

"COMET JUNIOR" MODEL PLANES for READERS!— See Inside!

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The 60 M.P.H. LINER-GLIDER!—See page 2

TAR and FEATHERS for JIMMY M'CANN!

By
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With practically everyone's hand against him, the Head of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS draws admiration from his bitterest enemy!

Taps on the Window!

"YOU shan't!" said Bob Darrell between his teeth. Aubrey Compton's eyes glinted.

"Stand back, Bob!" he said. "I won't! And you shan't do it, you fathead!"

Instead of standing back, as bidden, Darrell of the Fifth grasped Aubrey by the shoulder with a grip like a steel vice, sadly crumpling the most elegantly cut jacket at High Coombe School.

"Now look here, Bob—" began Teddy Seymour, in plaintive tones.

"Shut up, Teddy!" rapped Bob. "Let go my shoulder, Bob!" said Aubrey, with a dangerous quietness.

"Don't barge in here, you fool!" And five or six voices chimed in: "Let go!"

But Bob stood firm, and held on. There were nearly a dozen of the Fifth Form on the spot. They were gathered at the window of the French master's class-room.

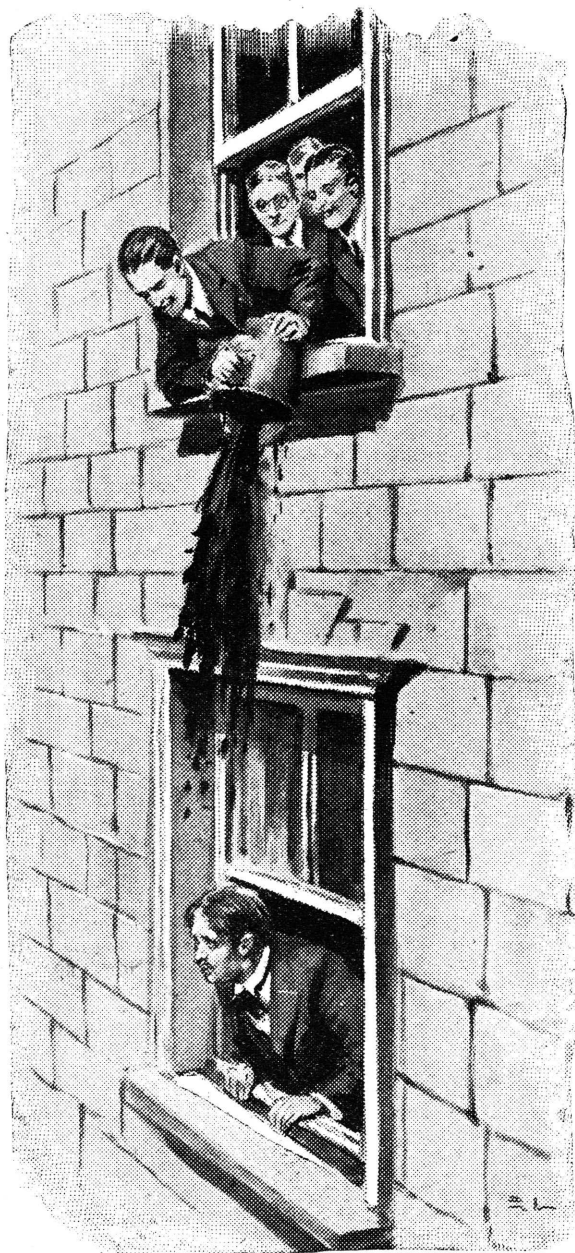
Monsieur Mouton, of course, was not there. He had gone to see the Head, Mr. James McCann, in his study, and there was no danger of him coming up.

The French class-room was directly over the Head's study. Leaning out of the window, a fellow could have talked to anyone looking up from the Head's window below.

That was why Aubrey Compton was there, and that was why a tin bucket full to the brim with a mixture of tar and feathers stood on the window-sill.

When Aubrey Compton had first talked of tarring and feathering the Blighter, James McCann, the Fifth Form men chuckled; but they had told Aubrey not to talk out of his hat. If ever a man deserved to be

Peering over the upper window-sill, Aubrey spotted a head coming out of McCann's window below—and tilted the bucket!



tarred and feathered it was the man who had introduced the unwelcome and painful element of work into the School for Slackers. That, of course, everyone admitted. But the thing was impossible.

But the brainy man of High Coombe was going to demonstrate that it was not merely a delightful dream. Strategy, of course, was needed.

Across the quad, in cover of one of the ancient High Coombe oaks, was Fatty Pye, of the Fourth Form, catapult in hand. Fatty had been bribed with a bag of jam tarts to loose off, at regular intervals, a series of pellets at the window of the Head's study. A ceaseless tap, tap, tap on his window was certain, sooner or later, to cause James McCann to put his head out to ascertain what the dickens was going on.

And as soon as the Beak's head

appeared below Aubrey was going to tip over the pail—and the thing was done!

What could be simpler?

With a pailful of tar, mixed with feathers, mopping his head, the Blighter would be hors de combat, giving the raggars plenty of time to get clear. Nobody would be spotted, which was rather important. For though it was known that the Blighter McCann hated the idea of sacking a High Coombe man, it was equally well known that he had a hard and heavy hand with a cane. But it was safe as houses—the Blighter would have no victim upon whom to wreak his wrath.

Quite a joyous mob had gathered in the French class-room to see old Aubrey pull it off. Unluckily, Bob Darrell, spotting that something was on, came, too, and now he was gripping his reckless chum by the

Tar and Feathers for Jimmy McCann!

shoulder, determined that Aubrey should not make such an ass of himself.

Aubrey did not want a row. Too much row over the Head's study might draw the Blighter's attention in that direction. And the Blighter was quick on the uptake, as keen as Sheffield steel. But Aubrey had waited and watched for this opportunity, and he was not going to miss it.

"Look here, Bob—chuck it!" urged Teddy, in his usual role of peace-maker. "If you don't want to have a hand in ragging the Blighter you can cut! Don't barge in, old chap."

Bob gave an angry grunt. "It's over the limit," he said. "I'm not going to see Aubrey get himself sacked!"

"Rot!" said Peverill. "The Blighter don't dare sack a man!"

"He jolly well would if he got that awful muck on his napper! Aubrey, old man, don't be a fool!" pleaded Bob.

"Will you let go?"

"No; not till you come away and chuck up playing the goat."

Aubrey breathed hard.

"We've got no time to waste," he said. "Mouton may come up here after he's through with McCann. Any man who's spotted here will get it in the neck. Pye's going it already!"

Floating in at the open window came the sound of the sharp tap of a pellet on glass below. Fatty Pye, prompt to time, was beginning to loose off his catapult. Obviously, it would not require much of that tapping to cause the headmaster to open his window and look out. There was no time to waste.

Aubrey withdrew his hand from the bucket on the sill. Then he laid both hands on the anxious chum who was grasping his shoulder.

"Back up, you men!" breathed Aubrey.

The Fifth Formers backed up as one man. Peverill, Carter, Burke, Raymond, Seymour grasped at Bob. In the grip of many hands he was dragged off Compton.

Bob was the heftiest fellow in the High Coombe Fifth. But he had no chance against so many. And he was handicapped, too, by his reluctance to make a row that might draw McCann there. He was opposed to such a ghastly rag on McCann; but his chief concern was for his chum—he wanted to keep Aubrey out of trouble, not to land him in it. And if McCann came up and saw the bucket of tar and feathers, he would hardly need telling what the game was.

Darrell struggled hard but silently. They dragged him back from the window and held him back, panting. Compton smoothed out his crumpled jacket. Then he turned to the window again and took hold of the tin bucket. Tap came again from below as another pellet knocked on the Head's window.

There was the sound of an opening window below. The tapping on the

Head's window had caused the occupant of the study to take notice and open the window to look out.

Peering over the upper window-sill, Aubrey spotted a head coming out of McCann's window below, and tilted the bucket.

Downward swooped a stream of tar and feathers. Right on the back of the projected head it mopped! Up came a wild and startled howl.

Aubrey gave a breathless chuckle. He spun from the window.

"Hook it!" he breathed.

The next item on the programme was a scamper across the class-room to the door, and a hurried retreat.

But that item had to be cut.

For just as the Fifth Form men started to scamper a stocky figure appeared in the class-room doorway and two very keen, blue-grey eyes looked in.

James McCann, clean and neat as usual, without a trace of tar or feathers, gazed at the dumbfounded men of the Fifth. They gasped, stared, gaped. In Aubrey's dismayed and horrified mind one question formed itself—on whose head had he dropped the bucketful of tar? Not on the Blighter's—that was only too fearfully clear! With a faint smile on his face Jimmy scanned the dismayed and flabbergasted crowd in the French master's class-room.

"What is going on here?" he asked.

The heroes of the Fifth did not answer. Speech failed them. They gazed at Jimmy McCann—gazed, and gaped, and almost gibbered!

A Bloodcurdling Howl!

IT was rough luck on Monsieur Mouton.

Everybody felt that—the victim himself most of all!

High Coombe was a solid old building, with stone walls and good oak floors. Nevertheless, sounds travelled. The new headmaster of High Coombe certainly would not have heeded footsteps in the class-room over his head but for the fact that the master to whom that class-room appertained was then and there in his presence.

Monsieur Mouton being in Mr. McCann's study in conversation with Mr. McCann, it was obvious that he had no class in No. 10 just then. Jimmy McCann, as the School for Slackers had learned to know only too well, was extremely quick on the uptake. If a crowd of fellows went into the French master's class-room in the French master's absence, it looked as if a "rag" was on. Only too often had monsieur found his class-room "shipped."

So Mr. McCann, politely excusing himself to the French master for a few minutes, stepped out of his study to go up to No. 10 and ascertain what the fellows were there for.

Monsieur Mouton, waiting for him to return to the study, was surprised and perplexed by an incessant tapping at the window. Had Mr. McCann been there, no doubt he would have opened the window and looked out to ascertain the cause of that strange and mysterious tapping on the glass.

Mr. McCann, negotiating rambling old staircases, did not hear Fatty Pye's imitation of a woodpecker. Monsieur Mouton, in the study, did, and after a succession of mysterious taps, he opened the window and put out his head to look round and see what was up.

What happened next was the greatest surprise that had befallen Monsieur Mouton since he had quitted his own beautiful country to teach his beautiful language to the inhabitants of a barbarous island.

He uttered a bloodcurdling howl that rang all over High Coombe—that caused fellows in the quad to jump, and old Judd to blink out of his lodge by the gates, and Mr. Chard to stare from his window in his rooms under the clock-tower.

Having startled all High Coombe with that fearful howl, Monsieur Mouton jerked a tarry and feathery head back into Mr. McCann's study, and, in a spluttering, gasping, and gurgling state, clawed at his hair.

In the class-room above, nobody spoke. The silence there might almost have been cut with a knife. Bob stood as overwhelmed with dismay as the rest. McCann had not got the tar and feathers! That, perhaps, was fortunate! But somebody had. And here was McCann!

The silence rather puzzled Mr. McCann. That these fellows were in No. 10 for a rag he did not doubt. But there were no signs of a rag in the class-room. Mossoo's desk was not upside down. The forms were not piled in a pyramid.

But he spotted the bucket, still dripping tar, with feathers clinging. He stepped to the window. There was a smear of tar on the sill. And from the open study window below strange, wild sounds floated out and reached him. The Head's face set grimly.

Petrified, paralysed, the Fifth Formers watched him. It was useless to scamper now. They were fairly caught. That unspeakable bargee, somehow, had spotted them. Knowing him as they did, they might almost have expected it. But they hadn't! Even Aubrey, with all his nerve, was utterly taken aback and dismayed. He lowered his eyes as the Head's keen glance fixed on him.

"This, I presume, was intended for me?" remarked Mr. McCann, in quite a casual tone.

No answer.

"You, I think, Compton——"

Bob broke the silence:

"We—we were all here, sir, and—and——"

"That will do, Darrell!" McCann's first glance into No. 10 had spotted Bob in the grasp of many hands, and he had a fairly clear idea of the state of affairs.

"Follow me, all of you!" said Mr. McCann.

They followed him—a dispirited crowd. They trailed down the stairs and after him into his study.

At a less apprehensive moment they might have smiled at what they beheld there. Monsieur Mouton was a striking sight. His unfortunate head was clouded with tar and sticky feathers. Tar was trickling down his

neck and down his face, giving him an odd resemblance to a zebra. He clawed and clawed.

"C'est affreux! Regardez moi, donc!" he shrieked, as Mr. McCann came gravely in. "I poke me ze head from ze window, and zis fall on ze head! Ze tar and ze fezzar! Ze fezzar and ze tar! How he happen? Mais regardez!"

He clawed with tarry fingers. "I cannot sufficiently express my regret for this outrage, Monsieur Mouton!" said Mr. McCann gravely. "The perpetrator will be severely punished. Allow me to assist you!" Carefully—for Mossoo was very sticky—Jimmy McCann took his arm to lead him away to a bath-room. The pressing necessity at the moment was hot water and soap. He made the Fifth Formers a sign to await his return, and led the tarry gentleman away. Mossoo's moans floated back.

Left in the Head's study, the Fifth Form men looked at one another in eloquent silence. Aubrey was recovering his nerve. Bob was glum and dismal. Teddy almost whimpered. The other fellows wondered sorrowfully what was going to happen now.

"You ass, Aubrey!" said Peverill. Aubrey shrugged his shoulders.

"How was I to know?"
"Poor old monsieur!" said Bob. "How long will it take him to get that muck out of his hair?"

"The Sheep's wool will need clipping!" said Carter.

Monsieur Mouton was called the Sheep. It was an obvious nickname for him. But nobody smiled at Carter's remark. It was no time for him to be funny.

"We're all in this!" said Bob. "If it's sacking, he can't sack the lot of us! If it's flogging, it will come easier for a crowd! We——"

"Don't be a silly ass!" cut in Aubrey. "It was my game, and I can stand for it!"

"Don't you be a silly ass, Aubrey!" said Teddy Seymour hotly. "Bob's right—whatever's coming, we whack it out all round!"

"Fathead!" said Aubrey. "Think the Blighter doesn't know?"

The mumble of dispirited voices died away as Mr. McCann came back into the study. He eyed the dismal group.

"Every boy here——" he began. Aubrey interrupted him. Aubrey was cool again now—cool as ice. He might be a reckless ass—no doubt he was—but nobody had ever said that he lacked the nerve to face the music. He was not the man to land his friends in trouble.

"It was I who pitched down the tar, sir!" said Aubrey. "The others had nothing to do with it. One of them tried to stop me, in fact. I did the whole thing!"

"Look here——" began Bob. "You will be silent, Darrell!" said Mr. McCann quietly. "I hardly needed to hear your confession, Compton! You must be well aware that you deserve to be expelled from the school for what you have done. I shall spare you that.

"But you will be flogged in Hall in the presence of all High Coombe tomorrow morning. It will be a public

and most severe flogging! Now you may go!"

And they went.

Up For a Flogging!

"SILLY ass!" said Corkran, when they heard in Big Study.

The Sixth Form men nodded assent to that.

Of course, the Sixth loathed McCann as much as the Fifth did. In the Sixth Form Room he had that Form right under his own eye, and they really came off worse than the Fifth. The Sixth—prefects and all—would have been glad to hear that the Blighter McCann had been tarred and feathered. But Compton

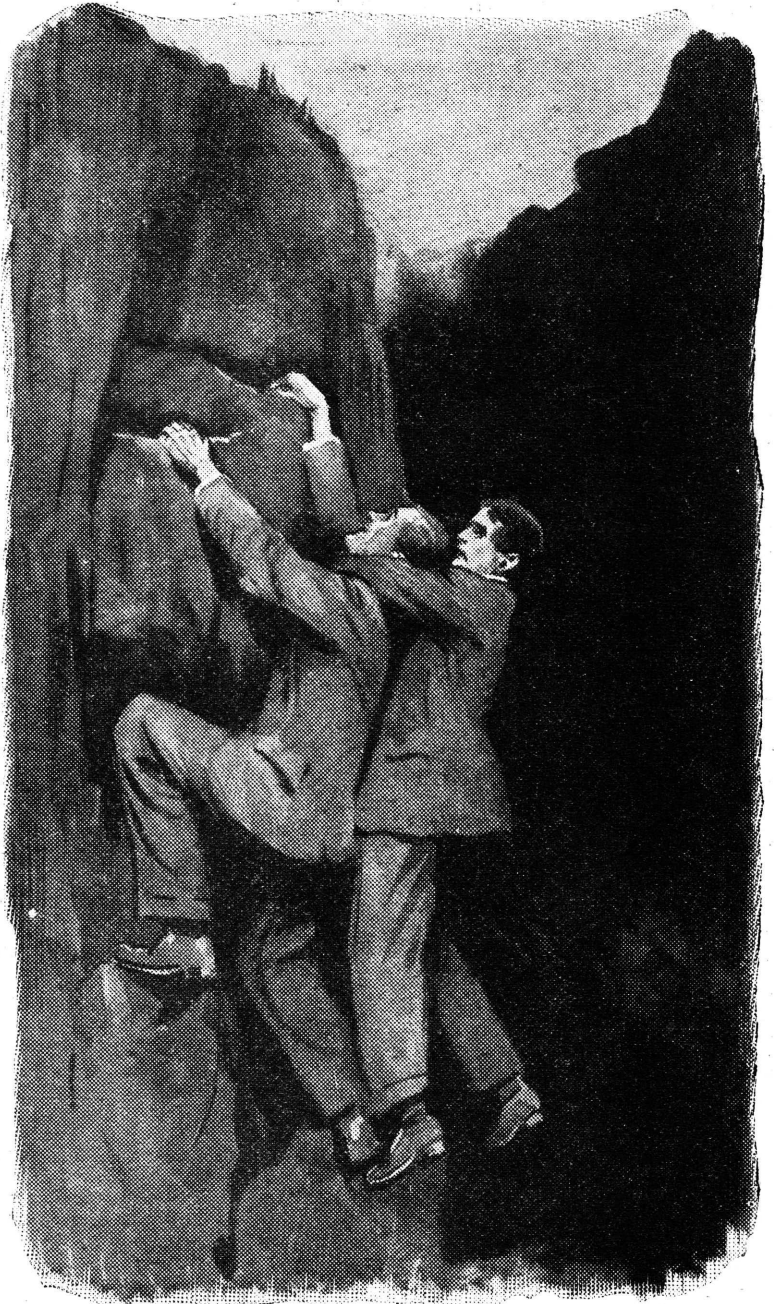
had made a muck of it—and the verdict of the Sixth was "Silly ass!"

In the Burrow, where the fags most did congregate, there was chuckling.

Ferguson of the Fourth told them. Ferg had had the supreme happiness to see Monsieur Mouton tottering on the Head's arm on his way to the nearest bath-room. Ferg blew into the Burrow bursting with it.

"Thick with it!" said Ferg blissfully. "Sticky with it! Tar—feathers—all over the poor little ass! Believe me! He was using awful language, too—kept on saying 'goudon'—a French swear word, I suppose——"

"That's French for tar!" cut in Loom.



It seemed that McCann's limbs were of iron, laced with steel, and how McCann stood the awful strain Aubrey could only wonder. Twice they were on the point of pitching back together.

Tar and Feathers for Jimmy McCann!

Loom was one of those fellows who knew things.

Ferguson gave him a cold look. "I don't want you to teach me French, Loomey! Keep it for the Sheep, if you know any, which you jolly well don't! I tell you, the poor old Sheep was fairly smothered—it'll take him days to get it out of his hair—lucky for him he hasn't got much! Reeking with it!"

"But who did it?" gasped Donkin. Ferguson chuckled.

"Compton, of course! McCann's got the whole gang in his study! Compton is a card! Of course, he must have meant it for McCann! But the Sheep's got it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" It seemed frightfully funny to the Fourth. And when they learned that Compton of the Fifth was up for a flogging the whole Burrow decided that he was getting off lightly. Most headmasters would have barked him.

Many of the juniors sympathised with Aubrey. It was true that he put on a good deal of roll; but he was going to suffer in what they felt to be a good cause. It would have been a glorious rag—if it had come off! Ferg took a different view. Ferg had been Compton's fag last term, and he had no use for the superb Aubrey. Ferguson expressed the opinion that the flogging next morning would be a "corker," and the charitable hope that it would do Compton good!

Not that Compton cared what they thought, or said, in the Fourth or the Shell. As he sat in Study No. 3 after tea he was thinking of what was to come. He was thinking of it with a set face and glinting eyes. It was not the severity of the punishment that troubled him, though that was bad enough, he knew, for he had suffered under McCann and knew that that stocky young man packed a lot of muscle.

It was the humiliation—going through it under the staring eyes of the whole school. He, Aubrey Compton, the dandy of the Fifth, the great chief and leader of the resistance to the new Head—turned up and flogged like a miserable fag!

He felt that he would never be able to hold up his head again. The humiliation would linger long after the sting of the cane had faded.

Bob Darrell, looking gloomier than if he had been going to get the swiping himself, gave Aubrey uneasy glances. He did not like the look on his chum's face, and he wondered, with considerable disquietude, what was passing in Aubrey's mind, as he sat silent. Teddy, worried and miserable, had a suggestion to make that was worthy of his intellectual powers. "What about packing?" asked Teddy.

Compton did not even look at him. Darrell made him a sign to shut up. But Teddy, who fancied that poor old Aubrey was thinking of the coming swipes of the birch, went on fatuously:

"Exercise books are no good! There was a man in the Fifth packed

exercise books, and they slid down his bags when he went over and bulged out at his ankles. But a double thickness of flannels—"

"Shut up, old man!" said Bob. "A double thickness of flannels," persisted Teddy, "and a blazer folded under them!"

"Fool!" said Aubrey. "If that's all you've got to say to a pal who's trying to help you, Aubrey, I'll cut!" Teddy said, with dignity. And he left Study No. 3.

Compton, leaning back in his chair, his elegant legs stretched out, his hands driven deep into his pockets, was silent again. Bob watched him more anxiously than before.

"It's rother luck, Aubrey, old man," he said at last. "But dash it all, you knew what to expect if McCann spotted you. It might have been the sac!"

"I'd rather it was!" "Oh, that's rot!" said Bob. "It's sickening enough, but it's not so bad as that! Bite on the bullet."

"Flogged like a snivellin' fag!" said Aubrey Compton, between his teeth, his eyes gleaming. "I'd take anythin' the cur liked to give me, bendin' over in his study—and he knows it! But he wants to rub it in! He wants to make me look small before all High Coombe! He wants to make a fellow ridiculous! He wants—" Aubrey choked. "The rotter! The dashed usher! He may be disappointed, after all."

"It can't be helped, old chap!" said Bob miserably.

"Perhaps it can!" said Aubrey. "Chard can't do anything—"

"Bother Chard!" "But what—" "Oh, leave me alone! I'm tryin' to think."

Bob Darrell left him to think. But he resolved to keep a wary eye on him. What mad thoughts were passing through Aubrey's mind he could not guess. But he was deeply uneasy.

That evening Aubrey did not appear in Big Study. Tredegar, captain of High Coombe, gave him a look-in in Study No. 3, out of sheer kindness of heart. But old Tred came down to Big Study looking flushed and huffed.

"How's Compton takin' it?" inquired Corkran.

"Pretty bad!" said Tred briefly. "He said he wouldn't stand it, and when I said that was all rot he buzzed a dictionary at me." Tredegar rubbed his chin. "He's in a rotten bad temper. I'm leaving him alone!"

All High Coombe knew, before lights out, that Compton of the Fifth was taking it very badly indeed. All the school buzzed with the rumour that Compton said that he wouldn't stand it! That, of course, was utter rot—a hasty word uttered under the stress of excitement and anger.

On the other hand, Compton was the sort of fellow to stand by his word, even a hasty one. Some fellows wondered whether there would be some sort of a scene in Hall in the morning. Fatty Pye even mooted the idea, in the Burrow, that Compton

might punch McCann—a suggestion that thrilled all the fags with a delicious excitement.

Missing!

"COMPTON!" James McCann's voice was quiet, but it carried to the farthest corner of Great Hall at High Coombe.

The silence was deep. Every fellow, every master, of High Coombe was present. The summer sunlight, glinting through stained-glass windows, glimmered on rank after rank of breathless faces. The headmaster stood on the dais at the upper end of Hall, with a grave face.

Liggins hovered with the birch ready for his use. Mr. Chard, master of the Fifth, looked as distressed as if he were going to get the swishing. But even Chard had not thought it advisable to put in a word for the culprit on this occasion. What could he say in favour of a fellow who had planned to mop tar and feathers over the headmaster, and actually had mopped them over a member of the staff? Even Peter Chard had to admit that that graceless member of his Form was getting off cheaply.

Indeed, everyone appeared to think so, except Compton himself. The look on Aubrey's pale, handsome face alarmed other fellows as well as Bob Darrell. Everyone was looking at Aubrey, or trying to; fellows out of range craned their necks to look.

He made no signs of having heard the Head's quiet voice. Chard, worried and fussy, weighed in.

"Compton! Compton! Go to the Head! At once, Compton!" Bob nudged his chum.

"Aubrey, old man!" he whispered.

Aubrey Compton stepped out of the ranks of the Fifth. Mr. McCann, at a distance, had his eyes curiously on him. Mr. McCann did not, as Aubrey bitterly believed, like this business. He loathed it. But he had his duty to do; and James McCann was not the man to side-step duty, however disagreeable.

"Compton, come here!" said Mr. McCann in the same quiet tones. He took the birch from Liggins.

"You are going to flog me?" Compton spoke almost casually.

"I have told you so, Compton!" "I'd rather be sacked!"

There was a buzz in Hall, immediately suppressed. Everyone wanted to hear what the Blighter had to say to that.

"That is not for you to decide, Compton! Come here at once."

"I'm not goin' to be flogged!" said Aubrey.

"Compton!" gasped Mr. Chard. "Compton!"

"Oh, I say!" brayed the Donkey, in the ranks of the Fourth.

"Aubrey, you ass—" groaned Bob Darrell.

Murmurs rose like the tide. Mr. McCann's voice cut in:

"Silence!"

And there was silence. "Mr. Chard, kindly conduct that boy to me!" said James McCann.

Chard rolled over to Aubrey and stretched out a hand.

Aubrey swung round, walked quickly down the Hall, flung the door open, and walked out!

So swift and so unexpected was that action that the whole school was taken by surprise. Chard remained, apparently petrified, with his arm extended, his hand grasping space. Again there was a murmur, which rose almost to a roar. Even McCann was taken aback.

He stood looking at the bar of sunlight that fell in at the door, left open by Aubrey Compton. But he quickly woke to action. His swift, elastic strides carried him down the gaping Hall, and he disappeared after Compton.

"Silence! Silence!" trumpeted Chard.

"Silence!" hooted Corkran.

But neither master nor prefect was heeded. Hall was in a roar! Compton was gone—McCann was gone after him! What was happening out there in the quad? Excitement grew and intensified. There had been a good many surprising happenings at the School for Slackers since Jimmy McCann had arrived there to wake it up. But this was the most surprising of all.

"Oh, the ass!" groaned Bob.

Would McCann come back dragging Aubrey by the collar? Was the swiping going to take place after all, or was it off? Excited minute followed minute—and McCann did not come back. Fellows craned their ears to hear sounds from the quad—but they heard nothing.

It was full five minutes before Mr. McCann returned—alone.

But his face told nothing. To the disappointment of some of the fags, there were no signs of punching. Whatever had happened and whatever McCann was thinking, he was calm and sedate as usual.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. McCann.

The school streamed out.

Never, in the history of High Coombe, had it been so irksome to go into the Form-rooms. Nobody knew what had happened—e v e r y b o d y wanted to know! One thing they knew in the Fifth—Aubrey was absent. His place in Chard's Form-room was empty. But in the other Form-rooms they did not even know that; and all was excitement and eager curiosity.

The Sixth had to wait for Mr. McCann. He seemed busy about other matters. Chard was called out of the Fifth Form Room for speech with him, and came back looking extremely perturbed, but he said nothing to his Form.

It was not till break that High Coombe learned.

Then the news came out.

Compton had cut!

He was no longer in the school! Judd, it was learned, had stopped him at the gate and had seen him climb over a wall. McCann, after him, had seen him also, glimpsing Aubrey's straw hat as he dropped on the outer side. Compton had told McCann that he would rather be sacked—and he was gone!

(Continued on next page)

New FULL-OF-THRILLS CARD GAME

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Tar and Feathers for Jimmy McCann!

From various sources it was learned that McCann had been busy on the telephone. McCann was not the man to let a fellow decide for himself whether he would be sacked or not! Everyone knew, or guessed, that McCann would leave no stone unturned to round up the fugitive and march him back. Of course, he had phoned to Okeham—Compton would not be able to take a train there. Where was old Aubrey now?

It was the sensation of the term! High Coombe fellows could talk of nothing else. Third school was simply a buzz in all the Form-rooms. Goggs took the Sixth in maths, McCann being absent. Was he away hunting for Aubrey? Most fellows supposed so.

If so, it was clear that the hunt was futile. Mr. McCann was seen again at the school dinner. Compton was not. Had he gone home? Had McCann prevented him from getting home? If he got home would his people stand by him or send him back? If he hadn't, was he wandering on the moors, or where was he?

If McCann had blocked the ways of escape close at hand, his only chance was to cut across the moors and pick up a car or train in some more distant place. As the day wore on, High Coombe thrilled more and more with wonder and excitement and surmise.

After three that day the one topic reigned supreme. Fellows meeting one another asked immediately: "Heard about Compton?" Even Ferguson did not think of cricket that afternoon; though there was a notice on the board, with a list of the names of the men for practice. Not a man turned up—neither did Ferguson! It was Compton first, and everything and everybody else LO-where!

Bob Darrell wandered about looking almost like a ghost. Where was his wayward chum? What had happened to him? What was going to happen to him? Bob could have kicked himself. Why hadn't he collared the ass and held him down by main force?

As the summer sun sank beyond the green coombes into the Atlantic it became known that he had not got home. Chard had been on the telephone to Colonel Compton, and nothing had been seen of Aubrey there. Where was he?

The Ghost of a Grin!

JAMES McCANN stood with the straw hat in his hand, looking at it, in the gleam of the summer moon. His face was set and hard. He stood on the rugged slopes of High Tor, five miles from the school. Round him the lonely moor stretched, mile after mile, silent, solitary. Even the iron-limbed headmaster of High Coombe was tired after the exertions of that day.

But he did not think of that as he stood with the straw hat in his hands, the name in it clear in the moon-glimmer, an aching dread in

his heart. What had happened to that wilful, wayward boy? By one faint clue after another, Jimmy McCann had picked up Aubrey's track over the moor. A shepherd had seen a schoolboy tramping—at a wayside inn he had bought bread and cheese.

It was clear that Compton was striking across the moor; and it was many hours later that Jimmy picked up the trail and followed. People had been lost on the trackless waste of Okeham Moor—and there were dangerous pitfalls for the unwary. Jimmy was angry—but he was anxious, too. And when he picked up the straw hat, with its band in the High Coombe colours, and the name of A. Compton written inside, anger vanished and gave place to anxiety.

He was close on the runaway—yet it was certain that many hours had passed since Compton had stood on that spot. What had happened? Before the headmaster of High Coombe stretched a deep rift in the moor, wide and deep, with crumbling edges. Compton had come on it, as he cut across the moor—jumped it, and the wind had taken off his hat as he jumped. So far, it was fairly clear. But it must have happened in the sun-blaze of early day. Had Compton gone on heartily, or—

Jimmy McCann laid down the hat and stepped to the edge of the rift. On the edge he dropped on hands and knees, and peered into deep shadows. From the dusky depths below came a sound, faint but clear. It was a groan. Then Jimmy knew.

"Compton!" he called.

"There was a faint, startled cry.

"Who's that? Is that you, Bob?"

"It is I, your headmaster, Compton! Are you hurt?"

"My leg—twisted!"

"I am coming down!"

"Don't! It's fifteen feet, at least—you'll get landed same as me."

Jimmy did not heed that. To go for help meant a tramp for miles, leaving the boy where he was—injured in the darkness. Jimmy McCann selected his spot carefully, swung over the edge, and slid down a steep slope—in the midst of a shower of dislodged earth and stones.

With all his care, he landed bumping and sprawling at the bottom of the rift, and lay for a few moments panting before he picked himself up and moved along, looking for Compton. He had a flashlamp in his pocket, and he turned on the light. The light gleamed on Aubrey's face—a face so white that it seemed as if every vestige of colour had drained from it.

Aubrey Compton did not stir. He blinked in the light, staring up at his headmaster. In the grim solitude and silence of the moor—in the lonely shadows of night—in danger and in pain—even the Blighter's face was welcome. He had been there half a day—helpless. He would have remained there the night—but for the Blighter! He could not imagine how McCann had found him.

"I fell in," he stammered. "I jumped it, and the edge gave way where I landed, and—and—"

"Let me see the damage!" said McCann's quiet, matter-of-fact tones. He did not seem like a headmaster who had caught a reckless young rascal running away from school. He might have been an elder brother. His touch was gentle; but Aubrey winced as he touched the injured limb. "No bones broken," said Mr. McCann, after a minute. "You have been fortunate, Compton. Now about getting out of this."

"I can't stir, sir!" mumbled Aubrey. "I really can't! I've tried a hundred times, and—"

"I am going to carry you!"

Aubrey, though slimmer, was nearly as tall as the stocky young man who was headmaster of High Coombe. He did not believe that McCann could carry him out of the rift. Leaving him staring, Mr. McCann moved along the rugged bottom of the rift, flashing the light to and fro, seeking the most favourable spot for a climb. It was going to be hard—but Jimmy McCann's view was that difficulties were only made to be overcome. He was the man to overcome them!

Having selected the most promising spot, he returned to Aubrey. The dandy of the Fifth looked at him with the ghost of a grin on his colourless face.

"You can't do it, sir!" he said.

Mr. McCann did not answer; he saw no object in wasting breath. He stooped over Aubrey and lifted him with an ease that surprised him. The dandy of the Fifth was swung on his back. He gave a yelp of pain as a twinge went through his twisted leg.

"Hold round my neck," said Mr. McCann.

He tramped along the rift to the spot he had selected for the climb. Aubrey held on like a limpet to a rock. The steep slope might have baffled any climber, even unburdened. But there was hand-hold and foothold for a strong, active, determined man. McCann climbed.

Once, twice, it seemed to Aubrey that they would go pitching back together. But they did not. How McCann stood the strain, Aubrey could only wonder. It seemed that his limbs were of iron, laced with muscles of steel. He was breathing hard through shut teeth.

Was it minutes or hours before the headmaster of High Coombe crawled out on the open moor and Aubrey slipped from his back into the grass? Minutes that seemed like hours!

In the moonlight he glimpsed the headmaster's face—white and drawn, beaded with perspiration, but calm. Mr. McCann stretched in the grass—to rest. Even he was exhausted. Aubrey, a few yards from him, was conscious for the first time since the Blighter had blown in at High Coombe of respect for him—even admiration, even—was it possible?—liking! Bob Darrell had said many a time that the Blighter was a man. And, by Jove, what a man he was—what a man!

Mr. McCann rose at last. The
(Continued on page 31)

Tar and Feathers for Jimmy McCann!

(Continued from page 24)

brief rest seemed to have restored him. He smiled faintly at Compton. "Now—" he said.

"I'm sorry, sir!" Aubrey blurted out the words, hardly knowing that he was saying them. "I'm sorry! I—I wish I'd taken that swiping! I'll take it like a shot—now—"

"I am afraid," said Mr. McCann, "that it will be some time, Compton, before you are in a fit state for swiping. And if, in the meantime, I can persuade Monsieur Mouton to forgive your offence, the swiping will not be administered. I think you have had a sufficient lesson, Compton—and I shall be as glad as you to cut out the swiping."

Aubrey could only wonder whether he was dreaming.

James McCann said no more; he needed all his breath for what was before him. He lifted Compton from the grass, placed him as comfortably

as he could on broad, strong shoulders, and tramped. Miles of rugged moor lay between him and the school by the shortest possible cuts—mile on mile—till it seemed to Aubrey Compton that Jimmy McCann must sink to the earth from sheer utter weariness. But Jimmy McCann did not.

"O H, I say!" brayed Donkin. And everybody else at High Coombe expressed in various ways his amazement when he heard.

It was after lights out when James McCann came back with Compton.

Bob Darrell and Teddy Seymour, wide awake and worried, were in Dormitory No. 3, with the light still on in spite of rules. Only they knew what had happened that night, but in the morning all High Coombe knew. And all High Coombe wondered.

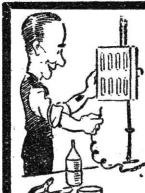
Ferguson of the Fourth was eloquent in the Burrow. Almost the only fellow in the Lower School to

back the Blighter, Ferg felt himself justified and vindicated. Hadn't he told them that McCann was a man? He had—and now he told them again. And not a man in the Fourth said "Shut up, Ferg!"

Aubrey had to "stop out" of school for two or three days. It transpired that the "swiping" was off. Stopping out of school, with time on his hands, Aubrey had ample leisure for laying fresh plans for beating the Blighter and putting paid to the bargee!

But no such plans were running in Aubrey's mind. Aubrey was doing some thinking—unusually hard thinking. But he was not thinking of beating the Blighter now!

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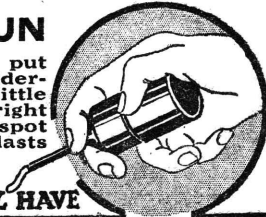
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