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JACK,  
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By S. CLARKE HOOK.

THE  
**MARVEL**

**1<sup>D</sup>**

CHUMS  
OF THE  
THIRD.  
By CHAS. HAMILTON.



"I THINK IT IS ONLY A BLUEBOTTLE GOT INTO DE LIQUID PART," PETE OBSERVED. "WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IS TO  
GIB DE BOTTLE A GOOD SMASH, LIKE DAT!" HE ADDED, SLAPPING THE LARGE SPOON INTO THE STEW. (END PAGE ONE)

NO. 171, NEW SERIES.

Our Second Long Story.Complete in this issue.

# Chums OF THE Third.

A Splendid School Tale.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.

## CHAPTER I.

## Harree Singh Takes French Leave.

WHEN Redfern came along the passage whistling, and kicked open the door of the Third Form room. It was a half-holiday at Netherby, and that apartment had but a single occupant—a dark-eyed, olive-skinned lad, who was seated at a desk under one of the high windows, busily writing. He looked up doubtfully as Redfern came in.

"Hallo, Topsy, have you seen?" exclaimed Redfern. "I've been looking for you. We're nearly ready. What are you stopping here for?"

Harree Jassat Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, was generally called Topsy by the boys of Netherby. Knowledge had given him the name. It was shorter than his real one, and, as Knowledge said, it was more descriptive. But Harree Singh was the most genial and good-natured fellow at Netherby, and he did not mind.

"Come out, you lumber!" continued Redfern. "What do you mean by loitering away, when you're to run in the paper-chase (two minutes). Get a move on you!"

But Harree Singh shook his head indignantly.

"Can't," he replied; "I'm detained."

"Oh, I say, that's not! Detained, when we wait you for the paper-chase!" exclaimed Redfern indignantly. "It can't be that! You've got to come!"

"I only wish I could, if it was Mr. Lumsden, I'd ask him to let me off, but it's King and you know King's a beast!"

"Yes; he is a regular howler!" asserted Redfern. "But you can't stay, all the same. You see, you're down to run with me as hero, and you've got to come. You will have to slither out somehow, and risk a looking afterwards."

"So I would, Reddy, but King's on the watch. He's got his study door open down the passage, and if I go out before an hour's time, he'll be down on me. He knows I'm to run, you see; so he's watchful."

"The best!" said Redfern.

He stood with a brow corrugated with deep thought, his hands thrust deep into his pockets. Harree Singh was the bestest runner in the Third Form at Netherby, and Redfern had chosen him as his companion for the run that afternoon. The boys were already gathering at the gates, and the hours were timed to start in less than ten minutes.

Mr. King was the most unpopular master at Netherby. He was a fussy, bilious little man, with a strong distaste for sports of any kind. The fact that Harree Singh was wanted to run in the paper-chase that afternoon only made his detestation more gratifying to Mr. King.

"All the same, you've got to come," said Redfern, at last. "even if we have to go into King's study and swing him first."

The nabob glanced.

"If the boys wasn't on the watch," he said, "I'd cut it like a bowl." Harree Singh meant like a bird, but his

English was always a little peculiar, especially when he was turned upon slang. "But he would be bound to catch me." "Then we must get him off the watch," said Redfern. "Lumsden see! Yes, I've got an idea. We'll make a giddy row in the quad under his window, and that'll give you a chance to sneak past his door without being seen. You'll do it!"

"Yes; with half a chance."

"Then be on the look-out."

Redfern walked out of the Third Form room. He went down the passage and passed the open door of King's study. Mr. King was seated at his table, with his face towards the door, so that no one could pass without his knowledge. He raised his eyes as Redfern went by.

"Watchful old bird," murmured Redfern; "but we'll do you all the same!"

And he hurried on.

Mr. King's eyes dropped to his work again, and the scratch of his pen went on. Scratch—scratch! Mr. King was long that afternoon. Suddenly a terrific uproar beneath his window made him start, and the jerk of his wrist sent four or five sheets fluttering over his paper. Mr. King snatched his watch. He was a particularly neat and tidy man, and hints and squawks were his abomination.

By use to his feet with a savage look, and went to the window. The noise continued unabated, and Mr. King threw up the sash. He stared angrily out into the quad. Two boys were struggling in a deadly embrace, apparently engaged in a fight of the most ferocious description, and round them were a dozen others, all yelling at the top of their voices. As Mr. King put his head out of the window, a veritable babel assailed his ears.

"Go it, Reddy!"

"Faste him, Lawrence!"

"Give it his box!"

"Slog him!"

"Bravo, Redfern!"

"Back up, Reggie!"

"Go it—go it!"

"Hops!" shouted Mr. King.

But his voice was drowned in the din.

"Go it!"

"Back up, Reddy! You've got him!"

"Hoop!"

"Boys!" yelled the master again, purple with wrath. He rapped on the window-ill with a pointer, and shouted again.

"Hops, how dare you make this noise under my window!"

"Go it, Reddy!"

"Back up, Lawrence!"

Redfern—Lawrence, leave off fighting instantly! Do you hear? Both of you come into my study at once! Do you hear—Redfern, Lawrence?"

Either the din drowned Mr. King's voice, or the Third Form boys were deaf that afternoon. Not a single glance was raised towards the study window. Mr. King raved and gesticulated in vain. Suddenly Lawrence tore himself loose

from Redfern, and bolted off towards the school gates. There was a roar.

"After him, Reddy!"

"Ready him?"

And Redfern dashed after Reggie Lawrence in hot pursuit; and after Redfern went the whole crowd, whooping. Mr. King wiped his terrified brow.

"Is it possible that they did not hear me?" he murmured. "Oh in this deliberate impertinence on the part of Redfern and Lawrence! Savage little wretches, to fight each other in that brutal and revolting manner; and those two boys were such friends, too! I will complain to the Head of their fighting under my window!"

And, somewhat comforted by the prospect of a severe caning in store for Redfern and Lawrence, Mr. King returned to his writing. As he sat there at work, he continued to keep an eye on the passage.

He did not know that during the couple of minutes he had been at the window, a slim form had stolen softly past the open door and vanished. Horace Singh was no longer within the walls of Netherby.

### CHAPTER 2. The Paper-Chase.

"GOOD old Inky!"

Redfern slapped the Indian on the back as he joined the crowd of juniors outside the gates of Netherby School.

"So you dodged the King-beast all right, Inky! I knew you would."

"I fancy there'll be a row," gloomed Reggie Lawrence. "How dared we fight like that under Mr. King's window, Reddy?"

"Shocking of us," agreed Redfern. "Shouldn't wonder if King calls us over the coals for it. He's down on fighting, and we were going it, weren't we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For two such desperate combatants, Redfern and Lawrence did not look very much hurt. The fight had been a sham one, though it had looked very real to Mr. King.

"But there's no time to lose," continued Redfern. "If King sends a message and comes out, he'll have to find us departed. Ready, Inky!"

"Quite ready!"

"Five minutes' start," said Lawrence, taking out his watch. "Off with you!"

The two lasses, with their bags of sport slung behind, started off. Pretty nearly the whole of the Third Form at Netherby were gathered for the run. They were nearly all in running clothes. Redfern's class, Lawrence, was in time the start, and he kept his watch in his hand. The hare disappeared among the trees beside an Netherby Common. Some of the houses showed signs of impatience.

"I say, time's up!" exclaimed Knowles, when four minutes had elapsed.

"One minute more," said Lawrence imperiously.

"Hallo, here's those beasts, Robinson and Hake! What do they want?"

Robinson and Hake belonged to the Fourth Form at Netherby. There was a long-standing feud between those



"The sabbie is filled with wrathfulness" purred the Netherby in his soft voice. (See Page 410.)

and Owen Redfern, the cock of the Third. At a recent Form match, the Third, captained by Redfern, had linked the Fourth better on the Ragger field. That had not improved the feeling between them.

"Hallo, what do you chaps want?" asked Lawrence, noticing that the two Fourth-Formers were clad for running. "This is our chase. No outsiders wanted!"

"Have you bin-bought the blabbering common?" asked Robinson, who was afflicted with a stammer. "Can't you run if we want to?"

"I s'pose you can," answered Lawrence; "but none of your tricks, you know."

"Afraid we shall catch your champion runners!" asked Hake.

"Pooh! You couldn't catch either of them in a week! Who walked all round you on the Ragger field—eh? Who ran you off your feet in the Form match?"

Robinson scowled at this retort.

"Don't talk to the cheeky kids, Hake," he said loftily.

"We shall never hear the end of that blabbering blabber."

"Blabber!" exclaimed Reggie indignantly. "No talk about it. We looked you all over the ground, and we could do it again. Run!"

"I say, ain't time up?" demanded Knowles.

"Yes it is," said Lawrence, looking at his watch. "Come on, kids."

And the bands started. Robinson and Hake were off with the foremost, Lawrence saw the expressions of their faces, and he had reason for his feeling of uneasiness as to their motive in joining in the Third Form paper-chase. Somehow or other, wherever they went for the cock of the Third, Redfern contrived to come off best. But if they ran the hare down at a distance from the school, it was extremely probable that Redfern and Hurree Singh would have a warm tussle. They might be far from help; but, naturally, few of the Third could keep up with the two best runners of a higher Form.

In a straggling crowd, the best runners forging ahead rapidly, the bands streamed over the common. Robinson grazed at Hake as he caught a glimpse of a blue jersey ahead. He had sighted the hare.

They sighted him at the same moment. Redfern had stopped on the crest of a ridge to look back, and saw the bands streaming in pursuit.

"Hallo, there's bally Robinson," he exclaimed, "and Hake's with him! They're no business in our paper-chase. They mean mischief, Hurree."

"Yes; if they catch us."

"Still, I don't fancy they'll do that," said Redfern. "Come on. Put it on a bit."

Leaving the trail of torn paper behind them, the hare sprinted swiftly across the common. Both of them were in excellent form. Usual practice on the football field kept them very fit. At an easy, swinging pace, they went over the fenny common, and came into the path through Netherby Wood.

Beyond the wood was a lane, and then down this Redfern led the way for some distance, and then presented upon a slope, which gave access to a field. He stood on the top bar of the stile and looked back. The lanes were streaming out of the wood, and well in the lead was the lanky form of Robinson, and close behind him Hake.

The two Fourth-Formers were in fine condition and running strongly, and, as was only natural, the younger lads had dropped somewhat behind. Robinson sighted Redfern on the stile and waved his hand. Redfern jumped down in the field.

"Come on, Hake!"

Hurree Singh crossed the stile, but he was looking dubious. "Fondle me, my friend!" he exclaimed, "but I observe the leaves which states that the trespasser will be visited with the severe punishment."

Robinson grinned.

"Oh! Oh, trespassers will be persecuted! All right; they can persecute Robinson and Hake. They won't catch us."

"Run—"

"My dear and dusky chaps, Redfern means business, and we've got to put him through a course of squats and chock him off. You see, don't you, that he's a long way ahead of the Third?"

"Yes; he runs with the great swiftness."

"And Hake is close behind him. They'll both run into the giddy trap, and the Third will be able to keep clear. Don't ask questions, but follow your leader."

Hurree Singh obeyed. He had great faith in Redfern. The cock of the Third led the way at a rattling pace across the field, the trail scattering behind. Robinson rounded the stile they had crossed, and saw them leaving the field on the other side.

Redfern saw him there, and grinned. The two Fourth-

Formers had certainly well outrun the Third, and were close on his track.

"We shall have to hurry with the great speed!" exclaimed Hurree Singh.

"They do it," replied Redfern solemnly. "Come on!"

They left the field and crossed the Netherby road. Redfern opened a gate leading into a wide garden sloping down to the Nether stream. A gentleman with white whiskers and a white waistcoat, who was walking up and down a gravelled path, with his hands clasped behind him, suddenly stopped, and fixed a freezing glare upon the two juniors.

"Get out!"

"The fat sabbit is sagger," sneered Hurree Singh.

"Never mind that! Run along!"

They sprinted along a path through the garden. The gentleman in the white waistcoat looked at them as if puzzled by their unaided audacity. They were pale, and sprinting shamefully on towards the Nether, before he could collect himself sufficiently to make a movement.

Then, with a howl of rage, he darted in pursuit. It would have been as easy for a hippopotamus to chase an antelope as for the stout gentleman in the white waistcoat to put up a foot-race with the champion runners of the Third Form at Netherby. He panted and gasped behind them. Redfern turned his head, and, with a silent smile, bestowed a handful of "scout" over his pursuer. Then he and Hurree Singh closed a fence, and went along the bank of the river.

The gentleman in the white waistcoat stopped at the fence and glared after the elusive juniors in speechless wrath.

"The sabbit is filled with the swiftness," passed the catch, in his soft voice, looking back. "He is persecuted by the great anger."

"He looks fit," answered Redfern. "He's dead nuts on us Netherby chaps, Hake, kid. That's who I left the trail through his garden. When Robinson and Hake arrive, and he goes for them, they'll wish they had kept out of the paper-chase."

"Ha, ha!"

"Get into this tree and see the fun!"

They swung themselves upon a branch, and then to a higher one. Thence they commanded a full view of Major Mumbler's garden. The major had turned back from the house, realising that the offenders were beyond his reach, and he was strimming with rage. He could hardly believe his eyes when the gate swung open, and the lanky form of Robinson came walking in on the trail of torn paper.

Robinson came on like an arrow, and the gentleman in the white waistcoat rushed to meet him. There was a terrific collision.

Robinson staggered back, and rolled over, and the major sat down. Hake, bolting into the garden, fell over Robinson. The major was first upon his feet. His face was purple. He gripped Robinson and pinched his ear.

Robinson roared and wriggled. The scolding threats of the major, his heavy hands scowled far and wide. Hake, struggling, received a hot one on the nose, which sent him sprawling. Then Robinson came into view again.

"I'll teach you!" roared the major. "Trespassing in my garden! Trampling down my three-hods! I'll teach you!"

"Leave alone!" yelled Robinson—"leave-alone-leave-alone alone, you beast! I don't want to stay in your old garden! It's a pippit-pippit—"

"Repeat it again! Take that, and that, and that!"

"It's a pippit-pippit-paper-chase. Help! It'll break my bounding bones! Yah!"

Robinson, straggling frantically, drove his head into the white waistcoat with the force of a battering-ram. The major grunted and collapsed.

Robinson sprang away, gasping. He was sure all over, and quite out of breath. He darted away, but the major ran hot on his track. Before he could get over the fence the old gentleman had him again.

"You dare to assault me, my boy? Whack, whack! Take that, and that! I'll teach you! Take that, and that, and that!"

Robinson took them; he couldn't help it. Hake was over the fence now. He didn't want to come to close quarters with the major again. The old gentleman lost his balance as Robinson struggled frantically, and on down; he was dragged down Robinson, and laid his *over* his knee. Then his big hand rose and fell rhythmically.

The bands were up by this time. They came sprinting through the garden, and yelled with laughter as they passed Robinson. He had joined the band for the purpose of

making trouble, and now that he had found none, he wiser's entitled to help from the Third-Formers. They were glad

enough to see the major occupied while they passed in safety.

Redfern nearly fell off the tree with laughter. "This is Robinson's day out!" he exclaimed. "He's getting it warm. I believe I can hear those cracks at this distance. But come on, Tiky, or the pack will be up with us."

And the horses took to flight again. Away they went at a tearing pace, and the Third Form, sighting them on the river-bank, set up a whoop, and soon on to chase. But Robinson and Hake were no longer in the lead. After their encounter with the major they did not feel equal to a hard run. They dropped out of the race, and the Third Form streamed on without them.

## CHAPTER 3:

## How the Hares Come Home.

**B**Y many a path, through many a field and hedge, the paper-chase went on, the two hares keeping well ahead of the following pack.

Redfern and Hurree Singh were in high good-humour. They had succeeded in dropping Robinson and Hake out of the run, and so they had reason to be satisfied. Had the Fourth-Formers perceived them, they knew they would have had a warm time. But the two were out of it now.

When the hares turned on the homeward route none of the pack were in sight. The hares had completely out-distanced the fastest runner of the Third Form.

"Ray done it now," said Redfern. And they followed the lone hares to Netherby at an easy, swinging trot.

"We've done the hounds, Tiky; they haven't had a look in."

"We experience the satisfaction of the great success," said the nabob.

"We do, we do!" grinned Redfern. The top of the Netherby tower came in sight over the trees. The boys turned into the lane leading to the school. In the distance the village could be seen; behind them, all night and sound of pursuit had died away. They dropped into a walk.

There was a sudden rush of feet, and two figures halted themselves from a hedge upon the junction. Redfern and Hurree Singh went down, straggling, pinned to the ground by Robinson and Hake, of the Fourth.

Lying upon their backs in the dusty lane, each with a knee on his chest, the two hares glared upward at their captors. Robinson and Hake grinned gleefully.

"Glad-glad 'em!" said Robinson.

"Caught the hares!" said Hake. "You did—did didn't think we should lay a giggly ambush, did you?" grinned Robinson. "But we know which way you were bound to come home, you see, so here we are."

"Yes; here you are!" asserted Redfern cheerfully. "And now what's the little game?"

The Fourth-Formers chuckled.

"Why, we thought you'd be tired after that run," explained Robinson, "so we're going to give you a ride back to Netherby."

"Well, that's what I call kind, especially after I got you such an awful licking from old Major Mansfield."

"I'm going to make you wish you hadn't!" replied Robinson. "Now, I'm going to tie your wrists together!"

"You're not!"

"If you wriggle, I shall run-run-run-run—"

"No; don't do that!"

"I shall run-run-break your head against the ground!"

As Redfern was quite at the Fourth-Formers' mercy, he thought it best not to wriggle. Robinson fastened his wrists together. Then Hake did the same for Hurree Singh. The nabob looked at his chums in dismay. Redfern was still looking quite cheerful, but inwardly he was a little anxious.

He had not expected his boys of the Fourth to lay this cunning ambush for him. Had he foreseen anything of the kind, he would never have fallen into it so easily. Now he was considerably uneasy as to Robinson's intentions.

The captives were tied together by a strong cord passed round them and knotted.

"Now the giddy hares, Hake!" said Robinson. The grinning Hake dragged a wheelbarrow from the hedge. It had been left there by some labourers, who had been at work in the field, and it was in about as ready a condition as it was possible for a barrow to be.

The two prisoners were lifted up, and placed in a sitting posture in the barrow. Another cord was knotted round them, so that they could not get out. Burkish from a heap in the field was piled round them, to the full capacity of the barrow. They looked at each other dully from amid a heap of mossy vegetation.

Robinson and Hake surveyed the result of their labours with great satisfaction.

"You look all right!" said Robinson. "Do you feel—feel all right?"

"Oh, nabob!" replied Redfern, with forced cheerfulness. "We experience the delight and the gratification with—with—"

"Glad to hear it! Move them along!"

Hake took up the handles of the barrow. Forward it went, with its peculiar pango.

"I am," said Redfern, "you're not going to take us to the school, like this?"

"That is exactly what we are going to do, my son!"

"It ain't playing the game!"

"About as near it, Kiddy, as getting a chap thumped by an old rascal in a white waistcoat."

Forward went the barrow, lurching a good deal from side to side. Robinson stratted ahead of it, blowing forth melodious notes from a mouth-organ.

Redfern looked round wildly. To be taken back to Netherby like this would be too fearfully ridiculous and humiliating.

But there was no escape. Hake was pushing the barrow along, and if the passengers had opted it, they would have been lost by the tumble. Besides, the Fourth-Formers would only have laughed them into it again.

"Oh, I say, this is rotten!" murmured Redfern, almost distracted.

"It is, as you say, decidedly!" replied the nabob. "But the escape from the oppressor is the impossibility."

The gates of Netherby came in sight. There were a good many boys loitering there, doing nothing in particular, and the sweet strains of Robinson's mouth-organ attracted their attention at once.

The barrow was surrounded by a giggling crowd as it was wheeled through the gates.

"What have you got there, Robinson?"

"What do you call it?"

"Only rubbish!" said Robinson. "We collected it in the lane. It's no use! Looka modesty, don't it?"

"It does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern was crimson. A crowd of Fourth-Formers escorted the barrow across the quad. The sweet strains of the mouth-organ called up admirers from all sides. The sight of the two jokers, with their heads protruding from the heap of rubbish, was irresistibly comic. The spectators yelled and howled.

It was growing dusk in the quad. Some of the study windows were lighted. Right across went the barrow and the procession, till suddenly somebody shouted "Care!"

A figure in green and moor-boards was bearing down upon them.

Hake dropped the handles of the barrow with a gasp. The crowd melted away like snow in the sunshine. The hares had stopped under the heavy shadow of an elm. The jokers were now in a twinkling. The hares of the Third were left alone in their play.

Hurree Singh wriggled apprehensively.

"Quiet!" whispered Redfern. "If you roll out we shall never get clean. You'll only pull the giddy barrow over!"

"But the angle eye of the master-sabbib will discover us."

"Perhaps not. It's dark here, and that's old Pecke, he's as blind as a bat. Lie low, steady, and we may—"

Redfern's whisper died away. The two jokers remained very quiet. Mr. Pecke was bearing down upon the barrow. As he have said, the quad was dusky now, and under the big elm the shadow was very thick. Mr. Pecke was an extremely short-sighted gentleman, and as he came under the elm he raised his head forward and peered at the barrow through his spectacles.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I wondered what caused that unusual congregation of the jokers here. It is a barrow—apparently a barrow such as is used by labourers in their daily toil. Dear me! How remarkable that it should be here! No wonder the curiosity of the youthful mind was aroused by this most unusual spectacle."

The jokers were still as mice. With the rubbish heaped up round and over them they were almost hidden from view, and the shadow did the rest, assisted by the master's defective vision.

Mr. Pecke gazed at the barrow in wonder, without observing that two heads might have been seen, as the novelist says, in the midst of the mossy vegetation.

"It is truly strange," continued Mr. Pecke, "that this vehicle should be here—that it should have been seen, apparently, by the transport vegetation of a mossy and mildewed character into the grounds of this college. I must certainly speak to the gardener on this subject."

And Mr. Pecke dashed off. Redfern and Hurree Singh watched his green trail away through the dusk with unexpressed relief.

"My hat," muttered Redfern, "that was a narrow squeak!"

"The felicity transcends the narrowness of the squeak!" purred the wretch. "But if he returns to the kitchenness of the spot with the garden-of-Eden!"

"How corner-Robinson!"

The captain of the Fourth glided from the shadows. He picked up the handles of the barrow.

"Narrow sharp, Reddy," he grinned. "If old Peeko hadn't been—"

"Back up! I believe he's coming back."

"Scott! So he is—and King with him!"

Robinson was tempted to leave the barrow and bolt, but he pluckily stuck to it. There was no time to wheel it away, but he rushed it round an angle of the house wall and halted there. So long as they did not pass the corner, they were safe from observation. They waited palpitating. The voice of Mr. Peeko was heard round the corner.

"It is exactly as I see, Mr. King—it was actually a barrow, of the kind that labourers use in their daily avocations. It is here, and loaded up with rubbish of a decaying character. It is here—was here. Bless my soul, it has disappeared!"

Mr. Peeko stared blankly at the spot where the barrow had been. King looked round, smiling.

"I thought you must be mistaken, Mr. Peeko."

"I was not mistaken, Mr. King! The barrow was here—or there—or somewhere here, I am quite certain upon that point. I saw it very distinctly. It was not the pedagogue's whee-barrow, but a vehicle of the description that individuals of the labouring-class use in their daily—"

"Then where can it be?"

"That is a puzzle. It is less than a minute since I saw it here."

"I thought it might be some trick of the juniors," said Mr. King; "but it appears to me that your eyes have deceived you, Mr. Peeko. I am afraid I cannot stay here longer, as I have to see the Head, to lay a complaint as to Redfern and Lawrence fighting under my window this afternoon."

"It is very strange. Had it been the gardener's barrow I should not have regarded the phenomenon as inexplicable; but a barrow of the description used by labouring persons, for the conveyance of—"

Mr. Peeko's voice died away.

"Lucky they didn't look round the corner," grinned Redfern. "Get us out of this, Robinson, you innage, and back up!"

Robinson was loosened them. They dragged themselves free the stinging rubbish. The visitation of the juniors had brought the joke to an abrupt conclusion. The captain of the Fourth whisked the barrow away as quickly as he could, while Redfern and Harrow Singh hurried to their own quarters. The smell of the rubbish that had been piled round them hung longingly to their persons, and they wanted to get rid of it.

"Rather glad old Peeko shewed his nose into the matter," remarked Redfern. "It's got an eye of that eye before the Third came home. There they come!"

The peck, tired from the long day across country, were streaming in now. A lag came to tell Redfern that Dr. Lide wished to see him in his study. Redfern grinned.

"The King-beast has laid his complaint," he said. "Come on, Lawrence. You've wanted, too. Let's go and be humped over the giddy case!"

The two scholars propped themselves at the study of the Head of Methuyn. Mr. King was there, looking his sweetest, his glossy face a contrast to the kind countenance of the doctor.

"Come on, boys!" said Dr. Lide. "Mr. King complains that you have been fighting under his study window this afternoon."

"Fighting, sir?" said Redfern, in astonishment.

"Fighting, sir," exclaimed Lawrence, amazed.

Mr. King frowned darkly.

"Dr. Lide, they were fighting in the street, and inebriated manner," he explained. "Such an exhibition of simulating enmity was simply terrible to witness!"

"Ha—hum! What do you say, Redfern and Lawrence, in explanation of your inebriated conduct?"

"We weren't fighting, sir," said Redfern meekly.

"Redfern?"

"Yes!"

"You cannot mean to deny the accuracy of Mr. King's statement?"

"I think he must be mistaken, sir."

"Mistaken, sir," boomed Mr. King; "when you were fighting like—like Hottentots, and the crowd round you made noise enough to waken the dead, sir!"

"We weren't fighting, sir. It was only a friendly game, Lawrence and I never fight, sir."

The doctor looked hard at the boys. They met his gaze with an expression of sordid innocence.

"There does not appear to be a single trace of violent rage upon either of the lads, Mr. King," said the doctor. "That is very strange—if they were fighting, as you say. Is it possible that you were mistaken?"

Mr. King glared at the boys. Certainly his accusation of a desperate fight seemed a little absurd, considering how free from traces of warfare their faces were.

"Ah," he gasped. "It was a trick! It was done purposely, to delude me. The noise made by the others, egging them on, was terrific. They—"

"Excuse me, sir," said Redfern. "Are we to be blamed for noise made by others?"

"It is your fault. You—"

"I think, Mr. King," broke in the doctor's quiet voice, "that it is all a mistake. I think the boys may go."

King looked up as if he would rather have eaten them, but the Head's word was law. Redfern and Lawrence quitted the study. Outside, they hugged each other in gloom.

"Down the King-beast!" murmured Redfern; "and the best of it is, that he doesn't seem to know that lanky looks beside at all. That's the cream of the joke."

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Mr. King Gets Angry.

"THE King-beast is angry," said Redfern, as the Third bust out of their class-room, dismissed by Mr. King, who had been taking them in history.

"Look at the frown on his noble, expansive brow."

"He can't forget that giddy scrap under his window," murmured Lawrence. "We made him look as aw before the doctor. Can't help that. He shouldn't be an ass."

"Course he shouldn't! Hallo, he's calling us!"

"Redfern! Lawrence!"

"Sir!"

"Stop back here."

"Yes, sir!"

The shades of the Third stepped back. The others went on, Harrow Singh lingering at the door to wait for his sylvan. Mr. King's brow was stern, his expression ironic. He was a most sarcastic man, was Mr. King, and fond of giving the boys the benefit of his laughing tongue.

"I believe, Redfern, that I have before observed to you that this is not a place for idle chatter," he remarked.

"You are here to learn as much as is practicable to your extremely limited intelligence. When you wish to exchange whispered remarks with Lawrence, you should wait till you are outside the class-room. Have I told you that before?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had you unfortunately forgotten it?"

"No, sir."

"Then you deliberately disregarded my repeated injunction, Redfern?"

"This was a cunning way of putting it. Mr. King always had a way of putting matters he disliked very much in the wrong."

"No, sir," said Redfern. "I did it without thinking, sir."

"Ah, the topic was doubtless one of extreme interest, and could not wait even for a minute or so," said Mr. King.

"May I venture to guess that it was the eternal topic of football?"

"It wasn't, sir."

"No! You attended my, Redfern, Am I to understand that you have actually, for once, dismissed football from your mind when inside the class-room?"

Redfern, pretending not to see that Mr. King was speaking ironically, kept a wooden expression upon his face.

"Yes, sir; and more than once, too. Several times, sir."

"Really?" Mr. King breathed hard. He tried another tack. "Then, if you are so fond of what is this absorbing topic which caused you to forget the rules, have I laid down upon more occasions than I can remember?"

"The topic, sir."

"Yes. Do you understand plain English, or are you absolutely stupid?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you answer my question, Redfern?"

"Yes, sir. I do understand plain English, and I am not absolutely stupid."

Lawrence tried hard not to grin, but he had to turn his head away. Redfern was as solemn as an owl. Mr. King's face assumed a beautiful crimson colour.

"That is not the question I was referring to, Redfern. Tell me what you said to Lawrence a few minutes ago."

"I said, 'sir, if you please.'"

"I command you to tell me at once!"

"I was speaking of you, sir."

"Indeed! I am happy," said Mr. King, in the vein of a



This picture depicts an incident in the long complete "Buffalo Bill" tale which will appear in to-morrow's issue of "The Gem" Library. Price One Halfpenny. Don't fail to get a copy.

cross nose, "to form the subject of a whispered discussion. May I inquire as to the exact remarks you made?"

"Certainly, sir."  
Mr. King's remarks seemed to dilate. Though Redfern preserved an owl-like gravity, he knew that the junior was wilfully misunderstanding him.

"Tell me what you said, Redfern?"

"Yes, sir. I said you—you looked angry, sir."

"Ah! You said I was angry, did you? And what else did you say?"

"I said, 'Look at the frown on his noble, expansive brow,' sir," said Redfern meekly.

Mr. King turned purple.

There came a chuckle from the door. Mr. King glanced in that direction, and two or three heads promptly disappeared. "There were several interested listeners in the passage to the cabin of Redfern."

"Ah, indeed?" gasped Mr. King. "And you, Lawrence—what important remark did you make?"

"None, sir," said Lawrence.

"What did you say?" (pondered Mr. King.)

"Much I tell you, sir!"

"Instantly!"

"Well, sir, I said we couldn't help making you look as am before the doctor, sir," said Lawrence gravely.

Mr. King seemed about to choke.

There was a joyous giggle in the passage.

The master wished he had left the chums unquestioned.

"You—you—" Mr. King gasped for breath. "Lawrence, you—you dared to say—" Mr. King broke off. He realized that he had got himself into a ridiculous position. His brow was as black as a thundercloud. "You will each of you write a thousand lines, and—send bring them to me to-night. You—you are a disgrace to your Form! You hear me? Each of you will write a thousand times—" I must not be stupid and impertinent." Now go!"

"Yes, sir."

They went to the door.

"Upon second thoughts," said Mr. King, "two hundred lines each will be sufficient. Mind they are ready for me to see this evening."

"Yes, sir."

And Redfern and Lawrence left the room. They linked their arms in Hurree Singh's, and the three danced down the passage together.

"Hurrah!" grinned Redfern. "It was worth the imposition, kids, to rag the King-just like that. I thought he was going to bust a boiler, really. But we had to answer his questions, hadn't we, like giddy, dutiful whippers!"

"Oh course we had," said Lawrence. "He shouldn't be

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to be so inquisitive, you know. He had to take back the thousand lines, too. Know it couldn't be did. Ought to teach him a lesson not to speak so harshly."

"It was great," sneered Harvey. "It was unaccountable. We were short with the delight to pull the longest leg of the brother-in-law."

"We are—we are!" agreed Redfern. "And I think I shall be able to work off a little where about those lines, kids. There's room for a little bit of misapprehending."

And when the chance was to work to do their lines the audible shankles which proceeded from them indicated that the task was not so dull and tiresome as usual.

Mr. King did not forget that imposition. He never forgot one. Some of the masters judiciously omitted to ask for lines imposed, but never Mr. King. He enjoyed looking over them, and finding fault, and detecting any weaknesses or want of neatness, to make it an excuse for a fresh imposition.

He rather hoped that Redfern and Lawrence would fail to bring the lines in. But they did not fail. He had selected a nice, strong case in case they should. But the fibres of the third came up smiling, as it were, with the lines.

"Well!" said Mr. King grins, when they presented themselves at his study.

"The lines, sir," said Redfern.

"The lines, sir," said Lawrence.

Their faces were so innocent that Mr. King smelt mischief at once. He took the lines, and glanced over them, prepared to find the least fault in them, and to make it the excuse for repeating the imposition.

But the writing was unusually good, and there were no holes, no erasures, no traces of orthography. Yet Mr. King's brow grew dark as night. For this it was to read:

"Mr. King must not be stupid and impertinent."

He glanced at the innocent-looking juniors.

"You—you—you—"

He could get no further.

"It is nothing wrong, sir?" asked Redfern, with solicitude.

"How dared you—how dared you write that?"

"Why, you told us to, sir!" said the boys together, in mild surprise.

"I—I told you so?"

"Certainly, sir?"

"I told you to write, 'I must not be stupid and impertinent.'"

"Yes, sir. That's what we've written, sir—two hundred lines."

"You—you knew I was not—not referring to myself. You knew I meant—that I spoke in the first person."

Mr. King gasped for breath. The expression of innocence and mild surprise trembled hard upon the faces of the chums of the Third.

"You—you dare to apply such expressions to me!" gasped Mr. King.

Both the juniors looked horrified.

"Oh, sir?" ejaculated Redfern. "We didn't, sir! We only wrote down what you told us, sir. We shouldn't dream of calling you stupid and impertinent, Mr. King?"

"Certainly not!" added Lawrence. "You said a lot of things to us we didn't like, sir; but we couldn't call you stupid and impertinent."

"We respect you too highly," went on Redfern. "We respect you too much, sir, to call you stupid and impertinent, whatever we might think, sir."

Mr. King was the colour of a beetroot. The continual repetition of the obnoxious expressions was maddening to him, and he guessed that the juniors were by no means so simple as they pretended to be.

"Silence!"

"Yes, sir. But I really shouldn't like you to think that we should refer to you of our own accord as stupid—"

"An stupid and impertinent, sir."

"Silence!"

Mr. King had crumpled the papers up savagely in his hands. The thought had crossed his mind of taking in the previous imposition to the Head, and getting the juniors a sound caning. But he realized that a looking for the boys would not compensate him for becoming the laughing-stock of the masters' class.

He had inadvertently given this opening to the juniors, and the sooner the incident was closed the better it would be for his dignity.

"This misapprehending," he said, breathing heavily, "is mine—was—is short, you may go, and—and get out of my sight."

"Yes, sir," said Redfern quickly. They went to the door. The cook of the Third turned back, his expression anxious and concerned. "May I say just a word, sir? There seems to have been a misapprehending; but I should like to assure you, sir, that I wouldn't dream of calling you stupid and impertinent, sir."

The chums beat a retreat. On the floor of the Third Form room they laid down on their backs and yawned.

## CHAPTER 5.

## The Chums Make a Friend.

"MY Aunt Lavinia, what's the row?"

It was Redfern who asked the question. The three inseparables were coming along the path through Katherby Wood at a trot. They were out for a sprint in the keen air of the dusky spring evening. A sudden outbreak of clouds ahead in the silent wood startled them. They slackened down.

"Hullo, something's up!" said Lawrence.

A loud voice—a voice they had heard before—was ringing out.

"Hansel! Scoundrel! I'll have you imprisoned—dugger—what! Let go! How dare you lay your filthy paws upon an officer of his Majesty's Army! Grr-eh!"

"Down with the old fool, Mike!"

"Down he is, Smitty!"

There was a sounding thump on the ground. The three juniors of Katherby were in sight of the scene now. Their footsteps made no sound on the woodland path, and the shadows were growing thick under the trees. Their approach was not observed.

The old gentleman through whose garden Redfern had led the paper-storm was straggling on the ground in the grasp of a couple of rough-looking ruffians, evidently footpads, who had suddenly set upon him on the lonely path through the wood.

He was fighting gamely, but the odds were too great. Smitty had planted a knee upon his white waistcoat, pinning him down, and Mike had a grip upon his collar, and was twisting it till the major was purple in the face.

"Get him, Mike! Now go through his blooming pockets while I keep him tight. What a blinking old scoundrel it is!"

The three juniors exchanged glances.

"This is where we step in," said Redfern. "Come on!"

And the three rushed simultaneously upon the footpads. The attack took them quite by surprise. They had imagined themselves to be alone with their victim in the dusky wood.

Redfern threw himself upon Smitty, and, getting a good Ruggers grip on him, dragged him backwards off the major. Smitty went down with a bump and a gasp, and Redfern sat on him.

Mike rolled over with Harvey Singh and Lawrence clinging to him, and they pinned him down under their weight effectually.

The old gentleman seemed hardly to realize at first that he had been relieved of his assailants. He lay gasping for breath for a full minute, while the two captured ruffians struggled wildly, and gave vent to profane language.

Lawrence and the rufian easily kept their man down; but Redfern, single-handed, had all his work cut out to pin down Smitty. He had a big advantage to start with, or he could never have done it. Smitty struggled furiously.

The water struggled to his feet. His hand was pressed tenderly to his white waistcoat, but his wrist was secured back. He groped and spluttered, but quickly took in the situation. He picked up a heavy Malacca cane with a gold head, which he had dropped in his haste with the footpads. He whisked it through the air, and the knob came down with a sounding crack on the skull of Smitty.

Smitty gave a gasp, and ceased to struggle. He was half stunned, and he had the wit to pretend to be wholly so, for the old gentleman was swinging up the case for a second and harder whack.

"Hah!" said the major, looking extremely warlike—

"hah! Reinforcements arrived in time, enemy routed! Hah! Take that, you villain!" And the knob of the Malacca cane cracked on the skull of Mike.

The rufian yelped, and got another crack, and then he lay still.

Major Mansford flushed the case.

"Hah! Ennany routed with heavy loss," he chuckled, in high good-humour. "My boys, it was very plucky of you to come to my help like this—very plucky—good. Bravas, bravas. These rascals would have robbed me—yes, braved, robbed me! Don't let 'em get away!"

"I don't think they feel up to getting away, sir, after those whacks," said Redfern, with a grin. "Better give 'em another crack or two, and then they'll be quiet till you can send the police here for them."

"Hah! Good idea! Bright boy, braved!" said the major. The cane whisked in the air again.

"Don't! Leggo! Loosee alone!" roared Smitty and Mike together.

The cane swung through the air, and missed Smitty's head by an inch. Then it came down again, and again narrowly missed, clumping on the ground. The rufian yelped with terror, and Redfern giggled. He knew that the major was only frightening the rufian, but Smitty thought he had had two narrow escapes from getting his skull fractured.



"Now for the other!" exclaimed the major.  
Crack! The knock crashed down close to Mike's head. He roared and squirmed.

"Marry! Don't! Keep him off! He's killing me!"

"Marry!"  
"Ow! Marry! Loose go! Ow!"  
"If it wasn't two miles to the police-station," said the major, "I'd walk off there, begad! But, as it is, I think a thrashing will be near the mark. Let that brute get up, lad!"

Redfern allowed Smithy to rise. He bounded away, and the major made the case play like lightning. Smithy got about ten or twelve stinging laces before he escaped. He vanished into the wood, yelling like a squire.

"Now the other," said the major, brandishing his cane. Mike jumped to his feet as he was released. He sprang away frantically, caught his foot in a root, and went down on his face. The cane came down with tremendous force, and the ruffian yelled. He got four or five more before he could get clear.

"Roared, with heavy loss," chuckled the major. "Ha, ha! My lads, I thank you for your plucky assistance. Plucky youngsters, begad! Where do you come from?"

"Netherby College, sir."  
"Hah! Just going there, begad, to see the Head. Just walking over to complain about some young second-rate who trespassed in my garden yesterday afternoon. Impudent young rascal had the audacity to throw a handful of torn paper over me—me, Major Mansford! Got him a spanking, hah!"

"Oh, holy smoke!" murmured Redfern, in dismay. As the "impudent young rascal" in question, he was naturally concerned to learn of the mission that had brought the irate major out that evening on the path to Netherby.

"If you please, sir—"  
"Yes, what is it? Speak up."  
"You are going to Netherby to complain to the doctor?"  
"Yes, begad! Nasty young second-rate, got him crushed!"

Hah!  
"He—he didn't mean any harm, sir," ventured Redfern. "It was a paper-chase, you see."  
"Hah! Friend of yours, I suppose," said the major. "Want me to let him off, hah?"

"Yes, sir. He's a particular friend of mine, and I like him awfully. I've known him ever since I can remember."  
"Hah! Well, perhaps—perhaps." The major hesitated. "You are plucky youngsters, and I owe you something. I'll think over it."  
"It would mean an awful row for the chap, sir."  
"Serve him right—ought to be flogged! They used to dog me, sir, at Eton, and it did me good—did me good, begad! Better come with me to the end of the wood, lads, in case those second-rate are lingering about. They might hurt you."

It was impossible to decline the major's escort, but the crowd looked dismayed. As soon as they were out of the dusk of the wood, the old gentleman was pretty certain to recognize them as the invaders of his garden the day before. However, there was no help for it, and they marched along with the major to the end of the woodland path, and emerged into the lane.

"Plucky lads," said the major to himself. He had a way of uttering his thoughts aloud, freedom or consciousness that his words were audible to others. "I like them. Don't think I'll go to the school after all. Hah! Now, my boys, here's your road. Why! Hah! The young rascal himself, begad!" He stared at Redfern. "You—you—you young lads! You threw the sprags over me—over me!"

"It was only fun, sir," ventured Redfern, keeping a wary eye on the major's cane. "We didn't mean any harm. We—"  
"Never do."  
"Hah! Ought to be flogged! But plucky, very! Hah! Never mind, never mind! Don't go to the school. What's your name? What's all your names, begad!"

"Owen Redfern, sir. This is Reggie Lawrence, and this is Harrow Jampot Raza Rang—I mean Harrow Jampot Raza Singh, Nabob of Bhangoor."  
The major looked at the Indian boy, taking notice of him for the first time.

"Bogad! Harrow Singh! Know your father, bogad, old Nabob of Bhangoor! Give me your fist, boy! I'm glad to see your father's son!"  
And the major shook hands with the Indian.

"I remember my father speaking of the worthy Mansford-nabob," said the nabob softly. "The nabob is great in war, and needs the Alghora on the mountains with the heavy hand of the British Raj."  
"Hah!" said the major, looking pleased. "Bogad! You must come up to my place, my boys. After this, remember you're free of my garden, only don't do more damage than

you can help. You can come and go as often as you like, begad. Plucky youngsters. Son of the old nabob, too! Well, good-by, and mind you come and see me some time."

And the major shook hands with the three in turn, and they hurried off on the road to the school.

"My hat!" said Redfern. "This is a stroke of luck. King would have rejoiced his little self if the major had got as far as the school with his complaint."

"Wouldn't he just?" agreed Lawrence. "We've been in luck. And then the major's irritation, that's a bit of luck, too. You know he owns pretty nearly all the bank of the Netherby, on this side, and his keepers have been awfully strict on trespassers. Fancy having the giddy son of his grandfather! It will be all right."

And the inseparables reached Netherby, none the worse for their adventure, and in high good humour with themselves and things generally.

CHAPTER 6.

Rough on Robinson!

"KING'S been quiet the last day or two," remarked Redfern. "Seems to have tamed him a bit, doesn't it, pulling his leg that time?"

"Ha, ha," Lawrence chuckled at the recollection. "We respect you too much, sir, to think of calling you stupid or impertinent. Whatever we may think? Ha, ha!"

"He's saving it up for us, I'll be bound," said Redfern. "Those are the words of truth," chimed in the nabob. "The King-nabob is watching us every day. He has the great desire to catch us in the trap."

"Yo—yo—what! Oh, catch us napping! I sent Harrow Singh, your English would be a good thing to crack nuts with."

The nabob looked indignant. "I have received of the complete instruction from a native graduated gentleman of the Bengal University, before I shall arrive in this country!" he said sternly.

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"Well, he must have been a carter, that graduated gentleman," declared Redfern. "But, coming back to our matter, if King's on the track, I vote that we give him a chase on Saturday. If he caught us trespassing, far instance—"

"I say, don't be reckless, Reddy. If he caught us doing that, he'd have us up before his lord."

"Let me think, my son. Let him catch us. He doesn't know anything about the giddy frolics we've had from the major. If he spotted us in the major's grounds, he'd jump with joy. He knows how furious the old chap is, and it would be a chance he'd never miss. And then, when we meekly explained that we went by invitation—"

"Ha, ha!"

"And called upon the major himself to prove it—"

"He, ha!"

"I think King would have to sing small. Don't you?"

"Rather, if we can work it!"

"On Saturday afternoon, my kids, we shall work it, or let's something," declared Redfern. "Meanwhile, here we are this precious afternoon, with half an hour on our hands, and nothing to do. Whose case we dig up some fun?"

"He here not get vexed the extreme vengeance upon the lord of Reddism," said the nabob. "Let us go out and rag the Fourth."

Lawrence looked out of the window.

"Robinson's showing a football round the quad," he remarked. "It would be a joke to collar it and take it out for a run."

"Right-to!" said Redfern. "Let's get into ambush in the porch, and call out as soon as he comes close. They'll never catch us when we get going, and the gates are open."

The three juniors promptly ambushed themselves in the porch. Half a dozen of the Fourth were passing a ball about in the quadrangle, and presently it came sailing towards the porch, and dropped just outside.

Before the Fourth-Ferries could come up with it, a little figure shot out, and a splendid kick lifted the leather through the air, and sent it whirling towards the gates. Like lightning, Redfern, Lawrence, and the nabob were after it. A second kick sent the ball out into the road, with the three Third-Ferries on the track of it.

Robinson seized a bowl of sage. That ball was a new one, and had cost him a goodly sum out of his pocket-money, and to have it carried off under his nose was exasperating.

"Bah-bah-bah! that bah-bah-bah! you bah-bah-bah-bah!" he yelled.

Redfern turned his head. The captain of the Fourth was springing after him as fast as he could go.

"That's all right," called back Redfern. "We're only going to take it for a little run, kid. You shall have it as rolling-over, fact!"

"I'll bah-bah-bah every bah-bah in your body!" gasped Robinson. "I'll bah-bah-bah!"

"You'll bubble over if you go on like that," said Redfern. "Chase me, kid."

Robinson did chase him. He followed Redfern out of the gates like lightning, and five or six of the Fourth were hot on his heels.

But the three chasers were wicker. Away they went up the road, the football bounding before them, and Robinson and his friends dropped behind in the race.

"This is all right," said Redfern, looking back and seeing that the pursuit was dropping off. "Robbie can't stick it. He shall have his footer back when we've done with it. There's a lot of fun in kicking a ball about a public road, you know. It gets snatching at times, my lad! It looks as if it's going to get exciting now! Look there!"

A figure in uniform came out of a narrow lane into the road. It was the stumpy figure of Snape, the village policeman. Between Constable Snape and the Netherby juniors was a long-standing quarrel. As he saw the footer bounding along, the brows of the constable assumed a portentous frown.

"Hi, stop that there!" he exclaimed, stepping into the middle of the road. "You'll do some damage with that ball! Stop it, I say!"

Redfern was "on the ball." He let it stand for a moment.

"What's the matter with you, Snape?" he asked.

The policeman turned purple. To be called Snapey by a junior schoolboy was a little too much for his dignity.

"I'll show you what's the matter!" he growled.

And he bore down upon the three. Redfern picked up the ball.

"Clear the track!" shouted Redfern. "This is where I kick a goal! Clear out, Snapey! You're off-side!"

But Snape came only the wicker. He had no intention of clearing out of the way of the cheeky junior, though, had he known what a splendid drop-kick Redfern could put up, he might have thought better of it.

"He's asking for it," murmured Lawrence. "Let him have it, Reddy. Drop it right on his lovely countenance."

"Let his august visage be greeted by the leather," snarled the nabob. "Kick, you booby, kick!"

"What-to?" said Redfern.

The ball dropped from his hands, and as it rose, he kicked, with a beautiful accuracy which would have been greeted with wild applause on the Ragged Field.

It was a splendid drop-kick, and the ball flew like a bullet, and plumped upon the large red nose of Constable Snape with a sounding crack.

It had come so suddenly that the constable did not know what had hit him. He gave a yell and a gasp, spun round, and sat down in the dust. The ball bounced off his countenance, and in a moment the three juniors crouched it, and were leaning on merrily towards Netherby village.

Mr. Snape rose to his feet. He was considerably dazed and bewildered. His nose felt as if it had been hammered flat, and his helmet was on one side of his head.

"The limbs!" he murmured. "The limbs! Only let 'em wait till I get 'old of 'em, that's all! The blooming limbs!"

The three, gazing with wrath, dashed on at a speed which made pursuit by the village policeman hopeless.

"My eye!" murmured Redfern. "Snape will have his back up soon. We shall have to get home a different way, Hallo! What's that fearful rum?"

They stopped and looked back.

"My aunt! It's Robinson!"

The captain of the Fourth had not given up the chase. He had arrived upon the spot where Redfern had taken his goal upon the countenance of P.-o. Snape. He saw the policeman standing in the road, rubbing his nose; but he did not know what had happened. Robinson did not know whether the three had left the road or not, having lost sight of them, and he naturally passed to seek information.

"I say," he exclaimed, "have you seen those chaps, Snapey—three kids with a football? They—"

He got no further.

P.-o. Snape was badly in want of revenge just then, and he regarded Robinson's question as intended for a humorous allusion to his winking. He had the captain of the Fourth by the ear in a twinkling.

"Yes," he said, "I've seen three chaps with a football, I 'ave, and when I see 'em again I'll pull their hairs like that—and that—and that!"

Robinson snarled and wriggled.

"Largo, you beast! What are you doing that for? Lally-lally!"

"I catch you, you warmist!"

And Snapey, having pulled Robinson's ears till they seemed in danger of parting company with his head, began to box them by way of a change. Robinson struggled fiercely, both snarled and snarled, but he was powerless in the strong arms of Constable Snape. It was Snape's innings, and he made the far it.

"Help!" gasped Robinson. "He's m-m-mad—he's m-m-mad! Help!"

"I'll teach you to kick footballs at a member of the force!" said P.-o. Snape. "I'll teach you not to respect majesty of the law! There—and there—and there!"

Robinson began to understand.

"Let me go," he panted. "I'm after three, j—"

"You're one of 'em, I know that," said Mr. Snape; "you had a hand in it."

"I did did-did—"

"Yes, I know you did."

"I did did-did—"

"You needn't keep on repeating it," said Mr. Snape, slapping away. "I'm quite aware that you did, and I'm going to make you answer for it."

"I did did-did-did!" yelled Robinson, getting it out of his head. "I didn't have a hand in it. I'm after those kids. They've collared my footer."

"Well, why couldn't you see 'em before?" demanded Mr. Snape, leaving him to go of his. "Now that I believe you, you limb. Get away with you, do!"

Robinson got away with himself. He started off on the track of the chaps of the Third, breathing vengeance. The three stopped into the road, so that he could see them, and waved their hands. Robinson panted, and put on a sport. But the three were off like a flash, and the Fourth-Ferries laboured behind in vain. They vanished from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

"My hat!" said Redfern. "I never saw anything quite so rich as that. Snape is a tramp. I wish Robinson will be in a bad temper this evening, and when I take his footer back I shan't stop to thank him."

Robinson soon gave up the chase. The chaps reced the football road, and came back to Netherby by a different

route in time for calling-over. Redfern dribbled the ball across the quad. It was dark, and there was a light in the window of the study shared by Robinson and Hale.

Robinson was in there, explaining to Hale what he was going to do to Redfern at the very earliest opportunity. A pebble rattled on his window. He took no notice; but another came, and he got up angrily and opened the window.

Three figures stood below in the quad. He recognized Lawrence, Hurree, and Redfern, the latter with the football in his hands.

"Halla, Redfer!" said Redfern cheerfully. "We've brought your booster back."

Before Robinson could realize his intention, he dropped the ball and kicked. It was a beautiful drop-kick, fully equal to the one which had disconcerted Constable Scape.

Whirl! The ball caught Robinson fairly under the chin, and he went over backwards, and sat down with a bump, and the leather bounced across the room and smelt his spectacles clear. There was a loud crash in the study, and a howl of fury.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh floated back as the Third Form classes scuttled away.

They turned up in good time for calling-over, and there was a terrifically sweet and peaceful smile upon each of their countenances as they answered to their names. They felt that they had done well—very well indeed—and they were satisfied. Robinson did not look so satisfied, but that was not to be expected.

CHAPTER 7.

Laying the Snare.

"THEY are the worst—the very worst—boys in the college," said Mr. King, his thin lips in a tight red line, and his little eyes glittering under his contracted brows. "The very worst boys in all Netherby, Herr Schwann?"

The German master nodded.

"That is quite true," he assented. "Redfern is to worst boy, except Lawrence, and Lawrence is to worst girl, except the pluck run."

"I do not know which is the worst," said Mr. King. "But I shall reduce them to obedience, Herr Schwann. I shall break them in yet."

"Mein Gott! Ja, ja!" said the German. "But it will not be easy."

"Many of the masters like them, and even encourage them," said Mr. King, frowning. "Lawrence, for instance, has said to me that Redfern is the finest lad at Netherby. How nonsense! If the boy does anything well, it is that absurd and barbarous game of football."

"Ja, he plays to football well," said Herr Schwann.

"But I will bring him to reason," said Mr. King with a cold glitter in his eyes. "I will take some of the impertinence out of him, Herr Schwann."

"Ja, ja, Herr King."

The two masters were in Mr. King's study, discussing their grievances. Both of them had fallen foul many times of the chains of the Third, and neither could say that he had come off best in the long run.

It was the dearest wish of Mr. King's heart to catch Redfern napping; but he had tried it more than once, and found himself baffled, and so he was getting rather chary of the youngster. He found little sympathy among the other masters, who mostly liked Redfern, and, as he was not Owen's Fours-master, his opportunities were limited.

"Ha! What is that?" asked Mr. King suddenly, holding up his hand.

A voice floated into the study from the quadrangle. The window was open, and the tones of Owen Redfern were quite audible.

"Major Mansford's words, Reggie? A tipping idea! We can get away from Netherby at two o'clock, and there will be ample time before calling-over for a jolly run."

"It will be great fun," said Lawrence's voice in return. "The major is so down as Netherby shape getting into his grounds, you know."

"Yes, he is a cough-drog, and no mistake; but he won't hurt us."

"We shan't give him a chance."

"That's it. You'll come, too, Hurree Singh?"

"My heart will feel the great delight to do so."

"Then it's settled."

"But keep it dark, or—"

"Mean's the word."

The voices died away.

Mr. King stepped quickly to the window. Redfern, Lawrence, and the others were strolling carelessly across the quadrangle, without so much as a glance towards the study window. They were talking and laughing to themselves, but Mr. King could not longer hear what they said. He turned back from the window, and his eyes met Herr Schwann's. The German master grinned.

"That is a fortunate accident, Herr King. It looks as if these boys intended to trespass on to grounds of to major to-morrow suit themselves."

Mr. King nodded.

"Undoubtedly that is their intention," he replied. "But it is impossible to act upon words accidentally overheard. They must be caught in the act."

"Certainly."

"I think," said Mr. King, rubbing his skinny hands, "that Redfern & Company will go a little too far this time. Major Mansford is very bitter about boys trespassing on his grounds, and he has complained more than once to the Head on that very subject. It is our duty to see that he is not annoyed."

"Ja, ja."

"It is useless to attempt to stop the proposed infraction of the law. These three boys are incorrigible. If they know we were aware of their intention they would not abandon it; they would simply postpone it to a future more convenient occasion."

"Quite true, Herr King."

"For their own sakes, and for the sake of law and order in the college, I think it is our duty, Herr Schwann, to catch them in the very act of breaking the rules of the school, and the laws of the land, and make an example of them."

"That is exactly what I was thinking."

"Then you are with me, Herr Schwann, in this matter?"

"I can aid you all the way, Herr King."

"Good! They intend to leave Netherby at two o'clock. It is fortunate that we know their precise intentions."

"We can follow them from the school."

"No; I have a better plan than that. Redfern is as sharp as a needle, and he will certainly be on the watch for possible pursuit. There is only one way they can get from Netherby to the major's woods, and I propose that we get ahead of them on the road, Herr Schwann, and watch for them. In dealing with cunning, we must use cunning."

"You are quite right, Herr King."

"Once they are fairly within the forbidden grounds, we have only to make our swoop," said Mr. King, grinning with satisfaction at the thought. "The Redfern & Company will be marched back to Netherby on some occasion to regard leniently their transgression of discipline. But he could not possibly go back, so grave a matter as this, especially as I shall see that Major Mansford is informed of it, and that he comes up to the school to complain."

The German master chuckled.

"Gott! A fogging will do you good."

"I certainly hope it will," said Mr. King.

And for the remainder of that day Mr. King was almost good-tempered, so pleasant to him was the prospect of securing a fogging for the three heroes of the Third. He would

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certainly not have anticipated the morrow with such pleasant expectation had he been able to hear the further talk of the insuperable under the clime in the quad.

"Do you think it woful, Reddy?" asked Lawrence.

"I'm pretty sure it did," said Redfern. "We know that King was in his study, and that he must have heard anything said under his window. Besides, there was a sound of voices in there as we came by, and it stopped suddenly."

"Yes; and that meant that King had heard us, and wanted to hear more."

"Exactly."

"Awfully mean of him to listen," said Lawrence. "Lawrence wouldn't. Nobody at Netherby would, except King, and perhaps Herr Schwab."

"Listen," said Redfern contentiously, "generally hear things to their disadvantage, and there's no reason why the King-kest should prove an exception to the rule. He wants to get us into a row. If he's mean enough to listen to what we said, and to start out to watch and trail these harmless and inoffensive young gentlemen like our noble patron—why, he deserves all that he gets!"

"This is truth and wisdom!" declared Harvey Singh. "It will be a lesson for the school, which may cease to accuse to him the lots of great benefit."

"Let's hope so. Mind, we must keep a sharp eye on our bird-to-morrow. He's going to make a regular landing on of himself over this affair, so that he'll think twice next time before he starts busting us."

Not a word had the drama said at the school of their adventure with the major, or of the invitation he had extended to them. Not a word did they now say of their second expedition.

The next morning Mr. King looked at them keenly when he saw them. He took the Fourth Ferry for half an hour, and found the drama unusually attentive. Evidently, he thought, they didn't wish to risk being detained that afternoon, and leaving the planned excursion into forbidden territory.

Mr. King smiled to himself at the thought. He wouldn't have detained them for worlds if they had been over so recent. No; he intended to let them rush on to their fate—to carry out their planned casualty, and to find vengeance, in the shape of Mr. King and Herr Schwab, but on their track.

Shortly before two o'clock Mr. King and Herr Schwab quitted the school, and strolled away together. Their going did not escape the keen eyes of the three.

"Gone to lay a giddy ambush!" guessed Redfern. "The plot thickens, my children! But you two-ropes-halfpenny they're gone to Wood Lane to watch for us. Cut along to Devereux's study, Inky, and borrow his field-glasses, and we'll see."

The school soon borrowed the splendid glasses belonging to the captain of Netherby, and the three juniors ascended the tower. From the top of the school tower a view could be had for miles over the surrounding country. With the glasses Redfern soon made out the figures of Mr. King and Herr Schwab. They were heading directly for the wood, through which the footpath ran towards the major's property. These could be little doubt now.

"Come on!" said Redfern. "The giddy trap is set, and now we've only got to tangle into it!"

They returned the glasses to Devereux's study. Then they quitted Netherby and strolled down the road. It was a low spring afternoon, and a practice match was going on on Lixle-side. But for once even the football-field had no attraction for the three. They were hunting big game now.

They entered on the footpath through the wood. They laughed and elated loudly, but at the same time kept a keen look-out. Beyond the wood was the lane, on the other side of that the major's property, and the gate which had more than once been waded by the Netherby youngsters.

"Don't turn your heads!" murmured Redfern. "Can you see a Trilly hat over those bushes?"

Harvey Singh and Lawrence cast glances out of the corners of their eyes. They were at the head of the wood now, where the footpath entered the lane. Almost opposite them was a big gate, ornamented with a formidable row of spikes along the top. Over the gate a board was visible, in bold the familiar legend: "Trespassers will be prosecuted with the strict rigour of the law!"

"Did she spot it?" murmured Redfern.

"Yes," said Lawrence, in the same tone. "If that wasn't Herr Schwab's eye, I'll eat it! The Dutchman is watching the part from behind that tree."

"And from the other side," said Harvey Singh. "I have

discerned the respectable headgear of our esteemed instructor, the King-kest."

Redfern chuckled.

"They've got their eyes on us!" he said. "Mean, isn't it, to go watching harmless infants like us! It's touching to think of the pleasure we shall afford our kind teachers when we shin over that gate."

"The gratification and the delight are simultaneously extreme!" said the school.

"Got the rope, Reggie?"

"Here it is, under my jacket."

"Then go and do the Buffalo Bill act, while Inky and I keep watch."

"Night-ho!"

Lawrence crossed the lane to the big gate. Redfern and Harvey Singh made a great show of keeping watch for passers-by in the lane. It was a lonely plain. They knew that two pairs of eyes were watching their every movement from the wood.

Lawrence had the rope in hand, a noose at the end of it. He slung it up, and the loop caught on one of the spikes over the high gate. These were knots in the rope to assist climbers in the ascent.

"Come on, kids!" said Lawrence.

He went up the rope, hand over hand, and Redfern and Harvey Singh followed. Two figures came rapidly out of the wood into the lane.

"Redfern!"

"Papa?"

"Stop. I command you!"

The juniors had been spotted in the act of climbing over the gate. That was enough for the purpose of the watchers. But it was not enough for the three.

The boys negotiated the spikes in a twinkling, and long before the masters were on the spot, they were over the gate, and had dropped down inside.

Mr. King and Herr Schwab could not be sure that their voices had been heard. They arrived at the gate, and stopped there, and looked at one another. The German was grinning, and Mr. King's small eyes were glittering with satisfaction.

"There is no longer any doubt," said Mr. King. "They came here with the intention of committing a trespass, and they have carried out their intention. The fact that they had a rope with them, for the purpose of scaling the gate, shows that the act was premeditated, and indicates that they are frequently in the habit of acting like this. This is not the first time, you may be sure, that these young scoundrels have invaded private premises in this cunning and heinous way."

"Certainly not," asserted Herr Schwab.

"The question is," said Mr. King, "how are we to catch them? The only way seems to me to enter those grounds, and follow them."

"Good! We will go to the major's house—"

"The major's house is more than a mile from here. If those young rascals heard us calling to them, they will know they are followed. They may leave the grounds and cut back to Netherby if we lose track of them. I do not wish to have to make an accusation to the doctor unsupported by evidence. In the parent of our day, Herr Schwab, we must enter those grounds, and catch the offenders, and march them home in ignominy to the school!"

"Good, Herr King! But how—"

"Fortunately they have left the rope here. It will be simple to cross the gate with the assistance of this rope. Please help me up, Herr Schwab!"

The German master gave Mr. King what is vulgarly known as a leg-up, and, aided by the rope, the master was soon on top of the gate. He spanned himself over the spikes, which were large and not very close together. The German master looked after him doubtfully. He was a

**ANSWERS**  
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great deal stouter and heavier than Mr. King, and he doubted whether he was quite equal to such acrobatic feats.

"Come on, Herr Schwann!"

"I think it would be better for me to wait here for you, mein Herr," said the German cautiously. "Some spikes look very dangerous."

"Nonsense! I have passed them in safety. At least make the attempt, my dear sir, and I will help you from above."

The German gingerly drew himself up the knotted rope. He got a grip of the spikes, and tried to clamber over them. Doubtless he would have succeeded, but just then he was suddenly started by a gruff voice from within the gate.

"Allo, there! Treaspasser! I've got you!"

The German had one leg over the gate. As the gruff voice started him, he gasped, and tried to get it back. He was too unwieldy for a climber. He slipped and lost his hold, and fell off the gate, and would have plunged into the road, had not his rubber garments caught on one of the spikes and held him fast.

He groined and struggled wildly. His trousers were caught on the spikes, and he lay helplessly from the gate. The spotted apartment he was beneath his eyes. Mr. King, who was on the inside of the rope of spikes, holding them and trying to help the German, took a grip on his ankles from below.

He looked down wildly, and saw a man in velvet, with a rough face and beard, and a scowl on the rough face. The man was evidently a keeper, and, just as evidently, he believed that he had caught two daring trespassers in the very act.

"Let go!" said Mr. King.

Outside the gate, the German was whimpering and gurgling, strong on the spikes. Inside, Mr. King hung by the hands, the keeper's grip on his ankle.

"Let go, I command you!"

"Come down, ere I—"

"I refuse to do so! I— Let go! You will cause me to fall!"

The keeper grinned. He gave another tug at Mr. King's ankle, and the Netherby master lost his hold, and came down with a thump to the ground.

"Now I've got yer, you scoundrel!" said the keeper, fastening a grip like iron upon Mr. King's collar, and dragging him to his feet.

## CHAPTER 8.

## Mr. King Gets Caught.

**R**EIFERN buried his face in the grass to keep from shrieking. The three chains were close at hand, hidden in the trees, which grew close and thick beside the path leading from the gate. They had seen all, heard all.

They had expected to take a rise out of Mr. King. But to see him headed down by the ankle, and collared as a trespasser, surpassed their wildest anticipations.

Reifern gasped. Lawrence stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth to keep back a yell of laughter. Only Harry Birch recovered a few Oriental grunts.

The keeper had dragged Mr. King up. The Netherby master tried to freeze him with a glare of presidential dignity and disdain. But it was difficult to look dignified when one is rutted and crumpled, bespattered and blown, and with a grip on one's collar like a vice.

"Get yer!" repeated the keeper, with gruff satisfaction.

"Follow, unband me!"

"Follow—hey! I'll follow you! Come alonger me!"

"Follow!"

"Come alonger me!"

"Take your hand from my collar, I insist! Wretched fellow, I am a master from Netherby College; I am Mr. King!"

"Then you ought to know better than to trespass on private grounds, and climb over a gate like a schoolboy?" roared the keeper.

"Nonsense! I came in pursuit of some of my boys who have been guilty of trespass."

"Likely yare!"

"They are in the wood here somewhere. I watched them get over the gate, and came in pursuit to capture them."

"None of your lies! If you're a schoolmaster you ought to know the law better than to commit a trespass. Come alonger me!"

"I will not come; I distinctly refuse to come! I insist that you immediately remove your hand from my collar—immediately, or!"

"Are you a-goin' to come, or ain't you?"

"I am not so much decidedly not! Let me slip, you unscrupulous ruffian! I shall lose my temper, and strike you, if you do not instantly cease this ruffianly conduct!"

"If you try that game, my man, you'll get the worst of it!"

said the keeper, crying Mr. King with great disdain. "Just you come along, and stop telling lies! Schoolmaster, indeed! More likely a thieving pickpocket!"

Mr. King spluttered:

"I shall strike you if you do not release me!"

The keeper did not release him, and he kept his word. His fist plunged into the bearded face; then the prediction, that Mr. King would get the worst of it if he tried that game, was fulfilled.

The body man in velvet returned the blow with interest. Mr. King had'nt been as much idea of boxing as he had of flying. The keeper hit him right and left all over the place.

"Oh!" roared Mr. King. "Oh—ow! Leave off, you— you dreadful ruffian! Herr Schwann, come to my aid! I protest, I command you to help me against this horrible ruffian! Herr Schwann, if you do not help me I shall never speak to you again!"

But Herr Schwann was full of his own troubles. He had made gallant but ineffectual endeavours to get free of the spikes, and he was still hanging in a bunch on the outside of the gate, like a rope, fast ready to fall; and his vain struggles had ripped the cloth of his rubber garments still further, and they were giving way. There was a tearing sound, and the cloth parted. Herr Schwann dropped into the road in a heap, and rolled over.

He lay gasping. He heard Mr. King's frantic cries from the inner side of the gate; but the weight of the ladder would not have tempted him to negotiate those spikes again.

"Leave off! You are hurting me! I protest! Follow, I will have you arrested! I will complain to the major. Oh dear! Oh—ow—ow—"

Mr. King's speculations went on like an ascending song. The keeper was angry. He didn't like the expressions the Netherby master applied to him. He didn't like the punch he had received. It was his turnings now, and, convinced that he had to do with a trespasser, or worse, and a particularly important one, he let Mr. King have it hot and strong.

"Now, will you come alonger me?" he inquired, as the Netherby master fell in a huddled heap at his feet, and lay gasping and grunting.

## Out Friday, May 3rd.

No. 17. "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.



NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"THE BULL DOG."  
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"No, I will certainly not come with you; I am a respectable gentleman, and I am no misdoer."

"I say, you want some more?"

"No," replied Mr. King. "I do not want any more. I repeat distinctly that I do not want any more at all."

"Then, will you come along? I've got you, and I'm not going to lose you, my dear fellow."

"I will come if you insist. Yes, I will certainly come, and there is no need for violence. I insist that you keep your hands off me!"

"You are invited to reach as you like," said the keeper, "but you can't argue to give us the slip, you trespassing scoundrel! Come on! Maybe you'll tell us at the police-station that you are a bleeding misdoer!"

"The police-station!" murmured Mr. King. "Do you mean to say that you are going to—take me to the police-station?"

"Where do you think I'm going to take you?"

"My dear fellow," said Mr. King, breaking out into a cold perspiration, and trembling in every limb as the prospect of a court trial before his imagination. "My dear man!"

"I do assure you, even my word of honour, that I am not a trespasser, or a poacher, or any disreputable character of that sort. Have a little patience, and I will prove it."

"Changing your name, ain't you?"

"I did wrong to lose my temper. I have no cards in my pocket, and also letters, which will sufficiently prove my identity. I admit it was somewhat thoughtless to enter upon private grounds in quest of those letters; but really—I really cannot be blamed. My good man, your training these letters, and you will see that my statement is true. And if you will please be good to accept this half-crown—"

The keeper hesitated. He glanced at the letter, addressed to Mr. King, at Northey College, and was half convinced. The golden coin finished convincing him. He slipped it into his pocket.

"Well, you oughter had more sense," he said ungraciously. "Schoolmaster or not, you had no right to trespass here. Get lost with you!"

"Kindly open the gate," said Mr. King, breathing a deep sigh of relief. "Kindly open the gate, my friend, and I shall be only too glad to get out."

"Can't. It's padlocked!"

"But how can I—"

"You got it over the top of it. I'll give you can get out the same way."

"Indeed—indeed, I cannot! I—"

"Oh, yes, you can," said the keeper coolly. "I'll give you a leg up. Mind, if another keeper should see you here, I couldn't let you go, so you'd better be off. Mr. Trespassing Schoolmaster!"

That hint was enough for Mr. King. He hopped to the gate in quest to no time, and squeezed the keeper's leg up, and got a clutch on the spikes. He dragged himself gingerly over them, and dropped into the road.

Harry Nelson was sitting there in the dust, ransacking and moaning. He had not yet got over the shock to his system. He eyed Mr. King in a far from friendly manner. It was the vengeance-seeking man who had got him into this fearful adventure.

The keeper leaped away as soon as Mr. King was over the gate; then from the trees emerged three figures, long with supple and laughing. Redfern staggered against a tree. The coats of helms and crests were streaming down his cheeks.

"Did you ever see such a silly lout?" he gurgled.

"Never, never, never!" gurgled Lawrence.

"I can hear the noise of the snail speaking in powerful language!" gurgled Horace Singh.

The voice of Mr. King was indeed audible over the high gate. He was using language that was quite strong, though probably not really strong enough to express all he was feeling at that moment.

"Here, let's get out of this!" said Redfern, gasping.

"I don't think I've got wind enough left in me for another gander. Oh, my Aunt Lavina! What a treat for King! Let's go and look at them."

"I say, it ain't any!"

"Here, I'm going!"

"But—"

"Look here, they want to capture us and march us back to Northey. They won't be happy till they do. If King chooses to make an absolutely objection as of himself, can we as respectful people stop him? We respect him too much. Come on!"

Lawrence gave Redfern a leg-up; then he laid a hand down above to his elbow. The three dropped into the road within a few paces of the two masters. Mr. King could hardly believe his eyes.

"Redfern! Lawrence! Horace Singh!"

"Yes, sir," replied the three together.

"You—you—you have been trespassing! You are caught in the act!"

"No, sir!"

"What?" roared Mr. King.

"We haven't been trespassing, sir."

"You say dare to say so, when with my own eyes I see you drop from that gate! Know, you other young rascals, that Harry Nelson and I saw you get over the gate in the first place!"

"Did you, sir?"

"Yes, now, you will come back to Northey immediately!"

"But it's a half-holiday, sir."

"I tell you, you will come back to the school at once, you young rascals!"

"Don't and palpatist falsehoods to your other sins, sir!"

shouted Mr. King. "Come with me at once! Walk before me back to the school, all three of you, or you will regret it!"

"But, sir, it's a half-holiday, sir, and we want—"

Mr. King interrupted him with a box on the ear.

"Now, obey me!"

"Certainly, but I shall complain to the Head."

"You will have ample opportunity of doing so, Redfern," said Mr. King grimly, "for I am going to take you directly before Dr. Lidd."

The three, looking so serious and dismayed as they could, while inwardly they were chafing with resentment, linked arms and marched off. Behind them came Mr. King and Harry Nelson.

The German, by puffing and gasping, Mr. King looked a mere wreck. His face was out and out of his eyes, darkened by the rough handling of the keeper, his clothes were torn and muddy, and his hat hunched out of all shape. He had only one consolation—that the three lancers who had led him into this scrape were in his power at last.

When the party arrived at Northey certain eyes were cast upon them. Boys collected from all quarters to watch them cross the quad. Mr. King and the German master escaped from the ordeal as quickly as they could. They went to their rooms to clean up a little before taking the delinquents to the Head.

The innocent three were left standing in the hall waiting for their return. They were surrounded by inquirers.

"What have you done?" was the general query.

Redfern shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"Better ask King. We've done nothing."

"Oh, show us it," said Krowley. "King wouldn't search you back like that for doing nothing. What have you been up to?"

"We paid a friendly visit to a gentleman who invited us on his land," said Redfern. "Nothing wrong in that, is there?"

"Who was the party?"

"Major Mansford of Northwood."

"Oh, ha, ha! He invited you?"

"He did."

"Tell that to the maniac! You won't get us to swallow it, or the doctor either."

"My dear young friend, your words are of no account," said Redfern. "If a chap doubts my word I generally knock his head against the wall."

Krowley protested hotly.

"Oh, but, I say, you're wrong, you know. You can't work off a yarn like that on the Head."

"My dear fellow, it's a solid, proven fact. King wouldn't believe it. He'd go to have us up before the Head. All the worse for King."

"But—"

"Here he comes!"

The speaker's words came back. Mr. King was returning to his rooms. He had cleaned himself considerably and changed his clothes, but his face bore several signs of the encounter with the keeper at Northwood.

"Follow me!" he said, with glittering eyes.

"Yes, sir," said the three meekly.

And they followed Mr. King to the Head's study—an apartment divided of the Northey justice as a rule. But on this occasion there was a calm confidence in the manner of the claims of the Third as they entered the doctor's room.

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Major Gives His Opinion of Mr. King.

**D**E LISSE adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez, and looked at the legs of Mr. King unfolded in his tale. It was a tale of war, and a tale of wrath. The Head was accustomed to receiving complaints from Mr. King. He generally took off a big discount; but, really, upon this occasion the unpopular master seemed to have made out a strong case.

Major Mansford's objection to trespassers was well known. He had worried the Head more than once by complaints. The Head had promised that his boys should be kept well in hand in that respect in future. To have the major complaining again would be annoying. He would be in the right, too; and there was no doubt upon the point. Mr. King, with his own eyes, had seen the delinquents climb the gate. He had seen them return from the private grounds by the same way that they had entered them.

His following them was perhaps a little too nosy, perhaps injudicious, and had led to an unpleasant interview with the keeper. The boys could not be exactly blamed for that. Yet it was certain that their transgression had caused it. The doctor's brow was very stern as he gazed at the three.

"What have you to say?" he asked coldly.

"Nothing, sir."

"They will not venture to deny my statement, I think," said Mr. King; "that would pass the bounds even of their hardness and impudence."

"Certainly not, sir," said Redfern. "All you have said is quite true, sir, only you are mistaken. We have no explanation to give except the one we gave you."

The Head glanced at Mr. King.

"You have not mentioned that, Mr. King," he remarked. "I have no recollection of any explanation."

"What was it, Redfern?"

"We explained to Mr. King, sir, that we were not trespassing at Netherwood because we went there by Major Mansford's invitation."

"Oh, I remember that!" said Mr. King, with a sneer. "You can hardly hope to deceive Dr. Lisle by such a palpable falsehood, Redfern."

"It is not a falsehood, sir."

"Do you dare to say that Major Mansford invited you there this afternoon?"

"He gave us a standing invitation, sir, to come whenever we liked," said Redfern cheerfully.

Mr. King gasped. The doctor passed his hand over his eyes in a thoughtful way. Knowing the major as they did, Redfern's statement seemed so to really preposterous. They knew nothing of the services by which the estate had earned the major's invitation.

"Redfern, do you mean to say that seriously?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do you support him, Lawrence?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you, Harrow Singh?"

"The contrary of my friends' opinions with the assistance of the sublime truth, sir."

The doctor coughed.

"I do not quite understand this," he said slowly.

"They are lying, undoubtedly!" exclaimed Mr. King. "Surely you attach no importance to such wild and absurd statements, sir?"

"Let a note be sent to Major Mansford, sir," suggested Redfern quickly. "We are willing to stand by what he says."

The doctor hesitated. For the first time it dawned upon Mr. King that there was possibly some truth in the junior's assertions. He turned pale. Could it be possible that such an invitation existed—that he had been fooled all along the line?

"Very well," said the doctor, at last. "In justice to the boys, Mr. King, the note must be sent. If they have, indeed, spoken untruthfully, I shall administer to each of them the severest flogging ever inflicted at this school. But the matter shall be put to the test."

The three juniors were dumfounded. They linked arms and dashed down the corridor in high glee, and out to the football-field. They were sure of victory now. They watched a match on Big-side for the next hour. Then Redfern suddenly gobbled his comrades and dragged them away.

Look there!

The major's trap was driving through the gateway. In it was the major himself, with his well-known red face and white whiskers. He had evidently received the Head's note, and answered it in presence.

"Come on," said Redfern; "we're on in this set."

They were in time to greet the major as he emerged down. Major Mansford shook hands with all three of them, and was then shown into the Head's study. A few minutes later the chains of the Third were pulled in. The doctor's brow was solemn, but Redfern thought he caught a lurking gleam in his eye as if he wanted to laugh. Mr. King was looking approvingly down in the mouth. He gave the boys a vicious glance. The major was talking volubly.

"Of course I invited them, Plucky youngsters, begad,

and knew young Harrow's father is India, old Nabob of Blimpington. Made 'em free of my grounds—certainly."

"It appears, Redfern, that your statement was quite correct, and that you had, as you said, a right to enter the major's grounds," said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Redfern gratefully.

"You are therefore remunerated; yet it would be advisable, when paying a visit in future, not to pay it by way of climbing over a spiked gate."

Redfern blushed. He thought that the doctor growled how the matter stood; but if Dr. Lisle knew that the chains of the Third had deliberately "rotted" Mr. King, he did not deem it advisable to say so. Mr. King looked sufficiently foolish already.

"Under the circumstances, Mr. King's mistake was natural," murmured the doctor. "I apologise to you, Major Mansford, for the trouble you have been put to."

"Not at all," said the major; "and, begad, if you'll allow me to say so, Mr. King's mistake wasn't a natural one! Why didn't he believe what he was told—hey? Master Redfern told him he had an invitation, and he didn't believe it. What right had he to doubt the boy's word? There's no better way to make a liar of a boy than to doubt his word, begad! The fellow ought to be ashamed of himself, begad!"

Mr. King turned as red as a turkey-cock.

"Sir—Major Mansford—"

"Don't talk to me! Ought to be ashamed of yourself, begad! I said that before, and now you hear me say it again. Suspicious, mean bounder—bah! That's what you are, sir, if you want a plain soldier's opinion. Suspicious mean bounder—bah!"

"Sir—Dr. Lisle—"

"Hush, Major Mansford!"

"Hush, I always speak my mind! The boy's worth ten of him, sir! Plucky youngsters! I suppose you don't know how the three of them came to the room when I was attacked by footpads, and nearly robbed, begad! That's what fifteen bounders doing the same—bah!"

"I never heard of this," said the doctor, looking pleased. "I am glad something has happened. Major Mansford, to give you a better opinion of me—harkley heps—"

"Oh, that's all right, sir! My lack's worse than any bite any dog. Plucky youngsters, and I'm proud of them! That's why I dinner every when I got your note, to get 'em out of a pickle, and take 'em back to dine with me. I have your permission, sir?"

"Certainly."

"You'd like to come, boys—hey? Always do, with a feed—hey? Always could when I was a boy—bah!"

"Delighted, sir!" said Redfern. "So kind of you!"

"Thank you so much, sir!" said Lawrence.

"The fidelity of my heart is extremely transient and transient!" muttered Harrow Singh.

"Hah, come along, then! But just a word, Dr. Lisle. Don't let that man get on my grounds again—what's his name—King—King? King? King? King? Don't let him get on my grounds again, sir, or he'll find trouble!"

As the major shuffled off with the boys, Mr. King remained in the Head's study, and he had to listen to the major's remarks before he left—remarks very much like the major's in their bearing, though more gentle in expression. Mr. King writhed for ten minutes under the Head's tongue. He had been hasty, impudently, and had shown an unreasonable antipathy towards certain parties, it appeared, and the Head held severely that he would never place himself in so ridiculous a position again. It was calculated to weaken his authority, and might even make it necessary for him to leave Netherwood. Mr. King finally crept from the study in a white-hot of fury, but with the conviction borne in upon his mind that it would pay him better in future to give up the haunting of Redfern & Co.

Meanwhile, the chase boiled along in the trap with the jolly old major. He had a shrewd suspicion how the land lay, and he asked them questions, and they told him the whole story, and he laughed and chuckled till he was purple in the face. They spent a pleasant evening at Netherwood, and the major pressed them to come again—an invitation which was not forgotten by the Chains of the Third.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday's two long, complete stories: "The Bugle Call," a tale of dash, fun, and path, by E. Clarke Hooley; and "Frank Duster, Detective." Order your MARVEL in advance. Meanwhile get "The Case" Library. Price One Halfpenny. Now on sale.)

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