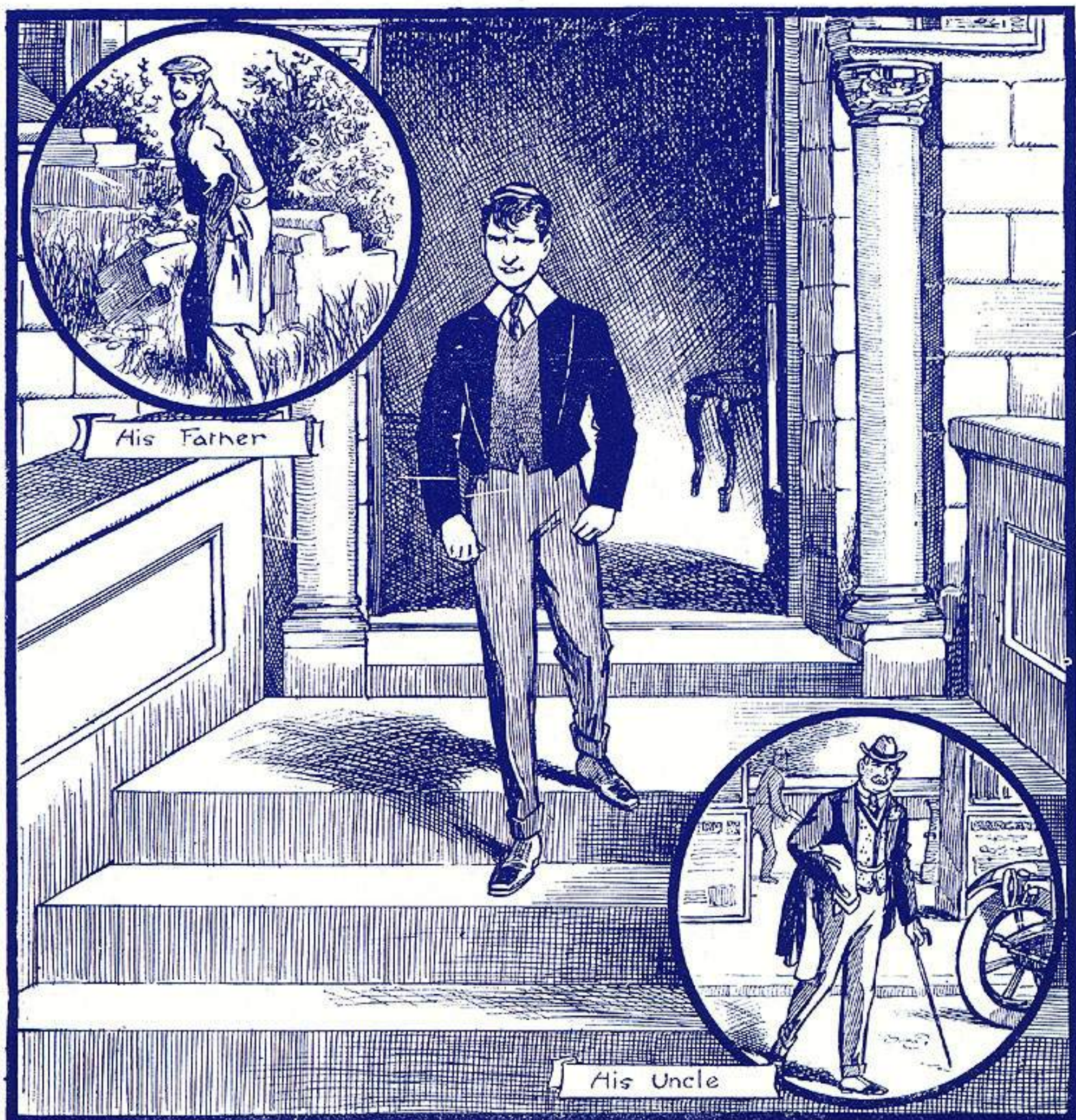




THE TERRIBLE UNCLE!



SNOOP'S PROBLEM—WHOM SHALL HE MEET?

(An Impressive Scene in the Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. in this Number.) 19-4-19



The Terrible Uncle!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Money Talks!

BOB CHERRY looked into Study No. 1, in the Remove passage with a broad grin upon his ruddy, cheery face.

"Come on, you chaps!" he called in.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in their study; the former engaged upon oiling a cricket-bat, the latter sitting on the corner of the table and watching him. Both looked round as Bob's powerful voice was heard in the doorway.

"Busy!" answered Harry.

"Bosh! Come on!" said Bob Cherry. "You can't afford to miss this! It's the joke of the term!"

"What is?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You chaps know that Snoop's got twelve pounds?" he asked.

"I think everybody in the Remove knows it," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "We've heard a lot about Snoop's quids lately."

"Quechy had it locked up in his desk for him," continued Bob. "Snoop asked him for it after lessons, and he's got it in his study now. I understand that he's seeing his pater this afternoon, and he's going to hand it over to the old johnny, who's just been demobbed. But he's had other offers."

"I know Loder of the Sixth wanted to borrow it," said Wharton.

"Loder was simply first in the field. There are others!" chuckled Bob. "My idea is that we ought to form a body-guard for Snoop, and take care of him till he gets rid of the twelve quids."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do come!" urged Bob. "Snoop's in his study now, and it's as good as a circus."

"Oh, we'll come!"

Wharton and Nugent followed the cheery Bob along the Remove passage to No. 11. As they neared that study a voice came to their ears through the open doorway—the voice of Fisher T. Fish of the Remove.

"I guess, Snoopey, that you can't do better. I calculate I'm making you this offer out of pure friendship."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked in.

Sidney James Snoop of the Remove was seated in his armchair, with a grin on his face. Snoop looked very cheerful; he was in a happy mood that sunny afternoon. Fisher T. Fish was standing before him, gesticulating rather excitedly with his long, thin fingers, his sharp,

glittering eyes fixed on Snoop's grinning face.

"I guess," continued Fisher T. Fish, "Snoopey, you're a jay—a prize jay from Jaysville! You hear me whoop?"

"I hear you!" grinned Snoop.

"So do we!" said Bob Cherry. "Go it, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish glanced round at the juniors in the doorway. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh joined them there, and looked in, smiling. Fisher T. Fish was an entertainment in himself.

"I reckon you galoots can levant," said Fishy. "I'm talking to Snoop."

But the juniors did not "levant." Fisher T. Fish turned again to his intended victim.

"I guess I'll explain to you, Snoop. You don't seem to have much of a head for business. Now, I was raised in New York, and what I don't know about cold business, sir, ain't worth knowing. I've got a little scheme—"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"A little scheme," continued Fishy, unheeding—"a daisy little scheme, sir, for making dollars by the bucketful. All I need is a little capital to begin on. Your dollars, old chap, couldn't be better employed. I'll guarantee—"

"To stick to the quids," remarked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nope!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "You galoots give your chins a rest, can't you? I'm talking to Snoop. Snoopey, old man, I'll guarantee your dollars, with a profit that would make a war-profit look sick. Now, how does that strike you?"

"It strikes me as funny!" answered Snoop.

"I guess I mean business, Snoopey—cold business from the word 'go!' I've got a little scheme, I tell you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you silly galoots shut up your yaup-traps?" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, wrathfully. "Why can't you absquatulate? I hear, Snoopey, that you've saved up your dollars for your popper, who's been demobbed, and is hard up. Now, I reckon if you go into this little scheme with me you'll have whole shucks of dollars to hand over to your popper, if you want. Got that?"

"I've got it," assented Snoop, "and I've got the quids, and I'm sticking to them, Fishy!"

"Well, of all the gol-darned, obstinate mules! Don't I keep on explaining to you—"

"Keep on as long as you like, old chap, I don't mind!"

"I guess—"

There was a footstep in the passage Skinner of the Remove, Snoop's study-mate, came along, and pushed through the Famous Five in the doorway. He seemed rather surprised to find such a congregation outside his study.

"Anything on?" asked Skinner.

"Yes; Fishy's exercising his lower jaw," answered Snoop. "I should think it was aching by this time! He's after my quids!"

"The cheeky bounder!" exclaimed Skinner indignantly. "Look here, Fishy, you get out of this!"

"I guess—"

"Out you go!" exclaimed Skinner, picking up the poker. "Now, then, where will you have it?"

"I guess—I reckon— Ow! Oh! Keep off, you jay! Oh, my hat!"

Fisher T. Fish hurriedly retired from the study. His little scheme was not fully explained yet; but there was no arguing with a poker at close quarters.

Skinner tried to shut the door after him, but Cherry's heavy boot was in the way.

"Take your hoof away!" snapped Skinner.

"Don't shut us out, old bean!"

"I want to speak to Snoop."

"Ha, ha! We know you do!"

"The knowfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh. "And the hearfulness will be the select and ridiculous entertainment!"

"Don't go, you chaps!" said Sidney James Snoop. "I've got no secrets with Skinner. Come in!"

Harold Skinner compressed his lips as the Famous Five came in with smiling faces.

"I wanted to speak to you in private, Snoop," said Skinner sourly.

"Tea-time will do, then."

"That will be too late."

"The too-latefulness will be great," murmured Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Snoop will have parted with his quids by then."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you silly idiots clear off?" shouted Skinner.

"No fear! We've come to see the circus."

Skinner scowled. He could not venture to take the poker to the Famous Five; the results would have been too painful—for Skinner. And his business with Snoop could not wait. It was pretty plain what his business was. He had no choice but to go ahead—with a smiling company to listen.

"The fact is, Snoopey," he said, "I've got something rather important to say."

"Say away!" said Snoop blandly.

"You know, I've given up dabbling in racing, and all that rot," said Skinner. "But—but I've heard of a really sure snip, and I want to try my luck—just for once. It's a real tip, straight from the horse's mouth, you know."

"They always are!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I stand to win three to one, and there's absolutely no risk whatever," went on Skinner, unheeding. "I'm ready to go in with you, Snoop. Lend me five quids, and I'll put on five for you. Each of us bags fifteen quids next Saturday. Rather good—what?"

"First-rate!" said Snoop.

"You'll go in with me?" asked Skinner eagerly. "I'm only mentioning this, Snoopey, because we've always been pals. I wouldn't give this chance to everybody. You're on?"

"Not at all—I'm off!"

"Look here, old chap—"

"Time's up, Skinner!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Skinner looked round savagely.

"What do you mean, you fool?"

"I mean that time's up," answered Bob. "Here comes Stott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The More the Merrier!

STOTT of the Remove looked rather surprised by the chortle that greeted his entrance into his own study. He was surprised, too, by the scowl with which Harold Skinner greeted him.

"Hallo! What's up?" he asked.

"Skinner's time is," answered Bob Cherry. "It's your turn now."

"I don't understand—"

"You've got a little scheme that requires capital, I think—"

"Eh?"

"Or else you know of a dead snip for the Swindleton Handicap which it would be a shame for Snoopey to miss—"

"I—I don't—"

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know what you're getting at," growled Stott. "I came here to speak to Snoop. You fellows can clear off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, fear! We're the audience, and you're the entertainment. Go ahead!"

"Pile in, Stott!" grinned Sidney James Snoop. "You can speak before the fellows. When they go, I'm going."

Stott looked rather sour.

"Well, I don't want to howl it out before all Greyfriars," he said. "But it's no secret, if you come to that. I'm getting a new bike, Snoop."

"Lucky bargee!"

"There's a bit of a difficulty, though," said Stott. "I've had a good bit from my people lately, and I've really got to give them a bit of a rest before I stick them for a new bike. See?"

"I see—perfectly."

"It's a matter of a fortnight or so," said Stott, eyeing Snoop. "My idea is, you might lend me the money for so long as that. I know you've got it."

"Only as long as that?" asked Snoop.

"Oh, yes. Certainly."

"No danger of your people not dubbing up at the end of a fortnight?"

"None at all."

"How jolly nice, to have a reliable family like that!" sighed Bob Cherry. "I wish I could depend on my people to dub up twelve quids at the end of a fortnight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what this cackle's about!" exclaimed Stott angrily. "The question

is, Snoop, will you lend me the money?"

"The answer is, I won't!" replied Snoop, cheerfully.

"Simply for a week or two—"

"Yes—I know that week or two. I've been there."

"You silly ass!"

"Thanks!"

"If you're going to be a mean, suspicious cad, Snoop—"

"I am—at least, I'm going to keep my quids in my pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Stott scowled round at the juniors, and tramped out of the study. Skinner followed him, realising that Snoop's quids were no more likely to be expended upon his sure snip than upon Stott's new bike. As they disappeared, scowling, an elegant figure appeared in the doorway of the study.

It was Aubrey Angel of the Fourth, dressed to kill, as usual.

The dandy of the Fourth glanced at Harry Wharton & Co. with the supercilious smile that was habitual to him, and then addressed Snoop.

"Busy this afternoon, Snoopey?" he asked genially.

"Yes."

"Ahem! I was goin' to ask if you'd care to come on a little run?" said Angel.

"Kenny and myself and another fellow or two. We'd be very glad of your company, Snoop."

"Not to mention your quids, Snoop!" remarked Johnny Bull.

Angel gave the Famous Five a fierce look. But he disdained to take any other notice of Johnny's remark.

"Well, will you come, old chap?" he asked. "It will be rather entertainin', Snoop—quite a good time. I promise you that."

"The last time I was with you I punched your nose, Angel," remarked Snoop.

Angel coughed. This was really a rather tactless reminder at such a friendly moment.

"Ahem! I'd really forgotten, Snoop, what we were quarrellin' about—nothin' at all, I suppose. What's the good of rakin' up old troubles? I've said we'll be glad of your company."

"A good time?" asked Snoop thoughtfully.

"Oh, toppin'!"

"Might drop in at the Cross Keys—what?"

"The Three Fishers," said Angel.

"It's a bit farther off, and, really, more judicious, you know."

"Oh, quite! Might get some billiards—"

"Certainly."

"And a game of poker?" said Snoop, in the same thoughtful way.

"Anythin' you like, old top. We mean to have rather a merry afternoon."

"And you and Kenny and the rest wouldn't think for a moment of squeezin' my quids off me at poker or billiards?" asked Snoop blandly.

"Look here!"

"You're not arranging among yourselves to swindle me out of them?"

"You cheeky cad!" roared Angel.

"Certainly not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my belief is that that's the arrangement," said Sidney James Snoop, calmly. "You see, I know you Angel. Well, I'm not coming. You can look somewhere else for a pigeon to pluck!"

Aubrey Angel clenched his hands hard. This was rather a "facer" for the elegant dandy of the Fourth. In Angel's opinion, his lordly notice was an honour to anybody, and especially to a nobody like Snoop.

"You cheeky outsider!" muttered Angel, between his teeth. "You ought to be glad to be taken notice of. I'll give you a hidin' for your cheek before I go!"

Snoop jumped up.

"Come on!" he answered. "I've licked you once, and I can do it again! These fellows will see fair play."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bob.

"The ratherfulness is terrific! Go it, my esteemed and ludicrous Snoopey!"

Snoopey was already going it; and Angel, perhaps uneasy for his elegant clobber, changed his mind about giving Snoop that hiding, and retreated hastily to the door. As he dodged out Snoop rushed after him, and planted a foot behind him.

Angel staggered into the passage with a yell.

"Now come back!" shouted Snoop, victoriously.

Angel of the Fourth came back, with set teeth and clenched fists. But he met with a hot reception. Snoop was fairly on the war-path. There was a hot encounter for a couple of minutes, and then Angel retreated into the passage again, and did not return.

"Bravo!" chirruped Bob Cherry, as Snoop panted for breath, and rubbed his nose. "What a giddy paladin! Bravo, Snoopey!"

Snoop laughed breathlessly.

"I wonder if there's any more comin'?" said Harry Wharton. "My only hat! Here's Loder!"

Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form looked in. Evidently the news had spread that Snoop had reclaimed the quids his Form-master had taken care of for him. Snoop, still panting from his encounter with Aubrey Angel, eyed the Sixth-Former very warily.

"Hallo, Snoop!" said Loder. "I wanted to speak to you. Trot along to my study, will you?"

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

"What?"

"I won't!"

Loder breathed hard.

"Do you know you're talking to a prefect?" he demanded.

"I know I'm talking to the chap who tried to get hold of my quids, and I know you don't dare to have the Head told about it," retorted Snoop, undauntedly. "You needn't come the prefect over me, Loder!"

"Straight tip for you, Loder," grinned Bob Cherry.

Loder controlled his wrath with some difficulty.

"You fags can clear off," he said.

"Stay here," said Snoop.

Harry Wharton & Co., without answering Loder, stayed. The Sixth-Former did not insist. It would not have been of much use.

"About that matter I mentioned to you the other day, Snoop—"

he began.

"My money?" said Snoop calmly.

"I—I'd be very glad if you could oblige me, kid. I'd make it up to you."

"Can't be done!"

"Now, look here, Snoop—"

"You can come out plain with it, Loder," said Snoop cheerfully. "These chaps know all about it. You've lost money on gee-gees, and you want mine. You're not going to have it. See?"

Loder made a stride towards the Remove; and Harry Wharton & Co. promptly made a movement to back up Snoop. Then there was a pause; and then Gerald Loder walked out of the study.

"The sooner you get those quids handed over to your pater the better, Snoop," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "You're becoming the most sought-after chap at Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter will want you to cash a postal-order for him next—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Talk of angels!"

grinned Bob Cherry. "Here comes the merry barrel!"

And the Famous Five roared, as Bunter's fat face and glasses appeared in the doorway.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Snoop's Chum!

WALLY BUNTER blinked at the Famous Five over Billy Bunter's glasses.

Snoop smiled.

He was in the secret, and knew that the fat junior was Wally Bunter, the cousin and double of the celebrated Billy

But Harry Wharton & Co. were as yet unaware of that important fact—to them Bunter was Billy Bunter, and they had no suspicion that Billy was in Wally's place at St. Jim's.

It was a case of appearances being deceptive—very deceptive indeed.

Naturally, they concluded that Billy Bunter had come along in quest of Snoop's quids, with his ancient but still serviceable story of a postal-order that he was expecting.

"Trot in, Bunter!" said Snoop.

"Roll in, barrel!" said Bob Cherry.

"It hasn't come, I suppose?"

"Eh? What hasn't come?" asked Wally Bunter.

"Your postal-order."

"The one you're expecting, you know!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" said the fat junior. "I'm not expecting a postal-order."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"I never said I was, did I?" roared Wally Bunter.

"My hat! You jolly well did—hundreds of times—"

"Thousands—"

"Millions!"

"You haven't forgotten that postal-order?" roared Bob Cherry. "It's been so long coming that it must be growing whiskers by this time. Have you given up expecting it?"

"Oh, you're an ass!" growled Wally. "I suppose I shall never hear the end of that blessed postal-order! Are you ready, Snoop?"

"Snoop isn't going to cash it for you in advance," said Bob.

"I don't want him to, you ass!"

"It's all right, you fellows," said Snoop. "Bunter's coming with me to meet my father."

"Oh!"

"And he isn't after the quidlets?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"You silly chumps!" said Bunter wrathfully. "Have you ever known me to be after a chap's money?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Help!"

"Well, let's be fair," said Harry Wharton. "The last few weeks Bunter has dropped the postal-order. He's given up telling whoppers. Let us hope it will last."

"Fathead!" replied Wally Bunter ungratefully.

"Well, if Snoop's going out, we may as well get down to cricket," said Bob Cherry. "If anybody else comes after your quids, Snoopey, and you want help, give us a yell. 'Gentlemen, the circus is over!'"

And the Famous Five, laughing, quitted the study. Snoop laughed, too, but there was a frown on Wally Bunter's fat face.

"All serene, Bunty!" said Snoop. "The fellows don't know you, you know. They still think you're Billy."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 584.

"I know they do, or I'd punch their silly noses!" growled Wally Bunter. "I was an ass to change places with Billy. The fat boulder fairly bamboozled me into it. I shall have to change back with him sooner or later; every letter he writes from St. Jim's is full of grousing. But never mind that. I'm ready, if you are."

"Come on, then! I'll see if there's a letter before we start; the pater said he would write if anything happened to delay him, and the post's been in half an hour."

The two juniors descended the stairs together. They were rather strangely-assorted chums; but Snoop's knowledge of Wally Bunter's secret made a link between them; and Wally, on his side, was aware of the fact that his influence over Snoop's weak nature helped to keep the one-time black sheep on the right path. It was owing to Wally that Snoop's savings had not been "blued" in an attempt to increase them by the wonderful method of backing winners.

Several juniors were looking over the letters, and Bolsover major called out to Snoop.

"Letter for you, Snoopey!"

"Chuck it over!"

Snoop caught the letter, and his face clouded a little. He had been long looking forward to meeting his father that day, and handing over to the "demobbed" corporal the savings he had so painfully collected for him. But his face brightened again as he looked at the superscription.

"It's not from the pater," he said. "It's my uncle's fist—my Uncle Huggins, you know. I'll read it as we go along."

Snoop and Wally Bunter walked out into the sunny quadrangle. Harry Wharton & Co., and most of the Remove, were gathering on Little Side, where cricket practice was beginning. Bunter and Snoop headed for the gates.

"Your Canadian uncle?" asked Wally.

"Yes—but he's in England now," said Snoop. "I shouldn't wonder if he's sent me a tip. He's coming down to see me before he goes back to Canada, some time. He's an awfully good sort, old Huggins. He stood by us when my father's affairs went crash, and paid my fees here. Blessed if I know what the mater and all of us would have done but for my Uncle Huggins. I wish he'd make friends with my pater."

Snoop's face darkened.

"Why won't he?" asked Wally.

"It's because—because—" Snoop flushed. "You know what happened to my father. His company went smash, and—and there was something wrong, and—and he went to prison. Everybody knows it, though most of the fellows are decent enough about it. And—and we'd always held ourselves a bit above the Hugginses, and—and when the crash came there was nobody but Uncle Huggins to see that we didn't starve. Old Huggins was as good as gold to the lot of us, but—but he couldn't get over the disgrace of his sister's husband going to chokey."

Wally nodded without speaking.

"It was a bit rough on him, considering that the pater had always looked down on him a bit," said Snoop. "We never expected him to help us, but he did. He wrote from Canada, and sent a draft with the letter, to see things through until arrangements could be made."

"Must be a good sort," said Wally.

"Oh, he is; but he doesn't like my father. He—he can't really be expected to, under the circumstances. It's rotten for the pater to have his family supported by a man he's not on speaking terms with, but there was no help. After he was out of—of—of that place he joined

the Army, and a private's money doesn't go very far to keep a family. Now he's demobbed he's got next to nothing. That's why I've been saving up. He used to have thousands, before his bad luck; now twelve quids will be a blessing to him!" said Snoop bitterly.

"But your uncle—"

"Uncle Huggins wouldn't even speak to him, let alone help him. He doesn't know what my father's like now. He's a different man since he's been in the Army. He's got the Military Medal, too," said Snoop. "You don't get that for nothing. And he's been wounded. I—I'm afraid he was a bit snobbish in the old days, when he was a big man in the City. That's how Uncle Huggins remembers him, you see."

The two juniors were out of the gates now, and following the lane towards Friardale.

"May as well read this," said Snoop.

"Hold on a minute, will you, Wally?"

"Right-ho!"

They stopped under the trees by the lane, and Snoop opened his uncle's letter. A startled look came over his face, and he glanced over it.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

Wally Bunter looked at him.

"Not bad news?" he asked.

"He's coming down!" gasped Snoop.

"Well, don't you want to see him?" asked Wally, in surprise.

"Ye-es—yes; of course. But he's coming this afternoon," said Snoop, in an agitated voice. "He—he ought to have given me longer notice. He says he can find the time to-day, and he mayn't be able to find it later."

"I dare say he's busy, old chap."

"He's no right to take me by surprise, like this. I—I can't see him. I'm going to see my pater. I can't keep my pater hanging about at the Priory, can I? The pater can't come up to the school. He can't show himself there. And—and he mustn't meet my Uncle Huggins, anyway. Oh, it's rotten!"

Snoop crumpled the letter in his hand. "What time is he coming?" asked Wally thoughtfully.

"Half-past three at Friardale. He will expect me to be at the station to meet him, too. I can't."

"And you're meeting your pater—"

"At three, at the old Priory."

Wally reflected.

"You couldn't do it in the time," he said. "You could hardly get to the station, if you didn't stay five minutes with your pater."

"I can't hurry away like that, either. I haven't seen my pater since he came home from the Rhine."

"Of course you can't!" agreed Wally.

"But your uncle can't blame you for putting your father first, even if he doesn't like him; in fact, he would expect you to, if he's a decent man. That will be all right, Snoop."

"But—but he doesn't like my father," muttered Snoop. "He's got reason not to like him. I don't deny that—or, at least, he had reason. And—and when he finds I'm not at the station he will think I'm being careless, and—and ungrateful. I can't afford to displease my uncle, Bunter. I—I say, suppose you meet him at the station?"

"I'd do it like a shot," answered Wally. "I was only coming with you as far as the Priory, anyway. You don't want me while you're jawing to your pater."

"You could explain to him—"

"That you're with your father, and you'll come back to Greyfriars and see him there? Good!"

"No, no, no! Don't mention my father!" exclaimed Snoop hastily. "The pater's like a red rag to a bull to Uncle

Huggins. You—you see, we were stand-offish to the Hugginses, in the old days, and then pater went to—to—to—to—you know where, and the Hugginses reckoned that we had disgraced them."

Wally Bunter gave Snoop a compassionate look. The absurd snobbishness of the Snoop family, in their prosperous days, considering what had followed it, would have been comic but for the painful state of affairs it had left behind.

"Are you sure your uncle is so ratty as you think, old chap?" asked Wally, after a pause. "He must be a jolly decent man, from what you've told me."

"Oh, I know—I know," said Snoop. "Don't mention my father. Not a word about him. Say I'm detained—"

"What?"

"It—it's excusable, under the circumstances!" stammered Snoop. The unhappy fellow was already falling into the wretched resource of the weak and timid—falsehood—as soon as difficulties loomed ahead.

Wally Bunter's fat face was very stern.

"A lie's never excusable, Snoop," he said quietly.

"Your cousin Billy wouldn't agree with you!" said Snoop, with a sneer.

"You're not talking to Billy now, but to me. It's silly as well as wrong. Suppose your uncle found out you weren't detained? He might ask your Form-master what your detention was for."

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

"He would be ratty at being deceived, and you couldn't wonder. If I'm not to mention your father, I'll simply say you couldn't come to the station, and I came instead. I don't suppose he'll care either way. Why should he? You had an appointment you made before you got his letter—that's simple, and that's true."

Snoop nodded.

"I—I suppose it's better to stick to the truth!" he muttered.

"You can bet your Sunday socks on that, old trump! Now, you amble along to meet your pater, and I'll go to the station. What's your uncle like? I shall have to pick him out."

"A rather big man, with a bronzed face—not much like me to look at," said Snoop. "But there ain't many passengers at Friardale; you'll know him easily enough."

"Right-ho! Ta-ta!"

Wally Bunter rolled on towards the village, and Sidney James Snoop started through the wood towards the old Priory. And as he neared the ruins his face brightened at the sight of a man in an old Army overcoat pacing to and fro.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Man From Canada!

"WELL, hit!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry looked round as a deep bass voice applauded the hit he had just made. Bob was batting to Hurree Janset. Ram Singh's bowling, and he had just sent the leather whizzing with a mighty stroke.

A tall man, with a bronzed face, in a soft felt hat, had joined the fellows who were looking on at the practice on Little Side. Bunter of the Remove was with him, evidently keeping him company.

Bob smiled as he saw the bronzed gentleman. He recognised Mr. Huggins, Snoop's Canadian uncle, who had been at Greyfriars before. The big gentleman smiled and nodded as he met Bob's glance.

Bob handed the bat to Vernon-Smith, and came off the field. He remembered Uncle Huggins well, and liked him.

Mr. Huggins shook hands with Bob, as

he had already done with Harry Wharton.

"Jolly glad to see you at Greyfriars again, sir," said Bob. "Where's Snoop, Bunter? Doesn't Snoop know his uncle's here?"

"Snoop's out," said Wally. "He may be back any minute. Would you like to come up to Snoop's study, Mr. Huggins?"

"I think I'll watch the cricket for a while," said the Canadian gentleman. "I suppose Sidney won't be long?"

"Any minute," said Wally.

"He's gone—" began Harry Wharton; and then he broke off suddenly as he caught an extraordinary expression on Wally's face. "What's the matter with you, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing."

"You looked as if you were going to have a fit," said Wharton, staring at him.

"Did-d-did I?" gasped Wally.

He was trying to convey to Wharton not to mention where Snoop was gone; but Wharton, who knew or remembered

Wharton was looking at him very keenly. He saw by this time what Bunter was trying to convey, though he could not see any reason for it. But as Bunter was Snoop's chum he supposed that it was by Snoop's desire that his business that afternoon was not to be mentioned to Mr. Huggins, and he did not continue.

Wally was conscious, too, that Mr. Huggins was eyeing him rather keenly. The Canadian gentleman was big and bluff, but it was pretty evident that he was not at all dense.

Wharton went to the wickets, and Mr. Huggins watched the cricket practice for some time. Skinner and Stott had come on the cricket-ground, hearing that Snoop's uncle was there. Mr. Huggins, with his eyes on the cricketers, became conscious of voices behind him holding a whispered conversation.

"Sid ought to be back by this time."

"He ought to be. Perhaps he's making it more than a hundred up."

"Do you really think, Skinner, that poor old Snoop is playing the goat again?"



Sammy Bunter rolled up to where uncle and nephew were standing. "You're wanted, Snoop, in Mr. Quelch's study. You're going to be licked for smoking!" (See Chapter 7.)

nothing about the trouble between Snoops and Hugginses, naturally did not understand.

He did not see any reason why Mr. Huggins should not know that Snoop had gone to see his demobbed pater. Indeed, it was only civil to mention it as a good explanation why Sidney James was not there to meet his Colonial relative.

"I was going to say—" began Wharton again.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Wally.

"Eh—what?"

"Isn't that an aeroplane?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"It's a pigeon, you duffer!"

"Is—is it really?" stuttered Wally.

"You'd better keep your blinkers where you can see through them, old tub!" said Bob. "You seem to be able to do without them when you're playing cricket. But taking a pigeon for an aeroplane—ha, ha!"

Wally laughed, too. His object had been to turn the current of the conversation, and he had succeeded. Harry

"I'm afraid so," said Skinner sadly. "He never can keep on the straight for long. I've talked to him lots of times, but he simply can't do it."

Mr. Huggins turned his head.

Skinner and Stott, apparently unconscious of his presence, strolled on in a leisurely way, still conversing in low tones.

A stern, set look came over Mr. Huggins' bronzed face. His glance turned on Wally Bunter, whose fat face was flushed with anger. He, too, had heard the whispered remarks.

"I think I'll look at my nephew's study, my boy," said Mr. Huggins. "Will you take me there?"

"Certainly, sir," said Wally, very glad of the chance of getting the Colonial gentleman off the crowded field.

Mr. Huggins walked with him to the School House.

Skinner and Stott observed him from the distance, and exchanged a grin.

"The dear old fish has swallowed the bait," murmured Skinner.

Stott chuckled.

"I fancy our old pal Sidney will be sorry for himself when the kind old gent interviews him," yawned Skinner. "Perhaps he will wish he hadn't been so appish to his old pals—what?"

And Stott chuckled again.

Wally Bunter entered the School House with Mr. Huggins, who paused to speak to Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, for some minutes, and then followed the fat junior up the big staircase. Wally led him to Study No. 11 in the Remove passage.

"I'll wait here for Sidney," said Mr. Huggins. "Don't go yet, Bunter. I think you said your name was Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know my nephew pretty well, I think?"

"Oh, yes!" said Wally.

"I concluded so, as you came to the station on his account," said Mr. Huggins, eyeing the fat junior. "I heard some remarks passed by a couple of boys on the cricket-field. No doubt you heard them, too."

"I heard them—the cads!" said Wally wrathfully. "Don't take any notice of them, sir. Skinner's as spiteful as a cat, and Stott is a silly fool, and does whatever Skinner tells him."

The Canadian gentleman smiled.

"They're not friends of my nephew's, then?"

"No, sir. They're his study-mates, that's all. And they jolly well know you could hear what they said, and they said it on purpose!" exclaimed Wally.

"Why is Sidney on bad terms with his study-mates?"

"They're a pair of worms!"

"Then there is no truth in what they were saying?"

"None at all," answered Wally. "I know jolly well that Snoop hasn't gone to play billiards this afternoon!"

"You know where he is gone?"

Wally was silent.

"You told me at the station that my nephew had an appointment, which he had made before he received my letter."

"That's so, sir."

"As I may not be able to come to Greyfriars again before I leave for Canada, I should expect my nephew to give me as much of his time as possible," remarked Mr. Huggins. "It must have been a very important appointment to take him away from the school when I was due to arrive, I guess."

"It—it was, sir."

"Unless it was very important indeed, my nephew's conduct would appear to be ungracious, not to say disrespectful, Bunter."

"It—it was very important, sir."

"Where is he gone, then?"

No answer.

"Come, Bunter," said the Canadian gentleman. "I shall not easily believe harm of my nephew; but there is no reason why a harmless schoolboy affair should be kept a secret."

"It—it's not exactly a secret," stammered Wally.

"It appears to be," said Mr. Huggins quietly. "I am not blind, Bunter. I saw you preventing Wharton from telling me something on the cricket-field. What was it he was going to tell me when you interrupted him?"

"Nothing with any harm in it," said Wally. "If Snoop was gone somewhere to play the goat Wharton would despise him, but he would be the last fellow in the world to give him away."

Mr. Huggins nodded, apparently struck by that remark.

"Snoop's a jolly good sort, too," went on Wally loyally. "If you knew some

things I know, you'd think so, Mr. Huggins."

"I shall be glad to know them, Bunter."

"I—I can't tell you, as it happens," said Wally. He was thinking of the way Snoop had scraped and pinched for more than a whole term to save money for his father. But Snoop had made him promise not to mention his father to the Canadian gentleman. "But—but it's true," added Wally. "Lots of fellows know about Snoop having acted in a really splendid way."

"I am glad to hear it," said the Canadian gentleman drily. "My nephew has acted in a splendid way, which you cannot acquaint me with, and he has gone out when he knew I was about to arrive, for an important reason that must not be confided to me. Very good!"

"I—I mean—" stammered Wally, quite dismayed by Mr. Huggins' way of putting it.

"I won't take up any more of your time, my boy," said the Canadian gentleman, a little brusquely. "If you see my nephew, you may tell him I am smoking a pipe in his study."

Wally hesitated; but Mr. Huggins took no further notice of him, and he left the study. His brows were wrinkled as he went. Plain dealing was in Wally's line, and he was irritated by Snoop's tortuous methods—of which he could not help foreseeing an unpleasant result. Whatever bitterness there might be between Mr. Huggins and Mr. Snoop, it would have been better to tell the Canadian gentleman the plain facts. But it was Snoop's business, and he had to have his own way—which was a tortuous one.

There was a glitter in Wally's eyes as he walked out of the School House. He promised himself the solace of looking for Skinner and Stott, and knocking their heads together. That was all the solace he had, in the circumstances, for the unpleasant turn affairs were taking.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry, as the fat junior reappeared on the cricket-ground. "Roll along and give us some bowling, Bunter."

"Busy!" answered Wally.

"Come on, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton. "If your name's going down for the Redelyffe match you've got to put in some practice!"

"Oh, all right!"

And Wally joined the cricketers, and Skinner and Stott were left unpunished for the present.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Father and Son!

"FATHER!" Snoop hurried on as he saw the pacing man in the ruined Priory.

Corporal Snoop swung round. The "demobbed" corporal was in "civvies," but he was wearing his old Army overcoat. His face, tanned by wind and weather, looked very healthy, though its expression was serious enough.

The sleek company promoter of other days was a new man now. The rough life of the trenches had knocked out much of the weakness and folly that had characterised him of old. There was a striking contrast between the strong, up-standing soldier and the fat, sleek, silk-hatted gentleman of prosperous days; but the difference was all in favour of Corporal Snoop.

He smiled as he shook hands with his son. He seemed pleased by Sidney James' look. Snoop, as well as his father, had improved.

"I haven't kept you waiting, dad?"

"I was early, my boy, and so are you,

I think," said Mr. Snoop. "I am glad to see you again, Sidney! And you—"

"And I am jolly glad to see you, father!" said Snoop brightly. "I've been looking forward to this for a long time. I—I wish you could come up to the school."

Mr. Snoop shook his head.

"Better not, Sidney. It was kind of the Head to allow you to remain at the school after the disgrace that fell upon us. I must not trespass on his kindness."

"The Head's spoken to me about you, dad!" said Snoop eagerly. "After you were wounded and had the medal. He told me I ought to be proud of my father. And so I am, dad—jolly proud! I believe he'd be glad to see you if you came up to Greyfriars."

The corporal shook his head.

"I don't think I could face him, Sidney—or anybody else who knew what happened to me," he said. "I've earned my pardon, but I cannot forget. But I am glad that you are not ashamed of your father. I've made up for my wrongdoing as much as I could. I've done my duty out there, and that's something. But—but—"

"And your wound, father?" Snoop's anxious eye had noted that the corporal was limping a little as he moved.

"Almost well—quite well, in fact. That's nothing. I'm glad to see you looking so well, Sidney. You've improved since I saw you last—before I went out to Flanders." The corporal sat on a mass of masonry, and Snoop took a seat beside him. "I've come down to say good-bye, Sidney."

"You're not going away?" exclaimed Snoop.

The corporal nodded.

"There's no chance for me here," he said. "My old friends in the City would take care not to know me if I passed them. I can't blame them, either. They don't want a man who's been in prison. I—I deserved it, Sidney. In the stone cell I used to repine and grow bitter; but I've done a lot of thinking out there in Flanders. Heaven helping me, I'm going to make a better use of my life in the future. There's room in the Colonies for a man who's not afraid of work. I—I hope, later on, to make a home and send for all of you. It's not impossible."

"Uncle Huggins could help you, if he liked," said Snoop bitterly.

"I think he would if he trusted me. But he doesn't, and it's natural. I've altered, but he's not likely to think so. And—and he's done much, Sidney—very much. He was always on ill terms with me, and it was my fault; but he came forward at once. I treated him badly before he went out to Canada; but he wrote from Canada at once when the trouble came. And—and all of you are dependent on him." The corporal's face clouded darkly. "That's bitter enough. It can't be helped. I've nothing—next to nothing. I can't ask my wife and children to starve to save my independence."

"He keeps me at Greyfriars," said Snoop moodily.

"And it's kind of him, my boy—and generous. Indeed, I believe he would help me make a start, if I would accept it; but I have some rag of pride left," said Mr. Snoop. "I've saved enough of my pay to provide for my passage out, and I've got two hands to work with, at least."

"And I've got some money, dad!" said Snoop eagerly.

"You!"

"Look here!"

With a glowing face Snoop took out a little leather purse, and poured the contents on the masonry.

"Twelve pounds!" he said.

"Where on earth did you get twelve pounds from, boy?" exclaimed the corporal in astonishment. Then a black look came over his face, and he grasped his son's shoulder. "Sidney! You haven't—you haven't—Oh, Heaven, if I should be punished by seeing my son follow in my footsteps—"

"Father!"

"Where did you get this money, then? You have nothing but an allowance from your uncle!"

"I've saved it!" said Snoop reproachfully. "Ever since you went into the Army, father! Shilling by shilling, and half-crown by half-crown. It's mounted up. I wouldn't touch it for anything. It was for you when you left the Army, father. I knew you'd need it."

Corporal Snoop looked at his son in silence for some minutes. His look showed that he had never expected devotion of that kind from Sidney James. His eyelashes were wet when he spoke again.

"My dear lad!"

"Twelve pounds in all!" said Snoop. "That'll be useful when you get to Canada, father!"

"My dear boy, put it back in your pocket," said the corporal. "I'm more pleased than I can tell you, Sidney; I never thought that you would think so much about your father. But I cannot take your money, my boy!"

Snoop's face fell.

"I know it isn't much," he said. "I've had to be jolly careful to save it, though. You've got to take it, dad! That's what I've scraped it together for! You wouldn't disappoint me, after—"

Snoop's voice trembled. "You must take it, father!"

Mr. Snoop hesitated a moment or two, and then he nodded. It was clear that his refusal of the money would be a bitter disappointment to the junior.

"Very well, my boy. I will do as you wish," he said. "That's good!" said Snoop, watching his father with great satisfaction as he took up the currency-notes. "I—I wish it was more, dad! But every little helps, doesn't it?"

"A kind thought helps more than money, my boy!" said his father, with a smile. "I shall not forget this, Sidney." There was a silence, which Sidney James broke at last.

"Uncle Huggins is coming down to Greyfriars this afternoon, father," he said.

Corporal Snoop started.

"This afternoon! I must not meet him! Where is he?"

"A friend of mine went to the station to meet him, and he's taken him on to the school."

"You ought to be there to see him, Sidney. You must not offend your uncle," said the corporal hastily. "You should not have come—"

"I wasn't going to keep you waiting here, for Uncle Huggins or anybody else!" said Sidney James sturdily.

Mr. Snoop rose quickly to his feet.

"Is he at Greyfriars by this time?"

"I expect so."

"You must go back at once, then."

"But—" began Snoop.

"I will see you again to-morrow," said his father hastily. "I'm stopping at the inn at Redclyffe, and I can come along here to-morrow. You will be free, as it is Sunday."

"Yes, nearly all day—all the afternoon, at any rate."

"Then come here to-morrow, at the same time, and I will be here," said the corporal. "Hurry off, Sidney! Remember how much you owe your uncle! He will not like being neglected."

There was a deep bitterness in the un-

fortunate man's face as he spoke, though he spoke quietly. Corporal Snoop had atoned for the sins of Mr. Snoop, the company promoter; but the full penalty was not yet paid. He was a ruined man, and his family was dependent on a relative who had never been his friend—a bitter and humiliating position enough. And there was no help—he could not plunge his wife and children into hopeless poverty for the sake of his pride. Even his son was bound to pay his duty to the uncle rather than to the father.

Snoop still lingered, with a clouded face; but his father motioned him to go.

"To-morrow, then!" said Snoop.

"To-morrow, my boy!"

And the junior left the old Priory, and hurried away through the wood towards Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wally Does His Best!

"**H**OLD on, Bunter, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Wally Bunter was bowling to Vernon-Smith at the wicket when he caught sight in the distance of Sidney James Snoop hurrying towards the School House. The fat junior turned from the bowling-crease at once.

"Here, catch!" he called out.

"Bowl, you ass!"

"I've got to speak to Snoop—"

"Bother Snoop!"

"He's just come in—"

"Look here, you fat grampus, you're wanted to bowl!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "I've got your name down for the Redclyffe match next week. If you don't put in practice I shall jolly soon scratch it off again!"

"I've got a message for Snoop from his uncle!" pleaded Wally.

"Oh, my hat! Bother Snoop, and bless his uncle!" exclaimed Wharton crossly. "Give Inky the ball, then, fathead, and roll off! And bother you!"

"Catch, Inky!"

"The catchfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!"

The fat junior hurried off the field. Sidney James Snoop was hurrying, too, and he had nearly reached the School House. Bunter put on a spurt, and overtook him; and Snoop turned his head as he heard the fat junior panting behind.

"Oh, you're here!" he said.

"Looks like it!" gasped Wally.

"Uncle's come, then?"

"Yes; he's in your study, smoking a pipe!"

"Is he in a good temper?" asked Snoop anxiously.

The fat junior made a grimace.

"He looks a very good-tempered man," he said. "But I'm afraid he's a bit cross now, Snoopey!"

"Because I didn't meet him at the station, I suppose," said Snoop moodily. "Of course, he keeps me, and I suppose he thinks I ought to put him before my father. Well, I won't, and be hanged to him!"

"Don't be an ass, old chap!" answered Wally quietly. "I don't believe he would think anything of the kind, and he doesn't know you were going to meet your father, as you wouldn't let me tell him. For all he knows, your father is still on the Rhine. But that cad Skinner—"

"Has Skinner told him?" exclaimed Snoop in dismay.

"Not about your father—"

"Oh, good!"

"He would, if he guessed that you didn't want the old Johnny to know!" grunted Wally. "But he doesn't guess that. He began yarning with Stott,

where your uncle could hear him, about you and a hundred up—"

"The rotter!"

"Mr. Huggins has got the impression that you went out when he was coming for no better reason than to play the goat," said Wally. "You can't expect that to please him."

"You ought to have explained somehow—"

"I did my best; but he asked me point-blank where you were, and I couldn't tell him, after what you said to me. I want to advise you to be open with him, Snoopey," said Wally Bunter earnestly. "It's the best way. Tell him plainly that you've been to meet your father—"

"And left him to wait my convenience!" sneered Snoop. "That would please him—I don't think!"

"He couldn't complain," said Wally. "Your father naturally comes first, especially as it was an appointment."

"I tell you he hates my father!"

"He doesn't look as if he hates anybody. He looks too jolly healthy."

"Well, he does. And, besides, he keeps me here—he keeps the lot of us, if you come to that," said Snoop bitterly. "Of course, he expects to be the great man, the mighty panjandrum, when he condescends to pay a poor wretch of a poor relation a visit. I'm likely to tell him that I've kept him waiting on account of the man he hates!"

Wally made an impatient movement.

"You've got it all wrong, Snoopey," he said. "The fact is, old chap, you're a bit suspicious and bitter yourself—"

"Look here—"

"You put a lot of things down to Mr. Huggins that I'm certain have never entered his head," said Wally. "He's just a decent, straightforward man with a jolly kind heart, if there's anything in appearances."

"Do you know him better than I do?"

"As I've never seen him before, of course I don't. But I've got some sense—"

"And I haven't?" said Snoop irritably.

"Well, you're not overloaded with it!" said Wally, rather warmly. He was getting irritated too. "I can tell you, Snoop, that if you've got any sense you will play straight with your uncle. He's the kind of man to be as generous as anybody, but to get awfully waxy if he's deceived or imposed on. Tell him just how the matter stands."

"Catch me!" growled Snoop. "As likely as not he would tell me that if I choose to keep him waiting for my father, he'll leave me on my father's hands."

"He wouldn't be so jolly mean—"

"I know I'm not going to chance it!" growled Snoop. "I've got to keep in with my uncle, and give him all the soft sawder he wants."

"I'm jolly sure that he doesn't want any."

"Perhaps you've never been a poor relation," said Snoop bitterly. "Dash it all, you have, though—you've told me that you're a poor relation of your cousin Billy. Could you get on with him without any soft sawder?"

"I never gave him any," said Wally sharply.

"And did you get on with him?"

"Well, no, not the best in the world. But—"

"It's the same with me and Uncle Huggins."

"It isn't, Snoop. I wish you'd take my advice. Look here, if you don't tell your uncle the truth, what are you going to tell him?"

"Anything that comes into my head,"

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said Snoop savagely. "Anything that will keep him in a good temper, and keep him from throwing me over."

"I'm sure he wouldn't—"

"You don't know anything about it!"

With that Sidney James Snoop turned away and stalked into the house. Wally Bunter made a step after him, but stopped. He had given his advice, and he knew that it was good advice; but if Snoop did not choose to take it there was nothing more to be said.

The fat junior returned to the cricket-field, but in a rather worried frame of mind. He was really concerned about Snoop, and anxious to see the weak and wayward fellow stand well with his uncle, and he knew that the wretched junior was going the worst way to work. He was sure that Snoop's fears were groundless—founded largely upon the suspicious and ungenerous traits in his own character. All his own failings Snoop attributed to the uncle to whom he owed so much and upon whose kindness so much depended.

He dared not take the risk of being straightforward, and was not clever enough to see that straightforwardness was the safest game to play, to put it on its lowest footing.

Snoop was feeling angry and bitter as he went up the staircase. He had had to leave his father hurriedly, after so long a parting, on account of his rich relative and he resented it bitterly. He was well aware how, in the old days, his father had wounded the frank, open-hearted man by an assumption of snobbish aloofness, and he did not believe that Mr. Huggins could forget and forgive. He took it for granted that his rich relative required to be kow-towed to—perhaps with a miserable consciousness of what he would have been like himself in Mr. Huggins' position. His feelings were certainly neither dutiful nor grateful, as he approached Study No. 11 in the Remove passage.

A whiff of tobacco-smoke greeted him as he arrived there and opened the door. There was a considerable atmosphere of smoke in the study, and Snoop coughed as he entered.

A big, bronzed gentleman rose from the armchair, pipe in hand, to greet him.

"Oh, here you are, my boy!"

And Snoop's Canadian uncle grasped his hand and gave him a grip that nearly made Snoop shriek.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Uncle and Nephew!

MR. HUGGINS greeted his nephew very heartily. He did not seem to notice Sidney James' confused and stammering answers. The smoke in the study made Snoop cough uncomfortably.

"By Jove! You're not used to pipes in this study!" exclaimed Mr. Huggins. "It was really thoughtless of me. Let us get out, Sidney; we can walk in the quadrangle a little while it clears off."

"Yes, uncle!" gasped Snoop.

He preferred to walk with his uncle while he talked to him. He did not want to meet the Canadian gentleman's clear, keen grey eyes more often than he could help.

They left No. 11, the Canadian gentleman chatting as they went downstairs, and Snoop hardly answering him.

He was so nervous and uneasy that he found it very difficult to assume a normal manner.

Keeping a secret was not a new experience to Snoop—he had often had secrets to keep. In this case the secret was quite a harmless one, and need not have been a secret at all; but all Snoop's little secrets had not been equally harmless.

Frankness would have served the junior better, if he had only known it; but he was not accustomed to being frank.

He listened to his uncle, only answering him when it was quite necessary, and growing gradually conscious of the fact that Mr. Huggins' keen eyes dwelt upon his face oftener and oftener. He did not meet the glance that was turned upon him, and tried to be unconscious of it. That conversation with his Colonial relative was not an enjoyable one to Snoop.

They arrived on the cricket-ground, where Wingate and some of the First Eleven were at practice, and Mr. Huggins looked on for some time with keen interest, affording Snoop some relief. Then they walked on to Little Side, and a shout greeted them:

"Well bowled, Bunter!"

Wally Bunter had just knocked down Wharton's middle stump. The captain of the Remove did not seem perturbed, however. He gave the fat junior an approving look. He was thinking that Bunter was going to be a rod in pickle for Redclyffe the following week.

"Good man, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Your friend Bunter seems an excellent cricketer," Mr. Huggins remarked to his nephew.

"Topping!" answered Snoop, glad to get to the subject of cricket. "He's going to play for the Remove next week."

"And yourself, my boy?"

"Oh, I'm not up to Eleven form! I

should be at practice with the fellows this afternoon, though, if I hadn't a visitor here."

Snoop was glad to be able to make that reply truthfully. He had taken to practice of late, and improved very considerably.

Mr. Huggins was silent for some time, watching the cricketers. Sidney James stole a glance at his face, and saw that it was very thoughtful; but he had a suspicion that the Canadian gentleman's thoughts were not fixed upon the junior cricket practice. As yet Mr. Huggins had made no reference to Snoop's absence, and the junior was beginning to hope that he would not mention it.

"Send that in, Snoop!" called out Wharton suddenly.

The ball came whizzing past where Snoop and his uncle were standing. Sidney James put out an active foot and stopped it, and picked it up and returned it with one movement—quite a smart return. His uncle gave a nod, as of approval.

Mr. Huggins, after a long silence, spoke suddenly.

"Your friend Bunter told me you had an appointment this afternoon, Sidney, which kept you out when I arrived."

"Yes, uncle," muttered Snoop, with a sinking heart.

"Some boys—apparently your study-mates—spoke of you in my hearing, hinting that your engagement this afternoon was of a very questionable sort."

"It wasn't true, uncle."

"I hope not, Sidney. But I cannot forget that the last time I visited you the report I received of you from your Form-master was not a favourable one."

"That—that was a long time ago, uncle."

"Quite so! But I am, as you know, Sidney, in the position of a guardian towards you, and I am bound to take notice of this. Although not legally your guardian, you must regard me as such, owing to your father's misfortune and his enforced absence. Now, my boy, you must not think that I distrust you. I wish, however, that you would tell me, of your own accord, where you have been this afternoon, and how you have been engaged."

"I've been doing no harm."

"Then you can have no objection to telling me!"

Snoop was silent.

"To be quite plain, Sidney," continued Mr. Huggins quietly, "last time I was here I learned that you had been punished for smoking, for reckless conduct, and for making undesirable acquaintances outside the school. Mr. Quelch was glad to say that you had shown signs of amendment. I hope that his belief was well founded. But, as I have taken charge of you, Sidney, I am answerable for you to your father. I require you to tell me where you were this afternoon!"

There was a stern ring in the Canadian gentleman's voice now. It made Snoop tremble.

Only too clearly he realized what the results might be if he angered the man upon whom he was utterly dependent—the man upon whom he had no real claim. Indeed, the miserable suspicion was in his mind that the Canadian gentleman would not have been sorry to find a good excuse for dropping the burden he had taken up. Snoop breathed quickly.

"Well, Sidney?"

"I—I was out of gates——" muttered Snoop.

"I am aware of that. You had an appointment?"

"Ye-es!"

"With a schoolboy?"

"N-n-no!"

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"With-whom, then?"

No answer.

"You do not wish to tell me, Sidney?" asked the Canadian gentleman.

"There was no harm in it!" gasped Snoop.

"I do not say there was. I hope there was not. But, if there was no harm in it, why this absurd secrecy?"

"I—I—"

"There is no need for you to stammer, or be confused, Sidney, if there was no harm in your occupation. If it was a matter of importance, I can fully excuse you for being away when I came. Otherwise, I can only look on your conduct as very disrespectful."

Snoop caught his breath.

"I—I went to see a soldier—a wounded soldier!" he stammered desperately.

The statement was true enough, though it was misleading; but Snoop's confusion made it look like anything but the truth. The bronzed face beside him hardened.

"Is that true, Sidney?"

"Ye-es!"

"Then why could you not tell me at once, without all this evasion?"

"I—I—"

"If you have taken an interest in a wounded soldier, Sidney, it is very creditable to you. Do you mean that the man was in need of assistance?"

"Yes!" gasped Snoop.

"Very good. I am staying in Courtfield to-night," said Mr. Huggins. "Tomorrow I will go with you and see the man. If he is in need of assistance, I am more able to assist him than you are."

"No, no, no!" gasped Snoop, in terror at the bare idea.

"And why not?" exclaimed Mr. Huggins sternly.

"Because—because—I—I—" Snoop's voice trailed off wretchedly.

Mr. Huggins knitted his brows.

"Very well, Sidney. I can only conclude that you have been engaged in some disreputable occupation, and that you have attempted to deceive me."

"It—it isn't so! But—"

"But what?"

"N-n-nothing!"

Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form, came rolling along to where the uncle and nephew were standing.

"You're wanted, Snoop!" he squeaked out.

Snoop was glad of the interruption. It gave him time to think out some wretched falsehood which he hoped would satisfy his uncle.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

Bunter minor grinned.

"You're wanted in Mr. Quelch's study. You're going to be jolly well licked for smoking! He, he, he! Walker sent me to find you! You're in for it, Snoopey!"

And the fat fag rolled away, apparently very much entertained by the fact that Snoop was "in for it."

Snoop turned quite pale. He dared not look at his uncle.

"It's not true, uncle!" he panted.

"I haven't been smoking."

"Your Form-master appears to have a different impression," remarked Mr. Huggins drily.

"I—I assure you—"

"Go to your Form-master at once, as he has sent for you."

Snoop almost tottered away.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Guilty!

"By gad!" ejaculated Gerald Loder. He coughed as he put his head into Study No. 11 in the Remove passage.

The room was thick with tobacco-smoke.

Loder had looked in to see whether Snoop was there. He knew nothing of the junior's visitor. Loder was as hard up as ever; and he had a vague hope of still getting that long-desired loan from Snoop of the Remove. He found the study empty—save for the curling wreaths of smoke.

A grin dawned on Loder's hard face as he stood in the doorway. After a few moments' thought he turned away, and went downstairs and looked into Walker's study in the Sixth Form passage.

Walker was his chum, and Walker was engaged as a chum of Loder's might have been expected to be engaged. He had a pink paper in his hand, and was making pencil-marks against the names of certain "gee-gees" that he fancied. He waved the pink paper at Loder as the latter came in.

"Nothing doing!" he announced before the prefect could speak.

"What the thump do you mean?" growled Loder.

"Money's tight!"

Walker yawned.

"What utter rot!" he said. "Tell Wingate!"

"Wingate's playing cricket!"

"So ought we to be, I suppose," yawned Walker. "Look here, Loder, if you don't want to be bothered with Snoop, let it pass!"

"I don't want to let it pass. I tell you his study is simply reeking. It ought to be reported to his Form-master. Look here, Walker, the young cad has been cheeky to me, and he's got to be licked. That's the long and the short of it."

"Why can't you—"

"Well, I can't! I want you to take it in hand!"

"Oh, all right! Anything for a quiet life!" groaned Walker. "I suppose the smoky little beast ought to be walloped!"

"Of course he ought! He's a regular young rascal!"

"And he's got on to something about you that he might mention if you reported him?" asked Walker with a grin.



A grip of iron was laid on Skinner's collar. "You will come with me, please!" said the big gentleman, as Skinner wriggled helplessly in his grasp. (See Chapter 9.)

Loder scowled. In his hard-up state he had not spared Walker, or anybody else he knew. His chum evidently concluded that his visit portended a new demand for a loan.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Loder. "That isn't what I want."

"Oh, good!" said Walker, in great relief. "I thought it was. Look at this list, old sport! What do you think of Angel Boy or Lucky Bargee for Wednesday—"

"Hang them both!" growled Loder. "I'm fed up with that rot! You've got something to do as a prefect!"

"Let it rest!"

"Somebody's been smoking hard in Snoop's study," said Loder. "I don't think it was Skinner or Stott. I know they've both been out—I saw them. It was Snoop!"

"Well, lick him; you're a prefect!"

"The fact is, I don't care to have anything to do with Snoop," said Loder, colouring a little. "I want you to take the matter up, without mentioning my name."

"Never mind that! You take up the matter!"

"All serene! I'll do it!"

Walker yawned again, put his pink paper away, and left the study. Loder took the pink paper, and sat down in Walker's armchair, with a grim smile on his face. Snoop knew too much for him to punish the junior personally; but the junior was to suffer for refusing to make that loan, all the same.

Walker looked into No. 11, to make quite certain that his dear pal's statement was correct, and coughed. Somebody had certainly been smoking there like a furnace.

The prefect at once proceeded to the Remove-master's study, and made his report. Mr. Quelch listened, with knitted brows. He was engaged upon literary work that afternoon, and was annoyed at the interruption.

"Send for Snoop, and bring him to my study, Walker," he said.

"Yes, sir."

And Sammy Bunter, discovered loaf-
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 584.

ing in the passage, was despatched to track down Snoop of the Remove, and bring him in.

Walker waited impatiently at the School House door for the Remove to arrive. It was some little time before Snoop came up the steps, with a harassed face and quivering lips. This blow had fallen upon him at the unluckiest possible moment.

"Get a move on, you young sweep!" snapped Walker. "You're wasting my time. Come with me!"

"I haven't been smoking, Walker," faltered the junior.

"Rubbish! Come along."

Walker led Snoop to Mr. Quelch's study, and followed him in. The Remove master turned from his work.

"Snoop, I have had occasion to punish you before for contempt of the rules of the school!" he exclaimed. "Now, it appears, that you have been smoking in your study again."

"I haven't, sir."

"Was it your study-mates, then?"

"I've inquired about that, sir," said Walker. "Skinner and Stott appear to have been out of doors since dinner."

Snoop started.

"Was it—was it this afternoon?" he exclaimed.

"You know it was," said Walker.

Snoop smiled, in the greatness of his relief.

"It's not a laughing matter, Snoop!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, angrily. "It is serious, as you will find. After my warnings, and your promise of amendment, you have done this—"

"I haven't, sir—not at all."

"Walker informs me that your study is simply reeking with tobacco-smoke."

"I dare say it is, sir. But I haven't smoked there."

"I will question your study-mates, certainly—"

"It wasn't them, sir, either."

"Then, who was it?"

"I—I had a visitor—"

"What? You allowed some other boy to smoke in your study! Give me his name at once!"

"It—it wasn't a boy, sir."

"I do not understand you, Snoop. You surely do not mean to tell me that you have had a female visitor who has smoked in your study?"

"Nunnup; it was a man, sir!" gasped Snoop. "My—my uncle, sir."

"What?"

"My uncle, Mr. Huggins, smoked his pipe there, sir, while he was waiting for me to come in."

Walker's expression was extraordinary at that moment.

"I don't believe Snoop had a relation here this afternoon, sir—" he began.

"You are mistaken, Walker. I remember I met Mr. Huggins a short time ago," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"Then it was your uncle who smoked in your study, Snoop?"

"Yes, sir—he waited there, as I was out. You can ask him, if you like, sir," said Snoop, cheerfully.

Mr. Quelch made an impatient gesture.

"I shall mention the matter to Mr. Huggins," he said. "But I have no doubt that your statement is correct, Snoop. You may go."

Snoop left the study with a smiling face.

"Walker!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?" stammered Walker.

"You have wasted my time, Walker. You have interrupted me for nothing. The boy's statement is evidently the truth. His uncle is here, and can substantiate it. You should have been more careful, Walker. You should have ascertained the facts before reporting to me. You have been careless."

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"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"You have wasted enough of my time, Walker. Kindly leave my study!"

Walker of the Sixth left the Form-master's study with a black brow and returned to his own quarters. Loder was there, and met him with a grin.

"Licked?" he asked. "I hope Quelch laid it on well—"

"You silly ass!" roared Walker.

"Eh?"

"You thumping idiot!"

"Wha-at's the matter?"

"You howling chump!"

"Look here, Walker—"

"You—you frabjous dummy!" howled Walker. "Catch me listening to your silly rot again. It was some dashed old uncle of the young sweep who was smoking in the study, you thundering fool! I've been jawed by old Quelch for wasting his time. You—you—you burbling idiot!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Loder.

"Old Quelch's jawed me like a fag, you-thumping dummy! Told me I wasted his time—me, a prefect of the Sixth Form—as if I was a kid in the Second!" howled Walker. "You thundering idiot—you—you—"

Loder quitted the study, leaving his friend Walker's eloquence still unexhausted.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Uncle Huggins Makes Discoveries!

MR. HUGGINS remained where Snoop had left him for some minutes in deep thought. Then he moved away towards the pavilion. Skinner and Stott were lounging there, idly watching the cricket they had no desire to join in. The two young rascals exchanged a grin as the big Canadian gentleman came in view; but they ceased to grin, and looked a little uneasy, as they found that Mr. Huggins was coming to them. The frown upon his brow was not exactly reassuring.

"Stop one moment, please," said Mr. Huggins, as Skinner made a movement to depart.

"Sorry, sir; I've got to go in to tea," answered Skinner.

Mr. Huggins let his walking-stick slide from under his arm into his hand. Skinner glanced at it.

"You will stop, please!" said the Canadian gentleman.

Skinner and Stott decided to stop. They did not like the look of that big walking-stick.

"I have something to say to you, my boys," continued Mr. Huggins quietly. "You are perhaps aware that I am Sidney Snoop's uncle—"

"Are you, sir?" said Skinner, as impertinently as he dared. "I really haven't the pleasure of knowing Snoop's relations. A great loss to me, I've no doubt."

"I think you are perfectly aware of the fact I have mentioned, as you have seen me here before. A short time ago, before my nephew came in, you made some remarks concerning him in my hearing."

"Did we?"

"You did. It occurs to me that those remarks were probably intended for me to hear."

"Not at all, sir. I didn't know you were listening to a private conversation!" said Skinner blandly.

"You spoke in my hearing," said Mr. Huggins, without heeding Skinner's insolence. "I think now, more than ever, that you intended me to hear. You made what amounted to a statement concerning my nephew. I require you to substantiate it."

"The fact is, I don't know much about

Snoop, and don't care to. We're not friends."

"You hinted, at least, that he was in some disreputable resort playing billiards this afternoon."

"I'm not responsible for what he does."

"Was your statement true?"

"Better ask Snoop," suggested Skinner. "I really don't feel justified, sir, in giving a chap away, though he's no friend of mine."

"You know where he was this afternoon?"

"Possibly."

"And you will not tell me?"

"Can't, really, sir. Honour, you know."

"I will not give my opinion of your honour. Come with me!"

"Eh?"

"I shall take you," said Mr. Huggins calmly, "to your Form-master, and request him to ask you to explain your observations. I am under the necessity of getting to the bottom of this matter before I leave."

"I—I—" stammered Skinner.

He made a backward move and at the same time a grip that seemed like iron was laid on his collar.

"You will come with me, please!" said the big gentleman, as Skinner wriggled helplessly in his grasp.

"I—I won't! I—I'll kick your shins if you don't let me go!" howled Skinner, desperately.

"Come!" replied Mr. Huggins, unheeding.

Skinner did not venture to kick the big gentleman's shins. Neither did he dare to be taken before his Form-master to answer for his innuendoes.

"I—I say, hold on!" he stammered.

"I—I was really only joking, sir—it was simply a little joke—wasn't it, Stott?"

"That's all!" mumbled Stott.

Mr. Huggins looked sharply at them both.

"You know where my nephew was this afternoon?" he said.

"Lots of fellows do," growled Skinner.

"I suppose Snoop's been lying, as usual, though I don't see why he should in this case."

"Where did he go, then?"

"To meet his father, of course!" grunted Skinner.

Mr. Huggins gave a violent start.

"His father!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. It wasn't a secret, that I know of."

"I did not know his father was in England. I understood that he was a soldier, in the Army of the Rhine!" exclaimed Mr. Huggins.

Skinner grinned. It dawned upon him that Snoop had been keeping this a secret from his uncle, for some reason that Skinner could not fathom, and he was quite pleased at the turn the affair was taking.

"Well, he's not on the Rhine now; he's in England," he said. "He's been demobbed weeks ago. Lots of the fellows knew that he was meeting Snoop near Greyfriars this afternoon. He can't come up to the school," continued Skinner with a grin. "He's a bit too well known to be able to look chaps in the face. He'd been in choky before he joined up."

"You are certain that my nephew went out this afternoon to meet his father?"

"You can ask Wharton or Bob Cherry if you like—they know all about it," answered Skinner. "Snoop's pater has been the talk of the Form since it came out that Snoop was saving up money for him."

"Saving up money for him?" repeated the Canadian gentleman.

Skinner chuckled.

"Yes, rather! Scraping up a bob here, and a half-crown there, like a merry miser, to help the dear old gent when he was demobbed. Ha, ha!"

"And refusing to lend a pal a quid, when he had ten or twelve locked up!" growled Stott.

The Canadian gentleman's hand dropped from Skinner's shoulder. The two young rascals walked away, glad to get to a safe distance from that exceedingly muscular Colonial gentleman. Skinner's face was quite sunny.

"Fancy lighting on that, by sheer chance!" he said. "Snoopey's keeping his pater dark from his merry old uncle. Goodness knows why, but it's plain enough that he's doing it. He's been telling the old gent lies, and we've given him away. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Skinner chortled in the deep satisfaction that he always derived from the discomfort of others.

Mr. Huggins paid no further heed to the charitable Skinner. He looked round him, and finding that Harry Wharton had finished with the bat, and was looking on, he joined the captain of the Remove. He wanted confirmation from a source more trustworthy than Harold Skinner. But Wharton, remembering Bunter's signals on the previous occasion, dried up at once at the mention of Snoop. He contrived to be called into the field, and the Canadian gentleman, rather puzzled, turned to Johnny Bull, who was chatting with Squiff.

He found Johnny more communicative. Johnny Bull had not the faintest idea that Snoop was keeping his meeting with his father a secret from his Canadian uncle, and he answered without even stopping to think.

"Do you know whether Mr. Snoop is in England yet, Bull?" Mr. Huggins asked.

"Certainly, sir!" answered Johnny. "Snoop's seeing him to-day, I believe—in fact, I know. Somewhere near Greyfriars, I suppose."

"I suppose he has been discharged from the Army?"

"Oh, yes; some weeks ago, Snoop says."

"I have heard some talk about my nephew saving money for his father. Is that the case?"

"What-ho!" answered Johnny, feeling pleased at being able to put in a good word for Snoop with his uncle. Jolly decent of old Snoopey, we all thought. The money was found in his study by accident, and Snoop had to explain. It was a lot of tin for a chap like Snoop. That's how it came out that he was saving it for his pater."

"I see!" said Mr. Huggins.

There was rather a curious expression upon his bronzed face as he walked away.

Wally Bunter had observed that interview with some uneasiness. He joined Johnny Bull when the Canadian gentleman was gone.

"Has Mr. Huggins been asking about Snoop?" he inquired.

"That's it," said Johnny. "He wanted to know about Snoop's pater."

"You—you told him?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wally.

"Why shouldn't I tell him, when he asked me?" asked Johnny Bull in surprise.

"No reason at all, only—only— My hat! I wonder what Snoop's been telling him?" muttered Wally. "Well, I gave him jolly good advice, if he's only taken it."

"Blessed if I know what you're driving at, Bunter. What do you mean?" asked Johnny Bull testily.

But Wally did not explain what he meant. The fat was in the fire now, so

to speak; and if Snoop had uttered falsehoods to his uncle he had to answer for them, and Wally could not help him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Snoop Speaks Out!

SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP came out of the School House with quite a bright face, and met his uncle in the quad. He was eager to explain to the Canadian gentleman the outcome of that sudden summons to Mr. Quelch's study. On that count, at least, he was able to plead "not guilty."

"Come with me, Sidney," said Mr. Huggins, before Snoop could speak.

He led him to an oaken bench under the elms, and sat down. The brightness died out of Snoop's face.

"Uncle," he exclaimed, "I—I want to tell you—you need only speak to Mr. Quelch. It was you smoking in my study—"

"What?"

"You remember how smoky it was,"

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said Snoop. "A prefect found it like that, and reported it, thinking it was me. It's all right. Mr. Quelch is going to ask you about it, I think!"

The Canadian gentleman burst into a laugh.

"By Jove! I believe the room was a little thick," he said. "So that was put down to you, Sidney?"

"Yes, and that was all," said Snoop eagerly. "Mr. Quelch will tell you so."

"I am glad of that, my boy. Now, to recur to the subject we were speaking of before. You told me that you went out this afternoon to see a wounded soldier?"

"That's the truth, uncle," faltered Snoop.

"What was his name?"

"His—his name?" stammered Snoop.

"Yes, his name!"

Snoop licked his dry lips. He wondered whether, during his absence, Uncle Huggins had learned anything from other fellows. The possibility dried up the deception that was on his lips.

"My boy," said the Canadian gentleman kindly, "I fear that you intended

to mislead me by what you told me. I cannot understand why. It was your father that you went to meet."

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

"It seems that my brother-in-law has been discharged from the Army, and is now home. You did not tell me so."

"Oh!"

"I have spoken to Skinner—I think his name is—and another boy. There is no doubt in my mind, Sidney, that your father is near Greyfriars, and that you went to meet him this afternoon. You attempted to deceive me!"

Snoop sat quite silent and motionless, leaning back against the trunk of the big elm behind the seat. He was feeling dizzy.

It was coming at last. His uncle knew the truth, and the miserable attempt at evasion had only made matters worse.

"Well?" said Mr. Huggins.

Snoop pulled himself together. He felt that it was all over with him, so far as his uncle was concerned. The deception gave Mr. Huggins the pretext that Snoop believed he wanted. But in his hopelessness he found something like courage.

"Well, it's true," said Snoop. He rose to his feet and stood before his uncle, the colour creeping into his pale cheeks. "I don't care! Yes, I did go to my father. I know you keep me here, and I know we should all starve if you didn't keep us. But he's my father all the same, and he comes first. I don't care! You can throw me over if you like!"

The Canadian gentleman looked at him very curiously, but did not speak. Snoop went on passionately, gathering courage with the sound of his own voice.

"You always disliked him. I dare say you had some reason, but you might have gone easy when he came such an awful cropper. And it's true that it was a wounded soldier I went to see—my father's a soldier, and he's been wounded. And I don't care what he was before that, or what he did! I'm jolly proud of him! And I don't care what you say, either—"

"Sidney!"

"I don't care! I don't care if you send me away from Greyfriars!" exclaimed Snoop passionately. "I'll ask my father to take me with him to Canada. I'm going to see him again to-morrow, and I'll ask him to take me away at once, so there! I know you don't like me, and you'd be glad to get me off your hands. Well, I won't trouble you any longer! I'll go away with my father!"

Snoop stopped, breathless.

His words had come out in a torrent, full of the bitterness and resentment that he had long been pent up within his breast.

"Sidney—" began his uncle again.

Snoop interrupted him. Now that all was lost, he meant to say his say to the full.

"Oh, I know—I know! You're done with me! I don't care! I'm sticking to my father. I don't care what he's done; and since then he's been a soldier—he's been out there, in danger of his life every day and night. I've stayed awake at nights thinking of him—thinking of the shells falling; and any one of them might have killed him. And when the letters didn't come—once—"

Snoop's voice broke.

"You don't care about that!" he burst out again. "Of course you don't! You only remember him when he was just a relation you couldn't get on with. You haven't seen him in khaki. I can tell you, that time when he was wounded, and the letters didn't come, I'd have given all your money ten times over, if

"I'd had it, to know he was safe. And now he's come home, and you're down on him just the same; but I'm not down on him, and I'm never going to be. And I won't hear a word against him, either! You can throw me off, if you like—I know you want to—"

"Have I ever said a word against your father, Sidney?" said the Canadian gentleman very quietly.

"No, you haven't; but I know what you thought—and I hated you for it!" said Snoop savagely. "I knew you looked down on him, because of what happened; and I hated you for it, and hated to take your money. I was a cur to take it! I wouldn't have if I could have helped it. But now—"

"Calm yourself, my boy! You are speaking very recklessly!" said Mr. Huggins.

His voice was stern, but his look was kind enough. That passionate outbreak on Snoop's part, disrespectful as it was, had done him more good with his uncle than any amount of wretched evasion and trickery could have done.

Snoop panted for breath.

"Well, that's all I've got to say!" he faltered. "I'm glad to get it off my mind! I know what's going to happen now, and I don't care! I can go to my father."

"When you go to your father, Sidney, I shall come with you—"

"You won't! He's got enough to stand without you adding to it!" exclaimed Snoop. "You sha'n't see him! I tried to keep it from you that he was here. You sha'n't see him!"

"I must see him, Sidney! Calm yourself, my boy! I am afraid that you have been very bitter, and very suspicious," said the Canadian gentleman compassionately. "I have nothing but good will towards your father. Of the past I will not speak; but since I learned that he was a soldier, and was at the Front, it was impossible for me to feel anything like ill will. If you had neglected your father on my account, Sidney, I should have been very angry with you."

Snoop stared at him blankly.

"That was the very last thing he had expected to hear from his Uncle Huggins."

"Wha-a-at?" he stammered.

"I did not know that your father was discharged from the Army," went on Mr. Huggins. "It was my desire to meet him as soon as he was free, and to discuss the future with him. He stands in need of help, and I am ready to give him the help he needs."

Snoop could only gasp.

"You must disabuse your mind, my boy, of the foolish bitterness and resentment you appear to have felt—for which, perhaps, I cannot blame you. You must look upon me as your friend and your father's friend."

"Oh!" stammered Snoop.

"You are seeing him to-morrow?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"Then I must come with you. My dear boy, by-gones are by-gones so far as I am concerned. My only desire is to help your father to recover the position he has lost. He has abilities, and he has had a terrible warning. The past is wiped out. The man who has been wounded in defence of his country is a man whom everyone is bound to respect. In a new land, Sidney, your father will have every opportunity of retrieving the past. I am returning to Canada in a few weeks, and it will be easy to arrange for your father to go with me."

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

Snoop felt as if his head was turning round.

"I—I've been a fool!" he stammered.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 584.

"I—I didn't know! I—I thought you still—"

"I am afraid you have done me some injustice, Sidney," answered Mr. Huggins, with a slight smile. "Perhaps I have also done you injustice. I have learned some things to-day that have raised you very much in my opinion. You will not leave Greyfriars, my boy; and to-morrow you will see your father and me shaking hands like good friends." Mr. Huggins rose to his feet. "I shall have to be leaving soon. Can you offer me some tea in your study before I go, Sidney?"

"Oh, yes, rather, uncle!" exclaimed Snoop brightly. "I—I'm a silly ass, I believe! I wish I had taken Bunter's advice. Uncle, I'm sorry I—I—"

"Never mind what you said, Sidney! I am glad that I was able to hear you speak from your heart. Come, my boy!"

Sidney James Snoop's face was like unto the rising sun as he trotted away beside the big Canadian gentleman. The clouds had rolled by at last—and in a way that Snoop had never expected.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had gathered to tea in Study No. 1 when Snoop looked in with a smiling face.

He was evidently in a happy mood.

"You fellows having tea—" he began.

"Just going to!" said Harry.

"If your esteemed and ludicrous relative has departed, my worthy Snoop, honour us by joining the festive board," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The spreadfulness on this august occasion is unusually terrific!"

"Terrifically terrific!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"My uncle's staying to tea," answered Snoop. "I—I say, I don't know whether you'd care to know, but he's a good chap—"

"We know he's a good chap," said Bob.

"He's coming with me to-morrow to meet my father," said Snoop. "They're going to make friends—"

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton.

"I—I didn't know him as he really is," said Snoop. "He's no end of a splendid chap, really! I—I say, I'm rather short of tin, owing to—to—"

"We know what it's owing to, old fellow!" said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "And this is the right study to come to!"

"I—I'd like to give my uncle a decent spread," said Snoop. "If you could help me out—"

"The helpfulness will be terrific!"

"Yes, rather!"

"This is the right establishment!" said Nugent, laughing. "We've got heaps, for once. Look here, Snoop, we'll hand over our merry supplies, if you ask us to tea with your merry uncle—"

"I was going to, if I could raise the spread!" said Snoop. "I'd be jolly glad—"

"Well, here's the spread!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll transport it to your study—just as if we were helping you carry it in from the tuckshop—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Thanks no end! I—I want to make rather a fuss of my uncle, if I can, as he's acted so rippingly—"

"Good man! We'll all play up!"

Sidney James Snoop, with a merry face, led the procession to Study No. 11. The Famous Five followed him, all well laden.

Mr. Huggins was in No. 11, fortunately

not smoking his pipe. The atmosphere had cleared off.

"My friends are coming to tea, uncle," said Snoop, rather proud of the opportunity of introducing the Famous Five as his friends. "You know them all. Oh! There's Bunter, too! I'll call Bunter!"

Snoop cut along the passage to No. 7. He found Wally Bunter with Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, just sitting down to tea.

Snoop caught the fat junior by the shoulder, and Wally Bunter blinked round at him over Billy Bunter's glasses.

"Come on, Bunter!"

Wally shook his head.

"'Nother time," he answered. "Just going to have tea, old trump! After tea, if you like. We've got shrimps."

Snoop laughed.

"I'm asking you to tea, fathead!"

"Oh, that alters the case!" Wally rose from the table. "You're looking merry and bright, Snoopey!"

"I'm feeling merry and bright," answered Sidney James.

"All right with nunky—what?" asked the fat junior, eyeing him very curiously.

"Right as rain! I wish I'd taken your advice," said Snoop.

"My dear kid, I keep good advice on tap for fags in distress," answered the fat junior benevolently.

"But it's all right—right as rain! My uncle's a brick! We're having rather a spread in my study, with nunky," said Snoop. "Come along—and you come, too, Toddy! It's a real spread!"

Peter Todd nodded.

"Never shall it be said that Study No. 7 refused an invitation to a good spread," he answered. "We'll come, and bring the shrimps."

"Tell Dutton!" said Snoop, laughing.

Peter Todd raised his voice, and addressed his deaf study-mate.

"Come on, Dutton!"

"Eh?"

"We're going to tea with Snoop!" roared Wally Bunter.

"Who's going to whoop?" asked Dutton, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tea!" roared Wally Bunter. "See? Tea with Snoop! We're all going to tea in No. 11!"

"What rot!" said Dutton. "Snoop will never be in the Eleven. Not unless he improves his cricket a good bit, anyway. Look at the way he bowls!"

Wally Bunter took a sheet of impot paper and a pen, and scrawled, and held up the result before Tom Dutton's eyes.

"Tea with Snoop!"

Dutton looked at it, and nodded.

"All right!" he answered. "I'll come, with pleasure; but I don't believe Snoop's going into the Eleven, all the same."

"Come along!"

"Wrong? I should jolly well say so! You've got it wrong if you think Wharton would be ass enough to put Snoop in the Eleven."

"Oh, my hat! Yank him along by his ears, Peter!"

Peter Todd chuckled, and took his deaf study-mate by the arm. Tom Dutton was led away to No. 11—it was easier than explaining.

With Snoop and Todd and Bunter and Dutton, and the Famous Five and Mr. Huggins, No. 11 was pretty full. But there was still room, somehow, for Vernon-Smith and Redwing and Squiff when they dropped in, and Tom Brown and Mark Linley were called in as they were spotted passing the door. Fortunately, the supplies were equal to the occasion.

It was quite a merry feast in Snoop's study. Skinner and Stott judiciously remained absent. They were the only

Remove fellows who did not want to meet the Canadian gentleman.

Mr. Huggins, in great good humour, was the life of the little party—and Snoop's face was very happy. It was quite clear that all his old bitterness and distrust of his uncle had vanished.

He was looking forward to the morrow, too, and the good news he had for his father. In Uncle Huggins the "demobbed" man was to find a friend in need, and help in retrieving the mistakes and misfortunes of the past. No wonder Sidney James Snoop's face was brighter than the Remove fellows had ever seen it before.

After tea, as dusk was falling, quite a little army escorted Uncle Huggins to the gates, and saw him off on the road to Courtfield.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the House, Snoop following more slowly with Wally Bunter.

"Uncle's coming again to-morrow," said Snoop. "He's calling for me in the afternoon, to go with me and meet my father. Isn't he a brick?"

"One of the very best," answered Wally heartily. "I don't want to say I told you so, Snoopey; but really—"

"You were right, old chap. And—and—I think I've been rather an ass!"

said Snoop slowly. "I—I've been suspicious and—and distrustful. I can't help thinking, Bunter, that if I'd been a better chap myself I shouldn't have been so afraid of my uncle, and should have trusted him more."

"Jolly likly!" agreed Wally, with a grin.

Snoop coloured, and laughed.

"It's turned out all right," he said; "but it's going to be a bit of a lesson to me, Bunter. I believe it's better, in the long run, to play straight, instead of tricky dodges—I'm going to bear that in mind."

And Wally Bunter hoped that he would.

Harry Wharton & Co. had the pleasure of seeing Uncle Huggins again the next day.

He called at Greyfriars for his nephew, and the Co. saw them start for the old Priory—Snoop breaking into a trot occasionally to keep pace with the long strides of the Canadian gentleman.

It was a couple of hours later that Sidney James returned, alone, with a smiling face, and Wally Bunter met him in the quad as he came in.

"All serene?" he asked, with a smile.

"You bet! The pater was no end sur-

prised when he saw me turn up with Uncle Huggins," chuckled Snoop. "But he was pleased enough when Mr. Huggins shook hands with him just as if they'd parted yesterday on the best of terms. I've left them talking—making plans for the future. They're going back to London together to-morrow."

"Good!"

"And the pater's going out to Canada with Uncle Huggins," said Snoop. "In a week or two, you know. I think he'll get on there, too. I say, isn't it ripping? I'm feeling as jolly as anything!"

"Same here!" said Wally Bunter cheerfully. "I'm playing in the Redclyffe match on Wednesday. So we're both in high feather. I've got some ginger-pop in my study. Come up and celebrate the joyful occasion!"

And the joyful occasion was duly celebrated; Wally Bunter little dreaming of what was to happen before the Redclyffe match was played on Wednesday. But that is another story.

(Next Monday's story is entitled "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE!" and describes the return of Billy Bunter to Greyfriars. This story will be in great demand, so ORDER NOW!)



Goggs, Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys—Goggs, Blount, Trickett, and Waters—come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Franklingham, which has been burnt down.

Goggs is a ventriloquist, a ju-jitsu expert, and an all-round sportsman, though he behaves like a simpleton.

The old feud between Rylcombe Grammar School and St. Jim's is revived, and Johnny Goggs takes a hand.

(Now read on.)

The Eavesdropper.

JASPER WEIRD shoved his head out of a window near by and spoke to Goggs.

"And has your feminine relation Made her departure for the station?"

he asked, talking in rhyme, as was his wont. "Eh?" said Goggs, with a hand to his right ear and the most stupid expression imaginable upon his simple face.

Weird repeated his query impatiently. "Why does he whisper so?" demanded Goggs of his chums.

"He wants to know whether Granny's gone," said Bags, grinning.

"Oh, I am not sure. Weird! It is very kind of you to inquire. I somehow missed her, you know. It has grieved me very much indeed."

"Your statement really makes me smile.

A miss is better than a mile

In such a case.

For such a face

As hers I ne'er before have seen

Since on this blessed earth I've been,"

said the rhymester rudely.

Goggs stared at him, more in sorrow than in anger. Then from the end of the passage sounded the voice of Goggs—the thin, high

voice which was not in the least like that of Goggs.

"Oh, there is that very clever little boy who makes the rhymes! Let me kiss him for his mother!" it said.

"My hat!" gasped Weird, frightened out of his wits for once.

His head disappeared, and the door slammed. From within came the voice of Tadpole, lifted in reproach to Weird for his rudeness.

"Hasn't Granny gone?" asked Bags, with a wink.

"I am not sure," answered Goggs thoughtfully. "Her speaking to Weird does not positively commit her to another appearance here. But I think it quite possible that she may appear again. She may even visit St. Jim's, though if she does so it must be as someone else's ancestor."

"I noticed that you didn't bring your clobber away," said Wagtail.

"Dear me, Waters! Have you taken to noticing things?"

"None of your sars, now! Yes, I've noticed, too, that I've a jolly sore mouth, where that St. Jim's boulder I fought with got home. That's why I haven't been saying anything."

"Do not distress your jaw on our account, dear boy. But fighting—eh? Oh, Waters, Waters, must you fight? Is it not better to keep the peace, even as I do?"

"Bet you ten to one that you're forced to fight within twenty-four hours, Goggles!" snorted Wagtail.

"I? But it is well known here, my young friend, that I do not fight."

"Is it? Think that's going to save you, do you? Why, that's just the kind of thing that would set Snipe on to you, fathead!"

"Oh! Then it is with Snipe that you fancy I shall be forced into combat? What a truly dreadful prospect!"

Wagtail nodded.

"Him or Larking," he said. "I don't think

Carpenter will be on. Most likely Snipe. The other chap will think you below his weight."

"What makes you imagine this, Waters?" asked Goggs.

"Heard them talking after they came out of Gay's study. Going to take it out of you for bringing a grandmother like that to the school, they say."

"Do you think they smell a rat?" inquired Bags.

The four were in their study now, and able to talk freely without risk of being overheard—or so they imagined.

But in that they erred. Carter had come round the corner of the passage just as they went in, and had caught a word or two of what Wagtail had said.

Now he applied his ear to the keyhole. Everyone was supposed to be at prep. It was unlikely, therefore, that he would be disturbed in his eavesdropping; but he was cautious enough to take precautions against any such disturbance.

He took out a sixpence and laid it close to the door. If anyone came along he had dropped the coin accidentally and was just retrieving it.

"You mean, I apprehend, do I think that they think—"

"I don't mean anything of the sort, Goggles! I want to know what Wagtail thinks," said Bags.

"But the real question is—does Wagtail think?" murmured Goggs.

Carter missed that; but he heard quite plainly what Waters said.

"I don't fancy they know that Goggs is Granny. But they reckon Granny was no end of a rummy specimen, and they think it jolly queer that Goggles didn't show up while she was here."

"Why do they not take the same view as our friend Weird, who evidently considers the rumminess of Granny a sufficient reason for my not showing up? It would be so much

more convenient if they took that view," Goggs said.

"I'm not dead sure that Larking & Co. are at all keen on your convenience, Johnny dear," remarked Tricks.

"Not? How unkind of them! But they must not know. I have devised a plan by which Granny and I may take the stage at one and the same time. That will make it quite clear to them that I am not Granny. It is true that I am, and that we shall be, in a certain measure, deceiving them. But I consider that a little—just a very little—deceit is pardonable in such circumstances," Goggs said.

Carker was drinking in every word. "The voice dodge won't do it," Tricks objected. "It's too thin. You'll only go giving away the fact that you're a ventriloquist."

The eavesdropper drew a long, deep breath. So Goggs was a ventriloquist! This was news indeed!

"It is not the voice—er—dodge, Tricks. Someone else must enact the role of my revered female ancestor—or should I say ancestress? No, it would be mere tautology to say female ancestress, I think. What is your opinion, my dear Bagshaw?"

"Eh? I think you'll find it jolly hard to get anyone to take on the giddy job."

"Giddy job? We appear to be talking at cross purposes. Oh, I perceive now! I had thought of Waters."

"Oh, had you? And what had you thought of me? Do you think I'm ass enough to put that beastly clobber on, and paint and powder my dial, and pretend—"

"My dear man, I really put no limit to your essential asininity! But as you do not feel equal to the role, I must think of someone who can sustain it."

"There's Gay," said Tricks. "They say he's no end good at acting."

"Ah, I may allow Gay to take the part!"

"Better get on with our prep, hadn't we?" said Bags.

Carker picked up his sixpence, and went. He went to his own study, for he wanted to think out what he had heard. But within an hour he looked in to see Larking & Co.

Carpenter got up. Carpenter did not like Carker, though there seemed no special reason why he should be able to stand Snipe and yet should bar the other outsider. There was little to choose between them.

"Where are you off to, Carp?" asked Larking.

"I'm going to give Lacy a look-in. Ta-ta!"

"You're not going on my account, I hope, Carpenter?" said Carker, in his oiliest tones.

"Oh, not at all! But I'm going!"

And Carpenter went.

"I suppose he doesn't care to hear," Carker remarked.

"What have you got something to tell us?" said Larking.

"I rather guess so! Something that really matters, too!"

"We've had some of your yarns before," Snipe said doubtfully.

"And some of yours!" retorted Carker.

Larking grinned.

"Well, there certainly isn't a lot to choose between you two," he said politely. "You can tell 'em, you know, both of you. But say on, Carker!"

And Carker said on.

Goggs Astonishes the Dormitory.

"THESE bounders are up to something!" whispered Bags to Tricks as they went upstairs that night.

Larking & Co. were ahead of them, talking together in rather a mysterious manner as they mounted.

Carpenter had been taken into the secret. He did not look at the affair in quite the same light as the other two; but there was one feature of it that made him share their desire for revenge.

He had interfered to protect the supposed elderly lady from Larking; and the supposed elderly lady turned out to have been Goggs!

It was not hard for Carpenter to forgive Larking for that savage blow. They had quarrelled before this, and had always made it up again very soon.

But it would have been very hard for Carpenter to forgive Larking had he tried to rub in the spoof that had so effectively deceived him. Snipe did try that on; but Larking shut him up at once.

And Carpenter really did not feel it possible to forgive Goggs—at least, until he had got even with him.

The trio were determined to get even with Goggs that night; and the manner in which they meant to do it had been pretty correctly guessed by Wagtail.

Snipe was no warrior; but Snipe had been persuaded by Larking that he could certainly thrash Goggs, and had expressed himself willing to do so.

Larking meant to let him try. He had little faith in Snipe, even when opposed to an opponent so little formidable as he believed Goggs to be. But if Snipe went down, there were Carpenter and himself in reserve; and he had no doubt at all that either of them could smash up the simple-looking new fellow.

The other three had to be taken into consideration, of course. If a general attack were made upon Goggs, they would chip in at once. But they could hardly prevent a fight between him and Snipe, if Snipe could goad him into fighting; and, should Snipe be licked, they could not well object to his place being taken by one of his chums.

So Larking & Co. waited until lights were out to force a fight; and their intention was to wait until after Goggs had been licked before disclosing the fact that they knew of his impersonation.

Larking opened the ball.

"Have you a grandmother, Tadpole?" he asked.

"Yes, I have, Larking. But I really do not know that I have any desire to discuss my aged female relatives with you."

Tadpole had taken a liking to Goggs from the first. He fancied that he recognised in him a kindred spirit, and there he was wrong. But the friendliness and politeness with which Goggs had treated him were enough to justify his liking.

"Shouldn't think Lark would want to discuss them," said Carpenter. "If they're anything like you, Taddy, they would be weird!"

"Is it not rather of Weird's possible ancestresses in the second generation upwards that you are talking Carpenter?" asked Goggs mildly. "I trust you will understand, my dear Weird, that I intend no disrespect to any relative of yours."

"Your silly rot my mind befogs; I cannot listen to you, Goggs!"

replied Weird.

"You are really not very polite, Weird!"

"I do not care to be polite to such a simple, gawky fright!"

Jasper answered.

"Talking about grannies," put in Snipe, "the one we saw to-day was the giddy outside edge. Her dress—Oh, my hat!"

"Would your hat go well with her dress, Snipe?" queried Tricks.

Snipe took no notice of him.

"And her manners!" he went on.

"Crumbs!"

"And her arms!" said Bags cheerily.

"Some muscle, Snipe—what!"

But Snipe would not reply to Bags.

"Old harridan!" he sniffed.

"Snipe," said Goggs gravely, "it would be as well for all concerned if you understood that I regard an insult to my grandmother as an insult to myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shorted Wagtail.

He did not suspect that Larking & Co. understood well enough what Goggs meant. An insult to Granny was an insult to Johnny, for Goggs was the only grandmother Goggs had—though he had been wont to talk of his detective uncle as his grandmother in his early days at Frankingham.

"Right-ho! You can take it that I've insulted you, Puttyface!" said Snipe.

"That can only be washed out in her-lood!" proclaimed Tricks, in a sepulchral voice.

"Hear, hear!" cried Larking and Carpenter.

Snipe did not add his voice to theirs.

Now that it came to the pinch Snipe was not at all sure that he wanted to get out of bed to fight Goggs.

But he took comfort from the fact that Goggs did not appear to be any more anxious to get out of bed to fight him.

"Goggs won't fight!" sneered Larking.

"I fail to see how you can know that, Larking!" said Goggs mildly. "There are occasions upon which even the most truly pacific individual may feel himself called upon to elevate his ears—is it ears, or lords, my dear Bagshaw?"

"I think you must mean dukes," replied Bags.

"I was very nearly right, then. To elevate his—er—dukes in order to bestow a—er—is thick nose a proper term?"

"Oh, chuck that rot!" snorted Larking.

"You can't gas yourself out of it, you know!"

"Out of what, Larking?"

"Out of fighting Snipe, of course!"

"But I assure you that I am perfectly willing and quite ready to fight Snipe! My performance in the pugilistic way may not be all that a critical company would regard as really first-rate, but—"

"Shin out!" cut in Tricks. "Snipe's getting out, though he doesn't seem in any frantic hurry!"

"I am out!" snarled Snipe.

"I am also out!" announced Goggs. "So, however, is the light, and we can hardly give each other—er—thick noses in the dark, except by a concatenation of circumstances which is hardly to be anticipated."

Larking lighted a candle-end.

"Pull down all the blinds, and we can have a proper light on," he said.

The blinds were pulled down, and the gas was relit.

"Do we not have gloves?" inquired Goggs.

"Got none up here!" growled Carpenter.

"There you are mistaken, Carpenter, for I have a really nice pair of lavender kids," Goggs said blandly.

"Here's something more in the right line," said Tricks, diving into his trunk and producing a new pair of boxing-gloves.

He hurled them at Goggs, who caught them deftly enough, but looked at them as if he had never seen anything of the sort before.

"What very curious things!" he said.

It appeared that the gloves Tricks had brought out were the only pair available.

So Goggs made a suggestion.

"As there is but one pair, and I do not wish to take undue advantage, I am willing to yield them up to Snipe," he said.

"My hat! And he doesn't want to take advantage!" gasped Snipe.

"It would appear that I have committed a faux pas," Goggs said, looking around him with a benignant smile. "Pardon me; my silly mistake. I'm always making them. I am quite willing to don the gloves myself, if Snipe would prefer to have it that way."

"If they're going to be used at all I should prefer it!" answered the heroic Snipe.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Carpenter.

Everybody was out of bed now, even Tadpole and Weird.

To the surprise of Carpenter and Larking, Bags & Co. raised no objection to Goggs' offer, which, of course, amounted to allowing Snipe a distinct handicap.

"Look here," whispered Larking, "those bounders have got something up their giddy sleeves!"

"Well, what's up Goggs' isn't muscle," said Carpenter, grinning.

But in that estimate Carpenter erred.

Bags fastened the gloves on his chum's hands.

"I say, you know, I didn't ask for that," remarked Snipe dubiously.

"But I wish it!" said Goggs. "Bagshaw, I like the feel of these boxing-gloves. Reminds one of foxgloves, and other nice rural things, does it not? I think that I can smack Snipe's very unpleasant face quite hard with them."

"You'll second me, I suppose, Lark?" snarled Snipe.

He noted the fact that none of Goggs' chums hastened to point out to him that there were more effective ways of using boxing-gloves than smacking with them, and his uneasiness increased.

"And you shall second me, my dear Bagshaw!" said Goggs, with a beaming smile. "And my friend Trickett shall third me, if that be considered needful."

Again Bags & Co. abstained from remark.

Beds were shifted to give more room, and Carpenter took out his watch.

Snipe and Goggs faced one another, Snipe with bare fists, Goggs gloved.

The great combat was over in less than five seconds.

One glove, open, smacked Snipe on the right cheek. The other, also open, smacked him on the left. Then the left fist shot out, and Snipe took it on the point of the jaw, and went down with a mighty thwack.

He lay gazing up at the ceiling while Carpenter counted him out. To do him justice.

he could not have got up in time. But it would be doing him a great deal more than justice to pretend that he had any desire to do so.

"Did I hit him properly, my dear Bagshaw?" asked Goggs, with seeming intense anxiety.

"An Al fluke, dear boy, if you didn't intend it," replied Bags.

"Oh, I certainly intended to hit him! I consider him a person needing chastisement. But is he not going to get up and receive some more?"

"He's licked!" said Wagtail.

"You mean—er—defeated, Waters, my dear friend?"

"That's it, fathead!"

"And to think," said Goggs musingly, as he gazed down at the still prostrate Snipe, "that I should actually have defeated someone in pugilistic combat! Now, I wonder—I do wonder—what my dear grandmother would say?"

"Rats!"

"No, Trickett, no! In the exuberance of her ever youthful spirits, I have heard my grandmother make use of expressions which might be considered somewhat—er—slangy by a purist; but I have never heard her say 'rats' except when referring to rodents—which, by the way, she very much dislikes. Er—I really beg your pardon, Carpenter?"

"I said that if you'd take those gloves off—you can hand them over to me if you like—I'd have a turn-up with you!" snapped Carpenter.

"Does he mean—er—another pugilistic combat?" inquired Goggs.

"That's the size of it," replied Bags.

"Then I would greatly prefer to retain the gloves."

"I can't have that!" said Carpenter. "I don't believe you're the dud you've made yourself out to be. That was no dud punch you gave Snipe. But I don't care for a handicap."

"Don't be a silly ass!" hissed Larking in Carpenter's ear.

"I would really like to retain the gloves," said Goggs. "They may prevent painful abrasions of the knuckles."

Still Carpenter hesitated.

Then Bags spoke out.

"Go on!" he said. "We sha'n't say it wasn't fair!"

"But I protest!" put in Tadpole. "It really is not quite fair. Goggs, in his innocence, may so consider it; but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bags and Tricks and Wagtail all together.

And with that laugh the last flickering remnant of illusion as to Goggs' innocence of matters pugilistic vanished from the minds of Larking & Co.

Carpenter saw that he was hard up against it. But he was no funk; and Goggs did not look his match, even unhandicapped by gloves.

Tricks took the watch.

"I will shake hands with you, Carpenter," said Goggs. "I believe it to be usual; but I really objected to shaking hands with Snipe."

They shook hands, and just as the fight began the dormitory was invaded.

Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, the Wootton brothers, Lane, Carboy, and Mont Blanc trooped in.

Bags & Co. greeted them with cheery smiles, Larking and Snipe with scowls. Goggs took no notice of them at all, and Carpenter had not the chance.

He was hard up against it indeed!

Carpenter was not at all a bad boxer, but he was not in the same class as Goggs.

The mild-faced new boy tapped him when and where he chose. But he only tapped. Goggs did not want to hurt Carpenter.

Carpenter wanted to hurt Goggs, though, and he tried all he knew to do it. He got home one under Goggs' chin, but Goggs only tossed his head and smiled.

"Fight, hang you!" snorted Carpenter.

"Ouch! Owwww!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth he had had all the fight for which he had need. A regular pile-driver, very near the mark, had sent him flying.

He was counted out.

"Bravo, Goggles!" cried Gordon Gay.

"What on earth does the beggar do it with?" asked Harry Wootton.

"Feel his biceps!" said Tricks.

Wootton minor felt.

"My word!" he said. "Steel and whipcord—that's what they are!"

"Will you oblige, Larking?" asked Goggs politely. "Or perhaps you are not yet sufficiently recovered from the effects of—"

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE DEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

SPECIAL EASTER ATTRACTION!

For the convenience of our readers the next issue of the MAGNET will be on sale at all news-agents' on Saturday, April 19th.

"THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE!"

By Frank Richards.

The title of our next grand long complete story of Greyfriars School will tell my readers what to expect. William George Bunter, who has no scruples whatever in breaking the compact he made with his cousin, returns to his own school.

In vain Wally Bunter remonstrates with the Owl of the Remove. Billy has made St. Jim's altogether too hot to hold him; and at length he is compelled to shake its dust off his feet and inflict his undesirable presence upon Harry Wharton & Co. once more.

A great surprise is in store for the Greyfriars fellows, and many lively and amusing incidents mark

"THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE!"

A fine story this, and one which no reader of the MAGNET Library or its companion papers can afford to miss.

A GRIEVANCE AND ITS REMEDY.

"Where is now the merry party
I remember long ago?"

Such is the plaint of many of my chums who write to say that they would love to read of the early schooldays of Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co., and especially of the period when Vernon-Smith, justly known in those days as the Bounder, first came to Greyfriars. The answer to this long, long wail is obvious.

READ THE "PENNY POP."

It's a three-halfpenny "Pop" now, by the way, but the additional halfpenny imposed by war-time conditions is well worth expending. Indeed, if the "Popular" were a three-penny paper it would be good value for the money.

Very shortly, too, the "Pop" will be in greater demand than ever, for great innovations will take place. The nature of these innovations I may not even whisper as yet, except to remark that Messrs. Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest will have a hand in them!

AN UNCONSCIOUS TRIBUTE.

Letters from grumblers and from disappointed critics are becoming "small by degrees and beautifully less." But here is one which, if only on account of the peculiar way in which it is phrased, deserves reproduction on this page:

"Worcester Park.

"To the Editor of the MAGNET Library.

"Sir,—I am writing to tell you that the fellows who read the MAGNET every week are a lot of silly asses. I read it every week myself, and words quite fail to describe the stories.

"I regard your paper with silent content, and hope it will go down to prosperity like the rag it is!

"Yours witheringly,

"E. F. TRAIN."

So long as this amiable person continues to regard the MAGNET Library with "silent content" I feel sure we shall weather the storm successfully.

As for the paper "going down to prosperity," I am not quite sure whether this is a compliment or not; but I feel very much constrained to go down to Worcester Park and make a remark which would be very appropriate to Master Train, namely: "Travel!"

THE OLD, OLD QUERY!

I am still being besieged with letters from certain readers who cynically inquire if Harry Wharton & Co. are going to remain fifteen years of age for the rest of their lives. If these critical folk expect me to make the MAGNET Library a medium for doddering and decrepit old jossers with the gout they are quite offside. I refuse to do anything of the sort. Fancy Frank Richards opening a story something like this:

"Harry Wharton raised himself from his bathchair with a groan.

"Pass my crutches, Bob!" he wheezed.

"Not this evening!" said Bob Cherry, with a hollow chuckle. "I'm off to draw my Old Age Pension!"

If the Greyfriars juniors were portrayed as ancient men about to drop, methinks the circulation of the MAGNET would drop, too!

For the benefit of my boy and girl readers the whole world over, Harry Wharton & Co. are going to emulate Peter Pan, and never grow up. We don't want them to—at least, the majority of us don't. Let us have youth and vigour, freshness and vitality! "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth!" Old age must come, of course; but we have secured total exemption for the Greyfriars fellows!

NOTICES.

Football.

SOUTH ELSMALL JUNIORS—10¹/₂—10 miles.—Louis Rodgers, 34, Westfield Lane, South Elmsall, near Pontefract.

Boy of 15 wants to join football team, goal or anything else, for this and next season—5 miles radius—postage paid.—Chas. K. Watts, 128, Havelock Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 19.

MAYFLOWER F.C.—14-15—6 miles—home and away.—A. Stewart, 3, Carnegie Gardens, Port Glasgow.

Thomas Riley, 40, Fox Street, Canning Town, E. 16—with readers wishing to join a football club which he is forming. Stamped addressed envelope.

R. F. Tickle, 10, Crescent Road, Leyton, E. 10, wants place in team—5 miles—half-back or back.

Two good players want any place in team—6 miles of London.—E. A. Child, 143, Harkwood Road, Peckham, S.E. 15.

Players wanted, aged 13.—R. G. Mason, 39, Loftus Road, Shepherd's Bush, W. 12. Stamped addressed envelope.

CANN HALL BAPTIST F.C.—16—wants match for Easter Monday—10 miles—Epping district preferred.—A. Spraggs, 206, Odessa Road, Forest Gate, E. 7.

ESTLERS UNITED JUN.—16-17—3 miles—away preferred.—T. Jewers, 147, Mortlake Road, Custom House, E. 16.

Cricket.

EARLSMEAD ATHLETIC—15-17—5 miles.—Sec., 45, Lennox Road, Finsbury Park, London, N. 4.

CORMONT CRICKET CLUB—16—home and away.—Sec., 2, Oval Place, Clapham, S.W. 8.

E. Morphew, 62, Bickerton Road, Highgate, N. 19, wants place in cricket team—age 15¹/₂—good left-handed bowler and fair bat. Write or call.

AVENUE C.C.—17—3 miles—good players also wanted.—W. L. Peers, 34, Broxash Road, Clapham Common, S.W. 11.

MARCONI MESSENGERS' C.C.—all dates—home and away.—F. Jones, Marconi Messengers, 1, Fenchurch Street, E.C. 2.

LABURNUM JUNIORS—16.—H. Brogden, 478, Gorton Road, Reddish, Stockport.

CLAREDALE ATHLETIC.—A cycling and cricket section is being formed—15-17¹/₂—Sec., John E. Day, 29, Thorpe Road, Barking, E.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR.)

A howl of fury from Larking cut short the reference to his fight with Frank Monk.

"Take those gloves off, and I'm on!" yelled Larking.

Goggs held out his hands to Bags, and the gloves were stripped off.

"I suppose the bump was when Snipey got the order of the knock—eh?" said Jack Wootton to Bags.

"Your supposition, my dear Wootton, is absolutely correct," was the reply.

"Oh, come off it! We can't have more than one of you talking that lingo!"

"I'll second Larking," said Lane. "Snipe and Carpenter don't look quite fit for the job."

"It won't take you long, old sport!" remarked Bags.

Bags was right.

Even had Goggs retained the gloves, Larking would have been no match for him.

Watching him, Gordon Gay & Co. wondered whether they had among them all a match for Goggs.

Gay was the hottest of the crowd, and he would have had several advantages over the ex-Frankinghamian. But Goggs' superiority in cleverness would have made up for them all.

It was unlikely, however, that the question would ever be put to the test. Goggs' pacifism, though it had its limits, was real.

He was not a fellow to quarrel easily with those he counted friends.

Larking fought hard, but he fought a losing battle from the first exchanges.

Goggs would not punch him in the face, already pretty badly damaged by Monk; and Larking could not punch Goggs in the face—it was never in the right place when he punched at it.

But Goggs got home heavily again and again on the body of his opponent, and Larking, whose condition was not quite first-class, was soon blowing hard.

For four rounds he stuck it out, though it was plain to all that Goggs could have given him the knock-out earlier had he chosen.

Then he crashed down, and did not get up again until the count had been taken.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" said Gay. "If this isn't a surprise to the dormitory—and to us!"

"Leave us out, please!" said Bags. "We knew!"

"Rather!" spoke Tricks and Wagtail together.

A Council of War.

"I'm on!" said Gordon Gay readily.

Bags shook his head.

"Can't be, did!" he said.

"And why can't it, chump?" asked Wagtail.

"Because Gay's taller and bigger every way than Goggs—that's why."

It was the day after Goggs had taken Snipe, Carpenter, and Larking in turn, and had licked all of them with ease. Those in the secret as to Goggs had assembled in Gordon Gay & Co.'s study to discuss a new movement in the plan of campaign.

There were present Gay himself, Frank Monk, Jack and Harry Wootton, Lane, Carboy, and Mont Blanc, with the four new fellows—Goggs, Monus, Trickett, and Waters.

"Not much in that," remarked Frank Monk, shifting a critical gaze from Goggs to Gay.

"It's true enough, as far as it goes; but the clobber will take off a lot of it. And, whatever you chaps may think about it, I tell you this—Gordon can jolly well play any part every bit as well as Goggs, and better!"

"Much better, I do not doubt," said Goggs politely. "And in this particular case the part would really be so much more suitable to Gay than it is to me."

"What? Why? What are you getting at, you glass-eyed fathead?" snorted Gay.

"Glass-eyed curate is the correct epithet," said Tricks. "Member poor old Chiker, Johnny?"

"Did somebody call Goggs a glass-eyed curate?" asked Carboy. "Ha, ha! 'Pon my word, it was a jolly good name for him!"

"I have been called many worse things," Goggs said blandly. "Gayful, you are not truly polite; but I suppose you expect an answer to your question. I consider that you are naturally much more suited to the part of an elderly female than I am."

"Oh, am I, then? And why am I?"

"Because you can act so much more realistically, of course," replied Goggs, with his most engaging smile.

"Rats! You're a bigger ass than I thought you were!"

"Is that possible, my dear Joyful?"

"I can act your head off, anyway!"

Goggs stroked his face and then the back of his head in reflective fashion.

"If you can provide me with a new one—a much nicer-looking one—I should not mind that at all," he said pathetically. "Now that I have been found out, I have ceased to consider it an advantage—at least, an unmixed advantage—to have such a face as mine. Alas, my poor face!"

"Your face is all right, ass!" growled Wootton major.

"And you haven't been found out by anyone who matters," Wootton minor said. "We know, but then, we've a right to know, and it won't spoil the fun that we should."

But Wootton minor was wrong in part. Goggs had been found out by those who were not to be trusted with the secret.

Carker had played the eavesdropper, and through him Larking & Co. now knew that it was Goggs himself who had played the part of Goggs' grandmother, and that he was a ventriloquist.

Moreover, they were watching for Gay's appearance in the grandmother role, having heard its possibility talked of before Gay himself had been told anything about it.

But of this the assembled sharers of the secret were blissfully ignorant.

Had they known of it they would have foreseen an early end to the japing which could be got out of the granny wheeze and the ventriloquism. Not knowing it, they had hopes of carrying on for some little time yet.

"Look here, glass-eyed curate," said Lane, grinning, "see what you can do in the way

of making Gay as Granny! Then we can tell you whether it's good enough."

"Don't you suppose I can make up myself, you silly cuckoo?" snapped Gordon Gay.

"There is a slight difficulty in the way," said Goggs. "The habiliments—"

"The which?" gasped Wootton minor.

"He means the clobber," explained Tricks.

"The clobber," said Goggs gravely. "I thank thee, Trickett, for teaching me that word! Quotation, Shakespeare—adapted. Shakespeare did not mention Tricks, owing probably to the fact that he did not know him. I desire to make things clear as I proceed, for I have begun to recognise the class of brains—we call them brains, it is polite, if not veracious—"

"Tell me when he stops talking and says something!" hooted Gordon Gay, stopping his ears with his hands.

"The Granny clobber's in the barn," said Bags. "Sorry, Johnny, old bird; but we can't always give you your giddy head when there's bizney to be done, you know."

"Well, someone can go and fetch it, can't they?" said Monk.

"That is—er—quite an idea!" murmured Goggs. "I perceive in our friend Nuts the rudimentary principles of what might be termed thinking."

"Your friend what, you—you glass-eyed curate?"

"Oh, beg pardon, my silly mistake—I'm always making them! Monkey, I should have said."

"No, you jolly well shouldn't!"

Goggs sighed.

"However well one may mean, it seems hard to be right," he said sorrowfully. "I propose that we all—or as many of us as may be considered necessary—go to the barn. The objection to the course suggested by our friend Baboo—I should say, Chimpan—no, no, Monkey!—is that it will arouse suspicion if Granny is seen making her appearance from one of the studies, whereas—"

"The ass is right there!" said Wootton major, cutting Goggs short ruthlessly. "It won't do!"

"Look here, though," Carboy warned them, "suppose we run against any of the St. Jim's hounders, and they twig Goggs? That will put the complete kybosh on a bigger jape than bringing Granny back here."

"The complete kybosh"—what a truly eloquent phrase!" murmured Goggs.

But no one took any notice of his comment.

They were all looking at one another rather doubtfully.

"Carboy's right," said Gay. "He isn't often right; but he's hit the mark this time. What's to be done?"

"Goggs will have to stay here," replied Wootton major.

"Indeed, my dear Wooden, I shall do nothing of the sort!" said Goggs decidedly.

"Will you all excuse me for just one moment?"

He was close to the door as he spoke; and Carker, listening at the keyhole, left his sixpence, and was strolling down the corridor when he popped out.

The sixpenny-bit was Carker's excuse in the event of anyone's seeing him bending with an ear in suspicious closeness to the keyhole. But the warning he had got by overhearing Goggs' polite request to be excused had given him time to get away, and in his haste he had forgotten the coin.

He remembered it within a second, but went on, hoping that Goggs would fall to see it. Carker was very near in money matters, and the loss of sixpence would strike him as a blow.

Goggs seldom missed much, however. He spotted the coin at once.

He stooped and picked it up.

"Have you dropped anything, Carker?" he asked.

"Er—no—at least, I don't think so!" replied the sneak, fumbling in his pocket. "What have you found?"

"A coin," said Goggs.

"I—I— No, I don't think I've dropped a coin," Carker said reluctantly.

The sixpence had lain within a foot of the door, and Carker was no longer under the illusion that Goggs was as big an ass as he looked.

But still he underrated the new boy's acuteness.

"Then it must belong to someone else," said Goggs, putting away the coin. "I will make inquiries about it."

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