

The
**MODERN
BOY**

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EVERY SATURDAY
WEEK ENDING
MAY 4TH 1935
N378 VOL15



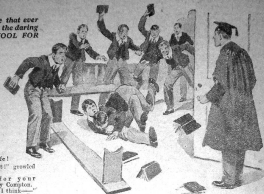
Up the Pole!
But He's Clever!



CAPTIVE OF THE FAGS!

The wildest scheme that ever entered the heads of the daring rebels of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS goes with a swing—a staggering swing—STAGGERS ALL ROUND!

By
CHARLES
HAMILTON



It's a Dog's Life!

"W HAT utter rot!" growled Bob Darrold.

"Thanks for your opinion!" yowled Aubrey Compton.
"Well," growled Bob. "I think—"
"Draw it out!" interposed Carter, the privileged guest of the Fifth.
"What do you mean, you ass?" growled Bob.

"I mean what I say, old bean!" answered Carter. He glanced round at the Fifth Form fellows. "I put it to you now—can Darrold's mental processes be described as thinking? Isn't he exaggerating?"

Whereupon there was a chuckle in the Fifth Form at High Coombe.

That chuckle reached the ears of Mr. Chard. He coughed. For was it from Peter Chard—Popularity Peter—to bother his Fifth Form in any way, if he could help it. He was not wont to barge in when they were enjoying a little conversation in class. But Chard, like all High Coombe, boys and masters, had been made to sit up and take notice since James McCann had become headmaster of the School for Slackers.

It was no use for Chard to turn a deaf ear unless McCann turned a deaf ear also. Which the Blighter, as they called McCann, never did. Sounds of movement from a Form-room during class might cause the Blighter to step in. And Chard bathed the new headmaster stepping into his Form-room, so he coughed a warning.

But the conversation went on, though in more subdued tones. It was exaggerating to have to make such a concession to the meddling Blighter. But what were fellows to do? McCann was headmaster and ruled with an iron hand. Aubrey Compton, the most reckless rebel in the School for Slackers, went on:

"It's time the Blighter was brought to book! How the governors ever came to appoint him headmaster is a mystery. They can't have known what they were doing."

"Set of old donkeys!" remarked

Teddy Seymour. "Except your paper, of course, Aubrey!"

"If my paper knew how the brute was carrying on here there would be rations at the next meeting of the Governors' Board," said Aubrey. "Well, he's going to know. I've given him a few hints on my letters and asked him to come down and see for himself. He's coming."

This was good news! Everybody at High Coombe, except Bob, kicked at the rule of James McCann. But they kicked in vain. The Blighter had them all under his thumb, and even in the Fifth Form work had become the order of the day. McCann expected results, and seemed determined to get them.

There was only one power greater than the Head—the Board of Governors, and Aubrey's sister, Celest Compton, was a very prominent and influential member of that body. If old Aubrey succeeded in getting his governors against the Blighter, surely the Blighter's number would be up.

The school was an Old Boy of High Coombe. The old school and its old traditions were dear to him. He could never approve of this new man upsetting traditions, and everything else. Once he saw how McCann was handling High Coombe all would—er should—be well! He would consult the staff—and every "Book" in the school would let him know that McCann was ruining High Coombe. Except perhaps Goggs, the science master, who was known to have a smacking admiration for the new Head.

"Aubrey, old out, I believe you've done it!" said Peverill. "I say, when is your governor coming?"

"May blow in any day this week,"

James McCann gave a jerk as a maliciously hurled book struck his chin and fell at his feet. "Oh, come on!" gasped Ferguson. "The Book!"



answered Compton. "I had his letter this mornin'. He's fearfully annoyed at some things I've told him. He can hardly believe that Fifth Form seniors are whipped like fags. I can tell you that when my governor comes down, he's coming on the war-path!"

"McCann's not the man to take much criticism, even from a governor!" growled Bob Darrold.

"Exactly!" agreed Aubrey. "I'm certain on that. McCann's the man to give him trouble, and lots of it. That's all that's needed to set my governor going!"

"It's a rotten idea!" growled Bob. "A row between the Head and the governors won't do the school any good."

"If there's a row they'll make him resign," said Aubrey. "And I fancy that that's what we want."

"Hear, hear!"

The prospect of McCann's resignation and departure caused a happy grin to dawn on nearly every face in the Fifth. If McCann went it was ten to one that Chard would step into his shoes. Days of lumpy slarking, evenings of breaking out of bounds, formed a delightful vista. Only it seemed too good to be true!

"Hem!" came from Mr. Chard again. The Fifth were forgetting caution—the heat of talk was rising once more. Some of the fellows had left their places—Aubrey was sitting on his desk with his feet on the form; Peverill was standing up, leaning on the wall with his hands in his pockets.

Captive of the Fags!

Popularity Peter did not want to bother his Form—anything but that—but the Blighter had a way of slipping in at the most awkward and inconvenient moments.

Even as Chard coughed the door opened, and a stocky young man, with very keen eyes, appeared in the doorway. It was the Head.

The sudden appearance of James McCann had an electrifying effect.

Mr. Chard, who was reading a letter at his desk instead of attending to his Form, slipped it hurriedly into a pocket of his gown, flushing like a schoolboy caught out by a Book. Aubrey Compton slid rapidly from his desk to his seat. Fowell blinked at the headmaster like a startled rabbit and dived for his form. In his haste he sprawled over Bob Darrell's legs, stumbled, and rolled. His head banged on the leg of a desk, and he roared, then scrambled up, red and confused, and gained his seat.

Mr. Chard was on his feet, red as a turkey-cock, yearning to hurl an inkpot at the face in the doorway. Instead of which, he had to shove McCann that he could keep order in his Form-room.

"Compton, take a hundred lines! Freerill, you are detained for an hour after three! Carter, you were talking!" Chard trumpeted.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Carter. "I—"
"Do not contradict me, Carter! Take two hundred lines!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Carter.

Mr. McCann, with an expressionless face, came up to the Form master's desk. He had looked in, it appeared, to speak to Chard on some trivial point in connection with the time-table. He was three minutes in the Form-room, during which a pin might have been heard to drop. And after he was gone, a pin might still have been heard to drop. Chard, conscious that he had fallen in the esteem of his Form, was fuming. During the remainder of that "school," he might almost have been McCann himself.

"Poor old Peter!" sighed Carter, when the Fifth came out in break.
"The Blighter's leader! him a dog's life—and he's possin' it on to us!"
"Wait till my governor hears in!" said Aubrey Compton, between his teeth.

The Fifth pinned their faith to that. It was the only gleam of sunshine in a murky sky.

Reaction in the Fourth!

CAPES, master of the Fourth, could have kicked himself. In a careless moment he had delivered himself, as it were, bound hand and feet, into the hands of the enemy. Caper was a younger man than most of the High Combe masters, but like nearly every other member of the staff, he loathed McCann. In his Form-room, Caper submitted to the new rule that something in the nature of work had to be done. The Fourth did not like it, and Caper let them see that he liked it no more than they did. Being

younger, he was less cautious than the older Beaks, and a careless moment found him out.

It had been Caper's happy custom to set his Form a paper and then stroll out of the Form-room leaving them to it. What the juniors put on their papers did not matter very much, so long as they did not worry Caper. If there was a "rag" during his absence, that did not matter, either—in the days of the Venerable Book, the late Head. It mattered a lot now!

Caper let the Fourth a paper that morning and scattered out. McCann was with the Sixth, booked for an hour, and not likely to come barging along. Besides, Caper intended to be absent for only about ten minutes. It was sheer ill-luck that he was absent for over half an hour. He happened to fall in with Mace, who had no class just then, and chat. Meanwhile, the Fourth were enjoying life.

For ten minutes they kept in their places and even gave some attention to their Latin papers. But as Caper did not return, the Fourth followed the example of the mice when the cat is away. If Caper had temporarily forgotten McCann, surely his Form might be excused for also forgetting that obnoxious young man!

Ferguson was the first out of his place. Loom and Bunn followed him, and they jolted Donkin with school books. Driven to desperation, the Donkey hurled a Latin grammar, which caught Fatty Pyc on the side of the head, missing the roggers by yards.

Fatty, at the moment, was negotiating a large drink of toffee. Backed off his form by the Latin grammar, Fatty rolled on the floor and the chunk of toffee slipped down his throat. Horrible gurgles came from him as he struggled for breath. Ferg rushed up to him, and thumped him on the back. Several other fellows came to the rescue in a similar way, till the wretched Fatty felt like a carpet that was being well beaten. He struggled and gurgled and gabbled.

"Urrgh! Leave off! Warrgh! I'm chock-chock-chock! Gurrgh!"

Pyc got rid of the toffee at last. With crimson face and watery eyes, he yelled:

"Who threw that book at me?"

"Oh, I say!" wailed the poor Donkey. "I did, you know, but I meant it for Ferguson!"

"Well, I don't mean this for Ferguson—I mean this for you!" roared Fatty, hurling himself on Donkin.

Chaped in a deadly embrace, they rolled over on the Form-room floor. The Fourth crowded round them, cheering. This was better than Latin papers. This was like old times—the good old times—the jolly old times!

"Go it, Donkey—punch him!" roared Ferguson.

"Give him beans, Fatty!" yelled Loom.

The Donkey, with a streaming nose, broke away. Fatty, flushed

with victory, rushed after him. Donkin fled among the desks, with Pyc in fever pursuit. Loud cheers and shouts encouraged both the hunter and the hunted. The din, deafening as it was, did not reach across the quad to Capes. It reached all the other Form-rooms, however—among them the Sixth Form Room, where the Sixth were suffering under McCann.

A form went over with a crash. Warning to the rag, Ferguson and his friends jolted both Pyc and Donkin with books, eliciting wild yells from both of them as the missiles landed. Another form crashed. The Donkey sprawled over it. Pyc sprawled over the Donkey, and a terrific roar of laughter went up. In the Sixth, Tregegar winked at Corlran. He fancied that the Sixth were going to get a rest. He was right. Leaving the entire to enjoy a much-needed respite, James McCann walked away to see what was happening in the Fourth.

He arrived at an exciting moment. Two forms were over, two juniors were occupying on the floor, and the rest of the Fourth were getting both of them. A dog-eared Virgil, recklessly hurled, landed on the chin of James McCann as he opened the door and stopped in. McCann gave a jump as the volume fell at his feet.

"Boys!" James McCann's voice was not loud, but it was deep.
"Oh, seniors!" gasped Ferguson.
"The Book!"

Instantly the din was stilled. Some of the juniors made a wild rush for the desks. Others stood spellbound where they were. Fatty Pyc's arm, drawn back for a punch on Donkin's already damaged nose, was arrested in transit. The Donkey sat up, blinking. James McCann, rubbing his chin, walked in.

"Go to your places!"
They went.

"Where is Mr. Caper?"
"He—he—he's not here, sir!" stammered Ferguson faintly.

James McCann walked to the Form-room window and put his head out into the sunlight. Across the quad two figures were in view—silhouetted old Mace and Capes.

Between fager and thumb Caper held a cigarette, half smoked. His head being partly turned towards the House, he remained quite unconscious of a grim face looking from his Form-room window. But Mace, looking past him, spotted that face, and started violently.

Mace was speaking, but he was so startled by the sight of James McCann's face in the distance, and his food, grim game, that he broke off, suddenly silent, his mouth still open. Caper, surprised, stared at him, wondering what was the matter with him. Then he saw McCann.

The cigarette dropped from Caper's fingers. He caught his breath, the red flushing into his face. He glanced up at the clock-tower over Chard's rooms, and realized what he had done. He had been half an hour out of his Form-room, and McCann had burst in—or had something

drawn him there? Knowing his Fern—especially the Justice Fern—Capes divided what might have drawn McCann there. Breathing hard, he walked quickly back to the House.

JAMES McCANN turned from the window as Capes came into the Fourth Farm Room. His first glance showed Capes that his worst anticipations were more than realized. There had been a rag—a tremendous rag. Two overturned boxes, books scattered all over the shop, Dunkin wiping a crimson nose with a water-spotted handkerchief, Pye Minkling with a half-closed eye, and all the Ferns red and conscious and apprehensive. One glance was enough for Capes.

"[—I—]—" Capes stammered. "I—I stopped out for a few minutes, sir."

"I observe," said Mr. McCann, "that you did!" And he walked back to the South Farm Room.

The Fourth looked at Capes. Capes looked at the Fourth. Jimmy McCann was not the man to rag a member in the presence of his boys. But all the Fourth knew that Capes was going to have a bad quarter of an hour, later, on the carpet in the Head's study.

Capes could have kicked himself! To give that out, that letter, that badge, a handle against him! Why, the man was capable of dismissing him. And Capes did not want to go. Like all the other Books, he had talked of going since McCann had come. But nobody had gone—nobody really meant to go if he could help it. Capes, in a cold perspiration, wondered whether he would be able to help it!

"Awfully sorry, sir!" stammered Ferguson. Fern's keen brain read the master like a book. He was really sorry. He knew that Capes, on his own, would have pretended not to notice that there had been a rag of all in his absence. The Fourth, unintentionally, had landed their Book in a fearful row.

Capes' reply was unexpected. He picked up the cane from his desk.

The Fourth eyed that unusual proceeding with alarm.

"Ferguson," said Mr. Capes. "I think you were the ringleader in this! You will stand up, Ferguson, and bend over your desk."

"But, sir—" gasped the dismayed Fern.

"Bend over your desk!" rapped Capes, in a voice that made Ferguson jump to obey.

His wheels rang like six pistol shots through the Fourth Farm Room. Fern went through it manfully, though he had to grit his teeth to keep back wild howls. The rest of the Fourth looked on in consternation. Was this Capes—old Capes that they knew, or thought they knew?

Capes laid down the cane. The rest of that "school" passed dimly enough for the Fourth. Capes was worried and angry and suspicious. The Fourth were worried and angry and resentful. The trustful confidence between master and boy, so long and so happily estab-



Fern got busy! Presently the Head's study door would be safe from anything but a talking visit!

lished at High Combe, seemed to be gone. Three Capes handed out letters, and looked as if he meant to ask for them to be shown up—a very unpleasant novelty. When the hour struck, the Ferns were obliged to get away from Capes as he was to get rid of them.

Capes Drops a Hint!

AUBREY COMPTON smiled, and his smile was reflected on other faces in Big Study—a member of the Sixth and Fifth were there. Capes, leaning in at the window, was telling a story of his own schoolboy life. It was "after three," when High Combe rested from the labours of the day and dished out of Fern instead of stinking in Fern. Capes, sauntering in the sunny quad, had stopped at the big bay window to speak to the fellows hanging in Big Study. He affected a sort of half-fellow-well-met attitude towards senior men, as if he were almost one of themselves. He prided himself on having nothing of the Book about him.

On this occasion, every man in Big Study wanted to be nice to Capes. Everybody knew that he had "had his hair combed" by the Blighter for a study in his Fern-room that morning. Corkran of the Sixth had seen him leave the Head's study, looking quite pale, and everybody knew that he had been through it. A man who suffered under the Blighter was a man whom all High Combe delighted to lounge. The seniors in Big Study

made this clear by a pleasant and dattering politeness when Capes stopped at the window. They made it clear that Capes had their moral support, for want that was worth.

But there was something slightly awkward in Aubrey's smile, all the same. Capes was telling a story of a rag. An obnoxious master had been screwed up in his study. Windows and door had been screwed, and the hapless man had been a prisoner for hours before he got released. Big Study smiled at the story, but there was a tincture of caution in Aubrey's smile, and Corker winked at Seymour. If Capes supposed that any man there was going to play cat-and-mouse and pull his chestnuts out of the fire, Capes was in error!

Having told his entertaining story, Capes strode away—hoping that the seed had fallen in fertile soil.

It had! For he had had another listener as well as the seniors in Big Study. Ferguson, of his own Fern, leaning on an adjacent oak, had been drinking in every word. Fern's eyes glowed as he listened. When Capes went, Fern headed for the Burrow to discuss matters with his pals.

"Who's gone to screw up the Bent?" asked Corker of the Fifth, in Big Study, when Capes was gone.

There was a laugh. "The man's an oak!" said Corkran, "talkin' that rot before a prefect. Somebody here's got to take Capes' hint," he said finally. "The man's an oak! We're all sorry he's had his" (Continued on page 19)

Captive of the Fags!

(Continued from page 13)

hair combed by the Blighter, but if he wants McCann screwed up, he can jolly well do it himself. Aubrey, old man, if you're fast enough to think of it, take my tip, and don't!"

"No fear!" Aubrey Compton laughed. "Capers is an ass! Besides, I'm expectin' my governor to blow in to-morrow, and I'm hopin' he will get paid to the Blighter." No screwin' up for me."

Capers' hint had fallen on stony ground in Big Study. But in the Barrow the soil was more fertile. In that apartment, Ferguson was in deep consultation with Pyc and Loom and Bunn. Ferg did not mention that he had got the hint from Capes. He elaborated it in the Barrow as his own idea—his very own. He was not going to lose any of the credit and the glory.

"It's jolly risky," remarked Pyc.

"Who's afraid?" demanded Ferg.

Pyc and Loom and Bunn were, but nothing would have induced them to admit as much.

"Besides, it's not so jolly risky," went on Ferg. He was chummy as well as fearless. "We've got the run of the carpenter's shop, and can buy all the things we want, and nobody the wiser. McCann goes for his walk at six every day, regular as clockwork. Who's going to worry us while the Blighter's looking it on the Brake's Grid?" Ferg chuckled. "Not Capes, you bet."

"But we can't screw the Blighter up in his study while he's out of his study," argued Patsy Pyc.

Ferg gave him a pitying look.

"If you'd use your ears instead of your chin, Patsy, you'd learn more sense and talk less trash," he said.

"We've got to get ready, and it will take time! You try driving a gimlet into hard oak—unless you want, I can tell you! And think McCann wouldn't spot us if he was in the room? Of course he would. He's a rightish beast, but he's no fool!"

"Then what?" asked Bunn.

"We get the holes all ready for the screws," said the astute Ferg. "Then, when the time comes, we simply have to drive the screws in."

"Suppose he spots the gimlet-holes," objected Patsy, the duncie.

"Suppose you show up and listen to your Uncle Ferg! We plug the gimlet-holes with putty or something, so that they don't show."

Pyc and Loom and Bunn gazed at John Andrew Ferguson in almost breathless admiration. Brain, if you like!

"Walk till six," said Ferg, settling down.

Eagerly they waited till six.

Jimmy McCann was as regular in his movements as the big clock in the tower over Chard's rooms. From five to six he worked in his study. At six he left and tramped down the rugged path into the coombe—the Brake's Grid, or the Masters' Walk, so it was called. The last stroke of six had hardly died away when the Head was seen to leave the House.

Five members of the Fourth Form were already provided with the

strangest gimlets they could root out of the carpenter's shop. McCann safely of the same, they weighed in.

McCann's study door, like most study doors, opened inwards. This might have presented difficulties to a less astute brain than Ferg's. Ferg took it in his stride, so to speak. Big, strong screw-eyes could be screwed into the solid oak of the door, then screws could be passed through them, screwed deep into the Board! Once that was done, no human force exerted on the door from within would pull it open.

The enterprising four had the corridor to themselves. If any man of High Coombe, boy or master, suspected that a trick was going to be played on the Blighter, that man was only likely to wish the jagers good hunting.

The holes were duly bored and plugged. It was, as Ferg had warned his comrades, hard work. But they stuck it manfully. Having finished with the door they went out into the quad and attended to the window. Happily, the big oak-tree near the Head's window screened them to a great extent. But Ferg, master of the Shell, certainly noticed that something was going on when he passed, and Randal of the Sixth, strolling in the quad, busily wondered what the young buggers were up to. Neither Ferg nor Randal cared to look into the matter, however. Even the majestic Chard, rolling by, after a state of astonishment at the busy boys, went on unregarding, a fowler of a smile on his face. Some of the Fifth actually came to look on, and walked away laughing.

Once more, holes were plugged. Everything was ready now for screwing up the Head. It would be quick work to drive the screws into the holes already prepared. Tired, with palms a little blistered, but feeling that they deserved well of their comrades, Ferg & Co. finished their task, put the gimlets back in their places, and grinned jealously when they saw McCann come in from his walk, unsuspecting.

Jimmy McCann had been eyes—very keen indeed. But he noticed nothing. Gimlet-holes plugged with putty dabbed over with dark stain did not show up on dark oak in a rather dusky corridor. Neither did they show up on the outside of the window frames—had the Head dreamed of looking there. Ah was going well—couldn't be going better! The only doubtful point was just when the Blighter should be screwed in. That point had to be settled very carefully. Ferg consulted over the timetable, and settled it.

"The Sixth are up to Mace for history in second school to-morrow," he told his fellow-conspirators. "The Blighter won't be with the Sixth; ten to one, in his study—the frame's always working. That's where we come in."

"But we shall be in Form with Capes," objected Patsy Pyc.

"Haven't you ever forgotten a book or a map?" asked Ferg, anxiously. "Easy enough to get out of the Form-room, with Capes! Now that the holes are ready for the screws, it's a

one-man job, and easy. I shall have the screws in one pocket and the screwdriver in another when we go into Form for second school. I forgot a map, and got leave to fetch it—what?"

Again his comrades regarded him with breathless admiration.

"If he's in his study, I shall hear him," continued Ferg. "I drive in the screws and leave him to it. He will hammer and bang to be let get—what? We may hear him from the Form-room! What ho! ho!"

And the conspirators chuckled jealously.

Quite a number of fellows at High Coombe were anticipating the morrow keenly. Aubrey Compton and his friends in the Fifth looked forward to the coming of Colcord Compton with high hope. Sixth Form men shared their hope. Mr. Chard, who, of course, knew, trusted that good might come of it. But in the Fourth they weren't thinking about any old school governor. They were thinking of Ferg's bold plan for screwing-up the Head in his study.

Did Capes know or suspect anything? Certainly he started very hard when two or three screws dropped from one of Ferguson's pockets in the Fourth Form Room in the morning. But after staring he scowled his eyes and made no remark. And when, in second school, Ferg discovered that he had forgotten to bring in a map, and asked leave to go and fetch it, Capes gave him leave at once. And the Fourth found Capes in a particularly good humour after Ferg had gone.

Prisoner in the Study!

JIMMY McCANN was far from satisfied with Mace. Mr. Mace, at seventy, had dentitions accumulated vast stores of knowledge. If so, he had long forgotten the art of communicating the same to a younger generation. Mace, in history, was taken as a joke at the School for Stockers. Nobody ever thought of listening to him. Generally, he deced through a class. When the Sixth were with Mace they thought and talked of all sorts of things—except history. They would have considered it rather a nerve if Mace had interrupted them.

Jimmy had come to High Coombe with irrepressible changes and returns in his head. But he did not want to seek anybody; he hated the thought of any man at High Coombe having real cause to wish that he had never come. Jimmy was in the position of a craftsman with a very poor set of tools. But the tools being human, and Jimmy being very human indeed, his idea was to make the best of them and not to throw them aside unless they proved absolutely hopeless. Jimmy had a far kinder heart than High Coombe gave him credit for. Bucking up a master of Mace's copyright notes was no easy task, even for the energetic Jimmy; but he was going to do his best. And assuredly he was not going to let Mace annoy in the Sixth Form Room.

Thus it came to pass that in second

which that morning, when Jimmy handed over the Sixth to Mace, he did not leave the Form-room.

The idea, as he politely told Mace, was to study a change of method; for even Mace could hardly deny that the Sixth were woefully deficient in his subject. Mace was displeased, but subsisting. The Sixth were enraged. They considered it luck when an interruption came.

Liggins, the house-porter, put his head into the Form-room, while an unhappy Mace was dealing with a discontented Fern.

"The net interrupt class," barked Jimmy. "Go away at once!"
"Colonel Compton, sir—"

THERE was a stir in the Sixth. This meant that old Aubrey's governor had tricked in. They exchanged joyful glances. They were going to get a happy rest, with an unannounced Mace, while the Blighter was having his hair combed by old Aubrey's governor!

"Colonel Compton has called, sir, and wishes to see you," stammered Liggins. "I've showed him into your study, sir."

"Inform Colonel Compton that I am now engaged with the Sixth Form, Liggins," said Jimmy McCann, "and that I shall be glad to see him, if he cares to wait till I am at leisure. And do not return here."

"Yessir!" gasped Liggins. He almost bellered away.

The Sixth did not know whether to believe their ears. McCann was Head, certainly. But keeping a governor of the school waiting—and such a tremendous big gun as Colonel Compton. Had he really the nerve?

Evidently he had. It was plain that he had dismissed Colonel Compton entirely from his mind. It was Jimmy's way to concentrate on the matter in hand—and the matter in hand now was history with the Sixth. Corkran & Co. drew consolation from the reflection that the longer the colonel had to wait, the madder he would get, making things all the worse for the Blighter in the long run.

Liggins hardly dared to convey Jimmy's message to the great man waiting in the Head's study. However, he had to do it, and he did. Colonel Compton, standing on Jimmy's hearthrug, was a commanding figure—tall, grim, stiff as a ramrod, with a bristly white mustache and knitted white brows—knitted a little more on the right than on the left to keep his eyeslugs in position. He glared at Liggins, as the house-porter told him.

Colonel Compton did not, perhaps, like his son, regard the new Head as a "dashed nigger." But he had arrived without notification, at a time convenient to himself, undoubtedly expecting to see the headmaster on the spot. He had to wait! He was not accustomed to being kept waiting. He threw himself into an armchair, crossed his long legs, and waited, frowning. Liggins drew the door shut and went.

The colonel picked up a newspaper. He rather glared at it than perused

it. The handling of the paper reached a keen ear which, about ten minutes later, was bent at the Head's door.

Ferguson grinned. He was fairly certain that the Blighter would be in his study in second school. But, of course, he had to be sure before he screwed him in. Now he was sure. Somebody was in the study, handling papers. Who but McCann?

Ferg got busy. Nobody else was out of Fern. He had the corridor to himself. Screw-eyes were screwed into the gimbal holes already prepared along the bottom of the door. Screws were driven into the holes already prepared in the door, through the spigots of the screw-eyes. The door was now safe from anything but a battering-ram.

Ferg slipped out into the quad and dashed as he approached the Head's window. But there was no sign of anyone looking out from within.

Screws after screws were driven into the holes ready in the easement frames. The window was now as safe as the door.

Bucking low, Ferg scuttled along

Owing to lack of space, our Car Badge feature has had to be held over this week. It will appear again in

Our Special ROYAL JUBILEE ISSUE on sale FRIDAY NEXT!

the wall and vanished. A few minutes later he walked back into the Fourth Form Room, with the map he had so conveniently forgotten. Capes made no remark on the length of time that he had been gone.

Ferg exchanged a look of intelligence with his friends. Jopsis grin ran along the Fourth.

Meanwhile, the colonel waited, his irritation growing.

He threw down the paper at last and paced to and fro in the study, his brows knitted more and more. He had been kept waiting half an hour!

All that Aubrey had said in his letters about this new man was doubtless well founded. The man was a boulder—a barge—not the man for High Combe. And his taxi from Orkham, which he had kept, was taking off cash all the time! Grimmer and grimmer grew the colonel's brow.

He had come to see McCann—to hear what the man had to say for himself, if anything! Well, by Jove, if the man did not choose to see him, that was that! He was waiting as long. When the fellow chose to come, he would find him gone. And

he would have something to say, by Jove, at the next meeting of the governors. In exactly the mood in which Aubrey would have been delighted to see him, Colonel Compton strode to the door, grasped the knob, and dragged. The door did not open.

He wrenched. Still it did not open. Exerting himself, he wrenched again. It was useless. The door did not budge. Breathing hard, Colonel Compton stood back and stared at it.

What was the matter with the dashed thing? It was not locked. The key was on the inside. But it would not open. Jammed, somehow. He went to the bell and pressed it, keeping his thumb on it to make it ring continuously. He was nearly boiling by this time.

There was a tap at the door. He heard the door-handle turn. Old Liggins' voice piped from the corridor. "You rang, sir?"

"Open that door!" roared Colonel Compton. "What dashed trick is being played here? Open that door!"

"Please unlock it, sir!" gasped old Liggins. As the door would not yield to a push, Liggins could only conclude that it was locked on the inside.

"It is not locked!" roared the colonel.

"But—but it won't open, sir!" gasped Liggins.

"Fool! Open it!"

"I can't!"

"Idiot!" Colonel Compton wrenched from within. Liggins pushed firm without. The door did not budge.

The colonel gave it up at last. He crossed to the window and stared out. It was easy enough to step out that way. He dragged at the window.

It did not open. There were several small casements in the big window and only one large enough to admit the passage of a man. That was the one that would not open. With a purple face, the colonel wrenched and shoved, pulled and pushed. A loud crack rewarded him. A pane had gone. But the window remained as fast as the door.

Colonel Compton desisted at last. He realized that he was a prisoner in the study. He realized, too, that all this jamming of window and door could not be accidental. It was trickery of some sort. Trickery—schoolboy japing—perpetrated on him, Colonel Compton, an important member of the Governing Board! The dashed young scoundrels who had done this should be flogged till they bled! He tramped across to the door again.

"Here, you!" he barked.

"Yes, sir!" piped old Liggins.

"Go and fetch the headmaster!

Tell him I've been fastened up in his dashed study! Do you hear? Go!"

Liggins went. But he did not go to the Sixth Form Room. He dared not, after McCann had told him not to.

Colonel Compton waited. It was still a quarter of an hour to the end of second school. He waited three minutes—then, spluttering, he began to bang on the door with his walking stick. Bang, bang, bang!

The din rang through the House.

Captive of the Fags!

In the Fourth Form Room they heard H. and Ferg & Co. grained joyously, and Capes smiled. In the Fifth they guessed that somebody had taken Capes' hint and appeared up the Road. Cjagel said no head to the hanging. If McCann was a prisoner in his study it was no business of Chad's! Bang, bang, bang!

In the Sixth they started and stared. They, at all events, knew that the Blighter had not been screwed in, for he was there! They could only wonder. Mr. McCann frowned. The uproar was pandling and annoying. But McCann carried on till the end of the lesson. Then he went to investigate.

Bang, bang, bang! The terrific din guided him to his own study.

"It's Colonel Compton, sir!" stammered Liggins. "Looked 'nuff in your study, sir, and banging and shouting to be let out, sir!"

Bang, bang, bang! The banging was followed by a frenzied roar:

"Will you let me out of this room? I'll smash the dashed door if it's not opened!" Bang, bang, bang!

"Colonel Compton!" gasped Mr. McCann.

"Is that McCann? Let me and!" howled the colonel. "What the dickens do you mean, sir, by letting your boys play such monkey-tricks?"

Mr. McCann stood for one moment dumfounded. Then he investigated—and called to Liggins:

"Fetch a screw-driver, Liggins, and remove these screws! Colonel Compton, I very much regret that some foolish boy must have screwed the door—a matter of minutes, sir, to release you."

It was more than a matter of minutes. Long, strong screws, driven in to the head, wanted some shifting. Liggins laboured with the screw-driver while the colonel fumed within. Both ends of the corridor were packed with staring faces.

Ferguson almost fell down when he saw McCann standing outside the door. Who, then, had he screwed up? When he learned, Ferg crept away, looking quite sick. Aubrey Compton was there—his face a picture! What effort was this going to have on his governor?

The door opened at last, and Colonel Compton strode out. His voice echoed like thunder down the corridor:

"Mr. McCann? I demand instant investigation—the accused punished—no flogging, sir, the accused flogging!"

The crowd faded away!

It was absolutely rotten luck. Colonel Compton had been dragged in as a help against the iron rule of the Blighter, and so far from regarding McCann's as an iron rule he emphatically expressed his opinion that that rule was too gentle and suggesting for High Coscote and suggesting for High Coscote when the young scoundrels ventured to play such dashed tricks on a governor of the school!

When he departed in his fact he was still snarling and convinced that the old school wanted a strong man to pull it together—his only doubt being whether James McCann was sufficiently strong!

Young Ferg has a great deal of ability, especially in the subject of screwing. He was the first to suggest that the door of the Fourth Form should be screwed up, giving the Fifth Form the time of their lives!

Biggles and the Blue Orchid!

(Continued from page 12)

slowly with the current down a broad river. Recollection of what had happened came back to him with a rush, and he crawled with difficulty to the cockpit. The first thing he saw was Algy's face, nose-tipped, and gray with the pallor of death, in the pilot's seat. Smyth's face downward, was sprawled across him. At first he thought they were both dead, but a closer examination revealed that they were both breathing faintly.

Ripping off his jacket, he trailed it in the water for a moment, and then held it over them. With difficulty he hoisted the unconscious form of Smyth on to the hull, under the coarvescence, and contrived to get the other into a sitting position in the seat.

Algy opened his eyes slowly and stared at him.

"Water?" he gasped, and Biggles wrung out the coat, allowing the drops to fall into the open mouth. Algy stirred and moved himself into a more comfortable position, still staring at his partner with wide-open eyes. "What was it?" he whispered.

"Bang on, kiddie," said Biggles. "Let me see to Smyth."

In a few minutes he had brought him round, tucked to the bank, and moved the machine to a projecting rock. He then made a pot of coffee, and the steaming liquid went far to restore them to normal, although they were all violently sick. Up to this time, no one had mentioned the professor.

"Where did he go?" asked Algy quietly at last.

"Biggles shook his head. "I don't even know how I got here," he said.

"Neither do I," replied Algy. "I saw you staggering about, and then you fell down. I remember raming up and starting to drag you towards the lake, and that's all I know."

"I saw you dragging him," broke in Smyth, "and then you fell down, too. I was being sick, but I managed to haul you both to the machine and get you aboard. I just remember dropping Mr. Lacey into the cockpit and cutting the mooring-ropes, and then I must have packed up, too."

"Thanks, Smyth," said Biggles quietly. "We were both panics if you hadn't done that. My hat! That's how the collector—Hutson—went out. But the point is, where are we? We shall have to go back and look for the professor."

They started the engine and taxied back upstream.

"The trouble is," said Biggles after a while, "we don't know how long we were unconscious, or which of these tributaries we came down. It might have been any one of these." He pointed to rivers on either bank which flowed into the main stream.

By evening they had still failed to find the lake, and Biggles was getting worried about the petrol they were using.

"We can't go on like this," he observed. "If we find a long, straight stretch of water I'm going to try to get her off; we shall be able to see where we are from the air, but, frankly, I don't think it's much use looking for poor Smiley. We can't just leave him, though."

A fairly straight stretch of water, terminating in a cataract, came into view as they rounded the next bend, and Biggles eyed it grimly.

"Well," he said, "that settles it. We didn't come over that waterfall. We are on the Bend, and we must have drifted in from one of these

tributaries we passed. Heaven knows which one it was. It's getting dark; we'd better tie the up while we can and get off again as soon as it is light."

THE following morning Biggles tacked up as far as the cataract to make sure there were no obstructions on the water, and then roared down the stream, throttle wide open. There was a slight breeze in their favour, and the Vandal came off the water without effort.

They saw the lake almost at once, and Algy pointed with outstretched finger. It lay a few miles away to the left, but it was not that which made Biggles push up his goggles and stare in stunned consternation.

"Were you smoking when you fell?" yelled Algy above the roar of the engine.

Biggles nodded.

"Then your cigarette must have started the fire—the place was like tinder."

Again the pilot nodded and watched the scene below, where for miles a fire was raging over the area of the dead trees. Sparks were falling in showers into the lake. Great blackened areas, still smouldering, showed where the fire had already burnt itself out, or died as it came in contact with the living forest. A mighty cloud of smoke rose high into the air and billowed away across the low-tops.

Biggles caught Algy's eye and shook his head; sadly he turned the nose of the machine towards the distant mountains.

Biggles is going to handle something which promises to be a success, and he is not alone in doing this for Two Fortunes Next Friday. In "Sunday's Express."