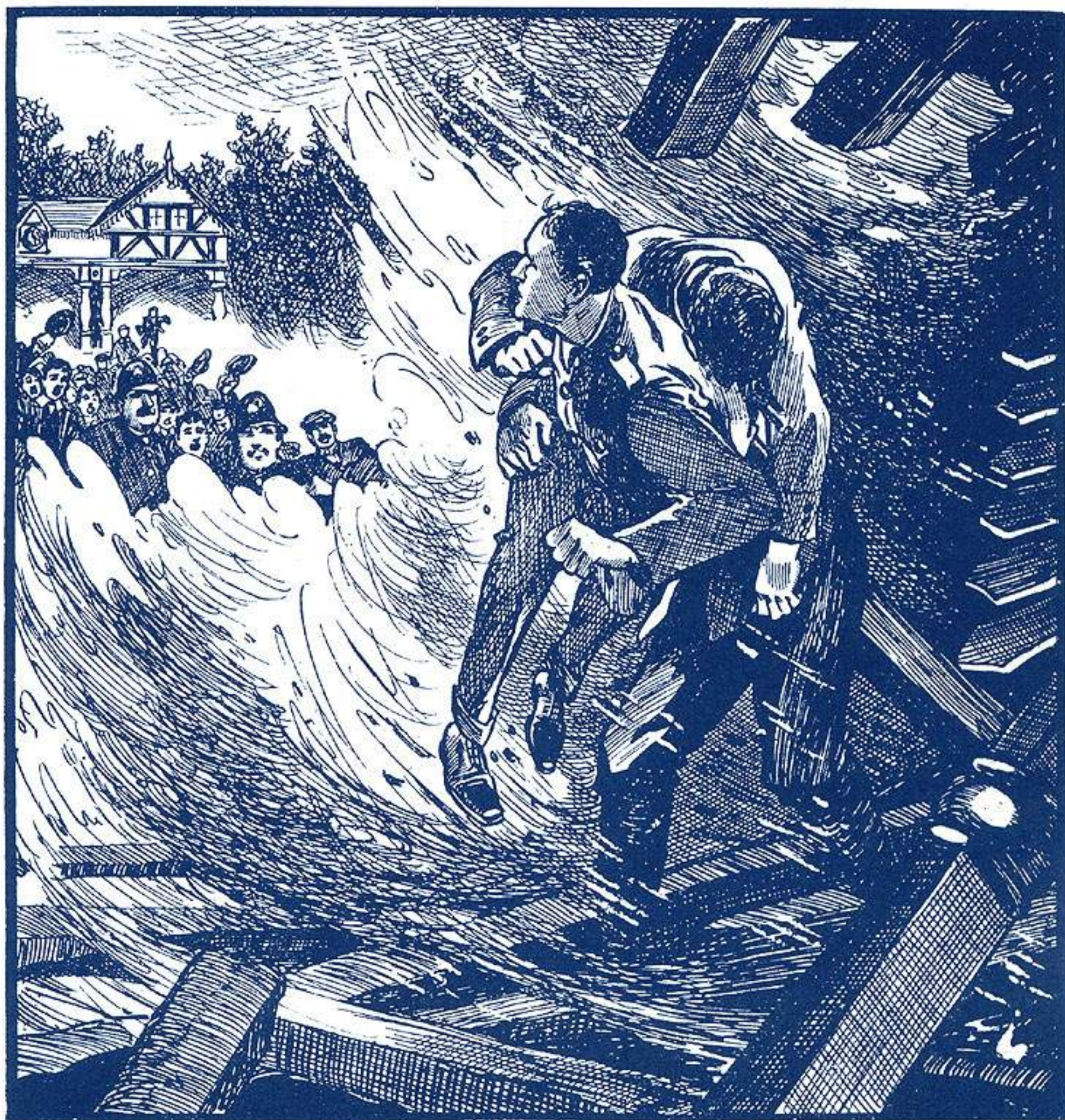


HIS FATHER'S SON!



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HIS FATHER'S SON!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Trouble Ahead!

"SNOOP!"

The Greyfriars Remove were at the breakfast-table when Mr. Quelch's stern voice addressed Sidney James Snoop.

Snoop gave a start.

"Yee, sir?" he stammered, standing up, and staring nervously towards the Form-master, at the head of the table.

Most of the Remove fellows glanced at Snoop, and at Mr. Quelch. It was evident from the Form-master's grave manner that something was up.

Harry Wharton & Co.—the Famous Five of the Remove—seemed more interested than the other fellows. They had reason to be. Harry Wharton thought he could guess what was up, though most of the Form were in the dark.

"Snoop," said Mr. Quelch, "after breakfast you will proceed at once to the Head's study."

"Yes, sir!" muttered Snoop.

He sat down again, pale and ill at ease.

His glance roved uneasily along the table, seeking Wharton's face, and then Vernon-Smith's, and then Redwing's.

All three of them were looking grim. "What's the trouble, Snoopey?" whispered Billy Bunter, who was always curious, and was afflicted with a desire to know everything.

Snoop did not answer.

But, after munching his war-bread in silence for a few minutes, Snoop rose to his feet.

"If you please, sir—" he began, looking along the table at the Remove-master.

"Well, Snoop?"

"Will you tell me, sir, what the Head wishes to see me for?" faltered Snoop.

Mr. Quelch gave him a surprised stare. The Remove listened to him in amazement. It was unprecedented for a junior to question a master in this way, and Snoop was about the last fellow who would have been expected to display so much nerve. Snoop was not famous for nerve—quite the reverse.

"Doubtless, Snoop, Dr. Locke will himself inform you!" said Mr. Quelch icily.

Snoop sat down again, crushed.

He kept his eyes on the tablecloth till breakfast was finished, but it was easy to read in his face the worry on his mind.

When breakfast was over the Removeites marched out, most of them going out into the sunny quadrangle for the short interval before lessons.

Snoop lingered in the hall.

He had to go to the Head's study; but he did not seem to be able to make up his mind to visit that dread sanctum.

Three juniors joined him as he hesitated there—Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and Tom Redwing. The trio were looking very grave.

Snoop gave them an almost haggard look.

"You've got me into this!" he muttered.

"Into what?" asked Harry Wharton quietly; while the Bounder smiled in a cynical way, and shrugged his shoulders.

Tom Redwing looked troubled.

"You know what the Head wants me for!" muttered Snoop. "It's about the affair of last evening. That man you collared—Clyne—has come down here to complain. I was afraid he would. I'm sure of it. Now I've got to face the Head. You—you promised to see me through, and this is what it comes to!"

Wharton gave the funk of the Remove a glance in which contempt and pity were curiously mingled.

How any fellow could get into such a state of funk was a mystery to the captain of the Remove.

"I suppose it's that, Snoop," said Harry, after a pause. "It may be something else, though."

"What else could it be?"

"Lots of things," said the Bounder cheerfully. "It may have come out about your smoking, or playing banker in the study with Stott, my boy."

"Oh, rot! You know very well what it is, and you got me into it!" snarled Snoop.

"If it's the affair of last evening, Snoop, you've nothing to fear," said Harry Wharton steadily. "We promised to see you through, and we meant it. If it's that, we're ready to come to the Head and take the blame."

"Certainly," said Redwing.

"Any old thing!" yawned the Bounder. "A licking won't hurt us. We've been there before."

And Smithy rubbed his hands as if in anticipation.

Snoop looked a little relieved.

"You can mention our names," went on Wharton. "In fact, we'll come as far as the study; and, if it's that affair, you can call us in. We'll speak up for ourselves."

"That—that's only fair, after what you promised," faltered Snoop.

"Quite so; and we mean it."

"I—I'll go, then."

And Sidney James Snoop turned his steps in the direction of the Head's study.

The three juniors followed him more slowly down the corridor, to be on the scene in case they were wanted. Snoop knocked at the Head's door and went in, and the trio waited. They were joined in the passage by Nugent and Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull. The Co. were interested.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore this merry procession?" asked Bob.

"We're the cheery culprits," said Vernon-Smith. "Snoop's going to beard the lion in his den, and we're waiting our turn to do the Daniel act. I don't think poor old Snoop will dare to be a Daniel, and stand alone—what?"

"But what's the row?" asked Johnny Bull.

"It's rather a secret," said Wharton

quietly. "Not from you fellows, of course—you can keep it mum. You know that Snoop's father is at Wapshot Camp; he enlisted under the name of Smith."

"I know," said Bob.

"You remember he met Redwing, and sent a message to Snoop to come out and meet him. It all came out, you know. Well, last evening we persuaded Snoop to go out and meet his father."

"He wanted persuading!" said Johnny Bull, with a curl of the lip.

"The funkfulness of the esteemed Snoop is great!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"He isn't exactly a hero, poor chap," said Wharton; "and it's a bit of a rotten position for him. It must be rotten for a fellow to know that his father's in prison."

"Well, rather," said Nugent. "I'm sorry for Snoop, though he isn't the kind of fellow to deserve much sympathy."

"Since Mr. Snoop bolted from chokey the bobbies have been looking for him," went on Wharton in a low voice. "He got clear by joining the Army, and getting out to Flanders. But he's been seen in uniform, and there's a detective hunting him now he's home on leave."

"Hard cheese!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's that man Clyne. You saw him when he came here to visit the Head. Well, we persuaded Snoop to take the risk of going out to meet his father, as the soldier-chap seemed so set on seeing him, and we promised to see him through. The detective man came on the scene, and we held him down while Snoop and his father cleared."

"Oh, great pip!"

"It was in the dark, and he couldn't have recognised us. We were careful not to let him hear our voices, too," said Harry. "But I suppose he's guessed that it was Greyfriars chaps who collared him. It wasn't hard to guess, I suppose. Snoop's being called over the coals."

"For that?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I suppose so. If it's that, we're going to own up and take the blame. We can't do less."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"And Snoop's going to call you in to own up?"

"Yes."

"Mean cad!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He ought to stand up and take his gruel like a man!"

"I don't think he's got the nerve."

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter rolled up—"I say, what's on, you know? What are you confabbing about?"

"Oh, buzz off!" snapped the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy, you can tell an old pal!" urged Bunter persuasively. "What's Snoop done? I say—Here, keep off, you beast!"

Bob Cherry introduced his boot into the conversation at that point, and the Owl of the Remove departed hurriedly, with a yell. Then the juniors waited, in a grim mood, for the expected summons into the Head's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Soldier's Son!

"COME in, Snoop!" Snoop closed the door behind him, and advanced towards Dr. Locke's desk.

The Head of Greyfriars was looking very severe.

There was another man in the study, whom Snoop recognised as Mr. Clyne, the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

Snoop's eyes glittered at the sight of him.

Mr. Clyne was only doing his duty—a painful and unpleasant duty, certainly. But the son of the man he was hunting could not be expected to make allowance for that. Mr. Clyne's belief was that the escaped convict had skulked into the Army as a safe hiding-place from justice. It was natural that he should think so. His profession did not tend to faith in human nature. But Sidney Snoop knew that his father was trying to atone for the shameful past by serving his country, and Harry Wharton and his friends knew it, too. It was because of this that they had stood by the unfortunate man in his distress.

And Snoop, nervous and irresolute as he was, was not selfish and cowardly quite all through. The hurried interview with his fugitive father had made a deep impression upon him. His father's wrongdoing had disgraced him in the past, and made his position at Greyfriars a painful one.

Snoop had bitterly resented it. He had hoped that he would never see or hear of his father again. But the sight of the bronzed man in khaki had strangely moved him.

His father was not what he had been. He was a man any son might have been proud of, in spite of the miserable shadow of the past. Snoop, somewhat to his own surprise, had found himself thinking more of his father than of himself. In spite of his fears and uneasiness, he was proud of the bronzed man in khaki who had stood up to the furious onrush of the Germans on the Somme.

And Harry Wharton & Co. would have been surprised if they had known of the fixed determination in Snoop's heart that, whatever the results to himself, he would never utter one word that could bring danger to the man from the Somme.

Unconsciously, the junior stood more erect than usual, and his eyes met the Head's glance with unusual steadiness. It was borne in upon Snoop's mind that he was the son of a soldier, and that he was called upon not to discredit his father's uniform.

Mr. Clyne did not speak; but he watched the junior very keenly as the Head addressed him. Mr. Clyne's interest in the whole affair was quite impersonal. He was simply "after his man," and "his man" he meant to have, by hook or crook.

"Snoop," said the Head, in a deep voice, "I understand that you were out of school bounds after locking-up last evening?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Snoop.

"You admit it?"

"It's true, sir."

"Very well! Did you make an attack upon Mr. Clyne in the fir-wood near the school?"

"No, sir."

"Be careful what you say, Snoop," said the Head quietly. "My boy, I have already expressed my sympathy for you in the position in which you are placed. It was not your fault that your father did wrong, and I cannot think that it is your duty to give information that would lead to your father's arrest. The duty of a son to his father transcends all other



At the breakfast-table! (See Chapter 1.)

duties. But there is a limit, Snoop. While you remain at Greyfriars you cannot think it right and proper to hold communication with a man who is, in point of fact, a fugitive from justice."

Snoop's lip trembled, and he was silent. "Mr. Clyne has information that the man he seeks has entered the Army, and is concealing himself from pursuit in the King's uniform," said the Head. "That much appears to be certain. He has reasons to believe that the man is lurking about the school, apparently for an interview with you, Snoop. He informs me that he came upon such an interview in the fir-wood yesterday evening, and would have succeeded in arresting his prisoner, but he was suddenly attacked and held down by three or four persons whom he could not see in the dark. He concludes that these persons were friends of yours, belonging to Greyfriars. That is the case, Mr. Clyne?"

"Precisely sir," said the detective.

"Mr. Clyne has very naturally complained to me," resumed the Head. "I am bound to ascertain the truth of the affair. You appear to have induced Greyfriars boys to break the law, Snoop; for you must be aware that it is a very serious infraction of the law to interfere with a police-officer in the execution of his duty."

Snoop set his lips hard.

The miserable fears of his pusillanimous nature were rising in his breast, and he cast a glance towards the door.

Wharton, Redwing, and the Bounder had persuaded him to that meeting in their sympathy and concern for the unhappy man from the Somme. They had promised to see him through, and to take the consequences; and they were ready to keep their word.

He had only to call them in.

But he set his teeth in a real effort to keep up his courage. A new spirit was rising in Snoop since his meeting with the war-worn soldier.

He did not speak, and he did not move.

"Well, Snoop?" said the Head, at last. "Kindly explain yourself! Were you concerned in this attack upon Mr. Clyne?"

"I did not take part in it, sir."

"You were with your father in the fir-wood, as Mr. Clyne suspects?"

"Yes," said Snoop desperately.

Mr. Clyne broke in.

"You suspected that I was on the watch, and you arranged with your friends to seize me if I came on the scene?" he exclaimed.

Snoop gave him a look of hatred and defiance.

"Yes, I did!" he said, between his teeth, "and I'd do the same again! Why can't you let my father alone?"

"Snoop!" said the Head sternly.

"The boy confesses," said Mr. Clyne drily. "It is clear now that he knows where the man is, and has held communication with him. It is known to others, too—those who helped him last night. I demand their names!"

"You must give Mr. Clynes the names of those who attacked him, Snoop."

Snoop faltered.

"I—I can't, sir!"

"What?" exclaimed the Head.

"I—I can't!" stammered Snoop.

"They helped me to see my father! He's back from the Somme—he's been wounded! It's a lie to say that he's hiding in the Army! He joined the Army to fight for his country! He's fought, too. He was wounded in the big offensive. Why can't that man let him alone? He hasn't been out on the Somme, like my father!"

Mr. Clyne bit his lip.

The Head frowned.

"You will not improve your position, Snoop, by insulting Mr. Clyne!"

"I don't care!" exclaimed Snoop, with half-hysterical recklessness. "I don't care! I know what he wants to see those chaps for—to ask them about my father, and where to find him. They won't tell him. They know my father's a good soldier, and they wouldn't say a word to hurt him. But I sha'n't give him the chance to ask them. I won't say a word!"

"Snoop!"

The Head's voice was like thunder. Snoop, with a sudden shiver, realised what he was doing, and he faltered and changed colour. His new-found courage oozed away.

"I—I—I—" he stammered. "I—I—I can't betray my father, sir! Besides, what's the good of taking him? He's wanted in the Army. He's going back to the Front, sir—"

"That is not for you to decide, Snoop. Your father will be dealt with justly. You admit that you have broken the law in preventing a police-officer from carrying out his duty. Are you aware that Mr. Clyne has the power to give you into custody?"

Snoop trembled. "And that I shall do so immediately," said Mr. Clyne, in a grinding voice, "unless you tell me at once where the man is hiding!"

"My—my father?"

"The convict I am in search of!" said Mr. Clyne coldly.

Snoop felt almost giddy. Again he was tempted to call in the juniors from the passage. They would have taken the blame of this from his shoulders. But it would have been to expose them to the same threat. And what would their answer have been? They knew that "Private Smith" was in the Leamshire Fusiliers, and that he was at that very moment in Wapshot Camp, a few miles from Greyfriars.

They had broken the law in handling the detective. It was an offence they could be charged with at law, and punished for. Would they refuse to harm his father, even at the price of a disgraceful punishment?

Wharton he could be sure of. He knew that. But the cool, cynical Bounder, and Tom Redwing, the sailor-man's son, who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship, and whom he had always injured and insulted in miserable snobbishness—could he rely upon them to face so much for his sake?

The detective's eyes read his face, and read there the doubt, the fear, the miserable apprehension. He was sure of his game now. The affair in the fir-wood had given him power, and he was going to use it.

"Speak!" he snapped. "You can tell me where the man is, or you can give me the names of the boys who helped you last night, who, I am sure, can give me the same information. Take your choice!"

"Mr. Clyne!" murmured the Head.

"Excuse me, sir, this matter is in my hands!" said the detective sharply. "I have been assaulted in the execution of my duty. A criminal has escaped owing to that interference. This boy and his confederates are liable to severe penalties. I have no desire, sir, to bring disgrace upon your school. But I have my duty to do. My prisoner escaped me last night owing to the action of boys in this school. I doubt whether I am justified in allowing them to escape the legal consequences of their conduct. Certainly I cannot allow a convict to escape also. My lad, you will give me the information I require, or you will be questioned next in a cell in the police-station! I have no time for trifling!"

The detective's voice rang out angrily. It was easy to see how bitterly Mr. Clyne resented the interference which had balked him in the very moment of success.

"I am sorry, Snoop," said the Head, in a gentler voice, "but you have placed yourself in this position; and interference is out of my power. You must answer Mr. Clyne."

Snoop did not speak. "Very well," said the detective. "You will come with me!"

The junior started back with a cry.

"You—you will arrest me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Clyne grimly.

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"Dr. Locke!" Snoop's look was wild and terrified. "Can he—can he—"

"I fear so, my boy," answered the Head pityingly. "You have prevented the arrest of a man for whom a warrant is issued, Snoop, and an assault was made upon an officer of the law. The matter is serious."

"I have no desire to be hard on the boy," said Mr. Clyne. "But he must undo the harm he has done."

"And give up my father?" panted Snoop. "I—I can't! I won't! You can take me if you like!"

"Snoop!"

"You can arrest me, if you choose," panted Snoop hysterically. "I won't say a word about my father! I—I tell you he was wounded on the Somme—he was in the worst of it at the Front! You sha'n't touch him. You can take me instead!"

Mr. Clyne looked at him long and hard.

Whether the junior's father was worthy of his faith in him or not there was no doubt that Snoop was speaking as he believed. To him Private Smith was not the escaped convict of old; he was the bronzed soldier, the man who had fought the Germans and redeemed the miserable past in the King's khaki. Mr. Clyne was a hard man—his calling made him so—but there was a human heart in his breast.

He turned to the Head, picking up his Homburg hat from a chair as he did so.

"Good-morning, sir!" he said crisply. "My business here is finished. Good-morning, to you, my lad!"

He left the study before either could reply.

Snoop gazed after him blankly, almost dizzily, as the door closed.

He could not realise his escape, for the moment.

The Head drew a deep, deep breath of relief.

"You have had a very fortunate escape, Snoop," he said quietly. "Mr. Clyne has apparently decided to overlook the matter, and he has been very kind to do so. I warn you not to let anything of the sort occur again. You may go."

Snoop tottered from the study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Unexpected!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had been looking intently out of the corridor window into the green quadrangle when Mr. Clyne passed, coming from the Head's study.

They did not want to meet Mr. Clyne's eyes.

True, it was impossible that he could guess that three of them—Wharton, Redwing, and the Bounder—were the fellows who had handled him in the fir-wood the evening before. He had not seen them in the dark.

All the same, it was only judicious to keep Mr. Clyne at arm's length. Unless Snoop gave them away to the Head, and they had to own up, the trio were not keen on making closer acquaintance with Mr. Clyne.

The detective hardly glanced at them as he passed, however.

To his eyes they were simply a group of schoolboys like any other, and did not attract his attention.

They were glad when he had passed, however.

"Well, he's gone!" said Tom Redwing, when the detective disappeared from sight at the end of the corridor.

"The gonfulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "It seems that the esteemed Snoop has not given you fellows awayfully."

The Bounder rubbed his nose.

"The Head must have wanted him

about something else, I suppose," he observed. "I thought perhaps it was a false alarm. Snoop's been spotted smoking, or hanging about the Cross Keys, very likely."

"I suppose it must be something of that sort," said Harry Wharton, in relief. "Of course, we'd have had to keep our word to Snoop, and take the blame off him; but I'd rather the affair didn't come out. I don't know what's the legal view of handling a detective on duty; but it must be serious—a bit more serious than struck us at the time, I fancy!"

"The seriousness is—"

"Terrific!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Snoopey! Snoopey can enlighten us!"

Sidney James Snoop came away from the Head's study, and as he saw the group of juniors in the window recess he joined them there. He was looking almost dazed, and his face was colourless.

"What's happened?" asked the Bounder briefly.

Snoop gasped for breath.

"Oh, I've had an escape! I—I—" He shivered. "Oh, I've had a shock! I—I came near—near—near—"

"Near what?"

"Going to prison!"

"What?" ejaculated the juniors.

"He was going to arrest me!?"

whispered Snoop.

"For what?" asked Wharton.

"Because I wouldn't give him the names of the fellows who collared him last night."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Snoop dumbfounded. That was about the last reply they would have expected him to make.

"You—you refused to give our names?" stuttered the Bounder at last.

Snoop nodded.

"And—and why?"

"Because he might have got out of you where my father was," whispered Snoop. "You broke the law in touching him, and he could have arrested you. You'd have been taken before a magistrate. Well, it stands to reason one of you would have let something out."

"We should not," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"No, you wouldn't, but Smithy might, or Redwing!"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder ironically.

Redwing coloured, but he did not speak.

"Well, you would, you know," said Snoop. "You couldn't possibly have faced the disgrace. What would your people have said? And you'd have been asked to leave Greyfriars afterwards! You'd have let out about my father, and that beast would have collared him."

"Then he did let you off?" asked the Bounder, changing the subject.

"I—I don't know! I told him I wouldn't tell him," muttered Snoop. "He—he seemed to change his mind. I—I suppose he felt like a beast. I know he acted like one. The Head said he could arrest me if he liked. The law was broken, you know, and it seems to be a serious matter to touch a policeman who's after a—a—a man. I suppose it is, of course. I—I thought he was going to take me."

Snoop trembled from head to foot.

The juniors could only stare. That Snoop had been scared almost out of his wits was clear; yet he had found the courage, somehow, to stand up to the danger. It was not like Snoop, and it puzzled them.

"I—I don't know how I stood it," said Snoop, as if answering their unspoken thoughts. "I was frightened—horribly frightened. But—but I couldn't give my father away, could I, or risk you fellows

doing it? Of course, you don't agree about that, perhaps—"

"But we do," said Wharton. "I'm glad you stood up to him, Snoop, and I think a heap better of you than I did. You're not such a funk as you make out."

"It was plucky, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Of course, if you did anything to hurt your own father you ought to be boiled in oil. Still—"

"Still, you thought I'd do it to save my own skin!" said Snoop, with a sneer.

"Well, yes, I admit that!"

"Well, I didn't!"

"I'm glad you didn't. And I'm going to change my opinion of you," said Bob, with a smile. "You've got more pluck than you own up to."

Snoop smiled faintly.

"You—you don't understand, you fellows!" he muttered. "You see, my pater, he did go wrong once, I know, and I came near hating him for the disgrace he brought on the family. But—but now he's a soldier. Think of him, out there on the Somme, standing up to those devils when they were ten to one! I should be a worm if I didn't stand by him after that! I—I never realised it, somehow, until I saw him last night. I'd been thinking of him as he used to be. I never really knew that he was changed; but when I met him, looking just like any other Tommy, it seemed different. And it's not such jolly easy work, either, at his age!"

He faltered.

"He's a good plucked 'un," said Johnny Bull. "Lots of chaps who weren't worth ninepence as civilians have made good in the Army. It's a man's life, and it makes a man of a fellow."

"There goes the bell!" said Nugent.

The juniors moved away for the Remove Form-room. They were glad enough that the matter had ended so well; and they were surprised, and glad, at the streak of real courage Snoop had shown.

For his father's sake he had faced a danger that would have daunted many a pluckier fellow; for there was no doubt that Mr. Clyne could have carried out his threat if he had chosen; and if he had done so Snoop could hardly have remained at Greyfriars afterwards, even if a severe punishment by the law had not fallen upon him.

The Army had made a man of the father; and, strangely enough, it seemed that it was to make a man of the son, too!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Skinner!

SKINNER and Stott joined Sidney James Snoop when the Remove came out after lessons. Both of them were curious to know why their pal had been called before the Head. Snoop had no intention of explaining to them, however. Skinner and Stott were his pals, but he did not trust them—any more than they trusted him, as a matter of fact.

"What did the old sport want?" was Skinner's question.

"Eh? What old sport?" asked Snoop, to gain time.

"The Head, of course!"

"Somebody seen you near the Cross Keys?" grinned Stott.

"Ye-es, exactly!" muttered Snoop, glad to let it go at that. Sidney James Snoop was showing signs of improvement; but it had not yet occurred to him that he was under any obligation to tell the truth. "It was all right, though. I got off!"

"Lucky you!" said Skinner.

"Yes; it was lucky!" muttered Snoop.

"I've got a wheeze," went on Skinner, "about that fellow Redwing!"

"What about Redwing?" asked Snoop irritably.

Snoop's feelings towards his new study-mate had changed considerably.

He had joined heartily in the snobbish persecution of the sailorman's son, and Tom Redwing had repaid him with kindness and help. Even Snoop was not quite proof against that.

He did not like Redwing; his was not the nature to do so. He did not feel especially grateful. But he felt that he could not join in any further attacks upon the fellow who had befriended him when he needed help, and he did not feel inclined to do so.

"The sneaking outsider seems to be getting on like fire in the Form," said Skinner. "Of course, I take no notice of him."

"He doesn't take much of you," said Snoop.

"Eh?" Skinner stared at him. "What do you mean, Snoop? I suppose you haven't come round, like the rest, and got friendly with that cad?"

"I think he's a decent sort," said Snoop doggedly.

"You didn't think so yesterday."

"Never mind what I thought yesterday! I don't want to take a hand in anything against Redwing."

"It's the Bounder's doing!" grinned Stott. "Smithy says that if Snoop bothers Redwing any more he's going to make a hullabaloo about Snoop's pater. You know what happened to Snoop's pater."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop gave his chums a fierce look.

"What are you cackling at, Skinner?" he exclaimed.

Skinner chortled.

"Well, I suppose you don't want all that dragged up, Snoop!" he remarked. "And Smithy is a determined beast. Still, you can lend us a hand without Smithy knowing."

"It isn't that. I'm not afraid of Smithy. I'm going to let Redwing alone because he's a decent chap."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Skinner curtly. "Now, my idea is this. We'll go down to Hawkscliff, where Redwing used to live, and dig up some old acquaintance of his—some boozy longshoreman. We'll fill him up with liquor, and persuade him to visit Redwing here."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Stott.

"Think of Redwing's feelings when a tipsy longshoreman came reeling into the school, claiming him as an old pal!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Stott roared with laughter. But Snoop did not. A day or two before he would have entered into the wretched scheme with zest. But he was too troubled about his father now to have much appreciation of Skinner's humour; and his feelings had changed towards Tom Redwing.

"We'll club together to get a bottle of whisky," said Skinner. "Equal whacks all round, you know. It will be as easy as falling off a form. We'll pick out the booziest longshoreman we can find at Hawkscliff—"

"We won't!" said Snoop.

"I tell you, Smithy needn't know you had a hand in it!"

"I'm not going to have a hand in it!"

"Oh, stand out of it, then, if you're scared!" said Skinner contemptuously.

"We can work it without you."

"You can't!" said Snoop resolutely.

"Eh? Why can't we?"

"Because I won't let you!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Skinner and Stott fairly jumped.

This was a new Snoop—a Snoop they had never known before. He was gener-

ally supposed to be the funkiest of the three. But he was looking dogged and determined now, and his eyes were gleaming. It was strange enough, perhaps—and yet not wholly strange—that his father's example should have made so much difference to the funk of the Remove. Perhaps his father's courage in the fighting-line had shown Snoop that there must be a strain of courage in himself somewhere, if he gave it a chance to show itself. And he was conscious, too, that the more he fought down his weak pusillanimity the easier it became to keep it subdued.

The astonishment of Skinner and Stott was so great that they could only stare at Sidney James for some time. In fact, they quite blinked at him.

"You—you—you won't let us!" ejaculated Skinner at last, like a fellow who wondered whether he was dreaming.

"No, I won't let you!"

"Why, you sneaking, funky cad," said Skinner, with growing wrath, "so you're standing up for that outsider, like the rest? Well, suppose I give you a jolly good hiding for your cheek—what then?"

"Give it me!" said Snoop.

"Wha-at?"

"You've bragged a good many times that you can lick me," said Snoop. "I've let you gas. Well, I'm not so jolly sure of it. You can try it on if you like!"

"You worm! You know I could kick you round the quad if I liked!" shouted Skinner, greatly enraged.

"Go it then!" said Snoop. "I'll do as much kicking as you do, anyway!"

"He's potty!" said Stott.

That was the only possible explanation to Stott's mind.

"I'll knock some of the pottiness out of him, then," said Skinner, pushing back his cuffs. "I'm not standing this from the sneakiest funk at Greyfriars. Come on, you cad, and have your lesson!"

Snoop put up his hands.

As Skinner came on, with a savage look, Snoop's heart failed him, and he backed away. Skinner grinned, and pressed him harder, and his knuckles came home on Snoop's nose.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came up with a rush. "Trouble in the smoky family—what?" Go it, Snoopey! Buck up! Don't let him lick a soldier's son, old scout!"

Those words of encouragement meant more to Snoop than the cheery Bob knew.

Instinctively he straightened up, and faced Skinner with more firmness. He was a soldier's son—the son of a man who had faced death in a hundred hideous forms without flinching.

It was up to him not to be a coward. Snoop bucked up; and Skinner, to his surprise, found his attack stopped, and that it was Snoop who was coming on.

Remove fellows gathered from far and near as the news spread that Snoop was fighting. It was a very unusual piece of news.

"By gad!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth, as he came up with a crowd. "Snoop—Snoop fightin'! Has he been drinkin'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And wirrin', begad!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Go it, Snoopey! Give him another on his boko!"

Crash!

Harold Skinner was down!

"Bravo, Snoopey!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Well hit!"

"Right on the wicket!" chuckled Bob.

Skinner sat up dazedly. Stott gave him a helping hand to his feet. Snoop

squared up again, but Skinner did not seem very anxious to recommence.

"What's the row about?" asked Squiff.

"Dispute over cigarettes—what?" asked Hazeldene.

"He's backin' up that outsider Redwing," said Stott; "and Skinner's goin' to lick him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton in surprise.

"Are you coming on, Skinner?" panted Snoop.

"Hang you!" growled Skinner. And he walked away.

"Who's the funk now?" yelled Snoop. Skinner did not answer that question.

He quickened his pace, and disappeared, followed by derisive laughter from the juniors.

Bob Cherry patted Snoop on the back.

"Snoopey, old son, I take back a lot of the things I've thought about you!" he said. "Keep on like this, my boy. And if you're taking up boxing, come and have the gloves on with me this evening. I'll teach you how to stand up to some really hard hitting."

"Thanks, no!" answered Snoop very hastily.

He had no desire to sample Bob Cherry's hard hitting.

But Snoop had risen in the estimation of his Form-fellows, and fellows who had never taken any notice of his existence before now sometimes honoured him with a cheery nod.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Redwing Takes a Hand!

TOM REDWING came into his study after tea, and found Snoop alone there. Stott was rather avoiding his study-mate since the row with Skinner. Snoop was looking out of the window, with a gloomy and thoughtful expression on his face; but he looked round and nodded as Redwing came in.

Tom Redwing gave him a rather curious look.

He had heard about the fight with Skinner, and its cause, and it had surprised him. Snoop had been one of the bitterest persecutors of the sailorman's son, who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship. A miserable snobbishness had always been a leading trait in Snoop's character. Redwing had helped him in the matter of his father, partly from a generous kindness of heart, and partly from a natural desire to serve any man in khaki. He had not expected it to make any difference to Snoop; in fact, he had not thought about that at all. But evidently it had made a difference.

"Hallo! Going to work?" asked Snoop.

"Yes; I've got a lot to do," answered Tom.

"Still working for a prize?" asked Snoop.

"Yes. Linley's helping me," said Tom quietly.

Snoop had often indulged in sneers about prize-hunters; but he was not sneering now.

Snoop moved restlessly about the study for a few minutes, while Redwing sat down to work.

"Busy?" he asked at last.

Tom laid down the pen he had taken up.

"Not if you want to talk," he said.

"Anything up?"

"You helped me yesterday," said Snoop.

"That's nothing."

"I—I suppose I owe you an apology," mumbled Snoop. "I haven't treated

you very well since you came into the school, Redwing."

Tom smiled.

"That's all right," he said. "I expected some fellows would take your view, but very few did. It doesn't matter."

"Well, I'm sorry. I—I didn't really mean to be a cad; it was really more thoughtlessness than anything else. I just acted without thinking."

"It's all right," said Tom. "If you've got over it, I'm glad."

"Well, you helped me yesterday," said Snoop, returning to the subject.

Tom gave him an inquiring look.

"Can I help you again?" he asked, guessing that all this was leading to something.

"Will you?" asked Snoop.

"Certainly, if I can."

"Suppose it's risky?"

"Is it about your father?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't mind the risk"

"I know I oughtn't to ask you," said Snoop in a low voice. "It's like my cheek; I know that. But—but you seemed interested in my father. It was really you that persuaded me to meet him last evening. I shouldn't have gone otherwise, I think. I'm glad I went—now. I understand things better now I've seen him. But—but—but it was only for a minute. That beast of a detective came along! I had only a few words—"

"It couldn't be helped," said Tom. "I'm glad he got clear."

"Yes. But—but he wanted to talk to me," said Snoop. "I believe he's thought a lot about me while he was out there, at the Front. I never thought much of him, and—and that seems to weigh on my mind now, somehow. He's in the draft for Monday, he told me."

"Going back to Flanders?"

"Yes."

"I know what you feel like about that, Snoop," said Tom gravely. "But it may be all for the best in this case. Out there he will be safe from the detective, and I believe he would rather face danger than—"

He paused.

"I know he would," said Snoop.

"It's not only that. Lots of fellows have their fathers out there, and they have to stand that. But—but I want to see him before he goes, and have a jaw with him, Redwing. I may never see him alive again. And—and he wants to see me. I'm his son, you know. Not much to care for, perhaps," added Snoop bitterly. "But he don't see that. I—I told him I'd fix it up, somehow, when he had to run last night."

Redwing's face was very grave.

"It's risky for him, as well as you," he said. "It's against the law to have dealings with a man wanted by the police. But I think a magistrate would take an easy view of that in your case, under the circumstances. But the risk for him! That detective is hanging about. He knows the poor chap is here to see you, and he will be on the watch, in case he tries it on again."

"I know. He mustn't come anywhere near Greyfriars," said Snoop hastily.

"But I've been thinking that out. There's a cricket-match at Lantham on Saturday afternoon—a khaki team from Wapshot Camp is meeting the Ramblers. The pater has leave on Saturday afternoon; he's told me that. He could go over to Lantham with a crowd of soldiers. There will be a lot of Tommies going to see the game. In a crowd like that he would be safe, I should think, especially as that beast Clyne is hanging about here. Lantham's a good many miles from here."

Redwing nodded.

"If I got word to him to go over to Lantham on Saturday afternoon I could see him there," went on Snoop. "I think it would be safe."

"But you?" said Redwing. "I'm pretty certain that Mr. Clyne is watching the school, and he may have two or three plain-clothes men helping him. I'm afraid that you won't be able to leave the school without being followed, Snoop, and you don't want to guide them to your father."

"That's the rub," said Snoop miserably. "But don't you think that if I went out with a crowd of fellows on bikes, Clyne wouldn't think anything of it? It would look just like an ordinary bike run."

"It's possible, of course."

"But you think—"

"Well, I think the chances are ten to one you'd get through all right," said Tom. "But the off-chance is what you've got to think of. And if the detective did follow you your father would be landed. That dodge of collar-ing Clyne couldn't be worked again—in the daylight, too."

"I must see him!" muttered Snoop. "Think of it, Redwing! He's going back to the Somme, and you know what it's like there! You know how many men have gone down. It's pretty rotten that a chap can't say good-bye to his own father before he goes out to that inferno!"

"It's cruel hard luck!" said Tom. "Look here, Snoop, if you feel like that about it, it's got to be worked. Do you mind if I speak to the other fellows about it—Smithy and Wharton and his friends, I mean? They can be relied on. The less said to anybody else the better, of course."

"I don't suppose they'd care to help. They're not friends of mine. Still, you're not, if you come to that!" added Snoop.

"They would help if they could," said Redwing quietly. "We may be able to manage it among us. If you go, you'll have to go in a crowd—and they'll be the crowd. Smithy's awfully keen, too; he may think of something."

"I'll leave it to you, then," said Snoop. "But about getting word to my father at Wapshot? I daren't write. You know that letters are sometimes opened in the post now."

"A letter to a soldier wouldn't be, at a camp," said Redwing, smiling. "Letters are only interfered with for censorship purposes."

"I don't know—it's risky. That man Clyne may have a way," said Snoop nervously. "You see, he knows my father came here to see me. He knows that he interrupted our meeting. He may be keeping a watch on any letter I write, or he may be able to see the letters in the local post-office that are addressed to soldiers. He might—"

"It's not likely."

"But it's possible, isn't it?"

"Well, no, I don't think it's possible," said Redwing honestly. "Still, you can't be too careful, with a man's liberty at stake. But word can be got to your father at Wapshot. You know the name he uses, and you know his regimental number—"

"Yes."

"Well, soldiers are allowed to receive visitors at camp."

"If I go, that beast will find out that my father's at Wapshot—"

"You mustn't go, of course. But I could go," said Tom. "In fact, I was going to Wapshot this week to see a Hawkscliff man who's joined up."

Snoop's face brightened.

"Then you—"

"Write a note, and I'll take it for you," said Tom. "It will be easy enough to

ask for Private Smith and give him a note. If I can't see him to-morrow, I'll try again; in fact, I'll go down to-day, if you like. I could get leave to come in after locking-up easily enough. Wingham will give me a pass, to see a soldier friend in camp. I'll try to-day, and if I don't see him I'll try again to-morrow. That will be in time for Saturday."

"You're a good chap, Redwing!" said Snoop gratefully.

Redwing rose from the table.

"I'll bike over to Wapshot now," he said. "Smithy will lend me his jigger. I'll speak to the fellows when I come back. They'll all be indoors then."

"Thank you!" said Snoop. "I know it's cheek to bother you—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom, with a smile. "Just write the note, Snoop."

He left the study, leaving Snoop looking a little more cheerful. He dropped into Vernon-Smith's study to ask for the loan of the bicycle, which was at once accorded. Snoop's note to his father was safe in an inside pocket.

A few minutes later Tom Redwing wheeled the machine out at the gates.

He mounted in the road, and pedalled along in a leisurely way towards Courtfield—the opposite direction from that in which he intended to ride. It was not likely that he would be taken special note of if a watch was being kept, but he left nothing to chance.

A man was leaning against a tree near the school, apparently lighting a pipe—an obstinate pipe, which took a long time to light. He gave Redwing one glance as he passed; but it was a very keen, sharp glance, and the junior, with all his senses on the alert, was quite aware of it.

He gave no sign, however, as he rode on.

He knew now what he had suspected before—that a watch was being kept by Mr. Clyne and his myrmidons. It was certain that Snoop could not leave the school without being followed.

Further up the road Tom Redwing passed a hawkish-eyed man, who was strolling along aimlessly. It was Mr. Clyne himself.

He glanced at the boy, but that was all. Even the keen-eyed Mr. Clyne could not suspect that in the pocket of that innocent-looking schoolboy was a note addressed to the man who was wanted.

Redwing did not turn from the road till he was nearly at Courtfield. Then he took a roundabout course through the lanes to get back to the Wapshot Road, covering the miles swiftly. Mr. Clyne and his merry men were still keeping up the watch at Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Fish and Spuds!

"SARDINES!" said Bob Cherry.

He slammed the tin on the table in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

And Johnny Bull slammed down another tin.

"Pilchards!" he said impressively.

"Bravo!" said Frank Nugent. "And we've got spuds galore. It will be a supper for the gods!"

And the Famous Five prepared the study supper with great zest. It was, for once, a season of comparative plenty. There were even a couple of bananas for Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The supper was, as Bob Cherry remarked, rather fishy and rather spuddy, but it was ripping.

"Better ask some chap in to supper," said Wharton, as he surveyed the spread table. "There's plenty for six."

"Bunter will come, if we press him," grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind Bunter!"

There was a tap at the door.

"Talk of angels!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bet you Bunter has smelt out the supper—he always does! Watch me biff him as he comes in!"

The door was opening.

Bob Cherry grabbed up a cushion and planted himself behind the door, to smite the new-comer as he entered. He hadn't the least doubt that it was Billy Bunter, on the scent of a feed.

The Co. stood watching and grinning.

The new-comer entered, and the cushion came down with a swipe, and there was a yell. It was not till the cushion had descended that the humorous Bob discovered that the new-comer was not the Owl of the Remove. It was Tom Redwing, who sat down in the doorway with a fiendish yell.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Redwing. "What the dickens—"

"Sorry!" stuttered Bob. "I—I thought it was Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do I look like Bunter, you howling ass?"

"I didn't stop to look, old chap. Never mind, let me help you up, and stay to supper," said Bob, dragging Redwing up by the shoulder. "How could I guess it was you? You missed calling-over, and I thought you were out of gates."

Redwing gasped for breath. He had had a shock. But his good temper was proof even against Bob Cherry's sense of humour, and he smiled.

"All serene!" he said. "Accidents will happen—when you're about, anyway. I came here to speak to you fellows—"

"Here we are, the whole family," said Harry Wharton. "We were just suggesting asking somebody in to supper, as we're well provided for once. Will you be the one?"

"Yes, if you like," said Redwing, laughing. "I've been on a long bike-ride, and I'm pretty sharp set."

"Here's a chair, old scout. I hope I didn't hurt you?" said Bob.

"Well, you did, you fathead! But it doesn't matter. I'm not made of glass." Tom Redwing sat down in the chair handed him by the repentant Bob. "If you chaps don't mind, I want to ask your counsel and advice—"

"My dear man, we're the five kind uncles of the Remove!" said Wharton. "We keep sage counsel and good advice on tap in this study."

"I want Smithy to be present, too, so we'll jaw after supper," said Redwing.

"Not at all. We'll ask Smithy to come and take a whack in the fish and the spuds," said Harry. "No end of spuds—from our own allotment, you know—the reward of labour. If Smithy hasn't fed, he can join us. Cut along and ask him, Franky, while I shove a few more spuds on."

"Right-ho!"

Frank Nugent left the study, and returned in a few minutes with the Bounder. The latter brought a tin of pineapple under his arm. The pineapple was solemnly added to the feast, which Bob Cherry declared was now not merely a feast of the gods, but fit for the goddesses, too.

Tea had been a very meagre meal, and the supper was much appreciated. While the juniors attacked sardines, pilchards, and spuds, with the pineapple to wind up, Tom Redwing explained the business of Sidney James Snoop. Harry Wharton & Co. listened with interest, especially when Tom mentioned how the school was being watched by Mr. Clyne and his minions.

"And you saw the soldier man at Wapshot?" asked Harry.

Redwing nodded.

"Yes; I was in luck. It happens that he shares the same hut as my friend from Hawkscliff, and the Hawkscliff chap knew him. I was able to see him, and give him the note, and got his answer. He's going over to Lantham on Saturday afternoon, with a party of soldiers on leave, to see the cricket-match; and Snoop's to be there to meet him—to say good-bye, you know. He's off to the Front on Monday with the draft."

"It's a good idea," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Naturally, he will want to say good-bye to his son, and we ought to help."

"The oughtfulness is great," agreed Hurree Singh. "I have a terrific sympathy for the esteemed soldier man!"

"Where will he be at Lantham, though?" asked Nugent. "The Ramblers' ground is rather extensive."

"And it's not easy to pick out one man in a crowd of Tommies," remarked Bob.

"That's all the better—for Private Smith. 'I thought of that,' said Redwing. "It will be better for him to see Snoop while the game's going on—everybody will be watching the cricket. We shall be in the grand-stand—it's only eighteenpence at Lantham, you know, and we can stand that."

"Quite," smiled the Bounder. "That won't break us."

"We shall be picked out easily enough," went on Redwing. "Mr. Snoop—I mean Private Smith—better call him that—Private Smith will see us there, and will join us if it's safe, or send us a message. He will have friends with him—Tommies, you know. Snoop can go out with him, and there you are. That's what I arranged with him."

"It's about the best idea," agreed Wharton.

"But—" Redwing hesitated. "I'm going with Snoop in any case; he must have somebody with him to help him through. It would be safer if he went with a party; and I thought perhaps you fellows—"

"That's understood," said Wharton. "We were thinking of biking over to see the khaki match at Lantham, anyway."

"You know it's rather risky to get mixed up in the matter, of course."

"No more for us than for you, I suppose?"

"Well, no; but—"

"That's all right; we're in it," said Bob Cherry decidedly. "The more the merrier—and the safer, too! You too, Smithy?"

"Naturally," said the Bounder.

"Well, I thought you'd be willing," said Redwing. "It's for the soldier's sake more than Snoop's. It would be pretty rotten if he had to go back to the Front without being able to say good-bye to his son."

"Beastly!" said Bob. "Poor chap!"

"Well, then, the question is—how are we going to get Snoop there without that lynx-eyed fellow Clyne seeing him go?" said Redwing. "We could start on a long spin, and wind up at Lantham. What price that?"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"Clyne is a sharp man—I know that," he said. "If he's watching the school, and he sees Snoop leave, he will guess what it's for—he would be a fool if he didn't. As for Snoop being with a crowd of us, Clyne knows he's got fellows here to stand by him. He knows that from what happened last night. We might dodge him on the bikes; but—but—"

"He's too sharp to be dodged, if he sees Snoop in the party," said the Bounder quietly.

"I'm afraid so," confessed Harry.

"He wouldn't know where we're bound for," said Nugent.

"Well, we've already spoken about going to Lantham on Saturday; and he may get nosing about and asking questions among the fellows," said Wharton measily. "He might have a bike handy himself and follow us—or, worse still, he might set a man following us whom we don't know by sight."

"Phew!"

"It would be horrible if poor old Snoop simply acted as a guide to his father for the detective to catch him."

"We've got to prevent that."

"But how?" said Redwing, with a troubled look.

"I think I have got it," said the Bounder, with a glimmer in his eyes.

"Go it, Smithy!"

"He must not see Snoop."

"But if he's on the watch——"

"I mean he mustn't recognise him," said the Bounder. "Snoop must change his looks a little. We'll get Wibley to help—Wibley can do it; he's a past-master in making-up. He can give Snoopey a dark complexion with his blessed make-up, and make him look older, too—it only wants a few touches, the way Wib does it. I'll bet ten to one that Wibley can alter Snoop's looks enough for him to pass under the 'tec's nose without being recognised."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"That's a good idea," said Wharton slowly. "I don't suppose Clyne would ever be looking out for a trick like that. He's bound to be on the watch, on a half-holiday; if he sees a dark-looking fellow about seventeen——"

"He wouldn't think that was Snoop, with his pasty face," grinned Bob Cherry.

"It's the only way," decided Wharton. "And it will work, too—I don't see why it shouldn't. Wibley will do it, without asking questions. Wib's always glad to get his make-up bosh into the limelight. It will have to be kept awfully dark, though."

"I'll tell Snoop, and you can speak to Wibley about it quietly, Wharton," said Redwing.

"Right!"

And Tom Redwing, much relieved in his mind, returned to his own study after the pineapple was finished. Snoop and Stott were there, working at their prep—Stott with a very sullen expression on his face.

Redwing did not speak till Stott had finished his work and gone downstairs.

Then he explained to Snoop.

Snoop listened with feverish excitement. His nerves were not in a good state; but he was trying to pull himself together. The idea of passing under the detective's sharp eyes in disguise evidently startled him; but he made no demur.

"You agree?" asked Redwing.

"It seems to me the only way," said Snoop in a faltering voice. "It's jolly good of you and the fellows to help me like this. And—and look here, Redwing! It it comes out, and there's a row, I'm going to tell the Head that it was all my doing, and that you only helped me. I'll take all the blame on my shoulders. I know my father would want me to, if he knew."

"We won't think about failing," answered Redwing soothingly.

Snoop meant what he said, though whether his resolution would hold good if the danger came was doubtful. But at least he meant well and honestly, and Tom Redwing felt a new respect for him. The one-time funk of the Remove was at least doing his best to be worthy of his soldier father.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants to Know!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Saturday afternoon had come.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon, splendid weather for cricket. The match at Lantham was a whole-day one, but it was not likely to finish much before dusk, and the Greyfriars fellows had plenty of time to see the afternoon's play.

The Famous Five were in the bike-shed when Bunter arrived on the scene. With his wonderful instinct for knowing everything that was going on, Billy Bunter was already on the trail. The five juniors were looking to their bicycles, and to Vernon-Smith's and Snoop's and Squiff's. Squiff's bike was to be ridden by Tom Redwing—the Australian junior,



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who was playing cricket that afternoon, having willingly agreed to lend it.

"Going out?" asked Bunter, blinking into the shed through his big spectacles.

"No; we're going to bike into the Head's study!" answered Bob Cherry, with heavy sarcasm. "It's quite a customary thing."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Run away and play, Bunter!"

"I was going to come with you for a spin," said Bunter, with great dignity.

"Your bike's a wreck, as usual," said Nugent.

"That's all right; I'll borrow Toddy's. Toddy's gone out with Dutton."

"You couldn't keep up," said Wharton. "We're going to ride rather fast."

"Oh, I know where you're going!" said Bunter. "I can ride to Lantham."

"How do you know we're going to Lantham?" growled Johnny Bull.

Bunter chuckled.

"Well, I know now you've admitted it," he answered.

Johnny Bull gave him a ferocious glare. The Owl of the Remove had actually been pumping them!

"I heard Wharton speaking about the match at Lantham the other day, so I guessed," said Bunter. "Now you've told me."

"You fat owl!"

"Well, I'll come to Lantham, too," said Bunter. "You can get a ripping tea at Lantham—I've been there. If my postal-order comes before we start, I'll stand tea for the whole party. I can't say fairer than that. If it doesn't come, you stand tea for me. That's fair."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"You can't ride the distance!" snapped Wharton. He was exasperated. The Paul Pry of Greyfriars was the last person in the world to be wanted on such an occasion, when strict secrecy was required.

"Well, if I get fagged, one of you fellows can free-wheel me along," suggested Bunter brightly.

"I can see myself doing it!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I don't think!"

"I don't think you fellows ought to be mean in war-time. I'm nearly starved to death here," said Bunter pathetically. "A good spread at Lantham would set me up. We might be able to dodge the grub rules there, too."

"You fat rotter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"If you call that civil, Bull, I don't! Look here, what are you getting out eight bikes for?" asked Bunter inquisitively. "Squiff's not going—he's playing cricket. You've taken his bike off the stand."

"Oh, rats!"

"Is it for me?"

"No!" rapped out Wharton.

"Who's going with you, then?"

"Oh, find out, you Peeping Tom!"

"Ain't I trying to find out?" answered Bunter, blinking at him. "Look here, you fellows, it looks to me as if you're being jolly mysterious about this bike-ride. I shouldn't be surprised if you were going out food-hogging!"

"What!"

"Skinner does. He goes a long way to get extra meals, and gets two or three on a half-holiday," said Bunter. "I know that. If that's the game, I don't mind keeping it dark, as you're my pals. But, of course, I expect to be treated as a pal."

Bob Cherry picked up a pump and made a rush at Bunter.

The fat junior skipped out of the bike-shed in a great hurry. Bob brandished the pump after him.

"You come back!" he roared.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter from a safe distance.

The Owl of the Remove hovered at a distance after that. He was suspicious now—more than suspicious. It was quite clear to Bunter that the ride to Lantham was only the cover for a "grub-crawl." Grub-crawling—that is to say, visiting places of refreshment one after another, and gorging at each—was a favourite occupation with some food-hogs on a half-holiday, and, of course, it had to be kept carefully dark. Bunter was sure that he knew why his entertaining company was not desired that afternoon.

Naturally, he was wrathful. He was ready to join in the grub-crawl if some other person would pay the expenses, and he felt indignant at the idea of being left out.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter, blinking on from a distance. "I'll jolly well keep an eye on them! It may be my duty to inform a prefect. After all, a chap's bound to be patriotic. Beasts!"

The bikes were ready, and the eight

machines were placed in a bunch, to be wheeled away at a moment's notice. Leaving his chums with the machines, Harry Wharton walked round to the wood-shed.

The door of that building was fastened, but it was opened when Wharton tapped. He stepped in, and closed the door after him.

There were four juniors in the shed.

Snoop, looking very uneasy, was undergoing alterations at the skilled hands of William Wibley, the dramatic genius of the Remove. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were looking on, and lending what assistance they could.

Snoop grinned faintly at he met Wharton's eyes.

His pale complexion was olive-tinted, and one or two artistic touches, which Wib knew how to give, made him look a couple of years older. He had changed his Etons for a lounge-suit, and when Wibley was done he was expected to look like a somewhat undersized Fifth-Former.

"How do I look?" he asked.

"Ripping!" said Harry, with a smile. "I should hardly know you now."

"His own father wouldn't know him when I've done!" said Wibley complacently. "I don't know what game you fellows are at, but you've come to the right shop for this kind of business."

"My dear man, we thought of you at once!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You couldn't have done better," answered Wibley. Wib had his weaknesses, and one of them was a love of praise for his skill in his own peculiar line.

His task did not take him long.

When he had finished he fastened his bag, nodded to the juniors, and left the wood-shed, much pleased with their tributes to his skill.

Wharton scanned Snoop, and smiled. Certainly no one would have recognised that dark-complexioned fellow, who looked between sixteen and seventeen, as Sidney James Snoop of the Lower Fourth.

"You'll do, Snoop!" said Harry.

"It's ripping!" said Redwing. "Safe as houses!"

"I think so, too," remarked the Bounder. "If Clyne sees through that he must have an eye like a gimlet!"

"He won't!" said Redwing.

"Come on, Snoop!"

The four juniors left the shed together. The transformation scene had taken place there, as in the House the "stranger" would have attracted unwelcome attention. But in the bunch of juniors wheeling their bikes out Snoop was likely to pass unobserved.

They hurried to the bike-shed, where the machines were already outside. Snoop took his bike, and the other fellows theirs, and with the disguised junior in the middle of the crowd they wheeled the machines away to the gates. Two or three fellows on the way glanced at them, and noticed that there was a stranger among them, without any particular attention. There was no reason why the Famous Five should not have a visitor that afternoon. But the chums of the Remove had reckoned without William George Bunter. As they reached the gates they found the plump form of William George in the gateway. The Owl of the Remove fixed his spectacles upon them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Get out of the way!" snapped Johnny Bull. "Do you want to be run down?"

"Am I coming to Lantham with you?" howled Bunter.

"No, you owl!"

"Look here, if I tell Wingate—Hallo! Who's your friend?" asked Bunter, breaking off as he discerned the



The escape of Private Smith! (See Chapter 10.)

"stranger" in the group. "I didn't know you had a visitor, Wharton."

Wharton brushed his bike past the Owl without answering. Billy Bunter blinked at the supposed stranger with great interest. It was odd, to say the least, that the stranger should first be seen within the gates of the school; odd that Bunter had not seen him come in, as he had followed the Co. to the bike-shed from the dinner-table, and had been at the gates since.

The cyclists brushed past him hurriedly. Bunter followed them into the road.

"You've lent your friend Snoop's bike, Wharton," he remarked. Bunter had an eye for detail, and he recognised Snoop's Sunbeam.

"Come on, you fellows!" muttered Wharton.

"I say, Wharton——"

"Let go my bike, you fat idiot!" exclaimed Wharton in great exasperation, as Bunter caught hold of his handle-bars.

"Look here, Wharton, if you mean that you don't want my company this afternoon——" began Bunter, with dignity.

"Well, I do mean just that!"

"Well, I can't allow you fellows to go on a grub-crawl like this. I feel that I ought to warn Wingate—— Yaroooooh!"

A shove on the chest caused Bunter to sit down in the dust before he got any further.

The juniors jumped on their machines and rode up the lane, leaving the Owl of the Remove sitting and gasping.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Meeting at Lantham!

"WARE hawks!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Not more than a dozen yards from the school gates a man was leaning on a fence on the other side of the road.

A glance was enough to tell the juniors that it was Mr. Clyne.

There was the detective, stick and Homburg hat, and cigarette and all, just as when Tom Redwing had first seen him near Greyfriars.

That he was not the only man watch-

ing the school they were sure. Every hole had been stopped, so to speak.

Mr. Clyne glanced at the party of cyclists as they came by. He was there to scan every person who quitted Greyfriars that half-holiday.

He had seen the juniors before, and he remembered their faces, with the exception of the dark-complexioned fellow who looked older than the others.

That fellow Mr. Clyne did not remember having seen before. But there were, of course, more than a hundred fellows at Greyfriars he had not happened to see during his visit there, so there was nothing suspicious in the circumstance.

He only noted that Snoop was not in the party, and after one searching glance his eyes dropped.

The juniors rode on.

"Don't look back!" muttered Wharton. And the warning was needed, for the juniors were keen to know whether the detective was looking after them.

At a distance Wharton jumped down and looked at his pedals, as if to examine them. As he stooped he looked back under his arm. Mr. Clyne was still leaning on the fence, and he was looking towards the school gates.

"All serene!" said Harry, as he jumped on his machine again. "He doesn't smell a rat, not even a mouse!"

"He's not looking this way?" muttered Snoop.

"No."

"Good egg!" said Redwing.

The juniors rode on in great spirits. Even Snoop's spirits rose now. With Mr. Clyne watching the school-gates, like a dog watching a rabbit-hole, it seemed safe enough to meet his father at the Ramblers' cricket-ground at Lantham.

By roads and lanes and short cuts the juniors pedalled on, slowing down a little presently to accommodate Snoop, who was not an athlete. Overhead there was a buzz of aeroplanes, and they glanced up at them once or twice. They seemed to be coming thickly from the flying-ground near Wapshot Camp.

"Air-raid on somewhere," said Bob Cherry, "I shouldn't wonder! Like to go a bit slower, Snoopcy?"

"No; I'm all right," gasped Snoop. He was not quite all right, but he was

doing his best, and his companions considerably slowed down a little more for him. Snoop was glad when Lantham came in sight in the distance at last.

"Stop here!" said Harry. They stopped in the lane by a clump of trees, where a spring welled up and flowed away rippling across the fields. In the cover of the trees Wharton opened a bag from his bike, and produced sponge, soap, and towel. Snoop, of course, was not to meet his father in his present guise. Private Smith knew nothing of his changed appearance, and would certainly not have known him.

Snoop knelt by the spring, and washed and scrubbed at his face, his companions lending him their assistance.

In a short time Snoop was himself again.

His dark complexion floated away down the stream. Wharton packed up the soap and sponge and towel, and replaced the bag on his handle-bars.

"Come on!" he said. The juniors remounted, and rode on into Lantham.

The machines were left at the Lantham Arms, and they walked to the cricket-ground.

Snoop glanced anxiously about him as they joined the crowd heading for the Ramblers' enclosure.

There were a good many soldiers and munition-workers in the crowd, as well as the townspeople of Lantham.

Snoop started whenever his eyes fell upon a khaki uniform, which was pretty often, but Private Smith was not seen. That gentleman was keeping out of the public view as much as possible. He would not be seen till he spotted Snoop in the grand-stand, and either came to him or sent him a message.

The Greyfriars party did not attempt to secure front seats, as would ordinarily have been the case. They preferred on this occasion to hide their light under a bushel, as the Bounder remarked. It was easy enough, of course, to get back seats, especially as the big timber structure was not half filled. The Lantham crowd mostly preferred the greensward that sunny afternoon.

The lunch interval was long over, and the afternoon's play was well on its way. From the spectators about them the juniors learned that both sides had batted, and that Lantham were leading. The khaki cricketers were in the field now, and Lantham Ramblers were batting a second time.

The play was good, and the Greyfriars juniors were interested in it, but Snoop had no eyes for the cricket.

He had not come there to see the game.

His eyes roved incessantly over the crowds watching the cricket, however, in the hope of detecting Private Smith among the scores of men in uniform.

The juniors, though in the last seat of the stand, were quite prominent enough to be seen by anyone in the field who wished to see them. Eight schoolboys together made a group that would not escape attention.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

Snoop caught his arm.

"Can you see him?" he breathed.

"Eh? Yes. Nothing wrong with my eyes."

"Where is he?"

"At the wicket."

"At the wicket!" stuttered Snoop.

"My father—"

"Oh, sorry!" said Bob, colouring. "I was speaking of the Lantham skipper. That's the Lantham skipper who's just come to the wicket. He's a good man. He knocked up a century last week."

"Pah!" muttered Snoop. He was not interested in the Lantham skipper, and did not care whether he had made a century or a duck's-egg last week.

Snoop resumed watching the crowd, while Bob Cherry watched the cricket. There was no reason why he should miss it.

Snoop started suddenly as he felt a light tap on his shoulder as he stood up in the back row of seats.

He spun round. A man in khaki smiled at him. While Snoop was searching the crowd for him the soldier had come in unobserved, and he was almost at Snoop's side.

"Father!" gasped Snoop. Harry Wharton & Co. looked round, and raised their caps and straw hats to the man in khaki, who saluted.

"Glad to see you, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "Couldn't be a better place than this. You won't be disturbed here."

"I owe you lads many thanks," said the soldier, in a moved voice.

"Not a bit of it!" answered Wharton, with a smile. "We're only too glad to be of use."

"The gladfulness is terrific, esteemed sahib!" assured Hurrce Singh.

The man in khaki smiled.

"This way, dad!" whispered Snoop.

He drew his father to the end of the seat, where no one was near, and the juniors stood like a screen between them and the rest of the stand, out of hearing. While father and son talked in low voices, Harry Wharton & Co. watched the cricket, and they cheered as loudly as anyone when the Lantham skipper topped his century.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Track at Last!

"BEASTS!" Billy Bunter sat in the dust by the roadside after the cyclists had disappeared from sight, struggling for breath.

In spite of war rations, Billy Bunter was as extensive in circumference and as short in breath as ever. He sat struggling for breath and uttering ejaculations that were the reverse of complimentary to the departed juniors.

"Can I help you?" A man came sauntering up the lane, and he stopped and lifted Bunter to his feet, with an agreeable smile.

"Thanks!" gasped Bunter.

He set his spectacles straight on his little, fat nose, and blinked at his helper. He recognised the keen-faced man who had called on the Head, and whom nearly all Greyfriars knew to be the detective who was searching for Sidney Snoop's father.

Mr. Clyne had adopted his most agreeable expression. It did not occur to Bunter that the detective regarded it as probable that useful information might be obtained by pumping a Greyfriars junior. It was with a view to that that Mr. Clyne had taken the trouble to give the Owl of the Remove a hand.

"I hope you are not hurt, sir?" said Mr. Clyne.

The "sir" pleased Bunter very much, as Mr. Clyne knew it would. Here was a man who recognised that Bunter was a person deserving of respect, which his Form-fellows never would recognise.

"Yes, I am!" gasped Bunter. "Out of breath, you know. I'd go after those beasts and lick them, only I couldn't catch them now. Fancy bumping a chap over because he didn't approve of their going on a grub-crawl, you know!"

"Very wrong of them!" said Mr. Clyne solemnly.

He guessed from Harry Wharton & Co.'s looks that they were not the kind of fellows to go on a grub-crawl, but his game was to propitiate Bunter.

"Of course, I'm against anything of the kind," said Bunter. "I'm patriotic."

"I'm sure of that," said Mr. Clyne. "Shall I give you a brush down? You are a little dusty."

"You're very good," said Bunter.

Mr. Clyne dusted him down with his handkerchief very carefully and respectfully. He had easily taken Bunter's measure.

"I say, you're the detective, ain't you?" said Bunter, quite agreeably.

"Yes, sir, I'm the detective."

"Looking for Snoop's pater?" grinned Bunter.

"I see you know all about it, sir."

"Precious few things go on at Greyfriars that I don't know something about," said Bunter complacently.

"You are a sharp one!" said Mr. Clyne admiringly.

"I'm generally considered rather keen," remarked Bunter, with a fatuous blink at the admiring Mr. Clyne.

"You ought to be a detective yourself," smiled that gentleman.

"Well, I don't know that I should care about that," said Bunter. "Rather a sneaking sort of business, if you ask me!"

Mr. Clyne coughed at this tactful speech.

"Well, it would hardly suit a wealthy young gentleman like you, sir," he said deferentially.

Bunter purred. He liked to be taken for a wealthy young gentleman.

"I suppose young Snoop's out of doors on a fine half-holiday like this?" Mr. Clyne remarked, as he finished dusting Bunter.

"Blessed if I know!" said Bunter. "I thought he was going out with those fellows, as he left the School House with Redwing and Smithy. But they seem to have left him behind."

Mr. Clyne's eyes gleamed.

"Redwing and Smithy were in the party that passed on bicycles?" he asked.

"Yes; they're with Wharton's lot," said Bunter. "I'd have gone with them, only I don't approve of going on a grub-crawl, of course. They're selfish. They didn't want to free-wheel me to Lantham if I got tired. I hate selfishness!"

"And they left Master Snoop behind?" murmured Mr. Clyne.

"Must have, as he wasn't with them. I fancy Snoop will be jolly careful how he goes out," chuckled Bunter. "He knows you're watching for him."

"Does he?"

"I fancy everybody knows it," grinned Bunter. "If I were a detective I should be more careful."

"Everyone is not so clever as you are, sir."

"Yes, that's it," agreed Bunter fatuously. "I should have managed it all right."

"Probably Master Snoop won't go out at all this afternoon?" remarked Mr. Clyne.

"Well, he can't go biking, at any rate, as that chap's got his bike."

"One of your schoolfellows?"

"No; that chap who was with those fellows," answered Bunter. "Some pal of Wharton's I suppose. Chap with a dark face. I've never seen him before. He was riding Snoop's bike. They wouldn't lend me a bike, the beasts! It ain't like Snoop to lend his jigger, either. If they've taken it without telling him, I'll jolly well tell Snoop!"

Mr. Clyne gave him a very odd look.

"I noticed a dark-complexioned lad in the party," he said. "So he was riding Snoop's bicycle?"

"Yes; a Sunbeam," said Bunter.

"The lad was a stranger to you, did you say?"

"Well, I've never seen him before. He doesn't belong to Greyfriars. The queer thing is, how he came in," rattled on Bunter. "He certainly wasn't in the school before dinner, and after dinner I was with those fellows, and then I was at the gates. Jolly queer for a visitor to come in the back way. Don't you think so?"

"Why, surely that would be very queer indeed!" said Mr. Clyne. Mr. Clyne was very well aware that no boy had arrived at Greyfriars that afternoon—better aware of it than Bunter was.

He knew that any fellow who left the school that afternoon was a resident at Greyfriars, unless he had dropped from the clouds.

Mr. Clyne's pumping of Bunter was working out much better than he had dared to expect.

"You know the lad's name?" he asked.

"No; never seen him before," said Bunter. "Hardly saw him as it was. Those fellows were keeping so close about him, just as if they wanted to keep him dark. Some low fellow they don't want seen, I suppose," added Bunter, with a sniff. "Redwing's got a lot of low friends. He's an outsider, you know."

"And he was not at the school this morning?"

"He couldn't have been."

"He suddenly appeared from nowhere—eh?" said Mr. Clyne, with a smile.

"He couldn't, of course," said Bunter. "Why, you must have seen him come in, if you've been watching the place!"

"No one came into the school while I was about, sir."

"Must have come in the back way," said Bunter, in surprise, beginning to be interested himself.

"A friend of mine is watching there," smiled Mr. Clyne. "No boy at all has arrived at Greyfriars to-day, Master—What did you say your name was?"

"Bunter—William George Bunter. Look here. That's jolly queer!" said the Owl. "How could the chap be in Greyfriars if he hadn't come?"

"Some boy you do not know by sight, perhaps."

"I know every Greyfriars chap by sight, of course!"

Mr. Clyne drew a deep breath.

"If Master Snoop wanted to go out without being noticed, do you think that those lads would help him, Master Bunter?"

"I know Redwing would. They've been thick lately. I've noticed Wharton and his pals have been friendly with Snoop the last day or two, too. Because his father's a soldier, I suppose!"

Mr. Clyne was silent, thinking hard. That such a trick could be played on him by schoolboys was surprising; but there seemed no room for doubt. Certainly, from his knowledge, the dark-complexioned fellow must belong to Greyfriars. Yet here was a Greyfriars boy who did not know him by sight. And he was riding Snoop's bicycle! The obvious conclusion was that the dark-faced lad was Sidney James Snoop, with his appearance cunningly altered to escape discovery in going out. And if such a precaution had been taken, another conclusion was obvious, too. That Snoop was going out to meet his father.

"Did you say they were going to Lantham, Master Bunter?"

"Yes. There's a khaki match there," explained Bunter.

"A khaki match!" Mr. Clyne smiled. "Very likely a good many soldiers will be there to see it, then?"

"Crowds of them, most likely," answered Bunter. "Lots of the Tommies will go over from Wapshot, I expect."

"I suppose you don't know just where the cricket-match is taking place?"

"That I do!" said Bunter promptly.

"On the Ramblers' ground, of course, as the soldier team is playing Lantham Ramblers."

Mr. Clyne looked at his watch.

"Dear me, I must hurry," he said. "I'd quite forgotten that I have a train to catch. Good-afternoon, Master Bunter! I've enjoyed our little talk very much!"

Mr. Clyne was striding away before Bunter could reply. The Owl of the Remove rolled away towards the school gates, and Mr. Clyne turned into a little lane a short distance from the school. There a man was attending to a bicycle—at all events, he appeared to be attending to it whenever anyone came by, at other times he let it rest. Mr. Clyne spoke to him in a low voice, and the man nodded, and walked away towards Greyfriars, taking up Mr. Clyne's post there to watch. Mr. Clyne wheeled the bicycle out into the road, mounted it, and pedalled away. There was an expression of grim satisfaction on the detective's face as he rode in the direction of Lantham. And he rode hard.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Air-raid!

"WELL bowled!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Lantham skipper was out at last.

Next man came in, and the cricket went on, Harry Wharton & Co. watching it with keen interest. The play was lively, and the juniors had almost forgotten Snoop and his father, behind them in the corner seat.

All eyes in the stand were directed towards the field of play, save only those of the soldier and his son.

And they, engrossed in their talk, had no eyes for their surroundings.

No one specially observed a late comer in the grandstand.

A man in a Homburg hat, whose trousers were a little dusty, had come in, and was looking about him, apparently for a comfortable seat.

At the back of the stand there were a good many seats empty, and the late-comer could have found one easily enough.

But he did not sit down.

He stood back inconspicuously, and his hawk eyes never rested. They gleamed as they lighted upon the group of Greyfriars juniors in the corner. He knew them again easily enough.

And the hawk eyes gleamed again at the sight of a khaki uniform behind the juniors, and the sight of Sidney Snoop of the Remove!

The dark complexion was gone. Snoop presented his normal appearance now. But it was evident that Snoop was the dark-complexioned lad who had ridden away from Greyfriars with Harry Wharton & Co. For there was Snoop, in full view of the detective, deep in conversation with a man in khaki. The soldier's face was turned away from Mr. Clyne, but the detective did not need telling whom he was.

He smiled.

Quietly, almost stealthily, Mr. Clyne moved along the seats behind the juniors, and approaching the father and son.

He was within a few feet when Snoop, glancing past his father's shoulder, saw him.

Snoop was speaking, but as he saw the hard face over the soldier's shoulder the words died on his tongue.

His face became so ghastly that the soldier started.

"Sidney, what's the matter?"

Snoop did not reply.

He could not speak.

But his frozen, horrified glance made the soldier turn his head to see what the junior was looking at.

Mr. Clyne stepped forward at the same moment, and his hand lightly dropped on the shoulder of the khaki tunic.

"I arrest you, Josiah Snoop!" he said, in quiet, crisp tones.

Quiet as his tones were, they made the juniors spin round as if they had been electrified. Harry Wharton & Co. moved as if by the same spring, and the cricket was quite forgotten. They gasped at the sight of the detective—with his hand on Private Smith's shoulder.

The soldier sat motionless.

He seemed stunned.

"The—the detective!" muttered Redwing, growing pale.

"Clyne!" panted Harry Wharton.

Mr. Clyne glanced at them, his brow growing stern.

"Keep your distance!" he said coldly.

"I can guess now who prevented me from effecting this arrest earlier. Be careful! There is a constable yonder!"

The juniors stood in dismay.

Handling Mr. Clyne in the crowded stand was not feasible, even if they had thought of such a desperate step. A constable was making his way towards the spot after Mr. Clyne.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

He gave Wharton a quick look, and the captain of the Remove shook his head. He knew that it would not do. But his heart was heavy.

"I'm afraid I must put the darbies on, Mr. Snoop," said the detective quite civilly. "I'm sorry—duty, you know. You are such a slippery customer!"

There was a clink of the handcuffs.

"Father!" moaned Snoop.

At the sound of the handcuffs the soldier seemed to recover. A blaze came into his eyes, and a tremble ran through him. Snoop caught him almost convulsively by the arm.

"You sha'n't take him!" His eyes flamed at the detective. "Hang you, you sha'n't! Father, cut for it!"

Mr. Clyne's grasp tightened on the soldier's shoulder, and he beckoned to the constable to hasten up.

Snoop sprang to his feet.

His eyes were ablaze.

He was no longer the funk of the Remove. He was the son of the soldier whose liberty was at stake. He forgot everything else. With the spring of a tiger Snoop flung himself furiously at the detective.

So furious was his spring that it bore the detective back, and he lost his hold upon the soldier.

"Father, run for it!" shrieked Snoop.

"Run for it, man!" shouted the Bounder, grasping the man in khaki by the shoulder.

The soldier hesitated.

With a muttered exclamation Mr. Clyne hurled Snoop aside, and sprang at the man from the *Somme*. The policeman was close behind him now.

The soldier straightened up, his eyes glittering. His right hand came up, and his fist, clenched, and as hard as iron, drove fairly into the detective's face. Mr. Clyne went down among the seats with a crash.

He did not rise again. The blow had stunned him.

The policeman's grasp was almost upon the man in khaki when he bounded away.

There was a roar of excited voices in the stand as the soldier forced his way down to the front.

Mr. Clyne lay where he had fallen, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 537.

but the policeman was after the escaping man like a flash.

People were on their feet from all sides now. Out in the field it was seen that something was going on in the grand-stand, and all eyes were turned upon it; even the cricketers had stopped their game.

The soldier forced his way down the seats, leaping nimbly, with the constable in hot pursuit, shouting to the onlookers to stop him.

But not a hand was raised. No one knew what the trouble was, but the natural sympathy with a man in khaki came to the front at once. People cleared out of the soldier's way to give him a free passage, and some blocked the pursuit of the constable as much as they could. There was a shout from all sides:

"Put it on, Tommy!"

"Run for it!"

The natural impression was that the soldier was wanted for some trifling military offence, and he had the sympathy of the spectators. There was a roar of encouragement as he bounded out of the stand and cut across the field.

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Let me pass!" roared the constable.

"In the name of the law, stop him!" The hapless man rolled over as somebody's foot came in his way.

He jumped up, and rushed on in pursuit, as the running man crossed the open space and burst through the crowd, which opened up for him and closed behind him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Good luck to him!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Oh, good man! He's done it! He'll get clear! Come on!"

"Father!" panted Snoop.

The crowd in the stand had swarmed down, and the juniors followed them. All eyes were turned after the fleeing man.

He was lost in the crowd on the other side of the field, which was dotted with uniforms. And as he had the sympathy of the crowd, the unhappy constable's task was a difficult one. The policeman was only doing his bounden duty; but that fact was quite lost sight of.

"He's clear!" exclaimed Redwing.

"He'll get away!"

Wharton clapped Snoop on the shoulder. Snoop was looking pale and sick.

"Buck up, old fellow! He's safe!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

There was a sudden roar from the crowded ground, and in the midst of it came a deep boom.

"A gun!"

"It's an air-raid!" yelled a voice.

There was wild excitement on the cricket-ground. Boom, boom! came quickly in succession from somewhere in the distance. The soldier and his pursuer were forgotten now. The crowd was breaking up on all sides, clearing for shelter. The grand-stand was emptied in a few seconds.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Harry Wharton & Co. joined in the surging throng making for the exits. It was the enemy—a daylight raid! Wharton caught Snoop by the arm. He supposed that Snoop would be in a blue funk.

But Snoop's eyes met his, gleaming, and he laughed.

"Good luck—oh, good luck!" panted Snoop. "They won't get him now. They can't get him now, Wharton! Good luck!"

And Wharton could only wonder.

Overhead there was a deadly buzzing, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 537.

increasing in intensity as the Gothas came closer. The bombs were coming—the rain of bombs from the ruthless raiders of the air. And Snoop, the funk of the Remove, gave not a thought to the fearful peril overhead. He was only thinking that in the confusion of the air-raid his father would escape. Truly, the soldier's son had become worthy of the man who had fought on the Somme.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Pluck of Private Smith!

CRASH!

Crash!

Boom!

"It's a bomb!"

The crowd had dispersed as if by magic. The cricket enclosure was deserted. The Greyfriars party were still together, close by a stone wall near the Ramblers' ground, the best shelter they could find. Wharton was watching the sky. The Gothas were plainly to be seen—three of them—and the bombs were falling. But they were going at great speed, for several British 'planes had risen in pursuit, and the raiders evidently had no taste for conflict at close quarters in the air. There was a deadly crash as a bomb burst on the cricket-ground—on the green space that only a few minutes before had been dotted with the fieldsmen. Crash! again.

"That's the grand-stand!" said Frank Nugent.

He shuddered as he spoke.

Only a few minutes before they had been in the grand-stand. Now the timber structure was reeling from the explosion close to it. A tongue of flame shot up to the sky, and a volume of smoke. The assassins of the air had hurled an incendiary bomb, ignorant that there was nothing but an empty cricket-stand to suffer from it.

"It's on fire!" muttered Nugent. "If we'd still been there——"

"Oh, the rotters!" muttered Johnny Bull, shaking his fist at the air.

The roaring of flames came to their ears.

"It's no great harm," said Redwing. "Lucky it didn't fall where there were people. There's a khaki camp within half a mile—that's what the brutes are after!"

Wharton gave a sudden start.

"The detective!" he exclaimed

"What?"

"He's still there!"

"Oh!"

The juniors had utterly forgotten Mr. Clyne.

Wharton's face paled as he thought of him.

He remembered seeing the detective fall under the soldier's blow, and he was sure that Mr. Clyne had not risen again. It was evident that he had been stunned by that terrible drive from the shoulder.

Stunned, unconscious, the detective lay in the deserted stand, now a roaring mass of flames and smoke.

Wharton clenched his hands.

"He's there!" he panted. "He's there! We can't leave him there!"

He ran desperately towards the flaming structure.

"You can't do it!" shouted the Bounder. "Don't be a fool!"

"Stand back, there!" shouted a constable, roughly dragging Wharton by the shoulder.

"There's a man in the stand!" gasped Wharton.

"Stand back! Someone's gone in for him—a soldier!" said the policeman.

"Keep back, you young fools!"

The juniors stopped.

The buzz of the Gothas was dying away southward, the British 'planes in hot

pursuit. Bombs were dropping, but they were miles away now. A crowd was gathering round the fire.

Snoop clutched Wharton's arm, his face deadly white.

"If—if he's killed," he muttered, in despair, "they'll say it was my father's fault! He knocked him down there——" Snoop groaned.

Wharton was already thinking of that.

"He may be saved!" he muttered.

"The bobby says a soldier has gone in for him."

"He'll be killed, too!" groaned Snoop.

"Look at it!"

The juniors watched the fire in tense anxiety. Three or four policemen were keeping back the thickening crowd.

All eyes were on the burning stand, the roof of which had fallen in.

Somewhere in that blazing, smoking mass was the unconscious detective, and the unknown, gallant man who had gone in to his rescue.

Would he—could he be saved—or had the brave rescuer gone in to his death?

The roar of the flames, in the wind, was terrible. A vast mass of smoke, shot with flame, rolled to the sky.

The juniors watched, their hearts aching with anxiety. There was a murmur, that grew to a roar.

"He's coming!"

From the smoking, crackling ruins a form emerged—that of a man in scorched and blackened khaki, with a scorched and blackened face. A form was flung over his shoulder—the form of an unconscious man. The roar of the excited crowd was deafening.

"Well done, Tommy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

The soldier staggered forward, and two or three constables ran to relieve him of his burden and to help him. Mr. Clyne, still unconscious, and scorched, but otherwise unhurt, was laid in the grass.

He had suffered little.

But the man who had sought him, groping through smoke and flame, had suffered, and suffered terribly.

His face was burnt and blackened, hardly a vestige of hair remained on his head, his clothes were smouldering. He sank down on the ground, and a deep groan burst from his lips—a groan of terrible pain.

"The brave chap!" muttered Wharton. There were tears in his eyes. "I wonder who he is—the splendid fellow?"

"Hold on, Snoop——"

Snoop was running forward. A constable pushed him back, but Snoop struck him savagely and tore on, and dropped on his knees beside the fallen soldier. The man's eyes met his.

A rough hand was laid on Snoop's shoulder.

He looked up furiously.

"Let me alone! It's my father! Let me alone!"

And Snoop was allowed to remain, till the terribly injured man was taken into an ambulance; and then Snoop went with him.

"His father!" said Bob Cherry.

"Snoop's father! It—it was Private Smith who went into the fire, you fellows. He went to save the detective—the man who was going to send him back to prison!" Bob's voice trembled. "I should think they'd let him alone after that—if he lives."

"If he lives!" said Wharton miserably.

And that was the saddening thought in the minds of the juniors when they returned to Greyfriars. Would Snoop's father live?

.....

Snoop did not return to Greyfriars until the following day.

It was Sunday; and after morning service Snoop was seen in the quadrangle, coming in from the gates with a pale face and troubled brow. Harry Wharton & Co. joined him at once.

"How is he, Snoop?"

Snoop gave him a haggard look.

"The doctor thinks he will live," he answered. "But—but he's badly hurt. Poor old dad! The wonder is he isn't dead now—he's burned so badly! And—and all to save that man——"

"Was Clyne hurt?"

"Not much. He was lying under the seats, it seems, and wasn't touched by the fire till my father found him and carried him out; and he got him out so quickly he got only scorched. But—but my father was groping about for him a long time; and—and you know how he looked when he got out——" Snoop's voice broke. "They're going to telephone how he gets on, and let me know when he's out of danger."

Snoop went into the House.

There were clouded faces among the chums of Greyfriars that day. They could not help thinking of the brave man tossing on his bed of pain.

But there was a brighter side to the matter. A few days later Mr. Clyne revisited Greyfriars to see Snoop. He brought good news. Snoop gave the detective a fierce look when he met him in the visitors' room; but after the interview Snoop's face was bright. He came

into the Common-room afterwards, and his changed looks drew inquiry.

"Your pater all right?" asked half a dozen voices.

"He's getting well," answered Snoop. "But that isn't all. That fellow Clyne isn't such a bad sort. He's brought me jolly good news. He came down specially to Greyfriars to tell me, so he can't be a bad sort, really. I—I suppose he was only doing his duty all the time, though I hated him for it."

"But what's the news?" asked Wharton.

"My father's pardoned."

"Oh!"

Snoop's face was bright.

"It's known who he is now, of course," he said. "It isn't every man who'd risk his life to rescue the fellow who was trying to arrest him. My father did that. That man Clyne seems grateful. I shouldn't have expected it of him. I dare say he's put in a word for my pater, but the military authorities must have done most of it. He's pardoned—the King's pardon, you know." Snoop's eyes glistened. "He's a free man! He can rejoin the Army under his own name when he's well. Isn't it ripping?"

"Ripping!" echoed Wharton heartily.

"I'm jolly glad!"

"The ripfulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah!"

"I say, you fellows, you can thank me for that!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"You!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him, with dignity.

"Yes, me!" he answered. "But for me that detective chap would never have gone over to Lantham that day. It was really I that put him up to it. I could see afterwards that he had been pumping me. I—I mean, considered it my duty to tell him—— Here, I say, wharrer you at?" roared Bunter, as the Famous Five, with one accord, fell upon him and smote him.

Billy Bunter fled, roaring. His tattling had certainly had a happy result; but Bunter was the only person who considered that he deserved any credit for it. He got a bumping, which was all he deserved.

Snoop's good news brought him congratulations from all sides. Even Skinner congratulated him. Private Smith had won his pardon by pluck, and his shadowed past was dead and gone—never to be revived. When he left the hospital it was as a free man; in his own name, to fight once more as a soldier of the King, under happier auspices. And Snoop of the Remove held his head higher than of old. The son no longer of a hunted man, but the son of a soldier—His Father's Son!

(Don't miss "**BILLY BUNTER'S BIRTHRIGHT!**" — next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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 Slumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!"

Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Prout, Maddocks, O'Rooney, and Gan-Waga arrive at the hotel. The heat becomes intense, and the idol's eyes are seen to open. Suddenly, with a terrible roar, the whole hotel collapses.

A lank Indian, name of Gadra Singh, arrives as gook to the party, which is going on an expedition into the cactus country. Larput Raj, the one-time rebel, is to be the shikari.

Suddenly Larput Raj cried out: "Look, sahib! Sharpra is awakening!" And against the distant sky two red lights showed like angry eyes.

(Now read on.)

The Cook Tries to be Kind, but Fails Badly.

"SHOW a leg, souse me! Show a leg, some of you lubbers!" cried Mr. Benjamin Maddock.

The native bearers had already gone forward with Ferrers Lord and Rupert Thurston. For a consideration their friend the fakir had permitted them to shelter the motor-car in the ruined temple where he made his home, and to protect it from the weather and the attacks of ants and other vermin. There was not much camp left to strike. The new cook had been supplied with a mule, and had piled his utensils on that animal. It was a sorrowful-looking creature of a billous-yellow colour, with moist, brown eyes that seemed always to have tears in them. At first sight Barry O'Rooney christened it Weeping Willie.

Mr. Thomas Prout approached the Eskimo, who was wrapping a puttee round one astonishingly plump leg.

"I want you to understand that there ain't going to be any slackers this trip, blubber-biter," he said. "You ain't having a feather-bed and a valet and your coffee and shaving-water brought up to you every morning, by honey! You've got to help old Stackpipe, the cook—see? Them's orders from the chief himself, and, by honey, don't you forget it!"

"And my ordhers, my bouncin' bhoy, is to watch that ye do ut," added Barry O'Rooney.

"How kindfuls yo' are to me, dears Barry!" said the Eskimo. "I think yo' must loves me awfulness. If I catches yo' bendings, old dears, I makes yo' readiness fo' a tombstones, whether yo' can affords yo'self a stonetombs or not. Never minds, Barry. I not afraid of work. I make yo' a butterfuls stew one dark nights with some rat-poison in her. Ho, ho, hoo! When we starts, hunk? When does the merry old balloon go ups, hunk?"

They made a start without any further delay, after Barry had shaken hands solemnly with the old fakir and told him that he had never seen anything so much like a mud-pie as that gentleman himself was since his happy childhood's days at Ballybunion Castle. Not understanding Barry, the fakir grinned pleasantly.

"And, bedad," added the Irishman, as he joined Maddock, "there's wan thing Oi'clane forgot to tell the ould darlint, Ben! Oi' meant to warn him to slape in foireproof bedclothes. Av he doesn't, his hair and whiskers will be settin' him ablaze. Whoosh! Ye haven't got such a thing as a parachute about ye, Ben, is ut?"

A rift in the mist, through which the hot sun streamed, gave them a glimpse of what

to expect. The path was narrow and rugged and perilously steep.

Gadra Singh and his mule were already descending without much apparent difficulty, so they followed. In an hour they halted, hot and gasping, on the edge of the jungle.

Gan-Waga took off his pith helmet, placed it on the head of the mule, and collapsed.

"My words, that awful hotness, Chingy!" he panted. "Can't yo' turn the tap-water on me a bits, Chingy?"

"My dear Wagtail," said Ching-Lung, "I wish you wouldn't make such a fuss about trifles. Shut your eyes, and fancy you are an icicle, and you'll soon feel better. We've got to get through this belt of jungle before dark. Put on your hat at once, or else we shall be mixing you up with Weeping Willie. Wouldn't you like a nice plate of hot curry?"

Gadra Singh advanced, bearing an earthenware jar, as the Eskimo, half boiled, paled at the thought of curry.

"Moaz loavely, Shiny Face!" he said. "Moaz pootiful!"

He tilted the jar, placing its slender neck beneath Gan-Waga's coat-collar, and as the cooling water trickled down his spine the Eskimo uttered a few gurgles of joy and content. Gan-Waga closed his little black eyes and smiled. It was very kind and thoughtful of the cook, and Gan decided that he would present him with a couple more of Ching-Lung's cigars, as they did not cost anything.

The cook stepped back, smiling himself as much as he ever did smile, and glad, no doubt, that his little action had conferred so much pleasure on a fellow human being.

"Butterfuls!" said Gan-Waga. "Ooh, gloriousness! Fetches along some morer, Sing-Songs!"

"A shameful destruction of precious THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 537.

wather, Oi call ut, Tom," said Barry O'Rooney. "Faith, by the idiotic grin on the face of the blubberbiter, ut moight be whisky. Bad luck to ye, Singh, to wasthe dhrinkin' wather loike that!"

Gan-Waga's little eyes opened. He stopped smiling, and at the same time his little gurgles of delight ceased. He yelled, and clawed at the small of his back. Some horrible, slimy thing was kicking and wriggling close to his naked skin.

The onlookers did not know what it was all about. The Eskimo got up and danced, and as he danced he tore off his coat, and then his shirt. A four-legged creature of an orange colour, plentifully bedecked with black spots, spun into the air, and alighted with a plop on the upturned face of Mr. Benjamin Maddock. The bos'un clutched it, gazed at it with horrified eyes, let out a howl, and hurried it from him in loathing.

It was a newt, and an extremely large and flabby one. The luckless reptile smote Gadra Singh on the chin, and as the startled cook recoiled he blundered against Weeping Willie. The mule's hind-legs shot out together, and encountered the earthenware jar. For the next second or two the sky seemed to be raining newts and fragments of pottery.

Gan-Waga was angry. He pranced about with a frying-pan, aiming blows at the cook. Ching-Lung interfered.

"Stop that nonsense, Gan!" he cried, as Gadra Singh appeared to be about to make a bolt for the jungle. "We can't afford to have him desert. Hi, cook! Come back here! Come back, I tell you, or I'll shoot!"

Gadra Singh returned as he heard the menacing click of the prince's weapon. He looked quite terrified.

"How did those awful things get into the water-bottle?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Great sahib, I know not," whined the cook, "unless, in my haste and forgetfulness, I forgot the cork. I placed the jar last night in the cistern up yonder for coolness, not knowing that these evil and unclean things were in the cistern. I am the cook of the great sahib, but I am a free man, and I will not be beaten by Shiny Face. What I have done, sahib, I have done in kindness, not knowing that the evil, slimy thing is there to tickle his esteemed back."

"Wagtail," said Ching-Lung, "shake hands with Gadra Singh. He says he didn't know the slimy thing was in the jar to tickle your esteemed back. And if I find any more slimy things in a water-jar, cook, I'll tickle your esteemed back. Come along, lads! We have a long way to go yet."

Gan-Waga's temper was something like the rook's rifle. It just squibbed off without doing any damage. He grasped the bony hand of Gadra Singh.

"His esteemed back—the blubberbiter's esteemed back, Barry," said Benjamin Maddock. "Do you know what I would like to do with it, souse me?"

"No, no, darlint!" said Barry. "Oi've got a tinder heart, Ben. Oi couldn't have hurrt him. Av ye see a dape hole, push him in. Weepin' Willie will help ye. Ye see, Ben, ut's a case where killin' would be no murder. Oi give ye free permission to do ut. Ut would be a noble dade. Oi wouldn't sthop ye, Ben, but do ut mercifully."

"Are you ready, lads?" cried Ching-Lung.

A hail came, and they looked back. A figure in khaki was signalling to them, his helmet on the muzzle of his upraised rifle.

Ching-Lung's binoculars brought the man up quite close, and he recognised Rupert Thurston's friend Duke Payton, of the Woods and Forests Department.

"On you get, boys!" said the prince. "You can't miss the chief's trail. Look after Gan-Waga, you fellows, for the heat knocks him out. Push along! The jungle is full of fever and other nasty things, and we don't want to have to sleep in it."

Although the Eskimo frequently made life a dreary place for Prout, Maddock, and that famous poet, Mr. Barry O'Rooney, they were very fond of their plump tormentor, and without him they would have found the world a duller place.

Ching-Lung smoked a cigarette as he waited for Payton.

"Any trouble?" he asked, extending his hand. "Have you come to fetch us back?"

"Fetch you back? Trouble?" Payton was pink and perspiring, but he was beaming. "No trouble at all. I've just got leave unexpectedly, and made up my mind to go with you, and I've been chasing after you full pelt. Why trouble?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Ching-Lung. "But I do know we're glad to have you. We got hold of Larput Raj and the bearers. I suppose I asked the silly question because we saw a couple of red lights last night away towards the big peaks, and Larput Raj informed us that Sharpra had awakened. Anyhow, he soon went to sleep again, for the lights quickly disappeared."

"Surely your Highness is not taking this nonsense seriously?"

Ching-Lung glanced up at Payton swiftly, and their eyes met. Payton shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not," said Ching-Lung; "but in China things go on something as they do here. We have the rottenest telegraph system and means of spreading news south of the Arctic Circle, I suppose, and yet rumour spreads like wildfire. Often it is all a fizzle, but generally there is something behind it. Isn't that your experience here?"

"Rumours! I've been chasing you through clouds of rumours," said Duke Payton. "I'm glad you've got Larput Raj and his little bunch of firebrands, for I thought they were at the bottom of it. They all mean to be loyal enough, but it's born in them to fight, and fight they must. Have you armed them?"

"Oh, yes! At any rate, they are carrying rifles and ammunition. Larput Raj and Ferrers Lord have exchanged knives."

Payton's clouded face brightened. He took a couple of small mirrors from his pocket, and, using them quickly and cleverly, he flashed a long heliograph message towards the Gate of Mist. A dazzling speck of light winked back an answer, and then vanished.

"Come, prince!" said Duke Payton.

Ching-Lung fancied there was a tone of relief in Payton's voice, but he asked no question. They passed from the sunshine into the green gloom of the jungle. The path trodden by Larput Raj and his men, and by those who had followed, was well defined. It was like entering a hot-house.

A crowd of monkeys went bounding through the swinging tree-tops, chattering and squealing angrily at the intruders.

Ching-Lung did not look up. He walked on quietly behind Payton, puffing at his cigarette. Faint, and far away, he could hear a droning that had nothing to do with bees, or monkeys, or any other inhabitant of the jungle, for it was the humming of an aeroplane.

The Defeat of the Invaders.

GAN-WAGA, the Eskimo, was in a limp condition when at last, clinging to the tail of Weeping Willie, he emerged from the jungle. His glad eyes rested upon a lagoon. Yellow reeds fringed the lagoon, but the water was as blue as an English sky on a bright June day.

Regardless of warning shouts concerning crocodiles and other trifles of the kind, the Eskimo pushed his way through the reeds and rolled in. Nothing that he could meet in the water ever troubled Gan-Waga. The newt spends a good deal of his life in the water. Gan had objected to the newt chiefly because he had encountered it unexpectedly on land, and also because no self-respecting human being cares to carry a lively newt about with him between his shirt and his backbone.

Gan-Waga turned over on his back, and, to the wonder and admiration of the native bearers, he took a cigar and a box of matches from some mysterious waterproof hiding-place, and lighted the cigar at the first attempt. And there he floated, rocking gently to and fro, perfectly happy, and as unsinkable as a new cork.

"Surely the sahib of the shiny face is mad!" said Larput Raj, reaching for his silver-mounted rifle. "There are many crocodiles, and the sahib is fat and tempting. Never did I see a man float with such ease, and one who could thus make fire in the water. Perhaps it is some magic that he possesses, and, if so, the crocodiles will not touch him. Look, thou, Nacha, the other sahibs take no heed of his peril!"

Ferrers Lord and Thurston were greeting Duke Payton, and Prout, Maddock, O'Rooney, and Prince Ching-Lung seemed to be taking no interest in Gan-Waga at all, for they were hot and leg-weary.

Nacha, the shikari's second-in-command, grunted, and made the sign that is supposed to ward off the evil eye; and as they squatted, smoking their pipes and watching the Eskimo, the rest of the bearers did the same.

"Chi-ike, Gan!" cried Maddock warningly. "You'll get a bite from something bigger than a mosquito if you ain't lively, souse me! There's a merchant coming your way with a set of teeth like forty man-traps!"

The Eskimo heard the warning, and rolled over. A ridge had formed in the blue water like the wake of a torpedo, and he saw the disappearing flicker of a black, snakelike tail. The size of the tail did not please Gan-Waga. He made for the shore with the speed of a plunging seal, emerged, and flopped down, dripping, beside Ching-Lung.

"Too bigful!" he said, in a disgusted voice. "And I too tiredness to fight the ugly old rascals. Oh, Chingy, yo' brought me to a rotten places! I don't think I sleeps comfortableness in theres, Chingy."

"Oi've been a traveller ever since the day Oi was fool enough to lave swate Ballybunion and go to say," said Barry O'Rooney, "and in that toime Oi've slept in some quare beds." He scratched his leg at the memory of it. "Wance or twice Oi've been nearly ate aloive, but Oi never slept in a bed wid anything that bit or crawled or jumped the soize of that in ut," added the Irishman. "Sure, Gan, ye'd nade a moighty powerful brand of insect-powdber to kill that koind!"

Having failed to find Gan-Waga, the crocodile had popped up an ugly, armour-plated head. Human beings seemed to be quite a novelty to the reptile, or to be treated with contempt, for it yawned in quite a bored kind of way, displaying a pair of spike-rimmed jaws a yard and a quarter long, with a gape like an open cellar-flap.

"Bedad! Look at the bewitchin' smole of ut!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Oi could wroite a poem about that smole. Ut's sittin' up now, beggin' for biscuits. And here comes his woife and his mother-in-law, and his uncle and Aunt Clara, and his sister Dorothy and little Percival and the twins. Hop ut, Gan! They mane havin' ye, my son! They're afther ye!"

The whole armour-plated population of the pool had awakened. More black heads arose, until Ching-Lung counted sixteen of them.

At that moment Weeping Willie, the mule, who had been trying to make a light lunch off somebody's pith helmet, turned his sad-looking gaze lagoonwards.

Possibly at some period of his life Willie had had an adventure with a crocodile that had not left a happy memory behind it. Willie put back his ears, opened his mouth, and let out an ear-piercing squeal. A terrific exhibition of buck-jumping ridded him of the articles the cook had not yet unloaded, and then Willie made a bee-line for the homeward trail at full gallop, followed by Gadra Singh.

"Willie, we have missed ye. There'll be wan vacant chair. And whin the ould cook grabs ye, ye'll wish ye were elsewhere," said Barry. "Ut sthroikes me, bhoys, that that bunch of long-nosed submarines manes to come ashore."

Larput Raj and his men had been watching the crocodiles in a stolid, unconcerned way. The flotilla of reptiles, as if obeying some wireless message, moved closer to the land. The leader actually thrust his body half-way out of the water, uttered the curious grunt peculiar to his unlovable race, and snapped his jaws.

"By honey, Gan, grinned Prout, "he must have found your visiting-card! He's got your name and address, blubberbiter, for a fact, he has, and he's looking for you. Now they're going to entertain us with a song and dance."

Such impudence as this was intolerable, though it had its amusing side. The other crocodiles lined up beside their leader, and joined in the chorus of grunts and jaw-snapping. Ferrers Lord rose from his camp-stool.

"If it is like this in broad daylight, it will not be a very healthy camping-ground after nightfall," he said, with a twinkle of amusement in his grey eyes. "Are those fellows sacred, Larput Raj, thou old wolf of the hills?"

"Once they were sacred, sahib," answered the shikari, an answering twinkle in his own eyes. "A holy man lived yonder in a cave, who tended them and fed them when some pious follower slew a deer or a goat and brought him meat. A day came when the holy man was seen no more, save for his turban floating in the lagoon. Cut thou some stout sticks, Nacha," he said to the head bearer, "and heat them in the fire. It would be unwise to slay them, for the spirit of the old man whom they devoured may be in them to work us evil."

A dozen bearers sprang to their feet and made for the jungle. A hot fire was already

burning. They returned with bundles of stout branches, strongly impregnated with some highly inflammable gum or resin, just as the fearless and impudent invaders came ashore. "As my Uncle Dennis remarked when he won the Battle of Waterloo, or won a bottle of whisky in a raffle—'O! forget which,'" said Barry O'Rooney—"Up wid ye, bhoys, and give them socks!" And, moind ye, they can be very nasty and spiteful at aich end. O! know O!m safe whin a dog wags his tail at me; but whin O! see wan of these lovely oil-paintings doin' ut O! quit. This ought to be a three-reel film. Av the gentleman wid the cinema camera is ready, he can sthark grindin' the handle, for Barry O'Rooney, the most famous of all cinema actors, is now about to begin. Have at ye! O!ll singe the whiskers of some of ye, ye saw-toothed, leather-tailed spalpeens!"

There was a rush for the blazing sticks, and great excitement. Beaten about their heads, and with flaming branches poked into their eyes and jaws, the invaders were quickly more than convinced that nobody loved them. Violently assaulted on all sides, they beat an ignominious retreat, amid the cheers and laughter of the victors, who had no casualties.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I enjoys that butterfuls little waltz round, Chingy," chuckled the Eskimo, "and I feel a lot betterer. I wonder ifs old Sing-Song found Weeping Willie yetness? Yo' think the crockydoles come back, hunk, Chingy?"

"Dunno," said the prince. "I heard the shikari telling the chief that some old fat-head of a fakir used to feed the ugly mob of them, and they finished by turning the fakir into a free lunch. When you start making pets of those chaps and tying blue ribbons round their necks, they get so jolly affectionate. I don't want to wake up in the middle of the night and find the golden head of one of 'em reposing on my pillow, and discover later that he's chewed off two or three of my ears."

It was decided to camp at a more respectful distance from the lagoon. Ferrers Lord ordered Nacha to take a couple of men and find Gadra Singh and the mule. Ching-Lung went on ahead with the millionaire to select a camping place.

"I don't know whether Payton has confided in you, chief," said the prince, "but when I met him it was pretty plain that he had come up country at full speed, expecting some sort of trouble. He couldn't help looking cheered up when I told him Larput Raj was with us, and that you had exchanged hunting-knives. Payton flashed a helio message back to the Gate of Mist that I didn't manage to read, and later on I heard a 'plane.'"

The millionaire nodded.

"These curious rumours that some mysterious kind of war is coming have made some of the hill tribes very restless," said Ferrers Lord. "I think Larput Raj would do his best to keep things quiet, but some of his men are spoiling for a fight, not against us, but against any other tribe they can pick a quarrel with. The most hot-brained of them are here, and Payton must be quite satisfied that it was a false alarm or he would not have joined us."

"Then he was only heliographing the 'All clear' to the aeroplane," said Ching-Lung. "He might be more explicit, chief."

"We are in India, Ching, and the Indian officials are a class to themselves, and have their own peculiar ways and methods that no outsider has ever been able to understand. And, on the whole, they have been successful methods. You and I have learned to mind our own business, and we have nothing to do with Mr. Payton's. He is Thurston's friend, and I am sure he is a good fellow and a good sportsman."

The sky was paling, and the evening mists were gathering, when Nacha and his men returned to camp. With them they brought Gadra Sing, who was tired and inclined to be sulky, and Weeping Willie, the runaway mule. As they were so close to the jungle large fires were lighted to keep away unwelcome visitors. And the evening was beautifully cool.

Gan-Waga carried his supper to the fire, round which Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney were seated. The Eskimo's supper consisted of bully beef, raspberry jam, arrowroot biscuits, and a tin of mixed pickles. His method was to smear a biscuit with jam, cover it with a thick slice of bully beef, and place a layer of pickles, onions preferably, on top.

"Tommy," he remarked, as he mixed the last of the vinegar with the last of the jam and sipped the extraordinary beverage, "I

sacked myself. I helps old Sing-Songs no morer, not fo' nobodys, old scouts. I fedded upness."

"Phwat d'ye mane—fedded upness?" cried Barry O'Rooney. "Whoy, ye overgrown oil-factory, ye've niver helped at all yet, not wan turnn of the hand. Av O! had my way, bedad, O!d fade ye up wid a big sthick!"

"Dears, dears! Yo' a lots too fondness of me, Barry. I think yo' jealous 'cos I'm so butterfuls and good-looking. Who—"

Someone whistled, and Gan-Waga got up hastily and waddled into the gloom. It was the cook, rifle on shoulder.

"Bring the long bottle that make the light out of it, Shiny Face," said Gadra Sing, in his melancholy voice. "Moaz pootiful. Las' night the rifle not go off, and I miss tiger. To-night I shoot tiger, Shiny Face, and you tell then I am moaz great shikari."

"Sing, my old dear," replied Gan-Waga, shaking his head, "I wouldn't go outs shooting tigers with you no morer nots for tallow cangles. I a bit fondness of myselfs, Sing. There's nothing doings—nothing doings. I've had some."

"Sahibs, sahibs," rang out the voice of Larput Raj, "arise and see! Sharpra the Slumberer is again awake!"

Once more against the grey of the misty sky the twin red lights were glowing like menacing eyes.

The Cactus Country.

THE shikari awoke Ferrers Lord at dawn, and then roused Ching-Lung, Duke Payton, and Rupert Thurston. Barry O'Rooney was waiting for them already, rifle on shoulder and pipe in mouth. The Irishman was a splendid shot with a rifle, and as the expedition had a good many mouths to feed, it was as well to obtain fresh meat, if possible, and not draw too heavily at first on their supply of preserved provisions. As they started off Larput Raj pointed to a tiny speck in the sky, and laughed.

"The vulture watches us, sahib," he said to Ferrers Lord. "He watches thee and Larput Raj, thy shikari, and truly he has wisdom, for shall we not feed him? As I told thee, sahib, further than two days' march into the cactus country I cannot guide thee, for beyond that I have not hunted, and it is an evil country. But I fear not, for I have still my strength, though my youth is behind me, and will trample my trail on the sand even to the peaks of Sharpra, if so it is willed and life lasts. Ay, it is an evil country of thorns and strangs trees, and so barren and naked that the bones of the wolves grow almost above their skins. And the bones of some of us shall lie there."

"Larput Raj is in a cheerful sort of mood, sir," said Payton. "It is big talk, shikari, for one who has hunted only a two days' march. What knowest thou, then, of what lies beyond the things thine own eyes have seen?"

"I have ears, Payton sahib, and my mind is not empty like a drum. This is no woman's work, no washing of clothes or grinding of corn. Thou hast eyes also. Behold, then, and tell me if this be woman's work!"

The shikari drew his knife and slashed a pathway through a barrier of tall jungle-grass that was hiding what was before them like a brown curtain. The grass fell away under the keen edge of the blade.

"Look, sahibs!" said Larput Raj. "The mists lie heavy, but you shall see enough to prove my words that it is a strange and evil land. And when you have looked, then will I and one of the sahibs beat the reeds by the watercourse for a deer. The old vulture still watches, and he grows hungry."

Where the grass ended the sand began. Their view extended only for a mile or two across a flat plain that had in some far-off age formed the bed of some vast lake or inland sea, for beyond that hung a veil of mist. Everywhere the cacti grew, sometimes in solitary state, sometimes in clumps and masses, cacti of every weird shape and of every colour. There were none of very extraordinary size close at hand, but uncanny forms of great height were seen vaguely looming through the mist. A few were in bloom, flinging out sprays of gorgeous blossom filled with honey and fragrant with perfume, and round them the jungle-bees and radiant butterflies had gathered in swarms. Others bore flowers that were unspeakably repulsive, and exhaled a stench of decayed carrion, and attracted blow-flies by the hundred.

"Well, I admit I've viewed scenery that was a good deal more attractive, Ching," said Rupert Thurston, "and I don't think it will improve very much as we go on. Anyhow, it's a fine morning. Hi! Come, shikari, fix us up for the drive."

Duke Payton took a long view of the reeds through his field-glasses, and Payton was a skilled hunter.

"It looks a more likely place for pig than deer, though there may be a buck in it, or a tiger," he said. "We'll need three men at least to drive that. I'll volunteer for one, for I'd like you fellows to get all the shooting you can, as I manage to have a fair share. The wind is right. Art thou ready, Larput Raj?"

The shikari posted Thurston and Barry O'Rooney, but he offered no advice to Ferrers Lord, for Larput Raj seemed to take it for granted that the millionaire was as good a shikari as himself, to whom it would be a grave insult to give instructions. Then, moving against the wind, Ching-Lung, Payton, and Larput Raj made a wide sweep to the back of the bed of reeds. The watercourse wound through it, with little slimy pools here and there.

Ching-Lung was in the centre. He had a fairly easy task, for he followed the watercourse, and the pools were barely knee-deep, with a hard bottom of sand. On his left he could hear Duke Payton, and on his right the shikari, as they crashed their way through the reeds. Then came the crisp crack of Payton's rifle and his warning shout.

"Tiger! Look out! I missed him clean, hang it!"

Ching-Lung stopped and peered forward, resting his rifle on the convenient branch of a tree. Forty yards away he saw the tiger slink out of the reeds. It paused at the edge of the watercourse to prick its ears and listen and snuff the air. The prince fired. He had brought the cartridges from China with him, and though they drove a good bullet they were not perfectly smokeless. Through the thin smoke he saw the tiger drop without a tremor or a kick. Then came a slight jar, and Ching-Lung felt his right arm fast.

It was pinned to the branch of the tree by an arrow that had passed through the sleeve of his coat.

(To be continued.)

NOTICES.

Correspondence.

H. Milroy, 19, Victoria Parade, Collingwood, Melbourne, Australia—with readers anywhere.

A. D. Melver, Tragowel, Victoria, Australia—with readers anywhere.

C. Marcroft, Willow Flat, Private Bay, Napier, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand—with boy readers.

A. E. Gordon, 60, Hopkins Street, Boulder City, West Australia—with readers with the object of forming an international magazine.

Back Numbers Wanted.

N. Scott, 25, Common Lane, Tyldesley, Lancs.—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "School-boys Never Shall be Slaves," "Through Thick and Thin," "The Hidden Horror," "For Another's Sake," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," and "Figgins' Fig-Pudding"—1/6d. offered. For "Lights Out!" 6d. offered. J. Leaver, 55, Park Road, Hampton Hill, Middlesex—MAGNETS, 179, 361, 352, 254, 239—3d. offered. For 254, 6d. offered.

Miss Eva Jackson, 11, Holland Street, Liscard, Cheshire—"For Another's Sake," "The Hero of the Hour"—must be clean; 3d. each offered.

F. Barren, Beeston, Hainland, near Halifax, Yorks.—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Through Thick and Thin," "The Greyfriars Wheelers"—must be clean; double price offered.

F. J. White, 40, Black Lion Lane, W. G.—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Fishy's Fag Agency"—2d. offered.

H. North, 4, Mona Road, Crookes, Sheffield—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," "Yankee School-boy," "Tom Merry's Minor," "Bully's Brother," "Bully's Chance," "Bunter the Boxer," "Bounder of Greyfriars," "Great Postal-Order Conspiracy"; also stories of the Bounder. State price.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 73.—CLAUDE HOSKINS.

SOME of you may not even remember who Hoskins is. He has never played a leading part in the stories. But there are some among the readers of the Greyfriars yarns certain to remember him, and certain to miss him if he were omitted from this series.

I mean the readers with musical tastes. Claude Hoskins is the Greyfriars musical genius.

Is he really a genius? you may ask. Well, that I really cannot tell you. For one thing, I am no judge of the matter. I was born with so small a perception of what constitutes real music that I actually like a piano-organ, and prefer the strains of the bagpipes to any other music whatever—which might recommend my taste to a Highland reader, but not, I fear, to the keen musician. It was the great Dr. Johnson, I believe, who defined music as, on the whole, a less disagreeable noise than most other noises. I am not quite so bad as that; but I cannot sit in judgment on the subject.

Hoskins belongs to the Shell, and shares a study with the robustious Hobson. They are not in the least alike, but they get on well together—possibly better than they would do were there more likeness between them. For two Hobsons would be rather a crowd in one study, and two of the Hoskins variety might get heated over arguments about sonatas in B flat. Bob Cherry says there are such things. I don't know, and for that matter, I don't believe Bob does. But anyway, I am tolerably sure that Hoskins would not welcome another fellow of his own type.

By the way, I see that it is Hoskins who spoke of his sonata in B flat, and I do not really know why it should appear to me unlikely.

Quite lately we have seen Hoskins worrying himself on the subject of the new music-master coming to take the place of Mr. Sharp, who had had to join up. That particular new music-master did not stay. He was a Hun spy, and Herr Gans bowled him out after he had treated the decent old Herr very roughly indeed. Whether his place has yet been filled we have not heard. Music is not one of the most important subjects of the Greyfriars curriculum, and to be without a music-master for a while would be something short of a disaster. Hoskins, who knows so much, ought not to miss him greatly at worst.

Bob Cherry did not know what counterpoint is. I don't know. But Hoskins knows all about it, though he is willing to submit to some amount of direction in his contrapuntal—lovely word!—studies.

It is a long time ago since Hoskins was first introduced to us as "a weedy youth, with a pale, æsthetic face, long, lank hair, a wide turn-over collar, and a very large tie." We nearly all wear turn-over collars nowadays, and there is nothing much in a large tie to attract attention. "Hoskins," continued Mr. Richards, "was very musical, and often composed things himself, and asked fellows to come and listen—an invitation which generally resulted in the fellows walking directly away from the neighbourhood of the piano. Hoskins had been known to give fags' lollipops to sit out some of the compositions when he played them; and Nugent minor was often heard to relate with great glèe how he had gained a whole packet of chocolates from Hoskins for listening to a sonata from beginning to end, having previously stuffed his ears with cotton-wool to keep out the noise. Dicky would appear to have very much the same feeling that Dr. Johnson had about music—or, perhaps, it was only Hoskins' particular brand that he hated.

At the benefit concert for Bob Cherry, after that cheery youth's hike had been scratched up, Hoskins distinguished himself by wangling in a composition of his own when he should have played the prelude—whatever that may be—to a duet. "Tell Me What Is Love," which was to be sung by Harry Wharton and Marjorie Hazeldene, Ogilvy, acting as—now, what was Ogilvy acting as?—never mind—anyways, it was Ogilvy who snatched from the piano Hoskins' MS. music and substituted the duet.

Coker started once a Fifth Form Dramatic Society, in imitation of the Remove organisation. Most of you remember that, no doubt;

more than one story was woven around it. But perhaps you don't all recall how Hoskins and Hobson were scared almost to death through it.

Hoskins had had a really liberal tip—a tenner. There are big possibilities in a tenner—from a schoolboy's point of view. Later on, when one has rent and house-keeping bills and trifles of that kind to pay, a tenner is only two hundred shillings. But at sixteen or so most of us would have thought it wealth.

Nine pounds of the ten was to pay for a violin; this seems to have been a condition of the tip, and unavoidable—but Hoskins did not want to get out of it, as he badly wanted the violin. The pound left over was blued on a feed to several members of the Shell, not so much because Hoskins was anxious to stand a feed as because he wanted his guests to come to the music-room after it and listen to his rendering of his own immortal compositions. Hobson displayed his ignorance ferriberly over those compositions, by the way. He said that they would all come and hear the symphony after the feed.

"My dear Hobson," said Hoskins, "one fellow cannot play a symphony all by himself." "No!" said Hobson, in surprise. "But



Claude Hoskins

you're such a jolly clever chap, Hosky, I dare say you could do it, though other musicians couldn't." "But there are a great many instruments used to play a symphony." "Oh, I see!—Then you could give us the concerto instead." "But my concerto in F minor requires violin and piano." "Make it a piano solo, then," said Hobson. "But let's have the feed first."

It is easy to see where Hobson's interests lay.

After the feed the other guests melted away, and Hobson was left as Hoskins' audience—or victim!

It was in the music-room that they were attacked by Coker—at least, they thought it was Coker. They knew about "The Redskin Raider," the great drama which the Fifth Form Dramatic Society were going to give; and they assumed that Coker was having a solitary full-dress rehearsal—which would not have been so very unlike Coker. It was true that they could not recognise the magnificent Horace under the war-paint of Black Buffalo, the Comanche chief; but they had no doubt of his identity. They thought he had gone mad; and a lunatic with a tomahawk is not a person to be encouraged at close quarters. Hobson and Hoskins took refuge behind the piano; and the fellow they supposed to be Coker jumped on the instrument, threatened them with his tomahawk in quite a blood-curdling manner, and finally got from Hoskins the nine pounds that were to have gone for the violin—under the guise of gold robbed from the Red tribes by Paleface dogs.

After all, it was not Coker. It was a stroke

of luck for the great Horace that he was able to prove an indisputable alibi, though. The real offender was Cleeke, the school porter pro tem., who had stolen other things as well as Hoskins' nine pounds. Dalton Hawke, the boy detective, bowled him out, and Hoskins got his money back.

Perhaps the influence of Hobson has been good for Hoskins, for we hear of his playing footer, and not playing at all badly. There is no special reason why a musical genius should not play footer; but you will not often catch a fellow of that type at it if he can get out of it, although—possibly owing to a prejudice in favour of the game, and, anyway, not to any prejudice against music—I am quite sure that footer would do him good.

But Hoskins is all right in the main, even if his notion that he is going to lick Beethoven, Bach, and the other German gentlemen with the names that are always so unlike the spelling of them, into several cocked hats one day is a delusion!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"BILLY BUNTER'S BIRTHRIGHT!"

By Frank Richards.

The readers who have been pining for a story with Bunter as its central figure will have their longing met next week.

Bunter has always pitched yarns about his titled relatives and their vast wealth—which is so frequently invested in postal orders that go astray in the post. Nobody believes those yarns, of course. But circumstances force some measure of belief this time. It really does seem as though William George were to become a personage of importance.

Does he? Well, wouldn't it be rather giving away the story to tell you that?

And if he does not, why doesn't he? H'm! Do you know, I rather think that the same objection would apply to telling you that.

You will be interested, though, I am sure. A glimpse of Bunter away from Greyfriars and his much-enduring schoolfellows is worth having.

By the way, some reader with a bee in his bonnet wrote a few days ago to say that he should like to see Billy Bunter as captain of the Remove. He would make a far better skipper than Harry Wharton, said this wrong-headed youth. And he seemed to mean it! I did not know that Bunter-worship had gone so far.

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

- 191.—"An Ungrateful Son."
- 192.—"Football Foes."
- 193.—"A Schoolboy's Sacrifice"
- 194.—"By Sheer Grit."
- 195.—"The Bully's Chance."
- 196.—"For the Honour of His Chum."
- 197.—"His Last Match."
- 198.—"The Stolen Cup."
- 199.—"The Downfall of the Fifth"
- 200.—"Wingate's Folly."
- 201.—"The Duffer's Return."
- 202.—"Against His Father's Wish"
- 203.—"By Order of the Form."
- 204.—"The Parting of the Ways."
- 205.—"The Duffer's Double."
- 206.—"Bolsover's Brother."
- 207.—"The Schoolboy Money-maker."
- 208.—"Tempted, But True!"
- 209.—"The Schoolboy Minstrel."
- 210.—"Bolsover Minor's Last Sacrifice."
- 211.—"A Race Against Time."
- 212.—"The Rivals' Test."
- 213.—"The Jape Against the Fifth."
- 214.—"The Fight for the Captaincy."
- 215.—"The Rival Co.'s at Greyfriars."
- 216.—"The Schoolboy Outcast."
- 217.—"Schoolboys' Treasure."
- 218.—"Harry Wharton & Co.'s Windfall."
- 219.—"A Forbidden Chum."
- 220.—"Foes of the Fourth."

Your Editor