

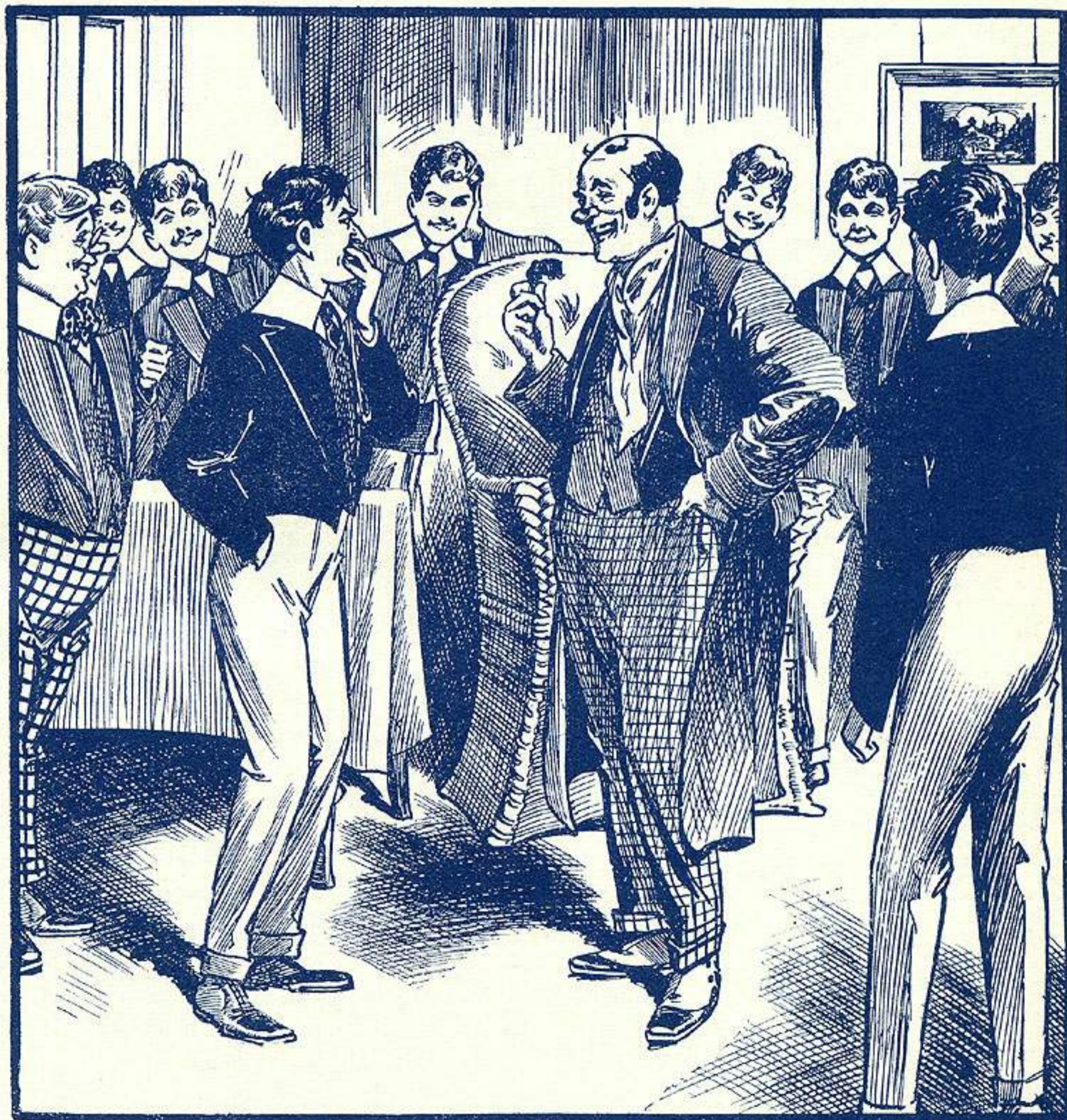


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WALLY'S WHEEZE!



THE IMPOSTOR REMOVES HIS DISGUISE!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Grand, Long, Complete School Story in This Number.) 15-3-19



WALLY'S WHEEZE.

A Magnificent, Long,
Complete Story dealing with
the Adventures of Harry
Wharton & Co., at Grey-
friars School.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry is Very Kind!

"HURRY up, Bob!"
Bob Cherry did not answer. The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were proceeding along Friardale Lane towards the school at a trot when Bob suddenly halted.

"Get a move on," said Harry Wharton, stopping, too. "Wibley will be waiting for us."

"Never mind Wib for a minute," answered Bob.

"My dear man," said Nugent, "you know it's a meeting of the Dramatic Society, and Wibley will scalp us if we're late!"

"What on earth are you blinking at, Bob?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry was staring through a gap in the hedge beside the lane.

On the other side of the hedge, in the field, two figures had caught his eyes in the gathering dusk.

One of them was Sidney James Snoop of the Remove.

The other was a short, squat, oily-looking man, with a bowler hat on one side of his head and a cigar in the corner of his mouth.

"Snoop!" exclaimed Wharton, following Bob's glance, and discerning the two figures in the field, engaged apparently in deep discussion.

"And Jerry Hawke!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"All the samefully," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "the esteemed Wib will be waiting for us, and this is not our bizney."

Bob shook his head.

"It's too bad," he said. "I thought Snoop was getting quite decent; and now here he is chumming with that beastly sharper again. Looks to me as if the man is hanging on to him, and won't be shaken off. Let's chip in."

"But—" began Frank Nugent.

"Let's pitch him into the ditch," said Bob. "We'll take Snoop home with us. See? That will be ever so much better for him."

"Look here, Bob, you ass—"

"Oh, come on!" said Bob. "I don't see letting Snoopey be worried by that fellow into playing his silly old tricks again. He hasn't got much sense, and we've got lots, so it's up to us to look after him."

Harry Wharton looked very doubtful.

Certainly he did not approve of Snoop and his shady proceedings, but from disapproval to intervention was a big step.

But Bob Cherry was already starting for the gap in the hedge, and his chums followed him, though in dubious mood.

Bob scrambled up the bank and plunged into the field.

Sidney James Snoop and Mr. Hawke were standing well back from the hedge, and they had not yet observed the juniors, being very deeply engrossed in their conversation, whatever it was about.

Snoop was speaking as Bob came through the hedge, and he was saying:

"Quite certain, you think?"

"Well, that's my belief," said Mr. Hawke. "I don't set up to be no prophet. But if that 'orse don't win I don't know anything about 'orses."

"But, if you think he's certain to win, will you book bets on him?"

"No fear!" answered Mr. Hawke emphatically. "I ain't laying agin that 'orse. I can't afford to chuck my money away."

Snoop looked disappointed.

"Then I can't—" he began.

"My dear young feller, there are other coves," said Mr. Hawke. "Tain't everybody knows Long John's chances as I do. I've had a tip from the stables, and I knows. But other coves don't know, and they'll lay their money agin him. I could interdooce you to a man in the business, for that matter. But don't ask me. Nothing doing, sir!"

At that moment the two became aware of Bob Cherry's sturdy figure striding towards them in the dusk.

Snoop started as he saw him, and his somewhat sallow face became crimson.

Mr. Jerry Hawke scowled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob, clapping Snoop on the shoulder. "We're going home, Snoopey. Coming with us?"

"No. I—I'm coming soon!" stammered Snoop. "Not for a minute or two. Don't wait for me."

"My dear kid, don't mench," said Bob cheerily. "We'll wait for you with pleasure. Besides, Mr. Hawke can tell us all about Long John, and his chances of winning the Swindlem race. Can't you, Mr. Hawke?"

Mr. Hawke muttered something unintelligible.

"Hadn't you better come back, Snoop?" asked Harry Wharton quietly. "There'd be trouble if you were seen with that man."

"I—I—"

"Who are you calling a man?" demanded Mr. Hawke indignantly.

"Well, that really isn't the right name for you!" answered Wharton scornfully. "Snoop, you must be mad if you make bets with him. You remember the trouble Bunter got into with the same fellow—"

"You—you don't understand," stammered Snoop. "I—I— It's not as you think, Wharton—really it isn't!"

"Well, are you coming?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"N-no."

Bob Cherry took one of Snoop's arms. "That's a mistake, old top," he said affectionately. "You're coming all right. Can't part with you, Snoop; you know what a fascinating fellow you are. Come on!"

"Look here, Cherry—"

"This way, old bean!"

"I—I—" gasped Snoop.

Bob Cherry, quite unheeding, walked him towards the gap in the hedge. Snoop simply had to go. It was not much use for the weedy youth to attempt to resist Bob Cherry, who could have picked him up and carried him quite easily.

Expostulating and stammering, Snoop plunged through the gap with Bob, and landed with him in the lane.

Mr. Hawke stared after them in a rage.

The sharper did not like seeing his victim carried off under his eyes in this high-handed manner, and he made a stride forward as if to interfere. Harry Wharton & Co. closed up in his path, and Mr. Hawke thought better of it. The Greyfriars juniors were quite prepared to toss him into the ditch if he gave trouble.

"Wot's this 'ere business?" growled Mr. Hawke aggressively. "Can't the young gent do as he likes without you bargin' in?"

"Not in this instance," answered Wharton. "Shall we pitch the rotter into the ditch, you chaps?"

"That is a wheezy good idea, my esteemed chum!"

Mr. Hawke backed away.

"Ands off!" he exclaimed. "I'll 'ave the lor of yer! I'll—"

"Collar him!"

Mr. Hawke jumped away, and started across the field at a good pace. The ditch was not at all to his taste.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you coming?" roared Bob Cherry, from the lane. "Wib's waiting for us, you know. And Snoop's kicking his heels here. Anxious to be off—ain't you, Snoopey?"

"I—I—" stammered Snoop confusedly.

Harry Wharton & Co. came leaping through the hedge, and the party started towards Greyfriars. Bob Cherry kept his powerful arm linked in Snoop's, but Sidney James showed no inclination to bolt. He walked on in silence, with crimson burning in his cheeks.

Bob Cherry chatted pleasantly to his companion all the way, Snoop answering only with grunts, when he answered at all. Bob was in a cheery mood, but Sidney James was not. But Snoop spoke at last, when the school gates were in sight.

"You fellows misunderstand," he said

haltingly. "It's not as you think. I know you mean well, Bob Cherry, but—"

"I've done well, too," answered Bob, becoming serious. "Look here, Snoop. You ain't really a bad sort, but you're as weak as water. You've been getting so decent lately that fellows hardly know you. You're all right so long as you keep out of temptation. Well, why don't you do it?"

"I—I—"

"You've been saving up money," went on Bob. "We all know that you saved up ten quid—it came out the other day. Well, that man Hawke has heard that you're in funds, and he's after it. I believe Skinner or somebody tells him things about Greyfriars fellows. You saved up your money to help your pater when he came out of the Army. Well, how would you feel if you lost it on silly betting? That's why I chipped in. I know it wasn't my business, but you'll be glad of it some time."

"You don't understand!" faltered Snoop.

"I think I do. What you've got to do, you know, is to grow a backbone," said Bob. "Instead of talking gee-gees with Jerry Hawke, hit him in the eye if he speaks to you! You'll save money on it in the long run."

Snoop grinned faintly.

But he said no more, and the juniors went in, just as Gosling was coming down to lock the gates. Then Sidney James Snoop was left to himself, while the Famous Five rushed off to the Rag for the meeting of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society—a most important function.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wibley's Great Wheeze!

"C HUMPS!"

Thus William Wibley of the Remove.

Wibley was wrathful.

"Fatheads!" he continued. "Duffers! Idiots!"

As stage-manager, general manager, and Lord-High-Everything-Else in the Remove Dramatic Society, William Wibley was privileged to let himself go occasionally.

He was letting himself go now.

The president of the society had arrived at the Rag full of important communications for a general meeting. He found five leading members absent. There were a good many present—Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, Squiff and Tom Brown, Hazeldene, and Peter Todd, Mark Linley, Newland, and several others. But the Famous Five were not there; and they did not arrive.

Wibley's uncomplimentary expressions were addressed to the absentees.

"Thumping idiots!" went on Wibley. "Where are they? I've a jolly good mind to expel them from the club! Yah!"

"They've gone down to Friardale, I believe," remarked Peter Todd.

"And what do they mean by going down to Friardale just before a meeting?" roared Wibley.

"A very important bizney, I think," grinned Vernon-Smith. "Nothing less than a visit to Uncle Clegg's."

"Yah!"

"They'll come," said Mark Linley consolingly.

"I've a jolly good mind to lock the door and bar 'em out of the meeting!" said Wibley darkly. "I jolly well will bar the door as soon as Bunter comes! That fat idiot is late, too!"

"Is Bunter coming?" asked Squiff.

"Yes, ass!"

"My hat! Is Bunter going to have a

part in the new play?" inquired Tom Brown.

"A leading part!" answered Wib.

"Great pip!"

"Hallo! Here he is, at any rate!"

The door opened, and Bunter of the Remove rolled in. After him came the Famous Five. They had arrived at last.

"Not late, I hope?" said Harry Wharton, as he closed the door.

Wibley hooted.

"Ten minutes late, you chumps!"

"Sorry!" said Bob Cherry. "We stopped to speak to a bookie on the way home."

"Eh?"

"And we've got a sure snip for some blessed race or other," said Bob. "Long John's the horse, and Jerry Hawke won't lay money against him. That's worth knowing, isn't it?"

"You howling ass!" shouted Vernon-Smith. "You haven't been idiot enough to—"

"Well, you see, we couldn't," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Long John is such a jolly good horse that Mr. Hawke won't take bets. So it's necessary to find out some bookie who doesn't know what a four-point-seven gee-geo Long John is."

The dramatic society stared at Bob Cherry open-mouthed. Even William Wibley forgot the object of the meeting for a moment.

"You can't be serious," said the Bounder, staring blankly at Bob Cherry.

"Sober as a judge," answered Bob.

"Have you ever heard of Long John, Smithy? I believe you know all about these things."

"There's a horse of that name entered for the Courtfield three o'clock race on Tuesday," said the Bounder. "I've not got any bets on it, if that's what you mean, you ass! And I hope you haven't."

"Why? Isn't he a good horse?"

"No; a regular outsider."

"Then why doesn't Jerry Hawke lay his money against him?" asked Bob.

"He would, if he could find anybody idiot enough to put money on Long John," answered the Bounder at once.

Bob Cherry looked puzzled, as he felt. He had distinctly heard Mr. Hawke declare that he refused to lay money against Long John.

"You're off-side, Smithy," he said.

"To come down to facts, we came on Hawke talking to a chap. He was telling him what a ripping horse Long John was, and refusing to put money against him. See?"

The Bounder laughed.

"You don't know much about racing sharpers," he answered.

"Not so much as you do, old scout," agreed Bob. "I may be innocent; but I certainly don't see—"

"I don't quite see, either," remarked Redwing. "Suppose you explain, Smithy, if you know all about it."

"It's plain enough," said Vernon-Smith. "Hawke is recommending Long John as a certain winner to the chap you speak of not because he's going to win, but because he's certain to lose. But he can't lay money against him, can he, after saying he's a certain winner? That would give the show away, even to an ass like Bunter here!"

"Look here—" began Bunter.

"Shush!" said Bob. "But if he won't make a bet with S—I mean, with the noodle we're speaking of—what good does it do him to recommend a certain loser as a winner, Smithy?"

"Simple enough. He's got a confederate all ready to spring on the chap to book a bet with him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob. "I remember now, he said he could introduce the noodle to a man who would bet—a man who didn't know what a topping winner Long John was."

"That's it," said the Bounder laughing. "Noodle—whoever he is—gets that dead cert from Hawke—and lays his money with Hawke's confederate. Long John loses, Noodle pays up, and the two rogues divide the loot. It's an easy enough game to play on a silly ass."

"What an awful swindle!" said Nugent.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't go among racing sharpers in search of high morality, I suppose?" he answered.

"Well, no. So the chap is certain to be skinned if he lays that money on Long John?" said Bob.

"Absolutely certain. I don't know so much about these things as I used, but I know Long John couldn't possibly win, unless every other horse in the field laid down and died on purpose. He's a well-known rotter."

"A sure thing for the bookie, then," said Bob. "I'm jolly glad now I marched the silly idiot off the scene."

"So that's what made you late?" exclaimed Wibley.

"That was it, your Highness."

"Well, I'll look over it, then, but for goodness' sake stop talking gee-gees, and let's get down to business!" said the president. "I've got a stunning wheeze for the next play. Bunter's going to take the title-role."

"What?" shouted the whole Dramatic Society with one voice.

Bunter of the Remove smiled genially.

"Now you're talking sense!" he said heartily. "Wibley, old man, you're not such an ass as I've thought!"

"None of your cheek!" answered Wibley. "Now, you fellows seem surprised—"

"The surprisefulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Wibley!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I suppose this is a joke, Wib?" said Wharton.

"Not at all."

"What's the play?" asked the Bounder sarcastically. "Hamlet, I suppose? Billy Bunter would make a splendid Hamlet. Some of the lines would suit him. 'Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!' for instance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"It isn't 'Hamlet,' ass, of course!" snapped Wibley.

"'Richard the Third,' perhaps?" suggested Peter Todd. "You could alter the lines, 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!' into 'A feed, a feed, my kingdom for a feed!'"

"You silly ass, Toddy!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let a chap speak?" demanded Wibley. "We're not doing Shakespeare. I wouldn't put Bunter into a Shakespeare play for his weight in gold—which would be jolly nearly all the gold in the universe—"

"You cheeky ass!" howled Bunter. "Look here—"

"Shurrup!" said Wibley. "The next play we do is a farce—a screaming farce. Fellows are getting fed up on Shakespeare. They don't care even for Shakespeare's comedies, unless we make Beatrice pour ice-cream down Benedick's neck, or Kate throw the plates at Petruchio! What they want is farce—something funny they can cackle at. Well, an actor's bizney is to give the public what they want."

"Ahem! But—"

"Look at the plays going on in London now!" said Wibley. "Utter trash, the lot of them! A manager daren't produce a good play in London. He has to go to Manchester to do that, and even there it doesn't pay. Same with us here. We

give a tip-top 'Hamlet'—myself in the title-role—and the fellows either won't come, or they yawn their heads off when they do come. Now, the first bizney is to get an audience, and if they won't come and see Shakespeare, instead of calling them names let's give 'em something they will come to see!"

"Good wheeze!" agreed Wharton. "But—"

"So this time we're going to give them a rollicking farce, with Bunter playing a leading part."

"You couldn't do better," said Wally.

"Couldn't do worse, I should think!" remarked Peter Todd.

"Bunter's going to have the title-role," resumed Wibley. "In fact, I've written the farce round Bunter!"

"What's the title?"

"The Fat Freak of the School!"

"What?" yelled Bunter.

Wibley nodded.

"You see, it will be no end funny," he explained. "It's a school play; that will make it easy for the costumes. I shall take the part of a down-at-heel bookie—I've got the clobber and things—chap built on the lines of Jerry Hawke, you know. Awfully comic scene where Bunter, in the play, tries to back a winner. As for you, Bunter—"

"Look here—"

"You won't really have to act," said Wibley. "Of course, if there was any acting required you couldn't do it; you've not got brains enough. You'll simply have to be yourself. You raid grub from other fellows—"

"Look here—"

"You get caught, and bumped—"

"I—I—"

"There'll be a lot of bumping. That'll go down. With Bunter's weight it will make the stage fairly shake, and the audience will yell like fire. They'll enjoy that. Depend on me to know their taste."

"Will Bunter enjoy it?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Never mind Bunter. Then we'll have him in evening-clothes in one scene—his old game of bagging somebody else's clobber, and the owner collars him, and strips him on the stage—not quite, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then there's a scene where all the fellows wash him, because he doesn't wash his neck. Real bath on the stage, real water, and Bunter floundering in it and gasping like a grampus."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" shrieked Bunter.

"You see, it's making you laugh already, just the description," said Wibley enthusiastically. "We shall have to give more than one show, I think. It will make the fellows simply howl. We sha'n't be able to give them on consecutive days. I expect Bunter will feel too sore for a performance the next day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We might arrange three in a week; that would give Bunter time to recover between the performances."

The Dramatic Society yelled. Wibley, full of enthusiasm for his great wheeze, was evidently blind to Bunter's point of view. Bunter, apparently, was expected to suffer manfully in the good cause. To judge by the fat junior's look, he did not quite agree with Wibley.

"You see, it's easy enough for you, Bunter, ass as you are," pursued Wibley. "You simply have to be yourself—sneaking, and gluttonous, and unscrupulous, and utterly idiotic—"

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then—" Wibley was going on.

But he was interrupted.

Bunter strode towards the president of the Dramatic Society and laid a sudden grip on his neck.

Crash!

Wibley landed on the floor with a terrific concussion, and roared.

Bunter glared at the convulsed juniors.

"You silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to take a hand in your silly play, you chumps! Go and eat coke!"

And Bunter rolled out of the Rag, closing the door after him with a terrific bang.

William Wibley sat up dazedly.

"Groogh!" he gasped. "Wharrer marrer? Where's that fat idiot? Why, I'll scalp him! I'll slaughter him! Ungrateful beast! Here I'm offering him the title-role in a roaring farce, and he— he— Groogh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" roared Wibley. "Come back, you fat idiot!"

But Bunter did not come back. For once a chance of the limelight had no effect on him, and Wibley's tempting offer was scornfully rejected. It was pretty clear that William Wibley would have to find some other victim to play the title-role in his roaring farce.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Golden Prospects!

WALLY BUNTER came into his study, No. 7 in the Remove, with a grim look on his fat face.

The fat junior was not feeling pleased.

Wibley's offer might have tempted Billy Bunter, who would probably have risked the bumpings on the stage for the sake of getting into the limelight.

But Wally had quite different ideas.

Since he had been at Greyfriars in Billy's name and place Wally Bunter had improved Billy Bunter's reputation for him very considerably.

The Greyfriars fellows, knowing nothing of the change the two Bunters had made, owing to their exact resemblance, supposed that Billy Bunter had improved immensely. Even as a footballer Bunter was now acknowledged to be in the front rank.

But it was evident that, while Billy Bunter was supposed to have improved, he was still more or less the old Bunter in the eyes of the Removites—certainly in William Wibley's eyes. They were not to blame, as they believed the fat junior was Billy Bunter; but Wally found it exasperating, all the same.

Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, was in the study, and he glanced at Bunter's clouded face as the fat junior came in.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Only silly asses playing the goat!" answered Bunter gruffly.

"Here?" asked Tom, with interest.

"In the Rag."

"What are they doing with it?"

"Eh? With what?"

"The goat, of course! Where did they get it?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wally Bunter.

"They haven't got a goat."

"A stoat? You said a goat!"

"Help!"

"How could they get a stoat in the Rag?" asked Dutton, puzzled. "There'll be a row if Quelchy finds them bringing stoats into the school. Blessed if I know what they want a stoat for. I'll go and see it, I think."

And the deaf junior left No. 7, leaving Wally Bunter grinning. He did not feel equal to explaining, and Tom was allowed to go in search of the stoat.

Wally Bunter threw himself into the armchair.

"It's rotten!" he muttered aloud. "When I came here I never counted on all this. But the fellows will never forget what Billy was like—"

He broke off abruptly, colouring.

The half-open door was pushed further open, and Sidney James Snoop looked in.

There was a peculiar expression on Snoop's face.

It was clear that he had heard the fat junior's muttered words, and they perplexed him, as well they might.

Wally's face was crimson as he met Snoop's glance.

"Hallo!" he mumbled.

Of late Wally Bunter had been on very friendly terms with Snoop, but at that moment he wished Sidney James a thousand miles away.

"I looked in to speak to you," said Snoop. "I—I was going to consult you, Bunter—" He paused.

"Go ahead!" said Wally uncomfortably. He was wondering what Snoop could possibly be thinking of those unguarded words.

Snoop sat down on the edge of the table, and there was an awkward pause. It was Snoop who broke the silence.

"Do you know, Bunter," he said, "there's been a lot of change in you the last few weeks."

"I've been told that about a hundred times!" grunted Wally.

"It's really odd," said Snoop. "You've been helping me with my work lately, and it's jolly decent of you, now I'm trying to pull up; but you used to be thought the biggest dunce in the Remove."

"Thanks!"

"I used to do my construe much better than you, you know. Now Quelchy is getting into the way of holding you up as a model to the Form."

"Very kind of him, I'm sure!"

"Then there's the way you play footer," said Snoop, his eyes on Wally Bunter's flushed face. "You know how you always played. Yet you showed up in the Highcliffe match in first-rate style. You're as good a footballer now as any chap in the Remove."

Wally was silent.

He realised that Snoop was not making these observations for nothing. They were the outcome of the words Snoop had just overheard; added to his perplexity at the change in Bunter, which, in some respects, Snoop had observed more than the other fellows, owing to the new intimacy between them.

"It's ever since your cousin Wally came to see you," went on Snoop. "It dates from that time."

"Does it?"

"A lot of fellows have mentioned that."

"They seem jolly interested in me!" grunted Wally.

"Well, it's rather remarkable, you know. You seem to have grown just like your cousin Wally, so far as we knew what he was like."

Grunt!

"How's your cousin getting on at St. Jim's?" asked Snoop suddenly.

"Blessed if I know!"

"You hear from him sometimes?"

"Yes."

"Is he in the footer team?"

"I—I believe not."

"Popular, I suppose?"

"I—I hardly think so."

"He was very popular here, when he was on a visit."

"Was he?"

"Everybody liked him."

"Oh!"

Wally Bunter's manner was growing more and more reserved, not to say

gruff. There was a silence again; Snoop's eyes on Bunter's face, and Bunter's fixed on the hearthrug.

Snoop seemed to be waiting for Bunter to speak; but the fat junior did not speak or look up.

"I never thought I should get friendly with Billy Bunter," went on Snoop, with a smile. "But we're friendly now, ain't we?"

"I suppose so."

"You've done me some good turns," said Snoop.

"You're welcome."

"If you ever wanted a chap to stand by you, I'm the man!" said Snoop, his manner becoming more earnest. "I know I don't amount to much, but I mean that. If you ever had a secret, or anything, and I knew of it, you could rely on me to keep my mouth shut."

Wally did not answer.

The colour deepened in his fat cheeks, however.

He knew what those words implied. His careless utterance had given Snoop the clue to that which had long perplexed him, and he suspected.

But he said nothing. He rather liked Snoop, whom he looked upon as weak and irresolute rather than bad; but Sidney James was assuredly not the fellow he would have chosen to confide in.

But he realised that, however strongly Snoop suspected the secret, it was safe with him, and that was something.

As Wally did not speak, Snoop, after a minute's silence, went on, changing the subject. He had evidently been inviting Bunter's confidence, and as it was not forthcoming he let the matter drop—showing a fact and consideration that most fellows would not have expected of Snoop.

"I was going to consult you, Bunter, if you don't mind—" he said.

"Pile in!" said Wally, greatly relieved at the change of subject. "I'm your man, Snoop, if there's any advice I can give you."

"You heard the talk there was when it was found out that I'd got ten quid in my box," said Snoop. "I'd saved it up for my father, you know. He's been demobilised, and he's out of the Army now, and pretty nearly on his uppers. I've told you about his bad luck long ago—" Snoop coloured. "We're really kept on an allowance from my Canadian uncle, who pays my fees here. He won't do anything for my father; of course, he can't be expected to, under the circumstances. I believe the poor old pater was as much sinned against as sinning, when his company went smash, and—and the law got hold of him."

Snoop stammered.

"Anyway, he's made up for all that by fighting the Germans, and helping to beat them," said Wally.

"Well, I think so, and a lot of the fellows think so," said Snoop, more brightly. "We used to be fairly well off, before the crash came; but when it came everything went. The pater can't go back among his old City friends after—after—you understand. He's got to begin life again, over forty—and the trenches haven't done any good to his constitution, at his age. It's hard lines, I think."

"Jolly hard lines!" said Wally, quite sympathetic now. "And it was topping of you to save up all your tin for him, Snoopey."

"It was a bit of a squeeze," said Snoop. "I've got ten pounds together. But—but what use is ten quid to a man in his position? If it was a hundred, now, it would make a difference—it would give him time to look round, and get hold of something."

Wally looked at him

"Ten pounds is something," he said, "and the fact that you've saved it for him, old chap, will buck him up."

"But if I could turn it into something substantial!" said Snoop wistfully.

"How could you?" said the fat junior, in surprise. "You're not old enough to speculate in the rubber market, old top; and if you could, you'd only lose your money."

"There's other ways."

"Blessed if I know of any! You can't take a trip to Monte Carlo and lose it on the green tables!" grinned Wally.

"I wouldn't be fool enough, if I could. But—"

"Look here, Snoop," said Wally Bunter, looking quietly at the junior over Billy Bunter's big glasses, "don't be an ass. I understood that you'd given up that sneaking bizney of putting money on horses. You know it's not good enough for a decent fellow."

"The end justifies the means, doesn't it?" said Snoop.

"You mustn't do evil that good may

approve of what he had already decided to do.

"Well?" muttered Snoop, looking at him uneasily.

"No!" answered Wally.

Snoop's face fell. His irresolute nature needed support; and he had evidently counted on his new friend for support.

"If it's not right, it's not right," said Wally quietly, "and you know it isn't, Snoopey. But whether it's right or not, it's idiotic. How the thump are you going to spot winners when bookmakers themselves can't do it? They know when a horse can't win. But that's about all they know. If you put your money on a gee-gee, the gee-gee will run away with it. What do you think bookmakers live on—their losses?"

"N-no, of course not. People must lose, as a rule, I know, or bookmakers couldn't exist. But in a special case—"

"Everybody who thinks he's got a winner thinks it is a special case," said



WILLIAM WIBLEY'S WAXY WAY!

come of it," answered Wally. "There you are, text for text!"

Snoop laughed.

"That's all right, I know. But I know it's low-down to make bets to win other people's money, and all that. I've chucked that kind of dingy rot. But—in this case—to help give my poor old pater a fresh start—I think it would be justified."

"My dear chap," said Wally, "justified or not, what's the good of thinking of it? You'd only lose the money!"

"I might get a chance of spotting a winner," said Snoop.

"I've never heard of spotting winners being a paying game in the long run."

"But it isn't a question of the long run—it's this once, and once only!" said Snoop eagerly. "Say, a ten-to-one chance—that means a hundred quid for my ten, if I win—I mean, when I win. Of course, I sha'n't be reckless—I shall be jolly careful. Don't you think I should be justified in doing it?"

Wally knitted his brows. He knew well enough that Snoop had made up his mind; but as a sort of salve to his conscience he wanted another fellow to

Wally. "And you can depend on it, Snoop, that a man who would make bets with a schoolboy would be a pretty thorough rotter—too thorough a rotter to square if you won."

"I—I don't think so. I think—"

"Snoop, old man, chuck the idea out of your head," urged Wally. "You've got ten quid for your father, and that will be a pleasant surprise to him, and it will help him. You'll have nothing if you keep on with this cranky idea. It's not only wrong—it's fatheaded!"

Snoop slid off the table.

"Not much good consulting you, after all," he remarked moodily.

"Not if you simply wanted me to back up your opinion, certainly," answered Wally Bunter. "But you asked me for advice, and I've given you good advice."

"With a sermon thrown in," said Snoop, with a faint sneer. "Thanks for both! Ta-ta!"

He walked out of the study.

"Snoop!" called Wally.

But Sidney James seemed deaf, and he went his way without answering.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Declined with Thanks!

"WHARTON!"

"Hullo, Wib!"

It was the following day, and Wibley came striding up to the Famous Five in the quadrangle with an excited face after morning lessons. The great Wib was evidently in a wax.

"Are you captain of the Remove?" demanded Wibley.

Wharton looked astonished.

"Eh? Yes, I believe so," he answered. "Unless the fellows have held a new election without mentioning it to me, I am."

"Well, a Form captain has some authority in the Form, hasn't he?" asked Wibley.

"More or less."

"Then you'd better speak to Bunter."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Has Bunter broken out again? What have you missed in the grub line?"

Wibley snorted.

"Tain't grub! Bother grub! It's about the play."

"The roaring farce?" asked Frank Nugent, with a grin.

"Yes," snapped Wib, "the roaring farce! I've been talking to Bunter, and he won't take on the part. Title-role, too—I've offered him the title-role, and he turns up his fat nose at it!" exclaimed Wibley, in great exasperation.

"Such a flattering title-role!" murmured Nugent.

"The flatterfulness is terrific!"

"Why, it's a screaming part!" exclaimed Wibley. "The audience will be simply roaring!"

"So will Bunter, if he takes on that part, according to programme," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bother Bunter! Bless Bunter! Blow Bunter!" exclaimed Wibley forcibly. "What does Bunter's fat carcass matter?"

"A lot to Bunter, I should think."

"And it's not that," said Wibley. "I've told him he oughtn't to mind a thump or two, for the good of the cause. He says the part is below his dignity! His dignity!" hooted Wibley. "Bunter's dignity, you know! Ha, ha!"

"Bunter's dignity! Oh, crumbs!"

"Fancy that fat freak setting up to have any dignity, just when I want him for a butt to make my play go!" said Wibley wrathfully. "I'll give him dignity! I've talked to him! I've pointed out to him that he hasn't any dignity—not a cent's worth—never has had! I couldn't put it plainer than that, could I?"

"Well, not much," agreed Wharton, laughing. "What did Bunter say?"

"He said I could go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" roared Wibley. "But I don't think it's a cackling matter. Here I've written a play—a screaming farce—cudgelled my brains for tip-top scenes—scenes that would make a Hun gurgle. And now it's all got to be chucked because of Bunter's dignity! His dignity!" almost shrieked Wib. "Billy Bunter's dignity! This is the first we've ever heard at Greyfriars of Bunter having any dignity."

"Well, a chap's entitled to decline a role—even a title-role—if he likes, you know," murmured Bob Cherry soothingly.

Snort!

"Nothing of the kind! Bunter's got to play the part. Nobody else could play it, unless it was his cousin at St. Jim's. He's too far off to ask. Bunter can do

it. He's got to do it. I've explained to him that it doesn't need any brains. If it did, I could understand his objections. But he's only got to roll on and be a fat fool—just in his line, as I told him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling, do! Bunter's got to take it on. Why, I've fairly written the part round him! I thought he'd jump at it. Now he refuses. You've got to speak to him, Wharton, and order him, as captain of the Remove."

Wharton chuckled.

"I'll speak to him," he said. "We'll all try our persuasive powers on him, if you like. But I can't order him, old man. That's outside the authority of a Form captain. Form captains ain't elected to make fat duffers play idiotic parts in roaring farces, you know."

"Idiotic parts! I tell you it's a regular shriek!" exclaimed Wibley indignantly. "It's a part to make a cat laugh! It's the chance of a lifetime for Bunter, only the fat chump can't see it. You talk to him—order him. I've told him that if he doesn't agree I'm going to thrash him. So I will—black and blue. If he won't make the audience roar, I'll jolly well make him roar!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hullo, hallo, hallo! There's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Leave it to us, Wib; we'll talk to him like a whole family of Dutch uncles!"

And the Famous Five bore down on Bunter, who had just come out of the School House.

They left Wibley fuming.

The president of the Dramatic Society was boiling with wrath and indignation. That special part had been written round Bunter, whose fatness, fat-headedness, and general obtuseness and absurdity fitted him for the leading role in a roaring farce, as Wibley had patiently explained to him. Somehow, his explanations had not seemed to gratify Bunter.

"Hullo, hallo, hallo, my fat tulip!" called out Bob Cherry. "Halt!"

Wally blinked at the five over his cousin's spectacles rather grimly.

"Well?" he said.

"Wibley's been speaking to us," said Harry Wharton.

"The silly ass!"

"He's taken a lot of trouble getting that part written for you, Billy," said the captain of the Remove. "It's really too bad to leave him in the lurch. Don't you think so?"

"No, I don't."

"Ahem! It's the leading part. You'll get all the limelight!"

"Rats!"

"You'll be making a success of the play—"

"Rot!"

"It's hard lines on Wib, you know!" urged Nugent.

"The cheeky ass!"

"Bunter, old chap, play up!" urged Bob Cherry. "Look here, we'll make Wib agree to leave out some of the bumping and ragging. There!"

"It isn't that."

"What is it, then?" demanded Bob.

Wally sniffed.

"Do you think I'm going to play a ridiculous part, and be held up to ridicule before all Greyfriars?" he exclaimed. "What do you take me for?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

"But—but that won't be anything new for you, Bunter," remarked Johnny Bull, rather unfortunately.

"Fathead!" was Bunter's reply.

"Now, be a good fellow, Billy!" urged Wharton. "Suppose we arrange to have a really good spread after every performance—"

"Bother your spread!"

"Eh?"

"Do you think I think of nothing but eating?"

"Well, yes, don't you?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Oh, rats!"

"Now, look here, Bunter—"

"Go and eat coke!"

With that definite reply Bunter turned on his heel and walked away, leaving the Famous Five staring.

"My only hat!" said Harry, in wonder. "What is it that's come over Bunter the last few weeks? Of course, nobody else would like to be the butt in a farce, but who'd have thought Bunter would mind?"

"Echo answers who!" grinned Nugent.

"I dare say this is another sign of improvement; but it's rather hard on poor old Wib. Bunter oughtn't to spring these improvements on us so suddenly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five rejoined William Wibley, who glared a question at them. Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Nothing doing!" he said.

"He doesn't agree?" hooted Wibley.

"No."

"Then I'm jolly well going to thrash him till he does!" said Wibley determinedly.

"Look here, old chap—"

"Br-r-r-rrr!"

Wibley stalked away in great dudgeon. He ran Bunter down in the quad, and shook a set of knuckles under his fat little nose.

"You fat freak—" he began.

"You bony lunatic!" answered the fat junior cheerfully.

"Wha-at?"

"Bony lunatic!"

"Do you want me to squash you now?" roared Wibley. "Listen to me! I'll give you till to-morrow. You've got to play the goat in my farce. Understand that. I'll ask you again to-morrow. You'll say 'Yes.'"

"I shall say 'Rats!'"

"If you don't say 'Yes,' I'm going to give you the thunderingest hiding you ever heard of!" said Wibley impressively. "Dignity! I'll give you dignity! You beginning dignity! I like that, I must say! I don't want dignity in my farce. I want you!"

"Ass!"

"Mind, you'll fairly get wrecked to-morrow unless you're ready to begin rehearsing!" said Wibley, warningly. And he walked away with a sniff of wrathful contempt.

"Fathead!" was Bunter's answer.

The fat junior rolled away rather moodily to the School House as the dinner-bell rang. Snoop was going in, and Wally was about to join him, when Sidney James sheered off, as it were, and went in by himself.

Wally Bunter frowned.

Since he had given Snoop good advice the day before, Sidney James had not spoken to him. It looked as if their friendship had suddenly ended—not an uncommon result of good advice.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Fools and Their Money!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP was making for the gates after lessons that day, when Wally Bunter joined him. Snoop did not give him a welcoming look; in fact, his face lowered—a circumstance which Wally affected not to notice.

Wally was really concerned about the foolish fellow. He knew with what self-denial and painful efforts Snoop had saved up ten pounds, which he designed as a help for his father, now discharged from the Army. He knew what Snoop's feelings would be if the money went in

an absurd attempt to increase it by such a method as backing horses.

Wally was good-natured; and he had rather a protective feeling towards Snoop, the natural feeling of a strong nature for a weak one. He would willingly have saved Snoop from his folly—and its disastrous results.

But Snoop, like most irresolute fellows, mistook obstinacy for firmness, and he was almost savagely obstinate about his new project. He did not want any more advice from Wally Bunter, and his looks showed as much. But Wally was studiously friendly and cordial.

"Going out?" he asked cheerily.

"Yes."

Snoop's reply was short, if not sweet.

"Like a fellow to come along?"

"No."

"Ahem! I'd like to speak to you, Snoop, if you've got a few minutes."

Snoop stopped.

"I'm not in such a hurry as all that," he said. "What is it?"

"Come and sit down a few minutes, then."

Snoop ungraciously followed the fat junior to a bench under the elms, where they could speak without danger of being overheard.

"I've been thinking of what you said to me in the study yesterday," Wally Bunter began diplomatically.

Snoop's frowning face relaxed a little.

"You don't think it's such a bad stunt as you did yesterday?" he asked.

"Well, it won't do any harm to talk it over," said Wally, still more diplomatically. "You don't want to rush into the thing, Snoop."

"I want to be careful, of course."

"That's it! Now, in the Rag yesterday Bob Cherry was talking to Smithy about something of this sort. It seems he saw a chap in talk with Jerry Hawke, and brought him home. He mentioned no names; but after what you said to me I think you were the chap."

"That's right."

"That man Hawke is rather a rorty character," hinted Wally.

"I know that. I wasn't looking for a polished specimen of virtue to make bets with."

"Hem! I suppose you weren't! But from what Bob Cherry said, it seems that Hawke was recommending a horse—in the Courtfield races—"

"Not exactly. He told me of a certain winner," explained Snoop. "It was simply for old acquaintance sake he gave me the tip; he doesn't stand to gain anything by it. I might have thought he was pulling my leg, you know, if he'd offered to lay money against the horse, after saying it was a cert. But he refused to do so."

"Smithy says—"

"Smithy knows all about it, of course!" said Snoop, with a sneer. "He used to dabble in that kind of thing. He doesn't know everything, though."

"Well, listen to what he said. He says Long John hasn't any chance—Long John is the blessed horse, isn't he? And Hawke knows it."

"That's rot!"

"If you lay money on that horse you'll lose," said Wally. "Hawke was spoofing you."

"I tell you he stood to gain nothing. I'm not going to make any bet with him at all," said Snoop impatiently.

"But he's going to introduce another man—"

"Yes, to oblige me."

"Well, he will go halves with the other man when he's got your money."

"What utter rot!"

"Isn't it as plain as anything?" exclaimed Wally.

"No, it isn't. They don't do business on those lines," answered Snoop obstin-

ately. "Hawke will tell me where I can see a bookie simply because I can't get hold of one without. As for Long John, he's all right. Hawke knows. He's had a tip from the trainer's stable, and he's laying money on that horse himself, he said."

"Gammon!"

"Oh, you know everything, of course!" growled Snoop. "You haven't been so jolly lucky in your own dealings, with all that you know."

"I've never—" Wally paused.

"You've never what?" said Snoop, with a grin.

"Nothing! Never mind about me. But Smithy knows a lot of that kind of game, Snoopey. He knows—"

"He thinks he knows everything, same as you seem to do," said Snoop. "I'm not such a fool. I shouldn't be taken in by a trick like that. I shall be jolly careful whom I hand my money to, I can tell you. Besides, I'm not going to put the money in the man's hands. Hawke said it would be enough if I gave a written promise to pay in case I lose—not that there's any danger of that. It's merely a matter of form."

"If you give such a paper you'll have to redeem it."

"If I lose, of course."

"Well, you will lose."

Snoop rose to his feet.

"I'm not doing this for the sake of any sporting rot," he said. "I'm doing it for my father's sake. It's no good giving me sermons. I'm going to do it. At the same time, I shall keep my eyes open."

"You're going to see Hawke now?" asked Wally, also rising.

"Why shouldn't I? In fact, I've got to; he's going to tell me of a bookmaker who'll take my bet. The same man who's booked his own bets, at ten to one against, too."

"Ten to one!" stuttered Wally. "You think a horse is going to win when a bookmaker is willing to lay ten to one against him?"

"Outsiders romp home sometimes."

"They jolly well don't romp home when the bookies lay ten to one against them. Bookmakers don't live on the money they lose."

"It happens sometimes; and the man who gets a hint in advance of a dark horse's real form stands to win a pot of money," said Snoop, with a greedy gleam in his eyes. "It was jolly good-natured of Hawke to tell me. You're prejudiced against him. He's not a bad sort, in his own way. Of course, the man cut up rusty when he wasn't paid his due. I don't see what else could be expected. I shall pay if I lose, and he knows it, and he will tell his friend so, and so I shall get fair treatment. You seem to think I'm a baby!"

"You haven't so much brains as a baby if you let those rotters, hand-in-glove, bag your money off you!" exclaimed Wally, losing patience.

"That's enough! Anyhow, it's my money, not yours!" snarled Snoop.

"You needn't be so jolly anxious about it, Bunter. I'm not going to lend it to you on the strength of a postal-order you're expecting."

And Snoop walked away to the gates, leaving Wally Bunter dumb.

"Fools and their money are soon parted!" murmured Wally, as he walked slowly towards the School House. "After all, I suppose it's none of my business. But one can't help being sorry for the silly ass. And there's his father, too!"

Wally Bunter was in a reflective mood for some time. In the Remove passage William Wibley bore down on him.

"Now, Bunter—" he began.

"Oh, buzz off, and give a chap a rest!" exclaimed Bunter. And he went into his study and slammed the door.

Wibley bawled through the keyhole: "I'll lick you to-morrow if you don't play up!"

"Rats!"

Wally Bunter was giving more thought to Sidney James Snoop than to Wibley and his promised licking. When Sidney James came in Wally looked for him, and affected not to see the icy expression on Snoop's face.

"Got in touch with the man you wanted?" he asked.

"Hawke's told me about him," answered Snoop defiantly. "Man named Lodgey. He's doing some business in Courtfield to-morrow—Saturday—and he's coming along to see me after dusk. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, as you're so jolly interested in my affairs!"

"Not coming near the school, surely!" exclaimed Wally, aghast.

"Well, not very near," said Snoop, with a grin. "I'm not a fool. I'm to cut out after gates to-morrow, and I shall find him at the stile down the lane. Easy enough, and jolly good-natured of him to come!"

"How will you know him—a stranger to you?" asked Wally, eyeing Snoop very curiously.

"He's going to whistle 'Tipperary' when anyone passes him. That's a signal," said Snoop, evidently rather elated at being mixed up in such mysterious proceedings. "You can come along with me and see him, if you like."

"Thanks; I don't like!"

Snoop glanced round, and lowered his voice.

"Look here, just for once in a way, why not have a little plunge?" he said.

"You've done me some good turns, and I'd like to do you one. You can get ten to one against Long John, and he's certain to win. Hawke showed me a letter from the trainer. It's been kept dark, but it's a dead certain thing. You can stretch a point for once, and make a lot of money—"

"I don't think I should be the one to make the money if I stretched a point," said Wally. "I shouldn't do it, anyway. I hope you won't go to-morrow."

"I shall certainly go!"

Snoop strolled away, leaving Wally Bunter with a thoughtful frown on his fat face. Wally had determined to save the foolish fellow from his own folly if he could, but it certainly did not look now as if he could.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Thrashing Bunter!

"WIB'S coming!"

Peter Todd put a grinning face into Study No. 7, and made that remark to Bunter

of the Remove.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Wally Bunter had gone to his study to get through some work. He had, in point of fact, forgotten all about Wibley and his roaring farce till Peter looked in to remind him.

The fat junior glanced up from the "Anabasis."

"Wibley?" he repeated.

"Yes; he wants you to rehearse this afternoon," said Peter.

"Tell him to go and eat coke, the silly ass!"

"You can tell him. He's coming along," grinned Peter. "Look here, Bunter, why won't you play the Fat Freak in Wib's farce? It would be no end of a part, and you would have all the limelight!"

"Because I'm not going to make myself ridiculous, you chump!" growled Wally.

"Why should you mind?"

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"Why?" howled Wally. "Would you do it?"

"Of course I wouldn't. But that's no reason why you shouldn't," said Peter. "It can't be called a dignified part, but it's quite as dignified as sneaking into other chaps' studies and bagging their grub, for instance. If you can do that in the Remove passage, why can't you do it on the stage? I think it's really ill-natured of you, Bunter."

"Oh, you can't think!" answered Wally. "Don't try, old chap. You'll only give yourself a headache."

"Why, you cheeky grampus—" began Todd indignantly.

Peter Todd was interrupted by the arrival of Wibley. About half the Remove came along with the president of the Dramatic Society, apparently in anticipation of fun.

But Wibley did not look as if he considered the matter funny. There was a frown of wrath upon his face, and his eyes were gleaming. He tramped into the study with a heavy tread.

"Bunter!" he shouted.

"Hallo, fathead!"

"I want you to rehearse this afternoon."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I've got your part ready for you, and you can put away that Greek rot and begin on your lines at once."

"Go it, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry from the doorway. The doorway was crammed with grinning Removites.

"Oh, clear off!" answered Wally.

"Will you take on the part?" demanded Wibley, breathing hard.

"No!"

"Now, look here!" said Wibley, as patiently as he could. "I've written that part specially for you, Bunter. It's a regular scream. You won't have to work at it, you fat slacker. You simply have to roll on the stage and play the silly goat, as you're always doing. The lines are easy, and if you forget some of them I'll let you gag—within reason. I can't say fairer than that. It isn't as if I were asking you to use your brains, when you haven't any. What do you complain of in the part?"

"Buzz off!"

"What?"

"Can't you see I'm busy?" asked Wally. "How can I mug up Xenophon, with you braying at me all the time?"

"Xenophon! I'll Xenophon you!" roared Wibley. "Bless Xenophon! Making out that you're working now—ch, you fat fraud?"

"I am working!"

"Don't be a funny idiot! Now, I'll read out the first lines to you—"

"Of the 'Anabasis'?"

"No!" yelled Wibley. "Of the farce!"

"You won't!" answered Wally Bunter.

"I can't listen to your twaddle, Wibley."

"My—my what?"

"Twaddle!"

"Twaddle?" said William Wibley dazedly. "He calls my play twaddle!"

"What do you call it?" demanded Bunter. "Bosh! if you like that better. Or rot! Or tosh! Lots of names for it. Take your choice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" roared Wibley. "I've come here to offer you an alternative. You take the part, and begin mugging it up at once, or I'm going to give you a thrashing!"

"Fathead!"

Wibley threw off his jacket. It was clear that the exasperated president was in deadly earnest.

"Wib, old man," interjected Harry Wharton, "that's too thick, you know."

"I'm going to squash him!"

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"Draw it mild, old nut!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I'm going to spiflicate him!"

"I don't think we can let you, you know," said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter is within his rights, though he's an irritating fat bouncer to cut up rusty like this at the wrong moment."

"I'm going to pulverise him!"

"Oh, let him go ahead!" said the fat junior cheerfully. "I'm quite ready to be squashed, spiflicated, and pulverised, if Wibley can do it."

He slipped off Billy Bunter's glasses and put up his fat hands as William Wibley strode towards him.

The crowd of juniors looked on with grinning faces. They remembered what unexpected form Bunter had displayed in a scrap with Angel of the Fourth, and some of them surmised that a surprise was in store for Wibley.

Wib was a good deal taller than Bunter, and he had a longer reach. The fat junior certainly did not look like having much chance.

"Look here, Bunter," said Wibley, pausing at the last moment. "Will you do the sensible thing?"

"Certainly!"

"You'll act in the play?"

"That wouldn't be a sensible thing, old scout. I wouldn't be found dead in it!"

"For the last time!" roared the incensed president of the Dramatic Society.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Bunter. "Play 'Hamlet,' and I'll take the title-role, if you like."

"You fat chump!"

"I say, that would be as funny as your farce, Wib," said Vernon-Smith. "Bunter as Hamlet would bring down the house."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's my offer!" said Bunter. "Take it or leave it!"

"Then you're going to be jolly well licked!" said Wibley. "And I'll lick you like this every day till you play up!"

"Go ahead!"

William Wibley went ahead. He fell on Bunter like a hurricane, smiting with terrific vim.

To his great astonishment his hands were knocked away, and not one of his terrific smites touched Bunter's grinning face at all.

And, to his still greater astonishment, a fat fist came out, landed on his chin like a coke-hammer, and almost lifted him off his feet.

Crash!

William Wibley measured his length on the study carpet.

"Well hit!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Poor old Wib!"

Dick Rake came in and picked Wibley up. The dramatic president was looking quite dizzy.

"Wha-a-at's that?" gasped Wibley.

"Sus-sus-something hit me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My knuckles, old chap," said Wally.

"Come and try 'em again!"

Wibley rubbed his chin, and blinked at Bunter. It was hard for him to realise that the Owl of the Remove had disposed of him so easily.

"Well, my hat!" he said. "What's the matter with the fat little beast? He used to be the biggest funk in the Remove."

"Better chuck it, Wib," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "There's nothing for you and Bunter to fight about, you know."

"I'm going to smash him!"

"But it's Bunter who's doing the smashing," said Bolsover major.

"Rats!"

William Wibley was not satisfied yet. He advanced to the attack again, but a good deal more cautiously this time. He was aware now that the fat junior was not to be spiflicated at one fell swoop.

But it skilled not, as a novelist would say.

All Wibley's efforts could not break through Wally Bunter's guard, and the fat face grinned at him provokingly from behind that impregnable defence.

There was a continuous chortle from the crowd in and outside the doorway. For it was plain to everybody but Wibley that the fat junior was simply playing with him, and could have sent him spinning at any moment if he had chosen.

Wibley attacked, and attacked and kept it up till he was fairly exhausted with his efforts to get at the fat Removite. He paused at last, nearly winded, astonished, and exasperated; and then Bunter made a forward move. He tapped Wibley's nose, and tapped his chest, and tapped his eye, and tapped and tapped incessantly, the amazed Wib finding his guard of no use at all. A final tap, after Wibley had been driven right round the study, sat him down on the carpet.

Wally Bunter smiled down at him, apparently as fresh as ever. Wibley could only sit and gasp.

"Finished?" asked Wally.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Do you mind if I get on with Xenophon now?"

"Wow!"

Rake picked up poor Wibley. He was not very much hurt, for the fat junior had been merciful, but he was quite

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spent and breathless. He leaned heavily on Rake, and gasped.

"Come on, old son!" said Rake. And he led Wibley away, amid yells of merriment. Wally Bunter looked round as he went.

"I say, Wib—"

"Ow!"

"Are you going to thrash me like this every day?" asked Wally Bunter innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

William Wibley did not answer that question. He limped away, leaning on Rake's sympathetic arm, and Wally Bunter sat down cheerfully to Xenophon.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley Catches On!

"HOW did Bunter know we had a cake?"

Vernon-Smith asked that question, in a tone of wonder, at tea-time in Study No. 4, and Tom Redwing laughed. A fat face and a glimmering pair of spectacles were looking in at the door.

Wally Bunter did not laugh. He snorted.

"How did you know, Bunt?" asked the Bounder, with an air of surprised interest. "It came by post, and I've only just unpacked it. Do you guess these things by black magic?"

"I never knew you had a cake, you silly ass!"

"You didn't know we had a cake?"

"No!"

"Then what have you come for?"

"Fathead!"

"He dropped in quite by chance, at tea-time, and didn't know we had a cake," murmured the Bounder. "I really think we ought to give Bunter the cake. He's earned it."

"Hang your cake, and bother you!" said Wally Bunter. "I haven't come to tea."

"He hasn't come to tea!" gasped the Bounder. "Redwing, old chap, help! Fan me, quick!"

"I suppose you think that's funny!" snorted Wally Bunter. "I came in to speak to you, Smithy."

"Without any designs on the cake?"

"No, you ass!"

"And somebody," said the Bounder, "said once that the age of miracles was past!"

"I want to speak to you," said the fat junior. "About what you were saying in the Rag the other day. About that horse Long John."

The Bounder laughed.

"Punting again?" he asked.

"Punting! What do you mean? Do you think I've ever punted on races, you chump!" exclaimed Wally indignantly.

"Well, all the Remove knows you did. You talked enough about it," answered Vernon-Smith.

"I haven't—I didn't—"

"He's losing his memory," said Tom Redwing, laughing.

Wally checked himself, remembering that he was Billy now—or, at least, was supposed to be Billy. It was really difficult to keep in mind all the manners and customs of Billy Bunter that he was now answerable for.

"Never mind that," he said. "I'm not punting now, anyway. I know a chap who's going to put money on Long John, and I want to stop him."

"Bunter as a moral reformer!" ejaculated the Bounder. "When are you going to give up springing these surprises on us, Bunt?"

"You said Long John couldn't win," said Bunter, unheeding.

"Well, he could, if all the field laid down and died on purpose," said the Bounder. "Not otherwise."

"You're sure of that?"

"The bookies are laying ten to one against him, and the race is on Tuesday," replied Vernon-Smith. "You can judge his chances by that."

"None at all, I suppose?"

"Less than none."

"Because, you see, if I stopped a chap putting money on him, and he won, the chap would be in no end of a bate," explained Wally. "I shouldn't care about that. But I don't know whether I've a right to do it. But I suppose I've a right to stop him from losing money he can't afford."

"That depends," answered the Bounder. "If he's a friend of yours, you can tell him from me that any chap who lays money on Long John will get left. It isn't as if there were the remotest chance. Anybody who gets him to back Long John is deliberately spoofing him."

"Well, you know something about these things, I suppose?" said Wally.

stared at him, a more amiable expression dawning on his face.

"Changed your mind?" he asked eagerly. "I've been altering the farce, but if you like to take the part, Bunter—"

"No fear!"

"Then get out!" growled Wibley. "Take your face away and bury it!"

"I want to speak to you—"

"Cut!"

"About the play—"

"Will you get out, or shall I take the poker to you?"

"I was rather interested in what you said the other day in the Rag," went on Bunter calmly. "About the part you were taking, you know. A good part, I think."

"Good—the way I should do it," agreed Wibley. "I couldn't let you have that part. You'd make a muck of it, you ass!"

The fat junior grinned. That was not what he had visited Wibley for.

"But you could do it rippingly!" he said.

"Of course I could!"



SAVING SNOOP.

"I've been there, dear boy."

"Thanks, Smithy! That's all I wanted to know."

And Wally Bunter quitted the study. "You've forgotten something, Bunter," called Smithy.

The fat junior looked in again.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The cake!"

Wally gave him a glare.

"Blow your cake!"

And he rolled away, leaving the Bounder chuckling.

The fat junior tapped at the door of No. 6, and looked in. William Wibley was there, pen in hand, with his brow corrugated. He was making some very necessary alterations in the roaring farce, for he had quite given up the idea of thrashing Bunter till he accepted the part designed for him. As Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh had remarked, the thrashfulness was a boot on the other leg.

He frowned at the fat junior in the doorway.

"Cut!" he said laconically.

Instead of cutting, Bunter came in and closed the door behind him. Wibley

"You're a jolly clever actor!" remarked Wally. "I've heard the fellows say that you've made up even as Mr. Quelch himself—"

"What do you mean? You've seen me do it?"

"I—I—yes, of—of course. Now, that character in the play," went on Wally hastily. "Sort of bookmaker character—something like Jerry Hawke—"

Wibley nodded, his manner thawing considerably. He was always ready to discuss his hobby; theatricals, in fact, were more than a hobby with him. They were a ruling passion.

"I'm really taking Hawke as my model," he explained. "It's a good part—the way I shall do it."

"I suppose you could make up in a character like that, and take anybody in, apart from theatricals?"

"Of course I could!"

"Well, I believe you could," said Wally Bunter. "Not like Jerry Hawke. That wouldn't do in this case. But something of the same kind; a sharper sort of fellow, with whiskers and a red

nose—good enough to pass after dusk, anyway."

Wibley stared at him.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded.

"Let's put a case," said Wally slowly. "Suppose a Greyfriars fellow was going out after dusk to-day to meet a man—"

"Eh?"

"A man recommended to him by Jerry Hawke—man named Lodgey—to make a bet with him—"

"Wha-at?"

"Suppose the chap doesn't know Lodgey by sight, but is to meet him at a certain spot, and Lodgey is to whistle 'Tipperary' as a signal—"

Wibley stared blankly.

"Well, suppose you got up in your character as a racing sharper, so that even a Greyfriars fellow wouldn't know you—you could, couldn't you?"

"Of course. But—"

"And suppose you met the chap I'm speaking of in the lane—"

"Eh?"

"Palmed yourself off on him as Lodgey—whom he doesn't know by sight—and booked the bet with him."

"What the thunder—"

"Then, when Long John loses the race, the silly ass will still have his money left," said Wally.

William Wibley's blank stare changed into a grin. He remembered what Bob Cherry had said in the Rag on the occasion when the Famous Five had been late for the Dramatic Society meeting. He began to understand.

"Who's the chap?" he asked.

"It's a secret, of course."

"That's understood."

"Snoop!" said Wally.

"Oh, the utter ass!" ejaculated Wibley. "The ten quid he saved up for his father—"

"Jerry Hawke and Lodgey are planning to bag five each," said Wally. "It's a shame to let them do it."

"A rotten shame!" said Wibley. "If the matter's as you say, it's easy enough to stop it." William Wibley rubbed his hands, and his eyes gleamed. "You've got more sense than I ever thought, Bunter!"

Wally grinned. Nobody, looking at the two juniors just then, would have suspected that they had been fighting a few hours before. Wibley had forgotten all about the trouble in Study No. 7. That was a very trifling affair in comparison with the chance of playing a part that was exactly after his own heart.

He rose from the table, forgetful of the roaring farce.

"Poor old Snoop!" he said. "They're going to skin him, of course. It would be a jolly good stunt to save his money for him against his will. If he's got his only quids on Long John he will feel pretty sick when the horse comes in eleventh."

"That's what I thought. If you could do it—"

"If!" said Wibley disdainfully. "I could do it on my head. I could make up as a man Snoop knows, let alone as a man he doesn't know. Now, let's have all the details." He rubbed his hands again. "What a lark! It's a good chance, too, of trying my new costume. I shall have to stick it on outside the school, though; wouldn't do to be seen ambling about here got up as a third-rate sharper—"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Lock the door," said Wibley. "I'll try on the things now. I'll make up, too, and you shall see me. It's a ripping stunt—simply ripping!"

During the next hour Rake and Micky Desmond and Morgan, who were Wibley's study-mates, applied in turn at the door, found it locked, and hammered and threatened in vain. All the satisfaction they got was the information that Wibley was making-up to practise a new character, and couldn't be interrupted.

Rake & Co. had to give it up, promising Wibley blood-curdling things when they could get to close quarters. But they did not see William Wibley again soon.

Shortly before dusk Wibley dodged out of the gates with a bag in his hand, and at call-over Mr. Quelch called his name in vain. Lines awaited William Wibley for missing call-over, but Wibley had probably forgotten the existence even of the august Quelch himself.

When William Wibley was engaged in a theatrical stunt, time and space vanished from his ken. Besides, when Mr. Quelch was taking roll-call in Big Hall, William Wibley no longer existed. He had been transformed into Mr. Lodgey, and, with his usual keenness, he was living the part so thoroughly that he was almost oblivious to the fact that he was not really Mr. Lodgey.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Taking the Plunge!

HARRY WHARTON stopped.

The captain of the Remove was taking a trot in the quad with Bob Cherry before setting to "prep." The two juniors were trotting along the path that ran along the school wall, when they almost ran into a shadowy figure there.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry in his powerful tones.

"Hush!"

"Snoop!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Don't yell!" said Sidney James Snoop savagely. "Do you want to bring the whole dashed school here?"

"Why not, if you come to that?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

Snoop grunted instead of answering that question.

"You're not breaking bounds, Snoop?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's my business!"

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"I walked you off from Jerry Hawke the other day," he said. "If you're breaking bounds—"

"I—I'm not!" said Snoop hurriedly. "I suppose I can take a walk in the quad if I like. I—I'm trying to think out a problem."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "No reason why you can't keep a civil tongue in your head, though."

"You—you startled me."

Wharton and Bob trotted on, neither of them placing much faith in Snoop's stammering denial. But it was no business of theirs to watch the reckless fellow, and they left him to his own devices.

Snoop's own devices led him to climb the school wall as soon as his chums of the Remove were gone, and to drop into the road. There he stood in the deep shadow of the wall for a few minutes, listening and palpitating. He gathered up his courage at last, and started down the road.

It was early evening, but the lane was very dark; only a few stars glimmering in the sky. Snoop's heart was beating hard, as he trudged along towards the stile, which was half-way to the village of Friardale. There Jerry Hawke's friend, Mr. Lodgey, was awaiting him—to book the bet on Long John—on which Snoop was to risk his ten pounds—and was absolutely certain—according to Mr. Hawke—to bag a hundred pounds.

The thought of such a sum as a hundred pounds dazzled Snoop, and blurred his judgment, such as it was.

Sidney James Snoop was sharp in his own rather shifty way; but he was not over-blessed with common-sense. And the fact that his intentions were good somehow gave him a feeling that he would have good luck.

His object was not selfish, for once; he wanted the money for his father, who was beginning life again after his service in the Army, with the ladder to climb from the very foot. A hundred pounds! With such a sum as that Corporal Snoop would have a chance of beginning well in civil life. And his surprise and pleasure when he found that his son had such a sum to hand him—the thought of that gave Snoop quite a glow.

That enticing prospect blinded him both to the shadiness of what he was doing, and to the crass folly of it. Yet in such folly he was far from alone. Snoop was not the only fellow who hoped and fancied that he could get something for nothing. The whole business of racing is founded upon such folly; and on the Continent hundreds of casinos flourish for the same reason that men, not mere schoolboys, believe that they have a chance of "getting rich quick" by out-sharping professional sharpers!

Snoop had faith in Mr. Hawke's "dead cert," not because Mr. Hawke was worthy of faith, but because it would be such a splendid thing if he won the hundred pounds. He did not, however, clearly realise that himself.

In that mood, the suggestion that Hawke and Mr. Lodgey might be acting in collusion only irritated him. He looked on that suggestion simply as an attempt to dash cold water upon his glowing dream of wealth.

A sharp, clear whistle came from the darkness ahead before he was half-way to the stile. Somebody was whistling "Tipperary."

Snoop stopped, peering ahead.

Anybody might be whistling such a tune, and he did not want to make a mistake; besides, he was not yet at the place of appointment.

A short, thick-set figure loomed up in the dusk, and Snoop eyed it. In the dim starlight he saw a man who looked about fifty, with reddish beard and whiskers, bushy eyebrows red nose and eyelids. The man wore a bowler-hat rakishly on one side of his head, and had an unlighted cigar stuck in the corner of his mouth. He wore an overcoat and a muffler.

The stranger stopped as he saw Snoop, and whistled a few bars. Snoop looked at him.

"I think I ain't makin' a mistake," said the man, in a thick, husky voice. "You expecting to meet a gentleman, sir?"

"Yes!" gasped Snoop.

"Name of Lodgey?"

"Yes."

"Fair freezing, waiting at the stile, sir. I reckoned I should meet you on the way if I walked in this here direction."

"I—I'm glad to see you, Mr. Lodgey!" faltered Snoop.

"It's a pleasure to me, sir, to meet a young gentleman like you," said Mr. Lodgey huskily. "P'r'aps I could offer you, sir, a drop from my flask this cold evening?"

Snoop shuddered.

"No—no, thanks!" he stammered.

"P'r'aps you'll hexcuse me, sir, it's cold!" said Mr. Lodgey.

He drew a flask from his overcoat and put it to his lips, keeping it there, tilted up, for a full minute.

Snoop watched him in silence.

"That's better!" said Mr. Lodgey, rather breathlessly, as he slipped the flask back into his pocket. "Sure you won't 'ave a drop?"

"Quite sure, thanks!"

"You're wise, sir," said Mr. Lodgey, with a nod. "Keep it at arm's-length if you can—it's different with a man of my age, of course. P'r'aps we'd better step aside from the road, Master Snoop, in case anyone should nose around."

"Yes—yes, please!"

"This 'ere way, sir."

Mr. Lodgey stepped on the grass beside the road, and Snoop followed him. A tree screened them, with its shadow, from the lane.

"Now, I understand as you want to do a little business on Toosday's races, strictly on the q.t., of course," said Mr. Lodgey, peering at the junior in the gloom. "I'm quite at your service, sir. I come along 'ere on purpose. What's your fancy, sir?"

"I—I suppose you will book a bet against any horse, in any race?" asked Snoop falteringly.

"Well, that depends," said Mr. Lodgey. "I ain't laying against the favourite for the three o'clock on Toosday, fr'instance. Not that the favourite is such a cert, p'r'aps, as folks suppose. There's talk of a dark 'orse in that race, 'though I don't know."

"A dark horse?" repeated Snoop.

"Well, they do say as a 'orse has been kept dark, and is certain to win," said Mr. Lodgey. "but, bless your 'eart, there's always talk of that kind. If a man has the information, it's a different matter."

"A man might get information straight from the stable?" suggested Snoop.

"'Course he might, if he knows the trainer."

Snoop drew a deep breath. Had not Mr. Hawke shown him a letter from the trainer—at all events, a letter which Mr. Hawke declared was from the trainer? Snoop was quite certain that he knew the name of that rumoured "dark horse."

"What's the 'orse you fancy?" asked Mr. Lodgey.

"I was thinking of—of Long John. I understand that the price is against him," said Snoop.

"Ten to one agin."

"I—I suppose that means he's considered an awful outsider?"

"In a way, yes; though, of course, he might turn out to be the werry dark 'orse folks are speaking of. A book-maker has to take his chance of that."

"Will you lay ten to one against Long John?" asked Snoop. "I—I mean, will you take my bet at ten to one against?"

"I'm your man, sir, though it's long odds, days afore the race, sir. But I'm a sportsman, and I'll take you on."

Mr. Lodgey took out a little book and a pencil, and made an entry, Snoop watching him eagerly.

"Now, there's the little matter o' the money, sir," said Mr. Lodgey. "'Course, I takes the word of a young gentleman like you. Still, as a matter of form, you can either put up your stakes in my 'ands, or give me a bit of paper. Being strangers, so far, it's better to be business-like."

"A—a sort of I O U?" said Snoop.

"That's it. If you win, I 'and it back to you along of your winnings—and if you lose, of course, you pay on it. A leaf out of your pocket-book will do."

Snoop took out his pocket-book, and then he hesitated. A remnant of common-sense forbade him to place his money in the man's hands; but without a written engagement of some sort it

was evident that the bet could not be booked. Mr. Lodgey could not be expected to place complete faith in the word of a stranger to him.

While Snoop was hesitating, Mr. Lodgey had recourse to his flask again, remarking that it was cold.

"Jest a few words, sir," said Mr. Lodgey, when he had finished with the flask. "Suthing like this: 'I promise to pay so much—you ain't named the amount yet—to Mr. Lodgey, in consideration of him laying—so much—for me on Long John for Toosday's three o'clock race.' Suthing like that. 'Ow much was you going to lay?'"

"Ten pounds!" gasped Snoop.

"My eye!" said Mr. Lodgey. "That's the precise amount that Mr. Hawke 'ave laid on Long John. I wonder—" He seemed to ruminate.

Snoop was seized with a sudden fear that Mr. Lodgey would refuse the bet. He scribbled the paper hastily, and signed and dated it.

"There it is!" he said eagerly. "You're booking the bet, Mr. Lodgey, aren't you?"

"I've said I would, and I will," answered Mr. Lodgey, taking the paper and striking a match to read it more easily. "That's all right. You've selected a 'orse with a long price, sir. Not that it 'urts me; if Long John gets 'ome I shall 'ave a tidy sum to pay out. But, bless your 'eart, not so much as I shall 'andle on the other gees wot I've laid agin! This is all right, sir. Hanything more I can do for you jest now?"

"No, thanks!" said Snoop. "I—I shall see you on Tuesday, I suppose?"

"Lemme see—the race is at Courtfield Park," said Mr. Lodgey thoughtfully.

"Yes, I can get along 'ere Toosday hevening. You'll see in the hevening paper, if you get one, whether Long John 'ave won or lost, and you'll act according. I may be late, you see, 'aving so much business on 'and that day. Make it a couple of hours later—or Wednesday, if you like—"

"No, no, I'll come out Tuesday night!" said Snoop eagerly. "I can manage it up to nine o'clock, if you like."

"Say nine o'clock, then, Toosday," said Mr. Lodgey. "That's settled. Good-night to you, young gentleman!"

"Good-night!" said Snoop.

He ran back breathlessly all the way to Greyfriars. When he was in the School House again Wibley of the Remove had not yet come in; but Snoop was not giving a thought to Wibley of the Remove.

When William Wibley did come in at last, he received a lecture and a hundred lines from Mr. Quelch.

And for quite a long time that cold evening a gentleman of the name of Lodgey stood leaning against the stile in Friardale Lane, smoking cigarette after cigarette, and wondering why Jerry Hawke's young friend did not come to keep his appointment!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Joys of a Plunger!

SKINNER and Stott, who were Snoop's study-mates in No. 2, found Sidney James rather trying the next day or two. Snoop seemed to be in a state of nerves; and Skinner confided to Stott his private opinion that Snoop had been backing gee-gees again.

"The silly ass had ten quid, you know," Skinner remarked. "I wondered how long he would keep it. Now I know."

And Stott grinned assent.

Harry Wharton took a rather more friendly interest in the matter. Since

seeing Snoop in company with Jerry Hawke, Wharton had concluded that the wretched fellow was falling into his old ways again, and he was a little concerned about it. He was not exactly friendly with Snoop; but he had been glad to see him on a better path. On Monday, after lessons, Wharton found him reading a letter by the corridor window, with a bright face, and he stopped to speak.

Snoop glanced at him with a smile, in an unusually good-humour.

"From my pater," he said. "I'm going to see him this week."

"Glad to hear it!" said Harry. "Is he coming here?"

Snoop's face clouded a little.

"No; he won't come to the school," he answered, "owing to—to— Well, you know all about it, Wharton. It would be awkward for him to come here; you know where he was before he became a soldier. I'm going out to meet him when he comes. I shall be jolly glad! I haven't seen him since he was in Flanders. He was in Cologne after that; he's been in Germany. Isn't it ripping that it's all over, and he's come out safe?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry. "That's how I felt about my uncle—though he's still in the Army of Occupation. Snoop, old chap, if you don't mind my mentioning it—"

He paused.

"Go ahead!" said Snoop cheerily.

"It came out about the money you were saving up for your pater," said Harry. "I thought it was jolly decent of you. Of course, it's not my business, but wouldn't it be a good idea for you to keep clear of a man like Jerry Hawke? If you lost the tin—"

"I'm not going to lose it!" said Snoop, in a rather dogged way. "It's too late to think about that, anyway. Ten pounds isn't enough. I had a chance of increasing it."

"A bird in hand is worth a lot in the bush!" said Harry.

"It's worth risking something for a hundred pounds. Besides, it isn't really a risk."

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Wharton, with a jump.

Snoop bit his lip.

"Well, you know now," he said. "You needn't think I've been playing the goat again. It's not that; I've clucked that for good! I've done it to raise the money for my pater. It will help to set him up; he's got everything against him."

Wharton looked at him, feeling only compassion for him. He knew well enough that it was impossible for Snoop to turn his ten pounds into a hundred pounds without hearing any of the details of the transaction. There was a terrible blow impending over the wretched fellow.

"You've done it?" he asked slowly.

"I've laid the money," said Snoop, half-defiantly.

"I wouldn't build on it too much, if I were you," said Harry.

"I am building on it," answered Snoop, almost feverishly. "I daren't think of losing it. Besides, it's impossible. You see, the horse has been kept dark; only Hawke had information from the trainer. I haven't laid the money with Hawke—quite another man. See?"

Wharton saw—more clearly than Snoop did!

"The bookie didn't know anything about Long John's form, though he's heard a rumour of a dark horse being kept for the race. It was almost like rooking him to get him to book the bet at all. But that's his business, of course. I can't afford to think of him."

"I don't think you need worry about the bookie, Snoop; bookies can generally look after themselves."

Snoop gave the captain of the Remove a quick, suspicious glance.

"That means you think I'm going to lose?" he exclaimed. "You don't know anything about these things, Wharton. You've always been too goody-goody to know much about life, as I do."

Wharton smiled. "Well, I don't know whether I ought to wish you good-luck, but I do!" he said. "I'm afraid you don't know so much about the thing as you think, kid. I only hope you won't lose the tenner." "Oh, that's impossible!"

Wharton nodded, and went on his way. Snoop walked slowly away to his study with a worried, wrinkled brow. He could not understand at first why the captain of the Remove had answered him so kindly; he knew well enough Wharton's opinion of such dingy blackguardism. But the reason soon occurred to his mind—Wharton knew that he would lose his money, and knew what a shock it would be to him.

But he couldn't know—he could only think so, Snoop told himself savagely. What did Wharton know about it? About as much as Bunter, who was so cocksure. He passed Wally Bunter in the Remove passage, and surprised that plump youth with an angry scowl.

Snoop went restlessly into his own study, where Skinner and Stott met him with grinning looks. Ever since he had handed that written paper to "Mr. Lodgey," Snoop had been in a state of nerves. He was confident—he repeated to himself a hundred times that there was no cause for doubt—and yet, somehow, black and haunting doubts would rise. People did have terrific strokes of luck sometimes—why shouldn't he? He had even read in the paper once of a man breaking the bank at Monte Carlo. Smithy had said that that was only a cunning advertisement; but Smithy was a cynical beast. Long John was going to win on Tuesday; he must win—he should win—apparently because Snoop simply dared not think of his losing!

"Are you going to buy a motor-car out of it, Snoopey?" asked Skinner, with a wink at Stott.

Snoop started. "Eh, what?" he stammered. "Out of what, Skinner?"

"Out of the plunder, when you've dished the bookies!" chuckled Skinner. "I'll tell you what, Snoopey. I'll give you three farthings for your winnings, in advance, and chance it!"

Snoop strode out of the study again, and slammed the door after him savagely. Skinner and Stott roared.

That evening seemed endless to Snoop. He was an object of some curiosity in the Remove, though he did not observe it.

Even Wibley, who had hardly ever spoke to him, seemed strangely interested in him now; looked at him often, and spoke to him several times. Snoop did not think anything about it, however. He little dreamed what it was that interested William Wibley in him for once.

He thought the evening would never end; and when bed-time came he could not sleep. To-morrow was Tuesday; at three o'clock his fate was to be decided at Courtfield Park. Would the morrow ever come?

It came, and found Snoop pale and worn from worry and want of sleep. In the Form-room, during the morning, Mr. Quelch glanced at him several times.

Snoop did not notice it—he noticed nothing; his mind was engrossed by almost feverish thoughts.

He would not know the result of the race till he saw the evening paper, and the evening papers at Courtfield were

rather late—too late for him to fetch one and get back in time for call-over.

He could break bounds, and then again later to meet Mr. Lodgey; but it was risky—too risky.

After morning lessons, when he was thinking it out, Wally Bunter spoke to him.

"Gosling's going into Courtfield this afternoon," he said.

"Hang Gosling!" was Snoop's irritable reply.

"I've asked him to bring an evening paper."

"Oh!"

"I'm going to call at his lodge for it, and if you hang around somewhere I'll hand it to you," said the fat junior.

Snoop gave him a look of real gratitude.

"I say, Bunter, old chap, that's jolly decent of you!" he said. "I was worried about that. Of course, I'm anxious to know; not—not that there's any doubt, of course."

Wally nodded, and left him. How he got through the afternoon's

looked on with unseeing eyes for a few minutes, and then wandered aimlessly away again. How was he going to endure his gnawing anxiety till the paper came? He began to understand now how it was that gambling led to drink.

What a fool he had been to risk his money—money saved bit by bit, week after week! Yet it wasn't a risk; it was a certainty. If he lost—if he lost! The thought came into his dizzy brain of repudiating the paper he had given to Mr. Lodgey—adding dishonesty to the rest. But that was only for a moment. He knew he could not repudiate the paper. What was written there was enough to get him expelled from his school, if he provoked the bookmaker to revenge.

If he lost he had to redeem that paper with hard cash. But he hadn't lost—he wasn't going to lose. Would the paper never come? Like an unquiet ghost, he wandered into the Remove passage. From Study No. 6 there came a sound of laughter. Wibley, very likely, amusing his study-mates with some of his impersonations. Confound Wibley! Confound them all! Snoop hated the merry juniors in No. 6 at that moment. They could laugh and joke, while he was feeling like this!

He wandered out into the quadrangle again, in the gathering dusk. Had Gosling come back yet? Bunter was lounging by the porter's lodge, evidently waiting for his paper. Snoop drifted under the dark elms, and waited. He pressed his burning brow to the cold trunk of a tree to cool it.

And people gambled for pleasure, he thought, with a kind of wonder. What pleasure! What fools! Would the paper never come?

"Snoop!"

A fat figure loomed up in the gloom. Snoop snatched the newspaper from Wally Bunter's hand.

"A light!" he breathed. "Have you got a match?"

Wally turned on the light of his electric torch without a word. In the bright light Snoop searched the paper. He found the racing column; he found "Latest Results" in the stop-press space. "Courtfield Park. Three o'clock. Tiny Tim, Peter Pan, Full Moon." What did it mean? Where was Long John, the horse that had won the race?

"Long John!"

The paper danced before Snoop's eyes. There was the name at last. "Also ran: Mead Maid, Lovelace, Peck o' Trouble, Prince, and Long John."

Also ran!

The paper danced before Snoop's nerveless fingers. He gave a low, faint groan, and reeled against a tree. He felt as if he was fainting.

Wally Bunter's strong grasp closed on his arm.

"Buck up, Snoopey!"

"Lost!" whispered Snoop. "Lost! Do you understand? I've lost! I've got to pay Lodgey. I daren't swindle him if I wanted to! Lost! Oh, what a fool—what a fool! And my—my father—"

He choked.

"Buck up!" said Wally. "It's not so bad as you think, old son. Pull yourself together, and come in."

Snoop made no resistance. He felt so weak that he could hardly walk as Bunter led him to the House. Harry Wharton & Co. joined them in the hall, gathering round the wretched Snoop to shield his pallid face and trembling figure from observation. Like a fellow in a dream, Snoop found himself in the Remove passage outside Study No. 6.

"Come in!" called out Wibley's voice as Wharton knocked; and Sidney James Snoop was marched into the study.

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work Snoop never knew. His mind and his heart was on the race-course at Courtfield Park. He was almost sick with anxiety and suspense.

He blundered hopelessly in class, and was sharply called to order by his Form-master; but he almost laughed when Mr. Quelch rated him. Form-work seemed to him infinitely little just then—a mere worry, without sense or meaning in it. At three o'clock, when Long John was running in the race, his heart beat almost to suffocation. Three-ten—three-fifteen; the race was run now. Had Long John won or lost? Of course, he had won—he must have won! What sheer cruelty it was to keep him in class that afternoon when he might have seen Long John win with his own eyes! Would that horrible afternoon never end?

Snoop could have cried with relief when the lessons were over at last, and the Remove were dismissed, it was not nearly time yet for Gosling to return from Courtfield; but Snoop haunted the vicinity of the porter's lodge. But he could not keep still. He walked down to the footer-ground, where Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a ball about. He

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Snoop!

"L ODGEY!"

Snoop started back, wondering whether, in the shock he had received, his senses were forsaking him.

Rake and Morgan and Micky Desmond were in the study; but of Wibley, whose voice he had heard, there was no sign. But in the armchair sat a figure he knew. He had seen it only once before, in the dusk, but he knew it.

Bob Cherry closed the door when all the juniors were inside. The Famous Five were in the secret now, as well as Wibley's study-mates.

"Long John has lost the race, you chaps," said Wally Bunter.

"Not really?" murmured Rake.

"Lost, 'as he?" said Mr. Lodgey.

"Blow me tight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop looked round dazedly. How had Lodgey come there? How came he in Rake's study, evidently on friendly terms with these fellows? Snoop remembered the merry laughter he had heard as he passed that study an hour before. Had Lodgey been there then?

"So Long John's lost," said Mr. Lodgey. "Well, 'ere I am, to collect my little debt, Master Snoop. I've got a bit of paper of yours."

"Cut it short," said Wally Bunter.

"Can't you see he's feeling bad?"

"You leave a cove alone, Master Bunter. If it ain't convenient to the young gentleman to settle on the nail I ain't the man to press 'im. F'rinstance, there's his paper, and he's welcome to light his cigar with it!"

Mr. Lodgey tossed a paper on the table, and Snoop's dizzy eyes recognised the paper he had signed.

"Put it in the fire, Snoop," said Harry Wharton.

Snoop glanced at the red-nosed book-maker.

"Go it," said Mr. Lodgey. "Anything to oblige a sporting young gent who's been backing also rans."

Lost in wonder, doubtful whether he was on his head or his heels, Snoop thrust the tell-tale paper into the fire.

"What what does this mean?" he stammered. "What—how—"

"Chuck it, Wib," said Bob Cherry.

Snoop stared round. He could not see Wibley.

The next moment his eyes became fixed in a fascinated gaze on Mr. Lodgey. That gentleman was taking off his beard and whiskers! Snoop stood petrified. The moustache followed, and the wig. Then the overcoat, revealing Etons underneath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Lodgey. "You look surprised, Snoopey."

"Wibley!" shrieked Snoop.

"What do you think?" said William Wibley complacently.

"Then—then was it—was it—was it—"

"Snoop stammered.

"Yes, dear boy, it was me you met in the lane the other evening," assented Wibley. "Bunter's idea, but I carried it out. Did I do it well?"

"Good heavens!" muttered Snoop dazedly. "Then—then I never made any bet at all!"

"Rather lucky for you you didn't, considering what a terrific winner Long John is," grinned Bob Cherry. "You ass, you've never seen the precious Lodgey at all! And if you've got any sense you never will. Mr. Lodgey wouldn't have let you off like this, I think."

Snoop began to understand at last. Wibley was rubbing the grease-paint from his face, and grinning at the same time with evident self-satisfaction. Snoop joined in the laugh.

"But—but where was Lodgey?" he gasped. "Where—"

"At the stile, old top!" chortled Wally Bunter. "Wib met you on this side of

the stile, you know—whistling 'Tipperary.'"

"And Lodgey?"

"Probably waited a good while—may still be waiting, for all I know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop laughed, too. He was not worried about Mr. Lodgey and his unavailing wait; he was only immensely relieved that his ten pounds had not to be paid to that sporting gentleman.

"I—I say, I—I suppose I—I ought to thank you!" he stammered.

"Don't mench, dear boy," answered Wibley. "This is jolly good practice for me. I shall make this part the leading part in the farce, I think, and I can do without Bunter. I'll put you in, if you like, Snoop, as a fat-headed noodle backing dead certs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and I—I haven't lost my ten pounds!" gasped Snoop. "Oh, I—I say, I'm jolly glad you did this! I—I'm jolly glad! You can laugh as much as you like; I don't care. I'm jolly glad!"

Sidney James Snoop looked much brighter the next day.

The narrow escape of his ten pounds had cured him of all desire to turn it into a hundred by backing horses. He was only anxious now to keep it safe till he should see his father.

"It's the last time," he told Wally Bunter. "I wouldn't go through that again for a thousand quids! You're a blessed spoofer, Bunter, and Wib's another; but I don't think any chap was ever so jolly glad to have been spoofed!"

Which was a very happy result of Wally's Wheeze.

(DON'T MISS "HOSKINS' CHANCE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)



Goggs Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Frankingham, which has been burned down. Goggs, the real leader of the four, ventriloquist, ju-jitsu expert, and all-round sportsman, looks particularly simple, and has before this played upon that simplicity to take in others. Blount, Trickett, and Waters, his chums, agree to help him in spoofing the Rylcombe fellows; and the campaign begins when Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and the two Woottons meet the new boys at the station. On the way to the school Goggs mystifies these four by his ventriloquism.

The four new boys are taken to see the Head, and on their way back are ambushed by Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe, three fellows of a very different sort from Gordon Gay & Co. But they get no change out of the Frankingham quartet. Goggs again uses his ventriloquial powers to take them in. The four are assigned together to Study No. 3, and are also told that they will share Dormitory 29 with Larking, Carpenter, Snipe, Tadpole—who imagines himself an artist of great

ability—and Weird, who talks in rhyme. Snipe has gone to Mr. Adams to be caned for making complaints about the sugar. The other juniors are discussing it in the quad. (Now read on.)

A Dog With a Bad Name (Continued).

"I DON'T see what Delamere wanted interfering!" growled Larking.

"You wouldn't!" snapped Gordon Gay.

"Well, we don't get much sugar—"

"You silly ass, Larking! How can you have much out of a measly half-pound a week?" demanded Monk. "And some of that has to be kept back for puddings, of course."

"The puddings ain't our bizney, Monkey," said Carpenter.

"They jolly well would be if you didn't get them, though!"

"Snipe was a potty lunatic; but, all the same, I don't see that they ought to crib our sugar to put into the giddy puddings!" said Larking, scowling at Monk.

It was not at all the usual thing for Frank Monk to remind anyone that he was the headmaster's son. The position gave him no special privileges, and he had no wish that it should give him any. But this sort of thing was a slur upon the man who was, after all, his father as well as his headmaster, and he resented it.

"If you or anyone else says that there's any rotten wangling with the rations, or that everyone doesn't get his fair whack, I'll punch his silly head!" said Monk hotly.

"Come away, Carp!" sneered Larking. "We'd forgotten that it was all in the family, and that anything we say may be used as evidence against us!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Carpenter uneasily.

It often happened that Carpenter was not willing to go the whole way with Larking and Snipe. Indeed, it was distinctly a bad thing for him that those two were his chums. But that was his affair; and presumably they suited him better than more decent fellows did.

"If you mean anything at all, I should like to know just what exactly you do mean, Larking!" said Monk.

"Haven't I said it plainly enough for you?"

"Chuck it, old top!" Gordon Gay said. "That confounded cad isn't worth taking any notice of, you know!"

Monk took no notice of his chum.

"Now then, Larking!" he snorted.

Larking shuffled his feet uneasily. Twenty or thirty pairs of eyes were upon him. To draw back was to show the white feather; and, with all his faults, he was no coward.

But he did not want to go on. He had no faith in his accusations. They were hardly that, indeed—cheap sneers, rather.

"I've nothing more to say!" he muttered.

"But you stick to what you said, I suppose?"

"Yes, I do, then! You can't expect me to knuckle under to you like that."

"Monk!"

The call seemed to come from the School House porch.

"Yes, Delamere?" answered Frank Monk.

"Come here, will you?"

Monk gave Larking an angry glare, and went.

Bags looked at Goggs.

The simple face of Johnny Goggs looked more simple than ever, if that were possible. But the lid of Goggs' left eye came down ever so slightly, and Bags knew that if Monk found Delamere in the porch, or anywhere near it, the fact would be the merest accident. For it was not the Rylcombe captain who had called Monk, though the voice had sounded to everyone unmistakably his.

Snipe came out at this moment. His hands were pressed under his armpits, and his unpleasant face was contorted with pain.

It was evident that Delamere's faith in Mr. Adams had been justified.

"What were ye after gettin', Snipey?" inquired Nicky O'Donnell.

"Three on each hand, the beast!" groaned Snipe. "Ow! He did lay it on, too!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Wootton major contemptuously.

"What for? What did I do?" hooted Snipe.

"That sickening rot about the sugar—"

"But I never said a word to Adams about it! I never mentioned—"

"Oh, come off it!" said Carpenter roughly. "It wasn't five minutes before that you were grousing to us, you fabricator!"

"I know I was. That's another thing altogether. Anyone can grouse; lots of fellows do. Why, Gay said the other day that the pudding wasn't fit for pigs!"

"I believe I did," admitted Gordon Gay.

"But you needn't object to my being so kind as to grumble in your interests, Snipe. Did you like the pudding that day?"

"No, I didn't. But what's that to do—"

"Did you think it was fit for you to eat?"

"No; but—"

"Q.E.D. No further argument on the pudding question necessary. We will return to our muttons—otherwise, the sugar subject."

"I've had enough of that subject!" Snipe snarled. "If I were to die next minute, I'd swear that I never said that to Adams! You can believe me or not, as you like!"

"I don't like!" said Wootton minor frankly.

"You've told too many of 'em, Snipey," remarked his brother.

"We all heard you," said Carpenter.

But Carpenter looked a trifle shaken in his certainty.

Snipe was not by any means given to strict adherence to the truth. But if he were lying now he was acting his part well. He seemed really indignant.

"For my part," struck in Goggs unexpectedly. "I believe Snipe. Nay, I will go farther. I am quite sure that Snipe never spoke those words."

"It was Snipe's voice," said Gordon Gay.

"How can you be sure, you silly chump?" asked Carboy.

"Oul, oul! Zat is ze question. Moi, I could make ze oath zat it was ze voice of Snipe," said Mont Blanc, the French junior.

"Oh, you shut up, Froggy!" muttered Snipe.

"Goggles is an ass, and, anyway, he doesn't know Snipey's voice as well as we do," said Lane.

At this moment Frank Monk came back, looking out of temper.

"You chaps all heard Delamere sing out to me?" he said.

There was a chorus of assent.

"Well, he says he didn't. I found him at last; but he wasn't in the porch, and he

hadn't been near it, he said. Some rotter's playing tricks!"

He glared round. His eyes fell upon the face of Goggs; but that face looked far too simple and innocent for its owner to be suspected of such a trick.

Monk looked at Bags next. Bags met his gaze readily enough.

"Have I a smut on my nose?" he asked.

"No, fathead!"

"You looked at me as if I might have, that's all. I shouldn't like to go in to classes with a smut on my nose, you know. Adams seems a bit particular."

"Brrrr!" growled Monk. "Look here, I'm hanged if I don't believe that one of you new bounders is a ventriloquist!"

"That's it!" shrilled Snipe. "That would explain—"

"Don't need any explanation in your case," said Wootton major. "Plain lying accounts for that. But it is a rum bizney that we should all have heard Delamere's voice, and yet it shouldn't have been Delamere."

"He doesn't lie," added Wootton minor.

"Are you a ventriloquist, Blount?" demanded Monk.

"I'm not," answered Bags at once. "But I should very likely say the same thing if I was, you know. A chap doesn't give away a secret like that so easily."

"Are you, Trickett?"

"Oh, don't ask me! Ask Goggles!" replied Tricks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a bold stroke on the part of Tricks; but it paid, as a bold stroke so often does.

The roar of laughter that greeted it showed that most of those present regarded it as an excellent joke.

And it really did seem absurd to suggest that the meek and solemn Goggs could possibly have played such japes as had been played.

Then Goggs spoke.

"At the moment when Monk was called," he said, "he was about to biff—I believe biff is the word—if not, I am open to correction—he was about, I say, to biff Larking. If anyone played a trick to prevent the impending biffing of Larking, logic would seem to suggest that the person who played such a trick objected to that biffing. I should like to make it clear that no such objection exists on my part. Though not strong or big enough to biff—I do hope I have the correct word—Larking myself, I could see him biffed by anyone else without a single throb of pity or emotion. I desire always to be candid and—er—plain—"

"Well, you are that!" said Gordon Gay critically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Goggs looked pained. He made an attempt to pick up the broken thread of his speech. But what more he tried to say was drowned in howls of laughter.

The Fourth Form refused to take Goggs seriously. As for crediting so complete a solemn ass with a talent for ventriloquism and a taste for japing, that would have seemed to them ridiculous.

But Monk did not laugh. The bell went just then; but as Larking moved away Monk tapped him on the shoulder.

"I haven't settled with you yet, Larking!" he said grimly.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Larking.

"What did you send Monkey off for, Goggles?" whispered Bags.

"I did not want a row between him and Larking through me," replied Goggs. "It was I who vented the sugar complaint publicly; but I had no wish to hurt Monk's feelings."

"What about Larking's, though? Monkey would have hurt them."

"I propose before long to do something in the way of hurting Larking's feelings myself, my dear Bagshaw. I will confess to your private ear that I have no great affection for Larking."

"Jolly lot of confessing to my private ear—I don't think! Why, you told everyone that!"

"Did I, Bagshaw? Dear me, my excessive candour will bring me into trouble if I am not more prudent! Do you think that he thought that I really meant it?"

"Sure he did! Didn't you see him scowl?"

"Will he—er—assault me, my dear Bagshaw, do you think?"

"Not knowing, can't say, Goggles dear. But I can tell you one thing—he will be jolly sorry for himself if he does!"

Others were talking as they went in.

"It's dashed queer, by gad!" said Lacy to Carpenter. "Did Snipe—"

"Oh, old Snipey's such a liar that his denying it goes for nothing," said Carpenter carelessly. "All the same—"

"Thanks, Carpenter!" breathed Snipe in the ear of his crosby. "I sha'n't forget that!"

For once Snipe had been telling the truth. But his fate was only another proof of the correctness of the adage about the dog with a bad name.

Not even his own chums believed him.

A Licking for Larking!

"MONK, my dear fellow!" said Goggs, as the Fourth tramped out of their Form-room, classes over for the morning.

"Well?" snapped Frank Monk, who had not yet regained his usual good temper.

"I wish to ask your advice on a really important subject."

"Oh, rats! I've no time to waste on you just now."

"But it is really important—most important, my dear fellow," said Goggs, in a pained tone.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Monk, haltingly.

Gordon Gay and the two Woottons and Lane and Carboy all halted, too, and all grinned. The contrast between the solemn and pedantic Goggs and the impatient Monk, yearning to get at Larking and call him to account, tickled them.

"It is about my grandmother," said Goggs.

"Oh, boil your grandmother!" returned Monk crossly.

Goggs looked even more pained.

"But that," he said, "would not be agreeable to my feelings—or, indeed, to hers."

"Well, don't boil her, then! Fry her instead! I don't care. Only don't worry me about her."

And Monk passed on.

Goggs buttonholed Gordon Gay just as he also was passing on; and the Woottons and Carboy and Lane stayed to listen. Monk went after Larking; but there was no need for them to go with him, and they expected to get more entertainment out of Goggs than they were likely to get out of a scrap between Frank Monk and Larking. They fancied that Larking would refuse to fight, indeed.

"My dear Joy—"

"Gay, if you please, Moggs!"

"Oh, pardon me; my silly mistake. I am always making them. Will you allow me to point out, Joy—er—Gay, that it—I mean Pay—that my name is—"

"Walker!" put in Bags, grinning.

"No, not Walker—er—where was I?"

"Blessed if I know!" replied Gordon Gay.

"Oh, about my dear grandmother; I have it now. I want your advice, Gay."

"Proceed, Walker!"

"Not Walker—Goggs. It is a homely name, but my face is homely, so that there is about it a certain fitness. Must I apply to the Head for permission before I write to my grandmother to ask her to come and live here?"

"You're going to write and ask her, anyway?"

"Such is my intention, my dear Gayful—I should say Joyful."

"No, you shouldn't!"

"You think not? You regard it as unnecessary?"

"I regard it as beastly cheek!"

"Really, I fear that I fail to follow you."

"Calling me 'Joyful,' I mean."

"Oh! Now I understand. But that is a matter of absolutely no importance. The question is whether I shall apply to—"

"We've heard all that, thanks. I shouldn't bother, if I were you. As you have made up your mind to write and ask her in any case, what's the odds what the Head thinks?"

"But I should desire to consider his feelings, my dear—"

"If you say 'Joyful' again I'll slay you! Don't bother about the Head's feelings. I don't suppose he really has any, and I'm jolly sure he won't bother about yours when you're sent up to him."

And Gordon Gay wrenched himself free and passed on, followed by his grinning chums.

Goggs turned to Bags.

"I fear, my dear Bagshaw," he said, with a heavy sigh, "that Gay is a person of hasty

temper, not too plentifully endowed with the shining virtue of patience. But never mind that. He will learn to appreciate me in time, I hope. I will now go and write to my grandmother. If you want me, you will find me in the study which we occupy jointly with Trickett and Waters."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled the dozen or so Fourth-Formers who had waited long enough to hear this speech.

"Blount, mon, does that daft idiot really think that he'll be allowed to have his granny here?" asked Donaldson.

"You heard what he said," answered Bags. "And you could see that he meant it, surely?" added Tricks.

"She'll come, too!" said Wagtail.

"Well, it licks a' that ever I heard in my life!" said the Scots junior.

"It fairly bangs Banagher!" Nicky O'Donnell remarked.

"Goggs is a corker, whatever," said Morgan.

And the trio followed Gordon Gay & Co. "I can't make out what you chaps see in a silly ass like that," said Carker to Bags and his chums.

"No, I don't suppose you can," replied Bags, who had already made up his mind about Carker.

"Of all the silly chumps about, Goggs is the biggest, there's no doubt,"

said Jasper Weird.

"Really, Weird, I do not in the least agree with you," said Tadpole. "I consider Goggs an extremely nice fellow, with a truly eloquent way of expressing himself. I wish that he had come into our study."

"If my objections you should flout, And ask him there, I shall go out."

Weird said, scowling.

"Pardon me if I say that I should not sorrow exceedingly for that, Weird," answered Tadpole. "Blount, I think I will go and reason with our friend Goggs. In the simplicity of his nature he credits all that is told him. But we, who are more experienced, know that the Head would certainly never consent to the installation of aged female relatives as inmates here; and I think that it is our bounden duty to set him right on the subject."

"Cut along, old top!" said Bags.

"And take your muzzle with you," Tricks said.

"Muzzle? I really do not grasp your meaning," replied Tadpole.

"You'll want it if Goggs is to make you hear anything he has to say; and he'll want it if you're to make him hear anything. But never mind. Talk both at once, if you like, and use up all the long words in the die. We can get along with the short ones."

Tadpole went off, pondering that speech. By the time he reached No. 3 it began to dawn upon him that Trickett might have meant that both he and Goggs were rather long-winded.

But Tadpole regarded that as a foolish mistake.

Bags, Tricks, Wagtail, and the rest passed out into the quad. They were just in time to see quite a procession leaving the gates.

Mont Blanc dropped back to join them.

"Zey are going to fight," said the French junior, showing his teeth in a wide smile. "Larking, he have screw up his vat you call plucks, an' he vill fight viz Monkey!"

"More fool he, by gad!" said Lucy. "Monkey's sure to lick him!"

"I don't see what else he could do," Bags said. "Monkey meant business, and Larking couldn't take it lying down."

"Are you backing Larking?" asked Carker.

"No jolly fear! I hope Monkey will knock him into a cocked hat! Why should you fancy I was on the rotter's side?"

"Well, you're in his dormitory."

"That's no reason at all," Tricks said. "Or, if it is, it's a reason the other way."

"Well, Monkey won't get off without being hurt!" Carker said sullenly. "Larking's no duffer, anyway!"

The fellows in front turned into a field screened by high hedges and not overlooked by any of the windows of the school. When Bags and those with him came up Frank Monk already had his jacket and waistcoat off; and Larking, plainly in less haste, was taking off his.

Gordon Gay was acting as Monk's second, and Carpenter seconded Larking. Wootton major held the watch.

"Before you fellows pile in," said Gay. "I've a word or two to say. It won't stop you, I suppose, but it may show you that you're silly asses to fight."

"Hurry up and say it!" snapped Monk. "But it won't make any odds!"

"It certainly won't!" said Larking, with a savage sneer. "So you may as well save your breath, Gay, for you can't save your dear pal from the hiding he's booked for!"

Gay looked hard at him, and breathed hard through his nose.

He had been going to suggest that a few words of apology could settle the matter.

To Gay, sunny-tempered and good-natured, it hardly seemed that what Larking had said was worth fighting about. No one but Frank Monk had taken it at all seriously; and the chances were that Larking had not meant it seriously. It was the kind of cheap sneer he often indulged in.

But Gay had no doubt whatever of his chum's ability to lick Larking; and now it seemed to him that getting well licked might do Larking good.

"On second thoughts I'll say nothing," he said. "Everybody's ready, Jack—at last!"

For Larking had his waistcoat off now. "Time!" said Wootton major.

The combatants advanced towards one another.

There was no marked disparity between them in size, weight, or reach. But for all that very few there had any doubt of the result of the encounter. Larking might have held his own with Monk for a round or two with the gloves; but a combat with bare fists in deadly earnest needs greater courage than a mere boxing contest.

Larking attacked hotly. Having made up his mind to fight, he meant to put in all he knew; and he was sure that his best chance was to go all out for a possible knock-out blow and an early decision.

But he was met by a sure guard and a cool head.

Monk might be angry, but he was not so angry as to lose his coolness.

He dodged or put aside a dozen punches. Then he saw his chance, and got in a not one on Larking's chin.

Larking staggered, and Monk followed up his advantage by getting in with right and left on his opponent's chest.

Larking went to earth with a crash. But he was up before Wootton major had counted five.

Monk met him, and drove at his body again. He knew that his enemy was not in the best of training, and that his body was really more vulnerable than his face.

But Larking eluded the punch, and landed Monk a nasty one on the right ear. He was showing better form than even his chums had expected, and the fall did not appear to have taken anything out of him.

For three rounds he held his own, and both were getting nicely marked.

Then Monk began to get on top, and Larking had a warm time of it.

The vim had gone out of his punches, and his guard was feeble. Once in the fourth and twice in the fifth he went to grass; and only the call of "Time!" saved him at the end of the fifth.

The plucky fight he was putting up had awakened some sympathy for him. Fellows told one another, as he came up to the scratch for the sixth round, groggy and battered, but still undismayed, that they had not thought Larking had had it in him.

But in five seconds from the beginning of the round he had completely lost all the sympathy thus gained.

He bit his lips as he faced Monk again, and there was a lurid, wicked gleam in his black eyes.

Monk's fist smote his check. Monk pressed closer. Larking's knee went up, and Monk staggered back with a cry of pain.

"Foul!" yelled a couple of score voices.

"You cad, Larking!" roared Gay.

"Foul it was!" said Wootton major. "It's your fight, Monkey, and—"

"No! I'm going on!" protested Frank Monk, pale to the lips, and in evident pain from that brutal knee-jab in the stomach, but unwilling to have the fight ended thus.

"Come on, then!" howled Larking.

And he rushed in at him.

"Let him alone!" yelled Monk, as hands were outstretched to drag Larking back.

He faced his enemy, far from fit yet to renew the battle, but ready to go on for all that.

Larking dealt him a furious punch under the chin, and Monk swayed and fell.

But even as he fell Wootton major called "Time!"

"Oh, yes!" sneered Larking. "It's jolly convenient to have the watch in the hands of a pal, isn't it?"

A roar of resentment greeted that sneer.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"HOSKINS' CHANCE!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's magnificent complete story of Greyfriars School centres around Claude Hoskins, the long-haired musician of the Shell. Fired with ambition, Hoskins devotes his energies to the composition of a grand march, with the dual object of achieving fame and fortune. He leaves no stone unturned to further his ends, and his delightful habit of borrowing other people's instruments causes a great deal of fun and friction. The great work—which is to take the world by storm—is at length completed; and the reception it receives at the hands of a local firm of music publishers causes vast amusement to everybody except Claude Hoskins!

BUNTER IN THE LIMELIGHT!

Billy Bunter looms very largely in the picture just now. His early exploits at Greyfriars are appearing in the "Penny Popular," published every Friday, and his amazing masquerade at St. Jim's is being graphically described, in Martin Clifford's inimitable style, in the "Gem" Library.

Bunter, as a source of amusement and delight, is simply inexhaustible. Sneak, spy, and gormandiser though he is, he makes a peculiar and irresistible appeal. He will come back to Greyfriars, of course; for how could the Remove possibly flourish without their prize porker? But before this happens W. G. B. will meet with many misadventures at St. Jim's—which is no longer the Arcadia Bunter imagined it to be when he first went there.

The exploits of Bunter raised many a hearty laugh in France when the world-war was in progress; and he is still as popular as ever with the Tommies on the other side.

Those readers whose complaint is "not enough Bunter" will find their needs admirably supplied in the current issues of the "Gem" and the "Penny Popular."

AN AIRMAN'S EPITAPH.

Not a few of my readers are either in the Royal Air Force or keenly interested in flying. Jimmy R., a young airman with a talent for verse and a keen sense of the ridiculous, sends me the following mock epitaph as a warning to youngsters who are inclined to be over-adventurous during their early training as pilots:

"Here lie the bones of Joseph Jones,
An erstwhile air-mechanic;
Who when in flight, took sudden fright,
And fell into a panic.
The gun and gear are buried here,
The wings are interred, also;
Alas, poor Jones! With direst groans
We note that he could fall so!

Oh, may his doom and humble tomb
Convey a timely warning
To those who rise to sombre skies
Upon a misty morning,
And never try, when perched on high,
A game of aerial polo;
Lest you be found beneath the mound
Where Jones is sleeping solo!"

I hope all my readers who are aspirants for the coveted "Wings" will take the hint!

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted by—

C. Goodwin, Devonshire Cottage, Crowthorne, Berks—with readers anywhere, especially those interested in film acting and cinematography.

Miss Eva Almond, 6, Myrtle Grove, Low Fell, Gateshead—with girl reader in America, 13-14.

F. Wirty, 12, Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury, W.C.1, wants members for correspondence club. Amateur magazine. Stamped envelope.

YOUR EDITOR.

Not three fellows there had the least sympathy left for Larking. Snipe and Carker, perhaps—wrong 'uns both. But certainly not Carpenter, who had the elements of decency in him, nor Lacy, who was not quite wholly a cad.

The half-minute's breathing-space gave Monk back his vigour—or as much of it as was needed. Gordon Gay fanned him, and the colour returned to his face.

"Time!" again. And once more the two put up their fists and advanced towards one another.

"Look out for his knee, Monkey!" shouted Lane.

"I rather fancy Larking had best look out for Franky's fist!" said Carboy. "This will be the last round. Ten to one on it with anyone who cares to take me on!"

But no one cared to do that.

And it was the last round!

Larking was shaken by the thought of what he had done, and affected by the wave of hostility the foul had aroused. It was hardly remorse he felt; but he did feel bitterly angry with himself for his lapse into open foul play.

One punch he got in; then under his guard Monk's left smote with crashing force. On the mark it took him, and he reeled over on to his back, and lay with closed eyes, dead to the world for a few moments.

"Eight—nine—out!" counted Wootton major. "But you oughtn't to have gone on, Frank."

"Do you think I wanted to win on a foul?" snorted Monk.

Carpenter lifted Larking's head. He was not pleased with his clum by any means, but he would not desert him.

"Give me a hand, Snipe," he said. And Snipe sullenly obeyed.

Smelling a Rat!

"FEEL better now?" asked Carpenter, twenty minutes or so later.

Larking had been smuggled in and through the quad in the midst of a crowd. His face was pretty badly marked. Monk also showed signs of the fight, but to nothing like the extent that his opponent did.

Carpenter and Snipe had done what they could for their beaten and disgraced pal. Now Carpenter felt inclined to clear out.

That Larking had been beaten was nothing. Any fellow might be beaten.

But he had fouled in the most flagrant manner. That did not matter much to Snipe; but it did to Carpenter.

"Yes, I feel better," said Larking, with a groan. "It hurts, of course; but I don't mind that so much. What I bar is having my face pulped like this, and going about looking as if I'd had an argument with a giddy gorilla!"

"What I should mind, if I were you, would be something else," said Carpenter, slowly and meaningly.

"I know what you mean, hang you!" snarled Larking. "That was an accident!"

"Jolly queer sort of accident, I must say!"

"Well, it might have happened to anyone!" remarked Snipe.

Carpenter regarded him contemptuously.

"It might happen to you, Snipe," he said. "It couldn't to me!"

"Look here, Carp," said Larking, almost pleadingly. "a fellow really doesn't quite know what he is doing when he gets in such a wax as I was in."

"Then a fellow ought to know—or he ought not to get in such a wax."

"I'm sorry. Is that good enough for you?"

"Oh, it's not my bizney!" replied Carpenter.

"You seemed to be making it your bizney!"

"Well, yes. We've been chummy a long time, and the other chaps are apt to judge a fellow by the company he keeps."

Carpenter seemed much more determined than usual. But he was weak at the core, and his resolution never lasted long. Already his own reference to old friendship had made him feel softer towards Larking.

"Do you mean that you want to cut me in future, Carpenter?"

"Of course I don't, old fellow! All I mean is that it's no good telling me you're sorry. It's to Monk you should say that."

"A public apology—Oh, hang it all!"

"That's what I'd do—at least, I think I would. And you've a heap more pluck than I have, Lark."

Larking groaned. He had also more pride than Carpenter—pride of the wrong sort, the arrogant pride that hates to own itself at fault.

"Well, it needn't be exactly public," conceded Carpenter.

"I'll write the fellow a line," said Larking. "and Snipey shall take it to him."

He scrawled a line or two, put the paper in an envelope, and winked at Snipe behind the back of Carpenter as he handed it to him.

"You needn't wait for an answer," he said. "There's the apology. The bouncer can take it or leave it; it's no odds which to me."

"I say, Carpenter, don't go!" Snipe said, as Carpenter moved towards the door. "I've something to say to both you chaps when I come back."

This happened to be true. But it was also true that Snipe did not want Carpenter in the corridor to see whether he went to Monk's study. Snipe had as strong an objection to any apology to Monk as Larking had.

"Right-ho!" said Carpenter, throwing himself into the armchair. Larking was sprawling on the couch, nursing his face.

Not another word was spoken until Snipe returned. But that was no long space of time.

"What did he say?" asked Larking.

"He grunted," replied Snipe.

"That's about what I should have said," admitted Carpenter. "I'm not a very revengeful fellow, but it would take me some time to get really to love a chap who had kicked me in the tummy."

"Oh, rub it in!" said Larking bitterly.

"I don't want to rub it in. I'd give something that it should never have happened, that's all."

Larking turned from him with an impatient gesture.

"What is it you've got to tell us, Snipey?" he asked.

"I've found out something," answered Snipe, his ferrety eyes agleam.

"You often find out things," said Carpenter. "But the less said about the way you find them out the better!"

Snipe scowled.

"You seem to be developing a Puritan conscience, Carp!" he sneered. "It will be a bit of a novelty in this study. But I'm not sure that Lark and I will find it very easy to live with."

"Oh, stow that rot, and get on with the washing!" said Carpenter roughly.

Snipe went to the door, opened it, and peered out.

"No need for that. You're inside!" gibed Carpenter. "There is Carker, though. I suppose he wasn't hanging round?"

"Carker wouldn't matter a fat lot!" replied Snipe. "It's those new bounders I'm guarding against."

"Well, they don't strike me as the sort to listen at keyholes."

"You never know," said Snipe. Then, lowering his voice to almost a whisper, he added: "One of those chaps is a ventriloquist."

"Oh, rats!" snapped Larking.

"I don't know—I don't know!" said Carpenter slowly. "It would explain things which can't very easily be explained otherwise."

"I don't believe it!" persisted Larking. "Snipe's got hold of that yarn we heard about that fat rotter at St. Jim's."

"Yes, I did think of that," Snipe admitted.

"Well, Bunter, or whatever his silly name is, isn't here," objected Larking.

"No. But the same sort of things—more or less—are happening here that happened at St. Jim's; and it ain't so very far-fetched to fancy they can be explained in the same way," said Carpenter.

"That's my notion!" Snipe said eagerly.

"Look here, you fellows may not have heard about what happened to Gay and that crowd yesterday on the way from the station."

"I should be pleased to hear that they'd all been run over," said Larking pleasantly.

"But they haven't, I know. What did happen?"

"There were Gay and Monk and those two rotters of Woottons," replied Snipe. "They all believe that they heard the voices of some of the St. Jim's fellows from behind the hedges—Merry's and D'Arcy's and Grundy's and several others."

"And the St. Jim's bounders weren't there?" said Carpenter. "I say, Lark—"

"Half a jiff, Carp! They recognised the voices, you say, Snipey?"

"Yes."

"And your idea is that it was one of those four new bounders playing the dashed ventriloquist?"

"Yes."

"How on earth could he imitate the voices of chaps he's never seen—never even heard of?"

Snipe was staggered. He scratched his tousled head, and his jaw fell.

"I never thought of that," he admitted.

"It is queer. But that isn't all, by long odds!"

"Go on! Another mare's-nest or two, old top!"

"There's no mare's-nest about this, I can tell you. Did you ever know that fellow Weird to sling check at us as he did last night—or as he seemed to do?"

"Seemed to be hanged for a tale! He did! And that reminds me that we haven't got even with him yet for it. I'll warn him up, I promise you!"

"But he didn't! He swears that. Someone else put the words into his mouth, as you might say. He only said some rot about that silly ass of a Goggs; then another fellow chipped in with all that about you and me and Carp here."

Larking and Carpenter looked at one another.

"Weird's a potty lunatic, but he isn't a liar," Carpenter said slowly.

"Then there was that sugar bizney at breakfast," said Snipe.

"I shouldn't describe you as a potty lunatic, old top—not as a rule," said Larking, with a malicious grin. "But you're the biggest liar I know! Carker's got some talent that way; but you lick him hands down!"

"You're a very truthful chap yourself, aren't you?" sneered Snipe. "I've heard you reel them out by the dozen when it suited you. But never mind that. The point is that I never said a word about sugar to Adams—I'm not such a fool! Someone played it on me, just as someone played it on Weird, and there's no other way of explaining it."

"Sounds as if there were something in it, Lark," Carpenter said.

"Well, I don't see what object Snipe can have in lying to us about it," Larking admitted reluctantly.

"That's not all!" went on Snipe, in triumph. "Monk was called away by Delamere, as it was supposed at the time. I didn't hear, not being there. But I suppose you chaps are sure it was Delamere's voice?"

"He says it wasn't—at least, Monkey says he says so," answered Carpenter. "But I could have sworn to it myself."

"Seems certain it wasn't his, though."

"Yes, that does seem certain," Larking said. "But there's not a lot in it. Plenty of fellows could imitate Delamere's voice, I should say."

"But what would they do it for? Not to save you from a hiding. You aren't so jolly popular as all that!" sneered Snipe.

"It wasn't any question of saving me from a hiding!" snapped Larking, with an ugly look.

"Oh, I understood Monkey was just going for you!"

"Dry up!" said Carpenter. "Snipe reckons it was one of those four. But why should any one of them want to call Monkey off it?"

"Don't know," replied Snipe. "I'll think that out when I have time, but it's no odds just now. This is what matters. We have four cases where a ventriloquist—and a pretty clever one—seems to have been concerned. In all four cases those new chaps were on the scene."

"That's true enough," said Carpenter, nodding.

"Though Snipe does say it," added Larking sneeringly.

Snipe let the sneer pass. He was not usually sensitive to reflections upon his want of veracity from Larking.

"I should think it was Goggs, only he's altogether too soft," he went on.

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't make me laugh, old bean; it hurts my mouth," said Larking, with a wry grin.

"Melted butter ain't in it with Goggs," Carpenter said. "Can't be Goggs. Pass on, Herlock!"

"Might be any of the other three," said Snipe.

"Blount, or Trickett, perhaps," Larking said. "That is, if there is a ventriloquist among them, about which I'm not satisfied yet. Not Waters, I fancy."

"Don't see why not," said Carpenter.

"I fancy it's either Blount or Trickett," agreed Snipe. "They're both pretty wide. We'll watch them. Needn't bother about Goggs or Waters."

"And suppose we can catch one of them at it—what, then?" asked Carpenter.

"Oh, no good being in a hurry to let on about it! No good giving the game away to Gay and his crowd, anyhow. Best to lie doggo, and see how we can turn it to our own account," said Snipe.

"As you like," Carpenter said, rising to go.

Carpenter lounged out. Snipe closed the door behind him.

(To be continued.)