

**WHO HOLDS
THE RAIL-
SPEED
RECORD?**

The
**MODERN
BOY**
2^D

EVERY SATURDAY
WEEK ENDING
MAY 18TH 1935
BY BOB HOPE



"We'll put his head in a bag and tie him up . . . it CAN'T go wrong!" . . . There's not a flaw in the Sixth's daring scheme to make the New Head of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS squirm!



Not a word was spoken as the Fifth Form men struggled with the figure with the bag over its head. The thing was done!

THE PREFECTS' REVOLT!

Pale with Rage!

CORRAN of the Sixth was pale with rage.

He was a great man at High Combe—slack, no doubt; but then everybody was slack at the School for Slackers. He was not great at games, neither did he shine in class. Nor did he distinguish himself by keeping order among the lags.

Often an uproar from the Barrow—the juniors' quarters—would echo as far as Big Study, and Corby would take no heed.

Nevertheless, Corby was a great man—head prefect—and much admired and liked in his Form, and in the Fifth. But if he had been the least-liked fellow at High Combe, he would have jumped into popularity at a bound as soon as it was known that McCann had a down on him.

It was only necessary for James McCann, the new headmaster, to be down on somebody for that somebody to receive the hearty support and sympathy of the whole school.

High Combe rallied round Corby as one man.

That, so far as it went, was grateful and comforting. But it was no material help. If calling McCann a blighter, a barge, a beast, and a bender had been a remedy, Corby's

By

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was would have been straddled rapidly. But Jimmy McCann went evenly on his way, regardless of what he was called, and the woe of Corby remained unremedied.

The hat had gone forth! Corbran, head prefect, was no longer head prefect—no longer a prefect at all! He had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

High Combe could hardly believe it at first. McCann had made many changes, and had made himself thoroughly disagreeable all round—to boys and to masters. In Common-room he was loathed; in the Form-rooms he was hated with a tremendous hatred. Fellows who turned out promptly at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning could hardly credit that only a few short weeks ago they had turned out when they jolly well liked.

Masters who popped into their Form-rooms on the stroke of time looked back with sad regret to the days of the late headmaster, the Venerable Beak, when they had strolled along to take their classes

at any old time. From end to end of the School for Slackers the indomitable energy of the new Beak ran like an electric current.

All that was bad enough—a deplorable break with old traditions. But this—

The august body of prefects, at least, had considered themselves fairly safe from the meddling of the Blighter McCann. Even a Beak who was no ready to whip a Fifth Form senior as a lag of the Fourth might have been expected to be a bit tactful with the Sixth, especially with the prefects, the cream of the Sixth. And now McCann's heavy hand had come down on Corbran, head prefect.

Why? Everybody knew. It was because the man was a boomer, a barge, an outsider, a million-dollar blighter! Having abolished fagging for the Fifth, he was now starting on the Sixth. And it was like his dastard impudence to pick out the head of the Sixth to begin on.

Of course, he pretended to have reasons; indeed, Darrell of the Fifth declared boldly in Big Study that his reasons were jolly good. Darrell's arguments did not convince the other seniors. They had not a convincing but an intensely expostulating effect.

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The Prefects' Revolt!

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They caused a sack of Sixth and Fifth to collar Darrell and hurl him forth from Big Study on his back. How gladly the frustrated High Countess would have served McCann with the same measure! But that, alas! was impossible.

McCann's reasons, which seemed good to Bob Darrell but to nobody else, might have seemed good to quite a lot of fellows at any school but the School for Slackers. Corky was shocked—as if that mattered! He cut well—as if that mattered! He cut well—as if that mattered! He cut well—as if that mattered! He cut well—as if that mattered! He cut well—as if that mattered!

The Venerable Head had never barged into fellows' studies; he might have made all sorts of discoveries if he had! But he never had. Chard, master of the Fifth, never barged in unexpectably. He, too, might have made discoveries in Fifth Form rooms—which, perhaps, he preferred to leave unmade! McCann barged because he was a barge!

Corky, fairly caught, had been overwhelmed with confusion. But even then he had hardly expected as drastic a sentence. Corky could hardly believe that he was no longer head prefect—no longer a prefect at all. The power of the asphalt had departed from him. Not that he ever used the asphalt—or hardly ever—but it was the symbol of greatness. And now it was gone! Corky was now an ordinary common or garden member of the Sixth Form—merely that and nothing more.

Too was, the Sixth breathed wrath and indignation. Tredegar, captain of the school, declared that something had to be done. Coffin, Long, Carver—all prefects, fully agreed. Randal, the latest man at High Counts, was almost energetic in taking the same view. Randal was a prefect, and if a prefect was to be dropped or for slacking, the prospect for Randal was rather dubious.

It was, Randal declared, a time for all the Sixth to stand together and show the Righter that he couldn't get away with this—or, at the very least, make him sit up straight and thoroughly, as a warning that there was a limit to what the school would stand.

Corky was an easy-going fellow. The way he carried out his duties as a prefect was proof of that. But the warms will turn! Fellows who saw Corky after the sentence had fallen on him said that he was pale—actually pale—with rage.

But long after he had recovered his accustomed sunny complexion the rage survived. Corky told the Sixth that he was not going to take this lying down. The Sixth agreed that he shouldn't, and wouldn't! The only question was how was that out-

raged and indignant Form to get back on McCann?

Getting back on McCann was a frightfully difficult task. Compton of the Fifth had been carrying on a sort of guerrilla warfare with him ever since he had blown in. But Compton had not had a lot of luck. From good fortune, or sagacity, or something or other, the Righter always seemed to come out on top.

Compton, shrewd as he was, was the bracing man—head and front of the determined resistance to McCann and all his works. If Aubrey Compton failed to make the Righter sit up, what chance had poor old Corky?

Little or none, it seemed. All sorts of things were wildly and hotly discussed in Big Study—from ducking McCann in the fountain to barging him out of the Sixth Form Room next time he came to take that Form. But even as they talked the High Counts seniors knew that it was all hot air. They knew that they didn't want to be asked, and that the power of the sack was in the Head's hands.

And in all probability the whole thing would have faded out in wild talk, especially as the holidays were close at hand and were now occupying a good deal of thought—but for the fact that Aubrey Compton suddenly saw his chance!

"What's the Row?"

"**T**HE row!" said Aubrey Compton, the dandy of the Fifth, as he sat in Study No. 3.

Teddy Seymour nodded. Bob Darrell grinned.

Neither of them needed to ask to whom Aubrey was alluding. Fancy names of that kind were applied to only one person in High Counts. And there was only one boy in the studies at present—the disgrace of Corkman of the Sixth!

"The warms!" went on Aubrey. "Oh, chuck it!" said Bob, still rather ruffled from his sudden and violent exit from Big Study. "Give us a rest, Aubrey. What's the good of gossaming? If McCann was collared with Corky as head prefect, he wouldn't be fit to be a headmaster! You know it as well as I do."

Aubrey's eyes glowered. He did know it as well as Bob did; but he was not prepared to acknowledge it. Friendship in Study No. 3, infinite and indissoluble, had often trembled in the balance since the arrival of the new Head.

"You said that in Big Study, Bob!" remarked Compton.

"It was the truth!" granted Bob. "Nobody likes old Corky more than I do, but what's the good of pretending he's any good as a prefect?"

"The rain chucked you out for it!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you want to leave this study in the same way—"

Bob Darrell stood up. His temper, as intended, was already ruffled. His blue eyes glowered.

"Six or seven fellows looked me out of Big Study!" he said. "If there's any man in the study who

thinks he can serve me the same I'll ask him to get on with it."

Compton rose also.

"Say another word for that rotten ear McCann, and you go out of this study on your neck!" he snapped.

"McCann's not a rotten ear, and you know it!" retorted Bob. "He's a man, and a real man, and the kind of man that this dreary old place wants to wake it up."

Aubrey's eyes flashed and he started round the table. Up jumped Teddy Seymour.

"Chuck it, you men!" protested Teddy. "No rage in the study! Sit down, Aubrey, you men—sit down, Bob, you fellows!"

Teddy, the peace-maker, shoved Bob with one hand, Aubrey with the other. They sat down rather suddenly as he showed—Aubrey unfortunately missing his chair and landing on the floor. "Bump!"

"You silly ass!" roared Compton. Bob chuckled.

"Silly, Aubrey, old man!" gasped Teddy. "But look here—"

Compton was on his feet in a twinkling and coming round the table at Bob. Bob, mindful of the friendship that his angry pal seemed to have forgotten, backed away.

"Chuck it, old man!" he said. "Look here, it's no hurry of ours what goes on in the Sixth! Stand back, you men!"

Teddy rushed between, just in time. Compton was already punching. However, it is said, saw the peace-makers—but Teddy Seymour did not feel particularly blessed at that moment as he caught the punch that was intended for Bob. It landed with a loud crack on the side of his head, and Teddy went spinning.

Cosh! The table rocked as Teddy banged on it. Corky slid and cracked. Teddy roared:

"Ow! Blow you! Waw!"

Seymour rubbed his head. He was too busy for some moments to do any more gossaming! Never, however, had a peace-maker been more needed in Study No. 3. Trouble had threatened almost daily in that study since the coming of McCann. Now it had arrived.

"Now, you cheeky rotter!"

"Now, you silly ass!"

They were fighting.

Teddy, still rubbing his head, gazed on in dismay. So far, he had managed to keep the peace—with difficulty! Now the peace was as thoroughly broken as the crockery that had shivered off the rocking table.

"Chuck it, I tell you!" gasped Teddy.

TRAMP! TRAMP! PUNCH! PUNCH!

Now they had closed, and Aubrey was whisking Bob towards the door. He was going to chuck him out of Study No. 3, as he had been chucked out of Big Study! That was what he discovered by standing up for McCann, and that was what he was going to get. A fellow who let his friends down—weller who stood up for the unspeakable Righter and uttered words in his defence when the whole school was breathing indignation!

Bob spun to the door. It was half-open, and Aubrey kicked it wide open. But there Bob halted.

The struggling figures parted, and a whirling form went headlong on the landing and crashed.

But it was not Bob's.

It was Aubrey's!

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Teddy.

Compton sat up dazedly. A dozen fellows stared out of the Fifth Form studies. Carter, Fessell, Burke, Durance, came running up the short stair to the No. 3 landing.

"What's the row?" exclaimed Carter.

He gave the gasping Aubrey a hand up. Compton leaned on him, panting for breath. Bob Darrell stood in the doorway with a knitted brow, his hands hard clenched. One word from Aubrey and he was booked for the raggings of his life! He knew that.

The fellows only needed to hear that he had been speaking up for McCann—at that moment, of all moments, when the School for Stickers thrilled with indignation and rage from end to end—and they would hurl themselves on him as one man and almost lynch him.

"What's the row?" repeated several voices.

Bob's face clenched harder. It was coming now! Aubrey, panting, ruffled, his beautiful legs crumpled, a button gone from his inconceivable waistcoat, looked at him. Bob's eyes glistened defiance.

Then Aubrey spoke, "Notin', old beans!" he said lightly. "Only berkin'!"

He went back into Study No. 3 and shut the door. Bob stared at him, Teddy Seymour grinned with relief, Study No. 3 sat down to tea again. Slowly a grin dawned on Bob's face.

"Sorry, Aubrey, you old ass!" he said.

"Pathetic!" said Aubrey.

"But look here, old chap," said Bob earnestly, "never mind what you think of McCann and what I think of him—deep clear of trouble with the man! It's no history of ours what happens in the Sixth. I can see what you've got in your mind—you're taking this up for Corky. Wash it out, old chap!"

Aubrey shrugged his shoulders.

The Striving Man!

"SAFE!" repeated Corkran dubiously.

"Safe as houses!" said Aubrey Compton.

"Um!" said Corky.

They were in Corkran's study—half a dozen of the Sixth and Compton of the Fifth. It was a large, handsome room, like all the Sixth Form studies at Highcombe. Corkran stood before the fireplace, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets. A tall, rather handsome figure, Corky was as tall as the new Head—though he had felt fearfully small when McCann had interviewed him—rather like a Puss in the presence of a mastiff.

Corky was not looking good-tempered and cheery, as usual. His eyebrows, his full frown, his high and policy state of head protect, weighed



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on Corky's mind and ruffled his temper. He was angry and resentful—indeed, he looked as if he was trying to repress the "frightful, fearful, frantic frown" of the Lord High Executioner.

Coffin, Carrow, and Lacy sat in a row on the edge of the bed in the skero. Randal sat in the armchair—or, rather, sprawled in it. Randal of the Sixth seldom found sufficient energy to sit upright. With his back in the seat of the chair, his hands clasped behind his head, his long legs resting on another chair, Randal looked, as usual, the picture of laziness. Trotter, captain of the school, sat in the window-seat. Aubrey Compton sat on the study table, swinging his elegant legs, dressed in the most beautiful trousers at Highcombe.

It was a sort of indignation meeting in Corkran's study. The Sixth Form men had met there to tell one another what they thought of the Brighter McCann and to compare notes about what they would like to do to him—in a word, to blow off steam! But when Compton of the Fifth came in the discussion took a more serious turn.

Blowing off steam was a relief in its way, but they would have been glad of a chance of getting down to brass tacks. Aubrey was showing them a way, but his words seemed to awaken as much dubiosity as enthusiasm.

"Handling the Head" was so fundamentally serious a matter that the most

reckless spirit blanched a little at the idea. And it was nothing short of handling the Head that Compton coolly proposed.

"The fact is," said Corkran, "I'd like to give him a nip! I'd like to duck him, or punch him, or bump him, or whap him with my own ears, or any old thing you like. But I don't want to be sacked from Highcombe, Aubrey, old man. Nor does any other fellow here."

Trotter nodded slowly.

"There's the jolly old rub!" he remarked. "The brats can sock a man if he likes. And—he would!"

"I believe," said Randal, from the depths of the armchair, "that he would think twice or three times before he socked a man, especially a Sixth Form man! But a man who handled him wouldn't have him much choice in the matter. See?"

There was a general nodding of Sixth Form heads.

Aubrey smiled sarcastically.

"If you'd let a fellow speak——" he suggested.

"Fire away, old chap!" said Corkran. "Any old thing—only don't tip us to go like brats to the slaughter. We're not giving that rat a chance to turf a man out of the school. I'm feelin' pretty savage, as you know, but I'm not lettin' any of my pals in for that!"

"Is McCann a cut?" asked Compton.

"Eh?"

The Prefects' Revolt!

"I mean, you be see in the dark?" went on Aubrey.

"I suppose not!" said Corkran.
"Well, then, listen! Suppose the Blighter was lagged in the Sixth Form Room and a bag shoved over his head so quick that he hadn't time to let out a yelp. Five or six fellows can handle him all right, tough as he is. He's left tied to a desk—"

"Oh, my hat!"
"To wriggle till morning!"
"Great pip!"
"Think that would be a warning to him to draw in his horns?" asked the dean of the Fifth casually.

THERE was a chuckle in Corkran's study. It was impossible, of course—old Aubrey was simply talking out of his hat! It was unthinkable! But how glorious, how gorgeous, if it had only been possible and thinkable! What a whop back at the unspeakable Blighter! What a lesson to him that High Combe was fed-up with his rot! McCann, with a bag over his objectionable head, tied to a desk, wriggling—they chuckled at the dancing idea!

"Well, what about it?" asked Aubrey.
"Nothing about it, indeed!" said Corkran. "Every man who laid a finger on him would be kicked out of the school so quick it would make his head swim."

"A delightful vision!" murmured Randal. "Too delightful ever to come true, old bean! Forget it!"

"I've mentioned that McCann isn't a cat, to see in the dark," said Aubrey Compton. "We got him to the Sixth Form Room after dark. Somebody takes the lamps out in the Form-room and the passage—in case anybody should touch the switch. He won't recognize anybody in the dark."

"Can?" said Corkran. "But why should the Blighter go to a Form-room after dark? He never does."

"Randal wangles that," said Aubrey.

"He is!" said Randal very dabblingly.
"You've a prefect, though Corkran isn't. If you had that fags have been backing in the passages and Form-rooms, putting out the electric lights, it's your duty to take the matter up," explained Compton. "Naturally, you report it to the Head!"

"Catch Randal takin' the trouble!" growled Cobbs.

"On this occasion, Randal does take the trouble. As a dutiful prefect—McCann likes dutiful prefects—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a dutiful prefect, Randal reports what's going on to McCann. McCann, a thousand to one, walks along to see what's up."

"I suppose he would!" roared Corkran reflectively. "He's that sort of energetic brand. McCann will barge in He's a bargee."
"He walks into what's waitin' for him," went on Aubrey. "Nobody says a word, of course—he's as keen as recognizing a voice as a face."

"If he gives our head, the whole house will be on the move!" said Cobbs. "I can see the fags turnin' out of the Harrow in their pyjamas."

"He won't give one howl!" said Aubrey coolly. "A fellow will have a bag ready and bang it over his head first thing. And a few dusters tied round it—"

"Old Aubrey thinks of everything!" said Lacy.

There were eager looks now, but Corkran slowly and regretfully shook his head.

"There's one thing you forget, old top!" he remarked.

"Caught it up!"

"McCann kisses he's made me wild and made the Sixth wild! Admitted, he won't see a face in the dark or hear a voice if he follow speaks. But he will know that my friends have handled him—he will know that I was there, and that my pals were there."

"Yes, that rather washes it out!" said Cobbs sadly. "As soon as it happens, McCann will as good as know our names."

"Suppose you're in Big Study at the time?" suggested Aubrey.

They stared.
"How can we be in Big Study, now, if we're handling the Blighter in the Form-room?" demanded Corkran.

Compton smiled, the smile of superior sagacity.

"You haven't got it yet!" he explained. "As you say, McCann will jump to it that the Sixth handled him—"

"Of course he will!"

"Led by you, Corky—"

"Naturally."

"He won't have a doubt of it."

"Not the slightest."

"For which reason," said Compton slowly and distinctly, "not a Sixth Form man will be on the spot! All the Sixth will be able to prove, if necessary, that they weren't near the spot."

"Then how—what—"

"Half a dozen of the Fifth will do the trick, with me leading them," said Compton coolly. "That's the beauty of it. McCann will see nobody—hear nobody—only he'll certainly catch the Sixth did it! And no Sixth Form man is goin' to have a finger in the pie as at all."

"Oh!" gasped the Sixth Formers.
"Randal will have to do his bit—but that's his duty as a prefect! Even the Blighter can't weary a man for duty, his duty. Isn't he a whole an' all?"

"I don't hear anythin' good 'em. They keep an eye open to see that nobody wanders in that direction by accident and leave us a clear field with the Blighter. How's that?" asked Aubrey.
Corkran breathed hard and deep.

"Aubrey, old man," he said, with feeling, "you're a pal, if ever there was one. 'Blindin'' by a fellow like this!"

"Old Aubrey's the leadin' man, there's no doubt about that!" said Cobbs. "Why, it will work like a charm! Fancy the Blighter roodin' through the Sixth afterwards, marchin' for the jolly old reggen

and leadin' out men after men who never had anythin' to do with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
There was a roar of laughter in Corkran's study. Trudge got off the window-seat and smacked Compton on the shoulder. Cobbs gazed at him with undivided admiration. There had been many plans for putting paid to the Blighter—many schemes to making him sit up. But this, undoubtedly, was the winner. He had disgraced Corkran and engaged the Sixth—was he not certain to jump if that Corkran and his friends in the Sixth had done this? He was!

And all they would have to do with it was seeing that Compton & Co. had a clear field, uninterrupted. When the Blighter came down on the Sixth like a wolf on the fold, they would be able to prove that they had been nowhere near the spot! McCann would have the whole school to choose from in picking out five or six fellows whose faces he had not seen and whose voices he had not heard!

No wonder Corkran & Co. chartered and repaired old Aubrey with delighted admiration—and no wonder Aubrey, thus lauded, felt like the classical gentleman of olden time, ready to strike the stars with his sublime head. All High Combe wanted to make the Blighter squirm.

There was no doubt that he would squirm when he was tied to a desk in a deserted Form-room with a bag over his head! The School for Slackers had suffered under McCann—and now his turn was coming!

A Gurgling Gasp!

BOB DARRILL was worried at prep in Study No. 3. It was not preparation that worried him—though since James McCann had taken the place of the Venerable Ben, prep had to be taken more seriously than of old. Bob was worried about Aubrey and Teddy. That something was "on," he hardly needed telling. Teddy Seymour was "in" it—Bob wasn't!

Bob, of course, would never have dreamed of giving his friends away. Little as he liked the campaign against McCann. But if he had known what Aubrey was planning that night, he would hardly have remained idle.

Both of them regretted that it had come to preaching in Study No. 3. In spite of that little episode, they were as good pals as ever. Indeed, it was because his friendship was unshaken that Bob was so worried now. He disliked the idea of ragging McCann; but it was for Aubrey that he was chiefly concerned.

Bob knew, if Aubrey did not, that in backing McCann, the dean of the Fifth was taking on a man far above his weight. Some new move against the Blighter was on, and Bob was worried—not for McCann, but for Aubrey. Several times during prep he gave his friends troubled and requiring glances. Aubrey was smiling cheerily—Teddy every now and then gave a chuckle.

"Look here, what's on?" demanded Bob at last.

Aubrey glanced at him.

"Is anything on?" he asked.

"Oh, don't be an ass! What's on, Teddy?"

Seymour chuckled.

"You'd better not know, Bob! Nothing in your line?"

Bob greeted and resumed prep. He was out of sympathy with his friends on the subject of McCann, and they did not tell him things as of old. In point of fact, had Bob known that Aubrey was planning an exceedingly risky a proceeding as "handling the Head," it was very probable that he would have intervened, if only to save Aubrey from his own recklessness. But though Barrell knew that "something" was on, he was far from dreaming how frightfully serious that something was.

After prep, Compton and Seymour went along to Carter's study. Carter and Burke and Raymond were there. Warren joined them.

Bob went down to Big Study, troubled in mind. He was rather relieved to find Tredegar, Corkran, Handal, and most of the Sixth there. He knew, of course, that the Sixth were fearfully engaged with McCann, and he suspected that Aubrey was joining up with them in some wild scheme of vengeance on the Blighter. Still, here were the Sixth, evidently not on the warpath, which relieved his mind.

But Bob found the atmosphere of Big Study rather chilly that evening. Corkran gave him a glare, an example followed by other Sixth Form men. Any man who did not believe that Jimmy McCann was the last word in blighters, the outside edge in rollers, was not popular in Big Study.

That still in the atmosphere drove Bob back to Study No. 1. Neither Aubrey nor Teddy was there, and Bob sat down to write a letter home. He supposed that his friends were still in Carter's study.

They weren't!

Compton, Seymour, Carter, Raymond, Burke, and Warren were nowhere near the Fifth Form studies. They were by that time gathered in a bunch in the doorway of the Sixth Form Room. In that room, and in the passage, lamps had been taken out of their sockets and laid aside. Anyone who had tried to switch on the light would have been disappointed. Darkness reigned.

Aubrey Compton had a bag in his hands. There was a cord round the neck of it, to be drawn tight when required. Teddy Seymour had a rope. The other fellows had dusters. All was ready for the Blighter—when he happened! Hearts were beating rather fast. The scheme had been laid so carefully that it seemed that nothing could possibly go wrong with it.

The worst that could happen was that the Head would not fall into the trap—he was such a wary Blighter that you never could tell! But that was the only danger. It

was, as Compton had declared in Corkran's study, safe as houses!

Nevertheless, handling the Head was so fearfully serious a thing that the heroes of the Fifth felt their hearts beat faster. If he had a chance to yell for help—! But he was going to have no chance!

As soon as they heard his groping along in the dark they were going to bag him, and the bag over his head, reinforced by the dusters rapidly applied, would muffle all sound. Strong as he was, he would be powerless in six pairs of sturdy hands. They would get him, silence him, have him where they wanted him, before he knew what was happening. It was all right—right as rain!

Neither was there any danger of a mistake in the dark—of some silly ass capping along and getting the Head's medicine. Corkran was going to keep an eye open, to see that nobody wandered in that direction. Everything, in fact, was planned—all was out and dried—the Blighter was going to get the lesson of his life, and nobody—excepting the Blighter—would be a penny the worse.

If only the Blighter came! The trouble was so keen, so wary, so much of a blighter, in fact, that they could not feel sure that he was going to walk into the trap till he had walked into it.

Impetuously, with beating hearts, they listened for a footstep. Dark as it was, their eyes, accustomed to the darkness by that time, could dimly make out the walls—they could have a faint glimpse of their victim, McCann, coming from a lighted

room, would not have that advantage. Was it possible to deny that old Aubrey was a born leader—that he thought of everything?

Compton was cool as ice. But even his heart gave a little jump as there was a footstep, and the dimness of dim figures—dim, but obviously the height of McCann—loomed in the passage. He was coming quickly, too—as if in a hurry—and they heard his breathing. It would have guided them even if they had not glimpsed him, a shadow among shadows.

Action was prompt, swift, drastic. The bag, in Aubrey's hands, whipped over a head and shoulders—in the same second the cord was drawn, closing it round the neck of the victim. One started, gurgling gasp—that was all—no yell to alarm the House.

Instantly, arms and legs were gripped and held and folded dusters tied round the bag enclosing the face, specially tight over the mouth. In the darkness, Aubrey Compton's eyes gleamed about like a cat's with triumph.

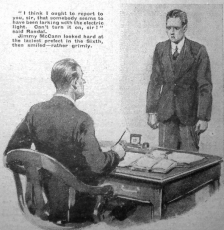
Six pairs of hands held the prisoner—helpless. It had worked like a charm.

Frantic Wiggles!

RANDAL of the Sixth sighed as he detached himself from the most comfortable armchair in Big Study. It was time for action—and action did not appeal to the laziest man at the laziest school ever. But Randy made an effort. And amid encouraging murmurs from other Sixth Form men he ambled out

"I think I ought to report to you, sir, that somebody seems to have been twiggling with the electric light. Can't turn it on, sir?" said Handal.

Aubrey McCann looked hard at the laziest prefect in the Sixth, then smiled—rather grimly.



The Prefect's Revolt!

of Big Study. Corkean was in the passage outside—leaning on the wall, with his hands in his pockets and a cheery smile on his face.

Thinking of the ambush laid for the Blighter, and of the Blighter about to walk into it, had a cheering effect on the fallen head prefect of High Coombe.

From where he stood he could keep an eye on the passage leading to the Form-rooms, and see that nobody ventured by chance in that dangerous direction. At the same time, he was full in view himself—obviously nowhere near the Form-rooms—nowhere near the ambush. His ally was complete, if McCann wanted to know afterwards.

A lag had come along—Ferguson of the Fourth—who wanted to fetch something he had left in the Fourth Form Room, and Corkean curtly ordered him back. Ferguson expressed his desire to tell Corkean that, being no longer a prefect, he had no right to gap at a Fourth Form man with his blessed orders. But Corkean, if he had no longer an asphalt, had a beet—and Ferguson grunted and went back to the Barrow.

After which Corkean remained leaning on the wall, but in blissful visions of a Blighter tied up and wriggling, till Bandal came out of Big Study.

Bandal passed him with a grin. "Aubrey's ready, I suppose," he asked, as he passed, in a low voice. "You bet!"

"Right!"

Bandal of the Sixth proceeded to the Head's study. He tapped at the door, and the deep, pleasant voice of James McCann bade him enter.

Jimmy was seated at his table, at work. The Blighter was a demon for work. But he laid down his pen and gave the prefect a kindly glance. Jimmy was sorry that he had had to be so severe with Corkean, but he entertained a hope that it would have the effect of bucking up other prefects, and making it unnecessary for him to hand out similar measure to more of them.

Bandal's visit to his study, after prep, really looked like it. It was the first time that a High Coombe prefect had come to the new headmaster's study of his own accord.

"Yes, what is it, Bandal?" asked Jimmy, with his pleasant smile.

"I think I ought to report to you, sir, that something seems to be going on in the Form-rooms," said Bandal.

"At this hour?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Well, somebody seems to have been larking with the electric light, sir," said Bandal. "Can't turn on the light! Of course, sir, before you came, the lags used to buzz in and out of the Form-rooms pretty well as they liked—but you've given orders for that to stop!"

"Quite," said Jimmy McCann.

Leaving his elbow on the table, the new Head looked at Bandal.

His first impulse was to feel pleased. The heavy hand with Corkean had apparently produced its effect. For the first time, a High

Coombe prefect was taking his duties with some seriousness. Never till now had a prefect cared too always whether lags lurked in the Form-rooms after prep, or whether they played tricks with the electric light, or dreamed of calling Mr. McCann's attention to such an infraction of the rules.

And Bandal was the latest prefect in the Sixth; Jimmy had not failed to note that fact, and to wonder why even old Mr. Chetwode—the Venerable Head—had fancied that he was any use as a prefect. If Bandal was bucking up, it was a sign of grace, very welcome to the new Head of High Coombe.

But Jimmy McCann was not unaware of the state of levee connection in the Sixth Form, caused by the disgrace of Corkean. His first impulse was to feel pleased with Bandal. His second was not. With one moment's rapid thought, Jimmy saw himself going along a dark passage, to see what was happening in the Form-rooms. He smiled—rather grimly.

Jimmy did not want to cock any of the Sixth if he could help it. But he had a strong suspicion that if he went along that dark passage somebody would have to be sacked afterwards.

"Thank you, Bandal!" he said.

"I thought I'd better report to you, sir."

"Quite!" said Jimmy. He half rose and spat the smolder gleam in Bandal's eyes. He sat down again, and sported the fall of Bandal's face. He felt inclined to laugh.

Had Jimmy been the unscrupulous Blighter that all High Coombe believed him to be, no doubt he would have rooted into this matter. But Jimmy did not want compromised and unthinking fellows to make lark of themselves, and drive him into having them out of High Coombe.

"I am rather busy at the moment," said Jimmy, watching with a glimmer in his eyes the lengthening of Bandal's face as he spoke. "Please ask Mr. Chard to look into the matter."

Bandal made one more effort.

"Mr. Chard's gone over to his rooms, sir—"

"Quite! Then speak to Mr. Ferris; he has rooms in the House, I think."

Bandal gave it up. Evidently there was nothing doing.

"Very well, sir," he said despondently.

He left the study, and Jimmy McCann smiled at the closing door, before he took up his pen again.

Bandal, with a glum brow, went back to Corkean.

Corkean eyed him cooly.

"Nothing doing," said Bandal.

"The brute's too wary! I—I believe he guesses there's something on! It's a rotten lark."

And Bandal, tired after his enormous exertions, went back into Big Study, and his armchair.

Corkean breathed hard.

Nothing doing—the brute was too wary! He might have expected it, from that larder. It was rotten—the rotten for words! All that elaborate plan laid for nothing—the Fifth Form supporters waiting in the dark,

waiting in vain! Corkean set his lips hard. The disappointment was bitter.

Then Bandal's words occurred to his mind. If the Brak guessed something—if he suspected something—he might look into it—taking a light with him, perhaps. Compton & Co. could not be off the scene too rapidly, in that case.

Anyhow, the game was up, and they might as well go back to their studies. It was close on bed-time, anyway. And the sooner they went, evidently, the better, if the Blighter was suspicious.

Corkean hurried along the passage, realizing that no time was to be lost.

He hurried down the Form-room passage. Coming from the light into the dark, he could see nothing, and he did not venture to call out, lest other ears should hear. He hurried on towards the Sixth Form Room.

What happened next was as surprising to Corkean as an earthquake could have been. That he was the same height as McCann—that in the dim darkness one shadowy figure did not differ from another—might have occurred to him, if he had thought of it—which he did not. After the lag was over his head, it was too late.

NOT a word was spoken. Six Fifth Form men, gripping the figure that wriggled and wriggled and wriggled, with the lag over its head, were grimly silent. There was no need for speech; the whole thing was out and dried. Silently, they bore that wriggling figure into the Sixth Form Room.

Its frantic wriggles did not worry them in the least; there were plenty of strong hands to hold the prisoner.

They jammed it against a desk, and held it while Teddy got busy with the tape.

Hand and foot the wretched victim was tied to the legs of the desk. Lots of rope was used; Aubrey was leaving nothing to chance.

Silently, leaving the victim tied to the desk, they trotted out of the Form-room, and Aubrey closed the door.

Still silent, on lights, they departed.

Five fellows sought their own quarters at once. Chard was already rolling into the House, to see lights out for his Form. But Aubrey Compton strolled along to Big Study and glanced in, with a smiling face.

Many eyes turned on him doubtfully, expectantly Bandal had already told the disgraced Sixth that he feared that there was nothing doing. But Aubrey looked as if something was doing—in fact done. He winked at the Sixth—a wicked wink!

"You're—" leathery Carve.

A nod!

"But Bandal thought—" said Coffin.

Aubrey smiled.

"Well, my lad," said Bandal. "I thought—and I told Carve—"

"Mum's the word!" droned Aubrey.

"What do?"

Aubrey strolled away, leaving a rejoicing Sixth in Big Study. Is Deen

No. 3. Teddy greeted him with a jealous grin—Bob Darrell with a grin more of sympathy.

"Well?" greeted Bob.

"Quite well!" said Aubrey. "Right as rain, old bean!"
And Teddy chuckled.

CORKRAN of the Sixth was not missed that night. As the Sixth Form men had come to themselves, and so it was time on holidays when that glorious rag was carried out so successfully, the other fellows, naturally, only supposed that Corky had gone to bed. Afterwards, it was quite unpleasant for Corky's friends to think of the sort of night that Corky must have passed!

Nobody knew till the morning! It was old Liggins, the ham-packer, who made the discovery, after ringing the rising-bell. Sounds of wriggling and muffled mauling caused old Liggins to peer into the Sixth Form Room—and he nearly fell down at the sight of a fellow tied to the legs of a desk, with a bag fastened over his head, encircled by chains.

Liggins, like a man in a trance, gazed at that amazing sight, then rushed away to call the Head. Mr.

McCann arrived promptly at such startling news—and promptly released the unhappy prisoner.

Corkran's face came red and furious from the bag. The night had seemed endless to him—but it had ended at last. For hours and hours and hours he had been thinking how of horrid discomfort than of his fierce desire to get at that first—that dummy—that scolding chump—Compton of the Fifth! That fierce desire was to be gratified at last.

Jimmy learned nothing from Corkran. Perhaps he guessed a good deal, for there was a faint smile on his face as he walked away from the Sixth Form Room.

There was no smile on Corkran's. And he did not walk—he rushed. He burst into Dorm No. 3 like a hurricane, and he hurled himself at Aubrey Compton.

"You hopeless one! You faulting idiot!" yelled Corkran, pouncing away at Aubrey for all he was worth. "I'll teach you to clap a bag over my head and tie me up for the night! Take that—and that!"

"You!" gasped Aubrey, too astounded to make any attempt to ward off Corkran's blows.

"Yes, me, you howling dummy!"

lashed the enraged Sixth Former, punching away vigorously. "You collared me instead of the Blighter!"

The combined efforts of Bob Darrell and Teddy Scyanne hardly dragged him off. Aubrey's nose was streaming crimson when at last Corkran was hurled forth from Dorm No. 3.

Aubrey seemed a little discouraged by his latest failure, and during the short remainder of the term carried no further his campaign against McCann. But when High Coombe broke up for the holidays he remarked in the breaks as they went to the station:

"The Blighter may have had rather the best of it this term. But we'll put paid to him next term!"

"I don't think!" grinned Bob Darrell.

And it remained to be seen which was right!

*He'll say "An' so on!" to those
He'll give for a bit, and prepare
to give a right hearty welcome
to "The Schooling Spectator!"
—the first of a really exciting
series of Spectator Reading stories
by the great Sage Compton—in
Next Week's SPECTATOR!*

They're Telling Us

The ATLANTIC'S GOT ELASTIC COASTS!



In every branch of knowledge—electricity, chemistry, air-forg, geology—the Big Dominant research institutions of Universities and such places are now telling us we're all wrong—"debunking" most of the old ideas we all took for granted!

But then it came these new radio three-signals and made it look as though the chronometers—or else the stars—weren't quite so right as they should be!

At first the experts thought that the time it took wireless waves to cross the Atlantic had something to do with the puzzle, but this was proved not to be the case. The only conclusion left was that the radio stations themselves moved about, even so slightly, and accounted for the differences between the three-signals and the chronometers!

Moreover, it was found that these weird differences were affected by the Moon, which, of course, causes the tides. Well, the Moon seems to take a pull at the land as well, so that the coasts of the Atlantic formed by the continents of Europe and America are sometimes actually 63 feet wider apart than at other times!

It seems queer that the rocks of the Earth can stretch even that much, but it is known that granite, the hardest of all, is elastic up to .0004 of an inch—and this much would be enough to provide over 60 feet of stretch for the width of the Atlantic Ocean.

These scientific people have a lot of surprises up their sleeves for us these days. All the well-known heights of mountains are inexact, because they are all reckoned from what is called sea-level. But the level of the sea varies quite a lot in different parts of the world. Latitude and longitude are upset, apparently, by "Earth-wobbles."

And now the professors say that a straight line isn't always the shortest distance between two points.

But whatever they say now it will probably all be wrong again in ten years' time!

THEIR latest "astatler" has been put over by an American professor of Harvard University. He's discovered that our old friend the Atlantic Ocean is not quite so much of a fixture as we thought it was. It's got elastic coasts!

Here's how they've worked it out, these men of science. Every day, three-signals are exchanged by trans-ocean radio between U.S.A., England, and France. One signal is checked at Greenwich and broadcast from Rugby. The French check theirs at Paris and send it out from Bordeaux, while Washington checks the three-signal made from Annapolis for the United States.

THESE stations each pick up the others' messages, and it was found that there was something wrong with the timekeeping of the three countries.

When ordinary folk are content with a good watch or clock, the scientist has to have a very specially accurate time-piece, which he calls a chronometer. The most reliable things we know of for keeping time are the apparent movements of the stars, and chronometers are set by these.