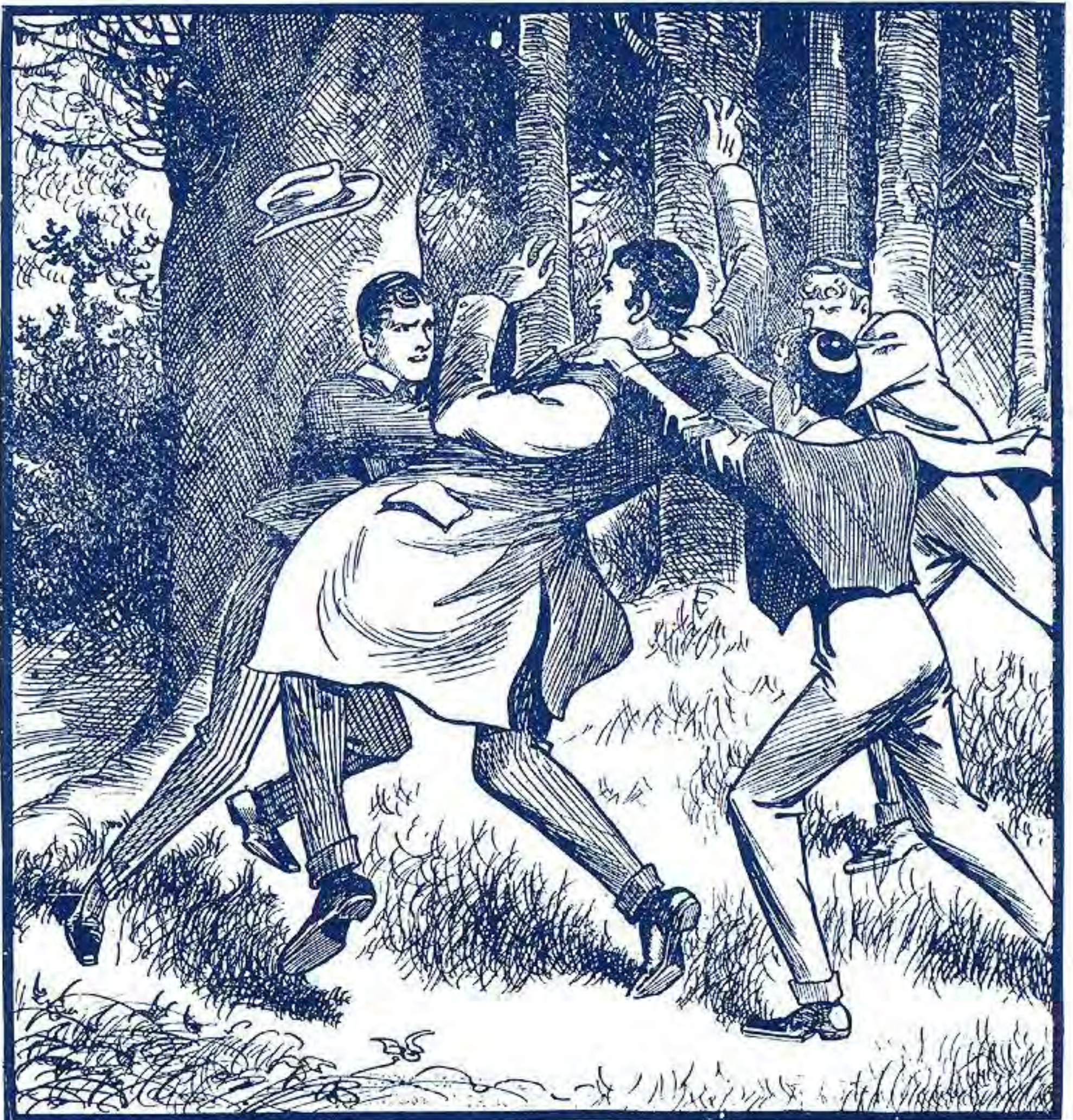


THE MAN FROM THE SOMME!



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GOING FOR THE DETECTIVE!

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THE MAN FROM THE SOMME!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Roland for an Oliver!

REDWING, old scout!" Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, looked into Study No. 11 as he spoke. As it happened, Tom Redwing was not there; but Snoop and Stott, Redwing's study-mates, were there, and they were chortling.

There was a large sheet of cardboard on the study table, and Sidney James Snoop was daubing words on it with a brush and ink.

He looked round with a grin as Harry Wharton glanced in at the doorway.

"Redwing's not here!" he snapped.

"Know where he is?" asked Harry.

Snoop sneered.

"I believe he's gone over to Hawkscliff for the afternoon, to see some old pals of his—boozy longshoremen, I suppose," he answered. "If the low bouncer's going to stick at Greyfriars, I really think the Head ought to make him give up his boozy associates—don't you?"

"I don't think Redwing has any boozy associates, Snoop; and you don't, either," answered Wharton quietly. "I certainly don't think he ought to give up his old friends because he's got to Greyfriars on a scholarship. Redwing isn't that kind of fellow."

"You stick up for him, of course," sneered Snoop. "You and Smithy would back him up, whatever he did. He's not our sort, anyway!"

"I shouldn't be likely to back him up, Snoop, if he were your sort," said Harry, with a curl of the lip.

"Oh, rats!"

"What have you got there?" asked Wharton, glancing at the cardboard, on which a few daubed words had caught his eye.

"You can read it if you like," grinned Stott.

Sidney James Snoop took the cardboard and pinned it on the wall in a prominent position, so that it would catch the eye of anyone entering the study.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows as he read what Snoop had daubed there in large letters.

"NOTICE TO PUSHING CADS!

Your Sort are Not Wanted in this Study.

KEEP OUT!"

The two young rascals chuckled as they scanned their handiwork.

"I think that's plain enough, even for Redwing," grinned Stott.

"I rather think so."

"So that's meant for Redwing?" said Harry Wharton, setting his lips.

"No names mentioned," smiled Snoop.

"Cap fit, cap wear, you know. I dare say the fellow knows he's a pushin' cad, and has no right at Greyfriars at all."

"We're not standin' him in this study, anyway," said Stott. "If you're so jolly

fond of him, Wharton, you can have him in your own study."

"I shouldn't mind," said Harry. "But this is his study, Stott, and you can't keep him out of it. And you've no right to insult him."

"Bow-wow! We don't want him here."

"I dare say he doesn't want you here. You're hardly fit to associate with a decent chap like Redwing, anyway."

"Why, you cheeky rotter——" began Stott warmly.

"You'd better take that down," said Harry.

"Redwing's a patient fellow, but he may lose his temper at that, and neither of you would care to tackle him, and you know it."

"Rats!"

"It will get through his thick skin, anyway," sneered Snoop. "I want the cad to know what we think of him for shoving himself into the school among gentlemen's sons!"

A sharp retort trembled on Wharton's lips, but he did not utter it. Sidney James Snoop, of all fellows at Greyfriars, was the least entitled to throw that taunt at anybody.

There was a step in the passage, and Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, lounged in.

Snoop and Stott looked rather uneasy.

Harry Wharton liked Redwing, and was friendly with him; but they were not exactly chums, and Wharton did not feel called upon to interfere in the present instance. But it was different with Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer, who seldom formed a friendship—and who, indeed, often seemed too cold and cynical to feel anything like friendship—had chummed with Tom Redwing. That regard had begun on the occasion when Tom Redwing, the sailorman's son of Hawkscliff, had pulled Smithy out of a stormy sea and saved his life. From that hour the sailor had had a firm friend in the Bouncer, who had stood by him through thick and thin. And, though Redwing did not know it, it was largely due to the Bouncer that he had won a scholarship at Greyfriars School.

Vernon-Smith, his hands in his pockets, glanced at the card on the wall, and smiled. Snoop and Stott were rather relieved to see that smile. The Bouncer was a dangerous customer when he was angry.

"Funny, by gad!" said Smithy.

"You think it funny, do you?" said Harry Wharton, rather surprised, and speaking very drily.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Yes, rather! It's dashed funny to see Snoopey and Stott giving themselves notice to quit in this way."

"What!" exclaimed Snoop.

"Did Redwing tell you he didn't want any pushing cads in the study?" asked Smithy.

"You silly ass!" howled Stott. "That notice doesn't refer to us; it refers to that cad Redwing!"

"Oh, my mistake!" smiled the Bouncer. "As it mentions pushing cads,

I naturally supposed it referred to you two."

Harry Wharton laughed, and Snoop and Stott scowled.

"So it's for Redwing," said Vernon-Smith thoughtfully. "I think the fellows ought to see this. The Remove have a right to know your valuable opinion on the subject."

The Bouncer put his head into the passage, and called out:

"Oyzez, oyzez! Roll up, Remove! Study No. 11. Entertainment now on."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" called out Bob Cherry.

"Come and sec, dear boy. It's interesting."

Bob Cherry came along the Remove passage with Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Frank Nugent came from the other direction. Squiff and Tom Brown and Peter Todd, Lord Mauleverer and Oglivy and Russell, Billy Bunter and Skinner, and several other fellows, came up, wondering what the Bouncer meant. Quite a little crowd gathered about the doorway, and there were some smiles at the sight of Snoop's notice, and some frowns, too.

"Begad, that's a caddish thing!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"The cadfulness is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Singh.

"Take it down!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I'm not going to take it down," said Snoop. "That's for Redwing. It's what we think of him."

"Have you called us here to show us that Snoop is a sneaking cad?" asked Frank Nugent. "We knew that before, Smithy."

"The knowfulness was great," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a nod.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"No. The entertainment is only just beginning," he said. "I've got some things to say and do, and it will be quite entertaining. No charge for admission!"

Snoop and Stott exchanged an uneasy look. They did not like the Bouncer's tone. It was dawning upon them that there was a dangerous anger under his tone of sardonic coolness.

"If you're going to lick the cads, we'll see fair play," said Squiff. "If you only want to lick one, I'll take on the other."

"Look here, don't you fellows come ragging in my study!" exclaimed Snoop savagely. "Redwing can look after himself, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's so," admitted the Australian junior. "All the same, I've a good mind to rub your nose in the carpet, Snoop!"

"What are you insulting Redwing for like that?" exclaimed Mark Linley hotly.

Snoop shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you can't insult a pushing cad of his sort!" he said. "Let the fellow get out of Greyfriars, and go back where he belongs, if he doesn't like it."

"We don't want him here," said Stott. "We draw the line at the son of a

common sailor," said Sidney James Snoop, loftily.

"You sneaking cad!" shouted Bob Cherry. "By Jove, I'll jolly well give you a licking, Snoop; you've wanted one a long time!"

"Hold on, Bobby!" said the Bounder. "Let me run the show. You're only the audience. Snoop, old scout, you object to Redwing because his father was a sailorman?"

"Yes, I do!" said Snoop defiantly.

"Does he object to you because your father was a swindling company promoter and a convict?" asked the Bounder, slowly and distinctly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Snoop's Father!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP turned pale.

It was the first time that taunt had been thrown at him.

There is an old saying that dwellers in glass houses should not throw stones, and certainly Snoop of the Remove would have done well to remember it.

The consciousness of his family disgrace was always at the back of Snoop's mind. All Greyfriars knew that his father, once wealthy, had fallen upon evil days, and had transgressed the law, and had been sent to prison. It had been a crushing blow for Snoop, and he had feared at first that he would be sent away from Greyfriars.

But the Head had not taken it upon himself to visit the father's sin upon the son.

The Greyfriars fellows had allowed the matter to fall into oblivion. Snoop, indeed, sometimes thought they had forgotten it; for even mean fellows like Skinner drew the line at throwing such a thing in his face in times of quarrel.

It was hitting below the belt, and even the black sheep had their limit.

There was a buzz among the juniors as Vernon-Smith spoke. Snoop's foolish snobbery and caddishness disgusted them, but they did not approve of the Bounder's speech.

The wretched Snoop stood with a white face, stammering. He had brought the taunt upon himself, for who was he to sneer at anyone's parentage, even if Redwing's had been disgraceful, as it was not? Certainly the most hopeless snob must have ranked an honest sailorman above a swindler who had been sent to prison.

"Smithy!" muttered Harry Wharton. "Dash it all, you might let that rest, Smithy!" said Peter Todd tartly.

"I call that cowardly!" said Skinner.

"Shame!" muttered two or three voices.

The Bounder reddened.

On his own account nothing would have induced him to let such a taunt pass his lips. It was the attack upon his absent chum that had drawn it from him. But he looked round defiantly.

"Snoop's setting up to judge Redwing's father," he broke out. "Let him hear about his own father, then."

"Redwing's father was the right sort, and Snoop is a silly snob," said Squiff. "But there's a limit, Smithy. Snoop couldn't help what his father did."

"Oh, you rotter, Smithy!" muttered Snoop. "You cad!"

Two or three of the juniors went along down the passage. The misery and shame in Snoop's wretched face was too much for them.

"You'd better take that rubbish down, Snoop," said Harry Wharton quietly.

Snoop flamed out.

"I won't!"

"You will!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm going to make you! And if you

let us hear one more sneer about Redwing's father, I'll stick up a notice myself in the Common-room about you and your father!"

"You cad!"

"Draw it mild, Smithy!" murmured Wharton. He was feeling uneasy and ashamed.

"Let him let Redwing alone, then," said the Bounder doggedly. "What's Redwing done to him?"

"Nothing. But—"

"Isn't Redwing as decent as any fellow at Greyfriars, and a good deal more decent than Snoop?" demanded the Bounder.

"Everybody knows he is," answered Harry. "But you can let Snoop's father alone, all the same. That's outside the limit."

"I don't see it! What the dickens does he mean, sneering at a man for being poor, when his own father's in prison?"

"My father's not in prison, and you know it!" shouted Snoop.

"I know he escaped," agreed the Bounder.

"You know he's gone into the Army, and that he's fighting the Germans at this minute!" exclaimed Snoop passionately.

"Begad, is that so!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

There was a buzz. This was news to all the juniors, excepting the Famous Five and the Bounder.

"It's true," said the Bounder, with a curl of the lip. "Snoop's pater got away from prison, and he came around here to get help from Snoop, who refused to help him."

"I—I—I—" stammered Snoop.

"You were afraid!" said the Bounder contemptuously. "If I'd been afraid, too, and Wharton, the poor beggar would have gone back to chokey, instead of getting a chance to join the Army."

"You helped him?" exclaimed Ogilvy.

"Wharton and I did. He wanted to join up, and we helped him do it," answered the Bounder. "I thought he would be better fighting the Germans than turning the crank."

"My hat! He can't be such a rotter as—as we supposed," said Ogilvy. "If he's fighting the Germans, that wipes out the other bizney, and you've no right to throw it up at Snoop!"

"No right, anyway!" said Russell.

"I wouldn't, if he'd let Redwing and his father alone," said the Bounder. "But if he doesn't take that rubbish down and burn it I'll put up a notice in the Common-room that convict's sons are not wanted here!"

"Smithy!"

"Draw it mild!"

"Let Snoop draw it mild first!" said the Bounder grimly.

Sidney James Snoop, with a trembling hand, took the sheet of cardboard from the study wall.

The Bounder's threat was enough. He knew that Vernon-Smith would be as good as his word.

The juniors watched Snoop in silence, as he thrust the cardboard into the grate and set a match to it.

It was the best thing he could do with it, certainly; but glances of disapproval were cast at the Bounder, all the same.

Snoop turned from the blaze.

"There!" he said. "I've done it! Now get out of my study, Vernon-Smith! You're a howling cad, and you wouldn't dare to talk as you've done only you know I can't lick you!"

"Oh, rats!" answered the Bounder. And he walked out of the study, the juniors dispersing with grim faces.

Harry Wharton hesitated a minute in the doorway, looking at Snoop. He did not like Snoop. Sidney James was not a

fellow he could like, and Snoop's miserable snobbishness aroused his angry contempt. But the wretched fellow's pain and humiliation touched him.

"Snoop, old scout," he said, in a much more cordial tone than he had ever used to Snoop before, "don't think about that rotten bizney, and don't think that the fellows are thinking of it. They're not."

"I'll make Smithy sorry for that!" muttered Snoop.

"Smithy oughtn't to have said what he did. But Redwing's his pal, and saved his life once," said Harry. "Why don't you let Redwing alone, Snoop? He's a decent chap, and he's done you no harm."

"He's a low cad!"

"He's nothing of the sort!"

"You think that the son of a common sailor ought to be hero?" sneered Snoop. Sidney James was evidently recovering.

Wharton set his lips.

"You know you would be starving, Snoop, if the sailors were not bringing food into the country, and risking their lives to do it," he said. "I wonder you can be base enough to speak like that! I know what the sailormen are doing for us, and I feel like taking my hat off whenever I meet a seaman. Do you think anybody at Greyfriars thinks as you do? If they did, I'd get out of the school. I'd be ashamed to stay in it. If common decency won't keep your silly tongue quiet, Snoop, you ought to remember that you can't afford to taunt a fellow like Redwing. What Smithy said you brought on yourself."

With that the captain of the Remove quitted the study, his face set and angry. He did not want to finish the interview by knocking Snoop across the room, so he thought he had better go.

Snoop cast a glance of hatred after him. Then he looked at Stott, who was grinning faintly.

"You think it's funny!" he said savagely.

"Well, come to think of it, it is a bit thick, you sneering at anybody's father, Sid, old chap," said Stott candidly. "You ought to be more careful."

"Hang you!" muttered Snoop.

"But, I say, is it true about your pater being in the Army?" asked Stott curiously.

"Yes, confound you!"

"Not under his own name, then?" said Stott shrewdly. "They'd have him out to finish serving his sentence if they knew."

"He's under another name," said Snoop sullenly.

"Well, I wish him luck!" said Stott. "I shouldn't have thought it of him. He can't be much like you if he's gone out to fight!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Snoop.

"Have you heard from him since he went?"

"Only a letter, when he was sent to the Front," answered Snoop. "He can't write to me here without danger. He sent a letter through my uncle, who looks after me since—since—"

"Since he came a cropper?"

"Yes."

"And he's really out there!" said Stott. "I've never noticed you looking very anxious."

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, you're in a jolly good temper," yawned Stott. "I suppose you'll let Redwing alone now, as the Bounder's cut up so rusty about it. You don't want him to stick that notice up in the Common-room—what?"

Snoop gave his chum a deadly look.

"I sha'n't let him alone, though, and Skinner won't," said Stott. "We'll

make him sit up! Smithy can't say anything about our fathers."

"It's all through Redwing!" said Snoop, between his teeth. "Hang him! How I hate the fellow!"

"I don't know about hating him. I don't like him. I think he's a rotten outsider! But I don't hate him, if you come to that."

"I do!" snarled Snoop. "And I'll make him suffer for this, too! And look here, Stott, I'm not taking anything from you, whatever I may take from Smithy. If I hear anything more about that from you there'll be trouble."

Stott laughed, and quitted the study. Sidney James Snoop was left alone, in a mood of bitterness and hatred and all uncharitableness. And it was upon the unoffending head of Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff that his bitter wrath was visited.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Soldier!

TOM REDWING'S handsome, sun-burnt face was very cheery as he came swinging along the road from Hawkscliff.

The scholarship junior of Greyfriars had spent a happy afternoon.

Tom Redwing was a member of the Greyfriars Remove now, and most of the Removites liked him. Aristocratic youths like Skinner and Snoop and Stott pronounced him "low"; but Tom did not mind that very much. Lord Mauleverer did not think him "low"; and his lordship was a most fastidious fellow, and certainly as good a judge as Skinner or Snoop. Harry Wharton & Co. liked him, and their taste was at least as good as Skinner's. In fact, it was only the fellows who were a little "shady" in themselves who assumed a right to look down on the sailorman's son. At Greyfriars, as everywhere else, it was a fellow who was uneasy about his own standing who assumed a snobbish contempt for others.

Redwing had found many friends at Greyfriars—and best of all, the Bounder. And that was a distinction in itself; for Smithy never showed regard for anyone in particular, and seldom gave evidence even of the liking he had for the captain of the Remove.

The future seemed bright to Tom Redwing; but, happy as he was at Greyfriars School, he did not forget Hawkscliff, and his old friends there. His old friends were humble enough, but he did not forget them on that account. He had spent that afternoon helping an old fisherman to caulk his boat, and he had enjoyed the work. And a ten-mile walk home afterwards did not dismay the hardy sailor-lad. He looked fresh and cheery as he came swinging along and turned into the footpath through the wood.

The wood was clothed in the green of spring, full of the scents and sounds of the awakening season. Tom Redwing slackened his pace as he trod the grassy path. Most of his life had been spent in the open air, and he was always glad to get out of doors. He was in no hurry to get back to the school, so long as he was in time for calling-over.

He left the path, and plunged through the thick wood, brushing a path through thickets and brambles. Once or twice he paused and looked round, as he thought he heard a footstep under the trees, or a rustle in the thickets. But no one came in sight in the solitary wood.

But suddenly he came to a stop. Through the green foliage about him he caught a glimpse of a khaki cap.

His keen ear had not been mistaken. He was not alone in the wood.

"Hallo! Lost your way?" he called out.

His natural impression was that the khaki cap belonged to some soldier on leave from Wapshot Camp who had missed his way in the deep, thick woods. The cap disappeared from sight in a moment, and there was silence.

Redwing, puzzled, stared at the thicket which evidently hid the soldier from his sight. He was conscious that he was being watched through the foliage, though he could not see the man.

"What the dickens is his game?" murmured Redwing, in wonder.

He moved on, to resume his way, when the bushes parted, and the soldier stepped out in his path. Redwing halted again.

In the subdued light of the wood he scanned the man.

He was a man of about forty, in appearance, in khaki, and he looked very fit and trim. There was a peculiar alertness in his face, as if he was on the watch, that puzzled Tom Redwing.

"Please excuse me," said the man quietly. "I hope I did not startle you?"

"Not at all!" said Tom cheerily. "Anything I can do for you?"

"You belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes," said Tom, with a touch of pride. He was proud of his Greyfriars cap, which evidently the soldier had recognised.

"You belong to the Lower School, of course?"

"Yes; I'm in the Remove—that's the Lower Fourth," answered Tom, surprised by the question.

"Then perhaps you know Snoop—Sidney James Snoop? He is in the Remove."

"He's in my study," said Tom.

"A friend of yours, perhaps?"

Tom hesitated.

"Well, we're study-mates," he said.

"Will you take a message to him for me?"

"Certainly, if you like!"

"I want to see him, and speak to him," said the soldier. "He is a—a—connection of mine, but I do not care to come to the school."

Tom Redwing thought he understood. The snob of the Remove probably did not want to show off a private at the school. Why the soldier should want to see such a relation as Snoop was the only puzzle.

"I'll take him your message, certainly," said Redwing.

"Thank you! Tell him that I am stationed at Wapshot Camp at present home from the Front, and that I am or leave this afternoon. I shall be glad to see him, if he will come and meet me."

"What name shall I give?" asked Tom.

The soldier hesitated.

"Private Smith," he said, at last.

"I'll remember," said Redwing.

"You'd better tell me where he's to come, Mr. Smith."

"Tell him—the same place as when I saw him last."

"Right!"

"And—and—" Private Smith hesitated again, and coloured. "Perhaps I have no right to ask you, but—but I'd like you not to mention this matter to anyone but my—but Master Snoop."

"Just as you like," said Redwing, in wonder. "I shouldn't be likely to mention it, anyway."

"Thank you very much!"

"Is that all?" asked Tom.

"That is all."

The man stepped aside, and Tom was about to walk on, when the soldier spoke again.

"One word more. Tell him I'm home from the Front for only a short time, and

it may be some time before I get leave again. Tell him I was in the fighting at the Somme, and was wounded. But I am well now. Tell him that, and I think he will come."

"I'll tell him, every word," answered Tom, concealing the surprise he could not help feeling.

If Snoop was cad enough not to want to meet a soldier relation who had been through the terrible fighting of the spring offensive, it was strange that the man should waste a thought upon him. But that was not Redwing's business. The soldier stepped back into the thickets, and the Greyfriars junior strode on.

There was something curious, almost furtive, in the manner of Private Smith that perplexed the junior; but he dismissed that from his mind. He was only too glad to be of service, ever so slight, to a man in khaki.

He came out of the wood into Friar-dale Lane through a gap in the palings that bordered the road at this point. A man was leaning on the palings, smoking a cigarette. He moved suddenly as the junior jumped into the road, fixing a swift look upon him.

Redwing glanced at him carelessly.

The man was dressed in tweeds, with a Homburg hat, and carried a cane under his arm. He looked utterly commonplace in every respect, and would never have attracted a second glance; but as he fixed that sudden, searching look on the Greyfriars junior his face was keen, suspicious, shifty, and Redwing could not help guessing that he was there on the watch for somebody or something. At that moment, indeed, the man seemed all watchfulness, like a lynx waiting for its prey.

"Stop!" he called out, as Tom was turning in the direction of Greyfriars.

Redwing turned back.

The man came towards him, his hawkish eyes still scanning the junior's face.

"Master Snoop?" he asked.

Redwing stared.

"That's not my name," he answered.

"You are not Master Snoop, of Greyfriars?"

"No."

"May I ask your name, young gentleman?"

"I don't see that it's any business of yours," replied Tom, not at all pleased by the man's manner. "Still, my name's Redwing."

The man smiled—a smile that was only on the lips. His hawklike eyes were keen and searching as ever.

"You know Master Snoop, perhaps?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"He is out of doors this afternoon, probably?"

"I don't know," answered Tom. "If you want to know anything about Snoop you'd better call at Greyfriars."

With that he turned on his heel and walked away towards the school. The man in the Homburg hat stared after him for a few moments, and then returned to his position at the palings, leaning idly there, and lighting another cigarette.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Cut Direct!

HARRY WHARTON was in the doorway when Tom Redwing came into the School House at Greyfriars.

"Hallo, here you are!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, here I am," said Tom, with a smile.

"I looked in your study for you, to yank you down to cricket practice," said

the captain of the Remove. "You'd cleared off."

"Sorry. I've been over to Hawkscliff for the afternoon," said Tom. "Did you want me?"

"Only for practice," said Harry, smiling. "You've got to stick to cricket, you know—you may be wanted in the Remove Eleven later."

"I'll stick to it like glue, in that case," said Tom. He paused a moment, and added: "Is Snoop at home, do you know?"

"I haven't seen him for some time," answered Harry. "He was in the study when I looked in for you. Ask Bunter—he knows everything."

"Right—I will," said Tom, laughing.

Billy Bunter was in the passage, blinking out of the window through his big spectacles with a disconsolate look. Bunter's postal-order, which he had been expecting for quite a considerable time, had not arrived yet, and between food-rations and shortness of cash the Owl of the Remove was finding life hardly worth living.

He blinked round as Redwing tapped him on one fat shoulder.

"I say, Redwing, old chap," said the Owl affectionately, "do you happen to have five bob about you that you don't want?"

"No."

"You see, there's been a delay in the post again," said Bunter peevishly. "I'm hard up."

"Not really?" said Tom, with a smile.

"Yes. You'd hardly believe it, but there you are," said Bunter seriously. "It's owing to the war, of course. I really think it's about time the war ended, you know. What's the good of rations to a fellow like me? I'm losing flesh."

"You can afford to better than most of us," remarked Tom.

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know! I'm growing thin," said Bunter. "I believe I've lost about six—"

"Stone?"

"No, you ass! Pounds."

"Well, that won't make any difference to you. When you've lost six stone you'll still be the heaviest chap in the Remove," said Redwing, laughing. "Have you seen Snoop, Bunter?"

"He's gone out. I say, I could make a half-crown do," said Billy Bunter. "If you've got half-a-crown you don't want—"

"I haven't any money I don't want, Bunter."

"Well, it doesn't matter whether you want it or not, if you come to that," said Bunter brightly. "Will you lend it to me?"

"Sorry; nothing doing!"

"Look here, Tom, old fellow—"

"Nothing doing."

"That's just like you measly, poverty-stricken scholarship bounders," said Bunter, with a sudden change of tone. "You've never got any money. Blessed if I know what you're doing at a school like this at all!"

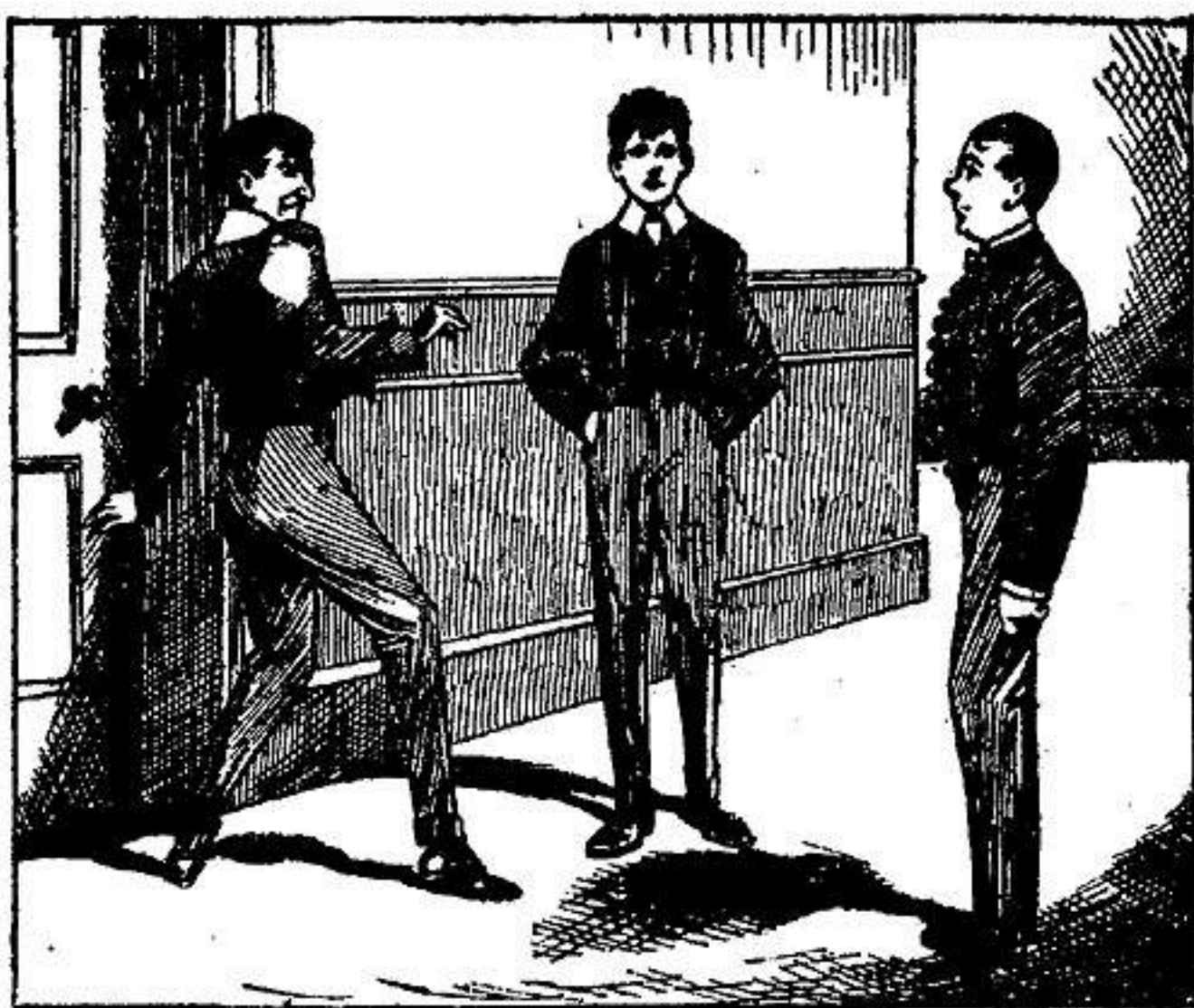
"Perhaps it isn't your business," suggested Redwing.

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, I agree with Snoop," he said aggressively. "I think it was like Smithy's cheek to make Snoopey take his notice down."

"What on earth do you mean, you fat duffer? But never mind; I don't care what you mean!"

Tom Redwing turned away from the fat junior, leaving Bunter grunting discontentedly. Bunter considered it an honour to ask the "outsider" for a loan; but evidently Redwing was not keen on being honoured in that way, and Bunter was annoyed. So instead of being "Tom, old fellow," Redwing had suddenly



Snoop is wanted! (See Chapter 7.)

become a measly boulder, in Bunter's estimation—which did not seem to worry Tom Redwing very much, however.

Redwing went up to his study, but Snoop was not there. He came along the Remove passage again, rather anxious. It was getting towards time for calling-over, and if Snoop was to meet the soldier in the wood there was no time to lose. Little as he could understand the man's desire to meet a relation like Snoop, Redwing did not want him to be disappointed.

"Hallo, looking for something?" asked Mark Linley, meeting him in the passage.

"Yes; Snoop. Seen him?"

Mark paused.

"I wouldn't bother about Snoop, if I were you, Redwing," he said quietly. "He's not worth licking. I had a good deal of the same sort of thing to stand from him; but I let him rip."

"Eh? I'm not looking for Snoop to lick him," said Redwing, in surprise. "I've got a message for him."

"Oh! I thought perhaps—" Mark checked himself. If Redwing had not heard of the incident in Study No. 11, there was no need to tell him. "I think he's downstairs, Redwing. I saw him come in."

"Thanks," said Tom.

He went downstairs again. Several fellows had come in, and Sidney James Snoop was among them. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the hall, chatting with the Bounder, Snoop being at a little distance with Skinner.

Redwing hurried down.

"Snoop!" he called out.

Sidney James Snoop glanced round as the sailorman's son came towards him. His eyes glinted, and his thin lips set.

As Redwing came up Snoop turned on his heel, turning his back on Redwing in the most direct manner, and walked into the Common-room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Snoop!

BOB CHERRY made a movement with his boot as Snoop passed him. He came very near letting Sidney James have it. But he refrained.

Vernon-Smith closed his lips hard, his cheeks flushing. Sidney James Snoop had evidently learned little from the lesson he had had. Why Redwing had come up to him to speak Snoop could not guess; but he had instantly seized the opportunity of inflicting upon him as cutting an insult as possible.

Redwing stood motionless for a moment, taken by surprise, and reddening. He felt the eyes of the juniors upon him, and his colour deepened. Billy Bunter burst into an unmelodious cackling, as if to give point to the unpleasant incident.

After a few moments Tom Redwing followed Snoop into the Common-room.

There was a general movement of the Remove fellows in the same direction. They naturally supposed that Redwing intended to call his study-mate to account.

But Redwing's look was not hostile. He had a message to deliver to Snoop; and as he had promised to deliver it he had to do it. That was all.

Sidney James had gone across to the big window with Skinner, who was grinning. Redwing followed him there.

"Snoop," he said, very quietly.

Snoop stared out of the window, oblivious, and went on speaking to Harold Skinner.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, Snoop," said Redwing, in the same quiet tone. "I've something I must tell you."

Snoop condescended to look at him at last.

"Are you speaking to me?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well, don't! I have to stand you in the study, as Quelch saw fit to shove you into my quarters. Outside the study, you'll oblige me by keeping your distance."

"I—"

"I want to have nothing to do with you," said Snoop. "Don't speak to me. I sha'n't answer you. That's all!"

His manner was as insulting as he could make it, and his words could scarcely have been more insulting. If Tom Redwing had replied with a blow the juniors would not have been surprised; indeed, that was what Snoop

seemed to be asking for. But Redwing remained quiet and calm.

"I don't want to speak to you, Snoop, but—"

"Well, leave me alone."

"I have a message for you."

"Oh, rot!"

"Otherwise I certainly should not speak to you," said Tom Redwing. "I certainly don't want to. But I was asked to give you a message, that is all."

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"Do you want to hear the message?"

"No," answered Snoop, "I don't."

Redwing paused.

"What are you talking to the end for, Redwing?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith impatiently. "Why don't you knock him flying if you can't let him alone?"

"I have a message for him, Smithy."

"I don't want to hear it if you have," said Snoop, with a sneer. "Not that I believe you."

"I think it is important," said Redwing. "It's from a relation of yours—at least, the man said he was a connection of yours."

"Oh, cheer it!"

"Will you hear me?" exclaimed Redwing.

"No, I won't!"

And with that Snoop lounged away, feeling that he had effectually put the outsider in his place for once, at all events.

Redwing stood silent, not knowing what to do. The soldier in the wood had asked him to give Snoop the message, and not to mention it to anyone else. So he could hardly shout it across the Common-room; and, thinking of the man in khaki waiting in the wood, Redwing did not want to leave the message undelivered. Harry Wharton tapped him on the arm.

"Is it really an important message for Snoop, Redwing?" he asked, with a very curious look at the sailorman's son.

"I think so; and there's no time to lose," said Tom, with a troubled look. "It's no business of mine, but I want to tell him. Somebody will be hanging about waiting for him if I don't."

"Well, if Snoop doesn't want to hear you it's his concern," said the Bomber gruffly.

"I—I suppose so."

Redwing was evidently distressed.

The crowd that had gathered in anticipation of trouble broke up, as trouble was not materialising. Snoop was on the other side of the room, chatting cheerily with Skinner, feeling quite elated. He felt that Redwing's curious persistence had enabled him to avenge the scene in Study No. 2 that afternoon. It had really been a most welcome and unlooked-for opportunity.

But Tom Redwing, thinking the matter over, felt that he could not leave the message undelivered. He remembered the troubled, anxious face of the soldier, and he knew that Private Smith would be waiting in the wood for Snoop to come. He felt that he had to put his own feelings aside for the soldier's sake, and he crossed over to Snoop.

"Snoop, I've got to tell you," he said, and all eyes were upon him again at once. "Will you come to the study, where I can speak? It's a private message."

"Oh, shut up!" answered Snoop.

"Very well; then I must tell you here," said Redwing. "As I came back from Hawkscliff I met a soldier in the wood, and he asked me to bring the message to you."

"What rot!" said Snoop, with a sneer. "I don't know any soldiers."

"He said you knew him. He gave his name as Private Smith."

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Snoop started violently.

"What?" he panted.

"Private Smith!" ejaculated the Bomber.

He exchanged a quick glance with Harry Wharton. Both of the juniors knew the assumed name under which Snoop's father had existed after his escape from prison.

Snoop understood now.

His face was pale.

"He asked me to tell you that he was wounded in the fighting on the Somme, but was well now," said Redwing—no longer interrupted by Snoop. "He said he is home from the Front for a short time, and on leave this afternoon, and he would like to meet you in the same place as before. It may be some time before he gets leave again. That is all, Snoop."

With that Tom Redwing turned away.

Snoop stood rooted to the floor.

The message was from his father; he knew that now. It had not crossed his mind for a moment till Redwing mentioned the soldier's name. He had supposed Private Smith to be in Flanders.

But for his own insolent folly he would have heard the message in the privacy of his own study. He had forced Redwing to deliver it in the presence of a crowd.

After what had been said in his study that afternoon, he knew that the juniors could be in no doubt as to who Private Smith was. The Bomber and the Famous Five knew already, and now the others would guess. And Private Smith, otherwise Mr. Snoop, was wanted by the police!

Snoop's head was almost swimming.

He had his own insolence to thank for this. Tom Redwing was probably the only fellow in the room who did not know that the message came from Snoop's father, an escaped convict!

"You ass, Snoop!" murmured Skinner, and he moved away.

Snoop, hardly daring to look at the faces around him, moved towards the door. There was compassion in the glances cast after him. The soldier's desire to see his son was natural enough, though it was doubtful if that desire was reciprocated on Snoop's side. But to have dealings with an escaped convict was a risky business. Snoop's own folly had made it risky in bringing the matter out in public in this way.

Redwing started as he noted Snoop's face in passing. Snoop fixed a look on him of bitter hatred and malice.

"You had to tell me before all the fellows, you cad!" muttered Snoop huskily.

"You forced me to," said Redwing. "I had to give you the message. I promised the soldier."

"Hang you!"

Snoop left the Common-room. Tom Redwing looked round at Wharton and the Bomber in wonder.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "I don't understand this. What's Snoop so upset about? The message seems harmless enough to me."

"You don't understand," said Wharton. "Snoop's father was—was—he had bad luck, and—and was sentenced to imprisonment. He escaped from prison, and managed to get into the Army under the name of Smith."

"Oh!" exclaimed Redwing.

"Goodness knows what will happen now!" said Harry uneasily. "If there's any talk it may get out, and the poor chap will be arrested. And now a dozen fellows know—"

"Good heavens!" muttered Redwing, in dismay. "But—but I couldn't help it. You saw that Snoop forced me to speak out here, if I was to give him the message at all."

"Yes, it's Snoop's fault."

"But—but is all that certain?" asked Redwing. "The man in the wood did not look like a criminal; he looked a thoroughly decent man."

"He's changed since he went into the Army, then," said the Bomber.

"He couldn't have been all bad, or he wouldn't have wanted to go and fight the Germans, Smithy."

The Bomber nodded.

"That's so. He's a good deal better than his son, anyway. Bet you ten to one that Snoop doesn't go and see him."

"Surely he will," exclaimed Redwing—"his father!"

"It might get him into trouble. Mr. Snoop is wanted by the bobbies, and a chap who has dealings with an escaped convict is rather in danger from the law."

"You mean to say the chap is still being hunted for?" exclaimed Redwing.

Back into his mind came the recollection of the hawk-eyed man in the Hornburg hat.

"He must be," said Vernon-Smith. "I don't suppose they know he's in the Army. He would be turned out fast enough if they knew what he was. But if they got on his track he would be arrested, and sent back to finish his sentence—years to run yet."

"If—if he was seen, I suppose he would be known—"

"Of course, they have photographs and things. It would be a feather in the cap of any detective who bagged him."

"Oh," muttered Tom, "a detective! Of course, he was a detective, and he was after—"

"Eh? What are you talking about?" exclaimed the Bomber, in astonishment.

"I—I must see Snoop!" said Tom hastily.

And he fairly ran out of the Common-room, leaving Wharton and the Bomber in blank astonishment.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP had gone up to his study. He wanted to be alone just then. His brain was in a whirl.

His father!

Even in Snoop's hard heart there was some trace of natural affection. The disgrace his father had brought upon him was terrible, and he had resented it bitterly and savagely. When the unhappy man, newly escaped from prison, had lurked about Greyfriars in the hope of getting help from his son, Snoop had been too terrified even to see him.

It was Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith who had aided the wretched man, and given him his chance to redeem the past by serving his country—making it possible for him to carry out his design of enlisting in the Army. Snoop had never forgiven his father; but the thought of him, exposed to wounds and death and hardship, had sometimes come into his mind, and softened his heart towards the hapless man. But now—

The man was mad to come near Greyfriars again, he told himself. He had fought for his country. He was a soldier. But in the eyes of the law what was he? An escaped convict, to be dragged back to life-in-death as soon as he was found. What did he want there?

He wanted to see his son. It was natural enough. Out on the plains of Flanders, in daily, hourly peril, the unhappy man's thoughts had turned to his son. When his short leave was over he would be going back—to what? Surely it was little enough to ask, to see his son, upon whom his eyes might never rest again in this life!

But Snoop was in no mood of tenderness. He was not without feeling for his father; but he was thinking of himself. Suppose the man were seen—recognised—arrested? All the horrible old story would be dragged up again, and made the talk of the school—a nine days' wonder. Why could not the man keep away?

How could he go and see him? He would have been glad enough to see him, if it came to that; but in a safe place. Now, if he even left the school, the Remove fellows would know why he was going. An incautious word might put the police on the track of his father, and incautious words were certain to be uttered. Billy Bunter had been in the Common-room. He knew. A dozen other fellows knew. Indeed, it was possible that some self-righteous person might even think it his duty to send information to the police. Snoop, with a sickening sense of misery, realised that he might himself have acted in such a way—if Private Smith had been somebody else's father.

Suppose—suppose a prefect heard it, or a master—suppose that even now a telephone message was being sent to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield—suppose—The cowardly fellow was willing to suppose anything in his miserable fear.

The study door opened, and Tom Redwing came in, and Snoop started to his feet, with a snarl almost like a wild animal.

"Let me alone!" he shouted. "Can't you keep away now? Can't you give me a rest, you confounded cad?"

Without heeding his savage words Tom Redwing came in, and closed the study door behind him. Snoop stood watching him, with clenched fists and glittering eyes. Never had he hated the sailor-man's son so much as at that moment.

"Don't be a fool, Snoop," said Redwing quietly. "I've just been told that the man I saw in the wood is your father."

"You knew it, you rotter!"

"I did not know it, Snoop. You forget that I'm a new fellow here. And I've never even heard your father spoken of. But, even if I'd known, I should have had to give you his message. There isn't much time for you to go and meet him before calling-over."

"That's my business!"

"It's not mine, certainly!" said Tom Redwing. "But now that I know who the man is, there's something else I must tell you. I'm afraid he's in danger."

Snoop's lips trembled.

"What do you mean?" he muttered huskily. "He's always in danger! It's frightfully risky of him to come here! Not that you care!"

"I do care," said Redwing. "The man's a soldier now, whatever he has been, and that's enough for me. I—I suppose he must have been a bad man, Snoop; but, if it's any comfort to you, he has certainly altered. I saw him, and spoke to him, and he looked to me a man that any fellow might be proud of for his father. He has made good in the Army. But that isn't what I was going to say. As I came out of the wood I was stopped by a man who was hanging about there—a fellow with eyes like a rat, who seemed to be watching for something—"

Snoop's face grew white.

"He asked me whether I was Master Snoop, and when I told him I wasn't, he asked me if Snoop was out of doors this afternoon," said Tom. "He seemed suspicious and watchful. I suppose the police know that your father had a son here?"

"Of course!"

"Then they might suspect that, sooner or later, he might try to get into communication with you?"

"They're sure to!"

"That's what I feared. I don't want to alarm you, Snoop, but from that man asking me questions about you it looks to me as if—"

Snoop shuddered.

"You think he belongs to the police?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Either a detective or a plain-clothes policeman," said Redwing. "That is what he looked like. Anyway, he was interested in you, and seemed to suspect that you might have been in the wood this afternoon. He certainly thought I was you when I came out into the lane. As it appears to me, it looks as if Mr. Snoop has been seen and recognised, and is known to be in this neighbourhood, and watch is being kept to collar him when he tries to see you. Of course, I may be wrong."

"You're not wrong!" muttered Snoop hoarsely. "It's plain enough. As I'm here, it's pretty certain they know he may come around some time, and they'd send his photograph to all the police-stations in this neighbourhood. They're certain to have done it. Some sneaking detective has spotted him, and wants to bag the reward for nailing him."

"Well, I suppose it's the man's duty to nail him, if he's a detective," said Redwing. "But, whatever he may have done once, he's fought at the Front since then, and I wouldn't be a party to hurting him in any way. He ought to be warned that he's in danger, Snoop."

Snoop shivered.

"I—I can't go!" he muttered defensively. "I—I might be seen and questioned. It would make it worse for him."

Redwing nodded quietly. He could see that Snoop was too scared to keep the appointment, that he would not have gone even if he had not been told about the supposed detective. About Snoop Tom did not care two pins; but he was concerned for the unhappy man lurking in the wood.

As the matter stood, Snoop was right. If there was a detective watching the wood, it would endanger the soldier for Snoop to go out and meet him. The man in the Homburg hat was evidently suspecting something of the kind.

"You'd better not go, I think," said Tom, after a pause.

"You—you think so?" muttered Snoop, relieved. He was glad to find that his own decision, caused by his cowardly fears, had good reason as well. For the moment he seemed to have forgotten his hatred of Redwing. More weighty matters were filling his mind.

"I think so. But your father must be told. He will be waiting for you. You could get another fellow to go instead of you, to tell him why you can't come, and warn him to get clear as quickly as possible."

"I—I can't!"

"One of your friends would do that for you."

Snoop burst into a shrill, sardonic laugh.

"Skinner, or Stott, or Bunter?" he said, with bitter accent. "I'd like to ask them to run the risk—I don't think!"

"Someone ought to go, Snoop," said Redwing quietly. "If that man in the lane was a detective, as I believe, your father is in danger. He may come out of the wood and run right into his arms."

"I tell you nobody will go!" hissed Snoop. "Don't you understand that my father's—a—?" The word stuck on his tongue. "He's hunted by the police. A fellow helping him might be imprisoned."

"He's a soldier, and he's been through the fighting on the Somme."

"That doesn't alter it."

"I—I suppose it doesn't, according to

law," said Tom, after a pause. "But it alters it to me, at least. Would you like me to go, Snoop?"

Snoop stared at him.

"You!"

"I will go, if you like, to save him from danger," said Tom Redwing, very quietly, but very firmly. "I shall have to miss call-over, but that doesn't matter."

"You—you'd go!" muttered Snoop. "Don't be a fool! Do you think I believe you? You might be arrested, too, if you were found with him!"

"I hardly think that."

"You might be sacked from Greyfriars, anyway. In fact, you certainly would be."

Redwing compressed his lips. He knew that as well as Snoop. But the thought of the anxious, troubled face in the lonely wood haunted him.

"I'll take the chance, Snoop," he said. "If there's nobody else you'd like to ask to go, I'll go."

"You—you mean it?" muttered Snoop, convinced at last.

"Certainly!"

"I—I say, you're a good chap, Redwing!" muttered Snoop remorsefully. "I—I haven't treated you well. I—I—"

"Never mind that," said Tom Redwing quietly. "Tell me where it was you met him last time, Snoop—that's the place he'll be waiting in—and I'll go, and chance calling-over."

"The old spinney, down Friarsdale Lane," said Snoop. "You know it?"

"Yes, I know it well. I'll get off there, then."

"I—I'll come down to the gates with you," muttered Snoop.

They left the study together.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Detective!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry softly.

He could not help being surprised.

Tom Redwing and Snoop left the School House together, and Bob's eyes followed them in astonishment.

"The lion and the lamb ever again," said Frank Nugent, with a smile.

"Blessed if I expected to see them friendly!" said Bob. "Redwing must be an awfully forgiving chap!"

"Silly ass, I call him!" growled Vernon-Smith.

The Bouncer followed the two juniors into the quadrangle. Tom Redwing and Snoop were going down to the gates, both silent. Snoop felt called upon to show some gratitude, or at least acknowledgment, to the fellow who was treating him so generously; but it made him awkward and ill at ease.

His feelings towards Redwing had not changed, though his dislike was, as it were, in abeyance for the time being.

Before the juniors reached the gates a man came in, and, after a glance about him, started up the path towards the School House.

Tom Redwing started as his eyes fell upon the cold, hard face, the sharp eyes, and the Homburg hat.

It was the man who had been leaning on the palings in the lane, on the border of the wood.

"This way, Snoop!" muttered Tom quickly.

He changed his direction, linking his arm in Snoop's, so that they placed one of the big elms between them and the man who had entered.

Snoop looked at him in surprise.

"What—?" he began.

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"That's the man I told you of," said Tom.

"Oh!" said Snoop, with a shiver.

He glanced after the man as he went striding, with quick, firm steps, towards the House. There was determination expressed, even in the set of the man's shoulders.

"That—that's the—the detective!" muttered Snoop.

"I fear he is."

"What can he have come here for?"

"Buck up, Snoop! I'm afraid it's to see you," said Tom quietly. "He may be after information about your father."

"Oh!" muttered Snoop.

"It's necessary for you to be within gates, you see," said Redwing. "If it's as I suppose, you may be called in to see him. Lucky you were not out of gates. You must not let out anything about your father."

"N-no. Of—of course not."

"You'll be careful of that. Perhaps it's just as well that the man's here, as I can get a word to your father while he's off the scene. Ta-ta!"

Tom Redwing left Snoop under the elms, and hurried out of gates. The man in the Hornburg hat had disappeared into the House by that time. Redwing did not want to catch his eye again, especially in company with Snoop, and in the act of going out. He was sure that his suspicions of the man were well founded, and he was sure that the man was as keen as a razor.

Snoop wandered aimlessly back towards the House.

He was glad, and intensely relieved that Redwing had saved him from the dangerous business of going to meet his father. But he was racked with uneasiness and anxiety. Some of the anxiety, doubtless, was for his unfortunate father; but more was for himself.

He thought of being called before the Head, to be questioned by a detective, with terror. His face was so pale and wretched that more than one Remove fellow glanced at him with compassion.

Harry Wharton stopped to speak to him as he came into the House.

"Buck up, Snoop!" said the captain of the Remove. "You'll get everybody noticing you if you don't look a bit more cheerful!"

"I'm not feeling cheerful!" muttered Snoop.

"You're not going out?" asked Harry.

"Redwing's gone for me."

"Oh!"

"It—it wasn't safe for me to go!" Snoop gave a glance round, and sunk his voice to a whisper. "I—I say, Wharton, did you see that man who came in?"

"Yes; Trotter's taken him to the Head's study," answered Harry.

"I believe he's a detective, after my father."

Wharton started.

"Snoop!"

"Redwing thinks so. He—he's met him out of doors this afternoon—watching." Snoop's voice trembled. "Redwing's gone to warn my pater. He—he's a good chap!"

"He must be, to do that for you, after—" Wharton paused; there was no need to "rub it in." "Dash it all, this is pretty serious! If you hadn't made Redwing speak out before the whole Common-room it wouldn't have mattered. But now, if that man asks questions, somebody will be sure to chatter."

Snoop suppressed a groan.

"That's what I'm afraid of. I—I say, Wharton, we—we've never been friends, but—but you ought to stand by me in this. My—my father's been through the

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fighting—he's done his bit, and—and

"I'd do anything for him," said Harry, quietly and sincerely. "If there is anything I can do to help, Snoop—"

"If—if that prying beast asks questions, the—the fellows ought not to tell him anything," muttered Snoop. "I—I know my father's wanted, as they call it; it's horrible enough. But it wasn't my fault he went to the bad, was it?"

"Of course not!"

"And—and he's been wounded on the Somme, too; that sets off other things, I think. What's the good of sending a man back to prison, and keeping him out of the firing-line? The fellows mayn't listen to me, Wharton; but you—you're captain of the Form—you tell them to keep dark what they know. I—I couldn't



stand the disgrace if he were arrested here!" said Snoop, with trembling lips.

Wharton made an involuntary movement of repulsion; it was still of himself that Sidney Snoop was thinking.

But he nodded assent. He was concerned for the soldier, who had at least fought for his country and striven to make up for his shadowed past. The man from the Somme should not suffer if Wharton could help it.

"I'll tell the fellows," said Harry.

"Hallo, I think you're wanted, Snoop!"

Trotter, the House-page, came up.

"Master Snoop!"

"Well?" muttered Snoop.

The page gave a curious look at his white, harassed face.

"The 'Ead wants you in his study, sir!" said Trotter. "Mr. Clyne wants to see you."

"Very well!"

"Buck up, Snoop!" said Harry, as Trotter went away. "Don't let the man see you looking so seedy; he'll guess something from it. And rely on me to see that the chaps don't jaw, if he questions them."

"Thanks!" mumbled Snoop.

He tried to pull himself together as

he made his way to the Head's study. But the effort was not very successful.

There was fear in his heart, and his nerves were in a twitter. He feared the keen, searching eyes of the detective. It was certain now that the man must be what Tom Redwing suspected, otherwise why did he want to see Snoop? Snoop had never heard the name of Clyne before.

Outside the Head's study Snoop paused, his knees knocking together, more inclined to bolt and hide himself in some obscure corner than to face the eyes of Mr. Clyne.

His hand trembled as he knocked at the door at last.

"Come in!" came the Head's deep voice.

Snoop entered the study.

Dr. Locke's face was very grave. The man with the hawkish eyes was seated there, the Hornburg hat on a chair near him. His sharp eyes rested on Snoop as the junior came in, and though Snoop did not meet them, he could feel their penetrating glance.

He stood before the Head, trying to calm his twitching nerves.

"My dear Snoop," said the Head, very kindly, "I have sent for you because this gentleman, Mr. Clyne, wishes to ask you a question. I should not have allowed such a question to be put to you, but it appears that Mr. Clyne has a legal right to act as he is doing, and I have no power to prevent him. Mr. Clyne is a detective."

"Yes, sir," muttered Snoop, with palsied lips.

"You may speak, Mr. Clyne," said the Head drily.

Mr. Clyne, who did not seem in the least disturbed by the Head's evident disapproval, spoke.

"Don't be afraid, my boy! Look at me!"

Snoop looked at him, but did not meet the detective's eyes. He tried to, but he could not. Snoop was far easier for Mr. Clyne to deal with than Wharton or Bob Cherry would have been in his place.

"I am sorry that my duty forces upon me a somewhat disagreeable task, Master Snoop!" continued the detective. "But I have to ask you a question: Have you seen your father during the past few days?"

Snoop shivered.

"I fear that you must answer this gentleman, Snoop," said the Head gently. "He has a right to ask the question."

"I have not seen him, sir," gasped Snoop.

"You were aware that he had escaped from prison a considerable time ago, Master Snoop?"

"I—I heard so."

"You are aware that he approached this neighbourhood on that occasion?"

"I—I— Yes."

"Did you see him at that time?"

The Head broke in.

"You have no right, Mr. Clyne, to ask Snoop that question. Snoop, you are at liberty to keep silent, if you choose."

Mr. Clyne gave the Head of Greyfriars a somewhat unpleasant look. Snoop breathed more freely. His father had been a criminal, but Snoop was not, and his headmaster was ready to defend him, if need were.

"I will not repeat that question," said Mr. Clyne. "I will ask another. Have you any reason to believe, Snoop, that your father has found concealment from the police by entering the Army?"

Snoop's tongue clove to his teeth.

That question revealed how much the detective knew.

"Snoop is not obliged to answer that

question," said the Head sharply. "This may be your duty, Mr. Clyne, but to call upon a son to speak against his father is cruel!"

Mr. Clyne set his lips.

"A man in my profession, sir, is often forced to be harsh to serve the ends of justice," he said. "And a criminal hiding himself in the ranks of his Majesty's Army is a serious matter. Master Snoop, a man in soldier's uniform has been seen in this vicinity who has been recognised as your father, by a policeman who had a photograph of your father in his possession. The constable was not absolutely certain, it is true; but the soldier took to flight when he approached him, and this is presumptive evidence. I came down as soon as I received word, as the case is in my hands. My boy, I have no desire to be hard; but you can see, I suppose, what it is my duty to do. A man wanted by justice cannot be allowed to hide in the Army and dishonour the King's uniform—"

Snoop broke out fiercely:

"It's nothing of the kind! He never thought of such a thing. He went to fight the Germans; he thought of nothing else. He's been wounded on the Somme—"

The junior's voice broke.

Mr. Clyne's eyes glittered as he rose. He took his hat.

"Good-afternoon, Dr. Locke! I think my business here is finished."

He left the study.

Snoop, in his agitation, did not perceive for the moment that the detective had skilfully gained his point, extracting from Snoop the admission that his father was in khaki. But as the detective left the study the consciousness of it rushed upon him, and he burst into tears.

The Head gave him a very compassionate look.

"My poor boy, I would have prevented this if I could," he said. "I did not approve of such questioning. You may go, Snoop. And I advise you to keep within the school gates for some days."

Snoop left the study. He half expected to find the detective "nosing" about the school, asking questions. But Mr. Clyne had gone down to the gates, and left Greyfriars just before Gosling came out of his lodge to lock up.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Rendezvous!

"WHITHER bound?"

Tom Redwing started a little.

Vernon-Smith was outside the gates when Redwing came out, evidently waiting for him.

"I—I can't stop now, Smithy," said Tom hurriedly.

"Right-ho! I'll come along."

Redwing, anxious to get out of sight of the school while the suspected detective was withing doors, hurried down the lane, the Bounder keeping pace with him.

A slight smile lurked on Vernon-Smith's face. He was well aware that for once his chum did not want his company.

"Whither bound, old scout?" he repeated, when a quarter of a mile had been covered.

Tom Redwing stopped, flushing as he faced the Bounder.

"The fact is, Smithy, I—I—"

"You'd rather not tell me?" grinned the Bounder.

"I think it would be better not, old chap."

"No need," said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"I know! Hasn't Snoop dished you into going to meet his father instead of him?"

"I offered," said Redwing quietly.

It was evidently useless to think of



Private Smith! (See Chapter 8.)

concealing the matter from the Bounder. Smithy had drawn his own deductions—which, indeed, were easy enough to draw.

"More duffer you!" snapped the Bounder. "What's Snoop to you—a sneaking cad and an enemy!"

"Never mind that, Smith. Besides, it isn't so much Snoop I want to help as the soldier chap. You helped him once, I know now."

The Bounder nodded.

"I'd help him again," he said. "If he was only hiding from the police in khaki, I'd hand him over fast enough; but he's genuine—I'm sure of that. He's a real soldier, and he's been through the fighting on the Somme. You are going to see him now?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

Tom Redwing explained.

"I'll come with you, then," said the Bounder. "I was with Snoop when he met his pater there that time, and I know the exact spot."

"I'll be glad if you come, Smithy," said Tom Redwing simply. "But there's a good bit of risk. I'm pretty certain there's a detective on the scent."

And he quietly explained his suspicions of the man in the Homburg hat.

The man who came in just before you went out?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"That's the man."

The Bounder whistled.

"It's a serious bizney, then," he said. "But it makes it all the more important to warn Private Smith. Come on!"

Tom Redwing made no further demur, and the two juniors hurried on together. As a matter of fact, the Bounder welcomed the adventure. There was a lawless strain in his nature. There was something that appealed to him in the idea of contesting with the detective and outwitting him. That did not appeal to Tom Redwing at all. The sailorman's son was troubled and thoughtful at the bare idea of disregarding the law, and he was very doubtful about whether the law would sanction what he was now doing. But he felt that he was doing right in standing by the man who had fought on the Somme.

The two juniors reached the old spinney, where the dusk was thickening

among the trees. The Bounder led the way into the heart of the spinney, and they halted as there was a rustle in advance.

Vernon-Smith whistled.

"Private Smith!" he called out.

A khaki cap showed through the thickets.

"All serene!" called out Tom Redwing. "You know me."

The soldier came in sight, his eyes scanning the two Remove fellows.

"Vernon-Smith!" he exclaimed.

"You remember me?" smiled the Bounder.

"Yes. I have kept my word to you," said the soldier. "I have not forgotten, either, what you did for me. But why are you here? Where is—"

"Redwing knows," said the Bounder. "We've come instead of Snoop. It—it wasn't safe for him to come—on your account, I mean," added the Bounder quickly.

"It might have got you into danger," said Tom Redwing.

Both the juniors were anxious not to let the man in khaki become aware that his son was thinking chiefly of his own personal safety. They knew it well enough, but they did not want Snoop's father to know it.

The soldier's bronzed face reddened a little.

The Bounder looked at him with interest. Was this sturdy, well-set-up man the Mr. Snoop he had seen formerly, before his misfortune? He remembered the sleek City man who had sometimes visited Sidney Snoop at Greyfriars. The features were the same, the build was the same. On the second glance he would have recognised Private Smith as Mr. Snoop. But the difference, nevertheless, was amazing. The Army had made a brave and sturdy man of the sleek City company-promoter.

"Then—then Sidney is not coming?" muttered the soldier at last, and his voice had a tone of sadness in it that went to Redwing's heart.

He could imagine how the man had thought of his boy at school during the long night-watches in Flanders, and had looked forward to seeing him, somehow,

if he lived to return. It was a bitter disappointment.

Redwing hurriedly explained his suspicions of the detective. The soldier's face set grimly as he listened.

"And I've come back for this!" the juniors heard him mutter.

"It's all serene, if you get back to camp now," said Redwing eagerly. "You'll be among thousands of others there, and the man can't know that you are at any special camp. He couldn't come to Wapshot and look over a couple of thousand men to find you."

The soldier gave him an odd look. "You're very kind to want to help me," he said. "I—I suppose you know —" He paused. "I suppose you know what happened to me—that I was in prison?"

"I know." "And yet you are helping me? I was guilty. I deserved my sentence. It was only just. I—I can see that, now that I have not led a man's life," said the soldier gloomily. "But they shall not have me again. It will not be safe for any man to lay his hand on my shoulder and call me his prisoner!" He was speaking rather to himself than to the schoolboys. "Whatever I was, I am King George's soldier now, and no man shall—" He broke off. "But I must see my son! I must see him!"

Redwing looked dismayed. "It isn't safe, he said. "I am sure that man is on the watch, and if you did anything reckless it would make matters worse."

"I cannot go without seeing my son!" said the man from the Somme. "I may never have an opportunity of seeing the lad again! A German bullet may leave him fatherless any minute of the day or night. I must see him! I must!"

Redwing exchanged a glance with the Bounder, full of trouble.

Well enough he could understand the soldier's feelings, and could sympathise with them. But the danger was terrible.

"You have been very kind," said Private Smith. "I cannot ask you to do anything further. You have run risks as it is. You had better leave me now."

"But what are you going to do?" faltered Redwing. "The man I suspect is at the school this very minute!"

"I don't know; but I must see my boy!" said the soldier, obstinately and moodily. "I tell you he is the only link I have with my country, the only one who cares whether I am knocked over in the next push. I must see him! But I shall manage it somehow."

"If you are determined to see him you must let me help you," said Tom Redwing. "There will be less risk."

"Less for me, but more for you."

"Never mind that," said Tom. "I will help you. Can you remain away from camp—"

"Until ten o'clock," said the soldier.

Redwing thought hard.

"Snoop could get out of the school during the evening, but he could not come so far as this," he said. "If you will not give up the idea, you had better be somewhere near Greyfriars after dark—say, in the fir-wood. Do you know it?"

"Quite well."

"You could lie low there, and some time before nine I will see that Snoop comes to you," said Redwing.

"God bless you!" said the soldier.

"You will be there?"

"Yes."

"We'll see that you do not miss seeing your son, sir," said the Bounder.

"Thank you from my heart!"

And with that the two juniors left the spinney, the man in khaki remaining in the dusky shade. Tom Redwing's face

was sorely troubled as he tramped back to Greyfriars with the Bounder.

"It's risky, Smithy," he said at last.

"For us, do you mean?"

"No; for the soldier chap."

"Snoop isn't worth it!" said the Bounder, with a curl of the lip. "I suppose his father doesn't see him as we do, though. It's natural. Ten to one, Redwing, Snoop won't take the risk of coming out after dark to see him."

Redwing compressed his lips.

"He must, Smithy!"

"We shall have to make him, then."

"He can't be such a rotter. He will come, and he will be glad to come," said Tom. But he did not speak very assuredly.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. They did not speak again as they hurried on to Greyfriars through the spring dusk.

The gates had long been locked when they reached the school. But they had expected that, and they passed quietly along the wall, to climb it and drop quietly in. From the darkness of the wall, where the trees within thickly shadowed it, a figure stepped.

"Stop!" said a quiet voice.

It was the man in the Homburg hat.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

To Go, or Not to Go?

VERNON-SMITH pressed Tom Redwing's arm quickly. It was a signal to him to be cautious; but it was not needed. Tom's face expressed nothing as the detective scanned him in the dusk.

"Hallo!" said Vernon-Smith coolly. "Who may you be, and what is this jack-in-the-box trick for?"

The detective did not reply, but a flash-lamp in his hand gleamed out, and the light shone on the faces of the juniors.

He gave a grunt, which the juniors guessed to express disappointment, and shut off the light at once.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I have seen you before—one of you," said Mr. Clyne. "Are you not the lad I met in the lane this afternoon?"

"Yes," answered Tom.

"You are late out of school, it appears?"

"Such things sometimes occur," remarked the Bounder blandly. "It means lines for a chap; and the longer he stops chatting with a man who jumps out like a jack-in-the-box the more lines it means."

The detective smiled slightly.

"Do you want anything with us?" asked Vernon-Smith. "If not, you may as well shift aside and let us get in. We've missed call-over already, I'm afraid."

Mr. Clyne stepped aside at once.

"Perhaps you'd give us a bunk over the wall, sir?" suggested the Bounder.

"We can't go in at the gates—they're locked—and there's a bare chance of squeezing into Hall before call-over."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Clyne.

He kindly assisted the two juniors up the wall. Tom Redwing dropped down inside. The Bounder paused a moment to glance down at the man in the road.

"Thanks!" he said. "You're waiting there for somebody, I suppose?"

"Not at all!" answered Mr. Clyne smoothly. "I had stopped to light my pipe, when you rather startled me by coming up so quietly."

"Oh, that's all, is it?"

"That is all."

"Right! But if you happen to be in the betting line of business, and you've got an appointment with some gay dog in this place, the best thing you can do is to clear off," said Vernon-Smith.

"We don't like that kind of thing here." Mr. Clyne burst into a laugh.

"I am not a bookmaker, I assure you," he said. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said the Bounder carelessly.

He dropped down inside the wall. Heavy footsteps were heard outside as the man in the Homburg hat tramped away.

The Bounder smiled cynically.

"You hear him, Redwing?" he whispered.

"Yes; he's going."

"Loudly, to come back quietly," smiled the Bounder. "He's keeping watch."

"You knew he wasn't a bookmaker, Smithy."

"But I wanted to make him think I suspected that he was," answered Vernon-Smith coolly. "We don't want him to suspect we're mixed up with the Snoop bizney, my pippin. Come on!"

They hurried across the quadrangle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry met them as they came into the House.

"You've missed call-over, you two!"

"The frownfulness of the esteemed Quelch was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Where on earth have you been?" inquired Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, what's up?" asked Billy Bunter inquisitively. "What have you missed call-over for? Quelch was waxy. Where have you been, Smithy?"

"Flanders!" answered the Bounder gravely.

"Eh?"

"To see the Kaiser, you know!"

And the Bounder walked on with Redwing, leaving Billy Bunter blinking in astonishment after him.

"I suppose the ass means that he's not going to tell me where he's been," said Bunter, after some thought.

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton met the two juniors in the passage.

"You're to go in to Quelch," he said.

"Ho left word with me. Better be rather careful how you answer him, under the circumstances."

"You bet!" grinned the Bounder.

The two delinquents presented themselves in Mr. Quelch's study. Fortunately, the Remove-master did not question them very closely. He was satisfied with their explanation that they had been down to the spinney, and had hurried back too late for calling-over; and he gave them fifty lines each and dismissed them.

They did not mind the lines very much.

Redwing went to his study, where he found Snoop and Stott. The latter was beginning his preparation; but Snoop was "mooching" restlessly about the study. Stott was grumbling at him, much put out by his study-mate's restlessness.

"For goodness' sake, Snoop, sit down!" he said tartly, as Tom Redwing opened the door. "How's a fellow to work with you buzzing about like a dashed wasp? What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, rats!" snarled Snoop. "Shut up!"

"Well, you're in a sweet temper, I must say! Aren't you going to do any prep?"

"Hang prep!"

"You'll have a row with Quelch in the morning."

"Hang Quelch!"

"I'd like to hear you say that to Quelch himself!" grinned Stott. "But if you won't work, let another chap work. Can't you keep still?"

"Go and eat ooke!"

Tom Redwing came in, and Snoop

turned towards him eagerly. Stott watched him with a sneer.

"Come along, Snoop," said Redwing, with a glance at Stott. They could not speak before that youth.

"Yes, all right."

"You're getting mighty thick with Redwing all of a sudden," said Stott sarcastically. "Are you afraid of Smithy putting up his notice in the Common-room, Snoopey?"

Without replying, Snoop followed Tom Redwing into the passage, and drew the door shut after him. There were several fellows in the passage, among them Billy Bunter. Harry Wharton came towards them. The captain of the Remove was well aware that Redwing had something to tell Snoop from his father.

"Come along to my study, you fellows," he said.

Snoop and Redwing followed him into No. 1. Frank Nugent was in Bob Cherry's study just then, and No. 1 was unoccupied.

The Bounder followed them in, Snoop eyeing him as he did so.

"All serene, Snoopey!" said Vernon-Smith, with a laugh. "I'm in this game. I went with Redwing to meet your—"

"Hush!"

"It doesn't matter about Wharton hearing," said the Bounder. "He's true blue."

"I thought Redwing had something to tell Snoop," said Harry. "I'll leave you here, if you have."

"I have," said Tom.

"Right-ho, then!"

"Hold on," said the Bounder. "You'd better stay, Wharton. We may want your help, and I'm sure you won't refuse it—what?"

"That's for Snoop to say," answered Wharton. "I'm willing to help, if there's anything to be done."

"I don't see that there's anything to be done," said Snoop nervously. "I don't mind Wharton hearing; he knows all about it. You—you told my father—you saw him, Redwing?"

"Yea."

"Has he cleared off?"

"No."

Snoop's face fell.

"He—he hasn't?"

"No; he wants to see you, Snoop."

The wretched junior clenched his hands almost convulsively.

"I—I can't see him," he whispered shrilly. "I can't! He's got to get away from Greyfriars at once. That man may nab him any minute. I know now that he's after him; he's told me so."

"I feared so," said Tom.

"His name's Clyne, and he's a detective," said Snoop bitterly. "He got out of me that my father had joined the Army—diddled me into letting it out, the beast! A bobby has seen my father in uniform about here, and this man has come down to hunt him out. And he screwed it out of me that the pater had gone into khaki—just screwed it out, the cunning beast! That was what he wanted. Now he knows my father is a soldier, and he knows he's the man the policeman saw. He will keep watch—"

"He's keeping watch," said Tom Redwing quietly.

"You've seen him?"

"Yes."

"He's sticking outside the school, watching the road," said the Bounder, with a shrug. "He doesn't know we know who he is, though. You can get out another way, and he can go on watching the road."

"I—I can't!" muttered Snoop. "He's as keen as a razor, I tell you. He will collar me very likely." He shivered.

"Your father's going to wait for you in the fir-wood, till nine," said Redwing.

"I can't go!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Snoop!

THERE was silence in Study No. 1. Snoop did not meet the eyes of his companions; he did not care to read there the contempt they could not help feeling for him.

The wretched fellow was in a state of twittering nerves. The dread of a new disgrace was strong upon him; and the fear of being called to account by the hawk-eyed detective.

"Snoop," said Harry Wharton, at last, "pull yourself together! If your father's waiting for you, you must go."

"I can't!"

"You can't keep him waiting."

"He oughtn't to come here," said Snoop shrilly. "What does he want to see me for? There's nothing for him to see me about, is there?"

Wharton suppressed an exclamation.

"Nothin' at all," said the Bounder, with grim irony. "Why on earth should he want to see you, Snoop? Nothin' in you for any man to want to see."

"Oh, don't be a sarcastic beast now, Smithy!" muttered Snoop. "I can't stand it! I tell you, it's dangerous for my father if I go. That man will spot me, and follow me, and my father will be arrested!"

"Not if you're careful."

"I can't!"

"You can get out the back way, and get across the fields," said Redwing. "You can come to the fir-wood from the other side. Clyne will go on watching the road."

"He may have others helping him, now he knows."

Redwing started. It was a possibility, though it was only Snoop's miserable fear that had put the thought into his mind.

"I suppose that's possible," said the sailorman's son, at last. "But you ought to risk it, Snoop. Don't you understand? Your father's been through awful things, out there; he knows he may be going back to his death. He wants to see you. You must go."

"I—I don't want to be a rotter!" muttered Snoop. "I—I'd like to see him. I know he's had a fearful time at the Front. I—I'm thinking of his danger, not of my own."

The juniors let that statement pass.

"Will you go if we come with you?" asked the Bounder very quietly. "Redwing and myself, I mean. Wharton's not called upon—"

"I'll come, if it's any good," said Wharton.

"Well, all three of us, then."

"What good will that be?" asked Snoop. "The man will spot me, all the same, and very likely collar me. I might get imprisoned."

"We'll undertake that the man doesn't collar you," said the Bounder steadily. "If the man shows up at all we'll keep him off, and give you time to get clear, Snoop. I will, at least. Honour!"

"And I!" said Tom Redwing.

"And I!" said Harry Wharton, with a glance half of compassion half of scorn at the trembling Snoop. "The man's run risks for us, out there. Why shouldn't we run risks for him? Snoop, if you'll go, all three of us will come, and if the detective shows up we'll see that you have time to get clear, even if we have to collar him and hold him by force while you clear off."

Snoop brightened up a little.

Such an offer would have made a more decent fellow's blood boil; but Snoop was not feeling insulted. He was only feeling relieved.

He would have been glad to avoid disappointing his father, if it could have been done without risk to himself. And

the juniors' offer seemed to see him clear of risk.

"But—but you may get into trouble!" he muttered.

"Never mind that."

"I—I don't see why you should do this for me," mumbled Snoop.

"Why should your father fight the Huns for us?" said Wharton, with a slight smile. "He's done that. Never mind the why and the wherefore. We three promise to see you clear, if you'll come, and that's good enough."

"I—I wasn't thinking only of myself," mumbled the wretched funk of the Remove.

"That's all right. Will you come?"

"Yes," stammered Snoop at last.

"Right-ho, then!" said Wharton. "Better make it half-past eight; it will be quite dark then. We'll get out over the back wall, without a soul the wiser. Get out of the House one at a time, and meet there—that's the idea. Prep will have to go for once."

Frank Nugent came into the study, and the meeting broke up. Nugent looked inquiringly at his chum; and Harry, who had no secrets from his study-mate, explained how matters stood.

"Better let me come, too," said Frank.

Wharton shook his head.

"The fewer the better," he answered.

"A crowd would make it more risky. Three of us are enough to see that Snoop gets clear. But you can keep your peepers open, Franky, and see that nobody comes nosing round while we're getting out presently."

"Right you are," assented Nugent.

Vernon-Smith was the first at the rendezvous, by the shadowy wall at some distance from the rear of the school buildings. Redwing and Snoop joined him there. Snoop was pale and ill at ease, but he seemed to have screwed up his courage to the sticking-point.

Harry Wharton did not leave the School House till his friends had been gone some little time. It was necessary to be very careful. When the captain of the Remove came downstairs Billy Bunter promptly buttonholed him in the passage. Wharton would have passed on, but Bunter was not to be denied.

"Stop a minute, Wharton!" he bawled.

Wharton stopped, setting his lips.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"In a hurry?" asked Bunter inquisitively.

"Oh, get it out! What is it?"

"The post came in some time ago," said Bunter, blinking at him. "There wasn't a letter for me, Wharton."

"Well?"

"I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Harry impatiently.

It was too exasperating to be bothered just then by Billy Bunter's famous postal-order. He walked on. Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, Wharton—"

Frank Nugent dropped his hand on Bunter's fat shoulder.

"Like some toffee, Bunter?" he asked.

Billy Bunter forgot Wharton's existence on the spot.

"Yes, rather, old chap," he said affectionately.

"Come up to the study."

"You bet!"

Billy Bunter followed Nugent to Study No. 1, and Wharton slipped quietly from the House. In the study Bunter blinked round through his big glasses.

"Where's the toffee?" he asked.

"Eh? What toffee?" demanded Nugent.

"Didn't you ask me if I'd like some toffee?" howled Bunter.

"Certainly."

"Well, where is it, then?"

"Ask me another," yawned Nugent. "I didn't mean I had any toffee, Bunt. I was just making inquiries on general principles, you know."

Billy Bunter gave Nugent a glare that almost cracked his spectacles, and rolled away in great wrath.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton had joined the three juniors at the wall.

"All here?" he said in a low voice as he came up.

"All serene," said the Bouncer. "Let's get out. The Tommy's waiting."

In a few minutes the quartette had climbed the wall. They did not go round into the road, where they guessed that the keen-eyed Mr. Clyne was probably still on the watch. They made a wide circuit, and crossed the high-road at a distance from the school, and struck across some fields towards the fir-wood.

The moon had not yet risen, and the evening was very dark. Once or twice the Bouncer looked back with suspicious eyes.

"You can hear someone?" asked Snoop, in a shaken whisper.

"It's nothing," answered Smithy.

Snoop halted.

"I—I say, if we're being followed—I say—"

He was trembling now.

The juniors listened intently. But there was no sound save the sigh of the wind.

"It's all right," said Wharton.

"I—I don't think so," stammered Snoop. "It's risky—for my father, I mean."

"Come on," said the Bouncer. "Quiet, and keep your ears peeled."

Snoop reluctantly resumed his way, and the juniors tramped on across the dark fields.

The fir-wood—a small patch of timber standing at some distance from Friardale Wood—loomed up ahead of them against the dark sky.

Snoop glanced round fearfully as he was led into the shadow of the dark trees, Vernon-Smith's hand on his arm. The Bouncer was half afraid that Snoop might bolt like a rabbit at any minute.

"Stop!" muttered Redwing at last. "He must be close here, if he's kept the appointment. I'll whistle."

The sailorman's son whistled softly.

There was a rustle in the trees.

"Hark!" muttered Snoop, his heart thumping. "Hark!"

"It's all right; it's your father," whispered Wharton.

"The other way, I mean—behind us," groaned Snoop.

From the darkness behind there came an unmistakable sound—a twig cracking under a cautious foot.

The juniors' hearts thrilled.

The Bouncer's suspicions had not been unfounded after all. They had been followed.

Mr. Clyne, or some associate in his task, had observed them near the school, had perhaps watched them leave, and had shadowed them across the dark fields—with what object they could guess. Mr. Clyne knew that the soldier's presence in the vicinity could mean only one thing—a desire to see his son at Greyfriars. Upon that he calculated, and his calculation had been correct.

Snoop grasped Wharton's arm convulsively.

"Wharton, it's the man—the detective! Oh, my father!"

For once Sidney James Snoop thought of his father before himself. The rustle

in the wood was repeated, and a dim form loomed.

Snoop ran forward.

"Father! It's you!"

"Sidney! My boy!"

"Run!" panted Snoop, catching his father arm in the darkness in his terror and excitement. "There's a detective close behind! For mercy's sake, father, get clear while you've the chance!"

"Leave him to us!" said the Bouncer grimly. "Take your father out of the wood to the lane, Snoop. Leave the other to us."

Snoop, in frantic excitement, was already dragging his father by the arm.

Harry Wharton, Tom Redwing, and the Bouncer remained where they were—silent, with tense nerves and beating hearts.

They could hear the pursuer now. He was quite close. In a moment or two he would be upon them in the darkness.

There was no need of words. They understood what was to be done.

Through the wood there came a crashing and rustling, as Snoop led his father towards the lane on the opposite side. The sound was loud and startling in the silent night, and it reached the ears of the shadower as well as those of the juniors. The cautious footsteps were no longer cautious. The man was coming on at a run among the fir-trees. And at a run he came upon the three Greyfriars juniors in the darkness, and before he knew he was upon them their grasp closed on him on all sides.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

For the Soldier's Sake!

CRASH!

Not a word was spoken.

But in the grasp of three pairs of strong hands the half-seen shadower was brought to the ground.

A Homburg hat rolled away in the grass.

It was Mr. Clyne himself.

The detective had calculated well, and he had been favoured by luck; but he had not counted upon Harry Wharton & Co. Their sudden attack took him utterly by surprise. He had not dreamed that anyone was between him and the fugitive he could hear crashing at a distance through the wood.

He went down on his back—the Bouncer had his wrists in a grip like that of a vice, Wharton's knee was on his chest, and Tom Redwing had him round the neck. Never was a man reduced to more sudden and complete helplessness.

He struggled furiously to free his hands, but he struggled in vain. And the juniors uttered no word. They did not want Mr. Clyne to be able to identify them by their voices.

For, though they hardly realised the seriousness of what they were doing, they knew that it was serious. They were defending the liberty of a man who had fought on the Somme; but they were aware that that was not the view the law would take of their conduct. In the excitement of the moment they hardly knew whether they were doing right or wrong; but they knew that they could not bear the thought of the handcuffs clinking on the wrists of the man from the Somme.

"Release me!" The detective spoke at last, and his voice was thick and husky with rage and breathlessness. "Let me go! How dare you touch me!"

No reply; but the iron grip did not relax.

Come what might, Mr. Clyne could not be released till the soldier was well on his way to camp and Snoop was back

within the walls of Greyfriars. They had their promise to Snoop to keep.

"Will you release me?"

Silence.

"You shall suffer for this!"

The detective squirmed and wriggled helplessly. He gave it up at last.

"You are keeping me here while the man escapes," he said, as the rustling died away at last in the distance, and all was silent. "You shall be punished for this! Do you know you can be sent to prison for it?"

The words struck a chill to the hearts of the Greyfriars juniors; but they did not speak, and they did not relax their grasp.

"Who are you? One of you, I suppose, is Sidney Snoop?"

The Bouncer chuckled softly. Snoop was not likely to have handled the man in that way, and the detective easily guessed the meaning of that chuckle.

"You are friends of Master Snoop's, I suppose? He has been here to meet his father. Release me at once, and I will overlook this. There is a chance yet. Release me—"

There was no sound in the wood now. But the juniors held the man pinned down; they were not going to take chances.

Mr. Clyne relapsed into savage silence; he was helpless, and words were of no avail. His feelings were not enviable, and certainly not amiable, as the juniors kept him pinned in the grass. The strokes of nine came dully from somewhere in the distance.

The Bouncer made a movement. He gave Wharton and Redwing a shove with his boot as a signal.

Three pairs of hands released Mr. Clyne at the same moment, and the three juniors sprang away from him.

Before the detective could even sit up the wood had swallowed up the three Removites of Greyfriars.

Mr. Clyne staggered to his feet.

He could hear a crashing in the wood at a distance, and that was all; and as he started savagely in the direction of the sound it died away. The juniors were already in the fields.

The detective paused, puzzled. He had taken it for granted that his assailants were friends of Snoop's, from the school. But they were not going towards Greyfriars, but in an almost opposite direction. Mr. Clyne left the fir-wood slowly, with a thoughtful brow.

Wharton, Redwing, and the Bouncer ran quickly across the dark fields, their backs to Greyfriars; and at a distance they doubled back to the road. They ran hard, without a word; not a second being lost. They had made a wide detour, but it was only a short space of time before they were climbing the wall where they had quitted the school.

"Is—is that you fellows?" quavered a voice, as they dropped down inside the wall.

It was Snoop.

"So you got back all right?" said Redwing.

"Yes; I've been here some time," answered Snoop. "Did you—did you collar him?"

"Yes."

"He doesn't know you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, good!" said Snoop, with a deep breath of relief. "Then—then it's all safe."

"What about your father?" asked the Bouncer.

"He's all right. He scudded away up the lane before I started back," said Snoop. "I—I made him go. I was afraid he might—might—I don't know what would have happened if that man had come up to him." Snoop

trembled. "But he's gone, thank goodness! They'll never find him now. They can't know what camp he's in, and there's thousands of soldiers at Wapshot, anyway. They don't even know his regiment. Thank goodness he's safe!"

"Safe as houses!" said the Bounder cheerily. "Keep your mouth shut about this, Snoop, and it will all be serene."

"I'm not likely to talk about it," muttered Snoop. "I—I'm much obliged to you fellows—"

"Oh, don't mench!"

"I—I waited for you to come in. I—I was afraid that man might have nailed you!" muttered Snoop. "I'll get in now."

He disappeared into the shadows.

Harry Wharton and his companions followed him more slowly towards the House. Their faces were very grave.

"I suppose you fellows know this mayn't be the end of the matter?" said

the Bounder quietly. "No good saying so to Snoop; he's twittering now, and he can't face it. But this mayn't be the end."

"I was thinking so," said Harry quietly.

"Clyne must know that we were friends of Snoop's, doing him a good turn. Unless he's an ass, he will guess we belong to Greyfriars—"

"Sure to!" said Tom Redwing.

"And he may come here on the merry war-path!" said the Bounder grimly. "If he does, it will be a row before the Head, and—"

"Trouble!" said Harry Wharton. "We've got to face it if it does come. Smithy. I'm not sorry for what we did. The soldier got free, anyway, and that was what we wanted."

"That isn't the way the Head would look at it—or a magistrate, I think," said the Bounder drily.

"I—I don't know," confessed the captain of the Remove. "I don't see how we could have refused to stand by Snoop at such a time. If there's trouble, we shall have to stand it, that's all."

And the three juniors went quietly into the School House, and to their studies.

There might be trouble to follow what they had done; and though they did not welcome it, they had the courage to face it.

But there was no ring at the bell, and at bed-time they went off to the Remove dormitory, safe for that night, at least. They turned in, hoping for the best in the morning, and slept soundly enough, in spite of the uncertainty of the morrow.

(Don't miss "HIS FATHER'S SON!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 72.—GADSBY and VAVASOUR.

THE only member of the Highcliffe fraternity of nuts who has as yet figured in the Greyfriars Gallery is Cecil Ponsonby, though Frank Courtenay and Rupert de Courey have also appeared; and quite lately we had Mr. Mobbs.

The series would hardly be complete without one or two more of the nuts, however; and Reginald Havers Gadsby and Adolphus Theodore Vavasour may very well be taken together. They would hardly be worth an article each.

It would not be easy to say which is the worse of the two. Both are, in some ways, more objectionable than Pon himself. There is no mean or cruel thing they would do that he would shy at, it is true; but he is at least more thorough-going than they are—a complete villain. Gadsby and Vavasour are not to be counted on to go right through with even the most rascally enterprise; they have their qualms about certain things—and at the bottom of their reluctance to follow their leader all the way is almost always sheer funk.

Not that Gadsby is an entire funk. He can buck up at times, though he made no better show than the rest of the nuts when Pon was in peril on the cliffs, and Tom Redwing rescued him. One might have imagined that even these fellows, though no heroes at the best, would have done something to help Ponsonby, their acknowledged leader and dearest chum. But courage and presence of mind both failed them, and but for Redwing, Vernon-Smith, and the Famous Five, Pon would have gone under once for all. That would have been no bad thing for Highcliffe; but it is open to grave doubt whether either Gadsby or Vavasour could be transformed into a decent fellow, even if Pon's influence were removed.

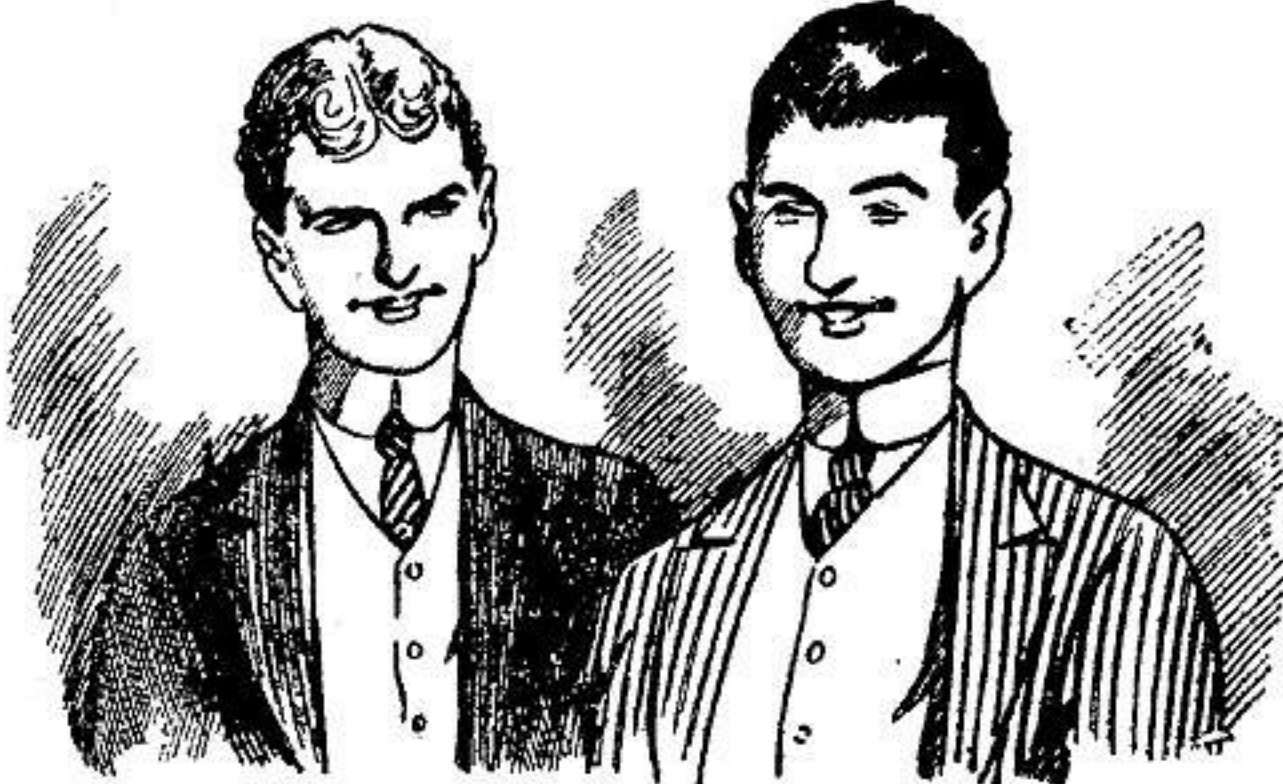
Vavasour can be set down as a funk all through. If he ever shows a spark of spirit, it soon flickers out. Skinner is pluckier than he; even Fish or Bunter or Snoop is not his inferior. Yet in the days before Pon came to Highcliffe Vavasour was the leader of the nuts. What a crew they must have been in those times!

Gadsby has more brains than Vavasour. But that is saying very little indeed. Adolphus Theodore is the kind of brainless idiot who used to be called a dude at one period and a masher at another.

Grown a little older, with money to throw away, Vavasour will put in his time in gambling-dens or on race-courses; he will ogle barmaids and drink too much; he will certainly never do any honest or useful work. Most likely he will carry all through life his catchword "Absolutely!"—his customary reply to almost any remark, adopted—unconsciously, no doubt—to save the trouble of thinking.

I should not care to predict any better fate for Gadsby. He is as rank a snob as Vavasour. He is as vicious. But he is less cowardly and less silly. Vavasour could never have thought of Gadsby's dodge of getting into Greyfriars as Mr. Lugg, the

dentist, and would never have had the resolution to carry it out, even if he had been able to think of it. There was nothing in the wheeze to be proud of; but it was something done—though it should not have been done—and it is difficult to imagine Vav doing anything definite, even paying off old scores in an underhand and blackguardly way. That is, on his own. He can follow another's lead, and has many times followed Pon's. In the serial, now drawing to its end, in the "Gem"—"The Twins from Tasmania"—we have seen him acting as understrapper to Gadsby, weakly spiteful, but afraid to go as far as his comrade in guilt, and always on the lookout for a chance of a back-door exit if things went wrong with their plots.



It was Gadsby who suggested a drugging scheme to Pon, ever ready for any tascality. They were both in the attack on Neville, the professional footballer who played for the Remove when Pon had cunningly wangled into the Highcliffe team old boys beyond the age of seniors. And they were both in the trouble on the footer-ground before that, when their snobbish talk provoked the railway-men to smack them well. The democratic conditions of a popular footer-ground did not appeal to Gaddy and Vav. They turned up their noses at the fellows among whom they found themselves. It would not have mattered so much about the undue elevation of their aristocratic nasal organs if only they had kept still tongues in their heads. But when they said aloud that they could not stay among dirty cads, hostilities naturally followed.

There is no end of swank among the nuts, and these two have their share of it, with possibly some to spare. Before the new road was opened Highcliffe and Greyfriars, though standing just where they now do, were farther apart for practical purposes, as one had to

go a longish way round by road to get from one to the other. When Pon came to Greyfriars to challenge the Remove—for the same match referred to above—Vavasour was with him, and they came in a dogcart. That was sheer swank, of course. Bicycles would have served their turn just as well; but anyone can ride a bike, and there are very few fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who can afford to hire dogcarts. It would be the very thing to appeal to a mind like Vavasour's—absolutely!

It was Vavasour who, in the days before Pon's coming, reported the chums of the Remove for kidnapping the Highcliffe Fourth footer team on its way to Cliff House to play footer against the girls. Such a match should never have been arranged, of course; but the girls talked too big, and the chivalrous Highcliffians held them to their word. They did not play the match after all. They thought they were playing it; but the side they met consisted of members of the Greyfriars Remove disguised as girls, and won easily.

Once on a time Hazeldene was in the

clutches of Pon & Co. They were rooking him. The Bounder went over with Hazel, and rooked them. It was not the right thing to do; two blacks don't make a white. But one can make excuses for it. A fight ensued, and Hazel stood by the Bounder. He licked Pon. Vernon-Smith took on both Gadsby and Vavasour, and thrashed the pair of them. Not that it was a great feat. Any one of the Famous Five could perform it. So could many another Greyfriars junior, for that matter.

And once on a time Gadsby was wrongly suspected. He and Pon were believed to have stolen Micky Desmond's Sandwich Islands stamp. They had not. They had only thought of doing so. The dodge was given up as too risky.

I think that is about the only time when Gadsby was wrongly suspected. And I think that the occasion on which Vavasour fought Bunter on account of the pretty post-girl was the only occasion upon which Vav ever fought when fighting could possibly be avoided.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 536.

A Great New Serial Story.

THE BROWN TORRENT.

BY SIDNEY DREW.

A Thrilling Story of Adventure, in which Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and other Popular Characters, play their parts.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Rupert Thurston buys an idol, which bears the inscription, "I am Sharpra the Stumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!"

Ferrers Lord, Prout, Gan-Waga, Maddocks, and O'Roonney arrive at the hotel. Ching-Lung arrives, after giving a performance in the guise of a conjurer.

The heat becomes intense, and Ching-Lung, who is watching the idol, yells:

"Great Jupiter! If I'm not mistaken, the hideous thing is opening its eyes!"

As he utters the words there is a terrible crash, and the whole hotel collapses.

(Now read on.)

The New Cook.

CHING-LUNG and Ferrers Lord rushed out across the veranda. The night was intensely dark, and the air was thick with dust. The hotel was not a very elaborate building.

Suddenly the earth ceased to tremble, and the moon loomed out again, still lurid and threatening. It showed a deep sag in the roof of the veranda. The hotel itself looked considerably out of shape.

The proprietor, who had made a dive for the open, gazed at his property, and groaned and wrung his hands.

"All safe?" cried Ferrers Lord. "Keep well clear, for there may be another shock!"

Several voices answered him. The moon grew brighter. The floor of the veranda was dripping wet, and a good deal out of shape. From somewhere or other came a muffled, roaring sound.

Ching-Lung and Mr. Thomas Prout dashed forward together and lighted the overturned cistern, bringing Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, to light. At the sight of him Maddock, O'Roonney, and Prout gained amused grins.

"Oh dears, dears, dears! What the matter, Chingy?" asked the Eskimo, glaring round him. "Who turned me downside-upness, hunk? What fo' you grins, yo' ugly-fuls idjits? Yo' think it a funniful jokes, hunk?"

"Peace, Wagtail—peace!" said Ching-Lung. "The upset of your cubicle was not due to a practical joke perpetrated by any of your beloved and esteemed comrades, but to a natural phenomenon, blubberbiter."

"Yo' shows me natural funny man, Chingy, and I jolly soonful punches him on his funny old noses!" said the indignant Eskimo.

"You mistake my meaning," said Ching-Lung gravely. "You were not upset by a man—funny or otherwise—but by a natural upheaval of the crust of this planet. Your bed was overturned by an earthquake."

"Oh, that was its, did he, Chingy?" said Gan-Waga, mollified. "Only a quake-earths, hunk, Chingy? I thought it was worseness than that. That silly old Sprouts or O'Loonatics done it. It no goodness punching a quake-earths on the noses. Dears, dears! I wish the quake-earths not quake till I finished my butterfuls dream. I dream I eatings iced pudden stuffed with tallow candles."

"Phwat a dhrame!" said Barry O'Roonney. "The monsther! Shame on ye, ye oily villain! Sure, bhoys, ut's a bad twist the ould hotel has got! Is the performance over, d'ye think, or is this wan of the places where they give two shows a noight?"

The dust was settling down. Luckily the overturned lamp in the millionaire's apartment had become extinguished without bursting into flame.

Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung went back into the room. The swinging lamp in the passage still hung from its hook. Ferrers Lord took it down and looked around.

"Not so bad as it might have been," he said. "These frame-built places are fairly tough. What were you saying about the image of Sharpra, Ching-Lung?"

Ching-Lung picked up the idol from the matting where it had fallen.

"Something idiotic. A trick of the light," he answered. "Just as I looked at it, just before the shock came, I thought the ugly brute was opening his eyes. They are shut tightly enough now. What a queer thing to fancy—eh? I must go and see what has happened to our bed-rooms."

Both rooms were considerably altered in shape. The proprietor was on the verge of tears. He was not insured against damage caused by earthquake.

A promise from Ching-Lung to lend him the money to make the hotel habitable, at a long term and at an absurdly low rate of interest, set him smiling again.

Prout and Maddock tidied up as well as possible, and once more a cool breeze sprang up, and made life and sleep possible.

One by one the native servants came back after their fright.

"Whatever Sharpra did to his eyes, I intend to close mine for an hour or two," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "I think I shall let Rupert Thurston have the benefit of all the shooting his friend Payton can offer him. We'll drive over there to breakfast. We need a cook, and perhaps Payton can find one for us. Good-night, Ching!"

"Good-night, chief!" said Ching-Lung. "I shall sleep till morning without any rocking."

Payton's bungalow stood almost at the edge of the jungle. There was a good road. Ching-Lung drove the car. They had left Prout and Maddock behind to repack the luggage into smaller space. Except for a broken window and a few dislodged tiles the bungalow seemed to have escaped damage.

Payton, in white flannels, came out to meet them—a plump, smiling figure.

"A lively sort of night!" he said. "Though it shook us pretty badly, it has not shaken Thurston's enthusiasm. He was off at day-break with my shikari after the tiger. I need not ask who your friend is," he added, holding out his hand to Ching-Lung. "Thurston has often spoken to me about your Highness. And you are very welcome."

"Then you got off without any accidents?" asked Ching-Lung as they shook hands.

"No damage to speak of," said Payton. "My telephone-wire is down, but that isn't anything unusual, for it happens whenever we have a big storm. Come in, gentlemen; and please make yourselves at home!"

After breakfast, when they were smoking their cheroots, Ferrers Lord mentioned that he was in need of a cook.

Payton laughed and nodded.

"If his looks don't put you off, I think I have the right fellow for you," he said. "He was at a London hotel for some time, making curries. And he can cook in the English way, and jabber some English of sorts. His name is Gadra Singh. I'll send for him."

Duke Payton called out something in the vernacular to a passing native, who salaamed and vanished. After a time an amazingly tall and amazingly thin man came striding towards them. He was so elongated and bony that Gan-Waga put down the slices of melon he was eating, and gazed with wonder in his little black eyes, expecting the man's bony legs to snap off short at the knees, or his spine to break in halves as he salaamed.

"Gadra Singh, thou bunch of laziness, thou most worthless of all rascals, this great and noble sahib is willing to employ thee. They go north to shoot game," said Payton. "They condescend to take thee as cook, thou intolerable idler. Tell the great sahib what thou canst do, oh, destroyer of excellent meat!"

"Roz beef, roz mutton, roz veal, chop, steaks, fish and cheeps, soap, curry, rice, pudden, roz lambs, checkings, rabbits, hairies, fizzinks, docks—moaz pootiful!" said Gadra Singh, almost in one breath.

"Phwat does he mane? Checkings, and rabbits, and hairies, and fizzinks, and docks, and soap?" muttered Barry O'Roonney.

"Bedad, av he'd ate a few afther he'd cooked thim ut moight do him a bit o' good! Pinch me, and tell me av O'm aslape, Gan. Is ut a man at all, at all, or only a bundle of blacklead scaffold-poles walkin' about?"

"And plotaires—moaz pootiful!" added Gadra Singh, with pride. "And sausidge—moaz loavely!"

"He seems to be a talented sort of individual," said Ching-Lung. "Plotaires—moaz pootiful" and "sausidge—moaz loavely" sound tasty dishes. Judging by his looks, I'd never have taken him for a cook. He'd make quite a decent hat-stand. You could hang quite a lot of things on him. I wonder what he lives on himself—macaroni?"

After the ease with which Ferrers Lord had deciphered the inscription on the image of Sharpra the Stumberer, Payton was not greatly surprised to hear the millionaire address Gadra Singh in the vernacular.

"He doesn't cook at all badly," said Payton. "I'd have had him instead of my own rascal, but he fancies himself a bit of a shikari, and he's too fond of pottering round in the jungle with a rusty old gun to be reliable under a roof with pots and pans. In camp he ought to be useful; but don't spoil him by offering big wages."

The upshot of it was that Gadra Singh was engaged as cook. His yellow eyes gleamed as he was told the news, and his long, melancholy face almost brightened.

Mr. Barry O'Roonney choked as if the smoke of his cheroot had gone the wrong way. He glanced at Gan-Waga, then at Gadra Singh.

"Bedad, ut's wonderfule the way we found the freaks!" he remarked. "The long and the short of ut! Av the ould blubberboiter would give up candles and whale-oil and take to ateing macaroni, and ould Stilt-legs would go in for whale-oil and tallow candles and chuck macaroni, we moight level thim up a throife. Phwat a loife!"

A native boy came with the news that Thurston Sahib had wounded the tiger, and was following the animal with the shikari and a dozen beaters.

Ferrers Lord had a long conversation with Duke Payton. The sun was blazing down fiercely as they drove back to the hotel.

Gadra Singh went with them. He had packed most of his possessions in a small blue handkerchief. The possessions he had not been able to pack consisted of an ancient smooth-bore rifle, a powder-flask, and a hunting-knife. He sat in the car between Gan-Waga and Barry O'Roonney, with an expression of heart-breaking grief on his long face.

Prout and Maddock rose from their chairs as the car approached. Ching-Lung and the millionaire entered the hotel.

"Bedad, Macaroni," said Barry, "come and be introduced! Here, ye two spalpeens, this is the new cook!"

Gadra Singh stepped down and salaamed, and then drew his gaunt and bony figure erect—all the six-feet-three of it.

"The new what, scuse me?" asked Maddock. "Come again, Irish! The new what?" "Phwat d'ye mane, the new phwat? Is ut deaf ye are in both oies? Didn't Oi say, as plain as a skoy-rocket on a dark noight, that ut's Macaroni, the new cook?"

"Plotaires moaz pootiful and sausidges moaz loavely!" said Gan-Waga. "Ho, ho, ho-o-o! Stands on yo' toetipses and kisses him, Tommy! Plotaires moaz— Oh, ha, ha, ha, hah-ah-hah!"

Gan-Waga doubled up Mr. Thomas Prout with one playful prod in the waistcoat, and Mr. Benjamin Maddock with another; and then, laughing uproariously, he waddled across the creaking, uneven boards of the veranda and took cover, leaving the bos'un and his friend gasping for breath.

"Av any man did a thing loike that to me, there'd soon be a funeral at his house!" said Barry O'Rooney. "And that same Eskimo would cost a bit for a coffin, too, bein' woide across the narrows, so to speak, and thickish round the slender parrots. Ut's yerself would make a fairly chape funeral, Macaroni. Oi reckon about seven fatg of half-inch gaspipe, wid a corrk to plug aich ind, would make ye an iligant coffin. Bedad, but we do foind him! Phwat a loife!"

Prout and Maddock spoke not a word. They placed their chairs one on each side of the doorway, and waited for Gan-Waga to emerge.

Finding a strip of shadow, the new cook lay down in it and went to sleep.

Barry departed in search of a long, cooling drink. Gan-Waga did not come back. The Eskimo had too much wisdom.

At the Gates of Mist.

FERRERS LORD leaned against a brown, sun-baked rock and looked across the great divide with keen, curious eyes. They had been twelve days on the road already. A sea of mist lay below them. Shadowy, vast, and dim in the distance, like monstrous, ghostly islands, rose the mountain peaks with their caps of eternal snow.

"There lies the cactus country," said the millionaire, pointing downwards; "but there's precious little of it to be seen. It was like this before. From the point of view of a botanist the whole thing is a riddle."

Ching-Lung took the binoculars and surveyed the ocean of mist.

"I'm not much of a botanist, chief," he said, "so I don't quite follow you. What is the riddle?"

"Merely that the cactus, in its very nature, is a desert plant—a plant that loves arid sands and dried-up, burning wastes. It is a kind of water-bottle in itself. It would be a dainty dish for many an animal, but it protects itself with thorns and spines and poisonous hairs. Yet they flourish down there, and grow to an enormous size, though the hot, steamy atmosphere ought to kill them almost as quickly as a sea fish is killed when placed in fresh water. That is the riddle, Ching, and we'll leave it to the botanists to solve. I call this place the Gates of Mist."

They turned back to the camp. It was pitched under the shadow of a cliff where there was a trickling fall of cool water that formed a crystal pool.

Gadra Singh was busy with his pots and pans. On an upturned pail sat Gan-Waga, his plump face shiny with perspiration, and a large cigar in his mouth. Opposite the Eskimo a gentleman, who wore very little in the shape of clothes, was squatting on a battered leather hatbox. His shock of matted hair, like his beard, was dyed a vivid scarlet. His skinny body was smeared over with white clay. He had only one eye, but it was bright enough for two.

"I not know what it is, Chingy," said Gan-Waga, "but it a bit likelike a rain-bow, hunk! Ho, ho, hoo!"

Ching-Lung gave a warning frown, and Gan-Waga's grin faded.

The millionaire bowed gravely to the red-headed gentleman with the clay waistcoat, for it is an unwise proceeding to offend an Indian fakir. Besides, Ferrers Lord had been expecting this visitor, and hoped to do business with him. For half an hour the fakir and the millionaire talked and baggled, and many rupees changed hands and vanished into the ancient hatbox.

"It isn't that I want to cut the prices, Ching," said Ferrers Lord, shrugging his shoulders; "but Payton insisted. Others may come after us, and, of course, it is unfair to spoil the natives. That fellow knows how to drive a hard bargain, and we may be sure he will stick to the bulk of the money. Any-

how, we are to have thirty bearers, and, best of all, their head-man is to be Larput Raj."

"I seem to remember the name," said Ching-Lung. "Wasn't he outlawed? Wasn't he the fellow who caused so much trouble?"

"The very man. But that is all over," answered Ferrers Lord. "Larput Raj has made the peace, and is a loyal subject. If he lives up to his reputation we are in luck's way."

Larput Raj came into the camp in the cool of the evening with his thirty bearers behind him. He lined them up. They were all wiry fellows, the eldest not thirty years of age. Only a couple of years before they had been in rebellion, causing one of those sharp and hardly-fought little wars about which the British public at home hears only a rumour or nothing at all.

"We are brothers, thou and I, sahib," said Larput Raj to Ferrers Lord.

He wore no turban, only a green fez with a silver tassel. The famous fighter and outlaw was slim and slightly-built. His hair was grizzled, and his face wrinkled like a monkey's, but he had the muscles of a greyhound, and his dark eyes sparkled with health and vigour. A bandolier of cartridges hung over his naked shoulder, and he carried a hunting-knife in a leather sheath at his hip. In the crook of his arm Larput Raj held a fine, silver-mounted sporting-rifle, a gift from the Viceroy himself after the peace had been signed.

"We are brothers, thou and I, Larput Raj," said Ferrers Lord. "These friends of mine are also thy brothers, Old Wolf of the hills. Though we meet now face to face for the first time, I know thy deeds. I, too, have fought. I, too, am a hunter. Thou shalt be my shikari, Old Wolf. Thy knife for mine. No hand shall ever draw it against me except thine own."

He exchanged a beautifully-chased hunting-knife for Larput Raj's horn-handled weapon.

"No hand shall draw this to my peril but only thy hand," said the head-man, with a laugh. "And that day shall never dawn, sahib." He swept his hand towards the far-off peaks. "We go yonder. It is well that we go, for we are like pots on the fire. The time comes when we must boil over, sahib, and we have not boiled over for many moons."

The millionaire translated for the benefit of Rupert Thurston.

"I suppose he means that they are spoiling for a fight," said Thurston. "They're a hefty-looking lot of beggars, I must say. Has he ever been in the cactus country, I wonder? Payton was telling me all sorts of queer yarns about it, though I suppose it's nothing more than mosquitoes and fever when all's said and done."

"Yes, there are plenty of both," said Ferrers Lord; "or that, at least, was my experience of the condition of affairs. This is practically the only piece of our Indian Empire that has not been properly mapped. I'll have a palaver with Larput Raj."

The millionaire seated himself on a packing-case, and his new shikari squatted on the ground, nursing the sporting-rifle the Viceroy had given him. For a long hour the two talked together. Night closed down, and great stars gleamed overhead—wonderful stars. Then Ferrers Lord rose and went into the tent. There was a savoury scent of curried jungle fowl that had been shot by Rupert Thurston. Ching-Lung and Thurston were at supper.

"If your new shikari is as good as the cook, chief," said Prince Ching-Lung, "there should be no complaints. The average jungle fowl generally tastes to me like a bunch of leather bootlaces, and a good deal harder to chew. These brutes are quite respectable, and you can get through them without breaking any of your teeth. What is the news? What has Larput Raj told you about the cactus country and the forest of the foothills?"

"Many things, Ching," answered Ferrers Lord. "He has told me so much, that it is quite obvious that he knows little about them. He has hunted the fringes of the cactus country. There are tigers and pig and deer, he says, and the swamps and lagoons swarm with crocodiles. Of that I was quite aware; but my shikari also adds the information that the forests and the great wooded ravines of the foothills swarm with human beings."

"According to my shikari, who seems to believe in them implicitly, they are a mysterious people, like the fairies of Ireland, and the gnomes and dwarfs of other countries. They are under a spell of punishment, for some wrong they did long ago, and confined to these tremendous forests and ravines."

Their chief, who was responsible for the wrong, is an immortal. He could not be slain, but the good spirits overthrew him in a terrible battle, and confined him in the heart of a mountain for ten thousand moons. After that time the power of the good spirits will cease, the evil one will break out of his dungeon, and another terrible war will be waged."

"Does the name of the gentleman who got this ferocious long term of imprisonment happen to be Sharpra the Slumberer, chief?" asked Ching-Lung.

"You have got it pat at the first guess," said Ferrers Lord.

Thurston laughed. "That hideous old curio I bought from the Jew in the bazaar," he said. "He opens his eyes, and then the band plays, or something. Isn't it that? I have forgotten the old rig-marole."

"I suppose I ought to give up this little exploring-trip, and go and consult an oculist, Ru," said the prince, echoing Thurston's laugh. "For a few seconds before we had what Gan-Waga calls a quake-earth, a fortnight or so ago, I happened to glance at your lovely image of Sharpra, and yelled. It was a yell, wasn't it, chief? The abominable little monster seemed to have his wicked eyes half open, and to be leering at me. I must want some glasses."

Gadra Singh, bending as if his long, lean body worked on a hinge, bore in Ferrers Lord's supper.

"Curry jungle-foals, moaz loavely, sahib!" said the cook. "Moaz pootiful!"

"Foals, eh?" said Ching-Lung, as he lighted a cheroot and sauntered out. "Some cook, that! It will be horses next."

Several fires had been lighted. Gadra Singh returned to his own pots and pans. Larput Raj and his men had made their camp a little way off. Ching-Lung whistled. To his surprise, Gan-Waga did not respond. He soon discovered why. On either side of a fire of their own sat the Eskimo and the cook. The lean cook was smoking one of Ching-Lung's half-crown cigars presented to him by Gan-Waga, and the Eskimo was picking the bones of a jungle fowl presented to him by the cook. The two—the long and the short of it—appeared to be on the best of terms. Ching-Lung halted just outside the ring of light thrown by the fire, and screened the glowing red tip of his cheroot with his hand.

"Moaz loavely!" said the cook, breathing out a cloud of fragrant smoke.

"Not so badfulness, Sing-Songs, old dears," grinned Gan-Waga, crunching a bone with his sharp teeth. "Why yo' such thinness, hunk? Why yo' so long and leanness, old scouts? Yo' gets no grubbes when yo' a kids, hunk?"

"Never nothing—moaz awful," replied Gadra Singh. "Anywhy, moaz Shinyface, art thou so fat?"

"Ho, ho, hoo! Eat butterfuls whales and sealses and walruses," said Gan-Waga. "And butterfuls dripping and tallow cangles. That the loveliful stuff to make yo' fatfuls, Sing-Songs. That the goods, old dears!"

Ching-Lung did not interrupt them as they seemed so happy and comfortable. He climbed the hilly path. Festoons of stars hung in the sky, and under each rock the shadows lay like pools of ink that threatened to engulf him.

The noises of the camp grew fainter, and then a great silence shut down. He stood at what Ferrers Lord had called the Gate of Mist, and mist filled the vast gap almost throat-deep, veiling its secrets. The peaks were invisible even when he put up his binoculars. Strange scents arose: the perfume of unfamiliar flowers opening only in the night, and of unfamiliar shrubs and trees. Huge-winged insects flattered round him, and from somewhere below a tiger arched.

Ching-Lung glanced over his shoulder, dropped the end of the cheroot, and placed his heel on it. The pleasant breeze was blowing across the divide from the direction of the camp. The prince obliterated himself into the shadows. Again the tiger arched. Out of the gloom came two figures that it was impossible not to recognise at a glance—the short, rotund form of Gan-Waga, and the tall, lean body of Gadra Singh, the cook. The starlight gleamed on the barrel of the cook's old-fashioned rifle.

"Moaz silly, Shinyface," said the cook, in a low voice. "It is I who am the great shikari, not Larput Raj."

"What a shikari, any olds hows, long ribbes?" asked the Eskimo. "What he do fo' a livings, hunk?"

"He hunt and shoot the game. Any moaz fathead know that," said Gadra Singh. "Any moaz big ass!"

"Yo' dids know, and I didn't, so that all

rightness," said Gan-Waga sweetly. "Yo both? hunk?"

"Sh! I hear him call, Shinyface; I hear him call while Larput Raj sleep by the fire. Oh, yes, I am a shikari, the moaz great! Others come, and, as you say it, they have much swank, and the sahibs believe them, but they will not believe Gadra Singh, and kick him back to his cooking-pots with kicks moaz hurting. So I show you, Shinyface. Old Stripes had bad hunting, so he's angry. Listen then, Shinyface!"

Gadra Singh dropped a bullet into the muzzle of the rifle, prodded it gently and firmly home with the ramrod, cocked the trigger, and fitted a percussion-cap on the nipple. Then he put one bony hand to his mouth, and imitated the bleating of a goat in all its perfection.

Ching-Lung had his doubts as to Gadra Singh's abilities as a shikari, though he had heard Duke Payton state that the cook had certain sporting instincts that sometimes made him neglect his pots and pans for a little game shooting.

The prince was not quite sure of himself. He was a skilled ventriloquist, but it was so long since he had tried to use that curious and bewildering trick of his voice that he was not confident of success. However, he did try. As Gadra Singh bent to listen, Ching-Lung pitched a stone down the slope, and a tiger's rasping snarl followed.

It was so close that the cook's eyes flashed with sudden excitement, and he dropped the rifle into his left palm and clapped the heel of the weapon against his naked shoulder. Then an elephant trumpeted.

Ching-Lung did not know whether there were any elephants in the vicinity, but he thought he might as well have an elephant as anything else.

Gan-Waga opened his mouth, and his head jerked to and fro as he tried to look in three or four directions at once.

"Wha-whass that, hunk?" he asked. "That a fog-horns, hunk?"

"Sh! An elephant, moaz foolish and fat one!" muttered the cook. "Shish! I make once more the goat-call and bring closer the tiger."

"He quite closefuls enough fo' me, old dears," said the Eskimo. "Yo' not think I stays to make suppers fo' any mangy tigers, hunk? I too fondness of myself, every old times. I not afraids to go homes in the darks. What sorts of butterfuls flowers yo' want on yo' graves, if there any of yo' lefted to bury, hunk, Sing-Songs?"

Ching-Lung suppressed a chuckle. In spite of his remarks, the little Eskimo was not the person who would abandon his new friend.

Once more the plaintive bleating of a goat was heard. Ching-Lung fancied he detected a slight rustling. On his side of the rock it was intensely dark. His shoulders were pressed against it. Perhaps it was merely his fancy, but the rock seemed to shake a little.

Then a shadowy thing that slowly took shape came swiftly between him and the sky—the tiger. The brute had leapt upon a boulder, and stood like a statue of ebony on a pedestal, utterly motionless, looking not at him, but over and above him.

Ching-Lung's hand went to his revolver. Gan-Waga had not brought any weapons with him, but he had brought an electric torch. He was fumbling with it, and accidentally pressed the spring. Out over the rock streamed the brilliant light, quite as much to the amazement of Gan-Waga as to that of the tiger. The beams shone full on the animal's head and muscular chest.

Gadra Singh snapped down the trigger, but the percussion-cap only snapped, cracked, and squibbed, without exploding the charge. With a howl of rage the cook clubbed the rifle, and while Gan-Waga, who was too startled to do anything else, worked the limelight, Gadra Singh smote the noble animal a crack on the head that must have jerked tears of anguish into the eyes of that lord of the jungle.

Uttering one snarl of fear and pain, the tiger gave a mighty bound into the shadows, and was gone like a phantom before Ching-Lung could fire a shot, and the disappointed cook raged and lamented.

Gan-Waga lighted a cigar.

"Look heres," he said at last, "yo' no goodness at shootings tigers, old dears. Yo' want a screwcorks when yo' try to fires that rotten guns to draw the bullet out. I killses tigers, betterness with a knife and forks. I hold the lights all brightfuls closefuls enough to scorch his whiskers, and then yo' misses him. Yo' betterer give ups tiger-shootings, Sing, and get a job as charwoman on an

airplanes. Yo' make morer money at that."

Gan-Waga went waddling away, and presently the cook slunk after him.

Greatly amused, Ching-Lung moved out of his hiding-place. He heard Ferrers Lord's deep voice, and saw the flicker of the match. Larput Raj was with the millionaire. In silence the three men looked out over the vast lake of mist.

"Did you feel a shock, Ching?" said the millionaire. "I thought I felt a faint, quite a little time ago."

"Yes, I did fancy that tuns big rock here trembled slightly, chief," answered Ching-Lung. "So it was a bit of earthquake?"

"It could be nothing else. What do you think, shikari?"

"The jungle is uneasy to-night, sahib," said Larput Raj. "Down yonder I hear the jungle people, and they are restless. Perhaps the news has reached them, sahib, that we come, thou and Larput Raj, thy shikari; and to the beasts of the jungle that is evil tidings, for to many we shall bring death. Ay, they are restless to-night, sahib!"

"Most likely that tremor of earthquake has unsettled them," said the millionaire.

"Or the tiger our new cook sent down in such a violent hurry with a very bad headache," said Ching-Lung. "I must tell you about that, chief. Hard luck robbed Gan-Waga and Gadra Singh of a very fine skin."

Ferrers Lord listened and laughed. "The breeze freshened," driving the mist at their feet northwards in great billows across the divide.

Suddenly Larput Raj extended his arm and pointed forward.

"Look, sahib!" he said, in a tense, strained voice. "Shupra is awakening!"

Against the grey of the distant sky two red lights showed side by side like angry eyes.

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"HIS FATHER'S SON!"

By Frank Richards.

Sidney James Snoop is not a favourite. There are very few redeeming qualities in this member of the Remove. He is as bad as Skinner—worse in some respects, I think.

But deep down in the worst there is nearly always something that can be touched, if only one can find it. And next week's story shows Snoop in a better light than anything that has gone before it.

It cannot be said that he shows up well this week. Most of you will feel disgusted with him. He puts his own responsibilities on the shoulders of others, and seems to feel very little gratitude to those who take them over. They are not his friends. He has done everything he well could do to earn the dislike of Tom Redwing; and Harry Wharton and Herbert Vernon-Smith certainly have no cause to love Snoop.

But at last there are signs of better things. Snoop remembers that he is his father's son. Not much to be proud of, you may say. But it is not of Josiah Snoop, the convict, that Snoop thinks of his father; but as "Private Smith," a man who has made good in the fields where manhood is proved. And Josiah Snoop makes good at home, too; and his son tries to follow in his footsteps—or, at least, means to try.

Will it last? Ah, who can tell that?

LIST OF GREYFRIARS STORIES IN THE "MAGNET" (continued).

- 164.—"The Greyfriars Clown."
- 165.—"The New Page."
- 166.—"The Greyfriars Wheelers."
- 167.—"The Prisoner of the Priory."
- 168.—"Last Man In!"
- 169.—"The Bully's Remorse."
- 170.—"Harry Wharton's Downfall."
- 171.—"The Greyfriars Tyrant."
- 172.—"The School on Strike."
- 173.—"Driven From School."
- 174.—"A Schoolboy's Honour."
- 175.—"The King's Guest."
- 176.—"Bulstrode on the War-path."

- 177.—"Barred by His People."
- 178.—"The Bully's Brother."
- 179.—"Bob Cherry in Search of His Father."
- 180.—"A Schoolboy's Cross-Roads."
- 181.—"Saved from Disgrace."
- 182.—"The Cook of the Walk."
- 183.—"Inky Minor."
- 184.—"The Schoolboy Millionaire."
- 185.—"The Slacker."
- 186.—"The Only Way."
- 187.—"Driven to the Wall."
- 188.—"Ashamed of His Father."
- 189.—"Sent to Coventry."
- 190.—"The Outlaws of the School."

NOTICES.

Correspondence.

E. Levell, 23, Palace Road, Bromley Road, Kent, wants to correspond with readers prepared to join club for helping blind soldiers and sailors.

M. W. Jones, 96, Portia Street, Hirst, Ashington, Northumberland, with readers all over the world.

C. M. Grimslett 265, Crossby Road, Seaforth, near Liverpool, with view of exchanging impressions of America, and books, etc.

L. Chandler, 385, Bell Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, with readers anywhere, preferably in Australia or Africa.

F. Clarke, 49, Judges' Street, Loughborough members wanted for correspondence and exchange club.

H. Kan, Wagerup, West Australia, with readers interested in stamp-collecting.

C. Robins, Evergreen Cottages, Carclaze, near St. Austell, Cornwall, with readers 13-14, in Canada.

C. Joseph, P.O., Box 159, Oudtshoorn, Cape Province, South Africa—with any MAGNET reader in England.

Miss Annie Black, 7, McLean Street, Ottawa, Canada—with girl reader in the British Isles.

Robert Black, 7, McLean Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada with a reader in any part of the Empire.

G. Wegger, Queen Street, Oudtshoorn, Cape Colony, South Africa—with readers, 12-15, in England and Colonies.

W. Doubleday, 24, Eagle Wharf Road, City Road, N. 1—from his old chum, G. Thornhill, late of Central Street, E.C.C., and Old Street P.C. Schools, who is believed to be in France with the R.F.A.

F. R. Jacobs, 37, Bayant Road, Norbury, Surrey—with foreign readers, preferably in India and China.

E. Smythe, 70, Claybrook Road, Hammer-smith, W.C., wishes to communicate with his friend whose mother lives at Windsor.

F. Lambert, 67, Whitefield Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wants to correspond with readers with the object of stamp-exchanging.

H. Broughton, 45, Wells Street, Haslingden, Lancs—with readers, 15-16, in New Zealand, Australia, or Canada.

Miss G. S. Smith, 6, Watkinson Street, Skipton, Yorks—with girl reader in New Zealand or Great Britain.

P. Brosilby, 11, King William Street, Fitzroy Street, Melbourne, Australia; with boy readers anywhere to exchange picture post-cards.

Clubs.

G. Green, Coleridge Avenue, E. 12—members for amateur boxing club, anyone in or round Lixton—weight 7-9st. Send stamped envelope.

N. Leiffe, Alfredale Place, Green Lane, Baldon, Yorks—Colonial readers to act as agents for foreign correspondence club.

W. Bannister, 35, Knowles Road, Bailey, York—members wanted for sports and exchange club.

E. A. Harrison, 11, Belmont Street, Picton Street, S.E. 15—members wanted for Wells Street Boys' Club—13-16.

G. Oliver, 5, Barry Avenue, N. 15—members wanted for club.

W. Jones, 55, Hassard Street, Hackney Road, E. 2—members wanted—stamped addressed envelope.

C. Crick, 9, Norwich Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey—members interested in photography wanted—stamped addressed envelope.

Your Editor