

The MODERN BOY

WEEK ENDING 30TH MARCH 1935
MID-OCEAN HALT EVERY SATURDAY

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MID-OCEAN HALT
for AIR-LINERS!

The Wake-'Em-Up Head of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS issues his challenge—"Knuckle Under—or GET OUT!"

REBELS of the FIFTH!

By

Charles Hamilton

The Order of the East!

"S HUT up, Darrell!" roared a down Fifth Form fellow in the quadrangle at High Coombe.

"But I say—" persisted Bob Darrell.

"Shut up, Bob!" urged Teddy Seymour.

Bob Darrell grunted and shut up. He seemed to be the only fellow in the Fifth Form at High Coombe School who had kept his head that morning. But it was no use talking sense to the excited Fifth. Aubrey Compton, who generally had the coolest head in the Fifth, was the most excited of the whole crowd now, and the Fifth followed Aubrey's lead as one man.

Fags of the Fourth, juniors of the Shell, stared of the Fifth Form men in wonder. Fergusons of the Fourth, Compton's fag, gazed at his big master and almost rubbed his eyes. He hardly knew Compton now.

Generally, in break, the dandy of the Fifth walked in quad, slim and handsome and elegant, looking as if he found it almost too much trouble to live. A spot of mud on his shoes, a spot of grease on his waistcoat, were to Aubrey matters of the deepest import.

Now his collar was crumpled and grabby, his necktie torn out, and his waistcoat minus a button—yet Aubrey did not seem even to notice it! Earthquakes and tornadoes could not have been more surprising than that.

All High Coombe knew that something bad happened in the Fifth Form Room that morning—something extraordinary—something dramatic! Which was astonishing in itself, for it was seldom that anything happened at High Coombe to disturb the even tenor of its way.

Under the rule of the Venerable Beck, High Coombe had dressed in undisturbed. But the Venerable Beck—the former Head—was gone,



"Blasted!" gasped Aubrey Compton, as, barging his way through the panting crowd, he read the astonishing notice pinned to the board—
"A. Compton, Fifth Form, is expelled from High Coombe."

and a stocky young man named Jimmy McCann had dropped into his place rather like a bombshell.

He had been specially selected by the Governors to ginger-up the School for Slackers, and the school didn't like him or his methods. They had nicknamed him the "Blighter."

Bob Darrell had wondered whether Jimmy McCann would wake up High Coombe. Judging by the looks of the Fifth, he had woken up at least that Form.

Tredgar of the Sixth, captain of High Coombe, came out of the ancient, ivyed bane. With him came Corkran, head prefect. They looked at Aubrey, ugly for the first time in the history of the school for Slackers. Even as a fag, in his far-off days in the Fourth, Aubrey had been like a new pin. Now he looked as if he had been in a dog-fight. Even the knees of his trousers bagged.

When Aubrey Compton's transgressions ceased to be a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, it was evident that an epoch had arrived in the history of the school.

"For the love o' Mike," said Tred, "what's happened?"

"McCann's happened," said Bob Darrell. "And—"

"Shut up, Darrell!" booted the Fifth.

Bob, once the most popular fellow

in his Form, seemed to be at a discount now. It was said of old that wisdom creeps out in the streets and no man regards it. Thus it was at High Coombe. The notorious Fifth were in no mood for Bob's cool common sense.

"We've put paid to the Blighter!" grinned Aubrey Compton. "We've tipped the McCann man where he gets off. And he's get off!"

Tred whistled. That was good news of well founded. But much as he disliked the new ruga, Tred could not help feeling that putting paid to Jimmy McCann was a tough proposition.

"But how?" asked Corkran. "We heard a fearful row going on in the Fifth. But what—

"We've booted him out of our Form-room!" said Compton coolly. "He barged in, and Chard cleared out—and we put the Blighter out on his giddy neck! And that's that!"

"Boo-booted him out!" stammered Tredgar.

"Yes, and we'd do it again!" declared Carter.

"We shan't have to do it again!" said Aubrey Compton. "I tell you, the Blighter McCann knows where he has to get off!"

"But—but you can't boot a headmaster!" babbled Corkran.

"Headmaster!" snarled Aubrey. "A boulder from nowhere, in a

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bunker hat and thick boots! A man who doesn't know how to wear a tie! A man who barges into a Form-room and turns out the Book it belongs to, there—"

"Did he turn Chard out?"

"Well, Chard was takin' a nap when he barged in. You know old Chard naps every mornin' after breakker. And why shouldn't he in his own Form-room?" Anyways, Chard closed, and McGann took us in hand. And we," added Aubrey, with deep satisfaction, "took McGann in hand. He won't barge into our Form-rooms again to a humpy!"

"Well, he's headmaster——"

"Hats!"

"I keep on telling these fatheads that it won't wash!" Bob Durrell cut in again. "McGann's headmaster, and he's a man, see?"

"You had a hand in chargin' him out, old boy!" chuckled Teddy Seymour. "You're as deep in the mud as we are at the mire!"

Bob shivered uncomfortably. His position was not agreeable. He was about the only fellow at the School for Slackers who was not a slackner, and he had backed up his friends against the new Head against his own convictions. Sitting on the fence was not his way; yet he hardly knew on which side of the fence to come down.

"Well, look here," he said, "do let a fellow speak! We've played the game——"

"Shut up, Durrell!"

"I tell you we've played the godly part," roared Bob, "and the best thing we can do is to tell McGann we're sorry, and get him to start slack—if he will!"

"What's sorry?" demanded Compton. "The act for one! And McGann said I was to be flogged for checking the Form papers into the fire instead of handing them over to him. Am I going to be flogged?"

"Flogged!" gasped Corkran. "A Fifth Form senior flogged! McGann's mad!"

"I dare say he was a prison governor or something before he came here," remarked Peacock. "He looks it! He's not goin' to turn High Coombe into a second edition of Dartmoor!"

"No fear!"

"Our Head will stand by us," said Compton. "Chard's as much up against the brutes as we are. Everybody knows that Chard ought to have been made Head when Dr. Chetwode left. We've got Chard on our side!"

"Chard will never see you flogged, old boy!" said Tredegar. "By Jove, the man wants tellin' where to stop! I can jolly well tell you all the Sixth will be on your side!"

"Flogged? My lat!"

"Where's the Blighter now?" asked Corkran.

"Knew out of sight!" snorted Compton. "Sorry he came to High Coombe by this time, I dare say!"

Fatty Pye, of the Fourth Form, came scuttling suddenly out of the

House. Fairly seldom ran, but now he was sprouting as if for the school hundred yards. His plump face was red with excitement. He raced across to the group of seniors, so obviously with news that Compton & Co. turned their attention on him. They guessed that it was news about Mr. McCann. Fatty arrived in such a hurry that when he stopped he gurgled for breath, and stood spluttering wildly.

"You spittin'st young ass!" said Tredegar. "What's on?"

"The Head!" gasped Pye.

"Do you mean the Blighter?" snarled Aubrey. Compton, it seemed, did not choose to admit that Mr. McCann was no headmaster at all.

"Oh, Jes! I say!" Pye gurgled again. "I say, I just saw him stickin' a noisie on the board!"

"What about that, you young ass?" snarled Aubrey. "Who cares what notices the fellow sticks on the board?"

"It's about you!" gasped Pye.

Bob Durrell's face became anxious. He grasped the bag by the shoulder and shook him.

"Cough it up, quick!" he snapped. "What about Compton?"

"He's a—s—s—s—s—s—s—" stammered Fatty Pye—"he's a—s—s—s—s—s—s—"

"Sashed!" yelled the whole crowd.

"Sashed!" repeated Aubrey dazedly.

"He'd never dare—he'd never——"

He broke off. For a moment there was deep silence on the crowd as noisy a minute ago. Then there was a pull-mill rush to the House. Already a crowd was gathering round the notice-board, commencing breathlessly on what was posted there. Aubrey shoved his way roughly through. His friends followed him.

On a notice pinned to the board, written in James McGann's clear, steady hand, all eyes were concentrated. It was brief. But it was very much to the point.

"A. Compton, Fifth Form, is expelled from High Coombe."

Popularity Peter!

M. CHARD, master of the Fifth Form, passed his rooms under the clock-tower with a frowning brow. He was in a state of wrath and indignation, mingled with perplexity. Big, aggressive, domineering, Chard had run High Coombe for years under the terrible rule of the Honourable Head, and why the governors had not selected him to succeed the old Head was an intriguing mystery to Chard.

What men could have been fitted for the post? Everybody knew that while Dr. Chetwode was Master Head it was Chard who ran the show. He was popular in the school. He counted popularity and was nickname Popular Peter.

With Chard as Head, everything would have gone on in the old way, the comfortable old way—the stark old way, everybody happy and satisfied and lay and getting nowhere. But who wanted to get nowhere, if you came to that? Nobody at High Coombe.

Chard could hardly have said what he thought of that young nut McCann. Certainly he could not have put it in polite language. A man who easily walked into the Form-rooms to see how things were going on there and took a hand personally if things were not going to his satisfaction! A man who had no respect whatever for tradition! A man who had whipped Compton of the Fifth before he had been an hour in the school. A man strong as a horse, used as ice, relentless.

Chard every now and then approached his windows on the quad and looked out at the fellows there. He had the best masters' rooms at High Coombe, under the clock-tower, with tall old windows on the ancient quadrangle, and ivy clustering over them. Everything at High Coombe was old, venerable, traditional—everything except Jimmy McGann!

Through the windows, open to the spring sunshine, Chard heard the excited voices in the quad. He knew what had happened in his Form-room after he had left it, swelling with angry dignity. He hoped, but he could not believe, that it would be a lesson to McCann to stop at the outset of his reforming career.

Why could not the man leave well alone? Chard did not ask himself why the man could not leave ill alone! Already, in the brief space that had elapsed since his arrival, the School for Slackers had been turned into something resembling a buzzing nest of hornets.

"Outagons!" said Chard again and again, as he paced. "A break with every tradition—outagons!"

A bell rang. It was the bell for third school. Break was over. Usually when break was over fellows scattered away to the Form-rooms in no great hurry to arrive there. Especially in the Fifth, Chard's Form, did they take matters easy.

Chard himself took matters easy. He would roll in a quarter of an hour late. But he was never the latest raver. Fellows who numbered in half through the lesson easily excused themselves to Popularity Peter. And fellows who cut a whole school seldom or never found themselves brought to book.

If Chard ever gave out lines it was very seldom indeed that he remembered to ask for them to be shown up. It would have endangered his popularity. Also it would have given him trouble. He did not like trouble. In the cosy-going atmosphere of High Coombe, Chard had wasted fat and long.

But the usual manners and customs of High Coombe seemed to have been knocked sky-high today. Soon after the bell ceased to ring there was a rush of feet in the quadrangle. Fellows did not seem to be hunting for the House and the Form-rooms. The whole Fifth came scuttling nervous to Chard's rooms.

Chard, from his window, watched them coming tremulously. What had happened now? What new outrage had been perpetrated by that unrepentant person, McCann? Chard had been considering whether to go

to be forgotten all off for third school. McCann had chosen to take matters out of his hands there.

Chard had considered the idea of returning into his master's dignity, like a tortoise into its shell, and leaving it to the new Head to make the next move. Anyhow, he had not yet given up his Form. Now his Form was coming to him, helter-skelter across the quadrangle.

Chard's door stood wide. He encouraged Fifth Form boys to saunter into his quarters for a talk now and then. He would feed them hand-generously. Chard, like all the High Coombes staff, had a good salary. He had also private means. Everything and nearly everybody at High Coombes was wealthy.

Sometimes fellows did drop in, especially for the food, but chiefly to keep Popularity Peter in good humour. Compton had even helped himself, once, to Chard's cigarettes, and Popularity Peter had only wagged a warning finger at him. Happy days—now apparently gone for ever, under the rule of the abominable McCann!

Tramping of feet woke the echoes of Chard's room. There was a thumping on his study door, and it burst open, to reveal an excited mob of the Fifth. Chard felt a pang. Excitement in the Fifth was a new thing—an unpleasant thing. Where was the old, elegant, easy grace of High Coombes? Nowhere to be seen at the moment.

"My boy!" said Chard, in his massive, rolling voice, not unlike the trumpeting of an elephant in the jungle.

"Mr. Chard!" panted Teddy Sycamore.

There was a buzz, or rather a roar, from the fellows behind.

"Calm yourselves, my dear boys!" said Chard, with a touch of rebuke.

"What is the reason?"

"That blighter McCann!" shouted Avery Compton.

This was too much even for Mr. Chard.

"Compton! You forgot yourself!" he said with dignity. "In my presence, you will speak of your new headmaster with respect."

"He's sacked me!" yelled Avery.

Chard almost staggered.

"He has—what? What? Compton!"

Darrell! Speak! What has happened?"

"There's a notice on the board—"

"In that notice's list—"

"It says—"

"Compton's sacked!"

"Expelled!"

"The blighter!"

"The shocky cad!"

Nearly all the Fifth were speaking at once. Chard's old oak-panelled rooms had never rung to such thunderous echoes. The din was deafening.

Chard waved fat hands for silence. He was almost dizzy at the noise. He realized his awful seriousness. Had the man really started with sackings? It was incredible—unimaginable! But if it was true—Chard felt a crashing sense of helplessness. The man was Head! He had the power. If he was brutal enough, tyrannical enough, rank outsider enough to use it, it was in his hands! But could it be true?

"Silence! Silence!" trumpeted Chard. "Order! Silence! Darrell, speak! The others keep silent! Darrell, what has happened?"

THE FIFTH was not silence, but there was a subsiding of the roar as Bob answered his Form-master. Bob's face was blank with dismay. He had thought a lot of the new Head; had thought of backing him up—if bringing the other fellows round to back him up. And the man had sacked his friend. At that moment Bob Darrell heard Jimmy McCann.

"It's true, sir! It's on the board, signed by the Head! Compton's sacked from High Coombes, sir! I know we played the goat in the Form-room, but it's too thick! You won't let him go, sir!"

It was awful for Chard. These boys loved and respected him—at least, he was sure they did. They

believed his power to be greater than it was. Popularity Peter was not the man to let them think it was smaller than it was! They believed that he could save Compton from this awful fate! He couldn't believe that unless McCann chose. Villain, you, that was the word. Chard had been thinking to his mind for a word really expressive of McCann and his work. He had found it!

"You won't let him go, sir—raise the Fifth."

"Mr. Chard!" panted Avery. "You can't—you won't—stand by and see a man in poor Form turned out by that blackguard."

"I can scarcely believe—" faltered Mr. Chard.

"It's true, sir!" said Bob.

"I—I—I must think!" said Mr. Chard. "This—this cannot be! Something shall be done!"

"Dress, sir!" shouted the Fifth. They took this as a promise and an undertaking. Chard did not mean it exactly like that. He only meant, and could only mean, that he would do his best to get that awful sentence rescinded.

But the relief, the satisfaction, of the Fifth, their faith in him and his powers, influenced him. A doubtful word now meant stemming the tide of popularity. And, after all, he was senior master—the oldest member of the staff, and not without influence even with the governors themselves.

Would that shocky young man resist him—and not only him, but the feeling of the whole school, masters and boys alike? Could he stand out against such a hurricane of resentment, scorn, indignation? Surely not! Popularity Peter was carried away by his own feelings and those around him. He rose to the occasion. His rather protruding eyes glistened.



"Compton!" His hand raised for another smash at the boy's head, Avery stared round bitterly at Mr. McCann.

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"We have got'd stand by us, sir?"

"You're a sportman, sir!"

"If only you were Head, sir!"

It was all sweet as honey to Chard. No wonder he forgot, for a moment, the considerations of prudence.

"My boys, rely on me! This—this must be some mistake—at least, a very hasty decision. I will see Mr. McCann immediately, and—"

Chard paused. His manner implied that, when he saw Mr. McCann, he would say to that young man, "Wash this out!" and McCann would tremble and wash it out. But Chard's manner was not quite in accord with his secret thoughts.

However, the Fifth Form men saw only his manner, and could not read his thoughts. His inward uneasiness was not betrayed in his plump, aggressive face. As he passed there was a roar of cheering that woke every echo in the ancient clock-tower. So tremendous was that roar that it rang right across the quad, reached Jimmy McCann in the Head's study, and caused him to set his steady lips in a hard line.

"Harrak!"

"Brave, sir!"

"Love it to me, my boys!" said Mr. Chard, carried away by his feelings—natural, in the circumstances. "Leave it in my hands. It'll be in me in every way!"

"You'll see the cur at once, sir?" asked Ambrey.

"You must not use such expressions in my presence, Compton! But I will certainly see Mr. McCann at once."

"Brave, sir!"

Chard would have preferred a little interval—a space for thought and consideration. But the Fifth evidently expected him to strike the iron while it was hot. They looked for immediate action—crushing and triumphant action! Chard had set his large, fat feet on a road from which there was no turning back. What he had said, he had said! After all, would the Blighter dare? And if he beat the fellow in this contest, it was a good beginning—he might hope even to "run." McCann afterwards said he had run the Venerable Beck!

But as Mr. Chard issued forth from his quarters, and rolled majestically across the quad, he did not feel so majestic as he looked.

In plain English, he had undertaken more than he could perform—unless that offensive young man chose to let him down lightly. Chard's majestic roll became slower and slower, and it was almost at a snail's pace that he reached the Head's study.

"Give the Boy Another Chance!"

JIMMY McCANN did not look an offensive young man, as he politely bade Mr. Chard be seated. He had respect for Mr. Chard's age and standing, if not for his wisdom. He was rather a pleasant, good-looking young man, and the touch of ginger in his hair really gave him a sort of distinction. Chard's master was habitually aggressive; Jimmy's was nothing of the kind. It

was easy and good-tempered. But there was a quiet force in Jimmy that was lacking in Chard.

Jimmy was not, as all High Compte believed, enjoying the misery and dolor he was causing to the school for Slackers. He was far from desirous to follow the methods of a bull in a china-shop. But he was there to do a job of work, and he was going to do it. Ten thousand fat and aggressive Chards would not have stopped him.

Chard felt it, as he sat—or, rather, plumped down. The sense that the other man was stronger than he was irritated him, but it dismayed him at the same time. Gladly, once he were there, he would have backed out had it been possible, even at the cost of losing Compton, of his Form. For it was born in upon his mind that at the first dictatorial word, at the first attempt to bluster, this quiet young man would cut him short with ruthless grimness.

He felt, rather than knew, that if he did get through this steely young man with a respect he had never dreamed of showing to the Venerable Beck, the iron hand would drop off of the velvet glove on the spot. It was fearfully disconcerting and humiliating to realize that he had to ask favors of this young man whom he loathed and detested. But it came to that, and there was no getting away from it.

He started with his sick, fruity cough. Jimmy McCann waited politely for more to follow. Chard coughed again. Really, it was not easy to begin under the civil but very steady gaze of those clear blue-gray eyes that looked like steel. But Chard got started.

"I have seen a notice on the board," he began. "It appears that a boy of my Form is sentenced to expulsion, as I gather from your notice, sir—"

Chard faltered under the steady gaze. He was far from intending to prevaricate, but he could see that Jimmy knew that he had been told of Compton's expulsion before he had seen the notice on the board. He coughed and redressed. This benevolent, wary young man knew that the fellow had come over to his room and told him. Chard would have preferred to know that out. However, he went on:

"Such a very drastic step, sir—"

"Not too drastic in the circumstances, Mr. Chard!" cut in Jimmy. There was a riot in the Fifth Form Room after you left, sir. Compton deliberately disobeyed my order to go to my study for a flogging. He was the ringleader in a personal attack on myself. I have considered whether to expel every boy who took part in it—

"Sir!" gurgled Chard.

"But I have decided that the example of one expulsion may suffice as a warning to the others, Mr. Chard. Naturally, I am very unwilling to begin my work here by expelling boys. Compton, unfortunately, has left me no alternative."

"Without consulting his Form-master, sir—"

"In such a matter, Mr. Chard, a headmaster must not solely on his own initiative. The responsibility is mine."

"The responsibility, sir, is very heavy!" said Chard, with a flush of spirit. "This boy's father, Colonel Compton, is a very influential member of the governing board. What view is he likely to take of the expulsion of his son from the school—his own old school, sir?"

"That is immaterial, Mr. Chard."

"Immortal?" gasped Chard.

"Quite!"

Chard blushed at him, breathing hard. Aggressive as he was, he stood rather in dread of Colonel Compton, a tremendous old warrior who had once been captain of High Compte. This steely young man, it seemed, regarded the tremendous old colonel as nobody in particular.

"If that is all, Mr. Chard—Jimmy was politely hinting that his time was up.

"It is not all, sir!" gasped Chard. "Far from it, Mr. McCann. I am bound to tell you that feeling runs very high in Compton's Form—"

"I am aware of it, sir!" There was a gleam in Jimmy's eyes. Chard realized that he had heard the roar from the rooms under the clock-tower. The Fifth Form master reddened again.

There was a pause, and then the distressed master of the Fifth played his best card:

"Mr. McCann, you have come recently—very recently—among us. It cannot be your desire to cause dismay and discontent throughout the school. If certain things are not to your satisfaction, time will mend them, sir—we are not yet used to your ways. I, sir, have been here twenty years, and there has never been an expulsion in my Form. This is a blow to me, sir, that I should never have expected."

Jimmy McCann was silent.

"I ask you, sir," said Mr. Chard, with a certain genuine dignity, "to give the boy another chance! He may be hasty—unthinking—even rebellious. His action in the Form-room I do not pretend to defend for one moment. But I can assure you that such an action will never be repeated. The sentence of expulsion, sir, even if not carried out, will be a sufficient warning. Mr. McCann, I am not in the habit of asking favors, but I ask you—beg of you—to give the boy another chance."

Chard hated himself for saying it, for having to say it, and he was glad that none of the Fifth could hear him. He was boasting himself to this man—this rank outsider whom he despised and loathed. But it was the only way, and he had to do it, or go back to the Fifth and let them see that they had leaned on a rotten oval—that, so far from being the power they supposed, he was only a talk painted to look like that! He had to act brusque, sir.

McCann, standing by the window with the spring sunlight on his clear-cut face, was silent, thinking. Chard would have given a great deal to

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"I fancy he's rather deep," admitted Bob. "But he's not got an easy job here, and I feel sure he wants to go as easy as he can. Thank goodness you've got us the sack, old bear, never mind anything else." It was Bob's way to take a cheery view and look on the bright side.

Mr. Chard looked up. He hesitated to speak—Popularity Peter all over—then said:

"Less talk in the Form, please!"

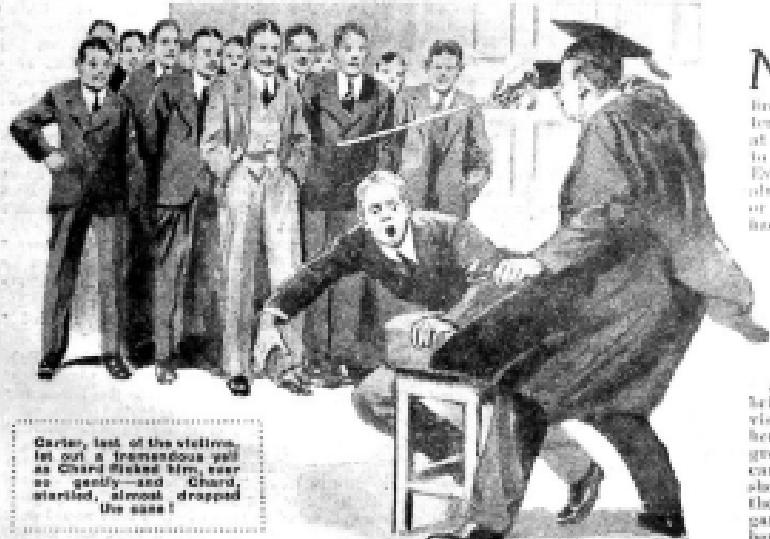
The Fifth looked at him. Chard actually coloured. It was a first feeble effort at discipline. He pretended not to observe the scornful curve of Aubrey Compton's lips. He dropped his eyes again at once!

Still, there it was—the invigorating influence of McChan was making itself felt even in the sleepy Fifth Form Room! Neither Chard nor any of his Form wanted McCann to stop

not seem to see why older offenders should not be whipped, too; and, anyhow, it was fearfully exciting! Aubrey Compton could hardly believe his ears when he came on a group of the Fourth in the quad and heard his own grinning fog, Ferguson, speaking:

"I hear there's nine of them up for whippings," Fog was saying. "I say, they look most awfully sick about it. Aubrey Compton will have a fit, or something! Frightful come-down for him, you know? Of course, he's above shaving exercise books into his bags—too jolly proud, you know. He gave me six with a firs the other day for spilling butter on his bags! I wonder how he will like six himself?" Ha, ha, ha!"

Compton stood almost petrified. Ferguson was laughing—actually laughing—at the idea of the shandy of the Fifth getting that six in Hall! His own fog!



Carter, last of the victims, let out a tremendous yell as Chard smacked him, rear as gently—and Chard, startled, almost dropped the cane!

It again. And after that, there was less talk! There was even—wonderful to relate—a little work done!

BUT the feelings of the Fifth were deep. And when they came out of the Form-room their feelings grew deeper. For all High Commo was in a fix with the affair. Comings in senior Forms were unknown, and the Fourth and the Sixth could hardly believe that a whole batch of the Fifth really were going to be caned all at once! They gaped over it, they talked with it. And, to the bitter wrath and indignation of the seniors, they evidently looked forward to the unheard-of scene as a sort of entertainment. That was the last kick out of all.

Already, it seemed, some spirit of division was creeping into the school, which should have been united in one man against the Blighter. Whipped themselves on occasion, the fogs did

"And the Blighter gave him six his first day here!" went on the happy Fog, unconscious of the proximity of his fog master. "Now he's going to get another six! He will be most frightfully wild. I shall be jolly careful not to laugh in Hall; but it's jolly funny!"

A grip on the back of Fog's neck caused the affair to come to even funnier to him on the spot. He stared round in alarm and terror at Compton's furious face.

"Oh!" gasped. "I say—!"

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! The impish Fog rolled and rolled as Compton smacked his head. The other fogs looked on in silence. Corkran of the Sixth snorted up. As a perfect—and bad prefect—it was up to him to intervene. All he did was to jerk his head towards the big window of the Head's study.

"Wave Blighter, Aubrey!" he ever-voiced.

The angry Compton did not heed.

Smack! Smack!
A crimson winter flew open.
"Compton!"

Aubrey's hand was raised for another smack, but the blow never fell. His hand remained poised in mid-air, arrested by the commanding voice of the man he hated. He looked round with black bitterness at Mr. McChan.

"No more of that!" said Mr. McCann quickly. "Corkran, it was your duty to stop that kind of thing. I shall expect it of you in future."

Smack! The crimson closed. Corkran, very red in the face, walked away. Aubrey Compton stood panting—half-inclined to give Fog's head another smack. But he did not venture to do so. He jammed his hands into his trouser pockets and moved off. Ferguson rubbed his hand.

"Cid!" said Ferguson.
And he was not alluding to Mr. McCann!

Chard's Way Out!

MISTER McCANN called the roll in Hall. It was probably the first occasion for many terms on which every fellow at High Commo ministered to his name at calling-out. Even at roll, shirkers had always perished. Somehow or other the High Commons had decided all to represent when Jimmy McCann called the names. They were beginning to feel that it was wiser not to be out for avoidable trouble. The boy was likely to be such a lot that was unavoidable!

And a certain unusual briskness in answering was visible. Fellows did not, as heretofore, stand in chatty groups and draw "Sam" carefully over their shoulders when they heard their names. If they regarded roll as a useless bore, and the master in Hall as a cheeky ass for bothering them, they did not at all events express that opinion in their looks.

All the masters were present: Peage, master of the Sixth, with a half-smoked cigar, half-hidden in the hollow of his hand, which he had brought into Hall with him. What became of that half of a Havana was a mystery. It utterly vanished after Mr. McCann's eyes had rested on Mr. Peage for a flashing fraction of a second.

Chard, of course, was there, red-faced, and looking, perhaps, a little more aggressive than usual. But that was only outward show. Chard tried to think that he had beaten McChan in the matter of asking Compton, and he hoped that the school took that view. After all, all they knew was that he had gone to see McChan and that the sentence had been washed out immediately afterwards. It looked like a victory, and appeared counted the most. But he was

there to "whop" wise men in his form, and that certainly had no terrors or triumphal look.

Bob Chand had his own ideas about whooping. He remembered the ancient proverb that a horse can be taken to water but cannot be made to drink. There was such a thing as carrying out an order in a way to show contempt of that order. And Chand, if he could not enter into open conflict with the Head, was passionately bent on pushing the conflict as far as he dared.

Ball-sell over, there was a hush. Then other names were called: Captain, Darrell, Peverill, Carter, Burke, Raymond, Seymour, Barratt, etc., Warren. Even in the enthusiasm of that wild music in the Fifth Form Room, McCann had noted the face and remembered the name of every fellow who had laid a hand on him, in reward either meekly. The name was soon at a naze:

Nine men marched up Hall. Bob Darrell colouring with discomfort under the eyes of Mr. McCann. The others made it a point to look unsmiling, like the old French aristocrats going to the guillotine. Ambry Compton even yawned slightly under McCann's eye.

Breathless faces, staring eyes, circled them. Even yet it seemed scarcely possible to High Coombs that this whole-some whooping was really going to take place. Ferguson of the Fourth, remissedly rubbing his ear, winked at Fatty Pye, but Fatty did not venture to grin. History was being made at High Coombs; it was a thrilling moment!

"It is my duty—" said Chand, and paused. His voice on this occasion, did not resemble the tramping of an elephant. Fellowes had to strain their ears to hear him. "It is my duty," he repeated slowly, reluctantly, the words coming from him like teeth at the dentist's, "to administer punishment for the—ah—rituals proceedings in my Form this morning. Hem! I shall—heh—administer six strokes to each of you liversomen!"

Chand cleared his throat.

"Comptons, you will bend over that bussock!"

Compton's eyes blazed. With breathless eagerness the whole school read the intention of robbing in his handsome, passionate face. It was only for a second. He bent over the bussock.

Chand whished the cane.

Six times it touched Ambry—barely touched him. Compton, in amazement, glanced up. He was not sure that he was being caned at all! Flick, flick, flick! Flick, flick, flick! Then he understood. He told the lollers afterwards, in Big Study, that Chand whished at him as he looked up. Probably that was an error. But there was no doubt that Chand was deliberately turning the whole thing inside-out; the whole school saw that.

"Darrell!" said Mr. Chand.

A buzz was growing in Hall. Mr. McCann glanced round, and it died into stony silence. Bob stole a glance at the headmaster's face as he stepped up to take his turn. For a

single instant there was a glint of bright steel in Jimmy McCann's eyes. It passed—and his face remained expressionless. Six tiny thicks barely touched Bob, far which he was duly thankful. Another man took his place—openly grinning.

Grinning faces were to be seen all over the packed Hall now. Everybody knew that Chand was "gassing" McCann with that trayecty of a whoop. He was making a fool of the Head. It did not occur to the pedagogues that Chand that he was also making a fool of himself!

But it occurred to Bob, and he could have blushed for his Form-master; so big, so pompous, so important—and so childish!

It was Popularity Peter all over! He made it clear—wanted to make it clear—that he did not approve of this execution; that he was on the side of the school against the new unpopular Chief Blook.

If that was how he felt, he ought to have resigned from the staff, not played the fool in Hall, Bob thought. And how was the Head going to take this?

MAN after man came up and bent over the bussock. All of them grimaced—and two laughed! Tragedy had turned into comedy—a most undignified comedy, it was true; but it was up against McCann, so it was all right! Any stick was good enough to beat the Blighter with.

Carter, last of the victims, kept up his reputation of being the jumpy one of the Fifth. As Chand tickled him gently, Carter started Hall by a tremendous yell that woke all the echoes of the old wooden rafters. Chand himself started, and almost dropped the cane.

"Oh, sir, you hit me terribly hard!" squealed Carter.

Then there was a roar from the crowd in Hall.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They laughed, and roared, and yelled, and rocked! Carter had brought down the house. All pretence of seriousness was at an end. Hall rang with roars of merriment. Teedgar was even doubled up with mirth. Chand himself was laughing. All the masters smiled.

Only one serious face was to be seen—Jimmy McCann's, expressionless as that of a graven image. The whooping over, High Coombs slumped out of Hall, laughing, chuckling, chortling, and wondering how the Blighter liked it!

Probably Jimmy McCann did not like it at all. And probably—very probably—he was making up his mind that he and Popularity Peter could not remain at High Coombs together. If Mr. Chand fancied himself in the role of a sturdy mustif buying defiance at an intruder, he was likely to discover that he resembled much more closely a fat possible popping in the path of a steamroller!

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