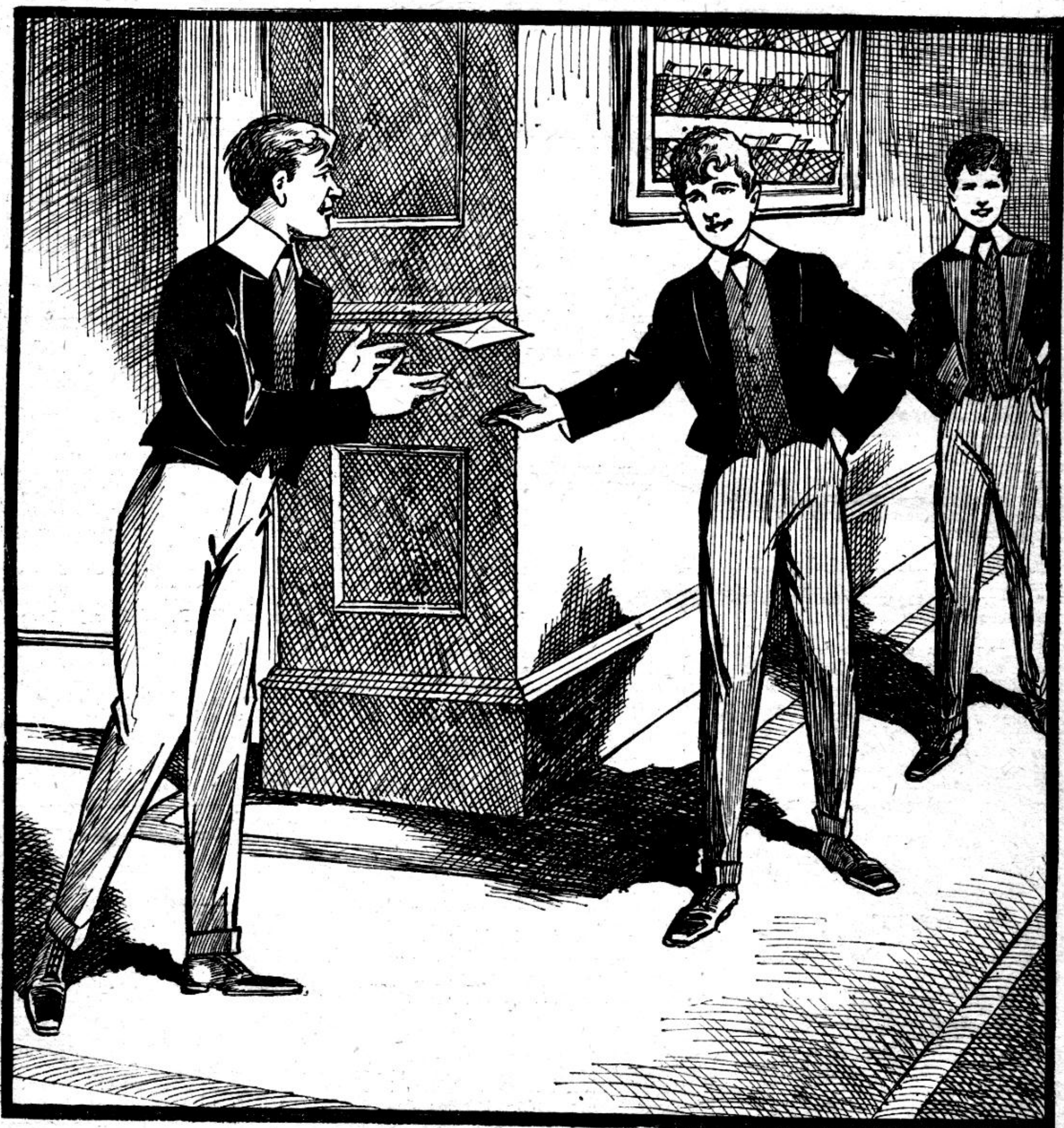


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IN SPITE OF HIMSELF!



LETTER FOR SNOOP.

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IN SPITE OF HIMSELF!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Snoop on the War-path!

WHARTON!" Snoop of the Remove spoke hesitatingly.

Harry Wharton was coming along from the stairs to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage, and he seemed in rather a hurry.

But he stopped as Sidney James Snoop spoke to him.

"Well?" he asked.

"I—I—"

"Anything up?" asked Harry, looking at Snoop in surprise.

"Not exactly. But I—I—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice came from the staircase. "Are you going to be all day getting that ball, Wharton?"

"Oh, you're in a hurry!" said Snoop.

"Yes, a bit," said Harry. "There isn't much more light for footer practice, you know; the days are drawing in. Wait a minute, Bob!"

"I've waited more than a minute already, fathead!"

"Wait another, then!"

"Bow-wow!"

Harry Wharton was still looking inquiringly at Snoop, surprised by Sidney James' manner. He was not on good terms with Snoop—far from it. Snoop was not a nice character in many ways, and he had nothing in common with the captain of the Remove.

But Snoop seemed troubled and ill at ease, and Wharton was good-natured.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked.

"Go ahead, old scout! They're waiting for me on the staircase."

"If you're in a hurry, I won't stop you," said Snoop, biting his lip. "I—I wanted to ask you to help me out, in a way—but it doesn't matter."

Wharton looked a little grim. He surmised that Snoop had been dabbling once more in dead certs, with the usual result. Snoop read the suspicion on his face, and shook his head quickly.

"I'm not going to borrow money of you!" he exclaimed. "You needn't think it's that. It's quite another matter. I—I want somebody to back me up!"

"My hat! There's Skinner—and Stott—your own pals!" said Harry, in surprise.

"They won't do it!"

"Well, I'll do anything I can," said Wharton, much perplexed. "Is there any hurry, or can it wait?"

Snoop seemed to shrink.

"Oh, never mind!" he said hurriedly. "I was a fool to think of speaking to you; we've never been friends. It doesn't matter!"

He turned quickly, and walked up the Remove passage.

Wharton looked after him.

He was quite perplexed, and did not know in the least what to make of Snoop. He reflected a moment, and then stepped into Study No. 1, picked up the football, and went back to the staircase.

"Coming at last?" inquired Johnny Bull, getting off the banisters.

"About time!" remarked Nugent.

"The timefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed light of day is disappearfully vanishing, and the shadefulness of the night is falling fast, as Poet Longfellow remarks."

"Catch!" said Harry.

He gave Bob Cherry a catch with the football; but as Bob had his hands in his pockets and wasn't looking for a catch, he caught it with his nose, and there was a howl on the Remove staircase.

"Yaroooh! You ass!"

"Clumsy!" said Wharton. "You'll have to head the ball better than that when we're playing St. Jim's, Bob. Cut along! I'll join you later."

"Look here, we want you," said Johnny Bull. "What are you going to slack about for?"

"I want to speak to Snoop."

"Blow Snoop!"

"What the thump does Snoop matter?" asked Frank Nugent. "Who's Snoop, anyway? Come along while there's some light."

"I'll come along when I've seen Snoop. Cut off, now, and don't waste time, my infants!"

Wharton turned away, and the Co. went downstairs with the ball, leaving him to his own devices.

Wharton hurried up the passage after Snoop.

That youth had gone into his own study, No. 11, and Wharton was following him there when Billy Bunter came out of No. 7.

"Just the fellow I wanted to see!" exclaimed Bunter, turning his big glasses upon the captain of the Remove.

"The want's all on your side, then, fathead!" was Wharton's reply, as he went on.

Bunter caught him by the arm.

"I say, Harry, old chap—"

"Let go! I'm pressed for time!"

"It's important," said Bunter, still holding on. "I say, Harry, old scout, it's awfully important!"

"Well, what is it, ass?" exclaimed Wharton, jerking his arm away. "Sharp!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order!" said Bunter, blinking at him.

"What?" exclaimed Wharton, in great exasperation.

"I was expecting it this afternoon—from a titled relation of mine, you know—and—Yah! Yoooooop!"

The exasperated captain of the Remove seized Billy Bunter by the collar and sat him on the floor. He had neither time nor patience just then to listen to the Owl of the Remove on the subject of his long-expected postal-order.

"Yow!" roared Bunter. "Beast! I say, old fellow—you rotter—yow!"

Wharton hurried on to Study No. 11. He wanted to oblige Snoop, if he could, little as he liked the black sheep of the Remove; and little as he could guess what Sidney James wanted of him. But

he wanted, too, to get done with Snoop and join his chums on Little Side before the light was gone.

He opened the door of No. 11, and glanced in.

Snoop shared that study with Skinner and Stott; but his study-mates were absent just then, and Sidney James was alone.

To Wharton's surprise, he found that there was a punch-ball rigged up in the study, and Snoop was punching at it rather clumsily, and breathing hard with the efforts he was making. Snoop was not an athletic fellow, and he cared little for games, unless it was to make bets on the result.

He ceased to punch the ball as Wharton looked in, and turned a flushed face towards the captain of the Remove.

"Hallo! Haven't you gone down to footer?" he asked, with a sneer.

Wharton affected not to notice the sneer.

"I came to see what you wanted," he answered. "I'm going down later."

"I don't want anything, if it comes to that."

"Then you're wasting my time for nothing," said Harry. He made a movement to go, but he paused again. "Look here, Snoop, what's the matter? If you're up against anything, and you like to tell me, I'll help you if I can."

Snoop peeled off the boxing-gloves.

"I am up against it!" he said. "Up against my study-mates, and everybody else, I think. But I'm not going to let that cad crow over me!"

"What cad?"

"Angel of the Fourth!" said Snoop, between his teeth.

"You've been rowing with Angel?" asked Harry, wondering why Snoop should be telling him about it. "I thought you were thick with him."

"Well, I was, in a way," said Snoop. "Skinner sucks up to him because he's rich. He may be as rich as Croesus, but he's a howling cad, all the same!"

"Granted!" said Harry, with a smile. "I shouldn't have expected you to say so, though!"

"You think I'm afraid of him?" broke out Snoop, his eyes glittering angrily.

"Eh? No, I didn't mean that!" said Wharton, more and more perplexed. "What's the matter with you, Snoop? You're very touchy!"

"He's a rotten cad!" said Snoop.

"Suppose my father is only a private, what about it? Angel's brother is exempted, and my father's doing his fighting for him, at any rate! Besides, my father would have had a commission, as a matter of course, only he'd had bad luck, Wharton. He joined up of his own accord—at his age, too! Everybody can't be an officer, I suppose? It's the privates in the line regiments who are beating the Germans, anyhow! I'm proud of my father!"

This came from Snoop in a sort of defiant torrent. Harry Wharton began to understand.

"Do you mean to say that Angel's been sneering about your father, Snoop?" asked Wharton quietly.

"He's always harping on it!" said Snoop savagely. "It amuses him to make me wild. I'm not going to stand it! Why should I?"

"I don't think you should," agreed Wharton. "But you're rather an ass to let it bother you! What does it matter what a silly snob says?"

"That's all very well for you! Your uncle's a colonel."

"He was in the Army before the war," said Harry. "If he had been a civilian, and called up for service, he wouldn't have been given a commission at his age. Don't you think I should be just as proud of him if he were serving in the ranks?"

"You're different from me, I suppose," muttered Snoop. And Sidney James was right on that point. It was because Snoop was a good deal of a snob himself that Aubrey Angel's mockery cut him so deeply. "But—but I'm not going to stand it! Angel isn't fit to clean my father's boots! If he won't shut up, I'm going to make him!"

"Not a bad idea," agreed Wharton.

"I—I'm not a match for him, I know that!" muttered Snoop. "He's bigger than I am, as well as older, and he can box. And—and I'm not good at it. He knows I'm no good in a scrap, or he wouldn't do it. Hilary's father is a private, but Angel doesn't say anything to him—he doesn't dare to! Well, I'm not going to hear my father insulted! I'm going to lick Angel!"

"Oh!" said Harry.

"I—I want somebody to back me up," faltered Snoop. "I know I've no right to ask you, Wharton, seeing that we've always been on bad terms. But Skinner and Stott only called me a fool when I spoke to them. They don't want trouble with Angel—he's rich. They're playing banker in his study now. So should I be, if I liked to put up with Angel's insolence. But I won't! Hang his money!"

"My hat!" murmured Wharton.

The captain of the Remove had seen a change in Snoop since his father had donned khaki. Snoop had improved in many ways. But that change for the better had gone further than Wharton had supposed. It was rather a large order for a weedy slacker like Snoop to contemplate a fight with Angel of the Fourth, who, blackguard as he was, was no bad fighting-man. It was not surprising that Snoop, in the circumstances, felt the need of someone to back him up.

"Well, now you know!" said Snoop. "I'm going to Angel's study to—to pull his nose! You needn't stare—I mean it! I'm not afraid of him! If you think I'm afraid of him, Wharton—"

"Not a bit of it, old scout," said Harry soothingly.

As a matter of fact, Snoop had an uneasy feeling that he was afraid, but was determined not to yield to it. He seemed to be trying to convince himself that he was not by a repetition of the statement in a defiant tone.

"Well, I'm not!" he said. "But—but I'd rather somebody was with me. They might set on me—Angel and Kenney—and—perhaps Skinner would, too; he doesn't want to quarrel with Angel. You come and see me through, and I'll jolly well pull Angel's nose for him!"

"My dear chap, I'll come with pleasure!" said Harry, half laughing. "I'd walk a mile to see Angel's nose pulled! Come on!"

"You're missing the footer!" said Snoop sarcastically.

"Never mind that! Come along, and



Snoop makes an announcement. (See Chapter 6.)

I'll see that you have fair play in Angel's study!"

"All right, then!"

The two Removites left Study No. 11 together, and made for the Fourth Form quarters. On the way Snoop glanced down the staircase, and seemed inclined to make for the quadrangle instead. But he pulled himself resolutely together, and they arrived at Aubrey Angel's door.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

"YOUR deal, Angel!"

There were four juniors round the table in Aubrey Angel's handsomely furnished study in the Fourth Form passage.

Angel had a cigarette between his well-cut lips, and a pack of cards in his hand, which he was shuffling. Kenney, his study-mate, was smoking, too; as were Skinner and Stott, the guests in the study. The four young rascals were enjoying themselves in their own dingy way. Sidney James Snoop generally made a fifth in the sportive circle, but his place was empty now.

Angel had rather a bored look on his handsome face. He found life at Greyfriars rather slow. This was the best he could do in the way of blackguardism; but it was not satisfying. He had had experiences before coming to Greyfriars which would certainly have prevented his admission to the school at all if the Head had known anything about them.

Skinner and Stott were very civil to Angel. The dandy of the Fourth was very wealthy; though his pursuit of "dead certs" sometimes landed him, like the seed in the parable, in stony places.

"This is jolly slow, you fellows!" said Angel, half suppressing a yawn. "Make it nap for ten bob a time, for a change."

"I don't mind," said Kenney.

Skinner shrugged his thin shoulders. "I don't mind, either, if you play for I O U's," he remarked. "I haven't got my pockets lined with ten-bobbers as you have, Angel."

"I'm not collecting wastepaper!" answered Angel, with a sneer. "By the way, where's Snoop? I thought he was comin'."

"You've upset Snoopey," said Stott, with a grin. "He doesn't like your remarks about his pater."

Angel grinned.

"It's amusin' to get his rag out," he remarked. "Blessed if I don't think he would punch me sometimes, if he had pluck enough! What a worm he is!"

"Horrid!" said Kenney, who was a faithful echo of his wealthy study-mate.

"Oh, he ain't a bad sort, in his way," said Stott tolerantly. "I'd let him alone if I were you, Angel. He's got a nasty temper."

Angel laughed contemptuously.

"Well, are we going on with banker?" asked Skinner.

There was a knock at the door.

In an instant Angel slipped the cards in the table drawer, and his cigarette disappeared under the table, with his boot pressed on it.

"All serene!" whispered Kenney. "I turned the key."

"Who's there?" called Angel, as the door handle was turned.

"It's me!" came the prompt and ungrammatical reply in Snoop's voice.

"Hallo, Snoopey!" said Skinner, with a chuckle. "He couldn't keep away, after all. I thought he couldn't! Let him in, Kenney!"

Paul Kenney unlocked the door, and Snoop came in with Harry Wharton. The sight of the latter was a surprise to the little party. They stared at him.

"Hallo! Brought a friend with you?" yawned Angel. "I didn't know this was in your line, Wharton! You're welcome to take a hand!"

Wharton's lip curled, but he did not answer.

"Wharton's come with me," said Snoop.

"Yaas, I see that! What's the game?" drawled Angel.

"Not that game!" said Snoop, as Angel brought the cards into view again.

"You can put those down, Angel!"

"What?"

"I've come here to talk to you plain, and Wharton's going to see fair play!"

Angel looked at Snoop coldly and contemptuously. His glance daunted the Removite for a moment.

"Look here, you haven't come here to make a shindy, Snoopey?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Yes, I have!" replied Snoop doggedly.

"Then don't do it! We don't want a row here."

"Couldn't you keep your Lower Fourth manners for the Lower Fourth, my dear man?" drawled Angel. "You rather get on my nerves, Snoop. Will you have the goodness to shut the door after you?"

"Yes, get out, Snoopey, if you're not here for banker," said Stott. "Don't kick up a row!"

Snoop stood where he was, faltering a little. He had brought Wharton there to see him through, feeling that he would be more courageous in the presence of a fellow whose courage was unlimited. But the hostile looks around him and the cold, contemptuous expression on Angel's handsome face discouraged him, and he felt his resolution failing.

"Go it, Snoop!" said Wharton encouragingly.

"You're a rotten cad, Aubrey Angel!" began Snoop, screwing up his courage to the sticking-point, as it were.

Angel raised his eyebrows.

"Really?" he asked.

"A sneaking, rotten, backbiting rotter!" went on Snoop, gathering courage with the sound of his own voice.

"You don't say so!" remarked Angel, unmoved.

"Yes, I do!" said Snoop, rather at a loss.

"Good! Well, now you've said so, would you mind gettin' out, and shuttin' the door after you?"

There was a chuckle from Angel's companions.

"Yes, there's the door, Snoopey," said Skinner. "Travel, old chap!"

"I'm not going!"

"Anythin' else to say?" asked Angel coolly. "This is rather amusin'. By the by, any news of your pater yet, Snoop? Have they made him a corporal yet? I believe corporal is his first step up, isn't it? Or perhaps he's got a job as a bat-man?"

"My father's still in the ranks," said Snoop, his voice trembling with rage.

"Must be jolly!" said Angel. "You meet such a variety of company in the ranks. It's democratic, and all that. Lots of chances of risin', too, if you're a good soldier. I hope your father doesn't drink, Snoop!"

Another chuckle from Aubrey Angel's admiring circle. Wharton began to look restive. He was feeling that if Snoop did not begin on Angel soon he would have to begin himself.

"That's the way you speak of a man who's keeping the Germans off you, you snob!" muttered Snoop.

"Yaas. It's rather lucky for us snobs that the lower classes are so kind as to keep the Germans off us, isn't it?" said Angel agreeably.

"Do you want me to wait any longer, Snoop?" asked Wharton politely. "I can't stand much more of this."

"I don't remember askin' you into my study, Wharton," remarked Angel. "I suppose these are Lower Fourth manners and customs. Don't let me detain you, I beg."

Snoop made up his mind. Angel's taunting had roused his temper again, and he screwed up his courage. He made a rapid stride towards the dandy of the Fourth, and grasped at his nose to pull it.

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"Look out, Angel!" exclaimed Kenney.

But Aubrey Angel did not need the warning. He was on his guard, quite prepared for some outbreak from Snoop.

His left came up like lightning, knocking Snoop's arm aside, and in a second more, half rising, he planted his right full in Snoop's face.

Snoop reeled back with a gasp. Bump!

It was a heavy blow, and it sent Snoop to the floor. He rolled helplessly on Angel's expensive carpet, amid a chortle from the whole study.

Angel sank back in his chair, smiling evilly. Snoop sat up, with a dazed look, on the carpet. He blinked dizzily at the grinning faces round him. Wharton, with a contracted brow, picked him up and set him on his feet.

"Have some more?" smiled Angel.

Snoop did not answer. He detached himself from Wharton, and moved to the door. His head was singing with the blow he had received, and his courage had oozed out at his finger-tips. With a scarlet face and a quivering lip the unfortunate funk of the Remove limped out into the passage.

"Snoop!" exclaimed Wharton sharply, between pity and disgust. "Snoop, old man!"

Snoop did not answer. He went unsteadily down the passage, followed by a roar of laughter from the study. Wharton glanced at the merry circle, and his hands clenched. He was greatly inclined to wade in, and begin on the four of them all together.

And at his look the chuckling in the study died away, and Skinner strolled behind Angel. But the captain of the Remove restrained himself, and left the study, closing the door with a slam.

He passed Snoop on the staircase as he went down. Snoop did not look at him, and Wharton hurried out to join his chums on Little Side.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Turning of the Worm!

HAROLD SKINNER grinned as he came into No. 11 to tea with Stott. The punch-ball was still in its place, but Snoop was not using it. He sat in the armchair, with a deep cloud upon his face, and he looked up sullenly as his study-mates came grinning in.

"Hallo! Going in for athletics?" said Stott, glancing at the punch-ball. "No room for that rot here, Snoop. Take it down!"

Snoop did not answer.

"Still got your rag out, Snoopey?" asked Skinner. "Don't play the goat, old man! What did you want to rag with Angel for? I suppose you didn't expect him to let you pull his nose, and take it smiling?"

No answer.

"The fact is, you've got to chuck that, Snoopey," said Skinner, raising his voice a little. "Angel's my pal, and it pays me to keep in with him. He's not going to be rowed by a fellow from this study—understand that!"

"I agree," said Stott. "It's all rot, Snoop! Suppose Angel twits you a bit, what does it matter? He's got a nasty tongue, but it doesn't do any harm, and he's worth knowing. I'd jolly well like to go to his place in the vac. No end of style!"

"He's used to fellows sucking up to him," went on Skinner. "Look how Kenney kow-tows to him! He's used to it. He's rich, I don't see how anybody could like him personally, but he's worth keeping in with. You were glad enough

to scrape acquaintance with him when he came, Snoop."

"Jolly glad!" said Stott.

Snoop did not speak, but his brow became more and more lowering. The shame of his defeat and of his pusillanimity in Angel's study was heavy upon him, and his temper was dangerous at that moment. His eyes were burning under his bent brows.

"Put up with his swank and make him worth while, as I do," advised Skinner. "I've stuck him for fifteen bob at banker this afternoon. The cash comes in useful. You might have done the same."

"I don't want his money!" said Snoop, breaking the silence at last.

"That's a new departure, isn't it?" sneered Skinner. "I thought you were jolly keen after his money."

"Perhaps I was. I wouldn't touch it now."

"Because he jeers about your pater?" Skinner laughed mockingly. "Well, all Angel's relations are high up the ladder, and he's a bit of a snob. Still, a fellow who'd got a father in the ranks ought to keep it a bit dark in a place like this."

Snoop's eyes blazed.

"I'm proud of it!" he snapped out. "It's about the only thing I've got to be proud of. And I'd be ashamed of my father seeing me pally with a pair of shady blackguards like you two, or with Angel either, rich as he is!"

"Hoity-toity!" said Skinner mockingly. "Here's the blessed worm turning! You ought to have shown this terrific ferocity when you were talking to Angel, old scout! It's wasted on us."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott.

"And your not going to talk in that strain, either!" pursued Skinner. "You'll get a study lickin' if you're not careful, Snoop. Mind, I mean what I say. You're not to rag with Angel, and you're to keep a civil tongue in your head in this study. And, for goodness' sake, let's hear no more of your dashed pater. I'm fed up with him—fed up to the chin!"

"Same here!" assented Stott.

Snoop did not answer, but his look was deadly. Even among his associates, the least decent fellows at Greyfriars, Snoop was treated with more or less open contempt, and regarded rather as a hanger-on than a friend. Anybody in the Remove knew that he could talk to Snoop as he liked. Even Billy Bunter ventured to slang him.

Snoop had always accepted that position, somehow. He was not thin-skinned as a rule. But the change that was working in him had made him more sensitive. It was surprising enough that he should have quarrelled with the wealthy Angel, instead of submitting to his sarcastic talk, and it showed how Snoop was changing.

Somehow, the thought of his father in khaki, facing death on the terrible Western Front, made Snoop ashamed of what he had been, and filled him with a vague resolve to be something better and manlier.

But it was uphill work for a fellow like Snoop, and many times he had lost heart, especially as any trace of decency on his part was sure to be met with mockery and jeers by his friends.

But Angel's bitter tongue had given the finishing touch. There were limits to what even Snoop would endure. Angel's motive was partly snobbishness, partly sheer malice. It amused him to enrage Snoop when he found that the wretched fellow was sensitive.

As for the junior's resentment, Aubrey Angel did not care two straws for that. He despised Snoop too thoroughly to think what he thought or felt.

While Snoop sat silent and glowering,

Skinner and Stott prepared their tea, giving him several unpleasant glances. It was exasperating to Skinner to have his friendship with the superb Aubrey endangered by the sullen resentment of his study-mate.

"For goodness' sake, don't sit sulking there!" snapped Skinner at last. "Look here, Snoop, we're fed up with your sulks. Get a move on, and help us get tea, and stop scowling. As for what Angel gave you, you asked for it, and it served you right. I'd a good mind to give you the same myself when you came there kicking up a shindy."

"You couldn't!" said Snoop.

"Couldn't, you worm?" growled Skinner. "For two pins I'd have you out of that chair and mop up the study with you now!"

"Try it on!" said Snoop between his teeth.

Skinner stared at him. This was quite a new mood in his study-mate, and it puzzled and exasperated Skinner.

"Do you mean that?" he snapped.

"Yes, I do!"

"Then I'll take you at your word."

Skinner strode at his study-mate, grasped him by the shoulders, and spun him out of the armchair. He intended to spin him across the study, but Snoop closed with him like an enraged cat.

His right, clenched hard, was dashed into Skinner's face, and as the startled junior staggered back, his left followed it, and Skinner stumbled over a chair and went headlong to the floor.

"My hat!" ejaculated Stott, staring at Sidney James in blank amazement. "You blessed wild animal!"

Skinner lay gasping on the floor, hardly knowing how he had got there. Snoop, half frightened at what he had done, stood glaring down at him.

"Ow!" panted Skinner. "Oh! Why, you cheeky rotter! Ow! I'll smash you! I'll wring your—ow!—neck! Ow—ow!"

"Keep your paws to yourself, then!" said Snoop.

Skinner picked himself up slowly, for he was hurt. A crimson stream was trickling from his sharp nose.

"Whop him, old chap!" said Stott.

"I'm going to. I'll lick him till he can't crawl!" panted Skinner. "I'll alter his features for him!"

He mopped his nose furiously with his handkerchief.

Snoop, his brief fury spent, stood uneasy and unquiet, fearing what was to follow. He made a movement towards the door, but stopped again. His irresolution was almost painful to witness; but Stott only grinned as he saw it. Skinner, having reduced his nose to some order, pushed back his cuffs and advanced upon his study-mate.

"Now, then!" he said, gritting his teeth.

Snoop backed away.

"Look here, Skinner—" he muttered.

"Come on!"

"I don't want to fight you. What's the good of ragging?" muttered Snoop.

"You began it, anyway."

Skinner did not answer, but he followed Snoop round the study table. Stott stepped in the retreating junior's way and stopped him.

"You've got to have it, Snoopey," he remarked. "You've been getting your ears up too much. Paste him, Skinney!"

With a heavy shove Stott sent the hapless Snoop staggering towards Skinner, and the latter piled in. Two or three blows sent Snoop reeling; but, as if the shock revived his courage, he turned on Skinner, and attacked him hotly in his turn. Skinner was not exactly a hero, and the attack was so hot that he gave

ground very promptly, which further encouraged Snoop, and the attack grew hotter and hotter.

The door opened, and a pair of big glasses glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows— Oh, my hat!" Billy Bunter blinked at the exciting combat. "Go it! Give each other a jolly good hiding! You both want it! He, he, he!"

Crash!

More by luck than design, Snoop got in a terrific upper-cut, which swept Skinner off his feet, and landed him on his back on the floor. Skinner lay half-dazed, panting with exhaustion and rage.

Greatly encouraged now, Snoop fairly danced round his fallen study-mate, brandishing his fists.

"Get up!" he yelled. "Get up and have some more, Skinner! Yahl! Funk! Get up!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Stott.

Sidney James turned on him.

"Do you want some?" he demanded truculently.

"My hat!" Stott backed away, evidently not wanting any, in Snoop's present warlike mood. "Look here—"

Skinner scrambled up, stuttering with rage.

"Collar him, Stott! Lend me a hand. I'll give him the fives-bat! I'll take it out of him! I'll—"

"Fair play!" howled Snoop, as he was seized on both sides. "Let go! Fair play, you rotters! Oh!"

"I say—" began Bunter.

Skinner kicked the door, slamming it almost on Bunter's fat nose. The Owl of the Remove jumped back into the passage just in time. And then followed sounds of anguish from No. 11 as Skinner got to work with the fives-bat.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Surprising the Remove!

"**A**NYTHING in the grub line?"

Bob Cherry asked that important question as he came into Study No. 1 after footer practice. Bob's healthy appetite was healthier than ever in the cold weather; in fact, it was flourishing like a green bay-tree by running waters. Bob was feeling inclined to polish off nearly all the rations in Greyfriars.

"Lots!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "My aunt's sent a cake—war-time cake—puzzle, find the plums—but it's solid, and there's plenty of it. Nugent's bagged a tin of pilchards, and we've got a haddock. So it's going to be a high tea—"

"Because of the haddock?"

"No, ass! The haddock is as fresh as paint. Don't be funny!"

"And there's plenty of war-bread," said Nugent cheerfully. "And there's butter—you can see it if you've brought your microscope."

"And cheese," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh proudly, laying a small—a very small—parcel on the study table.

Bob Cherry fanned himself.

"Cheese!" he repeated dramatically. "Do mine aged ears once more hear that sweet, forgotten word?"

"The cheesefulness is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The smallfulness of it is enormous—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the enormousness of it is small," said Harry Wharton, with a chuckle. "Never mind. Every little helps in war-time; and we're beating the Huns, anyway. That makes a good sauce."

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. "And here's my rations. Why, we're simply rolling in it! What ass said there was a food shortage?"

"I say, you fellows—"

The Famous Five fixed upon Bunter a quintuple glare. Billy Bunter was not persona grata at tea-time anywhere.

"Bunk!" commanded five voices in unison.

"Slay him!" said Bob Cherry in a deep voice. "The horrid Hun has scented our haddock! Slay him!"

"I say, you fellows, I haven't come to tea," said Bunter, eyeing the gorgeous supply on the table, nevertheless. "I say, is that cheese?"

"Never mind what it is, as you haven't come to tea," grinned Bob Cherry. "Hand me the poker, somebody. I want to brain Bunter!"

"Bother your old cheese!" snapped Bunter. "I dare say it's mouldy, anyway. I say, there's a lark going on in No. 11—I say, is that butter?"

"Hide it!" exclaimed Bob anxiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't think I want your blessed butter! I wouldn't take it at a free gift! I say, Skinner and Stott are laying into poor old Snoop no end with a fives-bat! Are they pilchards in that tin?"

"What's that?" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "What's the matter with Snoop?"

"Sounds as if he's being murdered," answered Bunter cheerfully. "Making no end of a row. He's been punching Skinner, and they've got him down, and thrashing him with a bat. He, he, he! I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter was brushed aside as the captain of the Remove strode from the study. His chums followed him, and they ran along to No. 11. If two fellows were thrashing one with a fives-bat it was time for the Famous Five to chip in; and tea could wait, even after footer practice in a keen wind.

That there was trouble in Study No. 11 was pretty clear from the yells that were proceeding from it. Squiff, Peter Todd, and Lord Mauleverer had come out into the passage, brought there by the uproar.

"What's the merry game?" asked Squiff.

Wharton did not stop to reply; he threw open the door of Snoop's study.

The unfortunate Snoop was extended across a chair, Stott holding him there, while Skinner laid on with the fives-bat. Skinner was hitting hard, too, his face pale with fury.

Wharton darted across the study, grasped Skinner by the shoulder, and spun him away from his yelling victim.

Skinner crashed against the table.

Bob Cherry was only a second after Wharton, and he devoted his attention to Stott. That youth, in alarm, released Snoop, just as Bob reached him and seized him by the collar. Sounds of anguish continued to proceed from the study; but they came from Stott, whose hapless face was being rubbed in the hearthrug.

Snoop rolled off the chair, and Wharton caught him by the shoulder and steadied him.

"Ow, ow, ow!" said Snoop gaspingly.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Peter Todd, looking in. "Trouble in the happy family circle—what?"

"Ow, ow, yow!" Snoop was almost sobbing with rage and pain. "You fellows see fair play. I can't fight the two of them."

"You can't fight one of them, you ass!" said Squiff, with a laugh.

"You'll see!" yelled Snoop. "You keep Stott off, and see me handle Skinner!"

"My hat! The giddy worm's turned!" exclaimed the Australian junior. "Good man! Go for his boko! I don't think Stott wants to interfere."

Stott's wishes could not be ascertained, or the simple reason that Bob Cherry was sitting on his head, and Stott was exploring the recesses of the hearthrug with his features.

"Stott's all right!" said Bob. "You don't mind if I sit here for a bit, Stott?"

"Gruggrrrggggh!"

"Don't talk German to me, Stott!"

"Groooogh!"

Skinner was making for the door, but the doorway was filled with juniors. Quite a crowd had gathered round at the unexpected and startling news that Snoop was on the war-path. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh pushed Skinner back with a dusky hand.

"The esteemed Snoop desires your respectable company, my worthy Skinner," he remarked.

"Let me pass, you nigger!" yelled Skinner.

Wharton took Skinner by the shoulder and spun him towards Snoop.

"There's your man!" he said.

"Come on, you coward!" roared Snoop.

The surprised faces crowding the doorway seemed to lend Sidney James new courage. He was going to show the Remove that he was some sort of a fighting-man, after all. The fact that Skinner wanted to shun the combat encouraged Snoop to the point of recklessness.

He attacked furiously, and Skinner's defence was knocked right and left. They went tramping round the study, Skinner defending and dodging, Snoop attacking all the time with terrific vim. There were cheers from the crowd of juniors in the doorway and the passage, mingled with laughter. Snoop as a fighting-man was something new and entertaining.

Skinner went down to the floor at last, and stayed there, gasping and groaning.

"Get up!" yelled Snoop, dancing round him.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm done!" groaned Skinner. "Hang you! Let me alone!"

"Snoop wins!" grinned Squiff. "Bravo!"

"Good man!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "You ain't such a worm as you've always made out, Snoopey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now let that other rotter come on!" shouted Snoop.

"Oh, my hat! Isn't he a hog for battle!" roared Peter Todd. "We shall have to look out for Snoop after this!"

Bob Cherry dislodged himself from Stott's head, and Stott staggered up, crimson and panting. Snoop danced up to him, flourishing his fists.

"Keep off, you fool!" howled Stott. "Oh! Owl! Yow! Yooop!"

Instead of keeping off, Sidney James Snoop smote him hip and thigh. Stott was more than a match for Snoop by a good deal, if he had tried, but he did not feel equal to it just then. And Snoop was so excited and furious that possibly he would have got the better of it just then, even if his study-mate had put his beef into it. But Stott's fight was very feeble, and in a few minutes he joined Skinner on the floor.

Sidney James Snoop stood panting and victorious.

"Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Good man!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Who'd ever have expected a funk to put up a fight like that?"

Snoop turned on him in a flash.

"Who are you calling a funk?" he demanded. "Put up your hands, Peter Todd!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Put 'em up!" said Snoop undauntedly, advancing upon the astounded Peter.

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"Made your will, Toddy?" asked Squiff. "Ordered your coffin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear lunatic," gasped Peter, "I won't put up my hands! You'd break into pieces, old chap, if I hit you. But I withdraw the word funk. I take it back from beginning to end."

"Well, Snoop isn't a funk, though he's always made out he was," grinned Bob Cherry. "Look at the floor, strewn with his victims!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle at me if you like," said Snoop. "I'm going to fight any chap who calls me a funk, even if it's you, Bob Cherry!"

"My dear man, you're not going to fight me," said Bob, laughing. "I give you best in advance."

The excitement was over, and the juniors dispersed, most of them chuckling.

Wharton tapped Snoop on the shoulder as Skinner and Stott picked themselves up, eyeing their study-mate sullenly and savagely.

"You won't want your tea here after this," said Harry. "Come along to my study, Snoop. We've got lots, as it happens."



"Thank you!" faltered Snoop. "I'll come, with pleasure."

And Snoop, a little damaged, but feeling very pleased with himself, went down the passage with the Famous Five.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "We left Bunter in the study, and—"

He did not finish, but broke into a run. Bunter was no longer in Study No. 1 when he arrived there. Bunter was gone, and so was the cheese and the butter and the famous haddock! It was a war-tea—a very much war-tea—after all, that Sidney James Snoop shared with Harry Wharton & Co.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER
News From the Front!

"LETTER for you, Snoopey!" said Bob Cherry, as Sidney James came up after lessons the next day.

Bob was looking over the rack in the faint hope that a remittance might have arrived for him while he was at footer practice.

There was nothing for Bob; but there

was a letter for Snoop, marked "On Active Service."

Snoop's face brightened as Bob tossed him the letter.

"From my pater, of course!" he said. "Thanks!"

"Good news, I hope!" said Bob.

"Well, it shows that he's safe, so far."

Snoop opened the letter, and Bob's glance dwelt upon him for a moment, very kindly in expression. It was a new trait in Snoop to show concern for anyone but himself, and his remark showed that he had been thinking of his father out in Flanders, amid the terrible perils of the Western Front. Snoop's expression became brighter still as he read.

"Oh, good!" he ejaculated. "I say, Cherry—"

He broke off, however, and coloured.

"Go it, old son!" said Bob cordially. "Anything good?"

"Well, it is good!" said Snoop. "I suppose you don't care about it, as far as that goes—"

"But I do, my infant!" said Bob. "What's the news? Have they made him a field-marshal?"

Snoop laughed.

"No. He's got a step up, though. He's corporal now."

"Good man!"

"And that isn't all," said Snoop brightly. "He's got the Military Medal!"

"Bravo!" said Bob. "Jolly glad, Snoopey! That's something to get. It will be the V.C. next—what? I say, we've got to celebrate this!" Bob raised his powerful voice and called to his chums, who were chatting in the doorway. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! This way, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came along. Billy Bunter rolled after them.

Bunter spotted the letter in Snoop's hand, and he judged by Snoop's pleased look and Bob Cherry's satisfaction that it was a remittance. And wherever there was cash, that was the place for William George Bunter.

"What's the row?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Jolly good news!" answered Bob. "Snoop's got a letter from his pater—"

"I say, Snoopey, old chap," interrupted Bunter. "I was just going to ask you to tea. Will you come, old top?"

"No, I won't!" answered Snoop.

"Oh, really Sidney, old fellow, we're going to have rather a good spread," said Bunter. "I really wish you'd come. You see—"

"Dry up, Owl!" said Bob Cherry.

"You fellows, Snoop's pater has bagged the M.M., and we're going to drink his health in ginger-pop. This way!"

"The M.M.!" repeated Bunter.

"What's that?"

"The Military Medal, ass!"

Billy Bunter gave a sniff of utter disgust.

"You silly ass! Isn't it a remittance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Is that why you want Snoopey to tea?"

Bunter grunted and rolled away. He wasn't interested in Military Medals. Snoop received congratulations from the Famous Five, however, which he valued more than Bunter's kind attentions. He was looking very bright as he was marched off between Wharton and Bob Cherry in the direction of the school shop. Skinner and Stott looked sulkily on from a distance.

"He's getting jolly thick with that lot, isn't he?" sneered Skinner. "We shall have him becoming too good for a game of banker next!"

"He seems in high feather," remarked Stott.

"Hang him, and all of them!" said Skinner amiably.

"Anything up?" asked Squiff, meeting the Co. in the quadrangle.

"Lots!" answered Bob. "Join up, dear boy, and come and drink the health of Snoop's pater! He's been killing Huns no end, and they've given him the M.M.!"

"Bravo!"

Snoop's face was flushed, and his eyes were sparkling. He had probably never been so happy in his life as he was at that moment. He was "somebody" at last, if only for a short time. The sneers and taunts of Aubrey Angel, which had made him writhe so much, were forgotten now. Harry Wharton & Co. evidently did not care whether his father was a private or a general; to them he was a man in khaki doing his duty at the Front, and that was all they cared about. And the opinion of the Co. was a good deal more valuable than that of the snob of the Fourth.

Quite a number of the Remove joined the procession as the news spread—Tom Brown, and Piet Delarey, and Peter Todd, and Vernon-Smith, and Redwing, and Lord Mauleverer, and a good many more. Snoop had never been the centre of an admiring crowd before, and he was very much elated.

"Ginger-pop all round, Mrs. Mimble," said Bob Cherry impressively, as the juniors crowded into the little shop; "and mind, the very best vintage! This is a very special occasion, Mrs. Mimble."

Mrs. Mimble smiled.

"I say, you fellows"—Bunter rolled in—"don't leave me out, you know! I say, Snoopey, old man, I congratulate you no end! I'll have some jam-tarts with mine."

"Roll that porpoise out!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Sit on him, somebody!"

"I say, you fellows, don't be beasts, you know! I want to congratulate Snoop—"

"You want to guzzle ginger-pop!" growled Bob. "Never mind—one for Bunter, too, Mrs. Mimble! Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Dry up!"

"Gentlemen," said Bob Cherry, taking up his glass of foaming ginger-pop, "I have the honour of proposing a toast to—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Here's to Corporal Snoop, one of the very best, and may he soon be a field-marshal!"

"Hip-pip!"

"Hear, hear!"

The toast was drunk with enthusiasm. Billy Bunter, indeed, was so enthusiastic that he was willing to drink it over again if more ginger-pop had been forthcoming. Snoop was cheered and smacked on the back; and when the hearty celebration was over he left the tuckshop looking as if he were walking on air.

Aubrey Angel was sauntering in the quad with Kenney, and he glanced rather curiously at Snoop as the latter came by.

"The little bird's in high feather," remarked Angel. "Hallo, Snoopey! What's the news? Have they let your pater off C.B.?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Kenney.

Snoop's cheery expression changed, and he gave the dandy of the Fourth a dark look.

"My pater's got promotion," he said.

"Bagged his commission—what?" asked Angel.

"They've made him a corporal," said Snoop, wincing.

"Dear me! Glorious, old fellow! I congratulate you no end!" said Angel

genially. "Let me see, what is a corporal?"

Snoop hurried on without answering, but his happy look was gone. Angel had succeeded in dashing his cheery spirits, and he smiled in his malicious way as he noted Snoop's clouded looks.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Snoop's Challenge!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Trot in, my infant!"

Study No. 13 were at prep. Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Mark Linley, and little Wun Lung were all seated round the table when Snoop looked in.

"Busy?" asked Snoop hesitatingly.

"Nearly done," answered Bob cheerily. "Squat in the armchair for a few minutes, if you don't mind."

"Right-ho!"

Snoop sat down, and in a few minutes Bob Cherry jumped up, playfully stuck his pen behind Hurree Singh's dusky ear, pitched two or three books across the study, with a crash, and turned to his visitor.

"Finished!" he announced. "Blow prep! Prep's a worry! Snoopey, old man, you're looking very fit!"

"I've been having a go at the punch-ball," said Snoop. "I—I looked in to—to ask you if you'd do me a favour, Cherry."

"Any old thing," answered Bob.

"I'm going to fight Angel."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"You think I can't do it?" asked Snoop, flushing. "Well, I'm going to try. I'm going to shut him up. He—he's been jawing again, the cad! He won't let me alone. He's stuck up a drawing in the Common-room, making fun of my pater!"

Bob knitted his brows.

"The miserable worm!" he said. "By Jove, it's about time that cad was thrashed! But I'll tell you what, Snoopey; I'll do the job for you! Leave it to me!"

Snoop shook his head.

"You see, old top, you're not quite up to Angel's weight," said Bob kindly. "He's bigger than you, and a bit more fit, if you don't mind my saying so. I'm afraid he's over your weight."

"I don't care!" said Snoop doggedly. "Suppose I get licked? Well, he will get some punishment, anyway."

"Yes, that's right enough; you could make it worth his while to stop his impudence, if you put your beef into it," said Bob, rather dubiously. "But you'll have to expect a bit of a gruelling, Snoop."

"I'm not afraid of that."

"Well, that's the right spirit," said Bob, though still a little doubtfully.

"A licking doesn't hurt a chap," said Snoop slowly, as if arguing to convince himself. "You stood up to Bolsover major when he first came here, because he was bullying, and he licked you the first time. You were pretty hard hit. But you stood it out, and you licked him afterwards. Well, why can't I do the same with Angel?"

Bob smiled.

"You could, if you tried," he answered. "It's only a question of sticking to it, and not caring if you get hurt a bit. Bolsover gave me a terrific time when I tackled him first, that's true enough. If you mean business, Snoopey, stick to it, and I'll be your second."

"I do mean business! Will you take my challenge to Angel?"

"I'm your man!" said Bob, at once.

"I—I've asked Skinner, but he won't," muttered Snoop. "I'm not on very good terms with Skinner, after the row we

had yesterday. Of course, it's a bit like cheek to ask you—"

"Not a bit of it, old son; I'm your man! I'll buzz off and see Angel at once, if you like," said Bob. "You're sure you want me to?"

"Yes!"

"Then it's a go. I'll ask him to come into the gym, say, in half an hour," said Bob. "Will that do?"

"That's all right. I'll be there."

"Done!"

Snoop left the study, leaving Bob Cherry looking rather thoughtful.

"The esteemed Snoop is coming on fully," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "His courage is terrific!"

"I hope it isn't just a flash in the pan," said Bob. "It's a big order for him to tackle a chap like Angel. Angel's a rotten cad, but he's tough, and he knows how to use his fists. I'm afraid poor old Snoop is booked for a licking; and Angel's not the man to let him down lightly, either."

"He can't lick Angel," said Mark Linley. "But he can damage him a good bit, if he tries. He ought to do it, too; I've seen that drawing in the Common-room, and it's caddish!"

Bob Cherry nodded.

"I'll trot along and see Angel," he said.

Bob went down the Remove passage, and headed for the Fourth Form quarters. He found Angel and Kenney still at prep, working in a desultory way. Little work was done in Angel's study that could possibly be avoided.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Still at it?" asked Bob, as he looked in. "I'll wait!"

"You needn't!" snapped Angel. "Buzz off!"

"I've a message for you."

"Oh, rot! Don't bother!"

Bob Cherry's eyes glinted, and he stepped into the study.

"I'll wait!" he repeated calmly. "If you don't like me here, Angel, I advise you to put me into the passage! You're welcome to go ahead."

Angel did not reply to that; he continued his work as if he had not heard. After a while he turned from his books and lighted a cigarette.

"Coming down, Aubrey?" asked Kenney, taking his cue from Angel, and ignoring Bob's presence in the room.

"Yaas, when I've had a smoke."

"Like to hear my message now?" asked Bob.

"Hallo! Are you still there?"

"Yes, I'm still here," said Bob quietly. "I've brought you a challenge from Snoop, of my Form, Angel."

"A what?" ejaculated Angel.

"You've insulted Snoop."

"By gad! Can that worm be insulted?" yawned Angel. "Dear me! Is the ferocious youth goin' on the war-path again? I thought I gave him a lesson in this study that would last him some time!"

"When will it suit you to meet him in the gym?"

Angel laughed.

"Is this serious?" he asked.

"Quite."

"That worm has dug up enough pluck to ask me to come and lick him?" exclaimed Angel.

"He's ready for you," answered Bob.

"I think you've gassed enough now, Angel, and I'd like your answer. The smoke here rather worries my lungs."

"You don't say so? Well, I'll amble along and thrash him, if he wants me to," drawled Angel. "As good a way of killin' time as any other. I'll be in the gym in a quarter of an hour."

"Right-ho!"

Bob quitted Angel's study, and

returned to the Remove passage, where he looked in at No. 11.

Snoop, in a rather breathless condition, was hammering away at the punch-ball, Skinner and Stott scowling at him. Punching the ball was rather disconcerting in the confined limits of a junior study, but the pair were raising no objections now. Their late experience had taught them a new respect for Snoop, and they did not venture to interfere.

"Quarter of an hour from now, in the gym, Snoopey!" announced Bob Cherry.

"Right you are!" said Sidney James.

"I'm going to be your second," said Bob, "and I'll tell the fellows to come along. Don't tire yourself out, kid. Ta-ta!"

And Bob Cherry went along to apprise his chums of what was on. Skinner and Stott stared at their study-mate.

"What's on?" asked Skinner. "Are you going to fight somebody, Snoop?"

"I'm going to fight Angel!" said Snoop defiantly.

"Ye gods! You'll get smashed up!"

"I'm chancing that!"

"You utter duffer!" exclaimed Stott. "You're no match for Angel! He could make rings round you with one hand tied."

"Oh, rot!"

"By gad!" said Skinner, his eyes glistening. "We'll be on the scene, rather! Stott, will you take five to one against Snoopey?"

"No jolly fear!" answered Stott. "I'll put ten to one on Angel, if you care to take it!"

"Not this evening!" grinned Skinner.

"So you think I'm so jolly certain to be licked?" muttered Snoop, glowering at his study-mates.

Skinner chuckled.

"I don't think—I know!" he answered. "And Angel's a spiteful fellow—he will hit as hard as he knows how. I'm sorry for you, Snoop! You're in for it!"

"Fairly in for it, and no mistake!" said Stott.

"Oh, shut up!"

Skinner and Stott strolled out of the study grinning. Their belief that Snoop was booked for the licking of his life was evidently genuine, and they were looking forward to it. Snoop gave them a dark look as they went, and sat down, a troubled expression on his face. He felt that they were right; he had taken on a task too big for him, and in imagination he could already feel Angel's spiteful blows crashing upon him, and he shivered. The task of the fellow who had determined to be plucky in spite of himself was not an easy one. He was struggling with himself, striving to keep up his courage, and face his self-imposed ordeal; but he felt, with a sinking heart, that his resolution was melting away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. arrived early in the gym.

The Co. were very interested in Snoop and in his latest development, and they had cordially decided to encourage him with their presence. A fellow who was struggling to get the better of his own weaknesses was a fellow deserving of encouragement.

Somewhere in poor Snoop there was a spark of British pluck, and what he chiefly lacked was self-confidence.

His father, once a sly and sleek City company-promoter, had turned into a brave and steady soldier under the invigorating influence of Army life, and the change that had been wrought in him was working in his son.

Snoop's striving to make himself

worthy of the uniform his father wore showed that there was good in him, and the Co. were feeling very friendly just then towards the fellow with whom they had never been on good terms before.

The news that Snoop was booked for a fight with a Fourth Form fellow, and one who was known to be a dangerous opponent, caused some excitement in the Remove. Nearly all the Form turned up in the gym, prepared to encourage Snoop and to cheer him. The general belief was that he would be licked; but, as Squiff remarked, there was no harm in that, so long as he put up a good fight.

Aubrey Angel sauntered in with a smile on his face, accompanied by Kenney, his second, and several more of the Fourth. Temple, Dabney & Co. had come along to see the fight; but though they were Angel's Form-fellows, they would not have been displeased to see Snoop victorious. Aubrey Angel had succeeded in making himself thoroughly disliked in his own Form.



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He had few friends; and his friends, such as they were, did not really like him. His tongue was too bitter, and his nature too malicious, for that. Even Kenney was well aware that Angel would not have hesitated to drop him at a moment's notice if it had served his interests in any way to do so.

Indeed, Aubrey Angel would probably have lacked even nodding acquaintances at Greyfriars but for the fact that he was "worth knowing." But his wealth, his swank, his wealthy home, and his big connections made him worth knowing—to fellows like Kenney and Skinner, at all events.

He glanced round as he came in, and noted that Sidney James Snoop was not yet on the scene. He smiled sarcastically. He was several minutes late himself, and the appointed time had passed. Snoop was evidently in still less of a hurry.

Angel joined the group of juniors, with his nose in the air and the expression on his face which often made fellows feel inclined to punch him.

"Your man anywhere about, Cherry?" he drawled.

"He's coming!" grunted Bob.

"Seems to be a little late."

"You're late yourself," said Nugent.

"Oh, I don't mind waitin' a few minutes!" said Angel easily. "It will be rather amusin' to thrash a cheeky fag! What's your merry champion doin'? Tryin' to screw up his courage to the stickin'-point?"

"Oh, don't gas!" growled Bob.

"The gasfulness of the esteemed Angel is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

Angel shrugged his shoulders.

The minutes were passing, and Snoop had not appeared. The Remove fellows exchanged glances. Snoop was very late.

Bob felt uneasy, all the more so as he could read the mocking expression upon Angel's face. He wondered whether Snoop's courage had failed him at the last moment.

It was decidedly uncomfortable, though. If Snoop failed to show up, it reflected on all the Form, and on his second especially. Bob Cherry was strongly tempted to remove the mocking look from Aubrey Angel's face by means of his knuckles. But it was scarcely fair to punch Angel because Snoop was late for his appointment.

"Well, I'm waitin'!" said Angel at last. "I've got one or two things on this evenin'. Would you mind trottin' out your champion, Cherry?"

"I'll go and look for him," said Bob. "I suppose he's forgotten the time."

"Very likely! I'm sure he'll be very glad to be reminded of it!" said Angel sarcastically.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry left the gym with a grimace. It was scarcely possible that Snoop had forgotten the appointment; but it seemed incredible that, after getting Bob to carry his challenge, he would let his second down.

Many of the juniors were grinning now. They had their own surmises with regard to Snoop's prolonged absence.

Bob Cherry came back at last, his face darker. He came alone.

"Where's Snoop?" asked Wharton.

"I—I don't know."

"Haven't you found him?" shouted Squiff.

Bob shook his head.

"But he must be about somewhere," said Johnny Bull, puzzled. "Have you looked for him?"

"I've looked in his study and the Common-room and round about," answered Bob. "I can't make out what's become of him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"Well, I'm waitin'!" drawled Aubrey Angel. "Snoop really does seem to be takin' his time!"

"Fucking it!" growled Bolsover major.

"The Remove must be proud of their giddy champion!" remarked Angel. "This reflects credit on them; I must say!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney, laughing.

"Well, it takes the cake!" remarked Cecil Reginald Temple. "Who ever heard of a chap challengin' a chap and then not turnin' up?"

"There's time yet," said Wharton.

"I'm not goin' to wait much longer," said Angel. "Can't hang about all night while the Remove champion is hidin' in a corner somewhere."

"There's plenty of the Remove here, if you're spoiling for a fight!" exclaimed Bob Cherry savagely. "I'll take Snoop's place, if you like!"

"So will I!" roared Bolsover major.

Angel gave a shrug.

"I came here to fight Snoop," he answered coolly. "If Snoop doesn't

choose to turn up I'll get off. Come on, Kenney!"

Angel sauntered away towards the door.

Temple and the rest of the Fourth-Formers moved off grinning, evidently greatly tickled by the peculiar end of the affair. The Removites looked savage.

"It's too beastly bad!" growled Tom Brown. "The silly ass wasn't bound to challenge Angel; but to let us all down like this—"

"I—I suppose he's funking it!" confessed Bob Cherry. "It can't be anything else, I suppose?"

"The funkfulness is terrific! And the esteemed and disgusting Angel is swanking over the Remove!" growled Hurree Singh. "The jokefulness of the ridiculous Fourth will be great!"

"Well, he's not coming, that's clear!" granted Bob. "May as well put these dashed gloves away! Br-r-r-r!"

Sidney James Snoop did not come.

That evening the Fourth-Formers made very merry over the Removite's challenge to Angel and its absurd outcome. But the Remove were not merry; they felt the stigma on their Form, and most of them intended to talk very plainly to Snoop when they saw him again. Sidney James Snoop, however, was not seen that evening, and it was clear that the unhappy junior was carefully keeping out of sight of his angry Form-fellows.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Finger of Scorn!

"THERE'S the worm!"

Bob Cherry made that remark as the Removites came up to their dormitory at bedtime.

Snoop was there first.

His face was pale, his manner troubled, and he did not venture to look at the other juniors.

The unfortunate fellow was so stricken with shame that even Bob, angry as he was, felt sorry for him, as he looked at him.

The emphatic things Bob had been going to say were not uttered, after all. Nothing he could have said would have made Snoop feel worse than he was feeling already.

He had kept away from the meeting in the gym, after challenging Angel to meet him there; his brief courage had petered out. He could not help it; and he did not need the scorn he saw on all sides to make him feel thoroughly wretched and ashamed.

Bolsover major strode towards him, and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"What do you mean by it?" roared Bolsover.

Snoop did not answer.

"You weren't bound to challenge Angel, if you were afraid of him!" went on the bully of the Remove scornfully. "What did you do it for? Now you've made all the Fourth cackle at us!"

Silence from Snoop.

"Who ever heard of such a thing?" went on the exasperated Bolsover. "Hiding away—actually hiding away! Where were you when Cherry was looking for you?"

Snoop's lips trembled, but he did not speak.

"That's enough, Bolsover!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Let him alone!"

"I'm not going to let him alone! I'm going to lick him for disgracing the Form!" roared Bolsover.

"You're not! Let him alone, I tell you!"

"I'll show you whether I'm not!" said Bolsover, and with that he started upon Snoop.



A running fight. (See Chapter 10.)

Wharton seized him by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"Let him alone, you bully!" he snapped.

"Oh, let him go on!" said Snoop bitterly. "It serves me right! I don't care!"

"Now, then, no rags here!" said Wingate of the Sixth, looking in at the door. "You making a shindy again, Bolsover? Take care!"

Bolsover grunted, and went towards his bed.

There was no ragging of Snoop that night. Little as they could understand his pusillanimous nature, the Famous Five saw to that. They had a pretty clear idea, too, of how Snoop felt; and if he deserved punishment he had it.

It was late before Snoop closed his eyes that night.

When the Remove turned out at rising-bell in the morning he hurried down first from the dormitory. It wanted more nerve than he possessed to meet the eyes of his Form-fellows.

When he came in to breakfast, Snoop found a white feather lying on his plate, and his face became almost livid.

Only the day before he had been pleased and proud at the news that his father had won the Military Medal. And to-day—the white feather! The thought of what his father would think of it filled his cup of bitterness to the full.

His face was so pale and troubled in the Form-room that morning that Mr. Quelch glanced at him curiously more than once.

Snoop did not heed.

Lessons were a worry and a strain to him that morning, and he was glad when the Remove were dismissed at last.

Skinner and Stott grinned at him in the passage, and Snoop, unheeding them, went up to his study instead of going out into the quad with the rest of the fellows.

He had only been there a few minutes, walking restlessly about the room, when his study-mates came in.

Their manner indicated very plainly that their new respect for Snoop had quite vanished now. His miserable failure to come up to time in the gym

quite obliterated the effect of the courage he had shown in the study.

"Hallo, funk!" was Skinner's greeting.

"Bit off rather more than you could chew—what?" grinned Stott. "I say, where were you hidin' last evenin', Snoopey?"

Snoop's lips quivered.

"Sendin' any more challenges?" pursued Skinner, with great relish. "Like me to take a challenge from you, Snoopey, say, to Coker of the Fifth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott.

Snoop eyed them sullenly.

"Jever hear of such a game?" chuckled Skinner. "Angel's tickled to death over it. I hear he's drawin' a new picture of your pater, Snoopey, depictin' him bunkin' from the Germans. I suppose that's what he's really doing, isn't it? It's all gammon about the Military Medal!"

Snoop clenched his hands, and came towards Skinner.

"That's enough!" he said. "I'm not afraid of you, at any rate, Skinner! Get out of this study!"

"What?"

"Hallo, he's woke up again!" ejaculated Stott, as Snoop rushed furiously on Skinner, and drove him out of the study under a shower of blows.

Skinner backed blindly into Vernon-Smith, who was passing the study. The Bounder shoved him off without ceremony, and Skinner sprawled on the floor.

"Hallo! Snoopey on the war-path again?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in astonishment. "Wonders will never cease!"

Snoop did not heed the Bounder. He turned to Stott, his eyes glittering.

"Get out!" he said savagely.

"Just going," answered Stott. "Keep your wool on!"

Snoop slammed the door after him.

"My hat!" gasped Skinner, as he picked himself up. "I'll smash him! Come in with me, Stott, and we'll—"

"You won't!" said the Bounder coolly. "Fair play's a jewel. You go in, and I'll come in, too."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Skinner.

"I'm making this my bizney. Redwing!"

"Hallo?" said Tom Redwing, who was coming up from the stairs. "What's wanted?"

"Skinner and Stott are spoiling for a fight. Help me to oblige them."

"Certainly!" said Redwing, laughing.

Skinner and Stott did not appear to be spoiling for a fight, however. They promptly scudded away, followed by the Bounder's mocking laugh.

Snoop was punching the ball in his study when Billy Bunter looked in a little later. Bunter's fat face wore an unusual expression. He came into the study, and closed the door after him, and bent his brows grimly and threateningly at Sidney James, who stared at him.

"What do you want?" snapped Snoop.

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order—" began Bunter.

"Oh, rats!"

"Could you lend me half-a-crown, Snoopey, till it comes?"

"No, I couldn't!"

"I think you could!" urged Bunter.

"Well, I could, but I won't!" answered Snoop. "Buzz off, you Owl!"

Bunter did not buzz off. His blink became more threatening, and he pushed back the cuffs from his podgy wrists.

"I think you'd better lend me half-a-crown, Snoop!" he said deliberately. "I don't want to punch you, Snoop. Don't make me do it!"

Snoop stared at him blankly. It dawned upon him that this was a consequence of his having shown the white feather the previous evening. Bunter—the egregious Bunter—fancied that he could bully him!

As Snoop realised that he burst into a laugh.

"It's not a laughing matter!" said Bunter threateningly. "If you want me to mop up the study with you, Snoop, you've only got to say so!"

"Right! Get on with it!" said Snoop.

"What?"

"Get on with it—I'm waiting!"

Bunter blinked at him doubtfully. As he hesitated, Snoop came towards him, with finger and thumb outstretched to grip his fat little nose. Bunter jumped back.

"I—I'll see you later!" he gasped, realising that he had made a little mistake. And he tore open the door.

Snoop grinned, and planted his boot behind Bunter as the Owl of the Remove rolled hastily out. Bunter pitched forward, and landed on his hands and knees, with a roar.

"Yaroooh!"

"Come in and have another?" said Snoop invitingly.

"Keep off!" roared Bunter. "Yaroooh! I don't want to have anything to do with you! Yow-ow-ow!"

And Bunter scrambled away in great alarm. Snoop, feeling much better, went back to punching the ball; and he punched and punched at it with great energy, as if he saw upon it the handsome mocking features of Aubrey Angel of the Fourth.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Going Through It!

"CHERRY!"

Snoop joined Bob Cherry after lessons that day hesitatingly. Bob gave him a curt nod.

"Well?" he said laconically.

"I—I want you—"

"Don't ask me to take any more challenges, old chap!" said Bob, with a faint grin. "Fed up, you know!"

"I—I made a rotten hash of it last night, I know," muttered Snoop, his

face crimsoning. "I—I know what you think of me—"

"Then I needn't tel you!" said Bob. "I don't want to, either. You shouldn't have done it, Snoop; it was letting me down, and letting the Form down. I don't see what you were afraid of, either; there's nothing terrific in getting a licking. I've have had lickings enough in my time, goodness knows!"

"You're different from me," said Snoop, with a sigh. "I—I wasn't exactly afraid, either. I—I don't know why I didn't turn up, really. I know it was rotten. I'm going to fight Angel, all the same!"

"Chuck it, old chap!" said Bob good-humouredly. "You must excuse me, really; I can't get mixed up in any of more of your challenges!"

"I don't want you to," said Snoop. "I—I want to go into training a bit. You see, I'm not a very good boxer, and Angel is; and—and a chap has to learn to stand up to hard hitting, too. Will you—will you have the gloves on with me and put me through it?"

"Oh! I tumble!" said Bob. "Best thing you can do, Snoopey, whether you fight Angel or not. I'll have the gloves on with pleasure; and I'll give you some really hard hitting to get you in the habit of standing up to it. I'll do that with pleasure."

"Oh!" said Snoop, a little doubtfully.

"Not too thumping hard, you know!"

"My dear man, the harder the better!" said Bob confidently. "You take my word for it, when you're through with me, Angel will seem like a pastime to you!"

Snoop did not look overjoyed at the prospect.

Certainly, if he could stand up to Bob Cherry for a few rounds he need have no fear of encountering two or three Angels afterwards. But a course of hard-hitting from Bob Cherry was not an enticing prospect; and possibly Snoop repented him of having requested the exuberant Bob's assistance.

But Bob was full of good-natured enthusiasm, and he marched Sidney James off to the gym at once.

"Hallo!" called Frank Nugent in the quad. "Footer, you slacker! Don't mooch off with Snoop!"

"Come along, Franky!" called back Bob. "I'm going to have the gloves on with Snoopey."

"Oh, my hat! Shall I telephone to the undertaker, Snoop?"

Snoop laughed feebly.

Nugent followed them into the gym; and Billy Bunter, who had heard Bob's words, hurried off with the news.

"I say, you fellows! Bob Cherry's fighting Snoop!" he yelled to the juniors on Little Side.

There was a shout of laughter at once.

"Tel Snook I'll send a wreath!" chuckled Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Wharton, taking Bunter by the shoulder and shaking him. "What do you mean, Bunter, you fathead? Bob's doing nothing of the kind!"

"Well, they've got the gloves on, anyhow!" said Bunter. "He, he, he! I could lick Snoop, you know, if—if I had time! He, he, he!"

Some of the Removites left the footer-ground to see the glove contest, much entertained at the idea of Sidney James Snoop facing the powerful fists of the champion fighting-man of the Remove.

They found Bob Cherry in his shirt-sleeves, with the gloves on; Snoop putting on his gloves rather more slowly.

"Get a move on, Snoopey!" said Bob encouragingly. "I want to put in some footer, if there's time; but I'm going to

hammer you as long as you can stand it, I promise you that!"

"He, he, he! You'll have lots of time for footer!" chortled Bunter.

"You ring off, Bunter! Now, then, Snoopey, better take your jacket off. I'm going to make you hop, you know!"

Snoop, looking less and less happy, removed his jacket, and Harry Wharton helped him on with the gloves.

"Like a cushion, Snoop?" asked Skinner.

"A cushion! What for?"

"To fall on."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Sidney James.

"Ready, Snoopey?" asked Bob cheerily.

"Ye-e-es."

"Well, put up your hands! Don't hold your left in that stiff way, old chap, or I shall get through at once on your boko—like that!"

"Yarooooh!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?"

"You—you punched my nose, didn't you?" gasped Snoop.

"Of course not! That was only a tap."

"Oh! It felt like a punch, anyhow," mumbled Snoop ruefully.

"My dear man," said Bob, laughing.

"you'll see that it was only a tap when I really punch you, you can put your socks on that!"

"How nice for Snoop!" murmured Hazeldene, and there was a laugh.

"Never mind your nose," said Bob, as Snoop rubbed that organ.

"Your nose isn't hurt—yet. Why, when I fairly let go at it you'll feel as if it's been pushed out of the back of your head!"

"I—I say—"

"Well, buck up!"

"I—I think I—I'll have the gloves on presently, if you don't mind!" stammered Snoop. "I'm feeling a bit tired."

"But I do mind!" chuckled Bob.

"You're not feeling tired, Snoopey. You're feeling funky, old boy, and I'm going to knock that right out of you! Dash it all, think of your pater; he's facing something a bit stiffer than boxing-gloves, Snoop! You'll be a soldier yourself some day, if you have any luck. Stiek to it!"

"I—I'm ready."

"Come on, then!"

Snoop came on so slowly that Bob came on himself, and for a couple of minutes Snoop felt himself in the midst of a concentration of whirlwinds, air-raids, and earthquakes.

Then he sat down.

Bob Cherry stared at him in surprise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you sitting down for, Snoop?" he inquired.

"Tired already?"

"You knocked me down, didn't you?" howled Snoop.

"Look here, Snoop! Don't be funny. I haven't hit you yet!"

"You've been hammering me like a blacksmith!" groaned Snoop, gasping for breath.

"That's nothing to what I'm going to do!"

"Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up, Snoopey!" said Billy Bunter.

"Don't be a funk! Be a man, old chap! Like me!"

"You fat idiot!" mumbled Snoop.

"Oh, have a little pluck!" urged Bunter loftily. "Anybody would think you were made of putty!"

"I'll tell you what!" said Bob. "Have 'em on with Bunter first, and I'll show you how to knock him spinning. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going, Bunter?"

"I—I've got to see a chap!" gasped the Owl, and he vanished.

Wharton lifted Snoop to his feet, laughing.

"Go it, old scout!" he said. "Bob's not going to hurt you; and if does, what does it matter, anyway?"

Snoop blinked. He seemed to think it mattered, somehow.

"Yes. Come on!" urged Bob. "You'll never lick Angel at this rate. Put your beef into it, Snoop!"

Snoop came on again, rather gingerly. The ring of juniors round the boxers grinned as they watched. But to the surprise of all—especially Bob Cherry—Snoop made a sudden and dashing attack, and Bob, quite taken aback by that unexpected happening, received Snoop's left on his nose, followed up by Snoop's right fairly in the eye. And it was Bob who went down with a crash.

He bumped on the floor, and sat spluttering.

"Hurrah!" roared Squiff. "Good old Snoopey! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Snoop, astounded and a little alarmed at what he had done.

Bob Cherry staggered up, with a really extraordinary expression on his face.

"You thumping idiot!" he gasped. "What did you do that for?"

"D-d-didn't you want me to?" stutered Snoop.

Bob rubbed his nose.

"I—I'll chuck it now!" said Snoop nervously, evidently fearing that after that terrific onslaught Bob Cherry would make matters warm for him.

Bob burst into a merry laugh.

"You're not going to chuck it," he said. "I was a bit surprised, that was all. Come on, and do it again, Snoop!"

"I—I'll try."

Snoop tried. He did not succeed in doing it again. But as he warmed to the work he put up a much better fight, and he began to receive without flinching some of Bob's powerful drives.

"Good man!" exclaimed Wharton, as Snoop staggered for a moment under a drive on the chest, and then came on again undauntedly. "Go it, Snoop! You'll have to look out for your laurels, Bob. Snoop's going to be champion of the Remove, at this rate!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

He could have knocked Snoop out at any moment, but he refrained from exerting his strength, only giving Snoop sufficient taps to keep him lively. His taps were rather forcible, however.

Snoop was tired out at last, and then Bob dropped his hands.

"Nuff's as good as a feast!" he announced. "You've done jolly well, Snoopey. If you did as well as that with Angel, I think you'd whop him."

"Do you think so?" asked Snoop.

"Pretty sure of it."

Snoop peeled off the gloves.

"I'm going to drop into Angel's study this evening and have a talk with him," he said.

And he left the gym feeling very pleased with himself. In the Common-room that evening Ogilvy called across to him as he came in:

"Seen Angel yet, Snoop?"

"N-n-not yet!" stammered Snoop.

"There's time before dorn."

"I—I'm going to see him to-morrow."

There was a chortle in the Common-room as Snoop made that reply; and Sidney James left hurriedly—but not to call on Angel.

as Snoop spoke to him. "Want the gloves on again? There's time for a round before dinner."

"Yes," said Snoop slowly. "And—and something else."

"Well?"

"I want you to give me a jolly good hiding!" said Snoop unexpectedly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"It's the only way," said Snoop nervously. "I—I want you to fight me, you know. After I've really been through it, I shall be able to stand up to that Fourth Form cad. I believe I can lick him, if I could make up my mind to it. Will you give me the hardest you can, and—and never mind if I want to cry off? Don't take any notice; just pitch into me for all you're worth!"

Bob Cherry stared at him blankly.

"My dear man," he said at last, "if I pitched into you for all I'm worth you'd have to be carried home afterwards."

"I don't care!"

"But I do," said Bob, laughing. "I'm not going to massacre you, old chap. I'll have the gloves on, with pleasure. But I shall draw a line."

"I'd rather you did as I asked. I—I want to get it ten times worse than Angel could give me, and then—"

"Well, it's a rummy idea," said Bob, rubbing his nose. "I don't want to knock you about, Snoopey. More in Bolsover's line."

"Bolsover," said Snoop thoughtfully.

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"I suppose Bolsover could lick Angel easily enough?"

"Yes, or half a dozen of him," said Bob, laughing.

"Bolsover called me a funk," said Snoop. "I'll take your advice, Cherry."

He turned away, towards Percy Bolsover, who was coming out of the Form-room.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going?" exclaimed Bob. "What do you mean, Snoop?"

"You'll see."

Sidney James marched up to Bolsover major, planting himself directly in his way. The bully of the Remove paused in surprise.

"Well, what's this game?" he demanded gruffly.

"You called me a funk yesterday," said Snoop, with some trepidation. In spite of his resolve, his heart was failing him.

Bolsover major gave a snort.

"So you are a funk!" he retorted.

"A sneaking funk, and a disgrace to the Form! You ought to be jolly well ragged! Why—what— Oh!"

Biff!

Sidney James Snoop smote straight at Bolsover's nose, and the burly junior staggered back, more surprised than hurt, but considerably hurt, all the same.

"T-t-take that!" gasped Snoop.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!" stutered Bob Cherry blankly. "He—

he—he's punched Bolsover's nose! Oh, crikey!"

Bolsover recovered himself, fixing a glare upon Snoop that the fabled Gorgon might have envied.

"Are you potty?" he spluttered.

"You—you—you've punched my nose! My nose! Why, I'll break you into little pieces! I'll pulverise you! I—I'll spifficate you, you cheeky worm!"

Snoop backed away as the bully of the Remove charged at him.

His resolution failed once more.

With a gasp, he took to his heels, and fled out of the House, with Percy Bolsover raging after him.

"Oh, crumbs!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. And he ran in pursuit, to keep Bolsover within bounds when he overtook his victim.

Snoop was fleeing at top speed, and in the quad he rushed into Wharton and Nugent, without even seeing them, and sent them both spinning. Without a look at them, Snoop bolted on, with Bolsover on his track. He was heading desperately for the Cloisters, fear lending him wings.

Wharton staggered a couple of yards before he recovered himself. He caught Bob Cherry by the arm as Bob came speeding by.

"What's the row?" he exclaimed.

"Has Snoop gone mad?"

"Jolly near it, I think! He's punched Bolsover's nose."

"Snoop has?" yelled Nugent.

"Ha, ha! Yes. Hence this strategic retreat, according to plan!" chuckled Bob. "Come on! Bolsover will want holding down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three juniors ran in pursuit of Bolsover major, chuckling as they ran. Snoop's outburst of recklessness, followed by ignominious flight, struck them as comic.

Snoop's scheme had really been a good one. For after facing a hammering from an adversary much more formidable than Aubrey Angel he would have felt some confidence in tackling the dandy of the Fourth. And Snoop's idea had been to land himself into it beyond recall, so that even if his fears rose up again he would still have to go through with it. But Bolsover's furious glare and huge fists had been too much for his nerves, and now he was dodging into the recesses of the Cloisters seeking escape.

But there was no escape from the enraged Bolsover.

Snoop was run down at last, and he reeled breathlessly against a stone pillar, gasping like very old bellows, and quite spent; and Bolsover rushed on him like a cyclone.

"Now, you worm!" roared Bolsover.

Snoop dodged feebly aside, but he caught Bolsover's drive, and went headlong on the flagstones.

"Yow-ow-woop!" spluttered Snoop.

"Get up!"

"Yow-ow!"

"I'll use my boots on you if you don't get up!" raved Bolsover. "I'll teach you to punch my nose! I'll squash you!"

"Ow-ow!"

Snoop yelled as Bolsover major started with his boots, in too towering a rage to care what damage he did. Harry Wharton and his comrades came panting up, and the captain of the Remove dragged Bolsover back.

"Hold on!" he gasped.

"He punched my nose!" roared Bolsover. "I'm going to smash him! Came up and punched my nose, by gad! I'll spifficate him!"

Bob Cherry and Nugent helped Snoop to his feet.

"Go it, Snoopey!" said Bob. "This is what you want, you know. Bolsover

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

"WILL you promise me something, Cherry?"

"Any old thing!" said Bob good-humouredly, stopping in the Form-room passage the next day

will give you all the drubbing you want. Splendid training!"

"Ow! Oh, dear!"
"Will you let go, Wharton? I'm going to spifficate him!"

Bolsover major wrenched himself loose, and rushed at Snoop again. In desperation, Snoop put up his hands, and the bully of the Remove was met by a frenzied drive that took him by surprise and sent him reeling back. Bolsover major sat down suddenly.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Snoop, astonished to see the burly Removite on the ground.

"Well hit!" roared Bob.
Bolsover major seemed hardly to know what had happened. He had been knocked down by Snoop; and he would scarcely have been more surprised if he had been knocked down by Billy Bunter.

He scrambled up with a deadly look.

"Come on!" panted Snoop desperately.

He was in for it! After knocking Bolsover down, he knew that nothing could save him from a terrific licking. And he realised that he might as well take it fighting; it could not make it worse, and might make it better. Half in terror and half in desperation, Snoop faced the bully of the Remove as the attack came.

It was a terrific attack. Wharton and his friends looked on, undecided. Snoop had certainly asked for it, and they had no right to interfere in a scrap which Sidney James had provoked. They looked on, with the intention of restraining Bolsover when Snoop gave in.

But Snoop was not giving in yet.

Forced to exert himself to the uttermost, and to put every ounce of his beef into it, he found himself a much better fighting-man than he had ever supposed. Disproportioned as the adversaries were, Sidney James Snoop stood up gallantly to his enemy, and even the burly Bolsover did not have it all his own way.

For some minutes he took as much punishment as he gave, and his big nose was streaming red and his eyes blinking painfully when Snoop went down at last. Snoop remained on the flags, quite done.

Bolsover major took out his handkerchief and mopped his nose, blinking at Snoop in wonder.

"What's come over him?" he exclaimed. "Is he mad? Do you want any more, Snoop?"

"Ow!" groaned Snoop. "I'm done! Yow-ow!"

"He must have been drinking. I should think!" said the puzzled Bolsover. "Who'd have thought he could stand up like that? He can't be such a funk!"

Snoop groaned. He was hard hit, and he could not rise. Harry Wharton & Co. prepared to chip in if Bolsover recommenced with his boots; but Bolsover major had no such intention.

"Blessed if I can make him out!" continued Bolsover. "He ran away from Angel, and he's stood up to me; and I could eat Angel! I think he must be wrong in the head. I'll let you off with that, Snoop; but don't take any more liberties with my nose, I warn you!"

And Bolsover major stalked away, with his handkerchief still to his nose, and in a state of great wonder and perplexity.

The Co. helped Snoop to his feet. He stood leaning heavily on Wharton.

"I—I stood up to him, didn't I?" stammered Snoop.

"You did, old chap!" said Bob Cherry. "Like a giddy hero! Feel well?"

"Ow! I feel mangled!"

"Well, you've been through it!" said Nugent. "You fairly asked for it, you know! It's no joke to punch Bolsover's hoko. Better come and bathe your own before you show up at dinner; it needs it!"

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"I didn't show the white feather!" said Snoop.

"Not a bit of it!" assented Wharton. "You've got plenty of pluck, Snoopey, if you'd give yourself a chance. We'll see you mop up Greyfriars with Angel yet."

Snoop was led away to the fountain, where he bathed his heated and damaged face. He was hurt, and he showed many signs of it; but he did not seem to be thinking much about his injuries. He was too pleased with himself for that. He had stood up to Bolsover major, and the fact that he had been able to face the bully of the Remove for three or four minutes was proof that he could handle Aubrey Angel of the Fourth if he made up his mind to it. And Snoop's mind was made up at last!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. saw much more of Snoop than they usually did during the next few days. Snoop was going in for boxing in deadly earnest, anxious to make up for his deficiencies in that respect; and the obliging Co. often had the mittens on with him in the gym. Snoop, now he had made up his mind to it, seemed quite tireless; and he stood up to the hardest hitting, and the more often he did so the easier he found it to face. He even requested Bob Cherry to go all out; and Bob obligingly did so, with rather painful results to Snoop, certainly, but valuable in the way of training.

Undoubtedly Snoop was getting on, and the results compensated him for the efforts he made. He was treated with great respect in his own study; Skinner and Stott were exceedingly civil. He even joined with some heartiness in footer practice, and found it exceedingly beneficial. There was a new colour in his cheeks, a new springiness in his step, and a new confidence in his look. In these days he was hardly recognisable as the old Snoop—the pasty-faced, lounging fellow of earlier days.

There was a rod in pickle for Aubrey Angel, if he had only known it.

Snoop was getting ready for the war-path!

Angel and Kenney came into their study to tea one day after lessons, and found Harry Wharton seated on a corner of the table waiting for them.

Angel looked at him.

"I don't remember askin' you here!" he said.

"I've come from Snoop!" said Harry.

"Snoop!" yawned Angel. "Who's Snoop?"

"Snoop wants you to meet him in the gym this evening," said Harry.

"Oh, Snoop! Another message from Snoop—what? My dear man, I can't hang around in the gym of evenin's waitin' for Snoop! Tell him to come here if he wants to see me!"

"Not much room here for fighting," suggested Wharton.

Angel laughed contemptuously.

"Plenty of room for all the fightin' Snoop will do!" he answered.

"I think he means business this time."

"I don't!"

"Well, are you coming to the gym?" asked the captain of the Remove, slipping off the table.

"No! Tell Snoop I'll pull his nose next time I see him!" answered Angel. "Oh, and you can ask him a question for me! I'm rather interested to know at what second-hand shop his pater bagged that medal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kenney.

"You can ask him that yourself, Angel!" said Wharton drily.

And he left the study.

Angel lighted a cigarette, with a contemptuous smile.

"Snoop's gettin' really too funny!" he remarked. "Imagine that sneakin' worm gettin' his ears up!"

"I hear that he's been taking to boxing lately," remarked Kenney.

"I'll give him more boxin' than he wants if he comes lookin' for me!"

A few minutes later there was a tramp of feet in the passage.

The door of the study was thrown open, and Sidney James Snoop walked in. He was followed by the Famous Five and several other Removites, and Temple, Dabney & Co. brought up the rear. Outside in the passage a good many juniors had gathered, most of them grinning. They had come there, in point of fact, to see Snoop licked, on the news that he was on the war-path once more.

"Give him room to fall, you fellows, when Angel chucks him out!" giggled Billy Bunter.

"Well, what does this mean?" asked Aubrey Angel, raising his eyebrows at the sight of the crowd.

"I've come here for you!" announced Snoop.

"Good! Did Wharton ask you that question?" drawled Angel. "In what second-hand shop, old scout, did your pater bag that medal? How much did he give for it?"

Snoop's eyes glittered.

"I'll answer that!" he said. "There's my answer!"

He rushed at Angel, who put up his hands promptly, intending to send the Removite spinning with a blow.

But Snoop's hands were quicker still, and Angel found his guard knocked up and Snoop's knuckles crashing on his nose.

Angel sat down in the chair behind him with a bump.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kenney.

"Shut the door, you fellows!" exclaimed Snoop. "If Angel prefers to have it here, we'll have it here!"

"Keep that door open!" bawled Squiff from the passage. "We want to see the circus!"

"We don't want any prefects here!" said Snoop.

"I guess that's just what you will want in a few minutes!" remarked Fisher T. Fish; and there was a laugh.

Aubrey Angel had risen to his feet with a deadly look in his eyes. He was quietly peeling off his well-fitting jacket.

But those preparations did not dismay Snoop. He threw his jacket to Bob Cherry, and stood ready.

"Go it!" sang out Vernon-Smith.

"We'll keep an eye open for prefects, Snoopey!"

"I'm waiting for him!" said Snoop.

"By gad! Angel doesn't seem to be in a hurry!" remarked Cecil Reginald Temple. "Like me to keep time, Angel?"

"That funk won't last through a round!" answered Angel with savage contempt. "Now, come on, Snoop, and I'll smash you!"

"This is going to be in order," said Harry Wharton. "You keep time, Temple. Trot out your ticker!"

Cecil Reginald pulled out his handsome gold ticker.

"Ready! Seconds out of the ring!" said Temple solemnly. "Now, then! Time!"

The juniors crowded back to give the combatants room.

The table was pushed to the wall, the chairs dragged out of the way, and they were swarmed with onlookers. The crowd in the doorway was dense.

At the call of time Snoop stepped up smartly, Angel a little more slowly.

But he came on, and the fight began.

In the first round it was evident that

Snoop's recent training had done him good. His boxing had improved immensely, and, more than that, he found himself able to face punishment without flinching. Angel was a hard hitter; but he was nothing to Bolsover major or Bob Cherry, both of whom Snoop had succeeded in facing.

To Angel's surprise, and the delight of the spectators, Snoop stood up manfully to the milling, and had decidedly the better of the first round.

"Time!" came from Temple.

Angel sat on a chair in his corner breathing hard. He was beginning to realise that this was a new Snoop, and that he was booked for a hard tussle, if not for a defeat. He muttered something to Kenney, and the latter produced boxing-gloves from a cupboard.

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

"This isn't a prize-fight," said Angel sulkily. "I didn't think that funk would stand up for more than a round. I'm goin' to fight with the gloves, or not at all!"

"Cold feet!" came a voice from the passage, followed by a laugh.

"Gloves, by all means," said Harry Wharton. "Put them on, Snoop."

"I don't mind," said Snoop, who was smiling now. It was the first sign of funk in his adversary, and it encouraged Snoop.

"Time!"

With the gloves on, the combatants faced one another again.

It was Snoop who attacked, and Angel who gave ground, all through the round, and the dandy of the Fourth was driven right round the study.

At the call of time he was looking savage and sullen.

He had never suspected this quality in Snoop, or certainly he would have been a little more careful with him. It was rather too late to think of that now, however.

"I say, you fellows, Angel's fuunking!" came Billy Bunter's voice from the passage. "He, he, he!"

Angel's face flushed.

He came up quickly to the call of time, and began hotly. Snoop, a little over-confident from success, was still more hot in the attack, and Angel, catching him with a clever feint, got through his defence, and landed an upper-cut which sent the Removite spinning.

Snoop crashed on the floor.

"Phew!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Temple began to count.

Angel watched his adversary savagely, ready to knock him down if he attempted to rise. He was not the fellow to grant the slightest advantage to an opponent.

All eyes were upon Snoop as Cecil Reginald counted.

The general expectation was that he would allow himself to be counted out, for the shock he had received was a serious one, and might have rattled a far sturdier fellow than Snoop.

But before Temple had reached five Snoop was up again, and Angel, rushing on, was stalled off with great success, Snoop fighting desperately till the call of time, and just managing to keep his feet.

The call came just in time to save him, and he reeled, panting, to Bob Cherry's ready knee.

"Good man!" said Bob enthusiastically. "Good man! Ripping!"

"I—I'm going to lick him!" panted Snoop.

"Keep that up, and you'll lick him to the wide!" assured Bob. "Blessed if I thought you had it in you! How does your jaw feel?"

"Ow! Bad!"

"Never mind. Save your breath, old scout. You're going to win!"

"Time!"

Snoop stepped up, slowly but steadily, and Angel came on savagely, to finish with a hot attack. But he was stopped, and Snoop succeeded in keeping him at arm's length for the round, while he was recovering.

There was keen interest in the scrap now, and the onlookers were almost breathless when the sixth round began.

Snoop had pulled through the worst of it, and if he wanted encouragement he had it in the fact that Aubrey Angel was visibly weakening now.

Too many cigarettes, probably, were telling upon the festive sport of the Fourth, and he was in difficulties for wind.

And his punishment was severe, though no worse than Snoop's so far. But it was getting worse. The Sixth round ended with Angel on his back on his own expensive carpet, gasping for breath.

There was a cheer from the passage. Bob Cherry clapped his principal heartily on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he chuckled. "If you ever make out that you're a funk again, Snoop, I'll whop you myself!"

Snoop laughed.

"Time!" said Temple.

Angel was in his chair, and he seemed loth to leave it. Cecil Reginald Temple gave him a significant look.

"I think I said 'Time,' Angel!" he remarked sarcastically. "If you're licked, say so!"

Angel gritted his teeth, and came up to time.

But he was not the kind of fellow for a stern fight to a finish, and Snoop's vigorous attack drove him right and left.

Twice he went down in that round, and when it was over the dandy of the Fourth was looking very groggy.

Snoop was breathing hard, and his face showed signs of damage; but he was still game.

He was already elated by the consciousness of coming victory, while the shadow of defeat was looming darkly over Angel of the Fourth.

"Eighth round!" said Johnny Bull. "Who'd have thought it of Snoop? Go in and win, Snoopey!"

"Time!"

Aubrey Angel came up very slowly now. He retreated faster than he came, Snoop following him up with a shower of blows. Angel was driven out of the ring, and he backed against the table, defending himself savagely, but in vain. Suddenly he groped behind him on the table, where a heavy ebony ruler lay, and in an instant the weapon was in his hand.

There was a shout of disgust, and of warning to Snoop.

But even as Angel grasped the ruler Snoop hit out from the shoulder, and the Fourth-Former went spinning along the side of the table, and collapsed on the floor. The ruler dropped with a crash.

"Foul play!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Angel, you worm—"

"You cad!" exclaimed Wharton.

Angel lay on the carpet and groaned. That last drive had finished him, and he was quite spent.

Snoop stood, panting, looking down at him, while Temple counted.

The count went through without a movement from Angel.

"Out!"

Kenney came forward, and helped his study-mate up and into a chair. Angel sat there, gasping, with a black brow.

Temple put away his watch.

"Snoop's win!" he said. "And, by gad, if that howlin' cad hadn't had all he could stand, I'd pitch into him myself!"

Foul play, by gad! He was goin' to hit with the ruler! Pah!"

And Cecil Reginald Temple marched out of the study in great disgust. Sidney James Snoop threw off the gloves, and Wharton helped him on with his jacket.

"Well, I've licked him!" said Snoop breathlessly.

"You have, old son!" said Bob Cherry.

"The lickfulness is terrific, my esteemed Snoop!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The surprisefulness is great, and the congratulation is terrific!"

"Bravo, Snoop!" chorused the Removites.

Snoop was almost at the end of his tether, but he held his head up as he left the study. In the passage the Famous Five seized him, and hoisted him shoulder-high to carry him home to the Remove quarters.

Sidney James Snoop looked very tired and rather damaged that evening; but he was very happy. He had succeeded in getting the better of his own weakness, though the struggle had been hard; and he had proved himself his father's son—*In Spite of Himself!*

(DON'T MISS "SPRING'S BROTHER!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.)

NOTICES.

Football—Matches Wanted By:

MITCHAM ROVERS—15-17—all dates.—F. W. Allen, 7, Rupert Terrace, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

G. Edwards, 5, Half Moon Street, Piccadilly, W.1, wants to join football club in West district—age 14—goalkeeper.

Correction.—Taylor, Portsmouth. Address: 23, Alver Road, not 183, Commercial Road.

Correspondence Wanted By:

Miss Lottie Jamieson, Ness Isle, Bressay, Shetland, with readers—13-16—in any part of the world.

Miss Annie McMahon, 42, Main Street, Milngavie, by Glasgow, Scotland, with readers in United Kingdom—15-16.

Miss Mary Hegarty, 56, Main Street, Milngavie, near Glasgow, with readers anywhere—16-17.

Andrew R. Murdoch, 52, Wellington Street, Moss Side, Manchester, wants readers and contributors for amateur magazine and Correspondence Club.

Miss Jeanie Henderson, 58, Main Street, Milngavie, near Glasgow, with readers—13-14—anywhere.

Miss Beatrice Brogan, 38, Main Street, Milngavie, near Glasgow, with readers—15-16—anywhere.

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A. H. Thomas, 25, Brookfield Road, Kilmaham, Dublin, wants members for his Stamp Club—those overseas specially invited.

Hector Homer, 6, Central Buildings, Lye, near Stourbridge, Worcestershire, wants readers for the "Stambermill Scouts' Magazine." Post free, 2d.

Hy. Bailey, 22, Greaves Road, Masbro', Yorkshire, wants readers for typewritten monthly magazine—3d. post free—pass-round system.

A. O. Wedding, 201, Rundle Street, Adelaide, South Australia, with readers anywhere.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 563.

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

THE IMPOSTOR.

By RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW.

"HEARD about the big fete at Wayland Grounds?" asked Dick Julian, entering the Common-room.

"The what?" asked Monty Lowther, the pseudo-humorist of the Shell.

"The big fete in aid of the Wayland Hospital for Wounded Soldiers, I think it is. Anyway, it will be a posh affair, so I hear."

"No," said Tom Merry; "I haven't heard of it."

"When is it coming off?" asked Blake.

And we pressed round him for further details. At least, the others did. As a matter of fact, I already knew the details.

"That's all I know," said Julian, with a grin. "My uncle's on the committee, or something, and he told me."

"Perhaps I can tell you a bit more, old bean," I drawled.

They all turned to me.

"What do you know about it?" asked Clive.

"Oh, nothin' much dear boy! You see, my grandfather—dear old bean!—is goin' to give away the prizes, or somethin'."

He told me all about it in his last letter. The fete's on Thursday, startin' at three o'clock—an all-day affair, y'know. Goin' to be quite a decent show, from all accounts."

"No chance of getting the day off," grunted Manners.

"Can't take French leave?" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his chin.

"Hardly," chuckled Clive.

"Couldn't get your uncle—I mean your granddad—to get us the day off, I suppose?"

said Roylance, looking at me hopefully. "He's a governor of the school, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes; he's a governor all right! But the old bird wouldn't dream of askin' the Head to let us have the day off."

"Couldn't you work him round?" asked Clive.

"Dear old granddad hasn't any green in his eye," I said.

"It's a beastly Greek exam to-morrow, too!" said Herries thoughtfully.

"Trust Herries to think of that!" chuckled Digby.

"Weally, Hewwies, you suahly do not wish to have the day off in ordah to miss the exam!" said D'Arcy, apparently surprised and shocked.

"Silly ass!" grunted George Herries. "What do you think we want the day off for?"

"If only you could persuade the old boy to get it for us, Cardew," said Tom Merry.

"The Head would cave in to him. He doesn't know anything about the Greek exam, I dare say."

"I've got a wheeze!" I said exultantly.

"Never!" gasped Lowther. Lowther is awfully funny at times.

"Clive, old bean, come to the study!"

And I strolled out of the Common-room.

"Well?" said Clive doubtfully, when we reached No. 9, where Levison was busy on lines.

Clive always speaks doubtfully when I say that I have a wheeze. I don't know why.

I explained to them what was needed.

"H'm!" said Levison.

"I can't get the dear old man here to beg the day off for us; but, all the same, he'll come."

Clive tapped his forehead, possibly to see if it were hollow. It is, I fancy. But he should know by now.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Levison.

"Merely this, dear boy. Instead of the real Lord Reckness coming, a clever youth with exceptional brain-power will take his place. In other words, dear man, someone from this study—a truly brainy youth—will make up as the real thing."

"Do you mean me?" asked Clive eagerly.

"Or me?" chipped in Levison.

"Well, you both have exceptional brain-

power, but in a negative manner; exceptional from its extreme scarcity."

"You chump!" snorted Clive. "You don't mean that you'll make up as Lord Reckness?"

"I do," I said. "I'm rather a dab at that sort of thing."

"Have you ever tried it?" asked Levison.

I shook my head.

"No," I said. "What is there I can't do, if I really try?"

Their answer was extremely rude, and I won't repeat it. I was brought up very carefully.

"Well," I said. "I'm goin' to do it whether you help me or not."

"Oh, we'll help!" said Clive, with a sigh like a Dunlop bursting.

"Good!" I chuckled. "Then we can get the day off for the Lower School."

And all that evening we were busy getting the props. Not clothes-props, but props—clothes. Get me, Steve? as they say in the Army.

The other fellows thought it wouldn't work. But I knew better. My features are rather like the old boy's, and that helped. Made up as a "nut" of about fifty years' standing, I could look near enough like dear old granddad. Kerr would make me up all right.

It didn't really matter when we carried out the wheeze, as long as it was before Thursday. Wednesday afternoon would, of course, be the most convenient time, for the Lower School wanted to see the whole affair.

By the time classes were over on Wednesday morning everything had been arranged. Kerr and I were to cut dinner and go to the wood, where the making-up could be done privately.

Then we would take the train at Wayland. At Rylcombe I would hail a taxi, and reach the school in real style.

Kerr was great. I had given him a photo of granddad, and he had made me up exactly like him.

There was no difficulty in getting to the station.

I rather enjoyed the walk along the High Street of Wayland. With a monocle in my eye I ambled along in the style of an ancient Brazil.

Old Binns, the tobacconist, was standing in his doorway, and I made tracks for him.

"Good—aw—afternoon, sir!" I drawled.

Kerr stared at me. He was going to call me uncle if he had to speak to me.

"Uncle," he said, "the train's going. You'll have to hurry!"

"All right my—er—little man," I smiled. "Here's a shilling; go and buy some—aw—sweeties!"

Kerr flushed scarlet, and called me an ass—disrespectful young bounder!

"Let me see—aw—I shall have to get some—aw—cigs."

Kerr gave me an expressive look. He didn't take the bob I handed to him, either.

"Cigarettes, sir?" said Binns, washing his hands with invisible soap and imperceptible water.

"Yaas! Say twenty-five Abdullas—No. 5."

"Yes, sir, certainly!"

And I walked in, leaving Kerr outside.

Those cigs were rather good, and I smoked one going to the station.

Nothing much happened in the train. As it was full, Kerr could not say much to me, and I annoyed him by saying, "Speak up, my little man!" when he did say anything.

The conversation ran something on these lines:

"You ass, Cardew! What—"

"Eh? Aw? Um! Speak up my little chap! Did you ask me for a hanky?"

"You ass! I said—"

"Sweeties? No! I—er—gave you a shilling to get some. I hope you haven't—er—finished them all. Your mamma would be cross!"

Then Kerr shut up.

By the time we reached Wayland Kerr was quite waxy.

He was so huffy that I had to get the taxi without his aid.

It was a jolly fine ride, too. I was quite enjoying my new role. The Head might ask me to stay to tea. Study tea had become thin, and the change would be welcome.

We drew up outside the gates, and there was quite a crowd of fellows there despite my instructions. When they saw me smoking they looked quite shocked.

We drove right up to the School House steps, and I got out.

There weren't so many juniors there, luckily, or the beaks might have become suspicious.

Racke and the merry Crooke had come up, though, and they passed audible remarks.

Tom Merry came forward.

"Ah, my little man," I said, "and who are you?"

"My name's Merry," answered Tom, with a look at the fag I was smoking.

"And who is that—er—extremely objectionable youth—er—with the lanky lad?" I inquired, indicating Racke, with a sweep of my walking-stick.

"Racke," answered Tom, with a slight grin.

"Slack? H'm! A most suitable name. What a face! It reminds me of the back of—er—an omnibus on—er—a muddy day."

The festive Aubrey gave me a perfectly Hunnish look.

"My name's Racke!" he snarled.

"Aha!" I said, puffing at my fag. "Your—er—father is the—um—capitalist, then? Messrs. Racke & Hacke, eh? Oh, I've heard of them! And the other little chap, with the—er—pimply face, is—um—Ruin, I presume."

Racke and Ruin. Ha, ha, ha!"

And they all laughed with me. But Racke was an exception, and Crooke another.

"Will you show me up to the Head, my little boy?" I asked.

Tom Merry glared at me rudely.

"Certainly, sir!" he said.

And he showed me up. When we were alone in the passage, he lipped in my ear:

"Put that silly fag out, you ass!"

But, of course, I didn't. The cigarette was part of the make-up, you see.

With a parting glare, he showed me into the Head's study. It was really Toby's job, but Tom was safer.

The Head sat thinking, and something ticked regularly. But that wasn't the works in the Head's head, that was only the clock.

"Oh, good-afternoon, my lord!" said the old boy affably, when Tom had announced me.

"Ah! Dr. Holmes! Er!"

Rather a good imitation of granddad, I thought.

"Will you sit down, please?" said the doctor, blinking at me curiously. Granddad hasn't long been one of the governors, and the Head didn't know him.

Down below in the Lower passage, Racke and Crooke were fairly seething with rage.

I gathered the facts from Crooke afterwards. It appears that, at Racke's suggestion, he and Crooke went to the prefect's room, found it empty, and managed to get on to granddad on the 'phone.

They heard me tell the fellows that granddad was staying at Wayland Manor so as to be handy for the fete.

Racke did just the sort of thing that might be expected of him—he told granddad that there was an impostor at the school. He didn't say who it was, luckily. Possibly he thought dear old granddad might hesitate about bowling me out.

When granddad heard the dire news he came over as fast as his car would take him. He has a car for National Service, or something. These old boys know how to wangle things. And it wasn't long before he came tearing up to the school gates.

It wasn't long, but it was long enough for me to get what I wanted from the Head.

The Head offered me a cigar. They were Coronas, and, with a sweet smile, I took one. It seemed rather queer for the Head to be offering me cigars. That was why I smiled.

The Head favoured me with a slight stare for a few minutes, then I realised that he was in the dark as to my purpose in coming to see him.

"You know me," I said. "Lord Reckness, y'know. One of the governors—what?"

"Ah, indeed! Very pleased to meet you, my lord."

I explained to him how I felt, or granddad should have felt, and he sympathised.

He must have thought me a queer old bird. He stared at me as hard as politeness would allow. But I had had the sense to sit with my back to the light.

"Ah, Dr. Holmes! Er—you have heard of the fete at the Wayland Grounds—what?"

"I think I have," murmured the Head. "In a very good cause, I hear; the wounded soldiers, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, yes, certainly—wounded soldiers. It will be—er—a very—er—instructive performance."

"So I understand," said the Head.

"It occurred to me, sir—er—that it might be—er—a good thing for some of your juniors to see the—er—performance, y'know—what?"

"Yes," murmured the Head, rather doubtfully, "it might. It would mean a day's holiday for them, and—"

"Yes, yes, certainly!"

"But—"

"My—er—dear sir, there surely can be no—er—objection to such—er—excellent educational value. And I am sure the boys would like it."

"I have no doubt as to that," said the Head. "But I scarcely think—"

"Perhaps you can't," I murmured. Luckily he didn't hear me.

"You see, Lord Reckness, the giving a holiday in this way is not exactly—"

The Head paused expressively.

"As a governor of the school, Dr. Holmes, I most strongly recommend that a whole holiday should be given. You see, it is not often that the lads get extra holidays."

"Since you are so fixed on that point," murmured the Head, wagging his head thoughtfully, "I will see what can be done."

"I certainly think that it will be good for them," I said most emphatically.

"Very well; then they shall have the day off. But only those whom the Form-masters recommend as deserving it."

"My grandson?" I said. "Of course he will be included?"

I was not sure of Lathom picking me as one of the best, you see. I could see that he wanted me to go. He got quite fidgety. Perhaps he doesn't care for ancient Brazils.

"By the way, how is my grandson getting on?" I asked. "He's a—er—a very clever lad, y'know. He's the apple of my eye, and the pride of my life." And I lay back in the comfortable chair and puffed out clouds of expensive smoke.

"Wonderful lad, Ralph!" I murmured.

"Um!" said the Head, in a manner I considered little short of nasty.

"It is settled, then, that he shall have tomorrow off, with such of the rest of the Fourth and Shell as the Form-masters recommend? Of course, as many as is possible should go," I said.

"Yes, yes," said the Head, somewhat impatiently.

At that moment there came an interruption. The door opened, and a well-groomed old gent thundered in.

It was Lord Reckness!

I sprang to my feet.

Kerr had made me up so well that I really looked like the real man. Indeed, only a close observer could have noted any difference. Kerr had only had granddad's photo to go by, but it had been enough.

The Head stood and stared at us in wild amazement. And as for granddad, he was speechless. Luckily for me, I am a quick thinker.

There was not a second to waste.

Taking the plunge, I gave a bull-like roar.

"Impostor! By jingo, impostor, how dare you!"

Poor old granddad's face was a picture. He knew I was the impostor, and my nerve astounded him. But, of course, he didn't know who I was, and he looked at me with a very puzzled face. Then he grew almost livid.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Impostor! How dare you!"

I held in my hand a stout malacca, with a huge silver knob, and I gripped it tightly

by the end. Swinging it above my head, I gave a roar, and rushed at him.

The crowd of fellows who had gathered in the passage gasped in amazement. They, at least, knew who I was, and they were astounded.

Granddad turned tail, and bunked. It was prudent, if not heroic. No doubt he thought me a lunatic.

The crowd in the passage fairly shivered as I came charging out of the Head's study, and chased granddad down the passage.

Down the passage we rushed. At the door we found another crowd. And they, too, gasped and shivered.

They stood stupidly in the doorway. Granddad was trapped. He turned, like the proverbial worm, and stood at bay. The Head was coming up.

I stood stock still, thinking hard. I had to get in the car, and then order the chauffeur to drive me to the police-station. It was the only way out.

Granddad stood like a landed fish, gasping by numbers.

Then in a flash I saw a way out. Granddad stood with his back to the door; he had hardly begun to "sit up and take notice." Events had passed too quickly for his ancient brain.

I looked round. The panting Head had just arrived, and Kerr and Racke, Tom Merry, and the rest were staring in a stupefied way at me.

I rushed at granddad again. I pushed the stick into his astonished hand and twirled round with him about a dozen times. When I stopped I had my back to the door, and granddad had the stick in his hand.

And now I was granddad, and granddad was me—see?

Granddad sprang into life, as I had guessed he would. Backing to the door, I gave a yell of pretended fright.

"Keep him off! Keep him off!" I howled "He is an impostor—a madman! Hold him while I get the police!"

"Hold him, boys!" shouted the Head, taking granddad for the impostor.

And they held him, thinking he was I.

I ran down the steps, and hopped into the car.

"Wayland Police-Station!" I yelled to the chauffeur. "And slow down through the High Street!"

Then, sinking back into the depths of the car, I chuckled. We had got the holiday all right. The Head could hardly go back on his word. And the holiday was really what mattered.

The car slowed down through Wayland High Street, and, taking care that I was not seen, I dropped off the footboard and into Wiggs' shop.

Wiggs is the man from whom we get our clobber.

"Hallo, Wiggy!" I said. "Don't you recognise me?"

And I pulled off the face fungus.

"Master Cardew!" he ejaculated in amazement.

"Exactly!" I purred.

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Now, I can't go back like this, old bean, an' I want another disguise. Also a wash an' brush up—see?"

"Wot to!" said Wiggs, with simple elegance.

And he fetched me out another set of clothes, the while I washed granddad off my face, so to speak.

When he had finished I looked my old spotless self, except that under the long top-coat there was a lounge-suit instead of Etons. A topper was set on at a jaunty angle, and with a pair of gloves in my hand I walked out of the shop.

Outside I almost dropped in surprise, for what should I see but the taxi I had hired, and left at St. Jim's, tearing down the street, with granddad leaning out of window, looking quite horribly excited about something or other. I stepped out into the road, and waved my arms.

"Hallo, granddad!" I bellowed.

He called to the taxi-driver to stop.

"Jump in, Ralph!" he said excitedly.

I jumped in, and jerked out as the taxi bounded forward:

"What on earth's up, granddad?"

"An impostor—at school! Stolen my car! Must catch him!"

He kept looking out of the window in search of the car.

"There it is!" he bawled at last, as we neared the police-station. "There it is! Stop, driver—stop!"

We drew up. Smith, granddad's chauffeur, was wandering round the car in a dazed manner, with a couple of policemen watch-

ing him. They evidently suspected he was up to something.

Granddad rushed up to him.

"Where's the impostor?" he bawled.

Poor old Smith nearly dropped. He thought he had been driving Lord Reckness to the police-station, and when he had got there there was no Lord Reckness inside. And now up came Lord Reckness demanding to know where the impostor was!

"Where's the man you were driving?" howled granddad.

Smith stepped back, and his jaw dropped. "Why, you—er—you were the man, your lordship!"

"What?" The old boy did a tango, to the enjoyment of the small crowd that had collected, and was encored.

"You were—"

"Dolt! Fool! Idiot!"

"That is to say, that when I got 'ere there was no one inside!"

"No one inside!" howled granddad. "Oh, you fool!"

And he stamped into the car. I followed. "Ere, 'ow abart me?"

A grimy individual, looking none too pleased, looked into the car.

It was the taxi-driver!

"What—what?" fumed granddad.

"I wants to be paid!" growled the man.

"From Wayland Station—"

I saw that he might give the game away, so hastily shoved a ten-bob note into the grimy paw. And, touching his cap, he withdrew.

"H'm! Hah!" grunted granddad.

I chuckled. Granddad had quite forgotten me. We reached Wayland Manor, and got out. Wayland Manor is a big place that granddad has just bought, but seldom uses. We went inside, and so worried was granddad that again he failed to notice me till tea was brought in.

"By Jove, Ralph!" he murmured. "You ought to be at the school."

"Oh, that's all right, granddad!" I yawned. "It's a halfer, y'know. Must stay to dinner—what?"

"H'm! Yes, if you—er—like. But—um—what will Dr.—er—Holmes say?"

"Perhaps you could ring up and tell him. You said you'd ring up an' tell him how you got on, y'know."

"Very well. Yes, yes, certainly!"

And he rang the Head up, and told him. The Head then told him about getting the day off; said he'd promised the impostor, and he didn't know quite whether he ought to keep to it.

Granddad, like a sport-boy-ee, said "Yes."

Then I toddled home after quite a decent dinner.

My word, what a shindy there was when I got in the Common-room!

According to those asses, everything I had done was wrong.

"You've got the day off!" I growled.

"What more d'ye want?"

"That's all very well," said Tom Merry.

"You're going to be bumped for smoking!"

And I was. After getting them all the day off, too!

THE END.

NOTICES.

Correspondence Wanted By :

N. Griffiths, 10, Wote Street, Basingstoke, Hants, with a boy possessing a typewriter or small printing-press to help in production of amateur magazine.

H. V. L. Smith, 234, Wakefield Street, Adelaide, South Australia, with readers anywhere.

Miss Elsie English, 83, McTier Street, Belfast, Ireland, with girl readers—17-21—in any part of the world.

Miss May English, 83, McTier Street, Belfast, with girl readers interested in cigarette-cards.

Miss Violet Evans, 57, Old Market Street, Bristol, with girl readers anywhere, especially Australia.

Miss Irma Lee, 17, Lewisham High Road, New Cross, S.E. 14, with girl readers abroad, especially France and China.

Thomas Griffin, Railway Cottage, Darfield, near Bardsley, Yorks, with readers anywhere.

F. Hudson, 972, Middleton Road West, Middleton Junction, near Manchester, wants members for "Gem" and MAGNET Exchange; amateur magazine with many attractions—postcards, stamps, etc.

Miss Peggy Cornwell, The Homestead, Ellenboro' Park, Weston-super-Mare, with readers anywhere.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 97.—Mr. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH.

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH is undoubtedly very fond of his father. I doubt whether anyone else in all the world is very fond of Samuel Vernon-Smith.

Of course, he has "friends." No millionaire is without "friends"—of a sort that go with his millions. This may be understood in a double sense, for "friends" of this kind go when the millions go.

They don't count. But the real affection of a son whom one has done everything possible to ruin by over-indulgence counts—especially after that son has learned lessons that counteract the effects of such over-indulgence. And in the fact that the Bounder is still very fond of his father one sees some proof that, in spite of all his purse-proud arrogance, his essential vulgarity, and his greed for money, Samuel Vernon-Smith has his good points.

A son should be fond of his father. That is hardly worth disputing. Yet the fact is that a great many spoiled sons are not at all fond of their fathers. They will take all "the old man" has to give with little or no thanks; but when disaster comes upon them they are only too ready to blame their foolish sires. The Bounder has never blamed his father for the troubles into which he has fallen; he has always been loyal. Perhaps that should not count in his father's favour; but, somehow, it does. Somehow, one feels that the shrewd Bounder, not easily led astray in his judgment of human nature, sees real good in his father which others fail to see.

They are very far asunder now in thought and feeling. Their dealings with Tom Redwing proved that. The Bounder never had the least real doubt of Tom, not even when he said bitter things that seemed to imply doubt. Mr. Vernon-Smith was very hard to persuade that the sailor's son was as straight as a fellow could be, and quite incapable of sponging. When he was forced to believe he yet believed grudgingly, and one fancies that he still feels some angry impatience with his son for thinking so much of a fellow without money or birth to recommend him, and some little bitterness against Redwing for being such a sterling fellow in spite of his disadvantages. He would not admit any such feelings; and they do not rule out a real admiration of Tom.

The Redwing stories tell us a good deal about Mr. Vernon-Smith. In them we see how hard he finds it to realise that anyone should mind being patronised by a millionaire or a millionaire's son. It seems to him absurd. It denotes the inability to see the main chance when put before one that is little short of idiotic, an independence for which he has no use. He would practically have adopted Tom—not as a second son, but as a favoured dependent. Tom had saved his boy's life; and in his eyes Tom had no right to refuse to be paid for doing that. He fell into the scholarship scheme none too

willingly, and when the time that he thought fitting for disclosure of the truth came, nothing the Bounder could say was of any avail to prevent his making the disclosure.

But—let us do him justice—he was willing to do more than a great many men would have been willing to do. Much of his money has come to him in the way of spoils; but he is not ungenerous with it. And I do not think his mind is essentially ungenerous. But it is so choked with the years of money-grubbing, and all the suspicions that are inevitable to the man whose hand is against every man's, that it is very hard for him to see things in the light that a high-spirited boy, with a boy's notions of fair play, or a



high-minded man like Dr. Locke or Mr. Quelch, would see them in. As he grows older, if he and his son continue to be the good friends they are now, I think there will come to him a softening of heart, a different outlook upon the world. For these things have already come to the Bounder. He is not even now a specially soft-hearted fellow. Some of the generous and self-sacrificing things he has done have been done in a half-cynical way, and with protestations that he did not care twopence about those for whom he did them. But he did them—that is the main point. And his eyes are open now to the fact that other things besides money count—and count more than money. In time he may open his father's eyes to that; perhaps he is already doing so. But neither father nor son is ever likely to think that money does not matter at all.

Samuel Vernon-Smith was certainly a harder case than he is now when he sent his spoiled boy to Greyfriars. Dr. Locke owed him a heavy sum. Among the millionaire's many activities was money-lending, though it is hardly likely he would ever have been a millionaire if that had been the only string to his bow. Dr. Locke has had a good deal of family trouble, and he is not a strong man. He found himself in Mr. Vernon-Smith's clutches, and he knew when Herbert came along that this was a boy who could not be treated exactly as other boys were. He had been allowed to go his own way, and his father expected that he would still do as he liked at Greyfriars.

It was really an impossible situation, as Mr. Quelch soon found. Mr. Quelch actually resigned rather than put up with the Bounder. But he withdrew his resignation when he learned the whole truth. At any cost he would stand by his old friend. You can guess, perhaps, what both he and Dr. Locke felt about Mr. Vernon-Smith. Probably no words they would have been willing to use could express it fully. Only an ignorant, pompous, unfeeling, thick-skinned man could have done what the millionaire had done. His boy's presence at Greyfriars under such conditions was a positive plague-spot on the school—bad for discipline, bad for the characters of other boys, and very bad for the masters, who saw their authority set at naught.

Well, that ended at length. Bob Cherry saved the life of the millionaire by a very plucky deed; and he was allowed to name his own reward. By this time Greyfriars knew how completely in the toils the Head was. Bob was offered five hundred pounds for himself. He would not take as much as a shilling for himself; his pride was as high as Tom Redwing's. But he asked that the Head should be set free. The Bounder was then under sentence of expulsion; it was that which had brought his father to Greyfriars. By doing as Bob asked Mr. Vernon-Smith apparently gave up all hope of getting the sentence rescinded, for it is certain that such generosity as Dr. Locke showed could not have been reckoned upon by him. But for all that he stuck to his promise—and there again you see the better side of the man. He hated doing it; but he had promised, and he did it. And the Bounder was given another chance.

Most of you will remember how the Bounder was put to the test by his father. There one saw again the suspicious nature of the man, for there was really no cause to think Herbert's affection failing. But perhaps one can make some excuse for Mr. Vernon-Smith, for he could hardly have helped seeing the change in his son, and fearing that it might force them apart.

The Bounder came triumphantly through his test. It was really not so severe a one as his father thought it, maybe. It is not likely to be repeated, though, in his turn, the Bounder tried something very similar on Tom Redwing, his father standing in with him in it.

One cannot wholly like Samuel Vernon-Smith. It is only for his son's sake that one likes him at all. But one's fondness for the Bounder makes one find what good is to be found in his father.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

“SPRING'S BROTHER !”

By Frank Richards.

Most of you will remember the two yarns a little while back in which Spring of the Second Form figured prominently.

Spring is a pretty complete all-round young rotter—usurer, funk, and thief. He has been found out sufficiently to make decent fellows fight shy of him, but not sufficiently to get him sacked.

There is a mystery about him—a mystery of which two people not belonging to Greyfriars know more than anyone at Greyfriars. One of these two is a Fourth-Former at Highcliffe; the other is a junior at Cliff House.

That mystery concerns Spring's younger brother. In next week's story the younger brother—who is quite a different kind of

fellow from Spring of the Second—appears upon the scene. And that is all I am going to tell you just now. Wait and see!

A MESSAGE TO A READER.

Will a certain reader who is very keen on everything that concerns Levison please believe that we here really have no ill-feeling towards her? She seems to imagine that there is a conspiracy to suppress her. Nothing of the sort! If she would only give her address—but she never does—she would be answered at once through the post.

Once, some time ago, this reader made an excellent suggestion in connection with the stories, and this suggestion was acted upon. We were grateful for it, and if only we had her address that gratitude could have been given tangible expression. But ever since then she has been clamouring for changes in the yarns, both in this paper and the "Gem," which don't exactly commend themselves to my judgment. Now, it is quite impossible to allow any reader to dictate as to matters of this sort; it is impossible to put to the vote the question which she is agitating; it is impossible, in short, to satisfy her. I had hoped that she would come to understand this in time; but she protests

that her life is being made a misery to her because Messrs. Richards and Clifford and I won't do exactly what she wishes!

Which is absurd. She herself will realise this in later days. It is a strong testimony to the lifelikeness of our stories that readers should come to feel that the characters are real persons whom they know. But even that is not a good enough reason for wanting to alter the whole course of things in connection with them. Suppose they were real, would anyone care to take that responsibility? I would not. There are persons for whom it is proper one should take it; but I, for one, would not think of interfering in this way in the lives of people for whom I had no responsibility.

I don't want to be rough on this enthusiastic reader. I don't think I am really being rough on her in what I say. She is attaching too much importance to something which has undoubtedly become a big thing in her life—too big a thing, I consider. But I could say more to her, if she would only give me a chance of saying it through the post. This Chat-business is too much like the pulpit—and I never did quite agree with taking individual sinners to task by name from the pulpit!

YOUR EDITOR.

23-11-18