

The
**MODERN
BOY**

2^D
EVERY SATURDAY

WEEK ENDING
29th MARCH 1930
No 372 VOL. 15.



*The Victor of
Waterloo!*

**THE
IRON DUKE**

STORY OF THE FILM INSIDE

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**



Carver stepped chalking on the blackboard and stared at McCann, petrified. The Fifth went on with their idling, and the Form-master slept!

The FIGHTING HEAD!

Jimmy on the Warpath!

DORMITORY No. 3, at High Coombe School, slept. And Dormitory No. 3 was not unique in that. Slumber reigned in all the other dormitories.

The last note of the rising-bell had died away. Here and there a head had lifted from a pillow, and a fellow had yawned and turned over. Haudal of the Sixth, in his bed-room study, had exerted himself to the extent of remarking "Bother that bell!" before he went to sleep again.

A bright spring morning beamed down on the green old quadrangle of High Coombe. A fresh wind swept the Devonshire meads. The Atlantic, gleaming in sunshine, loomed on the sea-ridge, sending deep echoes up the wooded combs. The world—with the exception of High Coombe School—was awakening to a bright new day. High Coombe School wasn't! Any stranger, looking in when old Liggins ceased to ring the rising-bell, would not have wondered that High Coombe was called the "School for Slackers."

Such a stranger, indeed, might have wondered why they had a rising-bell at High Coombe at all. Nobody needed it.

Under the rule of Dr. Chetwode, the Venerable Beak, High Coombe had grown starker and slacker. It was not easy to say what the fellows were

there at all for, unless it was for a rest-cure.

They were rotten in class, and proud of it. They were rotten at games, and not ashamed of it. They found the holidays more strenuous than the term! After the "hols" they would come back to High Coombe like homing pigeons for sweet repose.

There was only one spot of bother in that happy existence. The Venerable Beak had gone. A stocky young man named McCann, with ginger in his hair and ginger in his nature, had taken his place. Jimmy McCann had been only a day at High Coombe, and already he had made his presence felt. But the School for Slackers had not realized yet how awful it was going to be. They had had disconcerting samples of their new headmaster, but had not yet learned that the rest of the goods was up to sample.

This was Jimmy McCann's first morning. He had turned out at daylight and gone down the bank of the Clieve, down the deep wooded combs, to bathe in the sea, regardless of the early season. He had come back with his face glowing brighter than his hair, bearing the rising-bell as he came up the combs.

He was surprised when he arrived in the school to find himself the only man awake there. Even old Liggins had gone back for another snooze,

after ringing the bell; he did not expect to see anybody about for some time to come.

On second thoughts, Jimmy McCann was not surprised. It had taken him only a few hours to grasp the state of affairs in the School for Slackers—a state of affairs that he was going to change very considerably.

Thus it was that the accustomed calm of High Coombe was broken that morning. At a fearfully early hour—only twenty minutes after the rising-bell had ceased to clang, in fact—footsteps and voices, opening and shutting doors, were heard in the extensive House.

Dormitory No. 3 slumbered on. It was a three-bed dormitory, like all senior dormitories at High Coombe. The three beds belonged to Bob Darrell, Teddy Seymour, and Aubrey Compton.

Bob was the only man in Dormitory No. 3—or in all the school for that matter—who ever turned out at rising-bell. But on this particular morning, Bob slept soundly, like the rest. He had been up very late the night before. That was the reason. But ringing doors, excited voices, tramping footsteps, awakened Bob, while Seymour and Compton slumbered happily on.

Bob sat up in bed and blinked in

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the bright sunshine that streamed in at the window.

"You were awake!" asked Bob. No answer. "I say, there's something up!"

Bob listened. Unaccustomed sounds were heard throughout the House. It was difficult to guess what was going on; unless, indeed, all the fellows were getting up at the same time. That seemed highly improbable—at High Coombe!

"Teddy, old bean! Wake up!"

Bob harked a pillow across at his elbow. Seymour woke up with a gasp. He lifted his head and stared sleepily at Bob.

"You see! Did you wake me? Can't you turn out as usual without spoiling another fellow's beauty sleep? Go and get woke!"

"Something's up!" said Bob.

"But! Go to sleep!"

"I wonder if the new Head's about!"

"The Blighter! Better him! He's not so much to turn out at this unearthly hour, I hope! The Venerable Head never turned out till ten," granted Seymour. "Shut up!"

"But I say—"

Autrey Compton's eyes opened. "For goodness' sake don't jaw!" he said. "I was just dreaming that that new man, McCann, was drowned in the Clewly! You've spoiled a beautiful dream!"

"I believe he's up!" said Bob. "More fool he! Anyway, I'm not following his rotten example!"

Firm footsteps came up the little stair that led to Dormitory No. 3, which was rather tucked away in a corner of the ancient building. They crossed the landing to the dorm-door.

A knock and the door opened.

Without looking round, Autrey Compton knew that it was Mr. McCann who stood in the doorway of Dormitory No. 3. He went on speaking as if in ignorance that the new Head was there.

"McCann would hardly be up yet! I admit that he's the sort of pushin', mainin', maddilin' ratter to be poking about at unearthly hours. A rank outsider in every way, if you like! Bah—"

"Are you awake in here?"

Mr. McCann's voice came cool, clear, incisive. He did not seem to have heard Compton's words.

"Yes, sir!" stammered Bob.

He blinked at the Head with a red face. He did not want Jimmy McCann to take him for a slacker, which he was not. It was rather unfortunate that he had slept late on Jimmy's first morning at High Coombe. At the same time, from a natural sense of loyalty, he did not want to dissociate himself from the others. He repeated the new Head, and already liked him. But the fellows were his friends and comrades. Under the new regime at High Coombe Bob seemed likely to have a hard row to hoe!

"It is long past rising-time!"

Mr. McCann's voice and manner were quite good-humoured, but there was quiet firmness in both. There was

an iron hand in the velvet glove, as Bob realized of his friends did not.

"Not really?" asked Compton. "Yes, really!" said Jimmy, in the same good-humoured tone. "Turn out, my boys! After this morning I shall expect the whole school to turn out promptly at rising-time!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Barrell.

He slipped out of bed, an athletic figure in his pyjamas. Teddy Seymour looked at him, and looked at Compton. The three were friends; but while Bob was the most energetic fellow at High Coombe, Autrey was the most determined slacker. Teddy was drawn sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other. He always waited for a lead.

COMPTON did not stir. A hard defiance was forming in his handsome face. Who was this stocky outsider who had barged into High Coombe, where he certainly wasn't wanted, and was spoiling everything and everybody?

Teddy hesitated.

"Come on, Teddy!" said Bob, anxious to avoid trouble.

And, as Compton did not speak, Seymour turned out.

Mr. McCann, in the doorway, fixed his blue-grey eyes on the dandy of High Coombe.

"Compton!"

"Yes!"

"Yes what?" asked Jimmy, in a dangerous tone.

"Yes, sir!" answered Compton unwillingly.

"That is better! Good manners cost nothing, Compton."

Autrey breathed hard. This rank outsider was setting up to teach him manners—him, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the School for Slackers!

"I have told you to turn out, my boy!" said Jimmy McCann, in quite a kind tone. "Now, let me see you do it!"

Jimmy McCann did not see Autrey do it. Autrey remained as motionless as a stone statue.

"Autrey, old chap!" whispered Bob.

"Come on, Autrey; all the fellows are going down," said Teddy Seymour.

Autrey Compton yawned.

Mr. McCann stepped into Dormitory No. 3. His manner was still very quiet, but his eyes were glinting.

"Are you getting up, Compton?" he asked.

Slacker and dandy Autrey Compton might be, but nobody had ever said that he was wanting in courage. And it needed some courage to face the glinting eyes of the new headmaster of High Coombe. But Autrey faced them without turning a hair.

"Perhaps I'd better explain, sir," he said, in a manner in which respect and disdain were beautifully mingled. "We're Fifth Form men in this House, and not used to bein' bawled about like fags. And when Dr. Chetwode was here—"

"Dr. Chetwode is no longer here, Compton! You are dealing with a new headmaster! Get up at once!"

"I generally come down in time for breakfast, sir," drawled Compton. "That's rather the rule!"

"It is a rule that will be changed, dating from this morning!" said Mr. McCann. "Now, Compton, I am waiting!"

Barrell and Seymour stood silent. Even already Autrey had bottled with the new Head, and had been whipped in quad before all the school. Now he was bent on resistance as before.

"I am waiting, Compton!" repeated Mr. McCann.

"Perhaps you'd rather wait somewhere else, sir," suggested Autrey. "You're rather disturbin' me here!"

Mr. McCann stepped to Compton's bedside. One jerk of his hand tore off the bedclothes. The next moment Compton was whipped out of bed and landed on his feet.

"Get along to the bathroom, Compton!"

Autrey panted with rage.

"I'm not goin'!"

"I think you are!" said Mr. McCann grimly.

His grasp fastened on the back of Autrey's neck like steel pincers. The dandy of High Coombe was propelled out of Dormitory No. 3 with a force that was irresistible. He wriggled and pulled as he went across the landing in that steel-like grip. He struggled as he went down the short staircase to the passage. But he went!

"My hat!" breathed Teddy Seymour, staring after them. "I say, that dashed ruffian—"

"He's a man!" said Bob.

"Will you let go, you rotten blighter!" came Autrey's frantic howl, as he was propelled along the passage through a staring, piping crowd.

Mr. McCann did not heed that extraordinary way of addressing a headmaster. Neither did he let go. He propelled Autrey along the passage to the big bathroom at the end, where a good many fellows were already gathered, unwillingly and rebelliously, and getting under the showers. A trait of Mr. McCann's starchy arm and Autrey spun in circles across the wet floor and sprawled among them, landing under a streaming shower in his beautiful silk pyjamas.

"Love no more time, Compton!" said Mr. McCann grimly. And he nodded to the staring crowd of High Coombe and walked away.

It seemed that early rising was going to be the rule, instead of the exception, at the School for Slackers!

Breakfast!

THE Blighter—everybody at High Coombe already called Jimmy McCann the Blighter—breakfasted in Hall with the school. The headmaster at breakfast was an innovation—one of many that were coming! The Venerable Head had never breakfasted in Hall, at least within living memory.

Nobody liked the idea—except, as usual, Jimmy himself. Jimmy, fresh and pink, came as a new pie, took

as a rascal, looked cheery and bright, and did not seem to have the remotest suspicion that most of the fellows there would have liked to get him with the eggs and run the knives down his collar.

Mr. Chard, the master of the Fifth, was master in Hall that morning. But he came late.

Jimmy, in his early rising campaign, had had plenty of work on hand, and had not crossed out the Books. Perhaps, having arrived so very recently to take control, he felt a slight diffidence in dealing with members of the old-established staff; men who had been fixtures at High Combs for years or so. Though, as a matter of fact, diffidence did not seem to be highly developed in Jimmy.

Anyhow, Chard was late, as usual. Slackers of the School for Slackers was almost as conspicuous in masters as in boys. Chard—big, aggressively-looking, head-raised—did not look like a slacker; and it was related that once upon a time, as a new master, he had been energetic. Perhaps the atmosphere of the place had soured him. Moreover, he liked to be liked; and the only way at High Combs for a master to be liked was to let the fellows do as they pleased. Popularly was as the breath of his nostrils, and he did not suspect that in Big Study he was nicknamed "Popularity Peter"—Peter being his first name.

Mr. McCann's keen glance swept over Hall when he came in; a single glance that took in everything. He did not yet know the numbers of the school, but he knew that a good many fellows had not yet turned up, and he saw that there was no master present.

Breaker at High Combs was a very go-as-you-please meal. Fellows strolled in whenever they liked and stood or sat anywhere. And sometimes a group of seniors would remain, talking over their coffee, long after the school bell had rung. Bells rang at High Combs at specified times; but many of the High Combsers heeded not.

Jimmy found only three men at the high table where the prefects sat. They were Corkean, Coffin, and Lacy, of the Sixth. Adjoining the high table, but at a lower level, sat the rest of the Sixth who were not prefects, among them Tredgar, the captain of the school, but not a prefect. Three long oak tables accommodated the Fifth, the Shell, and the Fourth. Forms below the Fourth had long since disappeared from High Combs.

Ferguson, who was pleased to call himself captain of the Fourth, was getting Fatty Pys with bread pellets when Mr. McCann came in. Fatty, finishing an egg hurriedly, hurled the shell across at Ferg, missed him, and caught Dunkin of the Fourth in the eye, at which there was a ripple of laughter. Dunkin, the duffer of the Form—usually called the Donkey—pumped and knocked over his teacup, swearing tea right and left.

The ripple of laughter grew into

a roar. Three prefects sitting at the high table made no difference to the lags, who would have carried on even if Mr. Chard had walked in at that moment. They did not even see Jimmy McCann enter, being quite uninterested in Jimmy McCann.

But they became swiftly aware of his presence. He passed a second in passing the lag table.

"No more of that, please!" said Mr. McCann, in his quiet voice, which, quiet as it was, seemed to have a cutting edge like a razor. And he walked on, leaving silence behind him.

"Cheeky hargoes!" barked Fergusson, but not till Mr. McCann had sat down at the top table and could not possibly hear.

Ferg gave up pelting across the table. It was rather thick for this hargoes to butt in and spoil the fun. But Ferg was so fed, and he knew that this particular hargoes was not to be trifled with. Had he not seen, only the previous day, his lag master, Compton, whipped on his beautiful lags by this unconscionable hargoes?

Mr. McCann gave his prefects a cheery good-morning, to which they made inarticulate replies, regarding him somewhat as uneasy Poms might have regarded a strange bulldog.

"And where are the others?" asked Mr. McCann genially.

Nobody wanted to answer him. But Corkean, as head prefect, felt constrained to do so.

"Not here yet, sir."

"No!" said Jimmy McCann. He glanced at his watch. "Hall will be cleared in twenty minutes. Argoos

who has not breakfasted by then will, I fear, have an unusually keen appetite for his dinner."

The three prefects looked at one another as Jimmy calmly cracked an egg. Corkean rose quietly, and slipped out of Hall. If this hargoes—this blighter—this unspeakable nobody from nowhere—was going to wash out breaker for the men who did not turn up on time, a tip to that effect would be useful to fellows hunting about the passages and the stairs.

Mr. McCann's voice, quiet as it was, had carrying power; it was heard along the senior tables. Fifth Form men looked at one another. Bob Barrell cast an uneasy glance towards the door. He had dragged Teddy Seymour in with him, but Aubrey Compton had declined to be dragged. Aubrey had had some taste of McCann's quality, but it seemed to be his idea to content every inch all along the line.

Fellows came in, in twos and threes and in bunches, after Corkean had passed on the tip. But Compton was not among them.

Mr. Chard appeared at last. He rolled into Hall—big, ruddy, stout. Perhaps he was surprised by the unusual number of fellows already present and by the very unusual orderliness that prevailed. He glanced round, as if puzzled. Then, as his eyes fell on Mr. McCann, he gave a start, almost a jump. Chard had rather bulging eyes of a light blue, and they bulged more than ever at that unexpected sight, seeming almost to pop out of his head.

Mr. McCann rose and bowed to him.



The Fighting Head!

If he had anything to say about punctuality, he reserved it for a more fitting moment. Chard, rolling up Hall, breathed heavily like a grampus. Teddy Seymour winked at Bob, and Foverill of the Fifth grinned. Everybody knew that Chard had expected to step into the shoes of the Venerable Beak when he went, and loathed the newcomer who had barged into the coveted headmastership.

Chard's loud voice had been heard far beyond the walls of the Common-room, saying what he thought of the governors for their extraordinary selection of this unknown young man. Plenty of fellows expected trouble, and Chard looked now as if he was going to start the trouble right away. "Mr. McCann! Good-morning, sir!" said Chard, in his throaty, throaty voice. "I did not expect to see you here, sir!"

"A pleasant surprise, I hope!" said Jimmy.

"I regret, sir," said Chard, very red in the face, "that, being Master to Hall, I am a few minutes late. I should not have thought, sir, that you would consider it necessary to take my place on account, sir, of these few minutes."

"Not at all, Mr. Chard," said the new Head pleasantly. "I am here because it is my intention to make a rule of breakfasting with the school."

Chard, stout and majestic, looked rather like a Spanish galleon taken stock by a sudden gale. He gazed at Jimmy McCann.

"Pray sit down, sir!" said Mr. McCann.

Chard breathed very hard. "With your permission, sir, I will sit with my Form," he said, with overwhelming dignity, and he rolled to the Fifth Form table and sat down.

Fellows looked at McCann to see how he would take this. He took it with unshaken serenity, proceeding to denish his eggs and toast with the excellent appetite he had derived from an early bath.

Chard, who had taken so exercise that morning, sat down to eggs and rashers and kidneys. Every fellow at the Fifth Form table signified, in one way or another, his gratification at the presence of Mr. Chard. Not that they derived any great satisfaction from seeing Mr. Chard consume vast quantities of eggs, bacon, and kidneys. But it was clear that he was the Blighter's enemy, and any enemy of the Blighter was a man they delighted to honour.

In the struggle that was coming between the New Blooms and the School for Blathers, it was something for the slackers to have the senior member of the staff on their side. Some of them even indulged a wild hope that, somehow or other, Popularity Peter might succeed in ousting the Blighter and getting into the headmastership—a prospect that was positively dazzling to fellows who should only that their happy, busy life should not be rudely disturbed.

The House father, Rogers, was in attendance on Mr. McCann, eyeing

him very quietly from time to time. Mr. McCann's eye was on the clock. Everybody had come in now except Compton of the Fifth. That handsome and elegant youth was seen to glance in, exchange a word or two with fellows near the door, and then saunter away, his hands in his pockets. He intended, it seemed, to come in to breakfast later—when he liked!

"The ass!" murmured Bob Darrell.

Teddy Seymour grinned.

"All right for old Comp," he said.

"Chard's here and the Blighter can't clear Hall while a Beak's loading."

Bob did not feel so sure of that.

PROMPT to time, Jimmy McCann rose. Everybody else rose, except Mr. Chard, who seemed unaware that the new Head was speaking. Chard rather gabbled his food, and perhaps the noise prevented him from hearing Jimmy. But even the obstinate master of the Fifth had to take note when the fellows began to stream out of Hall, many of the latecomers with their meal unfinished. Then Chard rose, in a very bad temper. A smear of egg-yolk at the corner of his large mouth rather spoiled his impressive effect.

"Mr. McCann, sir!" trumpeted Chard.

"What is it, Mr. Chard?"

"Some of the boys have not yet finished their breakfast, sir!"

"No doubt they will be earlier to-morrow, Mr. Chard."

"I have not yet finished my breakfast, sir!" said Mr. Chard, with tremendous dignity and the accent on the "my."

"I have no desire to interrupt you, sir!" said Jimmy. "Pray continue as long as you desire."

Mr. Chard almost choked.

"One boy of my Form, sir, Compton, has not yet come in at all!" he said.

"I am aware of it, Mr. Chard."

"Am I to understand, sir, that this boy of my Form is to have no breakfast this morning?"

"Precisely, sir!" rapped the new Head.

Mr. Chard fell, rather than sat, in his chair. Hall was cleared, leaving the Fifth Form master and the servants to themselves—some of the latter winking at one another behind Mr. Chard's broad back. Jimmy McCann snatched hastily out of Hall and in the doorway encountered Aubrey Compton just coming in.

"Compton?" rapped the new Head.

Aubrey glanced round at him as definitely as he dared.

"Yes, sir."

"Breakfast is over."

"I've not had mine, sir!"

"Quite so! You are not to enter Hall, Compton."

Aubrey set his lips. He looked in and out Mr. Chard's eyes and drew support and encouragement therefrom.

"Am I to have no breakfast, sir?" he asked, addressing his Form-master.

Mr. Chard had no time to reply. The real incidence of appealing to a Form-master in his, the head-

master's, presence was rather too much for Jimmy McCann.

For the third time since he had been at High Cocotte he laid an iron hand on the steady of the Fifth.

"Come with me, Compton!" he said.

"I shall take you to your Form-room and you will remain there till class-time!"

"Mr. Chard!" shouted Compton, in reckless rage.

Chard trumpeted at once.

"Mr. McCann! I protest—this boy, in my Form, has not breakfasted. I repeat, sir, that I protest!"

"Very good, sir!" said Mr. McCann. "Your protest is duly noted. Now, Compton, come with me!"

Compton went, wriggling, red with rage.

"Shame!" shouted a dozen voices after the Head as he went.

Mr. McCann glanced round.

"Who spoke?" he asked.

Silence! The silence remained unbroken after that, while Compton was marched off to the Fifth Form Room. But the fellows were not silent when they went out into the quad. They talked with angry indignation.

"The blighter!"

"The rotter!"

"The bully!"

"He's a man, anyhow!" said Bob Darrell.

The words had no sooner left his lips when the enraged seniors found comfort and consolation in asking him and ducking his head into the fountain in the quad.

They would rather have ducked Jimmy McCann's. But it was some comfort to duck Bob's for speaking a word in his favour, and they ducked it very, very thoroughly.

Red-hot Beak!

TEDDY SEYMOUR gave a sigh of contentment.

"Thank goodness," he said, "for a rest!"

It was very peaceful in the Fifth Form Room. Peace, perfect peace, reigned there, very soothing to fellows whose nerves had been jangled by the explosive new headmaster.

Aubrey Compton, certainly, did not look peaceful. His handsome face was dark and bitter. Hands had been laid on Aubrey—and had hurt! He was a slacker, but so weakling, and he had been quite surprised by the way he had grompled-up in McCann's steady grip. Deep down in his heart, perhaps, there was some glimmering of respect for a man who was so strong, and so thoroughly so, and grimly resolute. But that made no difference to his fierce hatred of the man who had mastered him. Aubrey was not beaten yet.

Odious enough, the fellow who had no energy for football found plenty of energy and determination for a feud with a man who was down at slacks. In his letter hostility to the new Head there was no sign of slackness. He was prepared to put as much strenuousness into that battle as the best footballer could have put into a Soccer match.

But the rest of the Form, as usual, had. Popularity Peter was not the

man to make his Form work. The Fifth was supposed to be doing Lily. There was more opposition than Lily about it. Chard, from long habit, nodded off in second school. His enormous breakfast made that little nap almost a necessity to him, and under the rule of the Venerable Beak, his nap had never once been interrupted.

Having seen papers passed round the Form, and the Fifth make a pretence of giving them some attention, Mr. Chard settled down to pleasant repose.

His ways were the ways of High Coombe. If a man in the Fifth wanted to work, Chard helped him, without undue coercion. If a man did not want to work, Chard left him alone. He would have said that he trusted his boys, and they trusted him!

Even Chard, however, might have stared a little at the papers at the end of such a class if he had looked at them. But they had a wonderful system in the Fifth Form at High Coombe, established from time immemorial. Marks were given by the head boy of the Form. Being a sportsman, he handed them out, when he collected the papers, with generous impartiality. There was all the easier because he did not even look at the papers before he marked them.

Chard, never looking under the surface, and perhaps not caring to do so, was satisfied with the general level of attainments in his Form. Exams, it was true, brought some surprise. But most of the Fifth were so keen on a remove. The very few High Coombes who wanted to get on passed through the happy Fifth like swift fishes through a calm lagoon.

It was very pleasant in the well-warmed Fifth Form Room. Outside, the Blighter might rage, but within all was calm and contentment. The Blighter could not worry them there.

But could he not?

In their worst forebodings, since McCann had blown in like a hurricane on High Coombe, the happy Fifth had never anticipated seeing him in their Form-room. Not a man had ever seen the Venerable Beak there.

Chard, breathing stertorously, was asleep. Compton, scowling, was thinking of some scheme for getting his own back on the Blighter. Toddy Seymour, leaning back in luxurious ease, was reading a novel. Percival May and Burke and Raymond were talking football, with as much keenness as if they were talking croquet. Carter was drawing a caricature of Mr. McCann on the blackboard, watched by a dozen fellows lounging on the desks.

Bob Darrell was working at his Latin paper—almost the only fellow who was. But he worked in rather a desultory fashion. He hated to spend a cent or a nap in the eyes of his fellows. And he was worried about Compton. He was loyal to his friend, and he felt uneasy at the savage glint in Aubrey's eyes, and the glitter out of his lips. He rather

"Down with the Blighter!"—the Fifth are a riot, and from impetuosity, determination, and other qualities Mr. McCann appeared the headlong in the passage.



wished that old Aubrey would be as slack in leads as he was in football.

Suddenly the door opened, and Mr. McCann walked in.

There was a gasp from the whole Fifth. McCann had been with the Sixth, and they had never dreamed of seeing him in the Fifth. But here he was, cool, and quiet, and keen. Was it possible that this indescribable outsider was going to interfere with a Form-master in the execution of his duty?

As the Form-master was, at that moment, slumbering, such interference might have been considered as just. But the Fifth did not view it in that light.

They breathed hard and deep. Even Bob Darrell felt a wave of resentment. Schoolboy nature is conservative—a fellow expects things to go on happening as they always have happened.

Chard, unhappily, did not hear the new head, and slumbered on. Carter stopped chalking on the blackboard and stared at McCann, petrified. Carter was clever at drawing, and he had quite a good picture of the Blighter there. He gazed at McCann open-mouthed.

THE Blighter walked up to the blackboard, and Carter's heart almost missed a beat. But McCann's expression was quite genial as he looked at the drawing.

"Very well done," he said—"very well indeed! You can draw, my boy."

Carter stammered helplessly.

"But is this a drawing lesson?" asked Mr. McCann, pleasantly.

"N-no, sir," gasped Carter.

"You have not been placed in

charge of the class by your Form-master?"

"N-no, sir."

"You are not giving them instruction in drawing?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then may I inquire what you are doing?" asked Mr. McCann, in the same pleasant tone.

Carter could only stammer helplessly. The Fifth looked on. Chard, accustomed to be lulled by the murmur of voices, did not awake.

"Sarcastic lead!" breathed Compton.

The Fifth Formers wondered whether McCann saw Chard there at all. He did not seem to take note of him.

"What is this lesson?" asked Mr. McCann, addressing Bob Darrell.

"Lily, sir."

"Then I fear, Carter, that you are wasting time," said Mr. McCann.

"You will take the duster and wipe the blackboard clean, Carter, and go back to your place."

Only too happy to escape so cheaply, Carter did as he was told. It seemed that the Blighter had not recognized his own portrait in the chalk drawing—unless he was making allowances for the state of affairs at High Coombe, and making things as easy as he could. Anyhow, the subject dropped on the spot. A Latin dictionary also dropped—Toddy Seymour dropping it so heavily as he could to wake Mr. Chard.

Unfortunately, Chard was used to drawing on, in spite of dropping books. He did not stir. Only a faint sound came from him—it was a snore!

There was breathless, but suppressed, excitement in the Fifth. It really was an extraordinary scene, for the head to be standing before the

The Fighting Heels!

class while the Form-master slumbered at his desk, indisposed of his presence. Mr. McCann did not once glance at him, though he must have heard that snore.

"Darrell!"

"You, sir!"

"You may collect the papers and bring them to me."

Bob coloured. What an earth was McCann going to think of those papers on Titus Livius? His own paper, he knew, was the best, but he did not feel proud of it. Some of the others had not even been touched, though the hour was close on its end. Blank dismay sat on the faces of the Fifth. If this was the way the Blighter was going to work, life was not going to be worth living in the Fifth Form at High Combe.

"Time's not yet up, sir," said Bob, feebly.

"Quite so! But I desire to see the papers," said Mr. McCann. "Collect them at once, Darrell."

Bob looked round helplessly at his friends.

"Don't!" said Aubrey Compton, in a whisper that was intended to reach the Blighter's ear, and did reach it.

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Bob.

"I am waiting, Darrell!" said Mr. McCann, apparently deaf.

Bob hated to be in opposition to Jimmy McCann. But, right or wrong, he felt that he had to stand by his friends and comrades. After all, who knows the dilemma was this ginger-headed blighter to harge in and break up immemorial traditions?

"If you please, sir, it's our custom to mark our own papers," said Bob. "We've always done so since any man here was in the Fifth."

There was a murmur of approval, old Bob was standing up to this meddling rascal! Perhaps ducking his head had done him good!

"I see!" said Mr. McCann.

"Which boy's duty is it to mark the papers in this lesson?"

"Mine, sir!" said Compton.

In point of fact, it was Burke's, though no one-going were they in the School for Slackers that one fellow would pass the duty on to another, unasked by Mr. Chard. It mattered little enough, anyway, as the marks given equated simply nothing. If Aubrey was keen to take the lead in dealing with the Blighter, nobody wanted to stop him.

"Very well, Compton," he said.

"Collect the papers."

Aubrey hesitated a few moments, to let Mr. McCann see that he was considering whether to obey or not. Then he collected the papers. He took them to Mr. Chard's desk.

"Bring them to me, Compton!" said Mr. McCann.

"I usually mark them at my Form-master's desk, sir."

"Bring them to me."

But Compton's game was to get Mr. Chard into the scuffle, which he effected easily enough by shoving him, and waking him up.

Mr. Chard started, and stood up and rubbed his eyes. He almost fell down again at the sight of Mr.

McCann. Crimson overspread his plump face.

"You—you—I—I—" stammered the Fifth Form master. "I—I was—"

He was quite overcome, and broke off, gasping.

"Pray continue your repass, sir, if you so desire," said Mr. McCann, in so courteous a tone that it was difficult to spot the sarcasm in it. "I have no wish to disturb you."

"I—I—I fear I—I modified off for a—a moment," gurgled the unhappy master of the Fifth.

"I fear that you did, sir, but it is a matter of little moment, as I am at leisure to attend to your Form!" said Mr. McCann in the same courteous tone. "Possibly, however, you would prefer to continue your repass elsewhere."

Mr. Chard did so prefer! At that moment he would have been glad had the solid oak floor of the Fifth Form Room opened and let him drop through, out of sight.

As the oak floor did not oblige him, Mr. Chard edged towards the door.

"It—is it your wish—your intention—to take my Form out of my hands, sir—" It was a feeble attempt at bluster.

"Exactly!"

"Then, sir," said Mr. Chard, mustering all the dignity that was possible in the painful circumstances, "I will retire, sir."

Which he promptly did!

MR. McCANN stepped to the vacated desk, on which Compton had laid the little pile of papers. Aubrey gave the Form a glance, and read encouragement in all faces. He snatched up a pile from under Mr. McCann's nose.

"Compton!" ejaculated Mr. McCann.

Aubrey's heart beat fast. But he was cool as ice and steady as steel. It was the top-of-his nose!

"Darrell's told you that we mark our papers ourselves, sir!" he said. "It's for our Form-master to change the rule. Dr. Clockwork never interfered."

Jimmy's eyes glinted.

"I will pass over your insolence, Compton, if you hand me those papers at once!" he said quietly.

He made a step towards Compton. Aubrey made a swift backward jump. A second more and the whole stack of papers was flung on the Form-room floor.

There was a gasp from the Fifth. Papers flung up, and there was a roar in the chimney. Mr. McCann stood as if transfixed. Whatever he had expected at the School for Slackers, he had not expected this! It was rank rebellion—red-hot rebellion!

For a moment a pin might have been heard to fall in the Fifth Form Room. The face of Jimmy McCann hardened till it seemed to be made of iron. All the Fifth were on their feet, gazing at him breathlessly. He spoke after what seemed a long silence, brief as it was.

"You will be begged for that

action, Compton! Go to my study at once."

Compton did not stir. Jimmy McCann's hand came to grasp him. Twice that day Aubrey had been searched along to a grip of force—once to the bath-room, once to the Form-room. He knew what that grip was like. He bounded back.

"Teddy! Bob!" he shouted. "Back up, you fellows! Back up!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. McCann.

Compton jumped in among the desks. McCann was after him like a shot, grasping his collar. Aubrey clung to a desk with one hand, to Bob Darrell with the other. Bob was dragged almost over.

A wrench of the strongest arm at High Combe, and Compton was torn from his hold. Teddy Seymour made a jump after him, grasped him, and dragged at him. That settled it for Bob. He jumped after Teddy, and also held on to Compton. And that settled it for the rest of the Fifth. The whole Form rushed out of their places.

In an instant, Mr. McCann was surrounded by shouting, snuffling, excited Fifth Form men. They swarmed round him. Aubrey Compton was dragged from his grasp, and he was pushed, shoved, tripped, hustled to the Form-room door. Compton, gasping on the floor, picked himself up. He charged at the steady figure in the doorway, and Mr. McCann went headlong into the passage.

Crash!

There was a roar in the Fifth Form Room. Some fellow threw an inkpot, another a dictionary. Then missiles rained out of the doorway at the Blighter. Bob Darrell slammed the door.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped.

"Oh crumbs!" panted Seymour.

Aubrey Compton's eyes glittered.

"We've not paid to that rascal!" he said, between his teeth. "That'll teach him he can't feel about with the Fifth! He'll steer clear of us after this. And if he doesn't—well, we'll jolly well give him another dose of the same medicine! We're not going to stand any of his old lark! You fellows agree?"

"Down with the Blighter!" roared all the Fifth.

The rear school in every Form-room at High Combe, and made the Sixth, the Sixth, and the Fourth start and stare at one another, wondering what was up.

When the bell rang for break, Bob opened the Form-room door. Mr. McCann was no longer to be seen in the corridor. The Fifth Form streamed out, jubilant and victorious. The Blighter was gone—they had got paid by him, as Aubrey declared! They had beaten the Blighter at the last real trial of strength.

But had they? Bob Darrell, at least, doubted!

And so Mr. McCann is depicted after all!—but only for the above reason, and there are many others relating to the history of the Fifth in North Notingham's splendid story!