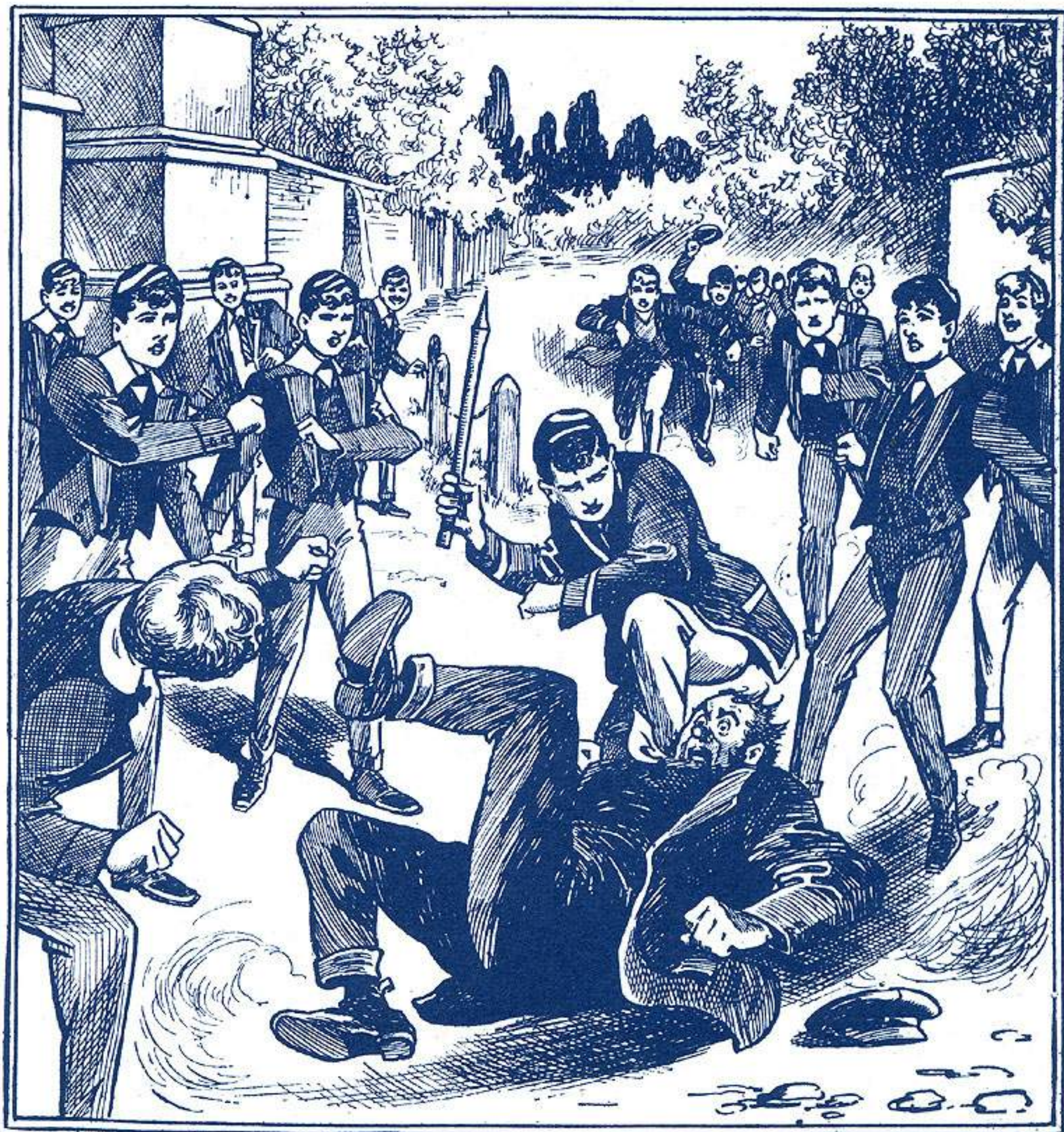


TOM REDWING'S FATHER!



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TOM REDWING'S FATHER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Skinner Exceeds the Limit!

"WHAT about Redwing?" repeated Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"It's time Redwing had a chance of playing for the Remove in a good match," said Vernon-Smith.

"Not a bad idea!" chimed in Bob Cherry. "Redwing can play, you know!"

"The playfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton, captain of the Greyfriars Remove, reflected. Tom Redwing was almost a new fellow at Greyfriars; and the match that afternoon was a hard one, with Highcliffe juniors.

"You've got to put in somebody, Harry," remarked Frank Nugent. "If Smithy can't play—"

"How's your wrist, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"Rotten!" he answered. "I couldn't hold a bat!"

"Of all the duffers!" Wharton said crossly. "You had to go and get crocked just before we're playing Courtenay's team! Why couldn't you leave it till to-morrow?"

"Well, it was Skinner's fault," said the Bounder. "The silly ass caught me on the wrist with the foil."

Wharton frowned. He was not suspicious, but he knew Skinner; and he wondered whether the cad of the Remove had crocked Vernon-Smith intentionally just before the Highcliffe match. But whether that was so or not, the Bounder certainly was crocked, and his place had to be filled. And Ogilvy and Russell, either of whom could have filled it, were away that afternoon on a visit to one of Ogilvy's soldier brothers at Wapshot.

"I suppose I'd better make it Redwing," said the captain of the Remove at last. "After all, he's a good bat, and a good man in the field. I suppose Wibley and Desmond will want to scalp me if I do!"

"A cricket captain's business is to be scalped!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's one of the responsibilities of office."

"I'll cut off and tell him!" said the Bounder. "Redwing was going to Hawkscliff this afternoon to see some of his old friends there. I believe he's at the bike-shed now!"

"For goodness' sake, don't let him clear off!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Right-ho!"

Vernon-Smith hurried away to the bike-shed to catch Tom Redwing before he started. Harry Wharton pencilled the name of Redwing in the list on the notice-board, where the name of Herbert Vernon-Smith had been crossed out.

"After all, Redwing's a good man, though he hasn't played much here," said Harry, his brow clearing. "I think he's about the best we can do under the circumstances."

"I think so!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"He's played up well against the Fourth!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The Fourth isn't Highcliffe, though! Courtenay's lot are in great form. Still, I think he'll do all right! Let's get along to the ground," said Wharton.

The Famous Five left the School House. Skinner and Stott of the Remove were lounging on the steps outside.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton!" called Skinner, detaching himself from the stone balustrade.

Wharton stopped.

"I hear you're a man short this afternoon," said Skinner, with unusual cordiality in his manner. "Smithy's crocked, isn't he?"

"You ought to know, as you crocked him!" said Harry sharply.

"Yes; that was a rotten accident!" said Skinner blandly. "Poor old Smithy put his paw in the way when I was swinging the foil—sheer ill luck! But, I say, you're a man short, what about giving me a chance?"

"You!" exclaimed Harry.

"Little me!" answered Skinner. "I'd like to play no end!"

"It's rather a new taste on your part, then!" said Harry Wharton drily. "You've never been keen on cricket before that I know of."

The Famous Five could not help staring at Skinner. That youth had certainly never been keen on anything that required personal exertion. Banker in the study was much more in his line than cricket. Skinner dodged even the compulsory practice when he could.

"I don't say I'm potty on it, like you chaps," said Skinner. "But I can play cricket, I suppose. I'm a member of the club, and entitled to play. I don't see why I shouldn't have a chance."

"No reason why you shouldn't, if you were in form," agreed Wharton. "But you're not in form to meet Highcliffe. If you meant business, I might give you a chance in the match with the Third next week."

"I'm not keen on a fag game!" sneered Skinner. "Look here, I can play, and I've been practising lately. You want a man; Smithy's out of it. Why not give me a chance?"

Wharton shook his head.

"It would be useless. You'd be no good against a side like Highcliffe," he answered. "It couldn't be done, Skinner. This is a bit sudden, you know! You can't jump into the Form Eleven at one jump!"

"I don't say I can play like Smithy," said Skinner sullenly. "But you want a man—"

As a matter of fact, we don't. Smith's place is filled now."

"Oh! Desmond, I suppose, or Morgan?" sneered Skinner.

"No. Redwing."

"Redwing!" exclaimed Skinner. "You're going to put a new chap in, and leave me out when I'm ready to play? And that cad—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"That cad!" shouted Skinner. "That low longshoreman, who's sneaked into Greyfriars by pinching a scholarship!

That's the sort of low hound you're going to play for the Remove, is it?"

"I'm going to play Redwing because he's the best man available," answered Harry Wharton quietly. "And if you want to call him names you'd better do it in his presence, Skinner!"

"The low cad! Wedgin' himself into everything" said Skinner bitterly. "I heard he was going to Hawkscliff this afternoon, too, to see his boozy pals there."

"I don't think his pals are boozy. I know you wouldn't call them so if Redwing were here to hear it!" said Harry contemptuously.

"Redwing is here," said a quiet voice, as Tom Redwing came up with Vernon-Smith.

Skinner started, and turned round.

His eyes glittered as they rested on the handsome, sunburnt face of the sailor-man's son.

"Let's get along to cricket," said Frank Nugent pacifically. "I suppose you're playing, Redwing?"

"Yes; if I'm wanted," said Tom. "Smithy says you want me, Wharton. I'm jolly glad to play, of course. I can go over to Hawkscliff any time."

"You'll always find your pals at the Pig and Whistle when you want 'em—what?" asked Skinner, with a sneering grin.

Stott burst into a chuckle.

Redwing gave Skinner an angry look, and his eyes gleamed for a moment, but he turned away without replying.

The sailor-man's son had won golden opinions from nearly all at Greyfriars, and he could afford to pass over the snob-bishness of one or two like Skinner and Stott.

The cricketers moved away towards Little Side, and Redwing went up the steps, to go in and change for the game. He took no further notice of Skinner; but the latter was in a bitter temper, and not inclined to be passed over with silent contempt.

"And that's the kind of fellow Wharton's playing for Greyfriars!" said Skinner to Stott, loud enough for Redwing to hear. The son of a boozy sailor-man, who might come in rolling drunk any time to see him!"

Stott chuckled.

Tom Redwing spun round, his face aflame.

"You cad!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling with anger. "How dare you speak of my father like that! You coward, you know that my father went down in a submarined ship! You were not good enough to clean his shoes, you rotten cad!"

"Here, hands off!" yelled Skinner in alarm.

His amiable intention had been to get Redwing's rag out, as he would have expressed it. Redwing's rag was out with a vengeance now. He was coming for Skinner with his hands up and his eyes ablaze. The insult to his father, who had met his fate facing his country's enemies,

had moved Redwing as no insult to himself could have moved him.

Skinner's hands flew up in defence, but they did not help him much. Redwing came straight at him, and a crashing blow sent Skinner spinning off the steps.

He collapsed on the earth with a loud yell.

Tom Redwing stood looking down on him with flashing eyes. Stott prudently backed away. He did not want any.

And Skinner did not want any more. He sat up, blinking, but did not rise. There was a step in the doorway behind Tom Redwing, and Mr. Quelch's soverer face looked out.

"Redwing!"

Tom Redwing turned at the deep voice of his Form-master.

"Yes, sir?" he stammered.

"This is not a place for fisticuffs!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "You will take a hundred lines, Redwing! Do not let this occur again!"

"Very well, sir," stammered Tom, with a crimson face.

Mr. Quelch walked away, frowning, and Tom went quietly into the House. Skinner scrambled to his feet. He was glad that Mr. Quelch had not heard the remark that had called forth the blow.

"Hurt, old chap?" murmured Stott.

"I'll make him pay for it!" said Skinner, between his teeth. "I'll be even with that sneaking longshoreman yet—and I know the way! Come on!"

The two black sheep of the Remove walked down to the gates together. They were gone when Tom Redwing came out of the House in spotless flannels, and hurried down to Little Side, with his bat under his arm to join the cricketers.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

"WHAT luck!"

Skinner of the Remove uttered that exclamation suddenly, his moody face brightening.

The two black sheep had been sauntering lazily down Friardale Lane with their hands in their pockets. Most of the Remove had gathered on Little Side to watch the Highcliffe match; but Skinner and Stott were not interested. Had Skinner been given a place in the Remove Eleven he would have had bets on the game, probably, and that would have given him an interest in it. For cricket, pure and simple, he did not care. In fact, Skinner cared for very few things that were pure and simple.

But he was angry at being rebuffed, and angrier still from the effects of Tom Redwing's blow. Stott did not speak to him as they walked down the lane, as he did not want to receive a snarling reply; and it was Skinner who broke the silence.

"Luck!" repeated Stott, in surprise.

"Where's the luck?"

"Look at that chap!" answered Skinner.

Stott looked.

On the rising ground, a short distance from the lane, a man stood, looking towards the school.

He was a roughly-dressed sailorman, with a thick, dark beard, and a face bronzed dark by sun and wind, the right cheek marked by a deep scar.

The sailorman looked as if he had been in hard luck; his clothes were well worn and dusty, and he had evidently been tramping.

Stott gave him a careless glance, and turned inquiringly to Skinner. The roughly-clad sailorman did not interest him.

"You know the chap?" he asked.

"Of course I don't, ass?" snapped

Skinner. "Do you think I've got pals among boozy seamen, like Redwing has?"

"That chap doesn't look boozy, if you come to that," said Stott, glancing at the man again. "He looks down on his luck."

"I suppose he'd be boozy enough if he got a chance!" answered Skinner.

"Well, you're not going to tip him half-a-crown to blow at the Cross Keys, I suppose?"

"I'm going to tip him half-a-quad," said Skinner.

"Potty?" asked the amazed Stott.

"For services rendered," grinned Skinner. "That chap's saved me a walk to Hawscliff—see?"

"Oh, I see!" said Stott, understanding at last.

The sailorman had not yet seen the two juniors in the lane below. He was staring directly at the distant school, as if keenly interested in the grey old walls and ivy-clad tower of Greyfriars.

What there was about the school to attract the attention of a sailorman would have puzzled Skinner, if he had troubled to think about the matter at all.

"Come on, and we'll tackle him," said Skinner. And his chum followed him through a gap in the hedge.

Harold Skinner was looking quite cheery now.

He had laid what he regarded as a ripping scheme for discomfiting Tom Redwing. It was some time since he had schemed that scheme, but carrying it out involved a journey to Hawscliff, down the coast, and the slacker was not keen on a ten-mile journey. This tramping sailorman had turned up quite luckily, from Skinner's point of view.

"What luck!" went in Skinner, as they passed through the hedge. "I was going over to Highcliff to get hold of some boozy longshoreman; but it's a thumpin' long way off! This chap will do. I'll stand him five bob in advance, to get full of booze at the Cross Keys, and promise him another five bob afterwards. He looks as if he could do with some tin—what?"

"He does!" grinned Stott. "But—but—I say, will he do what you want, old chap?"

"Of course he will," said Skinner confidently. "Why shouldn't he? All he's got to do is to get tipsy, and roll in at Greyfriars and claim Redwing as a relation. He's got to kick up a shine, and get everybody round. He can do that easily enough, I suppose. I dare say he's used to kicking up a shine at the pubs he goes to."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Redwing can deny that he's a relation," chuckled Skinner. "The fellows will believe it all the same. For why should a perfect stranger drop in and claim him as a relation if it's not so?"

Stott chortled.

"Besides, people always believe ill of a chap, though they're so jolly slow to believe good of him," added Skinner cynically. "Praise a chap, and people take fifty per cent. off what you say; but tell 'em that a chap's father has gone bankrupt, or get shoved into choky, and they swallow it fast enough. That's human nature!"

It was Skinner's nature, whether human nature or not, undoubtedly.

"Anyhow, it will give Redwing a turn!" said Skinner. "And there couldn't be a better opportunity, with the Highcliffe fellows there, and Redwing playing in the match. Fancy his feelings when a boozy seaman rolls on to Little Side and claims him as a nephew or a cousin!"

"Ha, he, he!"

"Old Quelch stands by Redwing a lot;

but even he will have to think a bit after a scene like that," chortled Skinner. "The Head will see that it won't do to let young ruffians with low connections into the school—what?"

"I—I say, it's rather rough on the chap!" muttered Stott. "After all, Redwing hasn't got any low relations that we know of. And his father went down at sea, torpedoed by those filthy Huns."

"Well, if he hasn't got any relations, isn't it kind of me to provide him with one?" said Skinner.

The two juniors were near the sailorman now, and he glanced down as they came up the acclivity.

The man stepped back into the trees behind him, as if not wishing to be spoken to, or even seen. But Skinner called to him:

"Hold on a minute, Jack!"

The sailorman hesitated.

Skinner and Stott came up, and joined him under the trees. The seaman looked at them inquiringly, and a little un-easily, Skinner thought. On closer view it was more plain than ever that the man was in hard luck, which was all the better for Skinner's scheme.

"Hold on! I want to speak to you, my man!" said Skinner, in a patronising manner. "Don't run away!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the sailorman.

"Looking for a job?" said Skinner affably.

"Not here, sir."

"Still, I dare say you'd like to earn half-a-quad by an easy job, wouldn't you?" said Skinner insinuatingly.

"I shouldn't object to that," said the seaman, in surprise.

"Right-ho! Well, I want you to do something for me, and it's half-a-quad if you do it," said Skinner. "It only means a little walk."

"Thank you, sir, but I'm not looking for a job here," said the sailorman quietly. "My work is at sea."

"Well, just hear what I've got to say," answered Skinner. "It's a pleasure to do it, really—not work at all. You see that school yonder—that's Greyfriars."

"Yes, I thought so," said the sailorman, turning his eyes upon the distant school again.

"Well, I'm a Greyfriars chap," said Skinner loftily.

"Yes, sir."

"There's a fellow at the school I want to play a joke on," continued Skinner. "A chap named Redwing."

The sailorman started.

"Redwing!" he repeated.

"Yes. I see you know the name," said Skinner. "He used to be a longshoreman, or something, at Hawscliff. If you've been there, I dare say you've seen him."

The seaman gave Skinner a strange look, but he did not reply.

"If you know him by sight, all the better," went on Skinner. "Well, this chap is an awful outsider, this Redwing fellow—Hallo! What are you staring at me like that for?"

"You—you were saying—"

"We want to take a rise out of him," explained Skinner. "He's a low rotter!"

"What?"

"For goodness' sake, don't yell at a fellow like that!" exclaimed Skinner irritably. "Listen to me. Redwing hasn't any relations; or, if he has, they're a low lot—and I want a man to drop in at Greyfriars, claiming to be his uncle, or father, or anything."

"I don't understand."

"It's a jape—a practical jape," explained Skinner impatiently. "It's to make Redwing look small before a lot of fellows—see?"

"Oh!"

"PB give you five bob now, and you're to go down to the Cross Keys and fill up with whisky, or whatever it is you drink," said Skinner. "You'll like that part of the job, I suppose?"

The sailorman was staring blankly at Skinner. Stott, rather uneasily, nudged his chum's arm. Skinner was so taken up with his scheme that he did not observe what Stott observed—that the seaman's bronzed face was growing darker and darker. On the bronzed cheek the scar became more prominent as the sailorman flushed. Skinner, unheeding the nudge from his comrade, rattled on cheerily.

"You'll get half-seas-over, you know—I believe that's what you call it—and then you'll roll in at Greyfriars. Go straight to the cricket-ground, and there you'll find Redwing. Do you know him by sight?"

"I know Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff by sight."

"Well, that's the chap, and that's all the better," said Skinner, with satisfaction. "Well, roll up to him on the cricket-pitch—never mind about interrupting the game; that doesn't matter—and claim him as a near relation. Say you're his father come back from sea."

"His—his father?"

"Yes, that will do."

"I—I say, Skinner!" murmured Stott. "Oh, dry up, Stott! Say you're his father just home from sea, and you've heard how he got to Greyfriars on a scholarship, and all that," said Skinner. "Make a dickens of a scene—shouting, and so on—so as to draw as big a crowd as possible. Redwing will deny that you're his father, of course."

"Will he?"

"Of course he will, as you're nothing of the kind! But the other fellows will believe it fast enough."

"But why am I to do this?"

"It's a joke on the cad, you know, to show him up. I'll stand you five bob to get squiffy, and another five after it's all over. I'll meet you here and square up," said Skinner. "Now, that's a good offer—what?"

The sailorman looked at him.

"You young rascal!" he said.

"Wh-a-at?"

"You young blackguard!" said the seaman. "I couldn't have imagined that a lad belonging to such a school could be such a young villain!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Skinner, in angry astonishment. "Confound your impudence! What do you mean?"

"You've asked me to play a dirty trick," said the scarred seaman, his eyes glinting at Skinner. "You're not good enough to clean Tom Redwing's boots, you cowardly young rascal!"

"You cheeky hound!" shouted Skinner. "Here, hands off! Why, you scoundrel—"

Skinner roared and struggled as the powerful hands of the seaman closed on him. His struggles availed nothing in that muscular grasp. The seaman shook him as if he were an infant.

Stott beat a retreat. His idea was that Skinner had asked for it, and now he was getting it, and he could have it all to himself. Evidently the cad of the Remove had woke up the wrong passenger.

Skinner's roaring changed to pitiful gasping as he swung in the powerful grip of the scarred sailorman.

Shako, shake, shake!

"Gr-r-r-r!" came from Skinner. "Groogh! Ow! Leggo, you—ow!—ruffian! Oh, my hat! Will you leggo? Gug-gug-gug!"

The seaman released him at last, and threw him contemptuously into the

grass. Skinner sprawled there, panting for breath.

Without a word to him the seaman turned away, strode into the wood, and disappeared from sight.

"Gr-r-r-r!" spluttered Skinner, as he sprawled in the grass. "Oh, the rotter! "Gr-r-r-r-r!" I suppose he's drunk. Ow-w-w-w-w!"

"I say, that was rather a bad break, Skinner!" said Stott, with a grin. "You shouldn't have tried it on him. I could see that he was a decent fellow enough."

"Groogh!"

"You're so jolly cocksure, old chap," said Stott.

"Grrrrrrrrr!"

Skinner staggered to his feet, dishevelled and furious. The sailorman had disappeared, and Skinner tramped back savagely to the lane, followed by the grinning Stott. Skinner's scheme, so far, had certainly not been a success.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match.

"WELL caught, Caterpillar!"

"Brave, De Courcy!"

Harry Wharton looked a little blue.

The captain of the Remove was batting, and Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe had sent down what looked like an easy ball. Wharton had let himself go at that ball.

It was good for three at least, or so he thought. But Rupert de Courcy of Highcliffe, otherwise known as the Caterpillar, was on the watch in the field. And the Caterpillar, famous for his slacking propensities, seemed to be full of electric energy just then. A run and a jump, and the ball, hot from the bat, was in the Caterpillar's hand—and held.

Thus Wharton was out first ball for a duck!

"Well caught!" roared the Highcliffe fellows, and the Greyfriars crowd joined in the cheer.

Bob Cherry, at the other end of the pitch, looked sympathetic. It was hard luck for Wharton.

But the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was a sportsman, and he took his defeat without repining.

He walked off, and Johnny Bull took his place.

"Hard luck!" said Hazeldene, as Wharton joined the group of waiting batsmen outside the pavilion.

"It was a good catch," said Harry.

"Looks rather rotten for us!" remarked Tom Brown. "Six down for seventeen runs; that's a bit of a record the wrong way!"

"And Smithy can't help us out this time," remarked Peter Todd.

Harry Wharton nodded without speaking.

It was a single-innings match, and Highcliffe had batted first. Courtenay and his men had totalled a hundred runs, taking rather a long time to get them. The sun was sloping to the west; but there was plenty of time to finish the match at this rate. Greyfriars had had bad luck so far—or Highcliffe had had good luck. Tom Brown had been dismissed for four, Hazeldene for two, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh for seven, Rake for one, and Delarey for three. Harry Wharton had gone to the wicket resolved to pull up the score, and he had been caught out for nil. It was a heavy blow to the Remove.

The worst of it was that the Bounder, who could always be relied on to do well for his side, was out of the team.

Redwing, who had taken his place, was more or less of an unknown quantity. He had fielded well in the

Highcliffe innings. And on previous occasions he had batted well, against opponents like Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth. But how he would keep his end up against the Highcliffians was a question.

Vernon-Smith was in the pavilion, though he was not playing. He was looking rather serious now.

Wharton's fall made the prospect of a Remove win look more than doubtful. And, as the poet has remarked, when misfortunes come they come not in single spies, but in battalions. Bob Cherry had raised the score only to twenty when he was clean bowled by Derwent of Highcliffe. Bob's ruddy face was a little glum as he came off.

"Man in, Squiff!" said Wharton.

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, of New South Wales, buckled on his pads.

"Look out for that man Derwent," said Bob Cherry. "That beggar from Tasmania knows how to bowl!"

And Squiff grinned, and proceeded on his way.

"Seven down for twenty," said Harry Wharton. "Never mind, Bob. You've done better than I did, at any rate."

"That was cruel luck," said Bob. "If you'd made fifty it might have seen us through. Cricket's an uncertain game."

"The uncertainfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh lugubriously.

"They can't beat Johnny, though," said Frank Nugent, "and Squiff will make the running."

"Yes, that's so."

The game looked up a little for Greyfriars. Johnny Bull, with his famous stonewalling tactics, was keeping his end up with stolid indifference, defying the best that Courtenay or Derwent could send down. His more brilliant colleague at the other end was making the running. Johnny Bull could always be depended on to back up a man like that, without going out for glory on his own, so to speak. With Johnny's stonewalling and Squiff's brilliant hitting matters began to improve, and in a short time there were forty to the score.

And then there was a roar.

"Well caught, Caterpillar!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wharton.

"That blessed slacker's woke up, and no mistake!" said the Bounder.

The Caterpillar, with a lazy smile, held up the ball. Squiff left the wicket, and Peter Todd went in. Vernon-Smith gave Tom Redwing a smile.

"You're last on the list," he remarked.

Tom Redwing nodded.

"Yes; I expected that," he answered.

"Feel in good form?"

"Topping!"

"There isn't much chance of a win," said the Bounder. "The Highcliffe chaps are in great form."

"It's a pity you're out of it, Smithy."

"Yes, rotten!" agreed the Bounder.

"Linsley couldn't play, either; and Nugent isn't up to that bowling if he was playing. I fancy Toddy will give them something to do, though."

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter joined the cricketers before the pavilion. All eyes were on the game, and nobody troubled to answer Bunter.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Good man, Toddy!" said Wharton, as Peter drove the ball away for four.

"We may do it yet!"

"Wharton, you ass—"

"Hallo! What do you want, tubby?"

"Looks like a regular muck-up to me," said Bunter, with a disdainful blink through his big glasses. "You're beaten to the wide!"

"Oh, dry up!"

The dryfulness of the esteemed jaw is the proper caper, my excellent and ludicrous Bunter," remarked Hurree Singh.

"Oh, rats! I'm going to tell Wharton how to save the game!" said Bunter. "Look here, Wharton, you've only got one more man to send in, when Toddy's bowled or Bull's caught out. They will be soon. Now, it's no good sending Redwing in. That's rot!"

"Cheese it!"

"My suggestion is to ask Courtenay to agree to a substitute being played," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I'm prepared to pull this game out of the fire."

"What?"

"Courtenay would agree. He's a good-natured chap," said Bunter. "Play me! Put me in! I'll save it for you!"

"You silly ass!" roared Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"My hat! There goes Toddy!"

"Poor old Toddy—and poor old us!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"I told you so!" remarked Bunter complacently. "Toddy isn't up to their form. I knew that was coming."

"Dry up, fathead!"

Peter Todd came off. He had put ten on the score, while the slow and cautious Johnny had added two. There was one more wicket to fall, and forty-eight were wanted to tie with Highcliffe.

"Sorry I couldn't do better, Wharton."

"All serene, old man. Now, Redwing!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"But look here," exclaimed Billy Bunter excitedly, "Courtenay would agree, I know that. He doesn't know my form."

"Fathead!"

"Put me in! Bull can stonewall, you know, and leave the game entirely in my hands. With me doing the run-getting the game will be pulled out of the fire. Now, don't be such a silly ass to send Redwing in—that chump! Look here, Wharton— Yaroooooh!"

The worried cricket captain was at the end of his patience, and Bunter felt a sudden grasp on his collar, and he sat down with a bump, and roared.

Tom Redwing, with an encouraging look from the Bounder, went in to join Johnny Bull at the wickets, and Smithy followed him with an anxious glance. He was very keen for his chum to do well in that match, especially as Redwing was playing in his place, and he had confidence in the sailorman's son. But the Bounder was the only fellow there who expected Highcliffe to win by less than forty runs.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Birds of a Feather.

SKINNER tramped along the road with a sullen, lowering brow. Stott walked by his side, glancing at him occasionally, and grinning. Skinner was so sharp, and prided himself so much upon his sharpness, that Stott was highly entertained by his egregious blunder that afternoon. Stott, who was not so extremely sharp, had seen that the scarred seaman was not the kind of man to play a dirty trick for a bribe, but Skinner had not seen it. His low opinion of human nature generally sometimes caused him to make mistakes, as on this occasion.

"No good scowling over it," remarked Stott at last, as they were passing the Cross Keys Inn. "What about droppin' in here for a game of billiards, Skinner?"

"Somethin' else on!" snapped Skinner.

"Well, what's on, then?"



News for Redwing! (See Chapter 6.)

"I've got to find a man to call on Redwing, haven't I?"

Stott uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Oh, chuck it, Skinner! I should have thought you were fed up with that dodge. 'Tain't so jolly easy to find a man who'd play such a rotten trick. And it is a rotten trick, whatever you like to say!"

"Lots of men would do it for a tip!" growled Skinner. "Don't preach at me, Stott! I made a mistake about that man. There's plenty of others."

"You may get another shaking," grunted Stott.

"Oh, dry up!"

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to walk as far as Hawkscliff; I know that!" said Stott. "Too much of a fog."

Skinner grunted.

"Besides, you might light on a chap who's friendly with Redwing," said Stott. "You might get thoroughly handled next time. I'd jolly well leave Hawkscliff alone, playing a game like that!"

"Well, there's something in that," admitted Skinner. "That ruffian must have been a Hawkscliff man, I should think. He seemed to know Redwing. Might wake up another hooligan like that. But there's a lot of longshoremen along the coast, and it's easy to pick one up."

"Better leave it alone."

"Oh, rats!"

"Hallo! What the thump is that?" exclaimed Stott, looking round as the sound of a disturbance came from the public-house they had just passed.

The two juniors stopped to look on.

From the doorway of the Cross Keys a man of seafaring appearance came bundling, with a brawny potman in shirt-sleeves behind him.

The seafaring man was crimson, and reeling a little in his gait. The potman had evidently persuaded him to depart by the use of force.

Outside the public-house the man stood up and glared back, and poured forth a volley of abuse at the "chucker-out."

But as the shirt-sleeved gentleman came out to him he backed away, and tramped off savagely up the lane.

He passed the two juniors, and paused

as he caught sight of the grin on Stott's face.

"Laughing at me—hay?" he exclaimed truculently.

Stott started back in alarm. He did not want trouble with that exceedingly ugly-looking customer.

"Nunno!" he stammered. "Not at all!"

"Never seen a bloke fired out of a pub before—hay?" demanded the man, coming nearer to the two juniors and exhaling a strong scent of whisky. "You cheekin' me, are you?"

"Look here, you let me alone!" exclaimed Stott in great alarm.

The man had thrust out a square jaw threateningly, and it was evidently in his mind to wreak upon Stott what he would have liked to wreak upon the potman of the Cross Keys.

Stott's grin seemed likely to cost him dear.

But Skinner, instead of being alarmed, was smiling. This ugly customer was just the man he wanted, and that thought occurred to him at once.

"Hold on, my friend!" he said.

"You're just the man I want to see!"

"Ho!" said the man, staring at him.

"Like to earn half-a-quid?" said Skinner.

"Ay, ay! What for?"

"It's a little practical joke on a chap," said Skinner, beginning the explanation once more. "Chap at my school—chap with no relations. I'd like you to roll in and say you're his father just home from sea."

"Wot?"

"I'll give you five bob now, and five bob afterwards."

The man stared at him blankly. The peculiar offer took him by surprise, but his expression showed that he was inclined to close with it.

"That's a blinking queer joke!" he said. "Where's your school?"

"Greyfriars, up the road," said Skinner eagerly, feeling that he had found his man at last. "Only half a mile."

"And you want me—"

Skinner explained fully—more fully than he had explained to the scarred seaman in the road, for he was not interrupted.

The seaman listened curiously, quite forgetting his hostile designs on Stott.

Seafaring he looked from his garb and his manner; but it was clear enough that he was not a seaman in the ordinary sense, but more of a longshoreman and tramp than anything else.

He grinned a little as he listened to Skinner.

Clearly he had no objection to playing that dirty trick, or any other, if it was worth his while.

As he had just been kicked out of the Cross Keys, it was easy enough to read his character. There could not be much doubt about a man who was not good enough for the most disreputable resort in that part of the county.

"Well, that's a queer idea," he said at last. "What did you say the cove's name was—Redwing?"

"Yes; Tom Redwing. He used to live in a cabin at Hawkscliff, along the coast, before he got a scholarship to Greyfriars and came to our school. He's an awful rotter," added Skinner. "Ashamed of his humble friends, and all that."

This was the reverse of the truth, as Skinner well knew. Skinner himself had made it a subject for sneering that Tom Redwing was still attached to his old friends at Hawkscliff. But Skinner sagely opined that this was likely to make the rough-looking man more favourably inclined to lend his aid.

"Redwing! Any relation of Bill Redwing?" asked the seafaring man. "He came from this part of the country—Hawkscliff."

"I dare say his father was named Bill," answered Skinner, with a shrug. "Did you know him?"

"I knew Bill Redwing, hang him! He downed me once," said the seafaring man. "A bit of trouble over a bit of money, and he knocked me out in the fore-castle of the Mary Ann. That was afore the war, though. I heard since that he was sent down in his ship."

"That's the man, right enough," said Skinner, in great delight. It was a real stroke of luck, from his point of view, that this rough-looking fellow had known Redwing's father and disliked him. "Well, this chap is that man's son—the son of the man who walloped you!"

"Hang him!" said the ruffian.

"Now he's setting up to be a gentleman," said Skinner. "Putting on no end of airs, making out that he's the same as other chaps at the school, and looking down on people he used to know."

"I dessay. Ten bob, you said?"

"Yes."

"Make it a quid, and 'Erbert 'Unks is your man."

Skinner hesitated.

Herbert Hunks was exactly the man he wanted, and, as it chanced, he had a dislike for the Redwings, and so was likely to do his work well. But a pound was a lot of money. Skinner did not like parting with money.

"Make it a quid," repeated Mr. Hunks. Ten bob down, and ten arter—that's fair play. I ain't takin' a lot of trouble for nothin', though I'd like to serve Bill Redwing's son a bad turn, hang the lot of 'em! But I ain't doing it under a quid, an' you can take it or leave it. I reckon I wouldn't do it at that figure if I didn't want to take down Bill Redwing's boy. I may get chucked out at the school, for all I know."

"No danger of that," said Skinner. "Any boy's father has a right to visit him. If they let in a chap like Redwing, they must chance it. You'll say you're his father just home from sea. The fellows will think he spun a yarn about his pater being submarined because he's ashamed of him. It will work like a charm."

"I—I say—" murmured Stott. Stott was not easily shocked; but the utter callousness Skinner was showing shocked even Stott.

"Don't you barge in," said Skinner. "Look here, Mr. Hunks, did you say fifteen bob?"

"I said a quid, and I mean a quid," was Mr. Hunks' reply.

"You'll go halves, Stott?" whispered Skinner.

"No jolly fear!" answered Stott promptly.

"Look here—"

"Well, I'll stand five bob," said Stott.

"Not that I like the idea, mind. I think it's too thick."

"Hand over the bobs and dry up!" grunted Skinner.

"'Arr down," said Mr. Hunks.

Skinner placed a ten-shilling note in his hand.

"I'll meet you here, about half-past six," he said, "under these trees, and square up the rest. When will you get to Greyfriars?"

"Well, I got to 'ave a drink afore I take that there walk," said Mr. Hunks.

"I'll drop in at the Red Cow, and then I'll come along, my hearty."

"Good man!" said Skinner, with satisfaction. "Mind, you don't recognise me if you see me there—we're strangers, of course."

Mr. Hunks gave him a rather peculiar look.

"Of course," he assented.

"You don't know Redwing by sight?"

"Not unless he's like Bill."

"Well, he may be or may not. He's playing in a cricket-match this afternoon, and he can be pointed out to you," explained Skinner. "Ask somebody if Tom Redwing is there, and he'll be pointed out. Then you'll know him."

"Ay, ay!"

"Mind, you're his father just back from sea, and you've been to Hawkscliff, and heard there that he's got a scholarship to Greyfriars, so you've come on to the school to see him," said Skinner.

"He'll be a hard-hearted rotter disowning his own father, you know—and if you pitch a good yarn about being wrecked, or something, the fellows may get up a subscription for you."

"My eye!" said Mr. Hunks.

"I shall be there, and I'll suggest it," said Skinner, with a chuckle. "It might be quite a good thing. Any Greyfriars chap would shell out for a sailorman down on his luck; and the circumstances will be pathetic, in this case."

The longshoreman chortled, struck by the humour of that remark.

"Well, we'll expect you," said Skinner after a few more detailed instructions, to which Mr. Hunks listened impatiently, with one eye wandering in the direction of the Red Cow. "Play your cards well, and it may turn out a good thing for you as well as the quid. So-long!"

Skinner had drawn the man into the trees beside the lane for that little talk. He did not want to be seen in conversation with Mr. Hunks. They parted now, and Herbert Hunks made a straight line for the Red Cow. Skinner glanced up and down the lane, and then came out from among the trees with Stott. They started for Greyfriars, both of them grinning. Stott's misgivings seemed to have disappeared now.

"Rather a surprise for Redwing—before all the Highcliffe crowd, too—what?" chuckled Skinner. "He may be sorry for punching my nose this afternoon."

"He, he, he!" was Stott's reply.

And they walked on cheerily to Greyfriars, there to look on at the Highcliffe match until Mr. Hunks arrived.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Redwing's Innings.

HARRY WHARTON watched keenly as Tom Redwing joined Johnny Bull at the wickets. Redwing looked very fit and well, and was evidently in good form; but the captain of the Remove wished most sincerely that Vernon-Smith had been able to take his place. With the Bounder as Johnny Bull's partner there would have been a chance of pulling the game out of the fire; but with an almost untried bat like Redwing the chance was remote. Five or six runs, and then the fall of the wicket, was what Wharton expected.

An unpleasant cackle came from Billy Bunter as Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe went on to bowl against Redwing.

"What price ducks' eggs?" grinned the Owl of the Remove.

"Wait and see!" remarked the Bounder.

All eyes were on the batsman as the ball came down, one of Frank Courtenay's best. It was met confidently, but Redwing did not hit out; he was feeling his way. And the next ball was merely played, and the next.

"Gone to sleep—what?" observed Bunter.

"Dry up, ass!" grunted Peter Todd.

Tom Redwing was very wide awake, as a matter of fact. The fourth ball gave him his chance, and he let out at it. Johnny Bull started, and then stopped. There was no need to run. It was a boundary hit.

"Good man!" shouted Wharton, in great relief.

"Well hit, Redwing!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Bravo!"

"What a rotten fluke!" commented Bunter.

Bob Cherry's elbow jammed on Billy Bunter's fat little nose, and the over-critical Bunter yelped and retired from the scene. He joined Skinner and Stott, who had arrived on the ground, and were looking on.

"How's it gone, fatty?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, Highcliffe's winning hands down, of course!" said Bunter, with a sniff.

"What can you expect, when Wharton leaves out a good man to put that sailor chap in? I offered to play—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look at that fathead now—he's caught off this ball, I'll bet my hat!"

But Tom Redwing was not caught. He hit the ball for three, which gave Johnny Bull the batting for the last ball of the over. Johnny Bull sedately blocked it when it came. Johnny had recognised the fact that his partner was a good bat in great form, and he meant to give him every chance.

"I say, Redwing's a jolly good man," said Stott. "I never thought he could play a game like that."

"Flukes!" sniffed Bunter.

"Fathead!" retorted Stott. "You don't know anything about cricket. I say, I'd like to see Greyfriars come out ahead, after all, Skinner."

"Blow Greyfriars!" said Skinner.

"I hope the game won't be interrupted, anyway," remarked Stott, with an uneasy glance in the direction of the gates.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Interrupted?" he said. "How could it be interrupted, Stott? Plenty of light for the finish, if that's what you mean."

Stott did not reply to that. He was thinking of Mr. Hunks, then on his way to Greyfriars; but he did not care to explain that to Bunter. The game Redwing was putting up for his school made Stott feel a little remorseful; but it did

not affect Skinner in any way. If Redwing was going to have a triumphant innings, Skinner charitably hoped that Mr. Hunks would arrive in time to spoil it.

The Caterpillar took the next over, and the change of ends had given Redwing the bowling again.

De Courcy of Highcliffe was a dangerous bowler, with all his sleepy looks, and Wharton watched the batsman rather anxiously. But Tom Redwing was all there. He played very carefully for a couple of balls, and then he went out at the bowling. The Caterpillar exhibited a mild surprise, as he found his bowling slammed for two, and two again, and four, and then another two.

Vernon-Smith's eyes were gleaming with satisfaction. He could not have done better than this; and his clam was receiving a roar of cheers from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Good man!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Smithy, you're a giddy genius to dig up a bat like that for us!"

"The batfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Redwing is getting onfully."

"Good man!" murmured Wharton. "My hat! I shouldn't be surprised if Redwing saves us yet!"

"Touch wood!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Johnny Bull faced Derwent. The stolid Johnny blocked two balls, and then hit a single. Tom Redwing finished the batting for the over, and Derwent, good man as he was, could not beat him. Tom was playing the game of his life, and thoroughly enjoying it. And the Remove cricketers enjoyed it, too, as they watched the rapid changes of the score.

The figures were moving now.

Even that great critic, William George Bunter, was silenced, when the board announced ninety for Greyfriars. Of the addition to the score since Redwing started, Johnny Bull was responsible for three, and Redwing for the rest; but Johnny was keeping an end up for his more brilliant partner. Highcliffe had been looking on the match as a foregone conclusion, but they looked a little more serious now.

For Johnny Bull certainly was immovable; and Redwing looked good enough for any number of runs yet. Fortune was smiling on the sailorman's son, in addition to his really first-class play. Courtenay, the Caterpillar, and Derwent had tried him in turn, and had made no impression on him. Courtenay sent on Smithson to bowl, for a change, but Smithson's bowling met with no immediate success, and there was a buzz when the board showed ninety-eight.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. "Redwing's the man!" he said. "A blessed undiscovered genius! Two more to tie, my pippins—and three to win! Why, Redwing looks good enough for a century if it was wanted."

The sun was lower in the west, but there was plenty of light to finish, though the game had lasted longer than, at an earlier stage, anyone had anticipated. Tom Redwing had the bowling again, and all eyes were upon him when Frank Courtenay took the ball in hand.

Skinner's face was dark and morose. This triumph of the junior he detested, albeit without cause, was gall and wormwood to him. His eyes were constantly on the gates, in expectation of Mr. Hunks—and he wondered savagely whether the longshoreman had expended the ten shillings not wisely but too well, and was sleeping off his potations in some field instead of carrying out his compact.

But his fears on that point were relieved at last. As he looked round once more a rough figure came into view, coming on to the cricket-ground. And Harold Skinner's eyes gleamed as he nudged Stott.

"He's come!" he whispered.

Stott looked round.

Mr. Hunks was walking a little unsteadily as he came to the ground. Very expressive glances were cast at him by the Greyfriars fellows, who gave him a wide berth. The public were allowed to watch the matches, if they liked—but a gentleman of Mr. Hunks' appearance was not persona grata on the school ground. However, no one interfered with him, and he took up a position by the field, and looked on at the game with bleary eyes.

"Go it, Redwing!" shouted Wibley, as Courtenay went on to bowl.

"Redwing!" repeated Mr. Hunks.

He turned to the junior nearest to him, who happened to be Bolsover major of the Remove.

"Young Redwing playin' 'ere—what?" he asked.

Bolsover major gave him a glance of disfavour, but he answered.

"Yes. He's batting now."

Mr. Hunks fixed his eyes on the batsman. The ball was coming down, and Tom Redwing was all eyes on the game.

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From the midst of the crowd, Mr. Hunks raised his husky voice.

"Tom! Tom Redwing, my boy!" His voice rang across the field. "Come 'ore. Tom! Your father's come 'ome!"

Tom Redwing's eyes left the ball.

Crash!

The middle stump was whipped out.

Tom Redwing did not even see it.

"My father!" he cried. "My father!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Claim.

OUT!"

Tom Redwing did not even hear the umpire.

He was standing on the crease, staring in the direction of the husky voice, his face white as chalk.

His father!

Long ago Tom Redwing's father had gone down in his ship, submarined by the savage Huns. Perhaps in the depths of the boy's heart there lingered a faint hope that the brave sailorman had survived, perhaps as a prisoner in German hands. If that hope existed it was slight. The sudden shout from the edge of the field that his father had come home almost stunned him. The blood rushed

to his heart, and, for a moment or two, he thought he would faint.

"Out!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

It was cruel luck. Two were wanted to tie, three to win, and Tom Redwing had seemed good for many more than that. But that sudden call had finished his innings.

Highcliffe had won the match.

Tom Redwing appeared unconscious that he had been playing cricket at all. Even the bat dropped from his hand, and clumped upon the crease unnoticed. His brain was swimming.

And upon Mr. Hunks all eyes in his vicinity were turned.

"Redwing's father come home!" repeated Bolsover major.

"Ay, ay!" replied Mr. Hunks affably.

"I'm his father!"

"You?" shouted half a dozen juniors.

"Wot! I'm Bill Redwing, young gents, and that there's my son!"

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bolsover major. "Poor old Redwing!"

The Highcliffe fieldsmen went off. The match was over.

Tom Redwing found himself caught by the arm, and he looked dazedly at Vernon-Smith, who had hurried to his side.

"Smithy!" he muttered. "My—my father!"

"Pull yourself together, old son!" said the Bounder. He did not betray his bitter disappointment at the disastrous end of the innings. If this news was true, a cricket-match was of little consequence in comparison.

"My father!" repeated Redwing.

He stared round to see the man who had called to him. Mr. Hunks was hidden from view in the crowd. But there was a shout from Skinner:

"This way, Redwing! Your father's here, Redwing!"

Tom cut across the field at top speed.

"There goes the Highcliffe match!" muttered Johnny Bull.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Never mind the Highcliffe match, if that news is true," he said.

"I say, that's a bit rough on you chaps," remarked Frank Courtenay. "Redwing let that ball pass him because his—"

"But he let it pass him," said Harry.

"Look here, under the circumstances, we're ready to call that ball off," said the Highcliffe skipper.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thanks, old fellow; but it's all right. The game's the game, and you've won it. Better luck next time!"

The crowd was thickening round Mr. Hunks, and all the juniors crowded in that direction, curious to see Redwing's father. The word had spread like wildfire that Redwing's father was there.

"That—that Redwing's father!" muttered Wharton, as he caught sight of the rough, seafaring man. "That!"

"That's the man!" grinned Snoop.

"Rather a corker, isn't he?"

"I don't believe—"

"Well, he says so."

Tom Redwing had pushed his way through the crowd round Mr. Hunks, the juniors making way for him.

The longshoreman nodded to him affably as he came up, and seized both his hands and shook them, to Redwing's amazement.

"Tom, my boy!" he exclaimed effusively, exhaling mixed odours of gin and rum as he spoke. "Tommy! My dear old Tom!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Redwing, dragging his hands away. "Was it you that called to me?"

"Course it was, Tom!"

"You said my father had come home," said Redwing, his voice trembling. "Where is he? Where is my father?"

"Tom, lad, don't you know your own father!" said Mr. Hunks sorrowfully. "Ave I changed so much as all that?"

"You—you—what?" ejaculated Redwing. "What do you mean?"

"He don't know his own father!" said Mr. Hunks, sorrowfully addressing the onlookers. "Don't know 'is old dad what dandled 'im on his knee."

"Dash it all, Redwing, tell your pater you're glad to see him! exclaimed Bolsover major.

"My father!" repeated Redwing dazedly. "That man is not my father! What do you mean?"

"Well, he says he is," answered Bolsover major, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Redwing looked dazed.

Why a perfect stranger should come there claiming to be his father was a mystery to him. But, worst of all, he realised that the news was not, after all, true. His father had not come back. This drink-soaked ruffian was there claiming to be his father, and that was all. The disappointment was bitter and crushing, and Tom Redwing was quivering under it.

"Ain't you got a word for your pore old dad?" asked Mr. Hunks. "Not a word, arter I been away two year and more? Tom, you ain't growed ashamed of your own flesh and blood, 'ave you, now you're a young gentleman at a big school?"

There was a murmur among the juniors.

Certainly this boozy-looking character was not a father any fellow could have been proud of; but a father was a father all the same. For his own son to turn his back on him was too utterly rotten, whatever he was.

"Can't you speak to the man, Redwing?" muttered Temple of the Fourth. "What's the matter with you? He's your father."

"He is not my father!" exclaimed Tom Redwing. "My father went down at sea two years ago. This man is a stranger to me."

"A stranger now, since you've got on in the world!" sneered Skinner.

"Shame!" came a voice from somewhere.

"Shame!" hooted Bunter, taking up the cry. "Don't disown your pater, Redwing: He's just as good as you are, anyway!"

Mr. Hunks wept a little. The cargo he had taken on board at the Red Cow made weeping an easy feat.

But the Greyfriars fellows did not know that the easy tears were inspired wholly by spirits, and they were touched.

Dark looks were cast on Redwing.

His statement that the man was not his father met with utter disbelief and derision.

Why should the man have come there and claimed to be his father if he was nothing of the kind?

It was altogether too steep!

Skinner and Stott could have explained, certainly, if they had chosen; but, naturally, they did not choose.

To the Greyfriars crowd the thing seemed plain enough. Redwing's father had turned up, and Redwing, now that he was a Greyfriars fellow, was ashamed of him, and wouldn't own him.

The denial that he was his father seemed, indeed, to be the first clumsy lie that leaped to his lips.

"Ashamed of his old dad!" said Mr. Hunks pathetically. "Ashamed of his father! Well, this do 'it me 'ard. Arter I been sent down at sea by the 'Uns, and been a prisoner for so long, I get back 'ome, and this 'ere is what I find! I call it 'ard—very 'ard!"

"It's a rotten shame!" Bolsover major

hotly. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Redwing!"

"Shame!"

Tom Redwing's look was almost wild. He could not understand it; it was past his comprehension. Even if the man was drunk, that did not explain his extraordinary claim to be the junior's father.

"I—I tell you he is not my father!" panted Redwing. "I've never seen the man before!"

"Ark at 'im!" said Mr. Hunks.

"Ark at my unnatural son! When I got back to 'Awkscliff I met an old pal there, and he says, says he, 'Your boy's up at the big school now, Mr. Redwing,' says he. 'And I advise you,' says he, 'not to go an' see 'im thero among the young gentlemen,' says he. 'He won't be 'appy to see you, a common seafaring man,' says he. 'Beggin' your pardon,' says I, 'my son won't be ashamed of his

junior could not be supposed to want to show him off at Greyfriars. But that did not excuse him for disowning the man. There was a limit.

Frank Courtenay and his companions had looked on in wonder. But the Caterpillar murmured in Frank's ear:

"A bit de trop here, Franky. Let's get."

Courtenay nodded. He thought so, too.

He spoke a few hurried words to Wharton, and the Highcliffe cricketers took their departure, rather to the disappointment of Skinner. Skinner was far from appreciating their delicacy in the matter.

Poor Redwing did not even see them. He was standing rooted to the ground, with his brain in a whirl.

He hardly noted, either, the condemnation in the looks of the Greyfriars juniors round him.

The bitter disappointment caused by the discovery that the good news was false mastered him at first; and then amazement. But he was growing angry now as the longshoreman persisted in his claim.

Vernon-Smith caught him by the arm.

"Redwing!" he muttered.

Tom looked at him.

"Is that man your father?"

"No."

"I—I say, old chap"—the Bounder hesitated—"he—he looks a bit rough, but—but—if—if—"

He broke off.

Tom Redwing's eyes gleamed, and he shook the Bounder's hand from his arm. He strode a step nearer to Mr. Hunks, who leered at him.

"You lying rascal!" he said, in a low, clear voice. "Every word you have spoken is false. My father was a sailor-man, not a drunken, rascally longshoreman like you. You are a liar and a villain!"

With that Tom Redwing turned on his heel and strode away.

Mr. Hunks blinked after him.

"And that's wot I get arter being sunk at sea, and took by the Germans and kep' a prisoner!" he said. "That's wot I get when I come back 'ome! It's enough to break a man's 'eart!"

"Shame!"

"Buck up, old man!" said Bolsover major. "The fellow's a rotten cad, and we're all down on him!"

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman!" said Mr. Hunks sadly. "You've got a kind 'eart, sir! I s'pose I did wrong in coming 'ere to see my boy; but, natterally, I never s'posed he would cut up rusty like this 'ere. I s'pose, now he's come 'ere, he thinks he's a young gentleman, like you, sir, and has growed ashamed of bein' a plain seaman's son. It's 'ard!"

Mr. Hunks dabbed his eyes with a red-spotted handkerchief, which was sadly in need of a wash.

"Fancy Redwing setting up as a snob!" said Skinner.

"It's caddish!" said Stott. "Mean, I call it!"

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

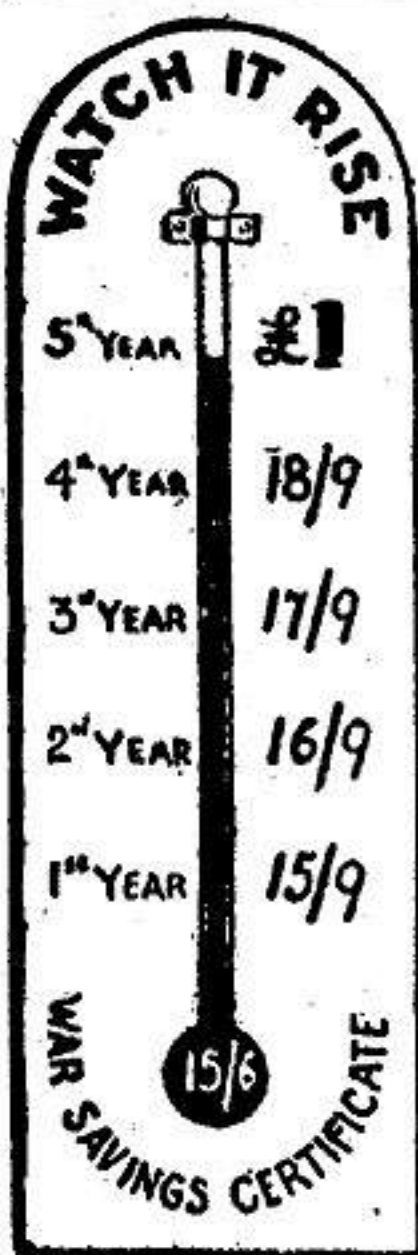
"The fellow ought to be made to own him!" exclaimed Bolsover major hotly.

"Dash it all, if we can stand Redwing he can stand his own father!"

"I should jolly well say so!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's 'ard!" said Mr. Hunks. "I got a lot of back pay to come to me, now I've got 'ome, and I says to myself, says I, 'Tom will want some money,' says I, 'to get noo clothes, and books, and sich, to keep up appearances among the young gentlemen,' says I. 'Tom shall 'ave every stiver,' says I. And as fur me, I can go to sea agin. I ain't afraid of the blooming submarines! Wot do I care wot



old father, not if he was living in the King's pallis,' says I. And 'ere I come with my 'eart as light as a bird, and now my own boy won't speak to me! It's 'ard!"

And some more rum-and-gin tears rolled down Mr. Hunks' weather-beaten cheeks. His simple narrative went straight to the hearts of the juniors, and there was a deep, angry murmur:

"Shame!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Hunks in Luck.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were looking on helplessly.

That this rum-tainted ruffian could be Redwing's father seemed incredible to them, yet it was still more incredible that he should make the claim if it was not so.

Even Vernon-Smith was staggered.

The juniors had supposed that Redwing's father was some sturdy, hearty sailor-man, when he had lived—nothing like this! Yet there was nothing in itself improbable in Redwing's father being a man of this type.

Truly, if this was Redwing's father, the

become of my old bones so long as my boy's well off and 'appy? And now he won't speak to me no more! Well, I ain't the man to force myself on nobody. I'm sorry I came 'ere. I 'ope you young gents will forget all about it, and not be down on Tom. He's a good lad at 'eart. I 'ope nobody 'ere will think worse of my son for 'ow he's treated me. He's a good lad at 'eart!"

"Poor old chap!" murmured the juniors, quite overcome by this generous and pathetic appeal.

The Bounder strode forward, his keen eyes on the man's coppery face.

"So you're Redwing's father?" he said.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"You're not the least like Redwing in appearance."

"A man changes a bit, sir, in the 'ands of the Germans!" said Mr. Hunks sadly. "I was 'eld a prisoner by them reptiles, sir, for hover a year, and it's precious little I got to eat. Nigh on starved, I was. And many's the time I'd 'ave jumped into the water, but I thought of my son 'ere at 'ome."

"I suppose you can prove all that?" said the Bounder, wavering.

"I could prove it if it was necessary," said Mr. Hunks, with dignity. "But I ain't going to bother Tom if he don't want me. I'm going to sea again, and the sooner a submarine sends me down to Davy Jones the better, arter this 'as 'appened!"

"Redwing ought to be lynched!" muttered Bolsover major.

"Lynching's too good for him!" said Skinner. "He jolly well ought to be boiled in oil! It—it's cruel!"

"Well, I'm goin'," said Mr. Hunks, with a deep sigh. "I'm sorry I come 'ere. P'r'aps you young gents will be kind enough to tell Tom I've gone, and that I ain't goin' to trouble 'im again. It'll be 'ard enough on me till I get my back pay, but I wouldn't ask 'im for a shillin' now. I'd die first!"

"Here, that won't do!" exclaimed Skinner, taking his cue. "You're not going away hard up, at any rate. If your son won't help you, there's others here that will. Dash it all, you fellows, he's been out among the submarines! It's up to us, and there's a bob from me for a start!"

Skinner took off his straw hat for a collection, and generously started it with a shilling. He really thought that Mr. Hunks' artistic efforts were worth an extra shilling.

Bolsover major pitched a half-crown into the hat at once.

Other fellows pressed forward to follow his example.

"Now, then, Smithy, you're rolling in money!" said Wibley.

Vernon-Smith thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Leave me out!" he answered.

"Oh, don't be stingy!"

"I don't believe the man is Redwing's father at all," said the Bounder coolly. "Redwing says he isn't, and he ought to know."

"He's disowned him because he's ashamed of him!" shouted Bolsover major.

"Redwing's not that sort!"

"But he's done it!"

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!"

"Well, I'm not contributing, at any rate," said the Bounder.

And he walked away.

"Shell out, you chaps!" shouted Skinner.

There was a shower of small coins into the hat.

Mr. Hunks' beery eyes glistened as he watched the collection grow.

The juniors were sympathetic. They were indignant at Redwing's heartless



Skinner is Generous! (See Chapter 7.)

conduct, as it seemed to them, and they were generous.

Harry Wharton & Co. tossed in their shillings with the rest.

The collection grew, and there was quite a little heap of small silver and coppers in the hat by the time Skinner presented it to Mr. Hunks.

That gentleman shovelled it into his pockets with great satisfaction.

"That'll see you on your way a bit," said Skinner.

"Thank you kindly, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Hunks. "This 'ere touches my 'eart, arter the way I been treated by my own son. Thank you, gentlemen! A sailorman's 'earty thanks, sir!"

And Mr. Hunks moved off, with coins jinkling in his pockets, and some of the juniors saw him as far as the gate. Mr. Hunks walked rather quickly. All had gone so well that he did not want to run the risk of further inquiry and possible detection. Had a master come on the scene Mr. Hunks' part would have been more difficult to play.

"P'r'aps one of you gents would see me right to 'awkscliff?" said Mr. Hunks, with a meaning look at Skinner.

"Certainly! I will!" said Skinner.

And he went down the road with Mr. Hunks.

Out of hearing of the rest, Mr. Hunks' expression changed as he remarked:

"You owe me ten bob, sir!"

"You've done jolly well!" said Skinner. "You've bagged two quid or more. I think you can let me off the other ten bob—what?"

"If you're looking for trouble with me, young man—" began Mr. Hunks, with a threatening look.

"Oh, here's your ten bob!" said Skinner sullenly.

He passed over the remainder of the bribe, which Mr. Hunks added to the cash that jingled in his pockets with much satisfaction.

"Going to Hawkscliff?" asked Skinner.

"I reckon I'm goin' to the Cross Keys!" answered Mr. Hunks. "They'll be civil enough to me now, I reckon."

"I—I say, it would be better to clear farther off," said Skinner uneasily.

"You see—"

"Evenin' to you!" said Mr. Hunks. And he started for the Cross Keys.

Skinner returned to Greyfriars. He would have been glad to see Mr. Hunks clear out of the neighbourhood, now that he had served his turn. But, upon the whole, Skinner was very satisfied. He had dealt Tom Redwing a blow that he was not likely to recover from, and his old score was paid off with interest. Harold Skinner looked very cheerful that evening.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Under a Cloud!

"COMING down?" The Bounder of Greyfriars looked into Tom Redwing's study after prep with that brief remark.

Redwing was alone there.

Snoop and Stott, his study-mates, had given him mocking looks when they left him, and Redwing was left red and uncomfortable. Both Snoop and Stott seemed to believe that the visitor of the afternoon was really his father; and Tom knew that, at all events, that belief was widely held among the Greyfriars juniors. He flushed as he looked up and met Vernon-Smith's glance.

"Finished your prep?" asked the Bounder, as Redwing did not speak.

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, come along!"

Tom hesitated.

In the present state of affairs he did not care to face the many eyes in the Common-room. The Bounder easily read his thoughts.

"Better come," he said. "If you keep out of sight, Redwing, it will look as if—as if—"

"Do you believe that man is my father, Smithy?"

"Not if you say he isn't."

"He isn't," said Tom quietly.

"Your word's good enough for me!" said the Bounder.

But the other fellows—

"Well, you see, it's dashed queer," said Vernon-Smith slowly. "The man was a bit drunk, I think; but that doesn't account for it. Don't you know him, Tom? Haven't you seen him before?"

"Not that I know of."
 "Then he can't be a man with a grudge against you?"

"I don't see how he can."
 "Then why should he play this trick, if it is a trick?"

"I can't say."
 "How can he know anything about you at all, if he's a stranger to you?"

Tom shook his head.
 "I don't know, Smithy. It beats me. But—but the man's a stranger to me, and not in the least like my poor father to look at. Any man from Hawkscliff could prove that he was lying. My father was well known there."

Vernon-Smith's eyes glinted.
 "That's a good idea, Redwing! If we could make that hoodigan face some friend of yours from Hawkscliff, that would prove he was lying, then."

"It would, easily enough," said Tom.
 "I don't know why the man should come here with such a yarn. I'm afraid the fellows think that I disowned him because he was down on his luck. If he'd been my father, I'd have stood by him whatever he was like."

"Of course you would; but I'm afraid they think that. Still, no good keeping out of sight. That will look like a bad conscience."

"I'll come down," said Redwing at once.

The chums went downstairs together. There was a general movement as Tom Redwing came into the junior Common-room with the Bounder. All eyes were turned upon him, and Tom reddened under their gaze.

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

Bolsover major ostentatiously turned his back upon Redwing, whom he had been rather friendly with hitherto, in his rough way. Skinner gave him a lofty look of contempt. Stott sneered, and Snoop looked rather uncomfortable. Snoop had more than a suspicion as to the true state of the facts, and though he had always been up against Redwing, he was not feeling satisfied now. Redwing had done him a good turn, in return for his enmity; and, though Sidney James Snoop had not a very active conscience, what he had was troubling him a little now. But he did not care to set himself against Skinner.

Harry Wharton gave Redwing a rather forced smile as the sailorman's son came up to him.

"I want to tell you I'm sorry for the way my innings ended to-day, Wharton," said Tom quietly. "I know it was rotten. I could have got the runs that were wanted. But that man startled me by calling out that my father had come home."

"I—I understand," said Harry. "Don't mind that, Redwing. It was enough to startle any chap."

"It made me think, for the moment, that my father might be still alive," said Tom, his lip trembling. "I suppose I ought to have been looking after my wicket, all the same; but—but I was fairly floored. I'm sorry."

"Don't worry," said Wharton. "And look here, Redwing, if you say seriously that that man is no relation of yours, I'll take your word."

"I do say so, on my honour!"

"That's good enough for me!" said Harry. "The man must be mad, I should think."

"What's the good of talking rot?" broke in Bolsover major gruffly. "You know the man was what he said he was—Redwing's father!"

"Redwing says not."

"And we know the reason!" sneered Bolsover major. "He's ashamed of

his father. I don't say the man was a father to be proud of; he was a bit low down. But a chap's pater is his pater. And who's Redwing, anyway, that he should look down on a man?"

Redwing crimsoned.
 At that moment Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form, put his head in at the door.

"Redwing here?" he called out.
 "I'm here!" said Tom. "What's wanted?"

"Your merry Form-master wants you in his study, my talip," said Nugent minor. And he walked away.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.
 "Quelch's got on to it. He was bound to. We'll see whether Redwing has the nerve to deny his own father to Quelch."

Tom Redwing left the Common-room without heeding Bunter. Two or three fellows followed him, and saw him go into Mr. Quelch's study. Like Bunter, they were wondering whether he would have the nerve to deny his father there.

Redwing found the Remove-master looking very grave. He could guess easily enough what was coming.

"A very strange story has come to my ears, Redwing," said Mr. Quelch. "It seems to be the talk of the Lower School."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"It appears that there was an extraordinary and very unpleasant scene on the cricket-ground this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch, eyeing the junior. "A seafaring man came there, claiming to be your father, and you refused to recognise him as such. Is that correct?"

"That is correct, sir," said Tom calmly.

"What was this man, Redwing?"

"I don't know, sir."

"If he was a stranger to you, how could he know you or your name?"

"I don't know."

"He was not your father, Redwing?"

"My father was drowned at sea, sir," said Tom, with a quivering lip.

"Redwing, my boy," said the Remove-master, kindly enough, "from the description I have received of the man, he was not a father you could be proud of. But a son's duty is a strict duty, Redwing. If the man was your father, you owe him your respect and obedience."

"I am aware of that, sir; but he is not my father! He is a lying impostor," said Tom, flushing. "I was proud of my father, sir—he was a father any fellow would have been proud of. This man is a drunken brute, nothing at all like my dear father."

"I accept your word, Redwing; but it is astounding that a stranger to you should come here with such a claim."

"I can't understand that myself, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a very searching look. Tom could read the lingering doubt in the Form-master's mind, and, though it hurt him, he could not blame Mr. Quelch. For if the seafaring man was not his father, why and how had he come there? Neither Tom Redwing nor Mr. Quelch was likely to guess at Skinner's cunning scheme of revenge.

"Very well, Redwing. If the man was speaking falsely, he is an impudent impostor, and if he should come to Greyfriars again, please inform me at once, and I will call in the police to deal with him."

"Certainly, sir."

Tom Redwing left the study. Many curious glances were turned upon him as he rejoined the Bounder in the Common-room. Harry Wharton & Co. showed their usual manner to Redwing that evening. They had made up their minds that they must take his word, amazing as the matter was. But most of the fellows were cold, and some of them cut Redwing en-

tirely. As Bolsover major had put it, the seafaring man was a bit of a corker; but it was up to his own son to stand by him, and a fellow who was too snobbish to recognise his own father in public was a fellow who was not fit to speak to. And Bolsover major decided not to speak to him, and a good many of the Remove followed his example.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Skinner is Not So Pleased.

"I SAY, you fellows—"
 Billy Bunter came in with news after lessons the next day. His fat face was full of excitement as he joined the Famous Five in the quad.
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" growled Bob Cherry. "What's the row now? Has your postal-order come at last? Time it did."

"I've seen him!"
 "Seen whom, fathead?" asked Nugent.
 "Redwing's father," announced Bunter.

"Do you mean that longshoreman?" asked Harry Wharton, frowning.

"I mean Redwing's father," answered Bunter, with a snigger. "He's staying at the Cross Keys, I believe. I saw him smoking at a window there. He, he, he!"

"So he's still hanging about here?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"It's time he cleared off," said Wharton, knitting his brows. "I don't believe he's Redwing's father. It's beastly to have the rotter hanging about Greyfriars."

"I say, you fellows, do you think he'll come here again?" grinned Bunter. "I say, the Head will be waxy. Redwing ought to keep his low relations away from Greyfriars, oughtn't he?"

"You fat idiot, he's not a relation of Redwing's!"

"Gammon!" said Bunter, with a fat wink. "Of course, he is. He says so. Besides, he's just the kind of father Redwing would have, isn't he?"

"Oh, soot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter rolled off to impart the news to others. There was a good deal of interest in the Remove when it became known that "Redwing's father" was staying at the shadiest public-house in that part of the county, and within so short a distance of Greyfriars.

If he was that sort of ruffian, Wibley remarked, it was only natural that Redwing wanted to keep him at arm's length. Some of the fellows agreed with Wibley.

All agreed that the seafaring man, with his claim upon a Greyfriars fellow, was not a very agreeable neighbour so near the school. The fellows had been sorry for him, and disgusted with Redwing's supposed heartlessness. But—there was a "but"—but it was clear that the so-called Bill Redwing was a boozey and loafing character. Indeed, on the following day several Greyfriars fellows related that they had seen him reeling in the village street, much the worse for the vile liquor sold at the Cross Keys.

"Redwing ought to get his pater to go home to Hawkscliff," was Bolsover major's comment.

"Boozey beast, and no mistake!" Squiff remarked.

"Well, he's a bit rough," said Bolsover. "But he was awfully out up at being disowned by his son, you know, and that may have made him reckless. Still, he ought not to hang about Greyfriars; it's really too bad. It will be the talk of the place soon!"

"The least Redwing can do after this is to leave Greyfriars," said Skinner judiciously. "He's brought enough disgrace on the school, I think."

"Oh, rats!" answered Squiff.

But Squiff did not speak so sharply as he would have done a few days before. There was a good deal of agreement in the Remove with Skinner's point of view.

Tom Redwing winced under the incessant discussion of the matter, much of which went on in his hearing.

His face was very interesting to watch—to Harold Skinner.

Skinner was enjoying his revenge. Redwing was in the black books of his Form, both for having such a father and for being ashamed of him—a rather unreasonable yew, but natural enough. Skinner was not now alone in thinking that Tom Redwing ought never to have come to Greyfriars. A fellow with a pater like that ought to have thought twice before entering at a school like Greyfriars; and, at the same time, it was mean and caddish to be ashamed of his own father, and to deny him in public. On both counts poor Tom was found guilty, and there were few who believed in him.

The sailorman's son grew more and more reserved as the tide of opinion set against him; and, though the Famous Five were the same as ever, Redwing avoided them a good deal. He felt that he was under a cloud, and he would not throw himself on anyone's compassion. Perhaps he would even have avoided his own best chum, the Bouncer; but Smithy did not allow that. And Smithy's friendship was a great deal to the unfortunate lad in those shadowed days.

But Skinner, satisfied as he was with his success, was not quite at ease. He fervently wished that the longshoreman would take his departure. So long as he lingered in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars there was danger of the facts coming to light. There was no telling what the ruffian might babble out in his cups. Skinner comforted himself with the reflection that the rascal's money would soon be exhausted, and then that delectable resort, the Cross Keys, would be closed to him. And on Saturday Skinner and Stott walked down to Friar-dale after dinner, to make a cautious inquiry as to whether Mr. Hunks was gone.

"Hallo, my hearty!"

That greeting fell on Skinner's ears as he came up to the stile in the lane. On the stile Mr. Hunks was leaning, smoking a short black pipe. Evidently he was not gone.

Skinner cast a hasty glance up and down the lane.

"Hallo!" he said. "I thought you were gone by this time."

Mr. Hunks closed one eye.

"Not yet," he answered. "I've found a comfortable anchorage, I 'ave. They're civil enough at the Cross Keys now, my buck—so long as a man's money lasts. 'Ow's my boy Tom gettin' on?" And the ruffian chuckled. "I'm goin' to give 'im another look-in this arternoon."

Skinner started.

"You're going to Greyfriars?" he exclaimed.

"Wot!"

"My hat!" murmured Stott in dismay.

"I—I say, you'd better not go there again!" stammered Skinner.

"Why not?" said Mr. Hunks coolly. "I'm a pore sailorman, down on my luck, and I want some 'elp. The young gentlemen will take another collection for me, and you'll be there to start it, sir."

"I jolly well sha'n't!" exclaimed Skinner.

"You'd better!" said Mr. Hunks significantly.

"Wha-at?"

"Don't you talk to me!" said Mr. Hunks disdainfully. "'Ow'd you like me to tell the young gents you give me a pound to come there an' tell lies?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Stott again.

Skinner's face was livid now.

"You—you wouldn't do that?" he gasped.

"Wouldn't I?" grinned Mr. Hunks. "I'd do it soon as look at yer! There's goin' to be another collection for the pore sailor, my hearty, and you're goin' to 'elp. You look out for squalls if you don't!"

Skinner fairly trembled.

Like many cunning persons, he was so cunning that he was liable to over-reach himself. It looked as if he had over-reached himself badly in this instance. Stott sidled away quietly, leaving Skinner to face alone the difficulty he had brought upon himself.

"Look here, you—you can't go to Greyfriars," stammered Skinner. "Our Form-master's heard about the matter now, and—and if he sees you he may call in the police."

"About Redwing's father—hay?"

"He doesn't believe you're Redwing's father."

"Don't they all believe it?" grinned Mr. Hunks. "Young man, you put me on to a good thing, and I ain't lettin' it slip! If you don't want me at Greyfriars, 'and me out a quid, and I won't come till next week. That's fair."

"I—I haven't a quid!" panted Skinner.

"I 'ope you've got enough to start a collection for a pore sailorman," said Mr. Hunks significantly. "It'll mean trouble for you if you 'aven't!"

"They won't make another collection for you," said Skinner, in utter dismay. "You'll get turned out by the porter."

"I'd like to see any porter turn me out from visitin' my own son at his school," grinned Mr. Hunks. "You may expect me this arternoon!"

"Look here—"

"'Nuff said!" interrupted Mr. Hunks, with a wave of his black pipe. "You look for me this arternoon; and if you ain't on the spot, sir, I'll inquire arter you, and then something may come out!"

Skinner's knees were knocking together as he fairly limped back to Greyfriars. He dared not quarrel with the man; he knew that. The greedy rascal was determined to make what he could while the opportunity lasted. The collection the juniors had made for him had whetted his appetite for more. Where was this to end? It seemed only too probable to the unhappy plotter that it would end in the exposure of his cunning plot, and that prospect made Skinner shudder.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Smithy.

"HE'S coming!"

Billy Bunter brought the news.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come off Little Side after practice, and they were chatting with the Bouncer near the gates. Tom Redwing was at work in his study, half-holiday as it was. The chums of the Remove were discussing a pull on the river till tea-time, and Smithy had announced that he would fetch Redwing out to join them, when Bunter burst upon them.

Bunter's round eyes were dancing behind his spectacles with excitement.

"He's coming!" he yelled. "He, he, he! He's coming!"

"Who's coming, you fat idiot?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, with an inward premonition of what the answer would be.

"Redwing's pater!" chortled Bunter. "He's coming up the road now. I asked him if he was coming here to see Redwing, and he said he was. He, he, he! What a scenet!"

Vernon-Smith set his teeth.

"Come and look, you fellows," he said. And the juniors went out at the gates and looked down the road.

Bunter's news was well founded. In the distance the grubby and shaggy seafaring man could be seen coming on towards Greyfriars.

"The cheeky brute!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "He's no right to come here. Anyhow, Quelchy will see him this time."

"Somebody else is going to see him," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "He's not Redwing's father, you fellows."

"I—I suppose not," said Bob Cherry doubtfully.

"He's not; and he's going to be shown up as the rotten impostor he is," said the Bouncer quietly. "Plenty of people at Hawkscliff know Tom Redwing's father well, and could identify him. Keep that rascal from getting away, while I buzz off to Hawkscliff on my bike."

"What for?"

"For a witness," said the Bouncer quietly.

"I—I say, Smithy—" Bob hesitated. "If—if it should turn out that he is really Redwing's pater—"

"I take Tom Redwing's word about that. Let the rotter come in, and see that he doesn't get away again till I come back," said the Bouncer. "I'll bring a Hawkscliff man with me to witness that he's an impostor, if I have to yank him by the ears! Then he can be arrested."

"Oh!"

Vernon-Smith said no more. He ran in for his machine, and wheeled it out and mounted. Long before Mr. Hunks had reached the school gates Vernon-Smith passed him on the road, riding as if for life.

It was a ten-mile ride to Hawkscliff, but that was nothing to the hardy Bouncer. The miles fairly flew under the tyres as he raced on.

Up hill and down dale he went, scarcely slackening speed for a minute. The perspiration was thick on his brow, but he did not seem to feel fatigue.

Hawkscliff was reached at last.

In the rugged, narrow street of the fishing village Vernon-Smith jumped off his bicycle outside the little cabin that had once been tenanted by Tom Redwing. In that cabin Tom had once dwelt with his father, before the sailor's last fatal voyage; afterwards he had shared it with a Hawkscliff man who had gone later on the mine-sweepers, and after that Tom had lived there alone, till he won the scholarship which had made him an inmate of Greyfriars School. Vernon-Smith leaned his bicycle against the little cabin, and sank down on the old bench outside to rest a few minutes and recover his breath and mop his perspiring brow and decide on his plans.

He wanted a Hawkscliff man who had known Redwing's father—and probably everyone at Hawkscliff had known Bill Redwing. The witness was surely easy enough to find. And any friend of Mr. Redwing and his son would surely be willing to make the journey to Greyfriars to expose a rascal who was calling himself by the dead sailor's name. Smithy was sure of that.

Hawkscliff was almost deserted in these days; the young men, and most of the old, were away on the mine-sweepers. A few women could be seen in the rugged street and the little gardens, and one or two very ancient mariners were smoking their pipes on the beach. To the Bouncer's surprise, as he sat on the bench

Looking down the street, he heard a sound in the cabin behind him. The cabin had been shut up since Tom Redwing went to Greyfriars, but there was evidently someone in it now.

"By gad, the mine-sweeper chap's come home!" muttered the Bounder. "Just the man I want!"

He rose to his feet and knocked at the door of the cabin.

It was opened by a powerfully-built sailorman, with a darkly-bronzed face and a scarred cheek. Vernon-Smith had never seen him before; but Harold Skinner would have recognised him as the man who had been looking down on Greyfriars from the hillside a few days before.

In the honest, frank face of the bearded sailorman there were signs of deep trouble, which Vernon-Smith noted, though without much thought. He was thinking of Tom Redwing.

"Excuse me," he said. "My name's Vernon-Smith, of Greyfriars School. I'm a friend of Tom Redwing's."

The scarred seaman started.

"Greyfriars!" he repeated.

"Yes. I suppose you're the chap who used to share this cabin with Tom before I met him," said the Bounder.

The seaman gave him a curious look.

"What then?" he asked.

"You know Tom Redwing?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you're a friend of his, as I find you in his cabin?" said the Bounder.

The man paused before replying.

"Why do you ask me that, sir?" he said civilly.

"Tom Redwing's in trouble, and I want you to help him out," explained the Bounder.

"Oh!" The sailorman stepped back.

"Will you come in and sit down, sir?"

Vernon-Smith entered the cabin. The grave, quiet seaman puzzled him a little.

"I take it that you're the chap who lived here with Redwing once, and went out mine-sweeping," said the Bounder.

"If so, you're a friend of his, and I'm sure you'll do him a good turn."

"What can I do for him?"

"There's a man come to Greyfriars claiming to be his father—"

"What!"

"A drunken, boozy rascal of a fellow," said Vernon-Smith. "Either he's a lunatic, or he's been put up to it by somebody—in fact, we don't know why he's done it, but he's claiming to be Redwing's father, and disgracing him before all the school. I've come over here for a Hawkscliff man who knew Tom Redwing's father, who'll come over to Greyfriars and show the rotter up. He's there now."

"Good heavens!"

"You knew Mr. Redwing?" asked the Bounder eagerly.

The seaman nodded without speaking.

"Then you'll come?"

Silence.

"Surely you'll come!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith anxiously. Redwing's been through a rotten time lately, and he's going through it again this afternoon. Most of the fellows think he's a cad for disowning his own father, because he won't own that that hooligan belongs to him. If you're a friend of Tom's you're bound to come!"

"Poor Tom!"

"Well, will you help him?"

The seaman hesitated strangely.

"So they played that trick after all!" he said. "They found another man. Master Vernon-Smith, I can tell you how the matter stands, at least. Two young gentlemen of your school have planned this."

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"How on earth do you know?" exclaimed the Bounder in astonishment.

"Because the other day, when I was near Greyfriars, they came to me and asked me to play just such a trick," said the scarred seaman quietly. "I shook the young gentleman who asked me. A precious young rascal he was."

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"What was he like?" he exclaimed. The sailorman's words had let in a flood of light upon the Bounder's mind. He thought of Skinner at once. "Was his name Skinner?"

"I don't know his name, sir. He was a weedy lad, with a nose like a knife-blade, and greenish eyes—"

"Skinner!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "Oh, the hound—the rotter! I might have guessed this. I ought to have guessed it! Skinner from beginning to end, of course! He's got that brute of a longshoresman to come there and disgrace Redwing. I'll make him sorry for it, too! But—but you must come over to Greyfriars and show the man up. If you won't, tell me where I can find another Hawkscliff man who knew Redwing's father."

The scarred sailorman smiled strangely.

"Not so fast," he said. "Give me time, young gentleman. How is Tom getting on in the school? Is he getting on well?"

"First-rate!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"Has he made friends there?"

"Lots! I'm his chum, for one," said the Bounder. "Everybody likes him."

"The boy was speaking falsely, then," muttered the sailorman. "I—I thought—I hoped he was."

"Skinner, do you mean?"

"The lad you call Skinner," assented the seaman. "He told me—he said—"

But never mind. I'm sure Tom would make friends at the big school—a good lad like Tom."

"He has," answered Vernon-Smith, looking at the man rather curiously.

"You needn't believe a word of Skinner's. Tom Redwing is as popular at Greyfriars as any fellow in the school."

"And he's not looked down on?"

"Of course not!"

"Yes, he was lying," muttered the seaman. "He looked like a liar. But—but poor Tom! With his new prospects—"

He broke off.

"Will you come?" asked the Bounder impatiently. "It's a long way to my school, you know."

"I'll come!" said the scarred sailorman at last. "Yes, sir, I'll come, to do Tom Redwing a good turn. He'll be glad to see me, I know that. But I wouldn't stand in his light. Heaven knows how I've wanted to see him once again!"

The Bounder started.

"I—I don't catch on. Who are you?" he exclaimed, with a startling thought in his mind.

"My name is William Redwing," said the scarred seaman quietly.

The Bounder jumped.

"Not Redwing's father?" he shouted.

"Tom Redwing's father."

"My hat!" The Bounder fairly staggered. "And—but—but why haven't you told Tom? Why—why—"

The scarred seaman's face clouded a little.

"I got back here," he said. "I was picked up by the Germans after my ship went down, and I was a prisoner—for a lifetime, it seemed to me. After two years of it I got away into Holland, and got home. When I got back here I heard what had happened to Tom, and—"

and— He paused.

"You surely know he'd be glad to see you!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"I knew he would, sir: but—but I didn't want to stand in his light," said the sailorman simply. "I came along to look at the big school. I was thinking it over—whether it would harm Tom in his new school for a rough seaman to turn up and claim him as his son. And I was just thinking, sir, while I looked at the school from the hill, whether it wouldn't be better for me to go quietly to sea again and say nothing. And—and then that lad came up to me, and—and he told me the trick he was going to play on Tom. He told me what, he said, the other boys thought of Tom!" The man's bronzed face twitched. "I thought it over then, and I thought if they're down on Tom because he's a poor seaman's son it won't do him any good for me to come Jongside. So I sheered off, sir, and came back here, and—and in a few days more I should have been at sea again, with nothing said."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Given Up by the Sea.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were in the gateway at Greyfriars when Mr. Hunks came swaggering up.

They eyed him grimly.

"My son about?" asked Mr. Hunks affably.

"If you mean Tom Redwing, he's indoors," said Harry Wharton.

"I reckon I'll go in, then!"

The longshoresman swaggered in at the gate, and the Famous Five followed him in. Gosling looked out of his lodge; but he had heard of Redwing's father, and he did not interfere. A buzz of voices greeted the longshoresman as he appeared in the quadrangle.

"Arternoon, sir!" said Mr. Hunks, as he came upon Skinner. The wretched Skinner had not dared to keep off the scene, lest he should be inquired after, as Mr. Hunks had threatened. "P'raps you'll be so good as to show me in—"

hay? I've called to see my son."

"This way!" muttered Skinner.

The ruffian followed him to the School House. In the doorway Mr. Quelch appeared, with a very severe brow.

The longshoresman touched his battered hat to him.

"What do you want here?" asked Mr. Quelch quietly.

"No offence, sir. I've called to see my son, Tom Redwing."

"Redwing declares that your claim is false!" said the Remove-master sternly.

"He's ashamed of his ole father, sir!" said Mr. Hunks pathetically. "It's 'ard on a man, sir. And seeing as I can't get my back pay yet awhile, I'm 'ard up, sir. P'raps, sir, you'd be so kind as to 'elp a cove?"

"If your claim is true and you are a seaman who has suffered in his country's cause, you shall certainly not want for help," said Mr. Quelch. "But, as Redwing denies your statement, the matter must be proved. Redwing!"

"Yes, sir?" said Tom, coming forward.

He had come downstairs on the news that his "father" was coming.

"You repeat that this man is not your father?"

"Yes, sir!"

"May I speak, sir?" struck in Harry Wharton.

"Certainly, Wharton, if you know anything about the matter."

"Smithy—I mean Vernon-Smith, sir, has gone over to Hawkscliff to fetch some man who knew Redwing's father," said Harry. "A Hawkscliff man will be able to say whether this is Mr. Redwing or not."

"A very good idea!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "That is very thoughtful of Vernon-Smith!"

Mr. Hunks' jaw dropped.

Vernon-Smith's idea might be a very good one, but Mr. Hunks was not charmed with it at all. He had no desire whatever to meet a man from Hawkscliff who knew Tom Redwing's father.

The change in his face did not escape the Remove-master.

"You may come in, my man," said Mr. Quelch. "You will remain here until Vernon-Smith returns with a witness—"

"I—I reckon I ain't got no time to wait 'ere," muttered Mr. Hunks. "If my son is ashamed of his ole dad I ain't going to worrit him. I'll leave 'im to his conscience," added Mr. Hunks loftily. And he made a strategic movement towards the door.

"Don't let him go, sir!" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

"I do not intend to do so!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "It is growing clear that his claim is false, and the police must deal with him!"

"Oh, crimes!" ejaculated Mr. Hunks. Skinner, with a livid face, disappeared from the scene. He felt that the hour of exposure was near at hand.

"Look here, I'm going!" expostulated Mr. Hunks. "You can't keep a man 'ere agin his will!"

"You'll see whether we can, you rotter!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Shall we collar him, sir?"

"You may use force if he attempts to leave, certainly!"

"The forcefulness will be terrific, honoured sahib!" grinned Hurree Singh. Mr. Hunks gasped.

He had quite given up the hope now of a new collection for the "poor sailor-man." He was beginning to feel nervous for his valuable skin.

"I—I own up, sir!" he gasped. "It was only a lark! I ain't that young cove's father, and never was!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bolsover major.

"It was only a lark, sir!" mumbled Mr. Hunks, cringing under the stern eyes of the Remove-master. "A young gent offered me a quid to come 'ere and say I was that lad's father, sir, that's all! Jest a practical joke, sir! And seeing as I owed Bill Redwing one, I thought I'd come. Which he walloped me something cruel, sir, in the fo'castle of the Mary Ann, owing to a misunderstandin' about some money of his'n that was missing, and which I never touched; that I'll swear! And when the young gent offered me a quid to come 'ere and show that lad up, 'I'm on!' says I. Only a joke, sir!"

"You mean to say that a boy belonging to this school induced you to come here with this wicked and cruel story?" exclaimed the Remove-master.

"He give me a quid to do it, sir!" Mr. Quelch frowned portentously.

"Mr. Quelch," exclaimed Tom Redwing, "you won't take the word of a man like that against any Greyfriars fellow! He says that my father punished him on some occasion for stealing. That is why he played this trick. I'm sure, sir, that no Greyfriars fellow would have had a hand in such a thing!"

"Probably you are right Redwing, and the man is speaking falsely," said Mr. Quelch, with a kind glance at the sailor-man's son. "Certainly I would not take his word against anyone."

"On my solemn davy, sir—" whined Mr. Hunks.

"Silence! Leave this school at once!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I am not sure whether the law would punish you for your cruel trick; but certainly if I find you at Greyfriars again I will give you into custody. Wharton, please request Gosling to see this man off the premises!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Hunks almost crawled out of the School House. The visit had not been a profitable one, after all; and he had not even succeeded in giving Skinner away. Harry Wharton & Co., and a crowd of the Remove and Fourth, saw him down to the gates—and they did not trouble Gosling to see him off the premises. They saw to that themselves. Mr. Hunks departed from the gates of Greyfriars with half a dozen boots crashing behind him, and he rolled in the dusty road with a roar.

"Now, then!" roared Bob Cherry. "All together—jump on him!"

"Yaroo!" howled Mr. Hunks. "Oh, crimes! Yow-ow-ow!"

He did not wait to be jumped on. In hot haste he equirmed away, scrambled up, and fled down the road. In record time the longshoreman vanished from the sight of Greyfriars.

Then the Remove fellows gathered round Tom Redwing. Bolsover major was the first to ask his pardon. Tom had been set right in the eyes of his Form-fellows, and he owed it to the Bounder—though the witness from Hawkscliff was no longer wanted. The mere fact that the witness was coming was enough for Mr. Hunks. Tom Redwing waited at the gates for his chum to return, and later on the Famous Five joined him there.

"Smithy's had his journey for nothing, as it turns out," remarked Wharton. "It's time he was here."

"Not for nothing," said Tom, with a smile. "That rascal did not wait for the witness, that's all. I wonder who will be coming with Smithy?"

He little guessed!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Smithy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry at last. "He's got a sailorman with him!"

Tom Redwing looked along the road. He started at the sight of Vernon-

Smith's companions, and his handsome face changed colour.

"Good heavens!" he panted.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the—"

Tom Redwing dashed out into the road and ran to meet Vernon-Smith and his companion. His eyes were shining.

"Father!"

Vernon-Smith joined the astonished Co.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton in amazement. "Who is it, Smithy?"

"Redwing's pater," said the Bounder quietly. "I found him at Hawkscliff."

"My only hat!"

"Father!" cried Tom Redwing.

"Father! Alive—oh, father!" The tears were streaming down the cheeks of the sailorman's son. "Oh, father!"

"Tom, lad!"

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band!" said Bob Cherry. "Redwing's pater alive and well! Gentleman, chaps, and fellows, this is where we cheer!"

And cheer they did, with a vigour that woke all the echoes of Greyfriars.

Tom Redwing's father was an honoured guest at Greyfriars that evening.

The bluff, hearty sailorman jumped into the favour of the school at once.

The Remove could not make enough of him.

A sailorman who had been submarined by the Huns, who had spent two years a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, that was a man whom Greyfriars delighted to honour.

And honour him they did.

Excepting, perhaps, Skinner. But Skinner was very busy that evening nursing a swollen nose, which the Bounder had bestowed upon him as a reward for his astute dealings with Mr. Hunks.

Mr. Redwing was greeted with great distinction by Mr. Quelch and the Head, and quite put at his ease; but it was in Study No. 1 that his reception was most hearty, not to say vociferous. In that study he had to relate his adventures to as many fellows as could cram themselves in—and then there was an overflow meeting in the Remove passage. And Tom Redwing's eyes never left the bronzed, scarred face—the face he had hardly dared to hope to look upon again in this world. That day was a happy one to Tom Redwing. And when Able-seaman William Redwing left Greyfriars a whole army of juniors marched away with him to see him off, and the cheer they gave at parting sounded very pleasantly in the ears of Tom Redwing's father.

THE END.

(Don't miss "WILLIAM THE WARLIKE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"WILLIAM THE WARLIKE!"

By Frank Richards.

Stories about the one and only William George Bunter are always popular, and I feel sure that my readers will be as much entertained by next week's yarn as they were by that of a few weeks ago, which dealt with Billy Bunter's Birthright, or that other, a little later, which told of his strange and annoying reformation.

William the Warlike seems as unlikely as William the Good—to be real, that is. There is bound to be something behind any willingness Bunter shows for the fray. And, of course, there is something behind it. What the mystery is cannot be told here, however,

or I should spoil the story for you. So you must wait to know that.

A FINE BOOK OF THE SEA.

A good many of you already know something of the work of Mr. John S. Margerison, who has written quite a number of capital sea stories, and has more on the stocks. "The Hungry Hundred" is not intended specially as a book for boys, but all boys keen on the sea would enjoy it. It tells of the shaping of a crowd of real hard cases—some of them raw hands, all of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve—by an enthusiastic and sympathetic young naval officer, a born leader, one who knows how to deal with men. No one can fail to like James Stanley Murray; and one also gets to be fond of the hard-bitten rascals who would follow him anywhere, as men of the British breeds will always follow the man they love and trust. Casey, Rooney, Davies, Ellis, Jenkins, Muldoon, Munro, Wade, McNab, Cooper, Morrow, and the rest—we get to know them all, and to recognise the

fine stuff that their roughness conceals. "Hard cases, every soul; readier with the fist than with the word; calling no man 'Master,' save through love and affection; never mustering a single good conduct badge among them . . . They 'did their bit' right faithfully and cheerfully, and they died . . . They rest in peace beneath the grey waters of the chill North Sea, while their brethren of the Hungry Hundred work and toil and fight and serve in that Sure Shield which is ever a safeguard to our Empire."

These are words from the last pages of the book, and they strike its note faithfully, I think.

"The Hungry Hundred" is published by Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., at 3/6. Of course, any bookseller or bookstall can supply it. I know that you are not all so wealthy that you can afford books at this price; but those of you who are exceptionally keen, and who have the cash to spare, may be glad of the hint that it is worth while to get it.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 543.

A Great New Serial Story.

THE BROWN TORRENT.

BY SIDNEY DREW.

A Thrilling Story of Adventure, in which Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and other Popular Characters, play their parts.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Rupert Thurston buys an idol bearing the inscription, "I am Sharpra the Slumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!" Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gau-Waga, Maddock, Prout, and O'Rooney arrive. The idol's eyes are seen to open, and with a terrific crash the hotel collapses.

A lank Indian, named Gadra Singh, is employed as cook; and the one-time rebel, Larput Raj, is the shikari. While watching the idol he sees its eyes open, but they quickly shut.

Duke Payton arrives and joins the expedition to the cactus country. They are out hunting a tiger, and Ching-Lung manages to shoot it. They find a blue-eyed native who has been killed by a python, and bury him. Maddock, Gan-Waga, Barry O'Rooney, and the cook are left in camp. Some rebelling natives fire on them. The natives are beaten, and the party proceeds in peace to Dandu's village. Barry accidentally releases Kosti, the python. Barry, Maddock, and Prout go to get Gan-Waga's fowl.

(Now read on.)

"Yes, I comes," said the Eskimo, also winking in the gloom. "Mind yo' not slip on the sloop, old dears. Ho, ho, hoo!"

Mr. Barry O'Rooney splashed safely to the bank, where Prout put out a strong hand and helped him to firm ground.

"Whisht! O've got him by the neck," whispered Barry. "He's got the ould rooster hid away, d'ye see? He's promised to bring ut round to the back of the tent ten minutes from now. O'll get into a bit of dhry goods. Lay out for the blubberboiter, and whin he comes pounce and leot him. You'll be there, Gan?" he asked aloud. "Don't be afraid of these two ruffians. Bedad, son, av they attempt to molest ye, O'll set about thim wid my two fists!"

Everything seemed lovely, provided the Eskimo fulfilled his promise and turned up with the goods at the appointed place. They were turning away hopefully when a voice came from the water-hole.

"Barry, old dears!"

"Hallo, mavourneen!" said Barry, pausing.

"I not think I comes; I too tiredness. I think I gives yo' yo' halves now," said the Eskimo. "Where the light?"

Prout switched it on. Their eyes turned glassy as from some hidden pocket Gan-Waga produced the carcass of the fowl. He dug his sharp, white teeth into it. A few quick bites and tugs removed a wing and a leg and cleared the breast of meat. Gan-Waga pitched the rest ashore.

"That yo' shares, Barry, old dears," said the Eskimo sweetly. "Good-nights!"

As Prout picked up the carcass and hurled it back at him, a red light burst over Sharpra and swiftly steeped the sky in crimson light. Ferrers Lord and the shikari were riding towards the camp at full gallop.

The Wave of the Torrent.

AMAN—who spends the best years of his life under burning suns and tropical rains on the frontiers of civilisation is apt to become careless sooner or later about his personal appearance. This was not the case with Duke Payton, of the Indian Woods and Forests Department. He was always dapper. There was never the suggestion of a bristle on his chin, though he could have grown a beard three inches long in a month.

Payton made a point of shaving once a day, and if he found the slightest suggestion of roughness on his chin or upper lip he would shave twice. His hair and his clothes were always neatly brushed, and he paid great attention to his hands. When at his bungalow, with no one near him but his native servants, Payton frequently dressed for dinner.

It was one of those occasions on which Payton decided that self-respect demanded a second shave. Payton had hung up a little mirror in the corner of the tent. He was stropping a razor when, by an unlucky slip, he slashed the strop almost in halves. He made a pungent remark, and Payton seldom used strong language.

Rupert Thurston, who was jotting down the events of the day in a notebook, turned to discover the cause of Payton's wrath.

"My only strop!" said Payton. "At least, the only strop that will put an edge on the thing."

"Why don't you use a safety-razor?" asked Thurston.

"Because all the safeties I've tried were beastly things," said Payton. "They were more like using a plane on your face than an honest razor. Perhaps I'm old-fashioned. Anyhow, I'm a clumsy ass to do a thing like that!"

"There's a brand-new strop in my bag there," said Rupert, and went on writing.

Payton opened the bag. He uttered another exclamation—not an angry one this time, but one of surprise.

"What's the idea in carting this thing about with you?" he asked.

He had the image of Sharpra the Slumberer in his hand.

"Well, that's curious!" said Thurston. "I don't remember putting it in there. I was looking in my bag about half an hour ago, and I didn't notice it, though it's pretty bulky. Is the old bouncer still asleep?" He asked the question jokingly.

"No; he's very much awake," answered Duke Payton—"at least—Here, look at the ugly brute!"

It was extraordinary. However they viewed the piece of hideously-carved marble, the eyes had the appearance of being open. There was no trick about it, no mechanism. Rupert prodded the eyes with his pencil. The marble was solid throughout.

Thurston asked an odd question:

"Did you ever see the woman in the moon, Payton?"

Payton nodded.

"It may be that," he said. "I understand what you mean. It took a very patient friend of mine an hour to point out the lady to me, and now every time I look at the moon I see her plainly. You mean that the eyes seem to be open if you look at them in a certain way, and I happened to look at it in that particular way when I took it out of the bag. I told you the eyes were open, and the suggestion—"

He hid the face of Sharpra the Slumberer with his hand as Ching-Lung entered the tent.

"Give your verdict, Ching," said Thurston. "Payton has just dug out Sharpra. Is the old horror asleep or awake?"

Payton removed his hand, and Prince Ching-Lung bent forward and peered at the image.

"That's a bit of a caution," he said. "I didn't know you were a sculptor, Rupert. You've been using a chisel on the thing, haven't you? You've been faking up his eyes."

"Honour bright, I haven't touched it, old man! I don't know how it got into my bag. Is it one of your japes? Did you fake it and put it in there?"

"Not on this earth!" said Ching-Lung. "I haven't seen the old image since the night of the earthquake. It doesn't appear to have been tampered with, either; but he's awake

right enough. The thing is a bit uncanny. We can't very well accuse the chief, for he doesn't go in for jokes. What's the inscription again, Payton?"

Payton quoted it from memory as he searched the bag for the strop.

"Something like this: 'When Sharpra flames the forests shall awaken and walk and drink blood. River and lake and mountain shall not stay them in the day that Sharpra arouseth himself from his slumbers and shakes from his shoulders the sleep of ten thousand moons. I am Sharpra the Slumberer, and at my awakening the whole earth shall tremble.' I believe there's some more, but for the moment I've forgotten it. I'll read it to you presently if you wish it."

"Oh, get out, you old horror!" said Thurston, pitching the image into the corner of the tent. "It has hypnotised us."

"If I were old Sharpra, and you clucked me about like that, I'd wait up for you one dark night," said Ching-Lung. "You'll put the wind up the old chap, Rupert. Why, you've done it!" he added, with a laugh, as he raised the flap of the tent. "He's sending up some fireworks. He's getting ratty."

The sky was aglow with smouldering light.

At that moment Ferrers Lord and the shikari rode in.

"Have you seen anything worth seeing, chief?" asked the prince.

"A good many camp fires," answered the millionaire. "There's a considerable force of men out there. We nearly rode into a band of them, some advance guard, I suppose. They were camped without a fire, and had posted sentries. They followed us for a mile or two, but our ponies were faster than theirs."

"They had ponies, then?"

"I was just saying so. Larput Raj, old wolf, go thou to the village and tell Dandu, the chief, that Azada would speak with him. And let Nacha put his sentries out farther. After that keep watch with owl's eyes."

The shikari saluted, and cattered away in the direction of the village. Dull and distant mutterings and whimpers came over the plain from the burning peak of Sharpra.

Dandu arrived without delay. Six young Dahran warriors, carrying lighted torches fastened to the handles of their spears, accompanied him. They thrust the blades of the spears into the ground, and in the light cast by the torches Dandu saluted Ferrers Lord with the sign of the snake.

"Dandu," said the millionaire, "I have ridden yonder with my shikari, and have seen many camp-fires. The village is not a good place. True, we could defend it for a time, but we have not many stores, and it is a foolish fox that lets itself be trapped. My counsel is that you take your women folk and children and what goods you can across the ravine. And waste no time."

"That is my counsel also. But Zapra, the priest, says it is evil counsel, Azada," said the chief.

"Then let Zapra and the fools who follow his advice remain behind!" said Ferrers Lord. "Do this thing, and do it speedily."

Half an hour later the evacuation of the

village began. When the dawn came the warriors were driving the last of the cattle towards the ravine. Zapra, the priest, still had a few faithful adherents, and the occasional flash of a spearhead in the grey light showed that the watch-towers were manned.

Barry O'Rooney had made a fire all to himself to dry the garments that had got so wet when he was looking for the boiled fowl. He did not speak, for his thoughts were too deep for words when Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, came waddling along.

"Yo' not sulkiness, hunk, old dears?" inquired the Eskimo, with a wide and happy smile. "Yo' not ratty, Barry?"

"Away wid ye!" said Barry. "Lave me in pace. Oi don't want to sthert the day by killin' an Iskimo!"

"It dreadfulness funny," said Gan-Waga. "Now, why yo' gotted the humps, Barry? I promises yo' halfs of the old rooster, and I gives yo' halfs, hunk? Yo' only get wildness, I my most mysteriousness. What the matters, old dears?"

"Phwat d'ye mane, phwat's the matter, old dear, ye haythin image?" growled Mr. O'Rooney. "D'ye think Oi could touch the miserable birrd afther you'd sthuck your teeth in ut? D'ye think Oi wanted ut afther ut had been soakin' in that dirty ould frog-pond, ye oily son of a Greenland whale? Away wid ye! Beat ut! Push off! Absquatulate! Mizze, Oi say!"

"Dears, dears! Yo' a most rufefuls man!" said Gan-Waga. "Ho, ho, ho! It was a butterfuls fowl, Barry! He so tenderness he melt away in yo' mouths. Yo' likes to kiss me afores I go, hunk?"

As the Eskimo saw Mr. O'Rooney gazing round for something hard to throw at him, he departed in haste to find out what Gadra Singh had for breakfast.

The bony cook did not welcome Gan-Waga with much enthusiasm. The Eskimo was supposed to help in the culinary department, but Gan-Waga seemed to have forgotten all about it. He gave a shudder as Gan helped himself to raw eggs, and began to crunch them up, shells and all.

"Dears, dears! Yo' gotted 'em too, hunk?" said the Eskimo. "I nevers met such a lot of miserableness. Yo' all gotted the pips this loveliful morning. I go to my dear old Chingy. My Chingy always keeps on smiling."

There was a shout. Larput Raj came galloping over the grass as fast as the sturdy pony could carry him. The pony was steaming as he sprang from it.

"They come, sahib!" he cried. "There is a big stir yonder, and the gleam of many spears!"

"How many, old wolf?"

Larput Raj shook his head. He was not good at computing numbers.

"I know not, great sahib, but they are many," he answered. "With the strong eyes you carry they may be seen."

By "strong eyes" the shikari meant the binoculars.

Ferrers Lord spoke to Payton. It seemed a waste of time and energy to have carried the packs so far, only to have to carry them back again; and Prout and the bearers had met with no little difficulty in crossing the ravine. The bearers were still with them.

"I'll get things moving at once," said Payton. "You'll keep me covered if there's any danger."

"Yes, I'll attend to that," said Ferrers Lord. "You ought to meet the chief and get help from him in taking the stuff up. Old wolf, bring thou the rifle the Viceroy gave thee, and follow. Let Gan-Waga go with the bearers, Chingy."

Taking his field-glasses and his little gold-mounted cane, Ferrers Lord went towards the village with Rupert Thurston, the shikari striding after them, rifle on shoulder. The gate was closed. Larput Raj knocked at it with the butt of his rifle. As there was no immediate response the shikari became angry.

"Sons of pot-sellers, open!" he cried. "Must the great sahib await your pleasure at the door of your dunghill? Open, you brown adders! Is it not I, Larput Raj, who knock? Is it not the great sahib who awaits?"

At length the bars were lowered and the heavy gate creaked open. A boy of about fourteen stood there. He salaamed and drew back. Ferrers Lord made a sign to the shikari, and went up the ladder of the watch-tower, with Thurston behind him. They had scarcely reached the platform before the ladder began to creak and groan under a heavier weight than their own. It was Zapra, the priest. He had washed off some of the paint, but he looked as ugly as ever. He made the gesture that is presumed to guard against the evil-eye, and that in itself was an insult.

The millionaire ignored him. He raised his binoculars and looked out across the plain. Above Sharpra was a pall of smoke. Thurston also put up his field-glasses. Something that resembled a glittering snake was crawling over the green plain—something more deadly and dangerous than any snake that ever crawled. It was a column of armed men, the sunlight flashing on their spears. They were a long way off, but much nearer the village objects were in motion. They were ponies, and they were not riderless.

"A raid in force, chief," said Rupert Thurston. "The beggars must be five or six hundred strong."

"Easily that," said Ferrers Lord. "There are seven or eight hundred spears out there. Zapra, look, thou dog!"

He gave the binoculars to the priest, and Zapra quite understood what they were for. He gave one look. Ferrers Lord was quick enough to catch the glasses as they dropped from his hand. Zapra gave a hoarse yell, and went blundering down the ladder. He had already packed up his most-treasured goods and buried the less valuable. He rushed into his hut, and came out carrying a bundle on his head. The next moment, his corpulent body quivering like a jelly, Zapra, the priest, was making a bee-line for the ravine.

"He trips along with all the ease and grace of a nimble elephant!" laughed Thurston. "And there are others!"

Howls and lamentations announced that the desertion of Zapra had become known. As the big rat had abandoned the foundering ship, the lesser rats quickly followed.

Again Ferrers Lord put up the binoculars. Far off across the green divide appeared a second glittering line, and behind that a third. The millionaire replaced the glasses in their case, and tapped the cane against his foot.

"We set out with the intention of crossing the divide, Rupert," he said; and Thurston noticed a few wrinkles in his forehead that were seldom there. "I detest intentions; they so often come undone. A determination is worth a thousand intentions. To attempt to fulfil a determination in this condition of things seems like asking for an extermination. There are between two and three thousand of those fellows on the move already. For this part of the earth that is quite a respectable raid; almost an invasion. And there may be ten or twenty thousand more behind them."

"And that suggests a fast trek for the safety of our skins, chief," said Thurston. "We can't hold up such a crowd."

Ferrers Lord did not answer at once. His frown vanished, and he smiled.

"Do you think I am stubborn, Rupert?"

"I don't know whether I'd call you that, chief," said Thurston. "Sometimes, to my knowledge, you have done what, to me, seemed the most pig-headed things in the world at the outset. I willingly admit that the result proved that I was wrong. Now I have a question for you, chief. Is it still your intention to cross the divide to Sharpra?"

The tent had been struck, and already the bearers were on the move.

"No," said Ferrers Lord quietly; "it is no longer my intention to go to Sharpra, but my fixed determination."

The Closed Gate.

BY three o'clock the ravine had been crossed safely. It was a powerful position to hold. The ravine ran almost east and west, and the gushing stream below entered the lagoon.

Payton, Ching-Lung, Ferrers Lord, Larput Raj, and Prout explored the bottom of the ravine eastwards as far as the lagoon. There it merged into marshes and reed-grown swamps that formed a formidable obstacle to any advance by a force unprovided with canoes or boats. To cavalry of any kind it was practically impassable.

The exploring party turned and followed the course of the ravine westward. It was not easy work, for they could only make progress in places by scrambling over boulders or wading along the rocky bed of the stream. At the crossing Dandu joined them. He salaamed to Ferrers Lord, who stood knee-deep in the swift current.

"The foe are drawing near the village, Azada," he said, "and soon we shall see the smoke of it. There is little to burn save the hatches. Zapra is with us, cursing and lamenting. My young men are angry, and ask me to slay him, for he is a mischief-maker, and at his words the hearts of my people turn cold with fear. Shall I slay him, Azada? Is it thy will?"

"Nay. Let the snarling old cur live," said Ferrers Lord. "Tell him from me that unless he keeps a silent tongue silence must be flashed into him with a stout whip. And now, chief, where is the nearest point that the enemy can cross?"

"It is called the Bridge of Grief, Azada. It is accursed, and for the curse put upon it by Zapra, the priest, the Dahrans are bidden to avoid it. There is good pasturage beyond, and this Zapra had claimed, and always he had the fattest cattle. One year the winter rains came soon and suddenly, and men were sent out to drive in the priest's cattle. And great clouds came, and wind and darkness. And lo! as the cattle were being driven over the bridge a mighty flame of fire burst from the sky, and many cattle were scorched and slain by it and flung into the ravine. And Zapra said it was the doing of Morf, the wild-boar god, for the boar hates the snake people, and will devour their young. Wherefore did Zapra curse the bridge, and call it the Bridge of Grief, for the cattle he lost were very fat."

"Trust the priests every time for owning the fattest cattle," said Duke Payton. "This must be a natural bridge, sir."

"We'll go and look at it, Payton," said Ferrers Lord; and led the way upstream.

An abrupt turn of the ravine brought the bridge into view. As Payton had guessed, it was a natural bridge. Winter floods and the everlasting rush of the water had bored an arch through the solid rock and smoothed the sides till they shone like glass. It was sixty feet high from the bed of the stream to the crown of the arch. A stiff climb brought them to the top of the bridge. It was the shape of a wide-open V, the grass-grown approaches being broad and very steep.

"This very picturesque bridge will have to go," said Ferrers Lord, stamping the water out of his boots. "I hate to have to destroy such a charming example of Nature's work, but we shall have to destroy it. Here is some work for you, Prout. We can't spare the men to hold it; so it must be demolished. Set about it without delay."

Prout saluted, and made for the camp along the southern bank of the ravine, and found Mr. O'Rooney and Mr. Maddock.

"Come along, by honey!" said Prout. "You don't seem to have nothing to do but sit about smoking yourselves blue in the face and wearing out the seats of your trousers. We've got to do in a bridge, so find the rock-drill and some blasting-cartridges."

"Phwat d'ye mane, do in a bridge?" asked Barry O'Rooney. "Where's the bridge at all, at all? Av ut's the bridge of your nose, sonny, you're talkin' about, kindly shove the mouthrosity wldin the reach of my fist or ould Ben's fist, and we'll do ut in whole you wait, and make no charrge. Phwat d'ye mane, bridge, in this hole?"

"It's a bridge we've got to blow up to keep those brown-skinned beggars off," explained Prout. "Come and work!"

Maddock and O'Rooney went and worked, and hot and tiring work they found it.

Ferrers Lord was lowered by a rope, and he made a chalk-mark on the rock at the exact spot where it had to be drilled in order to give the charge its greatest explosive force. A cradle was rigged, and Prout took the first spell. As they had only hand-drills, it was anything but a holiday.

Maddock relieved him, to be followed by O'Rooney, and then Ching-Lung took a turn. When all was ready Ferrers Lord went down again with the coil of electric wire.

"Haul away," he cried at last—"and haul slowly!"

"The longer I live the more I learn, which I presume to be the experience of most people," said Duke Payton to Rupert Thurston. "Your chief seems to be very well equipped for a mere hunting-trip. He hasn't forgotten much."

"He doesn't forget much, old chap," said Thurston, with a laugh. "He is the most useful person to come out with. He saves one all the trouble of thinking for oneself and making preparations. He says he is determined to go to Sharpra."

Payton rubbed his pink, clean-shaven chin. "We may all go there—as prisoners," he said, "if it's their custom to take prisoners. We don't know. Mr. Ferrers Lord is a very remarkable man, and I take off my hat to him with deep respect."

The charge was not exploded then. Dandu had brought up several ponies. The millionaire replenished his almost empty cigarette-case from Ching-Lung's full one. Then he took out his pocket-book and pencil and drew a plan.

(To be continued.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 79.—HERR GANS.

IT is very difficult to feel any sort of kindness for a Hun. Day by day the horrible tale of their atrocities grows, until sometimes one feels that not all the years to come can ever wash out the stains of that vile people, who seem scarcely human. Chivalry they never had. Even ordinary fair play is conspicuously lacking in them. But one might make some excuse for the want of these qualities. There can be no excuse made for deeds blacker and wicked than the very savages would commit. Germany and the Germans are an offence to civilisation and the world!

So it is hard to feel any kindness even for a man with a German name.

Yet not all men with German names must be counted as Huns. In the United States there are tens of thousands of them who are good Americans. They are the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of men who left Germany in disgust to seek another Fatherland. Even among those who were born in Germany there must be a righteous remnant, though it may be hard to discover it. It is the harder because so many Germans are born spies, ready to practise years of deceit in their dirty trade, to pose as good neighbours and friends till the time comes to drop the mask. France and Belgium have learned that lesson only too well. And if we have not learned it we must be hopeless idiots. Some wrong may be done here and there to individuals in such matters as internment and banishment; but the wrong done is small beside the danger to be feared, beside the horrible crimes of Germany. When the greater part of a nation runs mad the few who remain sane are sure to suffer.

But there are decent men—good men and loyal—of German birth; and Herr Otto Gans is among them.

Not a word can fairly be said against the honour of Herr Gans, though many have been said by fellows who have no scruples about fairness—by Skinner and such as Skinner.

Herr Gans looks like a German; he talks with a German accent; he still cherishes love for his native country. But that country is not Prussia. No one could hate Prussia and the Kaiser more than Otto Gans hates them. He comes from Saxony; and Saxony ought not to be the friend and ally of Prussia, though through the foundation of the German Empire she has become so. Just as Hungary has to remember many wrongs in the past done her by Austria, so Saxony has suffered at the hands of Prussia. Many Saxons have forgotten. Herr Gans does not forget.

He has never pretended that England is more to him than Saxony. The German master at Greyfriars is an honest man. But England has been his home for many years, and he has come to care for her. Certainly he would not betray her, whatever temptation were offered him. We have seen proof of that lately in two stories in which the Herr played a big part. There seemed cause for suspicion against him then. Skinner, who has always hated him, was quite sure that he was a spy, and plotted for his downfall, and exulted in the thought of being the instrument of it. Other fellows, with more open minds and more charity and more common-sense than Skinner, wavered for a little; but only for a little.

The man who was thus suspected was so far from being guilty that he treated with utter scorn the vile offers made to him by the scoundrel Bloomfield, who had been engaged to fill the place of Mr. Sharp, the music-master. Mr. Sharp had been called up for military service; and if it had not been for Herr Gans the spy who had managed to wriggle into his place would have been able to carry on his foul trade under a cloak of apparent complete respectability. Who could suspect the Greyfriars music-master of being a secret agent of the enemy?

Hermann Blumenfeld, who called himself Bloomfield, struck a snag in Otto Gans, however. Not for bribe or for entreaty or for threat would Herr Gans play the German game. Bunter, in hiding, heard the talk between them, and even to the obtuse mind of Bunter it was clear that the Herr was no confederate of Bloomfield's. He stood up to the rascal like a true man, and wrecked his schemes, though not without danger and injury to himself. The parts played by

Skinner and Bunter in the stories referred to are of no consequence here. Herr Gans played the part of a true man and a brave man. All that he did might not have been judicious, but it was all clean and honest. When he lay ill in the school sanatorium, after Bloomfield's murderous assault upon him, there were many anxious hearts in Greyfriars. It might be impossible to love a German—even a Saxon—but "the Gander" had earned respect and admiration, and there would have been sorrow if he had gone under.

Skinner's hatred of Herr Gans began very early in that gentleman's association with the school. It was at Redcliffe Station that the juniors first saw the German master—"a broad-shouldered, fair-haired man of middle age, with a pair of large spectacles, behind which his light blue eyes winked and blinked." Skinner bumped into him, and apologised in a manner which was more offensive than the pretended accident. Then, in the train, he and Vernon-Smith made unpleasant remarks about the German, taking it for granted that he could not understand English, and not caring if he did. When he came along to Greyfriars they expected to be reported. They were not. It turned out that the victim of their rudeness was the new German master, and he only lectured them. They tried it on again in class—or, rather, the Bouncer did, and he suffered for it. Then they played a trick upon Herr Gans, and that led to a quarrel between them, and Skinner, naturally, got the worst of it. The Bouncer was sure that the Herr was a spy, and Skinner played



upon those suspicions, and had revenge by getting Vernon-Smith into a nasty row. But when things were cleared up Herr Gans and the Bouncer were quite upon good terms, after an ample apology on the junior's part, whereas the whole affair rankled with Skinner, and left him feeling bitter against the German master.

It was not Skinner, however, but the bolder Bolsover, who showed up most prominently in the charge made against Herr Gans of stealing Mauly's fifty-pound banknote. Skinner egged Bolsover on, and other fellows were behind him. There did seem grounds for suspicion. Mauly had had to take off his jacket for a flogging in the Gander's study, and he believed the note to have been in it; and Herr Gans was known to be badly in need of money, though the reason for that was not one which reflected any disgrace upon him. Also, the Gander had been very bad-tempered with the Remove, giving punishment right and left; and that counted. But the note had never been stolen at all; and when the matter was thrashed out the kindness of the Head enabled Herr Gans to do what he had been longing to do—send his uncle, who was very ill, away for a change that might pull him round. All's well that ends well!

There are some few other stories to which reference might be made here. But they would not add much to what has already been said, for most of them have turned upon temporary unpopularity suffered by the Gander because of his German birth; and the cloud has always passed.

NOTICES.

CRICKET.

R. S. Mon Jeffe, 4, Vanbrugh Park, West (Flats), Blackheath, wishes to join a first-class cricket club with its own ground.

A. West, 111, Wellfield Road, S.W., 16, wants a place in a South London club. Good wicket-keeper. Age sixteen.

Matches, wanted by—

ALBION C.C.—average 16—away matches—5 miles radius.—S. G. Chinnock, 44, Harris Street, Markhouse Road, Leyton, E. 17.

OAKFIELD C.C.—18—with clubs—16-16½—having open dates.—B. Wakeling, 3, Clifton Grove, Graham Road, Dalston, E. 8.

INNS OF COURT C.C.—16—home and away—5 mile radius.—A. Fairburn, 217, Peabody Flats, Wild Street, Kingsway, W.C. 2.

15th LONDON B.B. C.C.—3 mile radius—home and away.—R. O. Garland, 127, Goodrich Road, East Dulwich, S.E. 22.

ARCHER C.C.—15—ground at Hampstead.—V. E. Hopkins, 20, Elkington Buildings, Archer Street, W. 1.

PLOUGH ROAD C.C.—16—5 mile radius.—G. W. Eager, 87, Plough Road, S.W. 11.

J. Robinson, 5, Chester Mansions, Lombard Grove, S.E. 5, home and away.

Correspondence.

Miss Isobel Lee, 17, Lewisham High Road, New Cross, S.E. 14, with girl readers abroad.

S. Hughes, 90, Victoria Street, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, with boy readers interested in stamp-collecting.

Miss Ailsa Hay, Blackwood Road, Forest Avenue, Bunbury, West Australia, with Irish or Scotch girl readers, 16-17.

Folly Burne, 7, Douglas Street, West Perth, West Australia, with readers in any part of the world.

Tom C. Cooper, Coombe Street, Wollongong, N.S.W., Australia, with readers who have back numbers including "After Lights Out" and "The Boy Without a Name."

Miss Jean Holmes, Carrum Downs, via Frankston, Victoria, Australia, with girl readers, 16-17.

Malcolm G. Cook, Glenfell, Goorambat, Victoria, Australia, with boy readers, 15-18.

Miss Irma Lee, 17, Lewisham High Road, S.E. 14, with girl readers anywhere.

Gideon Smit, 117, Sir Lewry Road, Cape Town, with boys all over the world interested in stamps.

A. E. Gordon, 60, Hopkins Street, Boulder City, Western Australia, with boys, with the object of issuing an international amateur fiction magazine for boys.

W. Jones, 55, Hassard Street, Hackney Road, for correspondence club.

H. J. Deegan, c/o "South Coast Times" Office, Crown Street, Woolongong, New South Wales, Australia, with readers anywhere.

J. Gilligan, 50, Eveleigh Street, Redfern, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, with readers in South Africa, China, and elsewhere, who are interested in stamps.

J. Miller, 7, Burgess Road, Crownfield, E. 15, for correspondence club.

P. Frampton, 21, Princes' Street, Enwood, Invercargill, New Zealand, with readers anywhere who are interested in stamp-collecting.

Back Numbers Wanted by—

Miss Peggy Durban, 3, Conduit Road, Hong Kong—"Gem" and MAGNET, 1-250; full price offered.

E. J. Taylor, Dominion Copper Products Co. P.O. Box 780, LaCline, Quebec, Canada—"Figgins' Fig Pudding," "Bob Cherry's Barring Out," "A Hero of Wales," "After Lights Out," "Bunter the Boxer," "The King's Pardon," "Wingate's Folly," "Wingate's Chum"—half price offered.

C. H. Russell, 11, Myrtle Road, Hounslow, Middlesex—Back numbers of the companion papers previous to 1917.

M. Plocking, 5A, Dering Street, Oxford Street, W.—"Boys' Friend" Library from No. 64, old series.

Leslie D. Jones, 26, Roseberry Road, Elm-side, Exeter, Devon—MAGNETS and "Gems" before July, 1914—full price offered.

Bert Martin, Railway Hotel, Carstairs Village, Lanarkshire, Scotland—"Gems," 334-7, 351-2—2d. offered for clean copies.

R. Radford, 2, Esher Grove, Mapperly Park, Nottingham—"Gems," 467, 463, 477, 480; also numbers before 413.

C. B. Skinner, 7, Wenham Road, Worthing, Sussex—Last five vols "Gem" and MAGNETS; also last fifty numbers of the "Penny Popular."

W. D. Hughes, High Street, Dunmow, Essex—"School and Sport"—1s. offered.