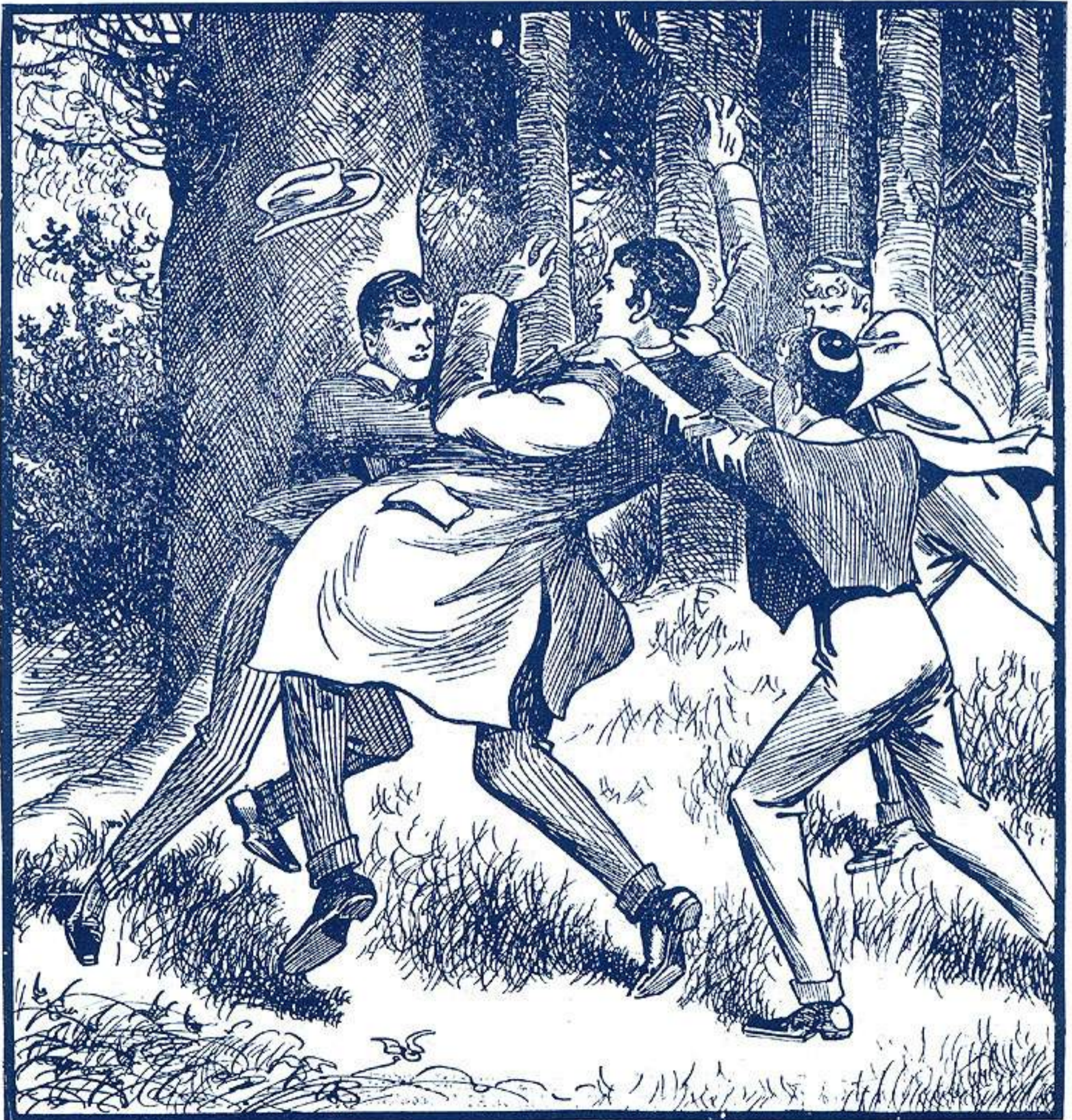


THE MAN FROM THE SOMME!



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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 lad 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 Janset 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 sins 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 here?" 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. "Well!"

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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 offending head of Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff that his bitter wrath was visited.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Soldier I

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—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!"

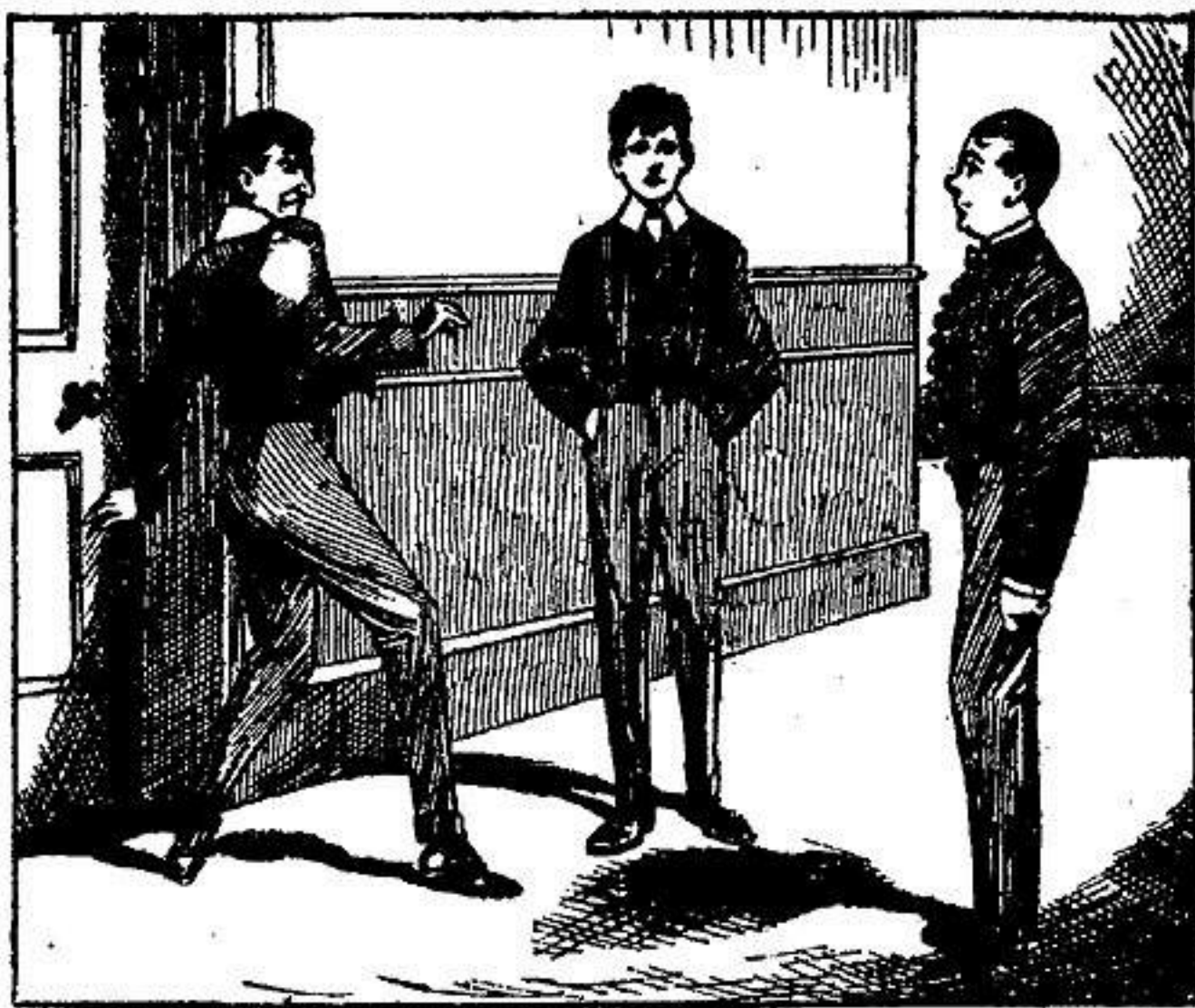
"Perhaps it isn't your business," suggested Redwing.

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, I agree with Snoop," he said aggressively. "I think it was like Smithy's cheek to make Snoopcy 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 cachinnation, 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 Quelchey 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 sailor'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."

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 over 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.

"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 Head 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 within 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 Remové 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—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,

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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.

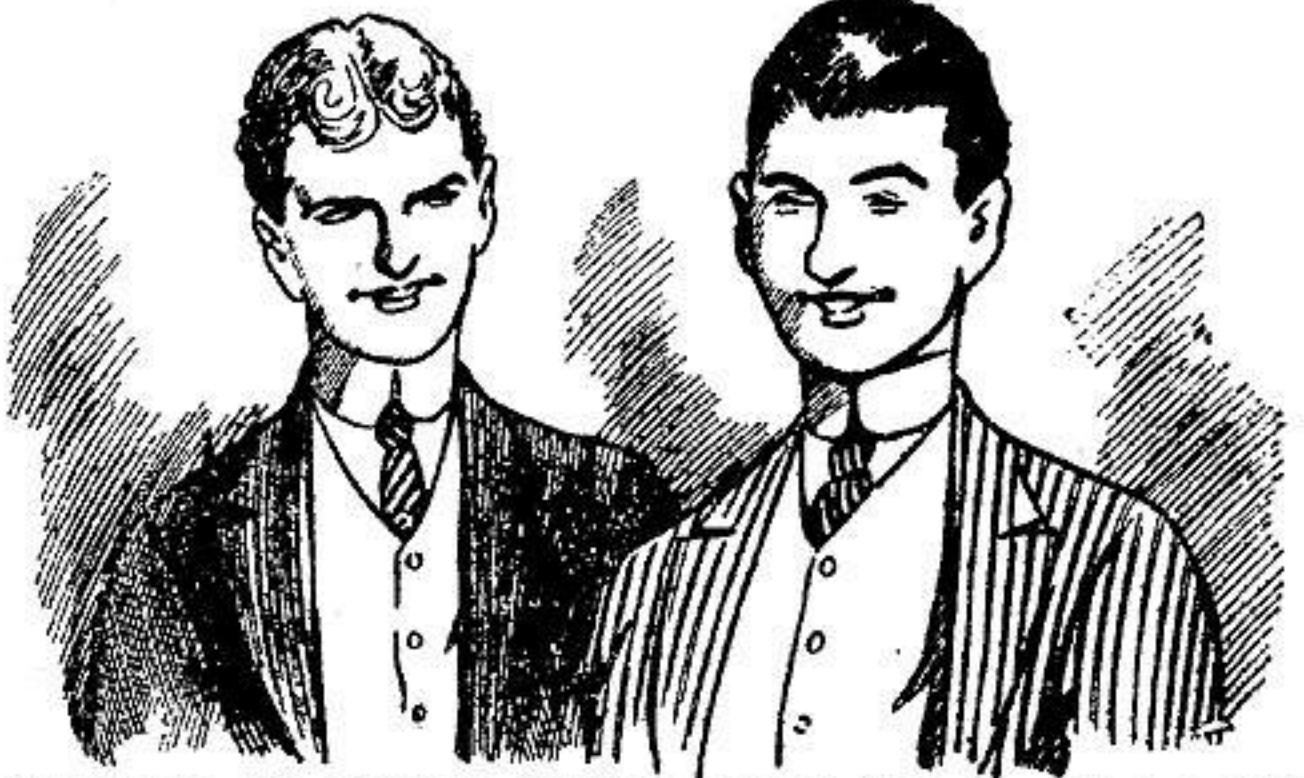
Vavasour can be set down as a funk all through. If he ever shows a spark of spirit, it soon flickers out. Skinner is pluckier than he; even Fish or Bunter or Snoop is not his inferior. Yet in the days before Pon came to Highcliffe Vavasour was the leader of the nuts. What a crew they must have been in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

