcome. But if he refused the offer the Remove fellows would jump to conclusions.

"All right; I'll be glad of your company, Smithy," he said unexpectedly. "We'll start after dinner."

"Oh, right-ho!" said the Bounder.

And after dinner they started.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Mishap on the Road!

HARRY WHARTON wheeled his bicycle out of the shed with a very cheerful expression on his face. He was going for a spin that afternoon with Nugent and Johnny Bull, and on the way back they were to call in at Cliff House to tea. Bob Cherry was staying in for a football match.

"May run across Snoop and Smithy," Frank Nugent remarked, as the three chums wheeled their bikes out of gates. "They're going to Lantham, you know, and we go round by Lantham."

"Yes, if they go!" said Harry.

"Why, they're just going to start!" said Nugent, in surprise. "Why shouldn't they go?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Wharton had spoken rather hastily. He did not want to explain to his chums why he believed that Snoop was not

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really called away. He had to keep secret what the sneak of the Remove had told him in confidence.

The three juniors pedalled away down the lane, and turned into the road for Lantham, which was also the London road. It was a bright and sunny afternoon, cold but clear, and ideal weather for a long cycle spin. The three juniors went along in fine style. Greyfriars was left far behind.

There was no traffic on the road, and the cyclists let themselves go. But suddenly, as a corner was turned, a big market-cart appeared before them, lumbering slowly on in the middle of the road.

It was very nearly a collision, but Johnny Bull jammed on his brakes and stopped, and Wharton and Nugent separated, and whirled past the market-cart, one on either side.

Just as they were dashing past it at a breathless speed there was the hoot of a motor-car, and round the next turning, a hundred yards ahead, came a big car at a great speed in a cloud of dust.

"Look out, Frank!" shouted Wharton, as he turned his bicycle to the grassy slope beside the road and jumped off.

Nugent was on the wrong side of the road, and going at a terrific speed, and it seemed as if nothing could save the cyclist and the motor-car from crashing into one another.

Wharton stood transfixed, his heart almost ceasing to beat.

The juniors, in the exhilaration of the ride, had become reckless and for that terrible moment it looked as if Frank Nugent would pay for his recklessness with his life. He jammed his brakes on desperately, but the car was rushing down on him. It seemed that all would be over in a second or less.

In that second the whole scene was printed clearly on Wharton's mind as he gazed with horrified eyes—the big car, with a big, sunburnt man at the steering-wheel, and the chauffeur sitting beside him; the hapless cyclist right in front of the tearing car. He saw the chauffeur's face go white under his cap. But the sunburnt man, who was driving, did not move a muscle.

A second, and all would have been over for Frank Nugent; but in that second the sunburnt man turned the car upon the grassy embankment beside the road.

He had acted with instant promptness, like a man accustomed to quick decision in moments of danger.

The car crashed up the grassy slope, and crashed into the hedge above and turned upon its side.

Nugent jumped off his machine, shaking in every limb.

The juniors left their machines and ran up the grassy bank towards the car, fearing that the accident had been serious for the occupants of the car, but before they reached it they saw both men upon their feet.

But the car was a wreck.

The chauffeur, still white and startled, was gazing ruefully at the overturned car, and the big sunburnt man turned towards the juniors.

"You were on the wrong side of the road!" he exclaimed, looking sternly at Nugent. "You might have been killed!"

"I'm awfully sorry!" gasped Nugent. "It was my fault; only I didn't see the car till you came round the corner, and—"

"It was ripping of you, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "I— I thought Nugent was done for, for a second."

"In another second he would have been done for, I guess," said the sunburnt man. "You'd better let this be a lesson to you, young fellow."

Nugent had not a word to say.

"But your car, sir," said Harry—"is it serious?"

"I guess it looks serious. How long will it take to get that car going again, George?"

The chauffeur shook his head.

"I shall have to get help from somewhere to move it, sir. There's a wheel smashed."

"Then we can't go on?"

"Impossible, sir!"

The sunburnt man grunted.

"And I guess I was in a hurry," he said. "Well, more haste less speed."

"We're awfully sorry, sir," said Wharton. "I—I suppose it will cost a lot to set that right, won't it?"

"I guess it will."

"And we are really responsible."

The big man laughed.

"Well, I guess you can't pay for it," he said. "That doesn't matter—luckily for you, you young rascals! But I'm in a hurry. Is there a railway-station near here, do you know?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not within four miles," he said.

"How far is it to Friardale, do you know—a village near Courtfield?"

"About five miles, sir."

"Is this the road?"

"Yes, this is the road."

A magnificent, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Yes; right on to Courtfield, and then to Friardale."

"Good! I guess I can walk it. Look after the car, George, and get it to the Courtfield Hotel as soon as you can."

"Yes, sir."

"I guess I'm going ahead, on Shanks's pony. And you be a little more careful how you run into motor-cars after this, you young rascals!"

"We will, sir," said Nugent. "It's awfully good of you to take it like this."

"No good crying over spilt milk, I guess. So-long!"

And the big man set off down the road at a good pace with long, springy strides. The juniors looked after him with interest.

"Good chap!" said Nugent. "If he hadn't turned the car off the road—"

The juniors returned to their bicycles in a chastened mood. They had been so near a tragedy that it had a very quietening effect upon their spirits. The chauffeur asked them to call in at the nearest garage with a message, and they promised to do so, and rode on.

"Ripping chap, that big fellow," said Harry Wharton. "It was really our fault; though they were exceeding the speed-limit, I fancy."

"I guess he's from America," remarked Johnny Bull.

"I guess he is," said Harry Wharton—"jolly good-natured chap. I wonder what he's going to a sleepy place like Friardale for? I've never seen an American there before."

The juniors pedalled on, and at Lantham gave the chauffeur's message in at a garage, and then rode away for the coast, to finish their spin at Cliff House. The ride had given them good appetites, and they were looking forward to tea at Cliff House with Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends. The incident on the road passed from their minds, though they wondered whether they would ever see the big American again.

"Here we are again!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the wide blue sea came in sight; and they dashed up to the gates of Cliff House and jumped off their machines.

And ere long they were sitting down to tea with Marjorie & Co., and they forgot all about the big, sunburnt man who was walking to Friardale, with his car a wreck on the road behind him. But they would not have forgotten him so easily if they had known his name, and could have guessed under what peculiar circumstances they were destined to see him again.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Way Out!

"WE can catch the three train," Vernon-Smith remarked.

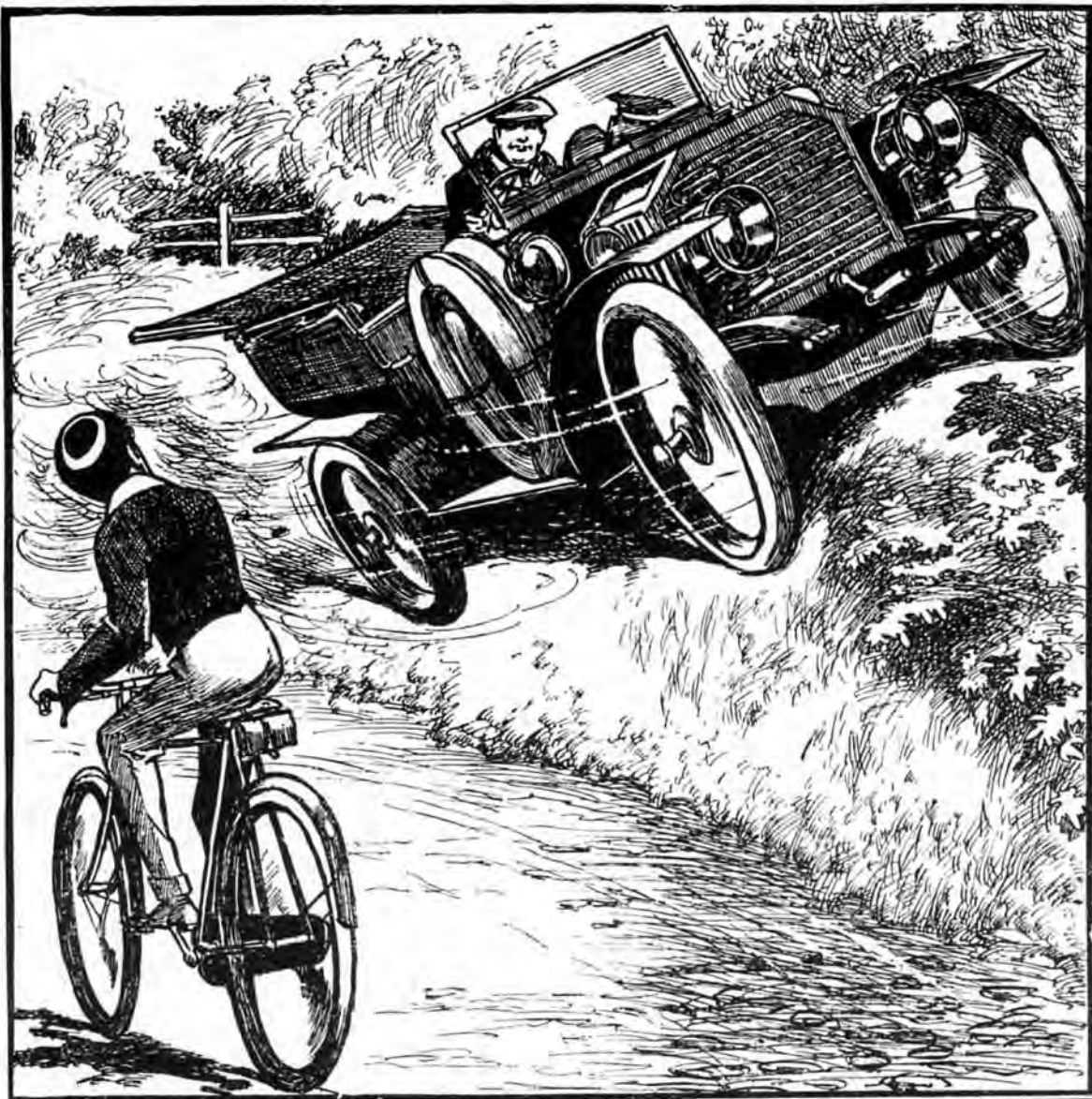
Snoop nodded.

He was walking very slowly, and the Bounder noted it with a grin. Unless Snoop bucked up a little, the

GOOD TURNS.—No. 32.



Four young ladies out for a ride in the country find their way barred by a shut gate. A Magnetite, seeing their predicament, runs back to open the gate; and the little extra trouble this "good turn" costs him is more than repaid by the thanks of the fair riders.



A second—and all would have been over with Frank Nugent—but in that second the sunburnt man turned the car upon the grassy embankment beside the road. It crashed into the hedge, and turned over on its side. (See Chapter 9.)

two juniors certainly would not catch the three train for Lantham. They were not half-way to Frimdale yet, and it was close on three o'clock.

"Better buck up, Snoopey," said the Bounder, looking at his watch. "If we miss the train, there isn't another till about five. And what will your sick friend in Lantham think?"

Snoop grunted.

But he did not increase his pace—indeed, he slackened it. The Bounder burst into a laugh.

"Why don't you own up, you ass?" he exclaimed. "You're not going to Lantham at all, and you don't want to catch the train."

Snoop flushed, but did not reply.

"Your fellow at Lantham isn't ill at all, and you're not going to see him, and you have asked him to send that wire simply to get out this afternoon with a good excuse," the Bounder pursued mercilessly. "You ass! I knew it all the time."

"Did you?" muttered Snoop.

"Yes, I did. Do you think you could pull the wool over my eyes, you fathead?" said the Bounder contemptuously.

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"That's why I offered to come with you. I was curious to see how far you would go."

Snoop halted.

"I'm not going to Lantham," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Smithy, we've always been friends," said Snoop hesitatingly. "I—I think you might help me a bit. I'm in a hole."

"Money?" asked the Bounder cynically.

"No, no! I don't want your beastly money!" said Snoop angrily. "You always think fellows are after your money."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"They frequently see," he replied.

"Well, I'm not," growled Snoop. "I—it's a different matter altogether. I'm in a rotten fix. I don't know what to do."

"Your uncle—what?"

"That's it," said Snoop, flushing more deeply. "You can understand better than Wharton. Your own pater's a bit of a bounder—"

"You let my pater alone!" said the Bounder sharply. "If you want a thick ear, Snoopey, you've only got to say that again!"

"Well, my uncle's not a bit of a bounder, he's a whole bounder—the whole giddy hog, and no mistake!" said Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, will you help me, Smithy? I've helped you in some things," said Snoop. "You'd have been caught out of bounds last time if I hadn't warned you that Wingate was on the look-out. You know that."

"I know it. I'll do anything I can," said the Bounder. "I'm a good-natured chap. Only don't try to take me in."

"You'll keep it dark if I tell you?"

"Safe as houses," grinned the Bounder.

"Well, then, I—I— Hold on a bit; here comes Coker!" Coker of the Fifth appeared in sight on the road, striding along with Potter and Greene. He bestowed a lofty nod on the two juniors as he passed them.

"Let's get somewhere where we can speak," said Snoop nervously. "I believe that cad Bunter is following us, too. Come out of the road."

"Right-ho! Get to the stile yonder."

They left the road, and vaulted over the stile which gave admittance to the footpath from Courtfield—a short cut from that town. The stile was shaded by big trees, and almost hidden by high bushes. Snoop leaned on the stile, looking towards the road. The Bounder stood under the trees, and lighted a cigarette.

"Pile in!" he said, with a grin.

Vernon-Smith evidently regarded his unfortunate friend's predicament as amusing.

Snoop stammered a little.

"You've promised to keep it dark," he said. "I'm in a hole. My Uncle Huggins is coming to Greyfriars this afternoon."

"What's he like?"

"A horrible bounder—an awful outsider!" said Snoop. "You see, I'm telling you everything. I simply can't face it if he comes. He's low, and vulgar, and beastly, and—and it will show me up horribly if he comes to Greyfriars. I know I owe him a lot, but it's jolly hard to feel grateful towards a man like that."

Vernon-Smith was busy with his cigarette, and Snoop's thoughts were all upon what he was saying, and neither of the juniors noticed a footstep on the thick fallen leaves with which the footpath was strewn.

A big, sunburnt man, striding down the footpath from Courtfield, had come into sight—if the two juniors had been looking towards him. But they both had their backs to him, looking out towards the road, and the fallen leaves deadened his steps.

In the silence of the woods Snoop's voice, though low, was very distinct, and the sunburnt man had heard every word.

He stopped.

For a moment he stood looking at the two juniors, a strange expression upon his face, and then he quietly stepped into the trees. If the juniors had looked round now they would not have seen him, but he was within hearing of every word they uttered.

"You're not generally bothered by feelings of gratitude, anyway," Vernon-Smith remarked, with a chuckle. "Gratitude isn't your ruling passion, Snoop."

"Oh, don't be funny! Look here, I simply can't face old Huggins coming to Greyfriars!"

"You can face his sending you tips there—"

"That's different!"

"And paying your fees—"

"That's different, too!"

"Is he really such a rank outsider?" asked the Bounder curiously.

"I've never seen him, but I know what he's like—a regular hooligan. He worked his passage to Canada years ago, and worked on a farm as a common labourer, and rose by his own efforts," said Snoop. "He's a beastly self-made man, you know."

"Rather lucky for you, since your pater's gone on the rocks," commented the Bounder.

"I know it is; but that doesn't alter the fact that he's an outsider, and that I'm ashamed for the fellows to see him."

"I suppose it doesn't! Have you told him you have these affectionate and respectful feelings towards him?"

"You ask! I haven't let him suspect anything of the sort—he would throw me over, and I should have to get out of Greyfriars—get a job and work, very likely."

"And that wouldn't suit you," grinned Vernon-Smith. "You never were fond of work, were you, Snoop?"

"Look here, Smithy; you're a deep beast, and you are always getting into scrapes that would finish any other fellow, and getting out of them quite easily," said Snoop. "You are as deep as a well, and cunning as a dashed fox. Tell me what you'd do?"

"Blessed if I know," said the Bounder thoughtfully. "I'd

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be jolly careful not to risk offending the man I was dependent on, I know that!"

"That's right; I don't want to risk it."

"Can't you make up some excuse to keep him away?"

"I've tried that!" groaned Snoop. "I got up that footer accident—you remember—but instead of keeping him off, it only made him more determined to come."

"Ha, ha! That was the little game, was it?"

"Yes, it was!" growled Snoop. "I played in that rotten match on purpose. You know I hate football. But it wasn't any use. And now—he's coming this afternoon."

"And you won't be there?"

"No, I can't face it. If he must come to Greyfriars and disgrace me, I'd rather be off the scene. That yarn about my going to see a sick friend at Lantham will do for him—unless he's jolly suspicious. But—but all the fellows will see him, and I shall never hear the end of it," said Snoop miserably. "Smithy, old man, can't you give me some advice? Some dodge for keeping him away from the school?"

"That's not easy. He must have started already."

"I expect he'll be here by the next train—or he may come down by car. He's rolling in money, and he'd think nothing of having a car."

"Kind of uncle to cultivate, I should say," said the Bounder. "Why not make an effort, and swallow him whole, Snoop?"

Sidney James Snoop made a gesture of angry impatience.

"I can't, I tell you! He's too utterly impossible. I'm ashamed of the very sound of his name."

The Bounder reflected. The cool, hard-hearted, cynical Bounder was just the fellow to come to for advice in such a matter—only the seeker of advice had to pay for it in enduring the Bounder's irony. But Snoop was willing to submit to anything so long as he could keep his terrible uncle away from the school.

"You see, I've yarned to the fellows a bit about him," said Snoop wretchedly. "That will make it all the worse—when they see him!"

"I suppose it wouldn't do," agreed the Bounder. "The fact is, Snoop, you have gassed more than a little about this precious uncle of yours, and made believe that he was a regular Panjandrum. And if he turns out to be an awful outsider—ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Snoop savagely. "Help me, can't you? You're as cunning as a monkey, and as full of tricks. Well, tell me what to do."

"Suppose I meet him at the station?" said the Bounder, after some reflection. "I'm willing to help you. I'll explain to him that you've gone over to Lantham to see a sick friend, and that may choke him off."

Snoop's face brightened for a moment. But then he shook his head.

"No go!" he said despondently. "He'd go on to Greyfriars and wait for me to come back. You see, he—he's rather fond of me."

"Must be a queer beggar!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, cheese it!" snarled Snoop.

"Has he ever seen you?"

"No, not yet."

"Ah, that accounts; perhaps he won't be so fond of you when he's seen you," the Bounder chuckled. "In fact, I think it's jolly likely that you won't be bothered with his loving affection after he knows you better."

"You—you rotter!"

"Don't get ratty—I'm going to help you," said the Bounder, laughing. "It's always good fun to spoof anybody—and I'll spoof him for you, right up to the hilt. If he comes by train, I'll meet him at the station, and spin him the yarn about your being at Lantham with a sick friend—and offer to take him over there in a car."

"In a car!" said Snoop.

"Yes; I've got lots of tin, you know, and I'd like a motor drive as well as anything else on an afternoon like this," said the Bounder carelessly. "If he wants to see you so much, he'll jump at the chance of seeing you. I'll make out that you may be delayed late at Lantham, if your friend's bad."

"But—but I can't see him at Lantham. He would come back to the school with me—"

"Let me finish. I shall give my driver private instructions. We shall lose the road to Lantham, and never get there. Then there will be an accident to the car, at a terrific distance from anywhere—laid up for repairs in some lonely place—wait for hours—then the driver gets it mended. Then we hike back to Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars!" exclaimed Snoop.

"Yes; we arrive there very late—after all the fellows are in bed," the Bounder explained coolly. "You are called down from the dormitory to see your loving uncle—and his

catches the last train back to London. Nobody will see him excepting you. Of course, you can't help the Head seeing him, but that won't hurt you."

Snoop gave a gasp of relief.

"Smithy, old man—will you really do it?"

"Sure!" said Smithy.

"You're an awfully good sort," said Snoop. "I never thought of anything like that. You are an awfully deep chap, Smithy. But it will cost money!"

"I've got plenty of dibs—and I'd like a motor-run as well as anything else to pass the afternoon. And it will be real good fun, too!" chuckled the Bounder. "There's no fun like spoofing an unsuspecting old Johnny."

"Good egg!" said Snoop. "He's almost certain to come by train—he said in his letter that he would come by the four o'clock train, unless he altered his plans and came down by car. Plenty of time to meet the four o'clock train."

"Lots!" said the Bounder, looking at his watch. "It's hardly a quarter past three yet. If he comes by train, Snoopsey, I'll nail him—and you can depend on me to see it through. Nobody will see him at the school excepting you."

"Good!" And he leaves England soon, so he can't come down again," said Snoop, with great satisfaction. "You are an awfully deep card, Smithy. If I get a good tip out of him, I'll go halves—honour bright!"

"Done!" said the Bounder.

"But—but supposing he comes by car?" said Snoop uneasily. "He mayn't come by train after all, you know."

The Bounder shook his head.

"If he comes by car I can't do anything—I don't even know which road he will come by. Might be at Greyfriars already, for all we know. I'll wait for him at the station, and chance it. He's most likely to come by train, isn't he?"

"Well, yes; I should think so. But if he doesn't—"

"Well, if he doesn't, you wait for him at the school gates, or outside—meet him in the road, and show him your giddy telegram from Lantham—and ask him to take you over there in the car to see your sick friend," said the Bounder. "That will keep him away from the school. After all, he's coming to see you, not the school."

"But—but I haven't any sick friend at Lantham," faltered Snoop. "Bob Carter sent me this telegram, but he isn't ill!"

"Send him a wire to be ill, then, if he hears a car driving up," said the Bounder coolly. "Would he do that for you?"

"Well, he would," assented Snoop, "especially if—I made it worth his while to do me a good turn. I'll promise him a whack out of the tip I get from my uncle."

"Good, that's settled! I'll get to the station now. You send a wire to Carter, and then lay for your uncle outside the school gates," said the Bounder briskly. "Between us we'll do the old Johnny right in the eye. My hat! I'd rather engineer a giddy scheme like this than play in a First Eleven match! It's ripping fun!"

And the two young rascals separated—Snoop feeling very relieved in his mind, and the Bounder chuckling in high good-humour. It looked as if Smithy had extracted Snoop from his difficulty—and such a tortuous scheme, involving cunning and resource and hard lying, was after the Bounder's own heart. He walked on to the station in a mood of great satisfaction with himself and his own cleverness.

And after the precious pair were gone, the sunburnt man stepped out of the trees.

His bronzed face was a little pale, and there was a curious line in his forehead: his cheery, breezy expression was gone.

He stood for some time in deep thought.

Suddenly his expression changed, his eyes gleamed, and his face lighted up. He took a time-table from his pocket and consulted it hastily.

"The train stops at Redclyffe—can catch it there—plenty of time—good!"

With that cryptic remark, the big man strode away at a great pace. He muttered to himself as he went:

"Ashamed of his uncle, is he? Ashamed of his uncle? I guess he shall have an uncle to be ashamed of, then, I guess!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Surprise for the Bounder!

VERNON-SMITH was lounging idly on the platform at Friardale Station when the London train came in. Immediately the Bounder was on the alert.

If Snoop's uncle was in that train, it was the Bounder's business to "nail" him, and carry out his cunning scheme of getting the old gentleman away to Lantham, to delay him so that his arrival at Greyfriars would be timed to take place after all the fellows had gone to bed.

The scheme was so cleverly planned that Vernon-Smith did not see a fault in it. Success seemed assured—if only the terrible uncle arrived by train.

The junior ran his eye keenly along the passengers as they

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 315.

FOR NEXT

MONDAY—

"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

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

alighted from the train. It was a "local" from Courtfield, as the London express itself did not come nearer than that town. Most of the passengers were local people from Courtfield and Redclyffe. But among them was one who was certainly not a local character. Vernon-Smith spotted him at once, and he drew a deep, deep breath.

Was this Snoop's uncle?

It must be Snoop's uncle, for all the other passengers were ordinary country folk. But this man—

The Bounder gazed at him.

He was a big man, with a sunburnt face—so far as his face could be seen. But his face was so dirty that it was difficult to note the colour of the skin. His nose was very red, and his chin had a mottled look as if in bad need of a shave. He was dressed in a suit of flaming checks, evidently quite new and bought ready-made. The clothes were ill-fitting and ill-cut, and the colour and the pattern were equally offensive. Across the hideous waistcoat, formed of a dozen colours that seemed to glare, was a huge and heavy watchchain, so palpably brass that it seemed to cry out that it was nothing else. The gentleman wore no gloves, and his hands were extremely dirty, the fingernails being so black that it looked as if he had really made them as black as possible with deliberate intention.

He wore a cheap bowler hat with a wide, curly brim, a little on one side of his head. There was a big varnished stick under his arm. In his mouth, with the bowl downwards, was a short pipe. The smell of a cheap and rank tobacco proceeded from the pipe.

All these details, and many more, the Bounder noted at a glance.

Was this Snoop's uncle?

He could imagine how all Greyfriars would gasp at the sight of such a man coming to visit one of the fellows as a relation. The man looked something like a particularly flashy confidence man, something like a bookmaker, something like a hooligan, but was indescribably more fearsome than any of them.

If that was Snoop's uncle—

The Bounder required some moments to recover himself. He had expected a rank outsider, but he had not expected that dreadful vision. So glaring, so flashy, so dirty and common the man looked, that the other passengers stared at him and exchanged covert grins. But he swaggered along the platform as if perfectly satisfied with himself, as undoubtedly he was. He carried a leather bag in his hand, and that bag was evidently quite new, like the rest of his attire. Perhaps the hapless gentleman had bought all those new clothes, in the simplicity of his heart, in order to do his favourite nephew proper credit at the big school. The Bounder grinned at the idea. He hurried across the platform to meet the fearsome personage.

The big man stared down at him as he raised his hat politely.

"Pray excuse me, sir!" said the Bounder. "May I ask if you are Mr. Huggins?"

"Josh 'Uggins is my name," said the big man, with a dreadful nasal twang in his voice. "I guess that's me, younker!"

"So glad to meet you, Mr. Huggins!" said the Bounder smoothly. "You are the uncle of my old chum Snoop—Sidney Snoop?"

"I guess so!"

"I've come to the station to meet you, sir," the Bounder explained.

"I guess that's real good of you?" said the man from Canada. "But why ain't my nephew come—hey? Where's young Sid?"

"He has been called away to see a sick friend at Lantham, sir. He sent me to tell you so. Can you come over to Lantham with me, and I will take you to him?"

"Far from 'ere?" asked Mr. Huggins.

"Only a short run in a car, sir, and I'll telephone for a car at once."

"I ain't going to Lantham nor nowhere else!" said Mr. Huggins. "I've come down 'ere to see my nephew. I'm goin' to Greyfriars School."

"But your nephew is at Lantham, sir," urged the Bounder, somewhat taken aback by Mr. Huggins's obstinacy.

"I s'pose he'll come back—hey?"

"Perhaps not till very late, sir. His friend is ill—"

"Well, I'll chance it, I guess!" said Mr. Huggins. "I'll go on to Greyfriars. If my nevy don't come back, I'll leave messages for 'im. And I want to see the ole school most pertickler. P'raps you'll show me to the school, young gentleman, since you're so perlit, now? I don't know the blooming way."

Vernon-Smith shuddered at the thought of being seen walking down the High Street of Friardale with that dreadful

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Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars. Order Early.

unspeakable outsider. He would have given up his scheme at once if he had only had Snoop to consider. But for his own satisfaction he was very keen on carrying his scheme through to success.

"I should be very pleased to take you to Greyfriars, sir," said the Bouncer. "But don't you think Sidney will be disappointed if you don't come over to Lantham?"

"Never mind Sidney! If he wants to see his uncle, he can come to the school. I'll stay for him," said Mr. Huggins—"in fact, I ain't going back without seeing him, and I'll go over the school while I'm there, too. I guess I want to see the place!"

The Bouncer's heart sank. Evidently Uncle Joshua Huggins was not an easy man to manage.

The Bouncer left the station with him. In the quiet village street all eyes were turned upon the flaring, flashy stranger. Two or three fellows of Highcliffe School passed Vernon-Smith—fellows he knew. They stared at Mr. Huggins, and grinned, and Ponsonby put up an eyeglass to inspect him at his leisure. Vernon-Smith turned red, and confounded Snoop and his uncle from the bottom of his heart.

He hurried Mr. Huggins on, leaving the Highcliffe fellows giggling. If Mr. Huggins had been Vernon-Smith's own uncle, the Bouncer could not have felt more horribly ashamed as he piloted the dreadful man down the High Street of Friardale.

Mr. Huggins refused to be hurried, too. Just as if he realised what Vernon-Smith's feelings were like, and delighted in tormenting the Bouncer, he lingered on the way, and made remarks in a loud voice with a strong twang.

The Bouncer suffered punishment for all his sins by the time he succeeded in getting Mr. Huggins out of Friardale.

Still with a lingering hope of carrying out his scheme, he turned, as if by accident, into the Redcliffe road; but the Colonial gentleman promptly called a halt. He pointed to a sign-post with his big varnished stick.

"One mile to Greyfriars!" he read out. "You're taking the wrong turning, young shaver!"

Vernon-Smith tried to grin as he gritted his teeth.

"By Jove, so I am!" he exclaimed. "Well, you have only to follow the road now, sir. You—you may find your nephew at Greyfriars after all, perhaps. He may have got back if his friend is better; or—or he mayn't have started yet. You'll excuse me now—I've got to go and see a friend."

Mr. Huggins shook his head.

"You said you'd show me to the school!" he exclaimed.

"I—I forgot an engagement. I'm sorry—"

"That's all right; but you're goin' to keep your word, young shaver!" said Mr. Huggins. "You just trot alonger me!"

Vernon-Smith stared at him blankly. He had intended to take the unsuspicious stranger in; but the tables seemed to be turned now. The awful outsider was taking the upper hand, and giving him orders, and he evidently expected to be obeyed, too.

"Sorry! I can't come!" said Smithy, without wasting any more politeness.

"You'll be sorrier still if you don't," said Mr. Huggins, taking his arm. "Come along!"

Vernon-Smith wrenched at his arm to get it away, and gasped. The stranger from afar had a grip like bands of solid steel. Vernon-Smith could no more have jerked his arm away from Mr. Huggins than he could have jerked it away from an iron vice.

"Let me go!" he exclaimed.

"I want you to show me to Greyfriars, I guess! I'll give you sixpence," said Mr. Huggins generously.

"Sixpence!" howled the Bouncer. "What do you mean? Do you think I would take sixpence from you?"

"I'll make it a bob, I guess!"

"You—you old fool!" shouted Vernon-Smith, throwing discretion to the winds in his rage. "My father's a millionaire! I'm not going to Greyfriars with you! I won't be seen with you! I wouldn't be found dead with you! Let me alone!"

"I guess you're coming along!" said Mr. Huggins, walking on towards Greyfriars, and forcing the furious Bouncer to walk with him. "I guess I've took quite a fancy to you, young gentleman! We ain't parting company yet."

"How dare you—"

Whack! Mr. Huggins's stick lashed round the Bouncer, and he gave a jump and a yell.

"Do you want another?" asked that fearful person. "Cause I guess I can give you some more if I've any more of your sort!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Bouncer. "You—you unspeakable beast! You horrid ruffian! You hooligan! You filthy outsider! You rotter!"

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Whack—whack—whack!

"Yarob! Oh! Leave off!"

"Any more of your sort?" asked Mr. Huggins.

"Ow! No! I beg your pardon! Ow!"

"Then we'll be gittin' on to Greyfriars, I guess!" said Mr. Huggins.

And they got on to Greyfriars.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Uncle Arrives!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP was standing in the road, with an anxious face, outside the gates of Greyfriars. He was watching for the arrival of a possible motor-car, in case his obnoxious uncle should have come down by road. No motor-car appeared in sight, however, and Snoop began to feel more and more relieved. If his uncle arrived by train, he felt sure that the cunning Bouncer would be able to deal with him.

His feelings may be imagined when he suddenly caught sight of Vernon-Smith coming up the road with a fearsome figure in loud checks walking beside him.

Snoop stood rooted to the ground.

This was evidently his uncle—the benefactor of whom he was ashamed. This dreadful-looking person—this awful outsider—this vision of vulgarity and bad taste and everything that was objectionable—this was his Uncle Huggins!

The Bouncer had failed him!

Mr. Huggins caught sight of Snoop, and waved his stick to him. Snoop could only stare blankly, with fury in his heart.

"Ere we are!" said Mr. Huggins, as he came up. "Are you Sid?"

Snoop wondered for a moment how his uncle knew him by sight, as they had never met before. But he had no time to think about that.

"Ye-es," he stuttered.

"My nevy—hey?"

"I'm Sidney Snoop."

"And I'm your Uncle Josh!" said Mr. Huggins. "Your old uncle, Josh 'Ugins, my boy, wot's come to see you!"

"Will you let me go now, Mr. Huggins?" said Vernon-Smith, in a low, concentrated voice, his face pale with rage.

"Cert'nly!" said Mr. Huggins, releasing the Bouncer's arm. "Thanky kindly for 'aving showed me the wye to Greyfriars, young gent!"

The Bouncer did not reply. He hurried in at the school gates, without a glance at Snoop. Snoop had given him a look that was almost homicidal. The Bouncer had failed him, and Snoop suspected that Smithy had tricked him, and deliberately brought his dreadful uncle to the school. Such a trick would have been quite in keeping with Vernon-Smith's peculiar nature.

"Well, 'ere we are, Sid, my boy!" said Mr. Huggins heartily. "Give us your 'and!"

Snoop mechanically held out his hand.

Mr. Huggins took it in a grip that made Snoop jump almost clear of the ground, and utter an exclamation of pain.

"Ow!"

"Glad to see yer, Sidney!" went on the hearty Mr. Huggins. "But 'ow is it you are up? I 'eard from you that you was laid up from a football accident."

"I've got well," muttered Snoop.

"Well, that's all right. Now we'll go into the school, and you shall show me round the place, and introduce me to your friends—wot?"

Snoop shuddered.

"I—I—I'm sorry, uncle," he said huskily. "I—I've had a telegram from—from a friend at Lantham—he's ill. I think I ought to go over there. Will you come along with me, and—"

"Oh, never mind your friend in Lantham!" said Mr. Huggins. "You can't go a-visitin' sick friends on the hon'y day your uncle comes to see yer!"

"But I—I—"

"Nuff said!" exclaimed Mr. Huggins decidedly. "You ain't goin', Sid!"

"Uncle, I—"

"I sha'n't 'ave time to come down agin," explained Mr. Huggins. "I got to git back to Kenedy. I done my business in London, you see. I got to git back."

Snoop was glad to hear it. He would have given whole terms of pocket-money if his uncle had had to get back to Canada before that dreadful day.

"So kim on!" said Mr. Huggins affectionately. "You're glad to see your old uncle, ain't you, Sid—wot?"

"Ye-es, of course!" stammered Snoop.

"Rather rough-and-ready, but you'll find my 'eart's in the right place," said Mr. Huggins. "You know, that, Sid!"

"Oh, yes, uncle!"
"I bought these new clothes to do you credit, Sid," said Mr. Huggins, with a pleased glance down at his new attire. "I ain't orlways so well dressed as this 'ere. But, of course, I wanted to do you credit at your school."

"That was very k-k-kind, uncle!"
"I'm a kind man," said Mr. Huggins. "When your father was shoved into quod—"

Snoop bit his lip hard.
His father's transactions in the City had been expected to lead to great wealth, and instead of that they had led to the gates of prison, and Mr. Snoop had retired from the world for the space of several years. Snoop found it difficult to live down a thing like that, and it had made him all the more anxious to keep his dreadful uncle away from the school.

"In quod still, ain't he?" said Mr. Huggins innocently.
"Yes," said Snoop between his teeth.
"Ard on 'im!" said Mr. Huggins. "We was never great friends, but I felt sorry for 'im when the crash came, and I made up me mind to look arter you, Sid."

Sidney James ought to have expressed gratitude at that point, but he could not. His feelings were very far from grateful just then.

"Well, kin on!" said Mr. Huggins.
"Don't—don't say anything about father in the school, uncle!" gasped Snoop. "It isn't known to everybody there, and—of course, I keep it as dark as I can!"

"Natterally," agreed Mr. Huggins. "But don't you be ashamed of your father, Sid. He done wrong, and he paid for it; but it ain't a son's place to be ashamed of his father. It would be as bad as bein' ashamed of your old uncle!"

Mr. Huggins moved towards the school gates, and Snoop had to go with him. He had given up hope now. Somehow or other, the whole scheme had gone awry, and his uncle was fairly planted on him. All his dodges and subterfuges had failed; the very worst had happened—his uncle had arrived at Greyfriars—and upon a half-holiday, when all the fellows were free to see him—in broad daylight—and the horror of the situation almost overcame Snoop. A better fellow than Snoop might have been dismayed by such a relative visiting him at such a school as Greyfriars; but to the miserable snob it was sheer torture.

Gosling, the porter, stared at Mr. Huggins as he came in with his nephew. Never had Gosling seen such a gentleman enter the gates of Greyfriars before.

Gosling, not unnaturally, failed to guess that this was a relative of Snoop. He took Mr. Huggins for what he looked like, and he came quickly towards the pair.

"This ain't allowed, Master Snoop!" he exclaimed. "I shall 'ave to report you if you bring this 'ere gent into the school!"

"Wot's that?" exclaimed Mr. Huggins.
"You get out!" said Gosling, pointing to the gates.
"Wot I says is this 'ere—bookmakers and sich ain't allowed in this 'ere place!"

"Bookmakers!" roared Mr. Huggins.
"Well, wotever you are, then," said Gosling. "You get out! Master Snoop would get into trouble if you was seen with him!"

"Wot! I'm his uncle!" shouted Mr. Huggins.
Gosling staggered.
"His uncle!"

"Yes; his Uncle 'Uggins, I guess! Now, wot have you got to say?" demanded the gentleman from the Colonies, fixing a ferocious glare upon the school-porter.

Gosling hadn't anything to say. He could only stare dumb-founded at Mr. Huggins, who snorted, and walked on triumphantly with the miserable Snoop.

Gosling looked after him like a man in a dream.
"Well, this beats it!" he murmured. "Wot I says is this 'ere, this beats it 'ollow! Oh, erikay!"

And Gosling retreated into his lodge, quite overcome.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Mr. Huggins Looks Round!

"GOAL!"
That shout, from the playing-fields, was wafted across the Close, and Mr. Huggins turned his head towards the football-ground.

"Match goin' on, Sid?" he asked.
"Yes, uncle," murmured Snoop.

"Your friends playing?"
"No; it's the first eleven," said Snoop. "Will you come up to my study, uncle? We'll have tea in the study, and a talk, and—"

Nearly all the fellows who were not out of gates were gathered round the senior ground, where the first eleven were playing the Fifth Form. The Close was almost deserted.

Snoop had a faint hope of piloting his uncle into the House unseen, keeping him in his study undiscovered, and

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"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

getting rid of him afterwards somehow or other. But Joshua Huggins was not to be disposed of in that way.

"We'll 'ave a look on at the match, Sid," he said.
Snoop groaned aloud. His dreadful relative was determined to let himself be seen by all Greyfriars. Mr. Huggins looked at him sharply.

"Anythin' the matter with yer, Sid?" he asked.
"No, uncle."

"You ain't lookin' very 'appy."
"I—I'm feeling happy, uncle. It—it's such a pleasure to see you!" stammered Snoop.

"That's orlright, then. Come and let's look on at the footer. I was glad to 'ear that you was a footballer, Sid. It's many a year since I've played the game, but I alters like to see a match. Somebody can take my bag into the 'Ouse, and we'll watch the footer for a bit."

"Yes, uncle."
Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, was lounging across the Close. Mr. Huggins called to him:

"'Ere, young shaver!"
Lord Mauleverer jumped. His eyes grew very wide as they fell upon Mr. Huggins.

"Begad! Did you address me, sir?" gasped his lordship.
Mr. Huggins held out his bag.

"Yes. Take this 'ere!"
"What!"
"Take this 'ere bag into the 'Ouse for me, and I'll give you tuppence!"

Lord Mauleverer almost fell down. He was a very obliging fellow, and he would have carried the bag in, but to be offered twopence for doing so—it rather took his breath away. Snoop gritted his teeth. His uncle was not only fearful to look at, but his manners matched his appearance. The idea of offering Greyfriars fellows a tip of twopence to carry a bag—it was really the limit. The dreadful uncle seemed to have no sense of propriety at all.

"I—I beg your pardon!" gasped the astounded Mauleverer.

"Nothin' to beg my pardon for, fur as I kin see," said Mr. Huggins. "Carry this 'er grip into the 'ouse for me, and I'll give you tuppence, and 'ere it is!"

And Mr. Huggins's dirty hand extracted two dirty coppers from a pocket, and extended them to Lord Mauleverer.

The schoolboy earl gazed at him.
"Who is this person, Snoop?" he asked.

"I'm Sid's uncle," said Mr. Huggins.
"Oh, begad!"
"Do you want this 'ere tuppence, or don't you, young shaver?"

"Thank you—no! But I will carry your bag into the house with pleasure, my dear sir," said Lord Mauleverer politely.

"Oh, take the tuppence!" said Mr. Huggins, as Lord Mauleverer relieved him of the bag. "You're earning it!"

"Thank you—the honour of being of service to you, sir, is quite sufficient reward," said Lord Mauleverer, with the most elaborate politeness.

Mr. Huggins returned the coppers to his pocket.
"Werry perlit, I must say," he remarked. "Well, cut orf with it. Who's that young shaver, Sid?" he added, as Lord Mauleverer walked away with the bag.

"That's Lord Mauleverer!" groaned Snoop.
"Lord, eh?" said Mr. Huggins. "Why, you're quite 'igh-class 'ere, Sid! Fancy you, with a father in quod, mixing with lords and sich! And with a rough old uncle like me! You've got on in the world, Sid! Now, I s'pose that young gent would think jest as much of you if he knew your father 'ad started in life by sweepin' out a hoffee?"

"They don't know that here," said Snoop, quite livid.

"Keeping it dark—eh? Well, I won't let on," said Mr. Huggins. "Not that there's anything to be ashamed of in startin' low down on the ladder, Sid. I worked my passage across the sea to Kenedy, and worked on a farm as a labourer, and I ain't ashamed of it."

Snoop was, but he could not venture to say so. He was writhing with inward anguish. Mr. Huggins's loud voice had drawn several fellows towards him, and Snoop saw Mr. Quelch looking out of his study window. Billy Bunter was blinking at Mr. Huggins from the School House doorway with eyes that had grown almost as large and round as his spectacles.

Bunter rolled towards them with a grinning face.
"Your uncle, Snoopey?" he asked.

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Snoop gave him a fierce look, but did not speak. But Mr. Huggins answered.

"Yes; I'm Sid's Uncle 'Uggins!" he said.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bunter.

And he started for the footer-ground as fast as his fat little legs could carry him, to spread the interesting news that Snoop's famous uncle had arrived.

"Kim on!" said Mr. Huggins.

The wretched Snoop followed him to Big Side. Bunter was before them, and the news had spread like wildfire that Snoop's uncle had come at last. All the Remove fellows who were there were keenly interested. They stared at Mr. Huggins as he came up with Snoop, and they gasped. In their wildest imaginings, they had never imagined anything like this.

"Snoop's uncle!" murmured Bulstrode. "Oh, my hat!"

"Faith, and it's a broth of a boy he is!" said Mickie Desmond, grinning. "Doesn't Snoop look pleased intirely?"

"My word, what a remarkable old codger!" said Stott.

"The remarkablefulness of the esteemed old codger is terrific!"

"Shurrup!" murmured Bob. "Where are your blessed manners? Don't let him hear you say anything, you duffers! Be civil."

But most of the fellows could not help grinning—as much at the sight of Snoop's suffering face as at that of his remarkable uncle.

Wingate of the Sixth was just kicking for goal, and the ball went home, and there was a cheer. Mr. Huggins joined in it, clapping his powerful hands with reports like pistol-shots.

"Urray, 'uray!" he roared. "Well kicked, by thunder! Bravvo!"

"You're a footballer, sir?" asked Bolsover major, with a wink at his companions, addressing himself very politely to Mr. Huggins.

"Yes, I was in me young days," said Mr. Huggins. "Like to see a game still. That there young feller did that well."

"That's Wingate, our skipper," said Bob Cherry. "So you are Snoop's uncle, sir? Glad to see you at Greyfriars."

"Werry kind, I'm sure," said Huggins. "Interdooce me to your friends, Sid."

Snoop suppressed a groan, and performed the introductions. The Remove fellows gathered round joyfully, all clamouring to be introduced to the celebrated uncle. They were enjoying the scene immensely, and especially Snoop's face.

"Ow do you do?" said Mr. Huggins, shaking hands in turn with the grinning Removees. "Werry glad to find meself 'ere! Yes, rather! I've bought these 'ere noo clothes to do my nephew credit!"

"Have you really, sir?" gasped Bob Cherry, making manful efforts not to burst into a roar of laughter. Mr. Huggins's simplicity tickled him immensely.

"I guess so. I ain't always goin' about in style like this 'ere," said Mr. Huggins. "I'm a self-made man, I am, and a plain man. I worked my passage across when I went out to Kenedy, and I bin a cowboy and a ranch-and, you know—worked with me 'ands all me life. Some neevies would be ashamed of a rough old galoot like me, but not my Sid. Sid's as proud of me as I am of 'im."

Sidney James was not looking proud at that moment.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. Then he said "Ow, ow!" as Bob Cherry stamped on his foot.

"Another friend of yours, Sid?" said Mr. Huggins, looking sharply at Billy Bunter.

"That's Bunter, sir—"

"Ow do you do, Bunter?" said Mr. Huggins, taking Bunter's fat hand in a grasp that seemed to close on the fat fingers like a vice.

Bunter gasped.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Glad to see you," said Mr. Huggins affably, compressing his iron grip on Bunter's hand till the fat junior yelled with pain, and danced before him. "Wy, wot's the matter with the young gent?"

"Ow! Leggo my hand!" yelled Bunter. "You're smashing my fingers! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Urtin' you?" said Mr. Huggins, still without relaxing his terrible grip. "Well, now, I snow! You youngsters are mighty soft in these 'ere days, I guess. Wy, I—"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Help!"

Bob Cherry chuckled gleefully. He caught a humorous gleam in Mr. Huggins's eye, and he divined that the rough old gentleman was not quite so simple as he appeared. He had not given anybody but Bunter that terrible grip.

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"Make him let go!" wailed Bunter. "Ow! You beast! You're crushing my beastly fingers! Ow! Help! Yaroooh!"

Mr. Huggins released him at last, and Billy Bunter, scowling furiously, beat a retreat, sucking his fingers, which were almost numbed. And Mr. Huggins, with a cheerful grin, turned his attention to the game, clapping his heavy hands, and applauding in a voice that could be heard from one end of the playing-fields to the other.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Celebrating the Occasion!

MR. HUGGINS was the cynosure of all eyes by this time.

Fellows came round from all sides to get a good look at him, and he was soon the centre of a crowd.

Interested as the spectators were in the senior match, they were soon much more keenly interested in Joshua Huggins.

And Mr. Huggins was affable to everybody.

Ranch life in Canada seemed to have developed his voice as well as his muscles, for it could be heard above all others, even when the crowd were cheering.

Even the footballers turned their eyes towards the spot where Mr. Huggins was standing, the centre of a crowd.

"Ye gods!" said Loder of the Sixth. "Who's that merchant?"

And Walker giggled:

"It's Snoop's uncle!"

The match was very near its close. When the game was finished, and the players trooped off, the crowd broke up, but they did not seem to want to leave Mr. Huggins. And Mr. Huggins seemed pleased by the attention that was bestowed upon him. Perhaps it gratified him to make something like a sensation in the school. Sidney James Snoop was not at all gratified; indeed, by this time he was entertaining wild thoughts of bolting, and leaving his uncle alone, at all costs. But he could not quite make up his mind to that.

"Well, that was a good game," commented Mr. Huggins. "I'm glad you are a footballer, Sid. It's good for you young fellows."

"Snoop a footballer!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He's been piling it on."

"Now we'll have a look round the school afore it gets dark," said Mr. Huggins. "Arter that, we'll 'ave tea in the study, Sid."

"Yes, uncle."

"And arsk all your friends," said the generous Mr. Huggins. "It's my treat. Gents, you'll honour Josh 'Uggins by feeding with 'im!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney of the Fourth. "We'll all come!"

"I guess so!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Depend upon us, sir. We'll roll up in our giddy thousands!"

"Begad, yaas!" said Lord Maulreverer.

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Snoop's uncle!" shouted Bolsover major.

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And as Mr. Huggins started to explore Greyfriars, the whole crowd went with him, in a state of great enjoyment. Snoop would gladly have escaped, but his uncle kept him by his side. He did not seem to want to part with his affectionate nephew for a moment.

The tour of inspection was a long-drawn-out anguish to Snoop. But everybody else enjoyed it, including Mr. Huggins.

That gentleman seemed, in fact, overflowing with high spirits.

As they came back towards the School House, Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, met them. The Form-master's look was puzzled and severe. He had inquired who the stranger was, and a grinning junior had explained that it was Snoop's uncle—but it seemed somewhat incredible, and Mr. Quelch decided to satisfy himself upon the point.

"Pray excuse me," said Mr. Quelch. "I understand—ahem!—you are a relation of Snoop's?"

Mr. Huggins nodded.

"I'm his Uncle 'Uggins," he said.

"This is your uncle, Snoop?"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Snoop.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

He looked after Mr. Huggins very curiously, as the Colonial gentleman accompanied Snoop & Co. into the house. Wingate met his eyes, and smiled.

"Rather a remarkable man, sir," the captain of Greyfriars remarked.

"It is very odd," said Mr. Quelch; "very odd indeed! I have seen the letters Mr. Huggins has written to the Head—"

they were well-written letters—I certainly expected to see quite a different person. This is—ahem!—somewhat unfortunate for Snoop."

"He doesn't look as if he were enjoying himself, sir."

"No; I am sorry for him. But his uncle seems very kind and—and well-disposed," said the Remove-master. "After all, the inward nature is of far more importance than the outward man."

Mr. Huggins had gone up to Snoop's study with his dutiful nephew. The Remove passage was simply crammed with the army of fellows that followed.

"There ain't room 'ere for all your friends to come to tea, Sid," said Mr. Huggins.

"Wouldn't you rather have a quiet tea, just by ourselves, uncle?" pleaded the wretched Snoop.

Mr. Huggins shook his head decidedly.

"I guess not—we're goin' to 'ave your friends."

"Let's have tea in the Rag, sir," said Skinner, in the doorway. "Plenty of room there for all the Lower School, sir."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "It's a big room, sir—room for everybody. Let's have it in the Rag."

"Good!" said Mr. Huggins. "Show me the way."

They led him down to the Rag—a large room on the ground floor, with windows overlooking the Close. Mr. Huggins nodded with satisfaction.

"This 'ere is all right," he said. "Now fur the grub. I reckon I'll smoke a pipe, while you're a-gettin' tea with your friends, Sid."

"Yes, uncle."

"'Ere's a tanner, and if there's any more wanted, you jest tell me," said Mr. Huggins, extracting a ten-pound note

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young. But I got in the 'abit when I was working my passage across the ocean. I've been tellin' your friends, Sid, 'ow I worked my passage hout when I was a kid not many years older than wot you are now."

"Have you?" said Snoop, between his teeth.

"I worked in the stoke-'old," said Mr. Huggins. "Werry rough it was. I guess—"

"Here's a chair, uncle," said Snoop, anxious to interrupt the flow of Mr. Huggins's low-class reminiscences.

"Thank you, Sid! Allers look arter your old uncle, and your old uncle'll allers look arter you," said Mr. Huggins affectionately.

"We've got a ripping feed, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Glad to 'ear it! I'm rather peckish myself. I can 'andle a good knife and fork," said Mr. Huggins. "I fust got a good appetite when I was workin' in a stoke-'old—"

"Will you sit here, uncle?"

"I guess so."

Mr. Huggins sat down at the table. Dusk was falling in the Close, and the juniors had turned on the light in the Rag. The big table, with two smaller tables added to it, was simply covered with the array of good things. Seldom had a spread equal to that been seen in the Rag—though a good many feeds had taken place there.

Most of the fellows did not care whether Snoop's uncle was a hooligan or a Hottentot, so long as the feed was good. And it was decidedly good. Chairs and forms were dragged in

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from a fat pocket-book. "Some of you go with Sid and 'elp 'im to carry in the prog."

"Hooray!"

"Jolly good old chap, if he has got his funny ways," said Bob Cherry, as a crowd of the fellows made their way to the school shop. "Too good for Snoopey, anyway."

"I say, Snoop, where did your uncle get his clothes?" chirruped Ogilvy.

"Ask him to tell us the name of his tailor, Snoopey."

"And the name of his jeweller."

"And the address of his hatter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop did not speak—he was white and desperate. He would willingly have thrown the banknote to the winds, but he had to carry out his uncle's instructions. Mrs. Mumble opened her eyes wide at the sight of the banknote, and handed out her best things in endless quantities in exchange. A dozen fellows were loaded with the supplies for the feed in the Rag.

They marched back loaded; and found Mr. Huggins sitting on the table in the Rag, smoking his short black pipe, and making the room reek with the smell of rank tobacco.

Some of the fellows in the room were coughing, and Russell had slyly opened the window, to allow the fumes to escape.

"May we lay the table, sir, if you wouldn't mind sitting on a chair?" asked Bolsover major politely.

"Cert'nly," said Huggins, sliding off the table. "Where are me manners, now? But we're rather rough and ready out West, you know."

"Yes, I suppose so, sir!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"P'raps you young gents don't like smoke," said Mr. Huggins, with thoughtful consideration. "I 'ope you don't smoke, any of you—it's werry bad for the inside when you're THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 315.

from all quarters—and large as the Rag was, it was well crowded. Even Coker & Co. of the Fifth condescended to come in—partly for the feed, and partly to enjoy the sight of Snoop's uncle. The Fourth and the Shell and the Remove and the Third and the Second, all sent numerous contingents. Pretty nearly all the Lower School, in fact, had gathered for that joyful occasion. It was past tea-time—and that magnificent spread was certainly better than tea in the studies.

"My hat! I wish Wharton and the others were here," said Bob Cherry, as he sat down. "They're missing all the fun."

"They will soonfully return," remarked Hurrree Jamset Ram Singh, "and this gorgeous and esteemed banquet will not be finished quickfely."

"That was quite true; the banquet was likely to last as long as the viands. All the fellows had determined to do it justice. Even Vernon-Smith had come in, though he kept at a good distance from Mr. Huggins—and Billy Bunter had recovered from the terrific handshake sufficiently to roll in and distinguish himself as a trencherman.

"Wire in, young gents!" said Mr. Huggins hospitably. And the young gents wired in with a hearty goodwill.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Recognition!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. jumped off their bicycles at the gates of Greyfriars, and wheeled them in. They had had tea at Cliff House, and ridden back to school in great spirits—quite unconscious of what they had missed. But as they wheeled their machines towards the bike-shed, they saw the lights in the windows of the Rag, and guessed that something was "on."

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"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

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"Looks like a celebration," said Wharton.

"Perhaps Mauly standing another feed," said Johnny Bull. "Well, if it is, I dare say we can manage a little."

They put their machines up, and came into the house, and hurried to the Rag. Harry Wharton opened the door, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment. He had been prepared for a scene of conviviality; but he was not quite prepared for what now burst upon his eyes.

It was a feed, certainly—but a feed of unusual dimensions, with an extraordinary number of guests—and the gentleman who was evidently presiding was so remarkable a gentleman that the three newly-arrived juniors stared blankly at him.

"Who on earth's that?" gasped Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, catching sight of his chums in the doorway. "Here you are again! Come in, you chaps!"

"But what—who—"

"It's Snoop's uncle!" called out Vernon-Smith. "Snoop's Uncle 'Uggins'!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Huggins waved a dirty hand to the new-comers.

"Kim in, young gents—the more the merrier! More friends of yours, Sid, eh?"

"Yes, uncle!" murmured Snoop.

"Make room for the young gents," said the founder of the feast. "I'm Sid's Uncle 'Uggins, young gents. Pleased to meet you. Sit dahn!"

"Thank you, Mr. Huggins!"

"You are very kind, sir."

Mr. Huggins beamed with affability. But as he saw the three juniors more closely, in the light, his expression suddenly changed. He turned his face a little away.

Harry Wharton was staring at him in bewilderment.

In spite of the mottled chin, the red nose, and the dirty skin, he felt certain that he had seen that face before—when the nose was not red, the chin not mottled, and the skin not dirty.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "I—I've seen you before, sir."

"My only hat!" murmured Nugent. "So have I! What a giddy change! What's the little joke, I wonder?"

"What does it mean?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. He, too, was convinced that he knew Mr. Huggins's face, changed as it was in its aspect.

Mr. Huggins turned to them quickly.

"We've met before, I think, young gents, ain't we? But mum's the word."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's the little joke?" asked Bob Cherry. "I didn't know you knew Snoopey's uncle, Harry."

"I didn't, either," said Wharton, laughing; "but I do!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Johnny Bull. "It's all right, sir—mum's the word! I never guessed you were a giddy humorist, sir."

Snoop looked at them in amazement, and then looked at his uncle. He did not understand in the least what they were talking about.

"I didn't know you knew any Greyfriars fellows, uncle," he said.

"I met them there young gents to-day," said Mr. Huggins. "But I'll tell you about it afterwards. Never mind that now."

"But I say—"

"I am very much obliged to you young gents," added Mr. Huggins. "But for you I should never have found out something that I was very glad to know before it was too late."

"Getting jolly mysterious!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"What's he found out, I wonder?"

But Mr. Huggins changed the topic by rising to his feet.

"Gents—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ear, 'ear!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

"Gents, I rises to propose a toast!"

"Bravo!"

"I ventures to proposes the 'ealth of my nevy, Sidney James Snoop, 'ere present. You all know my nevy Sid."

"We do!" grinned Bolsover. "We doest!"

"You know what a splendid chap 'e is," said Mr. Huggins.

"You know that he's the right sort. Bless your little 'earts, there are some blokes that would be ashamed of a rough old uncle like me, from the backwoods, but that ain't Sid's sort. I bet you 'e's been dancin' with joy ever since 'e 'eard that I was coming to the school to see 'im. He welcomed me with open arms, 'e did—like the good little chap 'e is. Nothin' snobbish about my nevy Sid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop became crimson, and writhed in his seat. He wondered whether that dreadful old man would ever hold his tongue.

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FRANK RICHARDS Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale "CHUCKLES," 1d. In our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"He ain't ashamed of me, and the fact that I worked my passage out to Kenedy, and worked with me 'ands all me life!" continued Mr. Huggins, enthusiastically. "Not Sid! 'E's the right sort, 'e is! 'E knows that I worked on a ranch as a common cowboy, but he knowed I'd try to do 'im credit when I kim 'ere, and I may tell you young gents that I bought this 'er noo clothes a-purpose."

"Hoar, hear!"

"So I proposes the 'ealth of Sid, and long may he be a good, manly fellow, and never become a snob."

The juniors yelled with laughter. They could not help it. Mr. Huggins's description of his nephew was so out of accordance with the facts they knew so well. Everybody but Mr. Huggins could see that Snoop was writhing with shame and rage.

But the toast was drunk with enthusiasm.

"Now, Snoopey!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Give us a toast—the founder of the feast, you know."

Snoop gave him a glance of hatred instead.

"Yes, git up, Sid," said Mr. Huggins, jerking his unfortunate nephew out of his chair. "Give the young gents a toast, Sid."

Sidney James trembled with rage.

"My uncle!" he stuttered. "The—the founder of the feast!"

"Speech!" howled Bolsover major; and the rest took up the cry: "Speech—speech!"

"Go it, Sid! Don't mind your Uncle 'Uggins!" said Mr. Huggins encouragingly.

Trotter, the page, came into the rag at that moment. With a subdued grin on his face, he made his way through the crowd towards Mr. Huggins.

"If you please, sir—"

"Ulllo, wot's wanted?" said Mr. Huggins.

"If you please, sir, the 'Ead's heard that you're 'ere, sir, and he would like to speak to you in his study afore you go, sir," said Trotter.

Snoop groaned to himself. Even the Head was to see his dreadful uncle, then. Apparently nobody at Greyfriars was to miss seeing him, then!

"Right ho!" said Mr. Huggins. "Tell the 'Ead I'll be glad to drop in, young 'un. P'raps I'd better go. You young gents can finish without me."

"I—I—if you'd like a wash and brush up before you go to the Head, uncle, I'll take you to the dorm," faltered Snoop. His uncle's clothes could not be helped, but at least the awful old person might be clean, Snoop thought.

"Now, that's werry thoughtful of you, Sid," said Mr. Huggins affectionately. "allers thinkin' of yer old uncle. But don't you come—you stay and do the honours. This 'era kid can take me to the dormitory."

"Suttinly, sir!" said Trotter.

"Git my bag, and take it there, too," said Mr. Huggins.

"Yessir."

"I'll look in agin afore I goes to the 'Ead!" added Mr. Huggins, as he rose from the table. "Aw-revaw, young gents!"

"Au-revoir, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Mr. Huggins followed Trotter out of the Rag. The door closed behind him, and then there was a yell of laughter.

"So that's your nunky, Snoop!"

"Good old sport!"

"So high-class!" sniggered Billy Bunter.

"Quite a nobleman!" grinned Stott.

"Ducal—more than ducal!" chuckled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When did your uncle wash last, Snoop?"

"Does he ever wash, Snoopey?"

"Where did he dig up that watch-chain?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You've sat down at his spread, and you can't jaw about him. And he's a jolly good sort—miles better than his nephew any day."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Snoop rose to his feet, his eyes glittering. His hands were tightly clenched. He looked as if he would have liked to run amuck among the grinning juniors, and hit out right and left. The miserable snob of Greyfriars was overwhelmed with shame and humiliation.

"Speech, Snoopey!" chortled Bolsover major. "Tell us about your uncle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters!" growled Snoop. "You rotters! You were glad enough to get his feed, anyway, and glad enough to have a whack in his remittances."

"Quite so!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That's got you, Bolsover. Gentlemen, I think Snoop's uncle is a jolly good sort, and he has a good taste in feeds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Better than he has in clothes, then," grunted Bolsover major.

Snoop sat down again. His uncle had told him to remain, and he did not venture to disobey his terrible relative. But he felt as if he would like to rush away, and hide himself where no Greyfriars fellow could ever see him again. The feast went on, all the fellows excepting Snoop enjoying it hugely.

The door opened at last.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's your uncle, Snoopey!"
All eyes were turned upon the door. Then there was a gasp of amazement from everybody in the Rag!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Huggins Explains.

MR. HUGGINS stood in the doorway, looking in with a good-humoured smile.

But it was a changed Mr. Huggins.
So changed, that for a moment many of the fellows did not recognise him.

A big, sunburnt man, with humorous, twinkling eyes. He was dressed in quiet dark clothes—his nose was not at all red. His chin did not look mottled. He was as clean as a new pin. He looked like what he was—a well-to-do, prosperous merchant, with something of the breeziness of the great West in his manner, and the tan of the western sun on his cheeks.

His smile broadened a little as he caught the amazed looks of the Greyfriars fellows.

Snoop jumped up.
He could scarcely believe his eyes.

Was this his uncle—this big, handsome fellow, of whom anybody might have been proud? The features were the same, the big, stalwart figure was the same; but everything else was utterly different. Snoop was quite dazed. He remembered the new bag his uncle had brought with him. It must have contained these clothes. Why—why had his uncle played such a ghastly trick on him?

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned at the sight of the metamorphosed Mr. Huggins. Quite easily now they recognised their acquaintance of the motor accident—the sunburnt man who had started to walk to Friardale that afternoon, on the Lantham road.

"Who—who are you?" gasped Vernon-Smith.
"I am Sidney Snoop's uncle, Joshua Huggins, I guess," said the big man; and his voice sounded very different now—deep, and clear, and cultivated, only the "I guess" remaining from his former speech.

"But—but—"
"The little game is played out now, young gentlemen, but I owe you, and my nephew, an explanation."

"By Jove, I think you do!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.
"You've been spoofing us, Mr. Huggins."

The Canadian gentleman nodded.
"Exactly!" he agreed. "It was a little comedy, for the benefit of my nephew. I will explain. I was coming down here this afternoon in my car, to visit my nephew, when a reckless cyclist tried to kill himself under my wheels, and the car was wrecked in getting out of his way."

"Thanks!" grinned Nugent.
"You!" howled Bob Cherry.
"Yes; that's where we met Mr. Huggins first."

"Oh, my hat!"
"As my car was disabled, I started to walk to Friardale," resumed Mr. Huggins. "I walked to Courtfield, and took the footpath through the wood to Friardale Lane."

Snoop started, and exchanged a quick apprehensive look with the Bouncer. He remembered his talk with Smithy at the stile at the end of that footpath.

"When I came in sight of the stile two boys were talking there, and I could not help hearing what they said as I came up the path," said Mr. Huggins. "I was surprised, shocked, and very angered, to discover, from what they said, that one of them was my nephew—"

"Oh!" groaned Snoop.
"And that he was persuading the other to help him keep me away from Greyfriars because he had heard that I was a somewhat rough person, and he was ashamed of me."

"Oh, crumbs!" said the Bouncer.
"The accounts Master Sidney had heard of me must have been somewhat exaggerated," Mr. Huggins went on, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes. "At all events, I had never heard myself described before as an impossible outsider, an awful bouncer, or a hooligan. I was angry, but more sorry than angry, that the nephew of whom I was fond—my sister's son—should be so ungrateful and so snobbish. I determined to punish him in the way he deserved."

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "I understand now."
"I hurried to Redclyffe, bought the most outrageous clothes I could find in a ready-made shop, and made my appearance as unpleasant and vulgar as I possibly could."

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the Canadian gentleman went on cheerfully. "I think you will agree that I succeeded pretty well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You did, sir—you did!"

"Then I came on by the train from Redclyffe as if I had just come from London," said Mr. Huggins. "I arrived here as you saw me. I acted as I did to punish my nephew for his miserable snobbish weakness. I think I have punished him. During the last few hours every snobbish nerve in his body must have been tingling, I guess."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What a ripping wheeze!"
"Begad, it takes the cake!"

"And now," continued Mr. Huggins, turning his eyes sternly upon his quaking nephew—"now it is finished, I think Sidney has had his lesson."

Snoop was trembling.
His brain almost swam with the horror of his position. He remembered, in fragments, what he had said to the Bouncer about his Uncle Huggins, and he knew that Mr. Huggins had heard it all. And he was dependent on the Canadian gentleman for his daily bread! What had he to expect now?

What could he expect? Could he suppose for one moment that his uncle would forgive him?
It was too much to expect!

Sidney James Snoop saw ruin before him—utter ruin and desolation. And the knowledge that he deserved it did not make it any more endurable.

The miserable boy covered his face with his hands and burst into tears.

A sudden silence fell upon the crowded room. Mr. Huggins advanced quietly towards his nephew, and laid his hand upon the boy's quivering shoulder.

"Don't be afraid, Sidney," he said quietly and kindly.

"I have punished you as you deserved; but my intention was also to give you a lesson. Now that it is given the matter is ended. I forgive you for all that you said of me. I shall forget it all as soon as I can. What has happened will make no difference to my treatment of you. I shall try to let it make no difference to my affection for you. You are a wretched snob, Sidney, and you are mean and deceitful. But you are my sister's son. You must try to cure your miserable weaknesses, and I trust that the lesson you have had will help you. Upon my affection you can always depend."

Snoop raised his tear-stained face from his hands.
His face had lighted up. He could scarcely believe in his good luck. At that moment, even in his small, mean heart, there was a glow of gratitude and thankfulness.

"Oh, uncle!" His voice faltered, and almost broke. "I—I'm sorry! I'm really sorry! Believe me, uncle! I didn't know you! I was a beast—a beast! I'll try to be more decent—I will really! I don't deserve your kindness! I—I ought to be kicked out of the school!"

And Bob Cherry murmured "Hear, hear!" But he murmured it under his breath out of consideration for Mr. Huggins.

Mr. Huggins's gaze was keenly fixed upon his nephew's face, and he read there, for once, repentance and sincerity. His bronzed features softened.

"I am glad to hear you speak like that, Sidney," he said. "Take care for the future, that is all. Give me your hand, lad."

And Mr. Huggins shook hands with his nephew and walked out of the Rag. And as he went the whole crowd of fellows burst into a shout.

"Three cheers for Snoop's uncle!" shouted Bob Cherry. And the cheers were given with a will.

"Hip, hip—hurrah!"
And the cheers rang pleasantly enough in the ears of the kind-hearted Colonial, and in those of the boy who had been ashamed of his benefactor.

THE END.

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READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Roonney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. This tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and as they are steaming along one day a bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. Before sunrise the next morning a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and when Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel, and injuring his head. Shortly after this adventure, Jimson, the parrot, is found croaking over a huge bush, and when Prout advances to catch his pet, he stumbles over the body of a man whom they have never seen before. The castaway is found to be alive, and is taken aboard the submarine. The adventurers then find a great hole has been blown in Mysteria. Ferrers Lord and his men explore the bottom of the pit, and find a miniature island has been formed inside Mysteria. While crossing to the island in canvas boats, they are attacked by one of the great monsters which inhabit Mysteria; but, although the party have narrow escapes, nobody is injured. While Ferrers Lord and his party are exploring the inside of Mysteria, Hal Honour, the engineer, takes a walk. He is captured by Julius Faber and his men, and is imprisoned in their camp. During the night, however, he awakens, and sees that Faber himself is keeping guard. He enters into conversation with him, and suddenly the engineer raises his clenched fists, and strikes Faber senseless to the ground. Hal Honour succeeds in getting away in a boat, and when he is well at sea he finds that Stumpy, Faber's wooden-legged accomplice, is also in the boat. Meanwhile, Ferrers Lord and his companions in the cave are experiencing a rough time. The naphtha lamps accidentally upset, catch fire, and the cavern becomes like a furnace. Rupert Thurston, on board the submarine, sees the flames issuing from the top of the cave, and sends out a raft, manned by Joe and the German cook, to the rescue. The raft has proceeded nearly round the miniature island, when the occupants are ordered to put up their hands by an unseen man. Meanwhile, the prisoners on the island, Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Barry O'Roonney, and his mates, cheer themselves up with a few songs, while the Prince amuses them with some ventriloquial performances.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Castaways—Hal Honour Makes Up His Mind—On the Way to the Cinnabar Island.

"Wind? There ain't no brimstone wind, guv'nor," said Stumpy, with an oath.

Hal Honour yawned and pointed to the sea.

"Swear—there," he said. "And quickly."

The big engineer picked himself up slowly, and yawned again. There were still a couple of hours of sunshine left. Over to the east a few dark clouds hung in the sky; to the west it was bright and clear.

"Food," said Hal Honour. "Tea."

He looked at the clouds thoughtfully. Though not a sailor by profession, these tattered masses of vapour seemed hopeful. The cripple obeyed his voice like a dog responding to his master's call. Honour still felt stiff. He looked ruefully at his tiny stock of tobacco. It was at very low ebb.

"Tobacco?"

"There's stones o' the brimstone stuff, guv'nor," said Stumpy. "We ain't short of baccy and rum. 'Ere you are, guv'nor."

Stumpy did not use an oath this time. He felt that the big man might be as good as his word, and toss him overboard. Honour filled his pipe. The sea was almost as flat as a table, and the air was perfectly still. He examined his distilling apparatus, and found it working well. He devoured corned beef and dry biscuits with an appetite worthy of his bulk, and Stumpy waited on him energetically.

"Eat," said the engineer.

Stumpy was the big man's slave. The cripple knew well enough that his life was in the engineer's keeping. Honour gave another glance at the sky, and then took a lead pencil

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from his pocket. Three things filled his life—sleeping, eating, and work. But work took first place.

On one of the smooth paddle-blades, bleached as white as snow by salt and sun, Honour drew a diagram, and began to work out calculations of a vessel that could descend to greater depths even than Ferrers Lord's miracle of invention. Stumpy watched him in wonder and awe.

"Good!" ejaculated Hal Honour. "Don't burn!"

He put the paddle aside. It was covered with figures. Again he took a long glance at the sky. The clouds were denser and more ragged, and the sun had dropped within a hand's-breadth of the horizon. The smell of pitch rose sickeningly from the seams of the canoe, and mingled with the scent of the burning oil.

"I have earned a million pounds," said the engineer, stretching himself, "on that paddle. Don't burn!"

Stumpy thought he had suddenly gone mad, but only nodded. There was a book of charts in one of the lockers, and, sorting them over, Honour quickly discovered the right one. There was no mistaking it, for it was thumb-marked, dirty, and stained. A circle drawn in pencil evidently located the Cinnabar Island. The engineer roughly calculated their position. It was too late to take an observation. He had discovered a battered old sextant, but it needed some attention before he could trust it. To the island of the Twin Pillars, the distance, at a guess, was something between a hundred and a hundred and twenty miles. And it was the nearest land, for Mysteria could not be relied upon.

Hal Honour had no intention of playing a game of blind-man's-buff with that elusive place. He made up his mind to steer a course for the other island, and he hoped to sight

Mysteria on the way. There was not much hope of falling in with any vessel.

"Breeze," he said abruptly.

There was a ripple on the water at last. He sprang to the sail.

"That's a bit of luck at last," said the cripple. "'Ow far do you make us off the island?"

"Which?"

"Why, that smellin' 'ole you're explorin'. Which else?"

Honour shook his head.

"Steer with a paddle. I'll rig a proper tiller up. That's your course."

The breeze freshened. Honour saw quickly that the canoe was a good craft to sail. She began to slip through the water rapidly.

"Where are we makin' for, guv'nor?"

Honour indicated the Cinnabar Island, and the cripple's face turned white.

"It's brimstone madness, guv'nor!" he growled. "It'll be swarmin' wif natives arter the seals, and rotten wif fever. And the niggers is a brimstone sight the worse of the two. We ain't treated the dogs none too gently, and they'll massacre us, sure as fate. Anywhere but that brimstone den, guv'nor. It's certain death!"

The engineer took a thoughtful pull at his pipe, and smiled.

"Suggest something better."

"Why, t'other place, guv'nor."

"Is it on the chart?"

"No, of course it ain't; but— 'Ere, don't you know the brimstone bearings, then?"

"I don't."

Stumpy's face turned still paler. He was right in showing a great reluctance for the Cinnabar Island. They had certainly not treated the natives well, and it was equally certain that the natives had not forgotten. It was one thing to return with a dozen well-armed men, but a couple of castaways would receive scant mercy. They could not hope to beat off the attacks of a hundred savages who were thirsting for vengeance.

"Maybe we'll run agin t'other place," he said. "Them dogs 'll carve us to bits!"

"Perhaps."

Honour's voice did not sound encouraging, as he sawed up a paddle. Mysteria was not a subject to be hopeful about. Probably they were actually running away from the island.

"Carve or no carve," thought Honour, "we must get fresh water, and then make a dash north. It's madness to go cruising about after that will-o'-the-wisp. The canoe can put up with plenty of rough weather, and the food will last us. Water we must have, and I only know one place to find it."

He whistled merrily as he sawed and hammered. Stumpy kept casting furtive, wondering glances at the strong, bearded face.

"He's a brimstone caution," muttered the cripple. "He might be out for a pleasure trip!"

Out of a packing-case, a paddle, and a couple of iron hoops the engineer deftly constructed a serviceable tiller. This he shipped, and with a gesture ordered his companion in misfortune to lower the sail.

Just as the tiller was fixed the sun went down. The breeze was still fresher. Honour took the helm.

"Get to sleep," he said.

The canoe heeled over to the wind, and danced along beneath the flash stars of the southern sky. The lamp, screened by tarpaulins, burned well. With his pipe in his mouth, and his strong hand grasping the tiller, Honour steered a straight course over the choppy sea. There was a clinking noise.

Stumpy was at the rum again.

Captured by Faber—Joe Gives Various Opinions—The Secret Out.

Joe and Herr Schwartz, to their utter amazement, saw the flash of lamps and the redder glare of torches. The thought of making any resistance did not enter their heads. There was something that savoured of the miraculous about it. And resistance would have been folly. Rifle-barrels gleamed in the hands of the ragged crowd on the bank. Joe pulled his queer craft to the shore.

"Thunder! It ain't him at all!"

Curious eyes gazed at them and at their raft.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" cried Faber. Joe shook himself.

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"I 'ardly know," he said. "I think we came through that tunnel. Who the deuce are you?"

"Bring him along," said Faber. "Bring him down to the fire!"

"And t'other 'un, too, cap?" asked Derrick.

"Of course! I'd forgotten the other one."

The carpenter scratched his head in perplexity as he was hustled forward to the blazing fire. After all, it was not very wonderful that there should be a communication between the sea and the subterranean lake. It was not this, but the suddenness of the change in their fortunes, that had momentarily dazed Joe. The lights dazzled his eyes. He rubbed them and blinked.

"How goes it, Shorts?"

The chef's face was a study. His mouth was wide open, and his little black eyes were round with wonder.

"I vas knock ofer, Choe!" he gasped slowly. "I vas tink dot I vos asleeb, is ud?"

Faber was in an evil temper, for his head ached vilely. A valuable hostage had slipped through his fingers, and they had lost their boat. They were prisoners themselves now—prisoners on a ghastly, evil-smelling mass of floating decay. With the canoe had vanished the bulk of their stores and ammunition. It was the crowning blow of a series of calamities. He had been desperate before, but he was doubly desperate now. Death's hungry eyes were glaring at them!

He looked keenly at the two men. Both were toil-worn; but Faber saw that fortune had not been kind.

"Who are you, you dog?"

"Dog yourself!" said Joe.

The gaunt, grey-bearded old man raised his clenched fist.

"I'll break your jaw if you don't answer!" he hissed. "Who are you?"

"Do I owe you anything?" asked Joe calmly. "Is this a magisterial inquiry, you lantern-jawed rascal? Keep your hands down, my beauty!"

Faber let his fist drop to his side. Bullying would not pay here, and he was quick to see it.

"All right, mate," he said. "I'll be civil. Who are you?"

"Age before honesty," said Joe. "Introduce yourself, my patriarch."

"My name's Faber."

"I guess I've read about you in the police-news," said the unruffled carpenter. "You're the swab who runs the Cinnabar, I take it. You might give us a testimonial about the brand of our electricity. Wherse's your sweet pal—the

himp wif the wooden feet? And where's your red 'at, Faber? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Break 'is neck, cap!" said Derrick.

"Shut up!" snarled Faber. "Keep your tongue in your teeth. I've told you who I am. Fair is fair!"

"You seem to take a deep interest in me," said Joe, "and I always play fair. I'm chief carpenter on the Lord of the Deep; owner, Captain Ferrers Lord, Esquire. This is Herr Shorts, cook of the same vessel. Anything else?"

"How did you come here?"

"Started in search of a party exploring the cave, and got lost. You found us—that's all. Your fire is a jolly lot pleasanter and more comforting than your company, for we're jolly cold!"

"Sit down, then. Give them some rum, Derrick."

"Thanks; I don't mind if I do," said the imperturbable carpenter. "You gents look as if you'd been in the wars. Who's your tailor and 'airdresser? Where do you get your collars ironed?"

Several of the seamen scowled at him blackly. Faber stood with his hands behind his back, staring into the fire. Now that Honour had escaped, he dreaded a quick reprisal. The moment he reached the submarine and told his story immediate action would be taken. Alone, Hal Honour could hardly have managed to work the canoe; but he had unknowingly kidnapped Stumpy, and he would make the cripple help him.

The situation was altogether desperate.

"They'll come round and pump shells into us," he muttered to himself, "or else land men and hunt us down! The food will be gone in a few days, and this accursed place doesn't hold any game. Hang the luck!"

He beckoned to Derrick.

"Yes, cap."

"The whole game is up," said Faber, in an undertone. We haven't a card to play. We might have brought 'em to

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terms by threatening to shoot Honour, but they won't have any nonsense over a couple of common sailors. It's a pure case of give in now. We'll have to stick up the white flag."

"And get clapped in irons, and shoved into the first goal they get near—eh?"

"I don't know about that. Anything's better than dying and rotting here!" said Faber.

"Yes," answered Derrick, shuddering.

Faber went back to the fire. The fat man had squatted down beside Joe, and was snorting and quivering. The carpenter felt quite secure, so far as the safety of his skin went. Personally, he had never injured any members of this ragged crowd, and he did not see what they had to gain by hurting either himself or the cook. He gravely drank their good health in rum, and wished them a speedy wash and haircut.

"Dey was choost needt both mosdt padly," said the chef, accepting a mug from Derrick. "Dey was der tirtieth gang of rascals dat I efer see. Vot ve do, Choo, is ud?"

"That depends what they'll let us do, cooky."

"Vat you mean?"

"Oh, I dunno! It's a thousand to nothing we're on the wrong side of the island. We couldn't go back in the dark, even if these 'andsome gentlemen in the new suits would let us."

"Dot vos so, for dot vas guide drue," admitted Herr Schwartz.

"Things being so, I don't think as we've much say in the matter, Dutchy. They'll get a bit of a scare when we don't show up—if they haven't got it now. Well, we did the little bit we could. P'raps we're better off 'ere than inside that show. They won't do us no harm. Why should they?"

The fat man snorted hoarsely, and Joe looked round, and encountered the piggy eyes.

"By thunder, what a prize-packet!" thought Joe, and then laughed.

He had seen many caricatures in the comic papers, but nothing more ludicrous. The tall hat was only a tattered rag, and it was astonishing how the relics of the frock-coat managed to hang on the ponderous figure. Joe had a good sense of humour. He ran his eyes over the massive object, and touched the cook's arm.

"What do you think of this 'ere for a penny peep-show, Dutchy?" he inquired.



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BOY'S JOURNAL

ONE PENNY EVERYWHERE.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 315.

FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1d. 1/2

"Id vas ein bosdt remarkable specimen, Choo. Dot vas ein beep-show vorth dwobence any tay."

Derrick uttered an amused laugh.

"Your mate's a pretty fair specimen hisself, carpenter," he put in. "I've seed plenty of thinner people than him."

"I believe you, mate. Hallo! Can it talk?"

The fat man wriggled, and opened his mouth. A little, hoarse ghost of a voice came from that vast cavern.

"Is your boss Ferrers Lord, the millionaire?" it asked.

"You have struck it first try, fairy," said Joe.

"What sort of a man is he?" puffed the human mountain.

"Well, not exactly your style," said Joe. "Your waist-coat would make him two overcoats and a carriage-rug."

The human mountain endeavoured to smile agreeably, but failed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Very good!" he puffed. "You are wonderfully witty—for a carpenter! You sharpen your wits like you sharpen your chisel, I suppose? I don't mean what he's like to look at. I mean his disposition. Is he a hard master? Does he rush you? Does he knock you about?"

"I can't remember 'avin' been knocked about much, shadow," said Joe.

He suddenly noticed that several of the ragged figures had come nearer to listen.

"Is he the sort to kick a man when he's down—eh?"

Joe began to smell a rat. The unkempt harsh faces looked very intent in the glow of the fire.

"Got it!" thought Joe. "He's on the pumping game."

The brutes have come to the end of their tether. I can see clean through this. They're done, and they want to give in. If it ain't that, they're playin' dark."

"You seem to take a mighty big interest in our chief, fatty," he said aloud. "Dashed if we don't live and learn! I thought everybody knew everything about Ferrers Lord!"

Joe Explains to Faber's Men Where They Are—No News!

"Well, the gov'nor would be the last to jump on a chap in trouble," said Joe, with a silent chuckle. "He's as good as gold, and as gentle as a pigeon." He pinched the cook's leg gently. "Bless your life, he wouldn't 'urt anybody! Of course, he does get out of temper now and then, like other folks, but it's only a bit of a flare-up, and then it's all over. I 'ave knowed him knock off a chap's grog for shirking; but that was a bad case."

"Is he forgiving?"

Joe again pinched the leg of the astonished cook.

"Forgiving? Why, he'd forgive the man as stabbed him! He's one lump of good nature, is the chief!"

Faber leaned forward, and looked piercingly at Joe; but Joe's face defied his gaze.

"Then he wouldn't leave a few poor fellows who had made a mistake and lost their luck, to die in a desert island?" said the fat man. "He ain't the sort for that?"

So this was the way the cat jumped.

"Oho!" said the carpenter. "Is it as bad as that, mates?"

"We've lost our boat and everything else," broke in the harsh voice of Julius Faber. "It's no good walking round in a circle. Can we make any arrangement with Ferrers Lord? We've got to face the music now. Do you think he will give us a passage to the nearest port?"

"That's a big order, Faber. You don't look a healthy sort for a clean, respectable ship."

Faber's eyes flashed. He was losing his temper rapidly.

"I've had almost enough of your foolery," he said thickly. "There are many ways of making even a hard-skulled idiot like you talk sense. Are you eager to be stripped and flogged? If so, I can oblige."

"Oh, let's be reasonable," said the undaunted Joe. "What good will it do you to flog me? What do I know about my chief? If you're in such a mess, you'd better face up to him and see. When people start pumping me, they don't get much for their trouble. Here's a bit of truth for you. Mr. Ferrers Lord is just, and he's not cruel. I don't think he'd leave the blackest rascal ever born on this island. No man as I ever knowed would. If you've lost your boat, you've made the worst mess of things as could be made. But I can't answer for the chief. Take my tip and go to him. This island may be under the sea before another week. Do you know where you are?"

Faber knew, so did Derrick, so did the fat man; but they had not told the others.

"Where?" cried several voices.

"On a floating island—on Mysteria," said Joe. "And she may be at the bottom in twenty-four hours."

Mouths opened, terrified eyes glared at him.

"He's lying, lads!" said Faber hoarsely. "Don't believe him!"

It was too late, for the words were spoken. And they did believe him. Their horrified faces proved it.

"Ach," said Herr Schwartz, "id vas drue—yes! Der islandt vas der derrick Mysteria!"

At that time the path that had been carved through the eerie forests gleamed with lanterns and torches.

Six men alone remained on the Lord of the Deep. Messages flashed from the vessel to the cavern whose dark recesses still refused to give up their secret. The answers from the cavern brought no hope:

"Still no news."

To the Rescue Once More.

Rupert Thurston and Phillips shared the command and directed the rescue-party. Thurston worked like a hero. Whatever may have been in his heart, his voice was lusty and cheerful. He travelled between the submarine and the cave more than once. Like a procession of gigantic glow-worms, the lamps crawled to and fro between the winding stems of the silent forest.

The Berthon was a tight and useful boat, strong and buoyant, and easy to handle. The pale-grey dawn began to break before they were ready. In its dark bosom the cavern had buried the secret of their comrades' fate. And Hal Honour was still absent, the man they had learned to rely upon for conquering every difficulty.

It was clear now that the intrepid engineer had met with some accident. Perhaps he had fallen and broken a limb; perhaps he had missed the path and gone astray; perhaps— But, with the bristling perils of that dreadful island, it was folly to speculate, though it was possible to hope; and yet, was it possible to hope?

All their faces were grim and sternly set. Surely, if they were alive, they would have found some method of telling it. Such men as Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, and Prout do not die easily, and they know nothing of despair. Yes, they could still hope. Even if King Death had claimed them, they would wrest their bodies from his clutch, or else sacrifice their own lives in the attempt.

The big Berthon, specially built, could carry a dozen men, though she only had four oars. Like the canvas boat, whose fate they were ignorant of, she towed a couple of flare lamps. They were ready at last.

"Not you, sir," said Phillips.

Rupert ground his teeth, and stood back. He would have given a limb to take command. Duty compelled him to stay behind, for he alone could navigate the Lord of the Deep, should all be lost.

"Good luck!" he said hoarsely.

The boat glided with lamps. On a small padded platform in her bows was a little, but deadly, quick-firing gun. The ripples broke away from the blades of the oars like flakes of fire. At a good pace she moved away over the lake.

"Look here, sir," cried one of the men; "there's a tide!"

"By Jove!"

The ground was deeply trampled, but it was plain to see that the water had receded.

"Odd!" said Rupert.

Everything that happened in fatal Mysteria was odd. The very laws of Nature seemed reversed on that topsy-turvy island. Thurston paced up and down the damp shore, watching the departing boat with haggard eyes. Other eyes were watching it, too. It kept in sight for a long time. Only for the haze of smoke that still hung in the cavern, it would have stayed in view much longer.

"Give me a brandy-and-soda," said Rupert. "I need one badly, because I've got to stay here!"

He took one sip, and flung away the tumbler and its contents.

"Vile!" he said, making a wry face. "I'll have a cup of coffee instead."

He drank off the coffee. It was horrible to have nothing to do, for idleness made him think.

"Outside and chop wood, half of you!" he shouted, seizing an axe. "We'll make a fire as big as a house to guide them back. Hands in pockets will do us no good, lads. Let's kill time somehow."

All the stars had faded, and the early morning was chilly. Two of the men began to fry bacon and make tea for breakfast, as if nothing had happened. The hollow stems were built up with masses of leaves and split wood underneath, as fast as they were brought into the cavern. The pile rose and rose. Then the kindling was saturated with naphtha, and a blazing log pushed in.

Boom!

With a report like a gunshot, the naphtha burst into flame, and the great roaring beacon was alight.

"They must see that," muttered Rupert, backing away from the scorching heat. "The cavern cannot be large enough to strangle such a flare."

He sat down on a case of cartridges moodily, but he

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 315.

FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

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

devoured a hearty breakfast. A man who does not eat can do the living no good, and no man can do the dead any harm. But every moment was like a dreary year of time.

Joe and Herr Schwartz tried to sleep, but their slumbers were scant and troubled. They were awakened at sunrise. In the light, Faber and his gang looked considerably uglier and more unclean than they had looked in the less powerful light of the torches and fire. The prisoners were handed two mugs of wretched tea, powerfully fortified with rum, and biscuit almost harder than their teeth, and a couple of chunks of half-boiled fish.

The cook left his untouched.

"Not want it?" asked Joe.

"Ach, der stuff vas vile," said the cook mournfully; "but id vas nod dot, Choe. I haf no abbedite. All der night I vas dink, dink, dink. I vas dink of der chief, of der boor brince, and of Dom Brout!"

"Oh, don't you worry about them, Shorts!" said the carpenter. "What's the use? Look at us two. We start off on a rotten raft, and we come out wi' safe skins—me and you—only two on us. They'd got a fairly decent craft, and we ain't got the cheek to compare ourselves wi' the chief and Ching-Lung. If we can do it, don't it stand to common-sense as they ought to do it twice better? Shouldn't wonder if they are huntin' for us this blessed minute. I feel sartin they are."

"You nod choke?"

"I very likely shall in a minute," said Joe, gnawing at the biscuit. "Afore I get this tack down. But I ain't jokin' at all. They 'ad a better chance of comin' through than us. We've come through. Buck up, and eat!"

Herr Schwartz pondered, and then—for he was very hungry—began to eat.

"Dot sound goot," he said presently. "Ja, ja, dey haf ein petter chance dan us, Choe. Pouf! I make ein petter breakfast oud of ein sole of ein poot. Dey led us go now, is id?"

Joe had his doubts. Derrick, Faber, and the fat man were holding a consultation.

"Say, carpenter!" called Derrick.

"Hallo, matey!"

"Know the way over them 'ills?"

"I reckon I do when I get to the top," said Joe. "I don't know this 'ere side, my dirty beauty!"

Presently a whisper went round, and there was a sudden bustle. It was apparent to the carpenter that preparations were being made for a hasty move.

"It's a case of surrender," he thought. "The chief'll turn the hose-pipe on 'em afore he let's 'em go aboard. It would do 'em good to run a jack-plane over 'em, and take the dirt off in shavings. What a 'andsome crowd!"

It was a ragged and unkempt brigade, but it was well armed. Each man had a rifle, a revolver, a knife, and a bandolier, and some carried axes. Derrick came forward. Perhaps Faber thought it beneath his dignity to converse with the carpenter.

"We're goin' to see your boss, shipmate."

"So I reckoned."

"You'll tell him as we ain't treated you bad—eh?"

"Not when you advised the gent with the grey whiskers to knock my 'ead off last night. What about that?"

Derrick laughed. He could not help a sneaking admiration for Joe.

"That ain't worrying you, shipmate. You don't care a chaw of baccy about it. We're floored and knocked out. Let bygones be bygones, mate. You won't run away, neither?"

"Not in this 'ole leastways, not just yet," said the outspoken Joe. "It would break my poor old mother's 'eart to see me in such company; but as I don't expect to meet the dear old lady in these parts, I'll risk my reputation."

"You're a cool 'un, matey!"

"You're mistaken. I'm a warm one," said Joe. "I'd like to take the best of you on at any game. See that?"

Joe bent his right arm until the great muscles threatened to burst his coat-sleeve to tatters.

"That's beef, and none of your Argentine or foreign stuff. That's all the best British, and 'ome-made."

Derrick grinned, and lowered his voice.

"I like a man," he whispered, "and you seem a lot like one. Go easy, mate—go easy, and I'll get you and your pal safe back. Some of 'em ain't to be trusted. I'll look arter you."

(This story is now drawing to its conclusion, and ANOTHER GRAND TALE of Amazing Adventure, by famous Sidney Drew, will shortly commence in THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY. Don't miss it!)

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In this grand new, long, complete story Frank Richards introduces a new character to Greyfriars, who proves to be something quite fresh in the schoolboy line. Not only is the new-comer an arrant "funk," but he admits the fact quite coolly, and takes it quite as a matter of course. Naturally, he drops in for rather a rough time, in the Remove—the fighting form at Greyfriars—and but for Harry Wharton's kind offices, his life would hardly be worth living. Harry does his best to reform the "funk," and in this work he is assisted by Bolsover, the Remove bully, though the methods of the two reformers are widely different. In the end, however, their combined efforts begin to tell on the "funk," who at last makes it clear, in his own peculiar way, that he no longer deserves the reproach of

"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

A FULL RANGE OF GOOD READING.

The arrival on the scene of our latest halfpenny companion paper, "Chuckles," now provides readers of our famous series of companion papers with a full range of good reading-matter for the week-end. The "Magnet" and "Gem" Libraries admittedly fulfil all the requirements of the early and middle parts of the week in a manner which it would, I think, be hard to surpass. Then comes, on Friday, "The Penny Popular," a paper devoted entirely to complete stories, and packed full of the cream of popular fiction. There is more solid, first-class reading-matter in "The Penny Popular" every week than in any other paper of its size and price in the world. In regard to this paper, it has always been my policy to cater for all ages and classes of fiction-lovers, and the manner in which the good old "Penny Pop." has steadily, from its inception, climbed the rungs of the ladder of popularity shows that its sterling worth is being more and more generally appreciated. Just lately "The Penny Popular" has enjoyed quite a boom, and has bounded ahead with more than usual rapidity, and in view of this very considerable increase in the number of regular "Penny Pop." readers I have decided to incorporate in it

A New Feature,

which will, I think, meet with general approval. This will consist of an

Editor's Chat Column,

so that I can communicate with my "Penny Pop." chums direct—nothing strikingly original, I grant, but a new departure for this paper, which I am convinced, from the numbers of readers who have written to me on the subject, will fulfil a long-felt want. So look out for Your Editor's Special Chat to his "Penny Pop." chums in next Friday's issue of "The Penny Popular."

Then on Saturday comes "Chuckles"—the bright and cheery halfpenny coloured paper which provides you with amusing jokes and pictures and first-class stories, just when you have most leisure to enjoy them. What more cheerful companion than the latest copy of "Chuckles" could you wish for on a Saturday afternoon or restful Sunday morning? In "Chuckles" my chums get more fun and brightness for one halfpenny than can be had anywhere else for double that sum; and if you want to enjoy a succession of cheery and happy week-ends this year I cannot give you any better advice than to order your newsagent to keep "Chuckles" for you regularly every week.

THE HOME WIZARD—No. 4.

The Bewitched Penknife.

Among what may be called "off-hand" tricks, demanding no apparatus, and only a nominal amount of preparation, this one deserves an honourable mention. It is an old trick, but comparatively little known, and, in the improved form I am about to describe, will often be found to produce greater bewilderment than many more pretentious feats.

The visible apparatus consists of a pint champagne bottle, and a borrowed penknife. The performer, taking his seat at a table, places the bottle in front of him, and drops the penknife, open, into it. He then waves his hands about over the bottle, professedly making mesmeric passes.

After a little while the knife begins to jump up and down in the bottle. When the influence is sufficiently developed, it will rap out desired numbers, or answer simple questions, jumping three times for "yes," once for "no," and twice for "can't say," after the approved spiritualistic fashion.

This surprising phenomenon depends on the use of a very old auxiliary of the conjurer, a piece of black thread, in this case about two feet in length. (The precise length most suited to the performer must be ascertained in the course of previous practice.) One end of this is attached, by means of a bent pin, to the right trouser-leg, just above the knee.

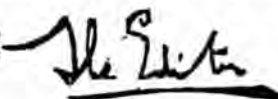
The opposite end, to the extent of a couple of inches, is anointed with beeswax. This portion is then rolled into a ball, and finally into a little cylindrical plug, about three-eighths of an inch in length, and six or eight times the thickness of the thread. This little plug, like the pellet of wax in a former trick, is pressed till needed against the lowermost button of the performer's vest. While examining and making some casual remarks about the penknife offered for his use (this should be one of light weight, and preferably with square ends), he gets this little plug between the forefinger and thumb, and in the act of opening the knife, so places it that it shall be clipped between the butt of the blade and the end of the spring.

The knife is then dropped into the bottle, and is made to perform as above stated. Before beginning the supposed mesmeric passes, the performer places the bottle at just such a distance from him that, with the ball of the foot on the ground and the heel raised, the thread shall be drawn taut, when the alternate lowering and raising of the knee will suffice to make the knife rise and fall again. When the trick has lasted long enough, the knife is drawn half-way out of the neck of the bottle. The performer lifts it out altogether, closes it, and hands it back to the owner, the mere act of closing it releasing the thread.

In the old method of working the trick, the "home" end of the thread was made fast to one of the performer's vest buttons. The bottle was held in the hand, and the knife made to rise and fall therein by moving it farther from or nearer to the body. The method above described is, however, far more magical, besides being, after a little practice, more easy to work. It is a great point to have the hands absolutely free. The performer may, if desired, hold them above his head, or spread them out upon the table, showing clearly that they take no part in the feat, and yet the knife continues its mysterious movements.

In all tricks of this kind the thread must be thin, so as to be practically invisible. On the other hand, strength is an important consideration, as an accidental breakage would place the performer in a very uncomfortable position. I can strongly recommend for use in such cases Kerr's Lustré Twist, No. 36, which combines the two desiderata in an unusual degree. Though very thin, it will bear a strain of over twenty-six ounces without breaking. It is procurable of any draper or trimming seller.

(More Tricks for the Home Wizard in next Monday's "Magnet" Library.)



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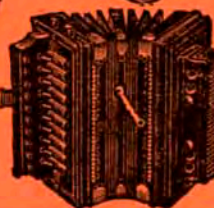
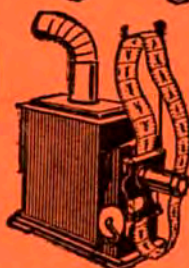


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