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THE WAR OF THE FAGS!

By CHARLES HAMILTON



Some of the Fourth baited Mr. McCann like a cannon-ball, and they both got down hard. Utterly amazed at what he had done, the fog blinked at the Head with brightened eyes!

"The Whapping of Your Life!"
 "It's bullying, I tell you!" growled Bob Darrell.

"What?" exclaimed Compton.
 "Well, what else do you call it?" demanded Bob.

Aubrey Compton's eyes gleamed. If the dandy of the Fifth Form at High Coombe School was ever guilty of bullying he was quite unconscious of it. It seemed so natural to Aubrey that any Lower boy who disregarded his will and pleasure should be kicked, or whipped with a cane, or hit on his bags. The word bullying was distinctly unpleasant. It jarred on Aubrey's fastidious taste.

"Oh, draw it mild, Bob!" said Teddy Seymour. "Don't get shirty, Aubrey, old man! You know old Bob's always talkin' out of his hat!"

Teddy was the peacemaker of Horn Thers. Sitting on the edge of the table in Big Study, with his friends standing on either side of him, Teddy smoothed Bob with one hand, Aubrey with the other. Bob and Aubrey always seemed on the verge of a row, yet they never had one, largely owing to Teddy's kind offices.

Some High Coombe fellows thought it odd that the two had ever chummed at all. They were so dissimilar: Bob, of the rugged, muscular, plain-speaking game-man; Aubrey, arbiter of elegance, laziest and slackest man in the School for Slackers! Yet they were great pals, though Bob had never been able to persuade Aubrey to take football seriously, and Aubrey had never succeeded in convincing Bob that the cross in a fellow's trousers was a matter of the first importance.

But it looked as if a row was coming on. Bob Darrell's brow was knitted, and Compton had clenched his hands.

"Bullyin'!" repeated Compton.
 "What else do you call it?" repeated Bob.

"What's the good of raggin'?" repeated Teddy. "Don't let that McCann man set us by the ears."

McCann was the new line-walker Head of the School for Slackers. He was hated for his waxy-camp methods, and the school called him the Blighter.

"He's done wicked enough already

at High Coombe. The old school isn't the same since he blew in."

"Oh, not at all!" said Darrell sarcastically. "Why, there's actually some work done in the Form-rooms now. We're as rotten at games as ever, but we get up at rising-bell, we're not late for classes, and Chard doesn't go to sleep in our Form-room since McCann woke him up one morning! I've heard that he's even nagging up staff he forgot years ago, because McCann expects him to teach us something! Jolly thick, what?"

"That's sure!" said Teddy. "Chard's a good old bean, and he's standing up for us against the new Book as much as—"

"As he dares!" said Bob, with a curl of the lip.

"We're gettin' away from the subject," said Aubrey Compton quietly. "Bob can take what line he likes, but I'm against the Blighter all the time and all along the line. But if you keep on harkin' up that outsider, Bob Darrell, you'll find yourself barred in the school."

Bob shrugged his broad shoulders.

"The door of Big Study opened, and half a dozen of the Fifth came in—Carter, Frewell, Burke, Raymond, Duranno, and Warren. They did not crowd in. High Coombe men never crowded or barged. Graciously they lounged into Big Study.

"Here we are, Aubrey, old boy!" drawled Frewell. "What's the big idea and the glib news? Anythin' up against the Blighter? If so, count on us to be the last shot in the locker."

"To the last screw in our trousers!" said Carter solemnly. Carter had his reputation to keep up as the funny one of the Fifth.

"You men raggin'?" asked Warren. "I say, don't let's rag among ourselves. United we stand, divided we come a ruckler."

"Only Darrell preachin' again," sneered Compton. "I've got a stink for raggin' the Blighter, and Bob calls it bullyin'." He ran call it what he likes, but I'm goin' ahead."

"Expound, old bean!" said Frewell.

"Name of the Sixth here!" remarked Carter.

"I've tipped them to keep clear while we're havin' this meetin'," answered Compton. "Better for the prefects to have nothin' to do with it. McCann's got his eye on them already. But you can bet they're all as keen as we are on raggin' the Blighter—all except Bob!" he added, with a sneer.

"Bob rather likes the man!"

"I believe he means well!" growled Bob. "Anyhow, he's headmaster now, and it's no good thinking of trying to carry on as if old Dr. Chubbards was still Chief Book! And I think it's a jolly good thing that the Venerable Book went, if you ask me."

"Nobody asked you, sir, she said!" sang Carter. And there was a laugh in Big Study.

"Cough it up, Aubrey!" said Raymond.

Aubrey Compton went to the door of Big Study, opened it, and called "Boy!"

THERE was a patting of feet in the passage almost at once. Ferguson of the Fourth came up at a run. Compton's bag was always prompt at the sound of his fag-master's voice. It was noticeable that, slack as the High Coombers were, and priding themselves on it, they drew a line at darkness in their fags. The juniors could model themselves on the seniors as much as they liked when they were not wanted for fag service. When they were, it was not a paying proposition to slack. Aubrey seldom had to call "Boy" twice.

The War of the Bags!

Ferg came in, and Compton shut the door. Ferg looked round at the gathering of seniors rather uneasily. He hoped that it did not mean a whoppin'. Only a few minutes ago he had been confiding to Patty Pys that he wished the new Bag would give Compton another taste of the cane, and it was rather alarming to hear Compton's voice immediately afterwards calling "Boy!"

Down three already knew Compton's plan. But the later arrivals did not, and they looked on with interest, rather perplexed. The plan, it seemed, included action on the part of the bags. That was rather a relief, in a way. For, secretly as they were opposed to the new Bag, McCann, they felt a certain sympathy about coming out into open conflict with him again. They had tried it, and had not forgotten that old Aubrey had had a narrow escape from the "sack" in consequence.

"I say, what's the row?" asked Ferguson. "I say, Compton—"

"Shut up and listen to me!" said Compton. "I suppose you know that that rotter McCann is always in his study from five to six? At five minutes past five, Ferguson, you're going to barge on the Highler's door—and bang."

"What for?" asked Ferg. "Because I tell you to!" said Compton irritably. "And at intervals of five minutes every other bid in the Fourth is going to do the same. You're to pass the word round."

Ferguson looked rather alarmed. "I say, he will tell me to come in if I bang—"

"Then you can rot," "Oh!" said Ferg. "I—I see!" He looked very dubious. "I say, Compton, that man McCann may get fearfully stuffy about it. He works in his study, you know. He will get shirty! He may bag a man and whop him."

"You afraid of a whoppin'?" asked Aubrey. "Well, yes, rather; he's a hefty brute," confessed Ferg. "You didn't like it when he—" Ferg broke off in time, warned by the look on his fellow-master's face. Compton did not like being reminded of that six on his beautiful bags administered by McCann.

"Well, if you're afraid of a whoppin', you'd better do exactly as I tell you!" remarked Compton. "For if you don't, I'm going to give you the whoppin' of your life."

"Oh, I say!" groaned Ferg. Bob Darrell gave an angry growl. "And you don't call that bullying!" he exclaimed. "You're going to whop the bags if they don't play up, and McCann will whop them if they do! Think they're keen on it?"

"Shut up, Darrell!" roared the Fifth. The seniors were keen on it, if the bags were not likely to be.

But Ferguson, finding unexpected support in at least one member of the Fifth, took his courage in both hands and proceeded to raise objections.

"Look here, Compton, I'd rather not! Look here—"

"You'd rather not," said Aubrey, with a cheery smile. "I'm sorry for that, Ferguson! Bend over that chair!"

He picked up a free hat which, with great foresight, he had brought into Big Study in case it should be needed. It was clear that it was needed.

"I—I say!" gasped the hapless Ferg.

The slacker man in the School for Slackers was not slack in handling a free hat, as Ferg knew by painful experience. He gave Bob Darrell a despairing glance.

Bob strode forward.

"Look here, chuck it!" he roared. "You can call it what you like, but I call it bullying, and I'm not standing for it! Put that hat down, Aubrey, and let the kid out!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Compton.

"Put that hat down!" roared Bob.

Ferguson watched the dispute with doubt and hope. Bob Darrell's face was flushed, his eyes sparkling. He looked like grabbing the hat away from Aubrey, and laying it round Aubrey's own elegant person if he objected. Ferg hoped that he would.

But from the rest of the Fifth Form men present came a roar.

"Shut up, Darrell!"

"Get on that barge!"

"Barge him out!"

Bob's eyes flashed. All the seniors were on their feet, gathering round him with angry faces. He was hustled towards the door. He was not an easy man to hustle, however. He swung back, and Peverill and Warren went stumbling over, landing on the carpet.

"Now look here—" shouted Bob.

"Knock the idiot over!"

"Sit on him!"

Ferg's eyes almost started from his head at the unprecedented scene that followed. Were those the easy-going, graceful suits of High Cosmole—these excited, saggy schoolboys, scrapping like a mob of fags in the Barrack? Ferg was rather glad he was there, after all. He seldom had enjoyed a show like this! He gazed on with breathless interest and delight.

Bob Darrell, struggling, crashed on the carpet. Five or six fellows sat on him and pinned him there. He heaved under them, but they pinned him down, and he panted helplessly. Compton looked at him with a cool smile. Then he turned his attention to Ferguson again.

"I think I asked you to bend over, Ferguson," he remarked casually.

"Oh, accidents!" gasped Ferg. In his keen excitement and interest in the scrap he had forgotten what was coming to him. Now he had to remember.

Diabolically he bent over the chair. He made a mental resolve to take no further heed of that ass Darrell. A fellow could not help him who could not help himself. Compton, evidently, was the "goods" in the Fifth Form at the School for Slackers.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Aubrey laid it on well. Ferg gave a loud howl at each swipe. Aubrey paused.

"Is that enough?" he asked gently.

"Oh crumbs! Oh!" groaned Ferg. "Yes, thank you, Compton!"

"You can have the rest of the air if you like!" said Aubrey, still genial.

"Oh! Oh! No!"

"Then I take it that you're going to do exactly as I've told you to do!" smiled Aubrey.

"Oh! Yes! Wow! Yes, rather!"

"Cut!"

Ferg promptly cut.

"That's that!" drawled Aubrey.

"You can let that silly ass get by now!"

Bob staggered up, red and breathless. He clutched his hands and gave Compton a look. Aubrey watched him with a mocking grin. Nobody knew better than Aubrey that he was no match for the muscular Darrell if it came to a quarrel and a scrap. But he did not care a straw for that. Teddy Snycester, as usual, barged between.

"Look here, you ass—" pleaded Teddy.

Bob unclenched his hands, but his brows were still knitted as he tramped out of Big Study. He went out into the quad to cool his wrath. In Big Study the heroes of the Fifth joyfully discussed that rag on the Highler McCann, and chuckled over it and chattered over it. And when five o'clock drew near they went out into the passage to listen happily for the sound of banging from the direction of the Head's study.

Caught in the Act!

JAMES MCCANN was busy in his very pleasant, book-lined study. A casement was open, letting in fresh air from the sea.

By standing at the window Jimmy McCann could get a view of coast and cliff and rolling Atlantic. Every now and then he left his writing-table, walked to the window and drew in invigorating breaths of fresh air.

He was standing by his window, with the sunlight caressing the red in his hair, when a loud bang came at the study door.

"Come in!" he called, glancing round.

Nobody came in. All Jimmy heard was a swift patter of retreating footsteps. He concluded that some fellow had knocked at the wrong door, discovered his error, and departed in haste.

He turned to the window again, regarding the quad with thoughtful eyes. A group of the Sixth stood in his view—Tredgar, captain of the school, with Harold and Corbett, Coffin and Lucy. They were talking and smiling, as if in possession of some sort of a jest. Jimmy had no objection to the enjoyment of a jest, but he would have preferred to see those Sixth Form men changed for football and putting in some practice.

He had a lot of work on hand at High Cosmole, and it was not all to be done at once. It was going to be done, however! The School for Slackers had begun to change—slowly but surely. Even the deadly feud against himself, bearing white-hot in the Fifth Form, did not wholly

diploma Jimmy McCann, much as it would have surprised Compton & Co. to know that! It was, at least, a sign of reviving vigour, even if it indicated expense.

Bang! Jimmy looked round at the door again, frowned more deeply, and again bade the hangar come in. Nobody came in. Such a hefty knock at the door of the headmaster's study was disrespectful, if not accidental. And the second time it happened Jimmy knew that disrespect was intended. He stood staring at the answering door.

There came a third bang on the door. Jimmy's lips set in a tight line. This was a rag!

He crossed the spacious study with a swift stride, and jerked open the door. Nobody was in sight. The broad corridor stretched to right and left, several other passages opening from it at different points in its length. Beyond any of these corners the hangar on the door might have dodged. Jimmy stood staring out for a long moment, then closed the door and went to his writing-table and sat down to work.

It could hardly be Fifth Form even playing a childish prank like this. He could not imagine the superb Captain delivering a runaway knock and scuttling round a corner. The Fifth were hopeless attackers, but they had some sense of their dignity as senior men. This was a rag of the juniors—Fourth or Sixth!

That surprised Jimmy a little, for he was aware that he was not so fearfully unpopular among the small fry as among the great men of the Fifth and Sixth. However, he had no doubt that his opening of the door and looking out would mark the end of the rag. He dismissed it from his mind and resumed work on the heap of papers before him.

Mr. McCann took the Sixth Form himself in classes—much to their disgust and dismay. Classical knowledge in the Sixth was at a low ebb. Under the Venerable Book—the late Head—they had drowsed in rote-learned slowness. How most of them had got into the Sixth at all would have been a mystery to anyone who did not know the ways of High Combe. Copies in the Fourth, taught little; Pease, in the Sixth, less; Chavel, in the Fifth, next to nothing, and in the Sixth they took a long and happy rest. A delightful state of affairs, which Jimmy McCann was going to alter very considerably!

Bang! Jimmy jumped. Deep in Latin papers—most of which would have made a junior at any other school blush, but with which the High Combe Sixth were quite satisfied—Jimmy had forgotten the rag. He was reminded of it by a tremendous bang at his study door.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. McCann.

A scolding of feet and a breathless cluckle came to his open ear. Then silence.

The rag was still on, and evidently it was going to continue. Jimmy McCann sat staring at the door with a wrinkle on his brow. He was thinking; and when Jimmy put in

some thinking, something generally came of it.

The bang, he noted, came at fairly regular intervals. The young man's gaze him time to settle down after every bang before they delivered another. This rag was proceeding according to plan, that was evident. Jimmy made a rapid mental calculation. Four bangs at the door had been delivered in approximately twenty minutes. That gave five minutes a bang. If the rag continued, it was easy to calculate when the next bang was due.

Mr. McCann sat for two minutes thinking. Then he rose from his chair, selected a cane, and stepped quietly to the door, his hand on the door-handle. That door was going to open very suddenly when the next bang came. Jimmy did not think that the next man would get away with it. With a faint smile on his face, but with a gleam in his eye, Jimmy waited.

At a little distance, round the corner by the French master's classroom, there was a group of the Fourth. Fatty Eye, deliverer of the last bang, had just snatched back and rejoined his friends, breathless and grinning. Next man in was Denkin, otherwise the Donkey.

Ferguson, presiding over the proceedings, was enjoying himself. Compton's foot had driven him to undertake this warlike operation against the Blighter; but it had gone so well, so far, that Ferg was beginning to think it quite a good stunt. Indeed, being a brainy man, he was already developing Compton's big idea further. He gave instructions to Denkin.

"Yell through the keyhole, Donkey!" he said. "Bang on the door, and yell through the keyhole! Let him have it! See!"

"Make the rotter sit up!" grinned Loam.

Denkin nodded and grinned. Denkin, the duffer of his Form, seldom had a chance of distinguishing himself. He was not going to lose this one. Four fellows had banged on the Head's door and got away safely. Why not the fifth? Denkin was quite keen.

"I'll shout 'Blighter' through the keyhole and then bang and bang!" he declared. There was a murmur of approval.

"Good old Donkey!"
"Do it, Donkey!"
Donkey went it.

On light, he crept along the corridor. Five or six eager faces peered round the corner watched him as he went. Cautiously, carefully, the Donkey approached the big oak door. Breathlessly the bunch of juniors watched him arrive there and stoop to the keyhole.

"Blighter!" yelled Denkin, and banged.

Banging was the next five on the programme. Unfortunately for Denkin, that item was cut. Hardly had he banged when the door flew open, an arm projected from the doorway, a hand of iron gripped Denkin, and he was jerked into the study, vanishing from the watchful eyes of the Fourth like a specter at cock-crow. Ferguson gave a gasp.

"He's got him!"
"Oh, seniors!"
"He'll be after us!"

There was a rush of feet down the passage to parts unknown. Ferguson & Co. were scuffling far and wide, almost before Jimmy McCann had fairly landed Denkin in his study. Denkin, unluckily, was not in a position to scatter.

The unhappy Donkey, gripped as if in a steel vice, was landed on the

"I think I asked you to bang over, Ferguson!" said Ferguson.
"Oh, seniors!" gasped Ferg. In his keen confidence and interest in the game he had forgotten what was coming to him!



The War of the Fags!

Head's carpet, and found himself tottering there, facing Jimmy McCann.

"Donkin, I think!" said Mr. McCann.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir!" spluttered Donkin.

"You knocked at my door?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What did you want?"

Donkin blinked without answering. He fixed his eyes in anguish on the cane in Jimmy's hand. He wriggled in anticipation. It was an awful moment for the miserable Donkey.

But Mr. McCann did not seem to be in a hurry to use the cane. He regarded Donkin with a thoughtful eye. That this obtuse fellow had thought of such a rag—much less dreamed of carrying it out—Jimmy knew was not the case, and could not be. He had to look farther for the originator of that bright idea. It was the originator of the idea that Jimmy wanted to see.

"I asked you what you wanted, Donkin," said Mr. McCann gently.

"Nothing, sir!" groaned the Donkey.

"You knocked at my door for nothing?"

"Yes, sir!" mumbled the wretched Donkey.

"Quite!" said Jimmy McCann. To Donkin's intense amazement, and still greater relief, he laid down the cane. "You must not let this occur again, Donkin; or I shall be obliged to punish you! You may go! Tell Ferguson I desire to see him in my study."

Donkin, hardly believing in his good luck, tottered away. It was some little time before Ferguson arrived in the study. Jimmy McCann was busy again with Sixth Form papers; he was not a man to waste time. But he turned from those examples of the wonderful depth of ignorance in the Sixth Form at High Combe to fix his eyes on Ferguson as he unceasingly entered.

"Donkin says, sir—" began Ferguson.

"Quite!" said Jimmy McCann. His eyes seemed to penetrate Ferguson like points of steel. "I think you knocked at my door a short time ago, Ferguson."

Ferguson knew that Donkin had not given him away. With all their faults at High Combe, they never did that kind of thing. Moreover, the Donkey would never have dared. This was only another sample of the ignorance that High Combe had already learned to look for in that "irreparably blighted" McCann! Ferguson called himself captain of the Fourth, and was undoubtedly the leading spirit in that Form. Of course, the Blighter knew that! Didn't the head spot everything?

But Ferguson was not the man to ask for a looking. And he had all his life with about him. He assumed an air of mild surprise.

"Do you think so, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Ferguson, I do think so!" assented Jimmy McCann. "And I

think I am not mistaken in assuming that you gave the first knock at my door, Ferguson!"

The head's was evidently a negative!

FERGUSON opened his lips. Before he could speak, Mr. McCann made a gesture.

"If you deny it, Ferguson, I shall make the closest inquiry as to where you were, and what you were doing, between five o'clock and ten minutes past. It is wrong to tell untruths, my boy, and stupid to tell untruths untruths!"

Ferguson's face set unlovely.

"Well, I did!" he muttered.

"Quite!" said Mr. McCann. "And did this very peculiar rag originate in your own fertile mind, Ferguson, or was it suggested to you?"

Ferguson started and flushed. His rag master had whopped him into talking on the rag. He would have liked to see Compton whopped. But did this least—this rotten—this outsider—think that he was going to give a man away? He had an inkling—Ferguson could see that. But he was not going to learn anything from John Andrew Ferguson!

Mr. McCann gazed at Ferguson quietly and steadily, and waited for his answer. It came definitely:

"I'm not going to tell you! I don't care if you do whip me, so there!"

Mr. McCann raised his eyebrows.

Ferguson stood panting. He had exaggerated a little. He did not care whether McCann whopped him! He knew what such a whopping was like. It was a relief to see a smudge glide over the face of Jimmy McCann.

"That will do, my boy!" said Mr. McCann. "You may go, Ferguson!"

"Oh!" gasped Ferguson.

He went gladly. As he was going Jimmy McCann drawled casually:

"By the way, Ferguson, whose rag are you?"

Ferguson glanced back.

"Compton's, sir."

"Compton's?" repeated Mr. McCann. "Very good! You may go!"

The door closed after Ferguson of the Fourth. In the Fourth Form Room the fags gathered and compared notes. The Blighter had ticked nobody, which was surprising and gratifying. But the rag was at an end. All the times bats in the Fifth could not have evoked any more bangs on the Head's door.

In his study, Mr. McCann mused for a moment.

"Compton's rag! Exactly!" he said.

Then he resumed his weary labours on Sixth Form Latin.

McCann's Beverage!

CRASH! Bump! Suddenly, unexpectedly, and rather violently, the new Head of High Combe School sat down.

The middle of the quadrangle was not the place in which any head-master would have chosen to sit down, could he have helped it. James McCann had no choice in the matter.

It was the day following the door-banging episode. That episode seemed to be closed and done with. Mr. McCann had said nothing about it; though perhaps he had thought the more! Possibly he was thinking about that very matter as he walked in the quad, in break, in the bright breezy morning. Certainly he was taken entirely by surprise by what happened.

Plenty of people were about on the quad. Trodgar stood with some Sixth Form men near the big bay window of Big Study. Compton of the Fifth was walking with Darrell and Seymour—the corner of his eye on McCann.

Mr. Chaff, strolling in company with Monsieur Mouton—invariably nicknamed the Sheep—the French master, pretended not to see the Head. He looked at McCann so deeply and intently that he found it difficult to treat him with the respect due to his chief—yet there was something about McCann that made it impossible to treat him with anything but respect.

Penge, master of the Shell, threw away a cigarette when he saw Jimmy and tried to look as if he had not been smoking in quad. Cape, master of the Fourth, was looking out of his study window, half-concealed by the curtain.

Was it possible that Cape knew there was something on among the young rascals of his Form? That, thinking it better not to see it, he remained in his study—let, wishing to see it all the same, he peered from his window with a surreptitious eye? Was it possible that, having an inkling of the fact that Aubrey Compton was stirring up the fags to deeds of daring-do, Cape approved in his heart, though, of course, he could not say so, and professed, officially, to know nothing about it? Be that as it may, Cape, unseen, peered into the quad.

Many eyes, besides Cape's and Compton's, were on the sturdy, stocky figure that looked so strong, so fit, so elastic, though so much less respectable and stately than that of the old Book, Dr. Chetwood.

How keenly than anyone else, Burn of the Fourth was watching him. Burn stood by the fountain. McCann, walking slowly and thoughtfully, passed the fountain, spraying silver in the sunlight. Burn of the Fourth hesitated one moment. But only one moment, for he was Warren's rag, and Warren and Compton had had a heart-to-heart talk with him, and he knew precisely what to expect if he did not play up.

He played up. Suddenly detaching himself from the fountain he dashed across the quad—not, apparently, seeing that Mr. McCann was directly in front of him. There was only one possible result. Burn of the Fourth hit McCann like a cannon-ball, and McCann sat down—suddenly and hard. His master-board slipped sideways, his gown picked up and from an adjacent grille, and he gave a gasp.

Then, spinning round, sat down

about a yard from him. Utterly scared at what he had done, the fat blushed at Jimmy with frightened eyes.

"Jimmy was first on his feet. "Oh, sir! So sorry, sir!" gasped Bann.

Mr. McCann set his mortarboard straight, shook mud from his gown, and gave the parting flag a grim glance. But, fustian and deprecating drapery as the High Combs considered him, he did not lose his temper. Not a bit abashed, as Bann humbly told his friends and commentators afterwards.

"You careless young rascal!" said Mr. McCann. "Look where you are running on another occasion!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bann.

Mr. McCann walked on. Bann, very glad that his share in the game was over and done with, picked himself up and scuttled away. Fatty Pyc, lurking under the ancient High Combs oaks, was not feeling so glad. His turn came next on the list. He was Teddy Seymour's flag, but he had his senses from Compton, and he knew better than to disregard them. After all, Bann had got off best free. Fatty hoped for similar good luck. And it was a frightfully good jape on the Blighter.

"Young ast!" Bob Darrell remarked to his comrades. "Look here, you men, that man McCann is a jolly good-tempered chap! What do you think Chad would have done to a flag who barged him over in quad?"

Compton laughed, and Seymour grinned. Bob gave them a sharp look, suddenly realizing that this was a new move in Compton's game, and he had been left out of the council of war this time.

"Look here, this is pretty rotten, Aubrey!" he granted.

"Think so?" yawned Aubrey. "That sort of thing isn't done!" snapped Bob.

"If McCann doesn't like our manners and customs he can clear out!" suggested Aubrey. "Nobody wants him here."

Fatty Pyc, suddenly shooting like an arrow from under the oaks, crashed into Mr. McCann's ribs, a little behind him. The collision was terrific. This time Mr. McCann did not sit down. He tumbled over on his hands and knees, his mortarboard rolling off.

"Oh, sorry, sir!" squeaked Fatty Pyc. "So sorry, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from several quarters of the spacious quad.

Mr. McCann was quickly on his feet. Fatty Pyc staggered up, quaking. McCann had not looked "shirty" when Bann barged him over. But he looked fearfully shirty now. The glint in his eyes sent cold chills through Fatty Pyc's layers of fat.

Jimmy McCann had taken Bann's barge as a sheer accident. He did not take Pyc's barge as an accident. His quick mind jumped to it at once. He was getting no more barges on his study door. He was getting barges in the quad instead.

His glinting eye flashed in the direction of Aubrey Compton. Aubrey, accordingly, was watching the pigeons in the quad, oblivious of McCann. Jimmy knew exactly how oblivious he was. After that flashing glance at the dandy of the Fifth, Jimmy fixed glinting eyes on Pyc.

"You will go to your Farm-master, Pyc, and request Mr. Capes, from me, to give you six strokes!" he said.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Patty. And he did not gain till his back was to Mr. McCann. If the Blighter supposed that any man on the staff would go hard with a flag for barging the new Beak, the Blighter was simpler than Fatty had believed him to be.

Patty trotted off quite cheerfully to Mr. Capes—who had his back to the window and a smile on his face when Pyc presented himself in the study. Having received the Beak's message, Capes, of course, had to give Fatty six. There was dust on Pyc's trousers, but it was not stirred by the six strokes that his Farm-master gave him. When he left the study he heard Mr. Capes laughing as the door closed.

Which good news Fatty carried at once to Forgyssa, who was next on the barging list. Feg was very glad to hear it.

"It's all right, Ferg, old boy!" smiled Fatty. "He'll only send you to Capes, and Capes will give you a flick or two. I say, I believe old Capes was watching from the window—he was killing himself laughing when I bent it."

Feg chuckled. Greatly encouraged, he prepared to take his turn in the barging game.

Mr. McCann had reached the library and turned to pass back. Behind him lurked the wily Ferg. This time it was going to be a collision dead astern. McCann was going flying, headlong. Feg was going to fall on him, if he could! That would be an extra one for the Blighter! Feg pictured the Blighter down on his face, Ferg's knees landing in the small of his back, all the wind driven out of him—a gasping, gasping, spluttering Blighter, winded to the wick! Really, it was almost worth a whooping—much more was it worth six very nice flicks from old Capes.

Grinning faces, from many directions, looked on. Only one was frowning—Bob Darrell's. Bob thought it not. Everyone else thought it topknot—an absolutely splendid jape on the unrepentable McCann. It would leave the Blighter in no doubt about what



"Blighter!" yelled Dinkin, and barged on the door. Barging was the next item on the programme. Unfortunately for Dinkin the door flew open, a hand of iron gripped him, and he was jerked into the study.

The War of the Fags!

High Coombe thought of him. Ferguson, feeling himself the centre of all eyes, was greatly excited and backed. It was going to be a tremendous battle this time.

Ferg suddenly flew!

James McCann had, of course, no eyes in the back of his head. How, therefore, he was aware that Ferguson of the Fourth was baring at his back was, and had to remain, a mystery.

The dismal fact was, that when the charging Ferg was only a yard from him, the Head suddenly turned.

Instead of crashing into an unsway back, Ferguson of the Fourth landed in McCann's grasp, which stopped him dead, fastening on him like steel pincers. Held by the curly, Ferg sagged, gasping, his eyes nearly popping out of his startled face.

"Oh!" gasped Ferguson. "Oh! Ah! Oh!"

Still holding him in that pincer-like grip, Mr. McCann glanced round. Strife had faded off faces, as if wiped away by dusters. Only one face wore a grin now. It was Bob's. He was grinning instead of frowning.

"Corkran!" called out Mr. McCann, quietly and clearly.

Corkran, head prefect, was walking with Head's, another prefect. They had their official adjupants under their arms. Corkran rather unwillingly came over at the Head's call. Even at High Coombe, a head prefect did not take a hand in a rag of this kind. But old Corky had had an idea of what was on, like all the rest of the Sixth. He wondered whether McCann knew that.

"Please lend me your case, Corkran!" said Mr. McCann pleasantly.

"Oh?" said Corkran. "Oh, yes, sir! Certainly."

He handed over the ash. McCann refused the unshaggy Ferg, and wished Corkran's name.

"Send over and touch your toes, Ferguson!" he said.

Ferg could have groaned. This indignantly keen beast had evidently tumbled to it that it was an unsway Fourth Form man to be the master of the Fourth!

IN the lowest of spirits, Ferguson bent over and touched his toes.

The swipe that followed could be heard all over quad. It rang like a rifle-shot. The suffering Ferg had, at least, to respect a man who could hit it on like that. It was quite scientific. It directed a yell from Ferg that rang louder than the crack of the cane.

Ferguson fully expected six. He hardly dared to believe the glad truth when McCann, after that one stinging swipe, hauled the cane back to Corkran of the Sixth.

"Thank you, Corkran!" said Mr. McCann, and walked on.

Ferg rose from his bowing attitude and blinked after him, and wriggled painfully.

And on the face of Donkin of the Fourth sat terror and dismay. For he was the next man on the list to jump the Head!

Mr. McCann walked into the House. It was soon reported that by his bid gone to his study. Beach was nervy over, and fellows began to go into the House. Compton dropped a hand on Donkin's shoulder.

"Stick in the passage," said Compton. "The Blighter will come out in a few minutes—he has to go to the Sixth. Berge him in the passage."

"—I say, Compton!" muttered the Donkey. "I say, I'm Barrell's fag, you know, and Barrell hasn't said anything, and—"

The glint in Aubrey's eye cut him short.

"Are you going to charge the Blighter?" asked Aubrey.

"Oh, yes, Compton!" growled the Donkey. "Oh, yes, of course!"

He took up a strategic position in the passage. At one end of that long corridor stood the school notice-board. A crowd of fellows gathered round it, ostensibly to look at the notices while they waited for the bell to ring, actually to watch the Donkey charge McCann when he came out of his study.

The Head's door opened, and he came out.

He had a paper in his hand; apparently a new notice to stick on the board. A crowd of eyes from the end of the passage watched him—and Donkin.

Donkin, with a courage born of panic, barged.

Mr. McCann side-stopped, and the Donkey leaped past him, plunged on, stumbled into the Head's doorway, and pitched over helplessly in the study. There the breathless and surprised Donkey rolled, unheeded by McCann.

Apparently forgetting Donkin's existence, James McCann walked on and stopped at the notice-board. There he pinned up the paper in his hand, gave the gathering of High Coombers a cheery smile, and walked away to the Sixth Form Room.

The bell began to ring. But it rang unheeded for some moments. For all eyes were fixed on the notice Jimmy had pinned on the board. It read:

"Forging for the Fifth Form is abolished."

"J. McCann, Headmaster."

That's one in the eye for the Fifth—but they might back in next Saturday's great alarm. Forging the fags?

HEROES OF THE FROZEN WASTES

By ROSEMARY ARMSTRONG, who will receive FREE any Stamp Garden which any reader may care to send to the Editor. If you can, enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply by Post

A THRILLING real-life story of disaster and heroism in the Frozen North is recalled by a striking set of stamps recently issued by the Soviet Government. On February 13th, 1934, a frantic SOS message was picked up by radio stations from the Russian ice-breaking steamer *Tschekmkin*, telling that she had been caught in an ice-pack

150 miles from the North Cape and was rapidly breaking up. Aboard the vessel was a scientific expedition, headed by Professor Schmidt, who had hoped to discover a northern passage through the Bering Straits to the Pacific Ocean. When their ship was wrecked the passengers and crew were forced to land on the treacherous rippling ice-floes and were in danger of being carried away into the vast Arctic wastes, there to perish of cold and starvation.

In response to the SOS, aviators set out to the rescue and, guided by wireless messages, succeeded in reaching the stranded adventurers and brought them safely back to civilization. The ten stamps which commemorate these

daring exploits are appropriately dedicated to the "Heroes of the Air," seven of them showing the pilots who saved out the rescue work and the parts they played in this sensational drama of the Arctic regions.

The first to reach the scene of the disaster was the aviator Ljapiewski, who took off the women and children, twelve in all. He appears on the 5 kopeck value. The highest value, 50 kopecks, shows the last aeroplane departing with the wireless operator and his equipment, and his helter-skelter on two motor boats en-gardeing the decrepit site of the abandoned *Tschekmkin* under the Southern Lights.



In the grip of the ice—the Russian steamer *Tschekmkin*, and her captain.

Top left: The last rescue plane arriving at Olga Schabert with the women and children taken off the ice-floes after the wreck of the *Tschekmkin*.