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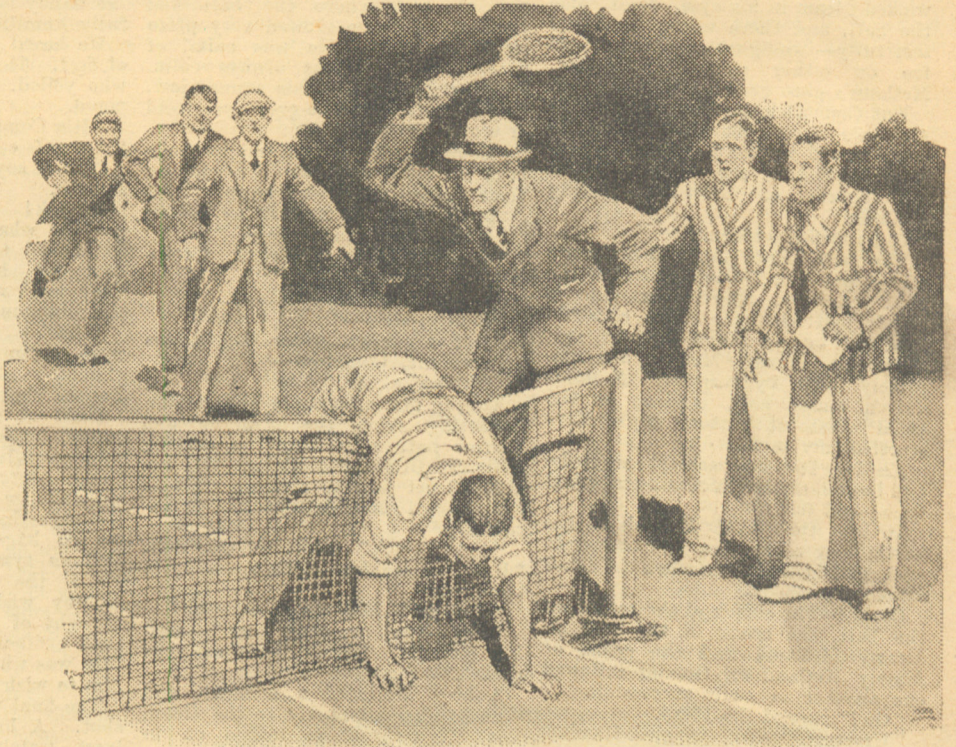
*The Dog-Watch!*

**600,000 TONS OF FLOATING STEEL!**—See Inside

# LAYING FOR THE HEAD!

The Fifth - Form Dandy adopts Gangster methods in his bitter feud against the Head of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS!

By . . .  
**Charles  
Hamilton**



One for Jimmy!

"FIFTEEN—LOVE!" said Teddy Seymour.

James McCann, the new headmaster of High Coombe School, heard him as he came strolling along by the courts, and stopped to look on, rather pleased by what he saw. Compton of the Fifth, though he prided himself on being the slackest slacker in the School for Slackers, could play tennis. He could, indeed, have played a good game of cricket if he had chosen, but simply because McCann wanted to buck up High Coombe cricket Aubrey didn't choose!

When McCann came nosy-parker-ing, as Aubrey called it, at Senior Nets, Aubrey loved to let his sticks go down or to drop a perfect sitter under the Head's disapproving eyes—for the more McCann disapproved the more Aubrey and the rest of the school approved. Cricket might or might not be a great game, but what was any game in comparison with annoying and irritating the Blighter McCann?

Now, for once, Jimmy McCann's glance at Aubrey Compton was approving. Aubrey made a handsome figure in spotless white, with a pink flush in his good-looking face. And he was keen! True, it was against all the traditions of High Coombe to be keen on anything, but Aubrey seemed to have forgotten for the moment that he was the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the School for Slackers.

Aubrey really did want to beat Bob Darrell in that singles, and he

was going all out to beat him. And so, for once, he looked as if he was really alive, and could not possibly have been mistaken for a tailor's dummy.

Bob Darrell, of course, was playing hard, though he lacked Aubrey's graceful style. Teddy Seymour was keeping the score for his friends; other fellows were looking on, most of them recumbent in the grass round the court.

They were not pleased to see McCann blow along. Tredegar, captain of High Coombe, stood up instead of sitting, Corkran, head prefect, sat up instead of sprawling. Other fellows stirred from various attitudes of lazy abandon. Somehow, Jimmy McCann's eagle eye had that effect on them, and they did not like it. Only Randal of the Sixth—the laziest man ever—did not stir.

Randy remained on his back with his hands clasped under his head, affecting not to notice that the Blighter was there.

However, McCann gave no attention to Randy. He stopped beside Teddy, and watched. Aubrey was serving again—it was Aubrey who had scored fifteen to Bob's love. Randal was quite near Teddy—McCann might almost have trodden on his long, lazy limbs.

McCann's eyes were on Compton. The ball sped from the racket, and Bob sent it back. Aubrey shot it to the baseline, and Bob volleyed it, and then Aubrey smashed it just over the net, with Bob yards away, and Teddy sang out:

Aubrey Compton glared defiance for a moment, then bent over the net—and Jimmy McCann wielded the racket good and hearty. Never had Aubrey been so fearfully humiliated.

"Thirty—love!"

Ferguson of the Fourth gathered scattered balls. Aubrey, as he went back to the baseline, glanced at McCann. What the dickens was the Blighter doing there—barging in, as usual. On this occasion Aubrey could not play his usual fumbling game to annoy the Blighter—he wanted to win that singles. It was Aubrey who was annoyed. But it came into Aubrey's active brain that there was a way of making the Blighter sorry that he had blown in, even if it cost him a point in the game he wanted to win. Aubrey's eyes gleamed.

"How does it stand, Seymour?" asked Mr. McCann genially.

"Game all, sir," answered Teddy.

"Compton seems in great form," said McCann.

"Topping, sir," said Teddy, pleased to hear a word of commendation from the Blighter for his pal. Teddy, of course, hated the Blighter—for was it not a point of honour at the School for Slackers to hate the new Head, who was determined to wake the school up and infuse something like life into its dry bones? But Teddy's hate was very mild, and sometimes he almost agreed with old Bob that McCann wasn't such a bargee and bouncer and blighter as the school supposed. Aubrey, whose bitter feud with the new Head never slept, found

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it hard at times to keep Teddy up to the proper pitch of hate!

Aubrey served again, still with that wicked gleam in his eyes. Back came the ball, and there was a hard and fast rally—two figures flashing to and fro on either side of the net. McCann's gaze grew more approving.

But that wicked gleam was still in Aubrey's eyes. At thirty—love he could afford to lose a point, he considered, without too much risk—for the benefit of the unsuspecting McCann.

It happened suddenly.

The ball leaped up, and Aubrey's racket smacked it—not back over the net! Aubrey, who could land a tennis ball where he chose, chose to land that one on James McCann.

Smack! Jimmy McCann was completely taken by surprise. A hard-driven tennis ball, landing on the third waistcoat button, might have startled any man!

Feeling for the moment as if he had been shot, Mr. McCann staggered back—and fell.

It was then that Randal of the Sixth, lazy as he was, had reason to wish that he had risen when the Head arrived.

Crash! The smack of the racket on the ball, the crack of the ball on Jimmy McCann, and the crash of Jimmy McCann on Randal followed one another in swift succession.

"Oh!" gasped the Head.

"Urrrrrrgggh!" gurgled Randal, flattened and squashed, and dizzily wondering if it was an earthquake.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Teddy, in utter horror.

Exclamations sounded on all sides. Bob Darrell stood as if turned to stone, petrified. Aubrey Compton smiled.

"Oh!" repeated McCann, sprawling over Randal.

"Wurrrrrgggh!" gurgled the hapless Randal, winded to the wide.

Tredegar and Corkran rushed up to give the Head a hand to rise! But Jimmy was on his feet before they could reach him. Randy sprawled and spluttered. Compton, with a hovering smile, came to the side-line.

"Sorry, sir! Quite an accident!" he drawled.

He did not really expect the Blighter to believe it. And Jimmy didn't.

### Six on the Bags!

"YOU ass, Aubrey!" breathed Bob Darrell.

"Oh crumbs!" moaned Teddy.

Consternation was depicted on every face. Randal wriggled and gurgled unheeded. All eyes were on McCann—and Compton. Accidents will happen, of course. But nobody believed that this was an accident—least of all James McCann. Aubrey himself doubted whether he could get by with it. But he was cool as a cucumber.

"Thirty—fifteen, Teddy!" he remarked. But Teddy Seymour could only gaze at him, his jaw dropping, his mouth open.

Mr. McCann must have been hurt. A bang like that on the waistcoat must have done some damage. But Jimmy McCann was hard as nails. He did not even press a hand to the painful spot where the ball had smitten. But he showed very plain signs of wrath. He was calm, of course; McCann was always calm. But the grim set of his square jaw, the glint in his blue-grey eyes, told of trouble coming.

"Compton!" A man might have been expected to speak in a gasping voice after such a bang. But Jimmy's voice was as even as usual.

"Yes, sir! I'm sorry——"  
"I doubt that statement, Compton."

Aubrey raised his eyebrows.

"Really, sir——"

"But if you assure me that it was an accident, Compton——"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

Aubrey had no scruple whatever in departing from the straight and narrow path of veracity in dealing with the Blighter McCann. Did the man expect him to own up that he had bashed that ball at him intentionally?

"Very good," said Mr. McCann. "But such accidents must not happen, Compton."

"Yes, sir! May we go on, sir?"

"For the moment, no," said Mr. McCann. "Kindly hand me your racket."

Aubrey hesitated a moment, and then handed his racket to the Head. The High Coomers looked on in breathless silence, wondering what was coming.

McCann gripped the racket.

"Now," he said, "bend over the net, Compton!"

Aubrey might have expected something of the sort—experience might have taught him that McCann was not the man to be scored over with impunity. This episode left where it was would have furnished food for merriment in Big Study, would have caused an explosion of mirth among the fags. That happy effect would be quite spoiled by Aubrey bending over the net and taking a whopping on his beautiful bags from his own racket!

"I don't think a fellow ought to be punished for an accident, sir!" said Compton, breathing hard.

"That," said McCann, "is where we differ, Compton! We will take it that it was an accident; but we must take it also that such accidents must not be allowed to occur. I am waiting, Compton."

Aubrey shut his teeth hard.

He was tempted to refuse obedience to this bargee. But what was the use? Bargee, and blighter, and bounder, and whatnot, McCann was still Head, and had to be obeyed. It was not merely that he could sack a fellow for disobedience. He could take a fellow by the back of the neck in a grip as resistless as that of a steel vice—he could, and he would! Aubrey Compton went to the net and bent over it.

McCann wielded the racket. Whack! Aubrey's cheeks were burning. He was the centre of all eyes. He rather liked to be the centre of all eyes—but not on this occasion.

Fellows came running up from different directions, hearing that something was on, and stared. Whack! Never since the Blighter had blown in at High Coombe had the dandy of the Fifth been so fearfully humiliated.

He heard a yell and a scampering of feet. It was Babbie of the Shell who yelled. Innumerable fags scampered.

"It's Compton! Getting six! On the tennis court!"

"Oh, I say!" gasped Donkin of the Fourth.

Whack! Jimmy McCann laddled out the whacks with slow precision. It seemed to the infuriated Aubrey that the brute wanted all High Coombe to arrive on the spot before the whopping was over.

Whack! Many of the onlookers were grinning. Some of them chuckled aloud. Ferguson of the Fourth chortled.

Most of the High Coomers, of course, sympathised with Aubrey. It was rough luck! But there was something supremely ridiculous in the sight of the dandy of the Fifth bending over the net and being whacked on his bags with a tennis racket. Fellows sympathised—but grinned. From the bottom of his heart, Aubrey wished that he had never thought of scoring over McCann in that extraordinary way. Doubtless that was what James McCann wanted him to wish!

The final whack rang like a pistol-shot. A hundred pairs of eyes, at least, watched Aubrey rise from the net with crimson, burning face. McCann handed the racket back to him.

"Thank you, Compton!" he said politely—in courteous acknowledgment of the loan of the racket.

He walked away. Aubrey barely refrained from hurling the racket at his head.

"Finishing the set, Aubrey?" asked Bob, breaking into a painful silence.

Aubrey gave him a black look, and walked off the court. His face, as he went, made some of the fellows exchange glances. At a distance he heard a sound behind him that made him grit his teeth. It was a sound of laughter. So they thought it funny, did they?

He went into the House, tramped up to Study No. 3, and slammed the door after him. His brow was still black when Bob and Teddy came in to tea. At tea he did not speak a word. His mind, concentrated and brooding, fixed on one thought—and one thought alone—somehow, anyhow, he was going to get back on McCann! By fair means or foul—and in his present frame of mind, he had rather a preference for foul!

### Mystery of the Night!

BOB DARRELL was horribly worried. So was Teddy Seymour. But there was a distinction between the natures of their worries. Teddy was worried because he was in Aubrey's confidence. Bob was worried because he was not.

Bob admired McCann—Aubrey

loathed him with a fierce loathing—yet they remained friends, Teddy often putting in some hefty pacificatory work! Hardly a term ago, Bob had known all Aubrey's thoughts, almost as well as his own or Teddy's. But now there were secrets in that study—hushed voices, whispers!

It hurt Bob hard that his best pals no longer trusted him. But he realised that it could not be helped when they were so opposed in the dispute that was shaking the School for Slackers to its ancient foundations. He did not, indeed, want to know when, and how, Aubrey planned fresh hostilities against McCann. He was fed up with Aubrey's feud. Still, he felt a pang if, when he came into the study, Compton and Seymour ceased to converse—or changed the talk to a new topic. It made him feel like an intruder in his own quarters.

Bob was getting used to that—but but now he had a feeling that things were getting serious. The passage of the days had not cooled Aubrey's bitter wrath. Rather had time intensified it. Bob knew, as well as if his pal had told him, that Aubrey was planning revenge, and he dreaded that it was taking a more serious shape than a jest or jape on McCann.

He heard Teddy say, as he came up, one afternoon:

"You can't do it, Aubrey! You're mad! For the love o' Mike, old man, shut it right out of your head."

"I'm not goin' to do it!" came Aubrey's cool drawl. "Bunchy Bligh's goin' to do it."

"You're mad!" groaned Teddy. "Absolutely mad!"

Bob stamped on the landing, to let them know he was coming. When he came in, Aubrey was cool and smiling—Teddy red and uncomfortable. Bob eyed them both.

"What's the game?" he snapped. "You don't want to know!" smiled Aubrey.

That was true—Bob did not want to know if it was a move in the campaign against McCann. But he was alarmed and worried.

"What's that about Bunchy Bligh?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing!" stammered Teddy.

Bob knew Bunchy by sight—not a nice character by any means. Bunchy had been a boxer, and had retired with a broken nose, half his teeth, and an unquenchable thirst. He lived at Okeham, did something in the line of training local boxers, and something in the line of selling sporting requisites at a little dark shop next to the Okeham Arms.

Some of the sporting set at High Coombe rather affected to regard the old pug as a sort of hero in his way. He was still able to put up quite a hefty scrap, as he proved sometimes on a Saturday night. The inside of Okeham Gaol was not unknown to him in consequence. What the dickens could Compton possibly have to do with Bunchy?

Teddy, who knew, was as worried as Bob, who did not. He was too much under Aubrey's influence to kick; but Bob could see that it was a weight on his mind. Neither of them told Bob

anything; and he was left to grope in the dark.

Neither, he soon learned, did they know anything in Big Study about what Compton was planning. Generally, all Big Study knew what was on—even prefects of the Sixth were not above entering into anything against the obnoxious Blihter. But nothing was known in Big Study now, which added to Bob's dread that his reckless pal was going over the limit this time. It must be something awfully serious, if he was keeping it dark from fellows who backed him up enthusiastically in his campaign against the Head. But it was clear that Tredegar and Randal and Corkran and the rest knew nothing.

"Wash it out of your mind, Aubrey, old chap!" Bob pleaded, in the Fifth Form Room. "You jolly well asked for what McCann gave you! You know it was a dirty trick buzzing a tennis ball at a man! All the fellows think it was too thick!"

"It was thick, Aubrey!" murmured Teddy. Hand-in-glove as he was with his dominating pal, Teddy would have been glad to see him yield to Bob's arguments.

"Don't nurse a grudge, old chap!" urged Bob.

"Who's nursin' a grudge?" inquired Aubrey.

"Aren't you?"

"Not at all! I should disdain to

nurse a grudge against a dashed usher!" drawled Aubrey. "But a low cad who hands out whoppings may be all the better for a whopping himself!"

"Shut up, Aubrey!" breathed Teddy. "For goodness' sake don't tell Bob!"

"I'm not goin' to."

"Aubrey, you unspeakable idiot!" almost groaned Bob. "You're not mad enough to think of lifting a finger against your headmaster! Aubrey, old man—"

"Hardly! It would soil my fingers!" explained Aubrey. "I'm rather particular whom I touch."

"Idiot!" said Bob.

"Silence, please!" came from Mr. Chard's desk. Chard seemed to have become aware that some members of his Form were devoting more attention to conversation than to Latin prose.

That night, in Dorm Three, Bob lay in uneasy half-slumber—too worried about his pal to be able to drop into his usual healthy sound sleep. Thus it was that he became aware that Aubrey and Teddy turned out of bed quietly.

Bob sat up. A glimmer of starlight from the window showed him his two friends dressing. He put a leg out of bed.

Teddy gave a startled squeak. "You awake, Bob?"



"He's seen us!" whispered Bob, and he, Aubrey, and Teddy Seymour ceased to breathe as Jimmy McCann suddenly halted and peered into the bushes.

## Laying for the Head!

"Yes!" growled Bob.

He got out of bed. Teddy blinked at him uneasily. Aubrey gave his superb shrug of the shoulders. Bob felt that this was not a case of "breaking out" after lights out. It was not an excursion out of bounds that was intended. That was serious enough; but this was something more serious. He was not going to let Aubrey out of his sight that night. Half-past ten chimed from the clock-tower. All High Coombe was, or ought to have been, asleep. Never had Bob been more wakeful!

"Comin'?" asked Aubrey, with a slight laugh.

"Yes!" said Bob savagely. "If you're going to play the mad ass, I'm going to stop you, see?"

"It's all right, Bob!" said Teddy hastily.

"I'm going to see that for myself!" said Bob gruffly.

"Dear man!" said Aubrey lightly. "And suppose McCann spots you out of the House at this time of night? You'll be as deep in the mud as I am." "I'll chance that!"

"I think it's chiefly because you're such a howlin' ass that I like you so much, old chap!" said Aubrey affably. "Come on!"

They left Dorm Three together, in rubber shoes, and dropped, one after another, out of a little obscure window on the ground floor, and found themselves under the stars, the fresh wind from the Atlantic blowing up the coombe, fanning their faces.

Some windows glimmered with light through the curtains. Chard's under the clock-tower; Penge's near Big Study; Cape's over by the library. And the Head's.

A shadow on the blind told that Mr. McCann was moving in his study. Aubrey glanced towards that window, and the starlight showed his handsome face, so set and hard and bitter that Bob was deeply glad that he had come. What was that mad ass thinking of?

The light went out in McCann's study.

"This way!" murmured Aubrey.

He led his comrades to the Head's garden. They stopped under a big oak close by the Masters' Walk—which the High Coombers called the Beaks' Grind—which led down to the Clovey, rippling down the coombe. Bob fancied that he understood, and was gladder than ever that he had come. He had heard that it was McCann's custom to take a walk down the Beaks' Grind before going to bed. Was that Aubrey's game?

They stood blotted from sight in the black shadow of the oak. Every moment Bob expected to hear the Head's footsteps. He stood ready to grab Aubrey, careless if the Head spotted the three of them so long as he prevented Compton from making a fool of himself. Aubrey, reading his thoughts, smiled.

"You howlin' ass, Bob!" he said. "Do you think I'd have let you come if that was my game?"

"What's your game, then?"

"Nature study!" said Aubrey.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Studying the nocturnal habits of certain animals!" explained Aubrey airily, and there was a faint chuckle from Teddy. "At the present moment the McCann animal interests me, and I'm studyin' his nocturnal habits."

Another faint giggle from Teddy. Footsteps were audible. In the glimmer of summer stars a sturdy, stocky figure loomed up. Bob's grab was ready for Aubrey, but it was not needed.

Mr. McCann approached them, and was walking on, when suddenly he pulled up in his stride and peered into the bushes, as though he had heard something.

"He's seen us," whispered Bob. But McCann, apparently satisfied, passed on, and his footsteps died away down the coombe.

"What about bed?" said Aubrey, with a yawn. "Unless you want to make a night of it!"

"Come on, Bob!" said Teddy.

They trod back to the House. Bob had a lurking suspicion that Aubrey was pulling his leg—trying to quieten his suspicions and shake him off, intending to return and wait for McCann when he came back. But it was not so. Aubrey was first in at the window; the other two followed. They got back to Dorm Three. Aubrey and Teddy threw off their clothes and turned in and Bob, utterly mystified, did the same.

It was some time before he slept—not till he knew that McCann must be back from his walk. Before that, Aubrey and Teddy were fast asleep. Bob slept at last, and did not waken till old Liggins was clanging the rising-bell in the morning.

"What the thump did you get out for last night, Aubrey?" Bob demanded when they went down.

Aubrey raised his eyebrows. "I told you—studyin' the nocturnal habits of the animal McCann!" he answered.

"Silly ass!" growled Bob. It had to remain a mystery.

### A Rush to the Rescue!

IT was "after three," and Compton & Co. were walking in the quad, when Aubrey mentioned, with airy carelessness, that he had leave, and asked his friends whether they would like to see him off in the train for Exeter.

Bob had been sorely worried all that morning. The mysterious excursion of the night before haunted him. That Aubrey was nursing some dark and deadly scheme for vengeance on McCann he was certain. And on reflection, Bob drew one conclusion from his airy persiflage about studying the nocturnal habits of the animal McCann. Had Aubrey wanted to ascertain, beyond doubt, that it was McCann's habit to take that nightly walk on the Beaks' Grind?

It looked like it to Bob. And if Aubrey wanted to ascertain that fact, why? Only because he had some mad scheme for something to happen to McCann in that dark, shadowy, secluded spot. That was how it looked to Bob. So he was relieved to hear that Aubrey had a night's

leave from school to stay with a relative at Exeter. That night, at all events, Bob would be able to sleep in peace, unworried by haunting dread of what Aubrey might be up to.

"You've got leave from the Head?" asked Bob.

Shrug from Aubrey.

"I shouldn't be likely to ask that bargee for leave, or anythin' else," he answered. "I've asked Chard."

Bob smiled. Mr. Chard could not have given Aubrey leave to spend the night at his relative's at Exeter without acquainting Mr. McCann with the matter and getting his assent. But Aubrey had saved his lofty pride by asking Chard instead of McCann. "Have a good time, old chap!" said Bob. "I suppose you'll be going to a show?"

"Yes, I believe there's a show of sorts," drawled Aubrey. "I hope you won't miss me fearfully this evenin'. You don't look as if you're goin' to mourn my absence."

"I'm glad," Bob laughed. "I was afraid you had some potty rot on for to-night, and I'm jolly glad you're going to be at your uncle's at Exeter."

"What an idea!" said Aubrey; and Teddy gave a snigger. But Teddy was very grave during the walk down to Okeham.

Once, when Bob dropped behind to speak to Carter of the Fifth, who passed in the lane, and overtook his friends again at a run, he saw Teddy speaking very earnestly to Compton, and caught a strange word—the word "alibi." Teddy reddened and shut up like an oyster as Bob rejoined them.

In Okeham High Street, Compton left his friends for a few minutes. He explained that he had to drop into Bligh's shop to pay for some boxing-gloves. During those few minutes, Teddy Seymour shifted from one leg to the other and could not keep still for a moment.

Aubrey came out again with a smile on his face, and they walked on to the station. His friends saw him into the train, and chatted with him at the carriage door till it steamed out—or rather, Bob chatted—Teddy, usually with plenty to say, standing silent and moody. Aubrey's smiling face looked back as the train went. Bob started walking back to the school in a very cheery humour—Teddy hardly uttering a word all the way to High Coombe.

"Coming down to the nets?" asked Bob when they got in.

"No!"

"Doing anything?"

"Oh! Yes! No!" said Teddy vaguely.

Bob put in cricket practice till tea. He came up to Study No. 3 in great spirits. With the worry of Aubrey off his mind, he had recovered his spirits at a bound. To his surprise, he found the usually volatile Teddy in the deepest depths of pessimism.

They missed old Aubrey from his usual place in the study. Still, he was only away for the night; he was coming back in time for second school in the morning. It could hardly be that that made Teddy so dismal-looking as if he was enjoying life about as much as a man going to execution.

At prep that evening he hardly looked at his books. Several times he wandered to the study window and looked out. Bob noticed that every time he looked out it was in the direction of the Head's garden, beyond which lay the Beaks' Grind and the coombe. There was some Latin prep for Chard and some maths for Goggs. Teddy hardly looked at either. Bob wondered more and more, and reasoned with him at last.

"Look here, Teddy, bite on it, old chap!" he urged. "You can't play the fool with prep as you did when old Rip van Winkle was Head. Chard has to see that the fellows do some work now."

"Bother Chard!" muttered Teddy. "Chard put a man in Extra yesterday," said Bob. "McCann's bucking him up, whether we like it or not. You don't want to be put in Extra after three to-morrow, Teddy."

"I don't care."  
"Look here, what's the matter?" demanded Bob.

"Nothing!" groaned Teddy. Bob Darrell gave it up. He only hoped that his friend would not be called on to construe in the Fifth Form Room next morning. The happy days when Chard let any fellow hand out any "con" he jolly well liked were over. Teddy really was asking for Extra. And he had said that he did not care if he was put in Extra! Bob, having worried about Aubrey for whole days, now worried about Teddy!

They went down to Big Study after prep. The talk was on the usual topics—the iniquities of McCann; the horrid bore of compulsory cricket; and—as Compton was not present—jesting remarks about the absurd figure he had cut, hanging over the tennis net with McCann smacking him on the bags with his own racket. None of these topics amused Bob Darrell, and when Teddy lounged out of Big Study he very willingly followed him. But Teddy seemed to have disappeared, and Bob did not see him again till dorm.

When he went up to No. 3—now transformed from Study No. 3 into Dormitory No. 3—Teddy was already there. Bob heard his voice as he pushed open the door.

"The mad ass! Oh, the mad ass!" Nobody was there with Teddy when Bob entered. Apparently he had been talking to himself—uttering his thoughts aloud.

"Who's a mad ass?" asked Bob. Teddy gave him a quick, guilty look.

"Oh! Nobody!"  
"Look here, Teddy, what's up?"  
"Nothing."

Bob grunted. Chard made his round; lights were out in the Fifth Form dormitories. Bob lay awake wondering and worrying. He knew that Teddy was not asleep. When ten chimed he heard Teddy get out of bed.

But Seymour did not leave the dorm. He went to the window and stood there in his pyjamas, staring out into the summer night.

Bob lay and watched him for some time. He sat up at last. At the

creak of the bed Teddy turned his head and his face was white as chalk in the starlight. Darrell stepped out of bed and joined him at the window as half-past chimed out.

"Look here, Teddy," said Bob quietly. "What is it? What have you got on your mind? Has Aubrey got anything to do with it?"

Teddy mumbled.  
"Cough it up, you ass!" said Bob. "Can't you see you've got me fearfully worried?"

"That mad ass!" breathed Teddy.

**Autographed  
by ALL  
the SOUTH  
AFRICAN  
TEST  
PLAYERS!**



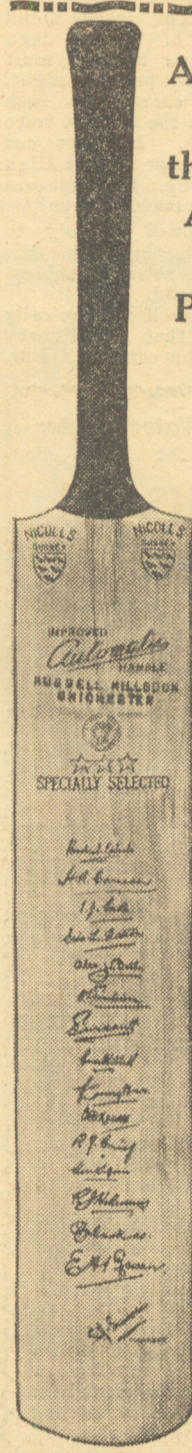
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**SEE  
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"Aubrey? He's all right—he's at Exeter——"

"I know! He's safe enough—if they fancied he had anything to do with it, they couldn't get round an alibi like that! But——" groaned Teddy.

"But what?" Bob came at the truth with one jump; that leave for Exeter had been fixed up as an alibi, to prove beyond all doubt that Compton had nothing to do with what was to happen that night! But what was to happen? What could happen—with Compton away?

Bob's heart was like lead. He gripped Seymour's arm—so hard in his intense anxiety that Teddy gave a little yelp of pain.

"It's too late now!" groaned Teddy. "Too late! Look—you can see that the Blighter's light's gone out—he's gone——"

"Tell me, you fool!"  
"He's gone down the Beaks' Grind, and——"

"What does that matter, with Aubrey thirty miles away?"

"Bunchy Bligh's waiting for him in the dark, to get him as he comes back!" It came from Teddy in a rush. He could bear the weight of his secret no more. "Aubrey's mad—McCann made him look such a fool—he's fixed it up with Bunchy to thrash the Head. Tipped him a couple of quid, and—and—McCann's for it! As he comes up from the Clovey——"

Bob for one second stood transfixed. Then he bounded for his clothes. Half-dressed, he rushed out of Dormitory No. 3.

"Bob!" panted Teddy. Bob did not hear him. He was racing down the stairs two at a time in the dark. He did not care if he was heard—he did not care for anything, except to stop that awful happening.

He hurled open a casement and leaped out. He ran for the Head's garden as he had never run on the cinder-path. Teddy, staring with white, scared face from the window above, had a glimpse of him in the starshine as he ran.

Bob panted on. Before him lay the deep, dusky path—the Masters' Walk—deep and dark under overarching boughs. Down that path, James McCann must have gone—and somewhere there, in the darkness, lurked a brawny hooligan, waiting and watching for him to come back. That was why Aubrey had wanted to "study the nocturnal habits of the animal McCann"—to pass the information on to his hiring!

Was Bunchy already on the spot? Most likely he had waited in cover to watch the Head go down the path, to make sure of his prey! That secluded walk was seldom trodden at night—but the ruffian would not risk making a mistake—he had to be sure of his man! Bob's thoughts raced as fast as his feet.

If the brute was there, Bob had to risk running into him—he was ready to risk anything to save McCann—to save Aubrey! Only to get to McCann before he turned to walk back—to warn him in time—that was all Bob asked. He tore on in the dark.

## Laying for the Head!

Crash! He bumped into a tree. Bob reeled from the shock. The next moment, a brawny hand grasped him and he was flung down.

Someone lurking in the darkness had heard him, though not seen him. Bunchy, in the dark, was listening for a sound—and at a sound he groped and grasped, and the figure he grasped went crashing to the ground. And a rain of blows descended on Bob Darrell as he lay—blow after blow from a thick cane, scattering his senses under the painful shower.

Half senseless, he heard a footstep, a calling voice—the voice of McCann—then the rapid pattering of the retreating ruffian.

A match scratched, a startled face looked down at him, and then Bob knew no more.

### "Pull Yourself Together!"

AUBREY COMPTON smiled as he stepped from his taxi in the sunny morning. Second school was on at High Coombe, and all the fellows were in the Form-rooms. Aubrey had noticed that old Judd, the porter, had an extremely serious and solemn expression on his face—but he had carefully refrained from making any inquiry. He could guess from old Judd's look that something had happened during his absence from the school—but he had to be very careful to appear not to expect to hear that anything had happened.

Besides, he did not need to inquire—he knew! What could have happened, except what he had planned to happen? Something, he had read in Juddy's face, had happened—and, of course, it was that! The Blighter had got his deserts, at long last! He only hoped that Bunchy had laid it on hard enough.

In a cheery mood, Aubrey strode to the Fifth Form Room.

Mr. Chard nodded him to his place as he came in; he did not speak. Chard was looking serious and solemn, like old Judd. Aubrey was rather surprised to notice that all the faces in the Fifth Form were serious and solemn, too. What a fuss to make over McCann getting a whopping! Did any of the fellows guess that he was mixed up in it? Not likely—when he had planned and carried out as perfect an alibi as anyone could desire.

The Blighter, of course, would think of him at once, as he wriggled and writhed from the effects of a lashing cane in the dark. But he had spent the night at his uncle's house in Exeter—a fact easily proved if inquired into. Aubrey smiled.

He wondered why Darrell and Seymour were not in class. Neither of them was to be seen in the Form-room. Aubrey sat down.

"Heard?" whispered Carter.

Aubrey assumed an expression of mild inquiry.

"Heard what?"

"On the Beaks' Grind—last night when McCann takes his trot—"

"Does he?" drawled Aubrey. "Yes,

I believe I've heard he does. Where's Seymour?"

"Sitting with Bob."

"Sitting with Bob!" repeated Aubrey blankly. "What do you mean? Where's Darrell, then?"

"In Number Three."

"But what the dickens—"

The Form-room door opened. Chard glanced round as the Head entered. The Fifth rose to their feet—except Aubrey. Aubrey sat and stared at James McCann.

The man was tough—hard as nails; Aubrey knew that, but surely even a man who was hard as hickory would show some sign of having been through what James McCann must have been through the previous night.

James McCann showed no such sign. There was not the faintest trace of damage on him. His face was grave—like every other face at High Coombe that morning. But that was all. Was the man made of iron?

Mr. McCann bowed politely to Chard and turned to the Form. His eye singled out the petrified Aubrey. "Compton!" he said.

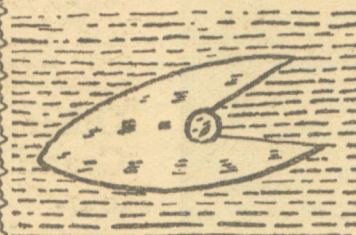
Aubrey lifted himself mechanically to his feet. Had that fool Bunchy failed to carry out his contract? But,

*Make this Water-Glider  
in a Jiffy . . .*

## IT RUNS ON CAMPHOR!

FROM a piece of stout tin-foil cut out a shape like that shown here, about two inches long. The foil must be absolutely flat and free from creases. You can easily make it flat by laying it on a smooth table and pressing it out with the tip of your finger.

Buy a penny lump of camphor at the chemist's and from this cut



a piece about the size of a pea, flat at the bottom. Lay the glider gently on the water, and place the piece of camphor at the point of the V-shaped cut, so that it comes into contact with the water.

It is the chemical action that takes place on this contact that drives the glider along—and it will move for as long as the camphor lasts.

If the tin-foil is cut more to the shape of a horseshoe, with a rounded nose, you will have a glider that will cruise around for a very long while without "coming to port."

if so, what was everybody looking as solemn as a boiled owl about?

"You may go to your study, if you desire, Compton," said Mr. McCann. His voice was very kind. "Darrell, I believe, is a great friend of yours, and if you wish you may remain with him, as well as Seymour. Mr. Chard will give you leave from class!"

"Certainly!" said Chard.

Aubrey felt as if his head was turning round.

"Has anything happened to Darrell?" he gasped.

"Yes," answered Mr. McCann gravely. "For some reason I have not been able to ascertain, Darrell left the House last night and went down the Masters' Walk. He was attacked—"

"Attacked?"

"In the dark, by some tramp or ruffian at present quite unknown. He was beaten severely—"

"Darrell was?" gasped Aubrey.

"Luckily, I came up, and was able to help him back to the House," said Mr. McCann. "His injuries are not serious—but he has been very cruelly beaten and is remaining in bed to-day. The doctor has seen him—you need not be alarmed, Compton." Mr. McCann's voice was kinder than ever as he saw the ghastly pallor in Aubrey's face. "He will have to keep to his room for a day or two—go to him at once, my boy, if you wish."

Aubrey Compton tottered from the Fifth Form Room. There was a murmur of sympathy from the Fifth. Old Aubrey was taking this hard! Of course, everyone knew he was fond of Darrell, often as they rowed in Number Three. Nobody guessed what was in Aubrey's tortured mind—he would not have cared if they had! He would not have cared if McCann had guessed and kicked him out of High Coombe. White as chalk, dumb with misery, he hardly knew how he got to Number Three.

Teddy Seymour, sitting by a bedside, turned his head and looked at him as he came in. He did not speak; he made a gesture towards the recumbent figure in the bed. Bob Darrell's face, pale and worn with pain, assumed a ghost of a grin.

"Hallo, Aubrey!" His voice was low. It cost him an effort to speak.

"Bob!" Compton choked. "Bob!"

"All right, old man!" whispered Bob. He stared in alarm at Aubrey's working face. "All right! Nobody knows—nobody will know—I got it instead of McCann, and thank goodness I did—thank goodness! Aubrey, old man, pull yourself together!"

High Coombe would not have known the Dandy of the Fifth if they could have seen him then—kneeling beside the bed, his face buried in the coverlet, sobbing as if his heart would break!

*"The High Coombe Joker!" provides Next Saturday's fun and excitement, when Carter, the funny man of the Fifth, works the Biggest Jape Ever . . . and Carter's victim, Jimmy McCann, has a little joke, too!*