

Parted Chums!

By
FRANK RICHARDS.



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PARTED CHUMS!

by
FRANK RICHARDS.

A Gripping Long
Complete Story of the
Chums of St. Kit's.

CHAPTER 1.

Simply Shocking!

"NAMELESS?"

"Yes."

"But that isn't a name!"

Vernon Carton, the captain of the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, gave a contemptuous sniff.

"It's his name!" he said.

"Oh, gad! And he's comin' here?"

"Yes—into the Fourth. Nice, isn't it? Very creditable for St. Kit's, and all that!" said Carton, with a sneer.

"But who is he?"

"Nobody knows."

"But, dash it all, Carton," exclaimed Lumley of the Fourth, staring, "the Head must know who the fellow is, if he's letting him into St. Kit's! This isn't a dashed home for nobodies!"

"Well, rather not!" chimed in Howard and Durance, and two or three more of the Fourth-Formers who were gathered round Vernon Carton in the junior Common-room at St. Kit's.

Carton shrugged his shoulders.

"It's as I say!" he answered. "The

fellow's a nobody—he hasn't even a name to call his own! He comes from nowhere. He's not even goin' to pay any fees! He comes in on the Foundation—a rotten thing that ought to have been abolished long ago. Some low-class rotter, you know, who has mugged up enough to squeeze through the exam, and is comin' here to shove himself into the society of his betters! I call it—"

"Rotten!" said Durance.

"Dashed rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Pushin' cad, you know!"

Every fellow in the little group had some remark to make. Evidently the news that a "dashed nobody" was coming to St. Kit's gave Carton & Co. a very painful shock.

"But how do you know, Carton?" asked Lumley. "Nothin's been said about it that I know of. I haven't heard—"

"I got it from Bunny," said Carton. "He heard the Head talkin' about it with Mr. Rawlings. Even Bunny was shocked."

"Fat little snob!" remarked Durance.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Durance!" ex-

claimed Carton irritably. "Bunny's a fat little beast, but he's right on this point—the fellow oughtn't to come to St. Kit's. Even Bunny's too good for him to associate with!"

"My hat! He must be a rank outsider, then!" grinned Durance.

"Well, he is a rank outsider."

"But is it true?" asked Tracy sceptically. "Perhaps it's only one of Bunny's yarns. You know Bunny!"

"Bunny hasn't brains enough to make up such a yarn. It's true enough," growled Carton. "But here's Bunny—you can ask him for yourselves."

A fat junior, who seemed on the verge of bursting through his Etons, blinked into the Common-room, and two or three of the Fourth-Formers called to him at once:

"Bunny!"

"Bunny Bootles!"

"Come here, Bootles, you fat boulder!"

"Hallo, old tops!" said the fat junior, as he rolled in cheerily. "I'm your man! I was just looking for you fellows. You want me?"

"Yes, we—"

"Well, here I am," said Bunny, with a smile of happy anticipation. "Is it going to be here?"

"Eh? Is what going to be here?"

"The spread."

"You fat duffer, there isn't goin' to be a spread!"

Bunny's fat face fell.

"Then what the thump do you want me for?" he demanded discontentedly.

"We want—"

"Do you know where St. Leger is?" asked Bunny, interrupting the captain of the Fourth.

"Bother St. Leger! We want—"

"Well, I want to see St. Leger," said Bunny. "It's rather important. He had a registered letter this afternoon—"

"Kick him, somebody!" growled Carton.

"Yow-ow! You beast, Durance!" roared Bunny Bootles. "I'll jolly well—"

"Kick him again if he doesn't shut up!"

Bunny Bootles promptly shut up. Durance's boot was a light and elegant one, but, light as it was, Bunny Bootles did not want to feel its weight again. He wriggled and blinked morosely at Carton & Co.

"Now, we want to know about this chap Nameless," said Tracy. "You were listening to the Head—"

"I wasn't!"

"There! I knew it was only a yarn!" said Tracy.

"I mean, I heard the Head speaking to Mr. Rawlings quite by chance," explained Bunny. "I happened to be under our Form-master's window, admiring the view, you know, and they were jawing in the study. The view from there is—"

"Never mind the view. What did the Head say to Rawlings?"

"Do you mean when he came into Rawlings' study?"

"Yes, ass!"

"He said it was a fine afternoon—"

"What?"

"And Mr. Rawlings said he thought it might rain—"

"You silly ass!" roared Carton. "Tell us what he said about that chap Harry Nameless!"

"Oh, that chap!" said Bunny, with a sniff. "That's shocking, ain't it? I was disgusted—quite surprised at the Head, you know. I'd have told him so, too, only—"

"Cut that out! What did he say?"

"He said the chap was coming to St. Kit's on Wednesday," said Bunny. "He's coming in on the Foundation—deserving case, the Head said. Awfully clever kid, considering his disadvantages—something to that effect. The boulder—the Head didn't call him a boulder, of course; I'm saying that—the awful boulder was brought up by a sailorman—just a common sailorman, you know, named Straw, or Hay, or something, who found him somewhere—some tramp's son, you know, picked up on the beach, or something—"

"Did the Head say that?"

"No; I'm saying that!"

"Tell us what the Head said, you thump-in' ass, and leave out your own silly piffle!" said Durance.

"Well, I'm telling you, ain't I?" said Bunny. "The chap's lived with the old sailorman since he left the sea, in a cottage somewhere, or something. He's been taught by an old St. Kit's man, who lives there, and he's called Nameless because he hasn't any name. Jolly queer, ain't it? The Head seemed a bit perplexed about what he was to be called here. Nameless ain't a name, you know. But he said that, as the chap had always been called that in his village, he would have to go on with

it. I'd have butted in and told the Head what I thought of it, only——"

"Only you'd have got licked for your cheek, as well as for cavedroppin', you fat worm!" remarked Durance.

"Look here——"

"Well, that's how it stands," said Carton—"a nameless nobody, brought up by some boozey forecastle ruffian, and he's comin' here—shovin' himself into the Fourth Form of St. Kit's. It's pretty sickenin', havin' a fat little sweep like Bootles here——"

"Oh, I say——"

"But I think the Head might draw a line at tramps!" said Carton bitterly. "It's a disgrace to the school!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And we shall be expected to be civil to him, I suppose!" remarked Tracy.

"Well, I know I shan't be, for one!"

"Same here!"

"What-ho!"

"I shall treat him with contempt, of course," said Bunny Bootles. "I shall simply wither him with a look. If he speaks to me I shall freeze him with a glance!"

"Oh, he won't speak to you!" said Durance. "Even a nameless boulder will draw the line somewhere!"

"Why, you beast——"

"The question is, are we goin' to stand it?" said Carton.

His chums stared at him.

"Blessed if I see any question about that!" answered Tracy. "If the Head lets the cad come, I suppose we've got to stand it!"

"We can keep him at a distance," remarked Lumley; "we can make him feel that he's a rank outsider—send him to Coventry, you know!"

Carton shook his head.

"That's not good enough," he answered. "We're goin' to put our foot down. The rotten boulder oughtn't to come to St. Kit's, and if the Head don't know his duty, it's up to us to enlighten him."

"My hat!"

"But what——"

"You don't mean——"

"I mean what I say!" said Carton, between his set lips. "We don't want the cad here, and we're not goin' to have him, if we can help it. My idea is, to draw up a round robin——"

"Oh!"

"Every fellow in the Fourth will sign

it," said Carton. "That will let the Head know what we think. He's bound to take some notice of our opinion. The fellow's not comin' till Wednesday—an' to-day's Monday—so there's plenty of time for him to be stopped. If he wants to go to school, I suppose there's plenty of other schools he can go to. He can give St. Kit's a miss. We'll send the Head a round robin, and put a stop to it!"

And, after the first gasp of surprise, there was an approving chorus from the group of elegant Fourth-Formers.

"Hear, hear!"

And in a few minutes more Carton & Co. were busy upon the round robin—the document which was to bring the Head of St. Kit's to a sense of his shortcomings, and to keep Harry Nameless at a respectful distance from the school which these elegant young gentlemen honoured with their presence.

CHAPTER 2.

The Round Robin!

ALGERNON AUBREY ST. LEGER, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, was reclining in a graceful attitude upon the sofa in his study, when a tap came at the door.

Algernon Aubrey never sprawled in an armchair or on a sofa, as some of the juniors did. His attitude was always graceful. Moreover, he never forgot the necessity of preserving the elegant crease in his trousers. Even when he lounged, he lounged with care.

Tap!

"Come in, old bean!" yawned St. Leger.

The study door opened, and three Fourth-Formers presented themselves—Vernon Carton, Tracy, and Durance. Carton had a sheet of impot paper in his hand, which was nearly covered with writing.

St. Leger had a letter in his hand. He had been reading it when Carton tapped at the door. He laid it down on his knee, and nodded cheerily to his visitors.

"Trot in, old beans!" he said hospitably. "Anythin' up? You're lookin' awf'ly serious!"

"We want your signature," explained Carton.

"Bogad! Do you?"

"It's a round robin," said Durance.

St. Leger raised his eyebrows.

"I don't mind signin' anythin' for anybody," he said generously; "but what the deuce is a round robin, old beans?"

"The ass doesn't know what a round robin is!" granted Tracy. "Explain to the burbling chump, Carton."

"It's a protest to the Head," explained Carton. "There's a new cad comin' to St. Kit's—a tramp's son from some workhouse, and we object. We're goin' to protest. Catch on?"

"Yaas."

"Every fellow in the Fourth is signin' the protest, and the names are signed in a circle, so as not to give away the chap that starts the list. It's possible that the Head may cut up rusty, of course, and we don't want him to pick on anybody in particular. So the names are signed in a circle. That's a round robin. Got it now?"

"Yaas."

"Well, sign away!" said Durance.

Algernon Aubrey sat up.

There was a rather thoughtful expression on his aristocratic brow.

"Perhaps I'd better read the paper before signin' it," he remarked. "Anythin' to oblige, you know; but—"

"Well, you can read it, but buck up. We haven't finished all the fellows yet, and we want to get it done before tea."

"Hand it over, old bean!"

Carton handed over the sheet of impot paper.

Algernon Aubrey fumbled in his waistcoat-pocket, and produced an eyeglass, which he proceeded to adjust in his eye in a leisurely manner.

Carton & Co. watched him impatiently.

"Buck up!" snapped Tracy.

"My dear old bean—"

"We're waiting!"

"There is such a thing, dear boy, as waitin' politely," remarked Algernon Aubrey. "No good hurryin', you know. I'm not goin' into this thing without knowin' what it's about. Now, dry up a minute while I read it!"

With, or without, the aid of his monocle, the dandy of the Fourth proceeded to read Carton's precious document. It ran:

"We, the members of the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, beg to respectfully protest against a nameless nobody being admitted to the school, and to our Form. We think it would be a disgrace to St. Kit's, and we

hope that this outsider will be kept outside.

"Signed."

The names of the Fourth-Formers were written in a circle round that statement, which occupied the centre of the sheet. Carton, Durance, Tracy, Howard, Lumley, and nine or ten other names were already there, a specially smudgy scrawl indicating that even Bunny Bootles felt an aristocratic prejudice on the subject.

"Sign there!" said Carton, presenting a fountain-pen.

St. Leger shook his head.

"I fear I could not possibly sign this paper, dear boys!" he said.

"Why not?" demanded Carton angrily.

"Do you want a nameless cad from nowhere in your Form?"

"Certainly not!"

"Do you think that the son of a tramp ought to come to St. Kit's?" demanded Tracy.

"Never!"

"Do you want the school to be disgraced by some ragged bounder who drops his 'h's' and eats with his knife?" asked Durance.

Algernon Aubrey shuddered.

"Begad! Horrid!"

"Fellow who picks pockets, very likely!" growled Carton. "You won't be able to leave your watch about when he's here!"

"Do you really think so, Carton, old bean?"

"Yes, I do."

"Begad! What is the Head thinkin' of, I wonder?"

"Well, whatever he's thinkin' of, we're goin' to stop it if we can! Sign the paper!"

"Impossible! I couldn't!"

"Why not?" bawled Carton. "Are you afraid to take your chance with the rest?"

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger rose from the sofa, and jammed his eyeglass a little more tightly into his eye. Then he fixed it on Carton.

"That question is an insult, dear boy," he said calmly. "Do you prefer gloves or no gloves?"

Carton gave an angry snort.

"I haven't come here to fight you, you ass—"

"You have, old bean, unless you withdraw that insultin' observation!" answered Algernon Aubrey, pushing back his elegant

cuffs. "I do not allow anyone to hint that I am capable of funkin'!"

"Then why—"

"Do you withdraw your remark, dear boy? That matter must be settled before these proceedings go any further!"

Carton gritted his teeth.

"Yes, you ass, if you like. Now, why don't you want to sign the paper?"

"It is quite impossible for me to sign this paper as it stands," said Algernon Aubrey amiably. "I quite agree with your views. It would be horrid to have a pick-pocket at St. Kit's! You said he was a pick-pocket, didn't you?"

"Somethin' of the sort."

"Sign the paper!" growled Tracy.

"I couldn't! Look at it for yourselves!" said Algernon Aubrey, in a tone of gentle remonstrance.

"What's the matter with it?"

"Look! It begins, 'We, the members of the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, beg to respectfully protest—'"

"Well, that's all right!"

"It is very far from all right, Carton! Don't you see that you are splittin' the infinitive?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"It is quite impossible for me to sign my name to a split infinitive," said Algernon Aubrey calmly. "I am quite aware that there are some modern writers, like Shaw, who split their infinitives, but I regard it as bein' in shockin' bad taste! The King's English should be treated with proper respect. I cannot possibly sign this paper unless the split infinitive is taken out."

"You crass ass—"

"Oh, begad!"

"You burblin' dummy—"

"Really, you know—"

"You howlin' chump!"

"If you are goin' to descend to Billingsgate, Carton, I must request you to retire from my study."

"You—you—you—"

Algernon Aubrey laid down the paper.

"I cannot sign a document in which the expression 'to respectfully protest' occurs," he said calmly. "If you like to change it to, 'We beg respectfully to protest,' I will sign it with pleasure, old bean."

"Respectfully to protest!—what's the thumpin' difference?" demanded Tracy.

"That does not split the infinitive, dear boy."

"You ass—"

"You chump—"

"You—you jabberwock!"

Durance, with a grin, took the fountain-pen and altered the offending sentence. The split infinitive disappeared, and at the same time the opposition of Algernon Aubrey disappeared, too.

He signed the paper.

"There you are, dear boys—"

Carton snatched up the round robin.

"Come on!" he exclaimed. "We've wasted enough time over that silly idiot—"

"Begad! I think—"

"Come on, we've got two or three more studies to do!"

And Carton & Co. carried off the round robin—no longer disfigured by a split infinitive.

CHAPTER 3.

Facing the Music!

"WHO'S goin'?"

That was an important question.

Carton & Co., of the Fourth, had been quite successful so far. The round robin was completed; nearly every fellow in the Fourth had signed his name to it.

Some of them had hesitated, but Carton was captain of the Form, and rather high-handed in his methods; he had had his way.

He had really had some doubts about Algernon Aubrey St. Leger; that noble youth, though the best-connected fellow at St. Kit's, was quite unlike Carton & Co. in many respects—he was anything but a snob. Vernon Carton did not think that he himself was a snob, but he had had a sort of feeling that St. Leger might think so, and might refuse to have a hand in the affair of the round robin.

However, St. Leger had lined up with the rest—rather thoughtlessly, but he had done it. And now the round robin was complete, and it only remained for it to be presented to the Head of St. Kit's.

But here a slight difficulty arose.

As an expression of public opinion in the St. Kit's Fourth, the round robin was entitled to the Head's respectful attention. But the juniors could not help realising that perhaps it would not gain the Head's respectful attention.

It was possible that Dr. Chenies might even cut up rusty—you never could tell.

As Durance remarked, the only thing you could be certain of about a headmaster was that there was no telling what the beast might do.

So the question of who was going to present the round robin was a rather important one; nobody seemed keen on it.

Many of the fellows agreed that it was up to Carton, as captain of the Fourth, and as founder of the whole stunt. Carton did not seem to see that, however. He was quite willing to leave it to any other fellow—if any other fellow could be found to leap into the breach, as it were.

Apparently another fellow couldn't be found.

The round robin hung fire.

Carton & Co. had tea in their study, and talked it over.

"The fact is, it may be rather risky takin' it to the Head," said Carton, coming out into the light at last, as it were. "I'd rather not."

"Exactly how I feel," remarked Howard.

"Same here!"

"If you care to take it, Durance, you——"

"I don't!"

"What about Bootles?" asked Lumley. "That fat rotter would do anythin' for a feed. We could have him to tea."

Carton shook his head.

"He's too wide to be taken in like that—and he's got no nerve. I—I wonder whether St. Leger——"

"Just the man!"

"St. Leger's got no end of pluck, and not much hoss-sense," said Tracy. "He's the very lamb we're lookin' for."

After tea the nuts of St. Kit's looked in on Algernon Aubrey.

They found that superb youth engaged, with a set and serious face, in examining a number of handsome neckties.

"Busy?" asked Carton, with a grin.

Algernon Aubrey nodded.

"Yaas. I've had a letter from my uncle——"

"Which uncle? You've lots!"

"My military uncle," said Algernon Aubrey, "Colonel Wilmot, you know. He's home from Germany, and he's comin' down to St. Kit's to see me soon. I haven't seen him for an awf'ly long time, and I want to make a rather good impression on him. What do you think of this necktie, Carton?"

"Oh, rippin'! We——"

"Do you think this other one is rather better taste?"

"Yes. Now we——"

"I am afraid you are answerin' without thinkin' very much about the matter, dear boy. It's rather serious. Now——"

"Bother your ties!" said Carton. "Look here! The round robin's ready now, and it's got to be taken to the Head."

"Take it, then, old bean!"

"Well, we think you're the chap to take it, St. Leger," said Carton blandly. "It's necessary to do a thing of this sort in a—sort of—of impressive way—the grand manner, you know. The Head will expect that. Now, you're about the only fellow in the Fourth who can be trusted to do the thing in the right style."

Algernon Aubrey beamed.

"My dear old bean, I'm your man," he said. "Leave it to me, if you really want the thing done decently."

Carton & Co. exchanged glances of satisfaction.

Algernon Aubrey had fallen into the trap without even seeing that there was a trap.

"You fellows can come with me, if you like," said Algernon, taking the paper from the captain of the Fourth. "Of course, you'd better not say anything. I'm the chap to do the talkin'. I have a way of putting things, you know."

"You have!" agreed Carton, closing one eye at his comrades. "Of course, we're ready to come——"

"I say——" began Howard.

"Shut up, Howard! We're ready to come, St. Leger, but we think you'd do it better quite on your own."

"Perhaps you're right, dear boy," said Algernon innocently. "Yaas, I dare say you're quite right. I have a way of puttin' things——"

"Go ahead, then!"

"Right-ho!"

Carton & Co. accompanied Algernon Aubrey as far as the end of the corridor which led to the Head's study. Mr. Rawlings, the master of the Fourth, came along the passage, and glanced at the group of juniors, but he did not speak to them—rather to their relief. Algernon Aubrey marched on boldly, tapped at the Head's door, and entered in response to the deep-toned "Come in" from within the apartment.

Dr. Chenies, the Head of St. Kit's, was seated at his writing-table, with a pen in his hand. He laid down the pen as Algernon Aubrey St. Leger entered.

"Well, what is it, my boy?" he asked, with a kind smile.

"I have the honour, sir, of presenting this round robin to you," said St. Leger, laying the paper on the table.

The Head started a little, and glanced curiously at the paper.

There was surprise in his face at first—it deepened to astonishment, and then his brows knitted in a dark frown.

He picked up the precious document, and read it through carefully from end to end.

"This is a—ah—round robin?" he said.

"Yaas, sir."

"Signed by nearly all the Fourth Form, it appears."

"Yaas, sir."

"I am surprised at this, St. Leger!" said the Head quietly. "May I inquire how you know anything about this new boy—as no statement has been made on the subject as yet?"

"Really, sir—"

"How do you know?" rapped out the Head, tapping the table with his hand. "Answer me at once, please."

"The—the fellows all seem to know, sir," stammered the dandy of the Fourth. "I—I heard it from the chaps, sir."

"Someone must have listened to a conversation not intended for his ears. Was it you, St. Leger?"

Algernon Aubrey crimsoned.

"Sir!"

"Answer me!"

The dandy of St. Kit's drew himself up to his full height.

"Dr. Chenies, I really do not think I ought to be requested to answer a question of that kind," he said, with a great deal of dignity.

"What?" ejaculated the Head.

"I am quite incapable of doin' anythin' of the sort, sir!" exclaimed Algernon Aubrey indignantly.

"Someone has done so," said the Head. "However, I shall see into the matter. Kindly call your Form-fellows here, St. Leger—every boy who has signed his name to this offensive paper."

"The paper was not meant to be offensive, sir," faltered Algernon. "You see, sir—"

"Do as I tell you, at once!" exclaimed the Head testily.

"Yaas, sir!"

Algernon Aubrey stepped out of the study, leaving the Head knitting his brows over the

round robin. Carton & Co. eyed the dandy of St. Kit's eagerly as he came gracefully down the passage.

"Well?"

"How did he take it?"

"Is it all right?"

"Tell us, you image!"

"I do not like bein' called an image Carton—"

"Will you tell us?" hissed Lumley.

"Certainly! The Head wants to see all the fellows who have signed their names to the round robin."

"Oh! What for?"

"He did not say what for, dear boy; but I dare say he will tell you if you ask him."

Carton & Co. exchanged rather uneasy glances.

"I—I dare say it's all right," muttered Tracy. "The Head must see that we couldn't stand the cad. He's goin' to tell us that it's all right."

"Did he look waxy, St. Leger?"

"Yaas."

"You ass, why couldn't you say so before?"

"You didn't ask me, dear boy."

"Fathead!"

"If you are goin' to be insultin', Carton—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Carton. "Blessed if I know how it's goin' to turn out—but we've got to see it through now. We might have known that St. Leger would make some sort of muck of it."

"Oh, begad!"

"Call the fellows," said Carton. "We've got to go, anyhow, as the Head's sent for us. We'll see it through."

It was with mingled feelings that the authors of the round robin presented themselves in Dr. Chenies' study.

Carton & Co. hoped for the best, and Algernon Aubrey seemed quite indifferent. As a matter of fact, Algy's powerful brain was still occupied with the question of his neckties. That was a more important matter to him than any number of round robins. Some of the crowd that filed into the Head's study seemed uneasy. A good many of them wished they hadn't signed that precious protest. But it was too late to wish that now.

The Head's study was pretty well crowded by the time all the protesters had filed in. Dr. Chenies was standing by his table, with a severe frown on his brow—which did not look promising. He glanced at the abashed

juniors over his glasses, and tapped the paper that lay on the table.

"I have sent for you, my boys," he said, in his deep voice, "to tell you how surprised I am—how shocked I am—at this act of snobbery—"

"Oh!"

"Begad!"

"Silence! The boy who is coming to St. Kit's is a very worthy lad. He has worked hard, under many difficulties, and his case is one of the most deserving that has ever received assistance from the St. Kit's Foundation. I had hoped that my boys would give him a hospitable welcome. I trust that this foolish paper was drawn up and signed in thoughtlessness—that you have been guilty of nothing worse than want of proper reflection."

Carton's eyes glittered.

"If you please, sir—"

"You need not speak, Carton. Believing that this act is one of thoughtlessness, I shall not impose a severe punishment."

Some of the Fourth-Formers looked relieved at that. They had begun to fear the worst.

"Every boy who has signed this paper will take five hundred lines," said the Head.

"Oh!"

"St. Leger!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Put that paper in the fire!"

"Oh! Yaas, sir!"

Algernon Aubrey picked the round robin from the table and dropped it into the grate. The juniors watched it in silence while it was consumed.

"I hope that, upon reflection, you will be sorry for this, my boys," said the Head.

"You may go!"

The juniors began to back out of the study, silent and dismayed. Some of them were giving Vernon Carton grim looks.

Carton paused, his eyes gleaming.

"May I say a word, sir?" he asked.

The Head looked at him.

"You may speak, if you have anything to say, Carton!" he answered.

"We object to a nameless cad comin' to St. Kit's, sir!"

"What!"

The juniors almost gasped. Carton's nerve took their breath away. It seemed to take the Head's breath away, too.

"We feel we've a right to object, sir," said Carton hardily. "We think it's a disgrace to—"

"Shurrup!" breathed Durance.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head.

"After what I have said, you venture to repeat your impertinence, Carton!"

"We think—"

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

He glanced round at his desk, and picked up his cane.

"Hold out your hand, Carton!"

The black sheep of St. Kit's breathed hard through his nose.

"You're goin' to cane me, sir, because I object—"

"Another word, Carton," broke in the Head icily, "and I shall flog you! Hold out your hand at once, sir!"

In silence, with set teeth, Vernon Carton held out his hand.

Swish!

"Now you may go! Not a word—go!"

The unhappy protesters crowded out of the Head's study. The door closed behind him. In the passage they looked at one another.

"What a go!" murmured Durance.

Carton gritted his teeth.

"We'll make that cad suffer for it!" he muttered. "It's all that nameless rotter's fault. We'll make him sit up when he comes!"

"Really, Carton—" began Algernon Aubrey St. Leger.

"Oh, shut up!"

And Vernon Carton stamped away, and the juniors dispersed—with the happy prospect before them of writing out five hundred lines each. The round robin to the Head could not be called a success.

CHAPTER 4.

The New Junior!

"YOU the new chap for St. Kit's?"

A handsome, athletic-looking fellow of about fifteen stepped from the train at Wicke Station in the afternoon sunshine. He had a bag in his hand and a coat over his arm. He was about to start along the train to claim a box that had been trundled out of the guard's van when a fat youth in Etons scuttled across the platform and addressed him.

Bunny Bootles—for it was the fat Fourth-Former of St. Kit's—eyed him curiously and rather doubtfully.

This was not exactly the sort of fellow Bunny had expected to see.

From Carton's anticipations Bunny had looked for some shabby, slouching fellow with a hand-dog air, but certainly this handsome, well-set-up fellow did not answer to that sort of description.

He smiled as he glanced down at Bunny, and his smile was a very pleasant one.

"I'm for St. Kit's," he assented.

"The new kid?"

"Yes, I'm the new fellow, certainly."

"I've only heard of one new fellow coming," said Bunny. "You can't be—I mean, you look quite decent."

"Thank you."

"Not at all," said the obtuse Bunny. "I've come here to meet your train. There was another new fellow expected—an awful outsider of a fellow who hasn't a name—"

The newcomer started.

"What?"

"I'm not surprised you're astonished," grinned Bunny. "Sounds awful, don't it? But it's a fact."

"I think perhaps you're making a little mistake," said the new junior quietly, compressing his lips a little. "I think I must be the fellow you're describing as—what did you say?—an awful outsider. At any rate, I am Harry Nameless."

Bunny jumped.

So this was the new fellow, after all—this was the nameless outsider—the rank bounder whose coming was such a shock to the select circle of Carton & Co.

"You—you're him!" ejaculated Bunny, breathlessly and ungrammatically.

"I'm Harry Nameless, if you want to know."

With that the new junior turned his back on the fat Fourth-Former of St. Kit's, and walked along to where his box lay on the platform.

Bunny Bootles blinked after him.

"My only Uncle Sam!" he murmured.

The fat and egregious Bunny had come to the station to meet the new boy—in spite of the aristocratic prejudices which he shared with Carton & Co.

Bunny felt that he was lowering himself. He admitted it. But it happened that day—as it often happened on other days—that Bunny, of the Fourth, was short of cash. In vain he had sought to "stick" Vernon Carton for a little loan; in vain he had made a round of the Fourth Form; in vain he had even humbled himself in search of a

miserable "bob" among the fags of the Third.

Bunny had had no luck. And the brilliant thought had occurred to his fat brain of meeting the new junior at the station and extracting a loan from him. The rank outsider, Bunny argued, was certain to feel pleased and flattered at being met by a St. Kit's fellow. In his pleasure and gratitude it would be a simple task to "stick" him for a small loan. Of course, he was a poverty-stricken bounder, but he was bound to have some cash about him. Bunny was prepared to relieve him of the trouble of looking after it.

The handsome appearance of the new junior had quite taken the wind out of Bunny's sails. At first he had felt certain that this must be some other new boy—not the expected bounder. But it was the bounder right enough—and he looked quite prosperous.

Bunny had had doubts about walking down the village with a nameless outsider. He admitted that he wouldn't mind walking down any street with this chap, so far as appearances went. So, upon the whole, when he had recovered from his surprise, Bunny Bootles felt pleased.

True, the new junior looked neither pleased nor flattered so far. But Bunny could soon set that right. He rolled after Harry quite hurriedly.

"Hallo, old top," said Bunny affably, rejoining the new junior, who was speaking to the porter. "That your box?"

"Yes," answered the other fellow curtly.

"Leave it here," said Bunny. "They'll send it on from the station. No need to take a cab—"

"I'm not taking a cab."

Bunny came very near sneering. Of course, this penniless bounder wouldn't be taking a cab! But Bunny, of the Fourth, remembered his object in meeting the bounder, and restrained his sneer in time.

"Just so," he agreed; "let them send it on. We're going to walk to St. Kit's."

"We!" repeated the new junior.

Surprising as it was, he still showed no sign of being pleased or flattered by Bunny's attentions.

But Bunny was a stickler.

"Yes, well!" he said. "I'm going to show you the way."

"I think I could find it easily enough."

"Well, there's a lot of turnings in Wicke

Lane," said Bunny. "The school's some distance from the village, you know—across the bridge. The fact is, old top, I came to meet your train especially to look after you and show you round on your first day at St. Kit's, you know."

"That's very kind of you," said the new junior, his manner thawing a little.

Somehow he hadn't been pleased with Bunny at first. Bunny couldn't tell why, but such was the surprising fact!

But now he could not help feeling a little grateful for this kind attention from a complete stranger.

"I mean to be kind, you know," explained Bunny cheerfully. "I'm kindness itself, in fact—and I'm no snob. Not at all, I'm not ashamed to be seen with you."

"Eh?"

"Not a bit," said Bunny fatuously. "You can't help being a rank outsider, can you? You wouldn't be one if you could help it. That's how I look at it, you know. What?"

Harry Nameless looked at him steadily.

The cheerful Bunny saw nothing to take offence at in his remarks—the bright and cheery grin on his fat face told as much.

Harry had made a motion with his hand as if to take the fat junior by the collar, but he let his hand drop again.

"I think we'd better part company here," he said abruptly.

"Eh? But I say—"

The new junior turned away from him and spoke to the porter about his box. Bunny Bootles noted that he slipped a shilling into the man's hand. The rank outsider had "bobs" to give away, then! Bunny, of the Fourth, felt his hopes rise higher. He had been thinking of a humble half-crown as the probable total of the amount to be extracted from the nameless stranger. Now the happy thought of a ten-shilling note dazzled his fat mind. He was prepared to be quite friendly.

Unheeding his friendly grin, Harry Nameless walked away to the station exit with long strides.

"Wait for me, old top!" called out Bunny. Harry did not seem to hear. He strode on, and Bunny's fat legs had to go like machinery to catch him up. He rolled rather breathlessly out of the station door with the new fellow.

CHAPTER 5.

Bunny Drops a Hint.

HARRY NAMELESS glanced about him in the old-fashioned High Street of Wicke—one of the quietest old-world villages in Sussex. He was quite a stranger there, and did not know the road to the school. He could have inquired easily enough; but Bunny of the Fourth was there to supply

information. He jerked at the new junior's sleeve.

"This way, old top!" he said affably.

Harry gave him a glance that would have been enough for anyone but Bunny of the Fourth. It had no effect on the cheery Bootles.

"I'm going to show you the way, old top," he said. "Come on! I'm going back to St. Kit's now, you know."

"Oh, all right!"

As both juniors were taking the same road, it was scarcely possible for the new fellow to elude Bunny's company. He walked down the old High Street with the fat junior in silence. He was wondering whether this fat and fatuous youth was a fair specimen of the St. Kit's fellows.

Often and often since he had won the Foundation scholarship to St. Kit's Harry had wondered what his new schoolfellows would be like at the big public school.

Certainly he had not pictured anything like Harry Bootles. Possibly Bunny was not a fair specimen of the rest. Yet he could not be a bad specimen, since he was the only St. Kit's fellow who had thought of an act of kindness towards the new fellow. Bunny, assuredly, did not look like a fellow prone to commit acts of kindness. But he had come to the station to meet the Foundation junior, anyhow. Harry felt that he ought to be a little gracious, but he could not help feeling something of a repugnance instead.

"Pretty odd place—what?" said Bunny.

"Yes."

"Ever been here before?"

"No."

"Not gone about much at all, I suppose?" said Bunny sympathetically. "Of course, you couldn't afford it, could you?"

No reply.

"Here's the tuckshop!" said Bunny, as they passed a little establishment into which a couple of well-worn steps led from the street. Bunny stopped, but the new junior did not.

"Won't you look in, old top?" asked Bunny.

"No, thanks!"

"Aren't you hungry after your journey?"

"Not very."

"Well, I am," said Bunny discontentedly. "Look here, old top, come in with me, and I'll stand you some tarts."

Tarts in the village shop were twopence each, and the total cash in Bunny's pocket was a penny. It was still in his pocket because it was a French penny and nobody would take it. How he was going to "stand" tarts to the new junior was a mystery. Perhaps he was depending on that unsuspecting junior's financial resources.

If so, he was disappointed. Harry shook his head.

"Thanks," he said, "I'd rather get on. Don't let me stop you, though."

He walked on, and Bunny Bootles cast a most expressive glance after him. Without the new fellow to foot the bill it was not of much use for Bunny of the Fourth to drop in at the tuckshop. Mrs. Woodger knew him too well to supply him "on the nod."

Bunny made a remark under his breath and rolled on after the new junior, and they walked out of the village together.

CHAPTER 6.

No Luck for Bunny!

HARRY NAMELESS walked on with a fresh, springy stride, and Bunny Bootles, the fat Fourth-Former of St. Kit's, was rather hard put to it to keep up with him.

At some distance from the village the road crossed a stream by an ancient stone bridge, and there Bunny suggested a halt. He was fagging winded.

"Lovely view from here!" he gasped stertorously. "Stop a bit, old top; it's a—groogh!—lovely view! I say, do you always plug along like a dashed steam-engine? Groogh!"

Harry smiled.

He stopped on the bridge, and glanced along the stream. The banks were thickly wooded, and the water shimmered and glistened in the sunshine.

It was a view well worth looking at, and the new junior leaned on the stone parapet. Bunny of the Fourth sank upon one of the stone seats on the old bridge.

"Sit down a bit," he said. "I want to speak to you, old top."

"Go ahead!" answered Harry, without sitting down.

"I've had a horrid disappointment to-day!" said Bunny, blinking up cautiously at the new junior's profile.

"I'm sorry to hear that!"

"My uncle promised me a pound note," explained Bunny.

"Has he?"

"Yes; but he must have forgotten to post it!"

"Oh!"

"You see, it hasn't come," said Bunny. "It's a thing that's never happened to me before, but I'm actually stony."

"Yes."

Harry continued to look at the gleaming river. Bunny of the Fourth wondered whether the new fellow was a fool. He didn't look a fool, but he certainly seemed unable to take a hint.

"Stony," said Bunny sadly, "and I haven't paid my subscription to the junior sports club. Durance positively won't wait after to-day. I suppose you couldn't lend me the pound—"

"Quite right; I couldn't!"

"I don't need exactly a pound. Ten bob

would do, and I'll return it to-morrow out of my uncle's pound-note. See?"

"I see."

Harry Nameless saw more than Bunny of the Fourth guessed. He "saw" why the fat junior had wasted a half-holiday in meeting a new fellow at the station.

Bunny's little secret was out now.

"Well, I don't often borrow money," said the fat junior; "never, in fact—I've a prejudice against it. Neither a borrower nor a lender be, you know. But on an occasion like this I'm forced to break through my rule. I suppose you could lend me ten bob till to-morrow?"

"Sorry; no."

"Make it five!" said Bunny hopefully. "I can pull through on five, though the price of tuck is something shameful—I—I mean, Durance won't wait for my sub!"

Harry glanced down at him.

"I'd better be candid," he said quietly. "I'm not in a position to lend anybody money."

"Oh, I quite understand that!" asserted Bunny cheerfully. "I'd advise you not to—a poor fellow like you! But this is an exceptional case, you see, I want that five bob particularly!"

"Sorry!"

"Look here, are you going to lend me five bob, or are you not?" demanded the fat junior, growing restive.

"Not!"

"My only Uncle Sam!" ejaculated Bunny indignantly. "After I've come fagging up to the station to meet you, and shown you the way to the school, and stood your friend, when there isn't another fellow at St. Kit's who would touch you with a barge-pole! I like that! Why, if Carton knew I'd even spoken to you I should get ragged at St. Kit's!"

The new junior looked at him quickly. A shade came over his handsome, quiet face.

"Who is Carton?" he asked.

"Of course, you wouldn't know!" said Bunny contemptuously.

"How should I know when I haven't even seen the school yet?"

"Nor any other decent place, I expect!" sniffed Bunny. "Carton's the captain of the Fourth, the richest fellow at St. Kit's. No end of style; lots of titled connections. He's my particular friend."

"And why should he rag you for speaking to me?"

Snort from Bunny.

"Because you're such a rotten outsider!" he explained. "Nobody's going to speak to you; the fellows are all wild at your coming to the school at all. They think the Foundation Scholarship ought to be abolished if it lets such awful outsiders into St. Kit's. There's no end of a row in the Lower School about your coming, I can tell you. And I've wasted the afternoon on you out of sheer good nature."

That's my weakness; I airways was too jolly generous! Why, St. Leger asked me to go swimming with him this afternoon; he was no end pressing about it—he's very attached to me. I said it couldn't be done. I was going to show some kindness to the poor rotter who was shoving into St. Kit's—you, you know! And now you won't lend me five bob!"

Bunny's voice rose in indignation.

Harry Nameless turned from the stone parapet and fixed his clear blue eyes on the fat junior.

"I won't lend you five bob," he said.

"Yah!"

"But I'll tell you what I will lend you."

Bunny looked hopeful again.

"How much?" he asked.

"I will lend you the end of my boot!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"If you don't clear off and leave me alone! Catch on to that?"

"Why, you—you," stammered Bunny, in breathless wrath and indignation—"you—you—you rank outsider, you—you—" He choked with wrath.

Harry made a movement towards him, but he stopped. His eyes had fallen upon the shining river again, and upon a black dot that showed over the water near the bridge.

A hand flashed up from the water and sank again. The new junior ran closer to the parapet.

His face was sharp with anxiety as he looked down at the river far below. The swimmer beneath him was in difficulties, he could see that.

The dark head turned; he saw a white face that looked up. Bunny, after a moment's stare of surprise, joined him at the parapet and blinked down.

"Hallo, that's St. Leger!" he said. "The duffer, he's got out of his depth. Algy can't swim for toffee."

A faint cry sounded from below.

"Help!"

"What are you up to?" exclaimed Bunny, as the new junior threw down his bag and coat and tore at his jacket. "I dare say he's all right. Of course, I'd go in for him otherwise. You ass, you can't dive from the bridge! Why, even Olphant of the Sixth wouldn't. Well, you thundering ass—"

Bunny of the Fourth broke off with a gasp. The hapless swimmer below, struggling feebly with the current, had been swept under the bridge, and was lost to view.

Throwing jacket and hat on the ground, Harry Nameless ran across the road to the other side of the bridge.

He watched with fixed eyes for the swimmer to emerge into view on that side. The dark head swept below.

He leaped on the parapet and put his hands together.

Bunny's eyes almost started from his head as the new junior, without a second's hesitation, dived from the stone parapet.

"M-m-mum-my only Uncle Sam!" gasped Bunny. "He—he'll be drowned! Oh, dear!"

Splash!

CHAPTER 7.

For Life or Death!

SPLASH!

The diving junior struck the water like an arrow, and cleaved it, and vanished for a moment beneath the Wicke.

He was up again in a twinkling.

Bunny's eyes almost bulged out as he watched him from the bridge above. Not for worlds—not for whole solar systems—would Bunny of the Fourth have attempted that dive.

Harry came up within a couple of yards of the struggling swimmer. Poor Algernon Aubrey was fairly at the end of his tether now. Twice he had been under as he was swept through the arch of the bridge. His face was like chalk, his eyes dizzy. A minute, or less, and he would have gone under for the third time—the last time. But a strong grasp was laid upon him, and he was drawn back as he sank down to death.

"Hold on to me!"

Harry was swimming strongly. A fierce current raced under the bridge, and it tore him along; but his grasp was firm upon the drowning schoolboy. Algy's head was well above the water, held there as the new junior swam, supporting his helpless burden.

St. Leger was almost unconscious, but not quite. His eyes gleamed intelligence at his rescuer, though he could not speak.

His lips moved, but no word came. His strength was spent.

"Hold on!"

St. Leger held on.

With his hands free Harry swam more strongly, fighting his way towards the bank.

But the river widened below the bridge, and the current was strong. The two juniors were swept on till they disappeared from the horrid sight of Bunny Bootles on the bridge.

Bunny's teeth chattered.

"Poor old Algy," he stammered; "drowned, and the new fellow with him! It don't matter much about the new fellow—but poor old Algy! He might just have well have lent me ten bob when I asked him to-day." Bunny shook his head sadly at that reflection. "Oh, dear, I suppose I'd better tell them at the school! Poor old Algy!"

And Bunny Bootles cut off as fast as his fat little legs would carry him in the direction of St. Kit's.

Meanwhile, Harry Nameless was struggling

with the current a good quarter of a mile from the old bridge where Bunny Bootles—rather hastily—had given him up for lost.

Alone the junior could have saved himself without much difficulty; but with the half-unconscious St. Leger's weight upon him it was a difficult matter. Twice he came close to the bank and caught at the rushes, but they gave way in his grasp, and the eddies swept him out again.

He struggled on gallantly, though his strength was going now. The woods by the bank seemed to be swimming round him; the water sang in his ears and deafened him.

He felt himself growing dizzy, but he set his teeth and struggled on. The terrible consciousness was upon him that, without releasing his helpless burden, he could not save himself; yet the thought did not come to him of letting St. Leger go. He fought on with falling strength as the river rushed him on.

A gleam came into St. Leger's eyes—a gleam of understanding. His lips moved again, he spoke in a strangled whisper:

"Let me go! You can't do it! Save yourself!"

Harry Nameless did not heed, even if he heard.

He fought on in the swirling water, and once again he won his way close to the bank. But the bank was high and steep—a bunch of reeds tore away in his grasp, and he was swept out again.

A shout rang across the rippling water:

"Stick it out!"

Harry panted.

He could not see who shouted; but he heard the splash of an oar. A boat was pulling towards him—the voice shouted again:

"Stick it out, kid—we're coming!"

"Help!"

Splash! Splash!

The boat was at a distance—but two Sixth-Formers of St. Kit's were tugging madly at the oars, and it fairly flew.

It shot past the struggling junior, and a strong hand grasped him by the collar.

"Hold on!"

Harry Nameless felt himself dragged into the boat—his grasp still firm upon St. Leger. He sank down in the bottom of the boat, streaming with water, his senses whirling.

He tried to speak, but he seemed choked—and suddenly darkness rushed upon him, and he did not know what happened next.

When his eyes opened, he was lying on a grassy bank, and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was bending over him, with a white face. Algy gave a gasp of relief as the junior's eyes opened, and he cast a wild look upward.

"He's come to, Oliphant!" Algy choked. "Oh, gad! I—I—I was afraid—"

A big Sixth-Former loomed over the junior as he lay in the grass. He smiled down at Harry. Though Harry did not know it as

yet, the big fellow was Oliphant of the Sixth, the captain of St. Kit's. Wake of the Sixth was securing the boat's painter to a willow by the bank.

"Feel better, young 'un?" asked Oliphant.

"Yes. I—I—" Harry tried to rise, and sank back in the grass. "I—is he all right?"

"Who? Oh, St. Leger—yes, he's all right! Aren't you, you reckless young ass?"

"I'm all right, old bean," said Algernon Aubrey. "But I should have been right at the bottom of the river if you hadn't come in for me. I'm awfully obliged to you. You've ruined your clobber, old fellow."

Harry smiled faintly.

He was not thinking much about his clothes just then. He was thinking of the fearful peril he had so narrowly escaped.

"Don't try to get up just yet," said the St. Kit's captain. "Wait till you've come round a bit."

"You—pulled me out?" gasped Harry.

Oliphant nodded.

"Yes; we saw you from a distance. St. Leger says you came in for him from the bridge. Did you dive from Wicke Bridge?"

"Yes."

"My hat! You're a good plucked 'un!" said the captain of St. Kit's, looking curiously at the dripping junior. "I've been going to try that dive—but I've never done it yet. You're a good swimmer."

"I was brought up by the sea," said Harry.

"You're a stranger in these parts, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll see you safe home as soon as you feel well enough to walk," said Oliphant. "You want to get your clothes changed as soon as you can."

"You're very kind," faltered Harry. "I—I—"

"Well, this fag you've saved belongs to our school," said Oliphant, smiling. "I dare say he wasn't worth your trouble—"

"Begad, you know—"

"Shut up, St. Leger. You'll come to my study to-morrow, and have four of the best, for going out swimming alone," said Oliphant. "You've got a lot to learn before you go swimming in the Wicke by yourself, you young ass."

"I suppose it's no good my tellin' you that I am really the best junior swimmer at St. Kit's, dear boy?" said Algernon Aubrey, with a great deal of dignity.

"Not the slightest. You're the thunderingest ass at St. Kit's, if that amounts to anything. Feel like walking now, young 'un?"

"Yes!" gasped Harry.

He rose to his feet with a lift from Oliphant's powerful arm.

"Well, I'm going to see you safe to your quarters, wherever they are," said the St. Kit's captain. "Where do you live? Staying somewhere near Wicke?"

"I—I—" Harry crimsoned. He realised now that these fellows were members of the school to which he was going to belong. He wondered how they would take the news when they learned who he was. Some words of Bunny Bootles' were ringing in his mind. Were these some of the fellows who—according to Bunny—wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole?

"Well?" said Oliphant, eyeing him curiously, wondering what the painful flush in his cheeks meant. "You're not quite fit to toddle about alone—and I've lots of time before I have to get back to St. Kit's. Where am I to take you?"

"I—I—I'm going to St. Kit's!" gasped Harry.

"What?"

"I'm the new junior!" Harry's face was burning, and he drew himself a little away, his head rising erect. "I'm—I'm going to St. Kit's. I'm Harry Nameless."

CHAPTER 5.

The Captain of St. Kit's.

OLIPHANT of the Sixth stared at him. St. Leger stared, too, blankly. Wake, who was still busy with the boat, looked round curiously over his shoulder.

There was a moment's silence. To Harry Nameless that moment seemed an hour—or a year. His face burned, and he drew a little farther away now that they knew who he was—the rank outsider, the nameless scholarship "boulder."

"Well, my hat!" said Oliphant at last. "So you're the new kid?"

"Yes," muttered Harry.

"I've heard of you," said the St. Kit's captain. "You're coming into the school on that queer old Foundation scholarship."

"Yes."

"You're called Nameless?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because—because I haven't a name."

"But that's jolly queer!" said Oliphant, staring at him. "Everybody has a name I suppose. You were born with a name, weren't you?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Well, what was your father's name, then?"

"I—I don't know."

"That's dashed queer, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is."

"Not that it makes any difference," said Oliphant. "Only it must be a bit odd to go around with such a name as Nameless. Why did they call you that? You could have borrowed the name of Smith, or Jones, or Robinson, couldn't you?"

Harry smiled faintly.

"The name grew up, I suppose," he said.

"All the folks at South Cove—where I've lived—knew I had no name of my own, and so I was called Nameless ever since I was a little kid. Nobody ever threw it in my face before, though," he added proudly.

"Nobody's throwing it in your face now, that I know of," said the St. Kit's captain gruffly. "Don't be a young ass. I said it's a queer name, and so it is, isn't it?"

"Yes, I know it is."

"No good being touchy about it, kid," said the Sixth-Former, kindly enough. "Touchiness don't go down at a public school, I can tell you. Just act as if your name was Smith or Jones, and you'll pull through just as if your name was Smith or Jones. Catch on? Now come along."

"But—but I—"

"Look after the boat, Wake, old fellow. You'd better run, St. Leger, you'll be shivering soon."

"I'm goin' to look after this chap, Oliphant—"

"You're going to do nothing of the kind, You're going to run to St. Kit's as hard as you can go, and get dry."

"But I—"

"And I'm going to start you with my boot if you're not off in half a second, you young duffer."

Algernon Aubrey looked at Harry. This was the fellow Carton & Co. were down upon before they had seen him—this was the fellow whose peculiar name had figured in the round robin which St. Leger had presented to Dr. Chenies a couple of days before; this fellow who had dived into the Wickie to save him, and almost lost his life for a stranger's sake. Algy's heart was full, but it was no time then to express his repentance; he had been guilty only of careless thoughtlessness, but it seemed to poor Algy at the moment that he had been guilty of something much worse than that.

"I—I'll see you later, old chap!" he gasped.

And with that, Algernon Aubrey started at a run—narrowly escaping the promised drive from Oliphant's boot.

"Come on, kid," said Oliphant, taking hold of Harry's arm.

He walked off quickly, taking the new junior with him, whether he liked it or not.

"I—I left my jacket on the bridge, and my—my hat—" stammered Harry.

"Never mind them now—you've got to buck up and get into dry clothes."

"But my bag and coat! I—"

"Wait a moment," Oliphant looked back. "Wake, will you come home by the bridge and bring on this kid's belongings? You'll find them there."

"Right-ho!" called back Wake.

"Now come on, Trot!"

Harry Nameless had to trot to keep pace with the long strides of the Sixth-Former. And the trot soon put him into a warm glow. He was recovering fast from his exertions.

Oliphant glanced at him curiously several

times as they proceeded up the towing-path and cut across the fields. They came out into the lane with the old grey tower of St. Kit's in sight over the trees.

"That's the school!" said Oliphant.

"I—I'm all right now," stammered Harry, still haunted by the words of Bunny Bootles. He had done a brave and generous action; and for that reason these fellows were civil to him—so he felt. He did not want their civility on those terms. The nameless boy had as high a pride as any fellow at St. Kit's.

"I can see you're all right," answered Oliphant. "You must be pretty tough to be so fit after what you've been through. You've been brought up hard, I should say."

"Yes," said Harry.

"I've heard some jaw about you the last day or two," said Oliphant. "You've lived with an old sailorman or something?"

"Yes; Jack Straw."

"He's not your father?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then how did he happen to have you in charge?"

"I—I—"

"Don't tell me if you'd rather not; I'm not curious," said Oliphant with a touch of gruffness in his manner again.

"I don't mind," said Harry, colouring; "it's no secret. Jack Straw picked me up on the beach after a wreck—nobody ever claimed me, and he took me in charge, like the good and kind and noble fellow he is." His voice warmed as he spoke. "He's been more than a father to me. I only hope—" He broke off.

"You hope what?"

"I hope I may be able to repay him some day for his kindness to me, that's all," said Harry. "I may be able to—now he's growing old."

"Good for you!" said Oliphant. "That's the right spirit. You've been to school before?"

"No; Mr. Carew taught me all I know. He lives at South Cove. He helped me for the examination for the Foundation."

"I see. You don't know what St. Kit's is like yet?"

Harry's face clouded.

"I met one fellow at the station," he said in a low voice. "I—I didn't get a good impression. I can stand it, whatever it's like. I'm going there to work. If the other fellows are down on me, I suppose I can stand it. I don't see why they should be."

"Neither do I," said the St. Kit's captain. "You'll find all sorts at St. Kit's—snobs among the rest, no doubt; but if you play a straight game, you'll get on all right. You've made one friend in the Fourth already, I fancy, and you've made a good impression on a rather important member of the school—the captain."

"The captain of the school?" said Harry. "I haven't seen him, that I know of."

Oliphant laughed.

"Little me!" he explained.

"Oh!" ejaculated Harry.

"Here we are—this is St. Kit's," said Oliphant, as he turned in at a great stone gateway. "Come along."

And Harry Nameless passed in at the gateway, and crossed the green old quadrangle of St. Kit's by the side of the captain of the school.

CHAPTER 9.

A Bumping for Bunny!

"DROWNED!"
"St. Leger?"
"Rot!"

"It's true!" gasped Bunny Bootles breathlessly. "Poor old Algy, you know! I'd have gone in for him only—"

"Only you finked?" suggested Durance.

"Look here, Durance—"

"But it's all rot!" said Carton. "Tell us what's happened, you babbling fat duffer, without any of your rot!"

Bunny Bootles had come panting into the Fourth passage, in the School House at St. Kit's, with the startling news. Terrible as the news was, the fat Bunny felt a certain sense of elation. He liked to be the bearer of news—especially news of a startling variety. Of course, it was awful for poor old Algy St. Leger to be drowned. But there was a certain amount of limelight for Bunny, as the fellow who knew all about it. Bunny was an important person for the moment, which was a consolation for poor Algy's untimely end.

"You see, this is how it happened!" gasped Bunny, as the Fourth-Formers surrounded him, excited and curious, and a little doubtful. "I was on the bridge—coming along with the new chap—"

"That nameless cad, do you mean?"

"Yes. I met him, and I was coming along with him, when we saw old Algy in the river—"

"I know he went for a swim," said Durance. "That much is true!"

"It's all true!" hooted Bunny. "I tell you—"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"Well, I was just going to dive from the bridge to rescue Algy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunny's tragic tale was interrupted by a roar of laughter. The idea of Bunny Bootles diving from Wicke Bridge was too much for the Fourth. They yelled.

Bunny blinked at them indignantly. He could not see anything to laugh at.

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tracy. "You—dive from the bridge! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you—"

"Tell us how you dived from the bridge!" said Durance, with a chuckle. "Tell us that, old scout! We shall believe it—I don't think!"

"I didn't dive—"

"Not really?" grinned Howard.

"No. You see, Algy was swept under the bridge, you know, and so—so there wasn't time!"

"Which was the only reason you didn't dive?" said Carton sarcastically.

"Yes, exactly!"

"Pile it on!" said Jones minor.

"Look here, Jones—"

"If Algy was really swept under the bridge, it's jolly serious," said Carton, his face growing grave. "He's no great swimmer, and there's a bad current there. Are you romancing, you fat chump?"

"I tell you—"

"Well, what happened next?" asked Vernon Carton impatiently.

"The new chap dived—"

"What?"

"He ran across to the other side, you know, and dived as Algy came through!"

"Rot!"

"He did, you know!" gasped Bunny.

"Rats!"

"Cheese it!"

"But he did!" wailed Bunny. Bunny Bootles was accustomed to having his statements doubted. Most of his statements were very worthy of doubt. But it was really hard to be disbelieved when, for once, he was telling the exact truth. Bunny felt that it was very hard.

"Don't give us that gaff!" snapped Carton. "That nameless cad dived from the bridge to pick up a fellow he didn't know. Don't be an ass! Tell us an easier one!"

"But he did—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, what happened after he dived?" inquired Jones minor.

"He got hold of Algy—"

"Bosh!" said Carton.

"He did; and then they were swept away together and drowned!"

"Oh! So the new fellow's drowned, too, is he?" said Lumley.

"Yes!"

"You didn't mention that at first!"

"Well, it doesn't matter so much about the new chap," said Bunny; "but poor old Algy, you know—"

"Anybody else drowned?" asked Carton, with sarcasm. "You didn't happen to see Oliphant drowned, did you? He's out in a boat to-day!"

"No, I didn't—"

"I'm surprised at that!" said Carton, still in the sarcastic vein. "You might as well have drowned Oliphant while you were about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you believe me?" howled Bunny.

Carton raised his eyebrows.

"Believe you? Don't be funny, old scout! Of course, we don't!"

"But—but—but it's true, you know!"

"If it's true, you'd better go to the Head, so that he can send out to collect up the bodies!" grinned Durance.

"I'm going to," said Bunny. "The Head will have to know, of course. I say, I think you

fellows are awfully unfeeling. I was very fond of Algy!"

"Very fond of his ten-bob notes, at least!"

"Why, you beast, Durance—"

Carton yawned.

"I think Bunny's got over the limit this time!" he said. "This is too thick even for one of Bunny's yarns. Bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I, say—leggo—yaroooh!" roared Bunny, as Carton & Co. grasped him and he was swept off his feet. "It's true! Oh crumbs! Yoooop!"

Bump, bump!

The doubting Thomases of the Fourth did not heed Bunny's frantic howls. They did not believe a word of his yarn; and Carton, at least, was angry at one part of the yarn—that in which the nameless new junior was represented as having acted an heroic part. Bunny was to be punished for his romancing, and especially for having represented Harry Nameless as a hero. And Vernon Carton put considerable vigour into the bumping.

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooh!" howled the hapless Bunny. "Oh crumbs! I'll go to the Head—yow-ow—yow— Leggo! I say, it's true! Ooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Oh, crumbs! Yooooooop!"

"Now, that'll be a lesson to you, you fat Hun!" growled Carton. "Keep your silly yarns inside the limit, you know!"

Bunny sprawled on the floor and gasped breathlessly.

"But it's true—" he spluttered.

"What?"

"It's all true—"

"You fat chump, are you still sticking to that yarn?" exclaimed Carton in great exasperation.

"Give him another bump!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bunny Bootles squirmed away, leaped to his feet, and fled. He raced away to the staircase.

"I'm going to the Head!" he yelled back at the grinning juniors. "I'm going to tell him Algy's drowned and—"

"Rats!"

"What? What is that, Bootles?" It was Mr. Rawlings' voice. The master of the Fourth was coming up the staircase, and he heard the fat junior's words, and started. "What did you say?"

Bunny turned to him breathlessly.

"St. Leger's drowned, sir—"

"Good heavens!"

Carton & Co. stared. They had fully believed that the yarn was only the outcome of Bunny's well-known fertile imagination. They were astounded to hear him repeat it to the Form-master.

Mr. Rawlings took it seriously enough, at all events.

He grasped the fat junior by the shoulder.

"Calm yourself, Bootles, and tell me at once what has happened!" he said

Bunny gasped out his story again. The Fourth Formers looked on in silence while he did so—serious enough now. Mr. Rawlings' face was quite pale as he listened.

"You did not actually see the boys drowned?" he exclaimed, when Bunny had finished gasping out his tale.

"Nunno, bnt—"

"Then how can you be sure they were drowned?"

"They—they were swept out of sight, sir—"
Bunny began to realise that perhaps he had taken a little too much for granted.

"They may have escaped, however," said Mr. Rawlings sharply; "you should not jump to such hasty conclusions, Bootles. We must hope for the best. I will immediately—"

"Why, there's Algy!" shouted Durance suddenly.

"What?"
Durance pointed to the staircase window, which gave a view of the quad. A slim and graceful figure, in a light and airy bathing costume, had appeared in the gateway, and was crossing the quad at a run. Mr. Rawlings stared from the window, and gave a gasp of relief.

"Thank Heaven! Bootles, you utterly foolish boy—"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunny.
He blinked at Algernon Aubrey, as that graceful youth came speeding towards the house. There was a rush downstairs to greet Algy of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 10.

Vernon Carton is Not Pleased!

"S. T. LEGER!"
"Yaas, sir," gasped Algernon Aubrey. He came panting into the School House to find Mr. Rawlings and a crowd of the Fourth there. Mr. Rawlings' alarm being relieved, he was angry now. It was evident that Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was not drowned. It was equally evident that he had crossed the quadrangle in broad daylight, clad only in a bathing costume. The latter circumstance occupied Mr. Rawlings' attention now.

"What do you mean by this, sir?" demanded the Fourth Form-master severely.

"By—by what, sir?"
"This—this absurd freak!" exclaimed the Form-master. "Is that a proper attire, St. Leger, in which to appear in the quadrangle? Are you out of your senses, sir?"

"Oh!" gasped Algernon. "You—you see, sir—I've been drowned—"
"What?"

"I—I mean nearly drowned, and Oliphant told me to run as hard as I could to the school, sir. He thought I might get a chill, so I didn't stay for my clobber, sir. It was nearly a mile away above the bridge—"

"Bless my soul! Then what Bootles has told me is true? But go at once to the dormitory, St. Leger, and dry yourself, and get into your clothes. Then you may come to my study."

"Yaas, sir."

Algernon Aubrey cut off at once to the Fourth Form dormitory. Mr. Rawlings called to him as he went.

"Bootles has told me that the new boy dived into the river for you, St. Leger—"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Is he safe?"

"Quite, sir. He's with Oliphant."

"Very good!"

A crowd of the Fourth rushed after Algy to the dormitory. They followed him in a state of intense curiosity. Vernon Carton's brow was very dark. It looked now as if Bunny, for once, had been stating the facts; and Vernon Carton realised that in that case his estimate of Harry Nameless was not quite in accordance with the truth. He did not feel in the slightest degree inclined to change that estimate, however. He was more inclined to feel savagely angry at the "rank outsider" having "shoved" himself into the limelight in this way. He realised that his campaign against the "outsider" would not be quite so simple a matter, after what had happened. And the caning he had received from the Head on the subject of the round robin had intensified his instinctive dislike of the scholarship junior, and he was not in the least disposed to abandon that campaign.

"Tell us what's happened, Algy," said Durance.

Algernon Aubrey was rubbing himself down briskly with a towel. He was nearly dry with running, and he soon had himself in a warm glow. He began to dress before he troubled to answer the eager questions of the Fourth-Formers.

"Can't you tell us what's happened?" bawled Carton.

"Oh, yaas!"

"Well, get it off your silly chest."

"Let a chap get his trousers on, old bean. Jones minor, dear boy, you might get some braces for me, will you—in that drawer. Begad, I've had a really awful time, you fellows! It's no joke to be nearly drowned!"

"Were you nearly drowned, though?" growled Carton.

"Yaas."

"All your past life flashed before your eyes, didn't it?" asked Jones minor, dimly remembering something he had read on the subject of drowning persons.

Algernon Aubrey shook his head.

"Not that I am aware of, dear boy. If it did, I didn't notice it. The present was enough for me, without bothering about the past, begad!"

"Shut up, Jones! What happened, St. Leger, you ass?"

"I have mentioned to you before, Carton, that I have a strong objection to bein' called an ass—"

"Tell us, you duffer," said Durance. "Can't you see we're on tenterhooks?"

"Certainly, dear boy. I went out for a swim—"

"We know that!" snapped Carton.

"I got out of my depth—"

"Just like you!"

"If you keep on interruptin' me, Carton, I shall never get to the end of the story, and I've got to see Mr. Rawlings, too. Where's my waistcoat?"

"Get on with the yarn."

"I was carried away by the current," said Algernon Aubrey. "I thought I was all right at first, though. But imagine my feelin's, dear boys, when I found I couldn't reach the bank, and I was bein' swept away to the bridge. A fellow was carried under the bridge and drowned once. I thought of that, and I can assure you that it was beastly. I saw somebody lookin' down from the bridge, and howled for help—and then I went under."

"What next?"

"Next, somebody was holdin' me up," said Algy. "He stuck to me like a brick, and kept me goin' till Oliphant happened up in his boat, with Wake. We'd both have gone down if Oliphant hadn't been there."

"And who was it came in for you?"

"The new fellow."

"That nameless cad?"

Algernon Aubrey paused as he was fastening his necktie. He groped for his eyeglass, but that famous article was missing. He gave Carton of the Fourth as withering a look as was possible without the aid of an eyeglass.

"You utter rotter!" he said, in measured tones.

"What?"

"After I've told you what the chap did," said Algernon Aubrey, his voice trembling with indignation. "He risked his life—to say nothin' of ruinin' his clothes. He stuck to me like a brick, though he could have saved himself by lettin' me go! How dare you call him names?"

"Dash it all, Car—" murmured Howard unasily.

Carton's eyes glittered.

"If he did as you say, that doesn't alter the fact that he's a nameless cad, and a rotten outsider," he said deliberately.

"Cheese it, Carton!"

"Dash it all, draw a line, old fellow!"

Vernon Carton looked round savagely. The murmurs of remonstrance came from his own followers. Even Tracy and Lumley joined in. Carton realised that—for the moment, at least, he stood alone.

Algernon Aubrey's eyes flashed at him.

"You're sickenin'," he said, with lofty scorn; "that's what you are, Carton—you're sickenin'. Don't speak to me again! If you do, I'll jolly well punch your nose, begad!"

Carton gritted his teeth, and swung away from the group of juniors, and left the dormitory.

"Where's the new fellow now, Algy?" asked Erance.

"He's comin' on with Oliphant."

Durance whistled.

"Does Oliphant know who he is?"

"Yass."

"What sort of a lookin' chap is he?" asked Lumley. "Shabby, hangdog sort of fellow, I suppose?"

"Nothin' of the kind—he's a splendid chap!" Algernon Aubrey finished adjusting his necktie to his satisfaction. "When I think of that rotten round robin, I should like to kick myself—and Carton. Of course, nobody will mention that to the new fellow."

"Ahem!"

Algernon Aubrey left the dormitory to go to Mr. Rawlings' study and explain in full the exciting happenings of that afternoon. He was still with the Form-master, when a shout from Bunny Bootles announced to the Fourth that the new fellow had arrived.

The juniors crowded in the doorway as Harry Nameless came across the quadrangle by the side of Oliphant of the Sixth. Fifty pairs of eyes, at least, were bent upon the new junior; and the colour was deep in Harry's cheeks as he felt himself the object of general scrutiny. Oliphant of the Sixth chatted to him genially as they came towards the School House, though Harry hardly answered. The Sixth-Former had an object in that; he was well aware of the feelings with which some of the Fourth, at least, regarded the coming of the "Foundation bouncer"; and he thought it just as well to let them see that the captain of the school had a good opinion of the newcomer. To the juniors the captain of St. Kit's was a very great personage, indeed, and his kind thoughtfulness certainly had its effect.

They came into the School House together, through a crowd. Harry's clothes were still dripping, and he was in his shirt-sleeves. That was proof enough of what had happened, if any of the fellows had doubted it further. Certainly it was rather an unusual way for a new junior to arrive at St. Kit's.

"Your things are not here yet, of course?" said Oliphant, pausing in the hall.

"No," said Harry.

"You want a change of clothes at once!" Oliphant glanced over the juniors. "Carton, you're about this kid's size. Lend him a suit of your clothes, will you, till his own come? He's been in the river, as you see!"

Carton set his lips.

"Yes, Oliphant!" he gasped.

It was impossible to hint reluctance to the captain and head prefect of the school. Carton had to swallow that bitter pill; but his breast was full of rage and bitterness as he signed to Harry Nameless to follow him.

CHAPTER 11.

Fees!

HARRY NAMELESS entered the Fourth Form dormitory at the heels of Vernon Carton. Carton had not spoken a word on the stairs, and Harry, catching a quick glimpse of his face, had been startled to see the expression on it. He had never seen

erton before, and his first impression had been that he was rather a good-looking and elegant bloke.

That a St. Kit's fellow who had never met him could feel for him a dislike that almost amounted to hatred naturally never occurred to the new junior. He was, as yet, quite unconscious of the excited discussions that had taken place in the Fourth Form on the subject of himself. He was to learn all that later.

Carton's expression startled him, but still, he only supposed that this elegant-looking junior was, for some reason, in a bad temper. Perhaps he did not like to be told to look after the newcomer. He thought no more than that—so far. But in the dormitory he was further enlightened. Carton turned towards him, his eyes gleaming, as soon as they were in the room, and now there was no mistaking the vindictiveness in his face.

"So you're Nameless?" he said, between his teeth.

Harry looked at him.

"Yes!" he answered.

"The low cad who's shoved himself into a decent school to crawl up to his betters?"

Harry started.

He had wondered a good deal what his greeting would be like at St. Kit's. He had not expected it to be very cordial, especially after his talk with Bunny Bootles. But this was a shock!

"I—I——" he stammered. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. Do you think you're wanted here?" said Carton bitterly. "Do you think the fellows would stand it if they could help it?"

Harry drew a deep breath.

"I don't see why they should mind," he answered quietly. "I'm doing no one any harm, I suppose. I've a right to come here."

Carton gave a sneering laugh.

"A right—because you've been swottin', an' shoved yourself through a silly exam that ought to have been put a stop to long ago. Do you think you're the sort of fellow for a school like this?"

"I hope so."

"You'll find out your mistake soon enough, then," sneered Carton.

Harry looked at him steadily.

"Do you mean that all the other fellows take it as you do?" he asked.

"Every one!"

"I don't believe it!"

"What?" stammered Carton.

"I can't believe that. Mr. Carew was an old St. Kit's man, and he was proud of his old school. He wouldn't have been if all the fellows were cads, as you say."

"Cads!" repeated Carton. "Are you callin' me a cad, you rotter?"

"What you've just said to me is caddish!"

Harry's eyes met Carton's furious stare fearlessly. "I don't know you—I've never seen you before—and you jump on me like this! It's

caddish! It's worse than that! It's mean and rotten!"

"Why, you—you cur——"

Carton choked with rage. He clenched his hands and advanced on the new junior, his eyes blazing.

Harry Nameless did not recede a step. He had his hands ready for defence, but Carton controlled himself. He remembered Oliphant's orders, and Oliphant was not a fellow to be trifled with.

He unclenched his fists, muttering:

"It will keep! I'll make you sorry for that, you worm! Oliphant's told me to lend you some of my clothes, you beggar!"

"I don't want your clothes. I will not touch them," said Harry quietly. "I'll manage to dry my own somehow."

"You mean that you'll try to get me into a row with Oliphant because of what I've said to you? Just what might be expected of a nameless rotter!"

"Nothing of the kind. But——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Carton turned away savagely, and began to rummage in a chest of drawers. He turned out the oldest clothes he could find; but they were quite nice clothes, for Vernon Carton was far too much of a dandy to have any clothes that were not elegant. He threw the things on a bed.

"There you are!"

"I don't want them," said Harry, flushing angrily. "I won't touch them!"

"You'll do as you're told!"

"I will not!"

Carton looked at him savagely. He dare not leave the St. Kit's captain's instructions unfulfilled. It was very necessary for the dripping junior to change his wet clothes, and Oliphant would probably discover if it was not done. And if he discovered why it had not been done, the snob of St. Kit's was likely to make close acquaintance with the captain's assistant. Carton realised that he was, to some extent, in the new junior's hands. He did not want trouble with the head prefect.

"Look here, you heard what Oliphant said!" he muttered angrily. "I dare say you don't know what the captain of a school is—or a prefect, either—but I can tell you that what Oliphant says has to be done. You're to change into those clothes. I've handed them out, as Oliphant told me."

"You mean that you'll get into a row, I suppose, if I don't?"

"Yes!" snarled Carton.

"I don't want to get you into trouble. I'll do it then."

"Do it, and not so much jaw."

With that Carton left the dormitory, slamming the door after him.

Harry Nameless stood for some moments silent, staring at the closed door. His heart was heavy. But the chill of his wet clothes struck him and he began to peel them off. Oliphant had intended that Carton should look

after him a little—as Carton well knew—but he had contented himself with carrying out the exact letter of the captain's instructions. Harry glanced at the white towels on the racks and wondered whether he could venture to take one to rub himself dry.

He was alone in the long, lofty room, with its array of white beds—and a feeling of desolate loneliness came upon him. He decided to take one of the towels, and he began to rub his sturdy limbs dry, and was soon glowing. He felt better then. He fought against the black despondency that was growing in his breast; he had a feeling that he would be lost if he gave way to it.

He had not expected to find life easy at St. Kit's. He had made up his mind that whatever difficulties he found in his way he would face them with courage and without losing heart. He remembered his resolution now, and pulled himself together manfully. After all, what did a few bitter words matter? He had a right at St. Kit's; he had won his way there, and what he had won he would keep. He began to dress himself at last.

He looked at himself in the glass when he had finished and smiled. Certainly Carton's clothes were very nice—much more expensive than his own. The two juniors were very close in size; Carton's things fitted him well, only with a little tightness across his chest and shoulders. He smiled at the handsome and elegant figure that looked back at him from the big glass. What to do with his own wet clothes he did not know.

He guessed that they ought to be taken to the housekeeper to be dried, but he had no idea of where to find the housekeeper's room, nor was he sure of what he ought to do. There was a tap at the dormitory door, and it opened to reveal a shock head and a chubby face, belonging to a podgy youth in buttons. Harry glanced at him.

He found that the chubby youth was regarding him with fixed interest. Even in the regions, "below stairs" an echo had reached of the discussions on the subject of the nameless Foundation boulder.

"I've come for the clothes, sir," explained the school page. "Mrs. Brown 'as sent for them."

"Mrs. Brown?" repeated Harry.

"The 'ousekeeper, sir. Master Oliphant says as 'ow your clothes are wet and 'as to be dried, sir."

Tuckle, the page, was quite respectful in his manner. Perhaps Carton's clothes had something to do with that. Tuckle confided to the cook later that the "noo feller" was "quite the gentleman."

"Oh, here they are!" said Harry. "Thank you!"

Tuckle gathered up the damp clothes and boots.

"Yessir. Orlright, sir! You're the new young gentleman, ain't you, sir?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"I thought so, sir. Name of Williams, I think, sir?"

Tuckle did not think anything of the kind, but he was curious on the subject of the new boy's name. Evidently he had heard of the "nameless boulder."

"That is not my name," said Harry quietly.

"Oh! P'raps you'll tell me your name, sir—for the boots, sir—and so on."

"My name is Nameless."

"Oh, yessir! Quite so, sir." Tuckle eyed the new fellow, and noted the faint flush in his cheeks. His manner became confidential. "I'm Tuckle, sir. I look arter your boots and things. Ever you want a brush down, sir, you jest say a word."

"Thank you."

"Not at all, sir," said Tuckle, wondering whether the new boy was very dense, or very close with his money. "I'm an obliging chap, sir. I look after the young gents, sir. Generally they 'and me a 'arf-crown at the beginning of the term."

That was plain enough even for a new boy who did not know his way about. Harry slipped his hand into Carton's trousers-pockets, to which he had transferred his supply of current coin from his wet clothes—not a very large supply. A half-crown changed hands.

"Thank you, sir, kindly."

Tuckle bustled out of the dormitory with the clothes. Harry Nameless stood a few minutes in thought, and then came out into the broad passage, and looked up and down it. He knew that he had to report himself to Mr. Rawlings, his Form-master, but he did not know where to find that gentleman. His very informal arrival at St. Kit's had thrown things out of gear a little. A feeling of being alone, almost lost, came on him: he hesitated to tread down the wide corridor to the stairs, and face again the sea of eyes. In all that huge building—in all that swarming crowd of boys—he knew no one—he had no friend—no one to lend him a helping hand.

At that moment there came into his mind the thought of the old sailorman's cottage at South Cove—of old Jack Straw's mahogany face and kindly eyes—the seat at the fireside which he had left to come to this great, desolate place. His lip quivered.

He was alone—utterly alone. Downstairs there was a crowd which he must presently enter—to meet eyes that were hostile, or at the best indifferent. Why had he come here? In the old sailorman's humble home there had at least been loving kindness. And here— The unhappy boy felt a swelling in his breast. At that moment there came a quick footfall in the corridor, and a bright and cheery voice broke in upon his gloomy thoughts.

"Here you are, old fellow! I've been looking for you!"

Harry started and looked up quickly, to meet the cheery and cordial smile of Algernon Aubrey St. Leger.

CHAPTER 12.

A Friend in Need!

"FEELIN' all right now, old bean?"

"Yes," stammered Harry.

"You've changed your clobber, I see."

"Yes," said Harry, flushing.

"I was going to look after you when you came in, but old Rawlings kept me talkin'," said Algernon Aubrey. "Famous old fellow for talkin', Rawlings. I've just heard from Bunny that you'd come. Some chap lent you this clobber?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's all right. Mine would have been a bit of a squeeze for you," said Algernon Aubrey. "Feelin' comfy in that lot?"

"Oh, yes, quite!"

"Right you are, then. I'm goin' to take you to Mr. Rawlings, an' you've got to see the Head. You haven't seen the Head yet?"

"No."

"He's quite a decent old boy," said Algernon Aubrey, encouragingly. "His bark's worse than his bite, you know. Quite a decent old blade. Don't you be afraid of the Head. Of course, he's rather a beast in some ways. You know these headmasters! But you have to stand up to him, you know," said Algernon Aubrey confidentially. "He has us to tea sometimes, and I've seen Carton ask him to pass the cake, as cool as anything."

Harry smiled. He did not think a vast amount of nerve was required to ask even the Head to pass the cake. But evidently Algernon Aubrey did.

"Well, come on," said St. Leger, "this way, old bean. Mr. Rawlings is very curious to see you. I've told him all about the rippin' way you came in for me. He's been raggin' me for goin' to swim in the Wickes by myself. Just his rot, you know—as if I can't take care of myself," said the dandy of the Fourth loftily.

"But—but it was rather dangerous, wasn't it?"

"Well, as it turned out, it was, perhaps," admitted Algy. "But never mind—let's get goin'. I say, you've made a terrible impression on old Oliphant. How do you like Oliphant?"

"He seems a jolly good sort!" said Harry.

Algernon Aubrey nodded emphatically.

"That's right—he is! Never heard of the St. Kit's captain takin' so much notice of a junior before; but, of course, it was because of the rippin' way you took a header from the bridge. Old Oliphant knows what that means. Of course, he would have done it in your place, but it wanted some doin'. You're fond of swimmin', what?"

"Very."

"Good! We'll get some swimmin' together, and I'll give you some tips," said Algy.

Harry smiled again. Tips on swimming from the fellow he had saved from drowning struck him as rather odd. But Algernon Aubrey evidently meant well. He led the new junior

cheerily down the corridor, and Harry's face was bright now. That desolate feeling of loneliness had passed. It was Algy who had caused it to pass. Evidently all the St. Kit's fellows were not like Bunny Bootles or Vernon Carton. He remembered Oliphant's remark that he would find "all sorts" at St. Kit's. Algernon Aubrey was of a sort that he could like. The kind, cheery friendliness of the dandy of the Fourth cheered him to the very depths of his heart.

Several fellows glanced at them as they came down the big staircase, and again it was borne in upon Harry's mind that the St. Kit's fellows were not all Cartons and Bunnies. Two or three juniors gave him a cheery nod and a smile, little dreaming how warmly grateful the new fellow felt for those slight attentions. A tall, deep-chested senior came up to him as they were crossing the lower hall, and he stopped, with his conductor.

"You're the new kid?" asked the big senior.

"Yes."

"You went in from Wickes Bridge after this young ass?"

"I—I—"

"You're a good, plucky kid!" said the senior.

"Give us your fist!"

Harry shyly gave his fist, and the big fellow nodded and passed on. The new junior glanced after him.

"Who's that?" he asked, in a whisper.

Algy smiled.

"That's Hilton, the captain of the Fifth. All the Forms here have captains, you know. Your fame is spreadin'," chuckled St. Leger. "Everybody at St. Kit's will know soon that you went in from Wickes Bridge. You see, you're the first St. Kit's fellow that's ever done it—in the present generation, at least."

"The first St. Kit's fellow!" repeated Harry.

"Yes, of—of course, I'm a St. Kit's fellow now."

"Of course you are, dear boy," said Algy, slightly surprised by the remark. He did not know how pleasantly the words sounded in the ears of the nameless schoolboy.

Algy tapped at Mr. Rawlings' study door, and opened it.

"The new fellow, sir."

"Come in, my boy," said the Fourth Form master kindly.

Algernon Aubrey drew the door shut, and walked on. Harry Nameless was left to his interview with his Form-master.

He found the interview agreeable enough; he had had some unpleasant forebodings, but none of them was realised. Mr. Rawlings was crisp and businesslike; but he was very kind, and evidently desired to put the new boy at his ease. Harry felt that he quite liked the bald little gentleman who blinked at him benevolently over his glasses by the time he was taken along to see the Head.

Dr. Chenies was more formidable. The first sight of the imposing old gentleman made Harry realise that Carton had had some nerve, after all, in asking the Head to pass the cake,

"as cool as anything." But the Head's manner was very kind, though very stately. He asked the new junior a good many questions, and commended him for the gallant rescue of St. Leger, and finally dismissed him feeling very reassured.

He found Algernon Aubrey St. Leger waiting for him in the passage outside the Head's study.

"Got through all right?" asked Algy.

"Quite!"

"I told you the old boy's bark was worse than his bite, didn't I?"

"But he didn't even bark at me," said Harry, laughing. "I—I think I shall like St. Kit's, after all."

"After all!" repeated Algy. "Begad! Didn't you think you would like St. Kit's, then, old bean?"

"I—I mean——" Harry coloured.

"Come along to your study now."

"My study?"

"The Fourth have studies here, you know," explained Algy kindly. "Carton has the top study—that's the best in the passage—he's captain of the Fourth, you know, and the captain of the Form always has the top study. I've been thinkin' of puttin' up for captain myself one of these days—you see, it's a very comfy study, with two windows. You're goin' to share my study I've asked Rawlings."

"Oh, I—I'm glad!" said Harry.

"This way!"

Harry Nameless followed the dandy of the Fourth up the staircase again. He was feeling very cheerful now, and keen to see his new quarters, and glad that he was to share them with this pleasant, polished youth. He was not aware, just then, that Algy's study was the only one in the Fourth to which he would have been a welcome comer, and that but for the incident at Wicke Bridge it would certainly never have crossed Algy's mind to ask for him as a study-mate. It was perhaps as well that he did not know.

CHAPTER 13.

Tea in Study No. 5.

"I SAY, Algy——"

"Go away, Bunny!"

"But, I say——"

"Go away! Fade out!"

Algernon Aubrey walked past the fat junior with his new companion. Bunny Bootles gave a grunt of discontent.

"The Fourth Form quarters!" said Algy, with a wave of the hand, like a monarch showing his kingdom.

Harry glanced round him with interest. They had come up two staircases, and from a big, wide landing several passages branched. The Fourth Form passage was wide, the floor was of ancient oak planks, and the walls of the same material—here and there the oak was worn away and showed the heavy stone behind. There were two or three big, deep windows that

caught the new junior's eye—the setting sun glimmered in at one of them, which looked westerly, with a golden glow.

Doors opened on both sides of the passage, and every door was numbered—or had once been numbered. As a matter of fact, a good many of the numbers had become quite indecipherable.

At the end of the passage was a step of nearly a foot, the passage ending on a higher level. St. Kit's School House was an ancient building, added to in different centuries, and it was full of unexpected nooks and corners and twists of construction. The last study in the passage opened on neither side; its door made the end of the passage, so that when the door was open the occupants of the study had a view of the whole length of the corridor to the staircase.

The door was half-open now, and Harry caught a glimpse of the interior of that study—a very handsome and expensively furnished interior. Algy gave a jerk of the head towards it.

"That's the top study," he said. "You see, it's up a step—that's why it's called ~~the~~ study. Carton & Co. make out that it's because they're cocks of the walk in the passage. All rot, you know; it was called the top study before Carton was born. At least, I dare say it was. Ours is No. 5. Here you are, old bean."

St. Leger threw open a door for the new junior to enter.

Study No. 5 was a very comfortable-looking study; it was not large, but it was extremely well furnished.

It was pretty clear that Algy St. Leger had plenty of ready cash, and that he did not spare it in making himself comfortable.

There was a Persian rug on the dark oaken floor, and a sofa that looked very inviting, with its soft cushions, and a handsome cover on the table. A bookcase in an alcove, opposite a rather wide window, was well filled with books—some of them big gilt volumes that looked as if they were never opened—which was the case. Algy received those beautiful volumes as presents from affectionate aunts, and always delivered the most grateful and gracious thanks for the same, but at that he considered his duty ended. He did not think it was up to him to peruse the volumes; he was not interested in "Kind Little George, the Best Boy of the School," or in "Truthful Tommy's Trials."

There were papers and books on the table—school-books, rather dog-eared in looks. Near the inkstand a pen lay on the handsome cover in a blob of ink, with a couple of bull's-eyes close to the blob. That did not look like the handiwork of the Honourable Algernon Aubrey St. Leger; and Harry wondered whether the dandy of the Fourth had another study-mate.

"Little beast!" said Algy, glancing at the blob of ink and the bulls-eyes.

Harry looked inquiringly.

"Bunny!" explained Algy.

"Oh! The—the fat fellow——"

"You've seen him?"

"He met me at the station," said Harry. "I heard you call him Bunny in the passage."

"Begad! He met you at the station? Did you lend him anything?" exclaimed Algernon Aubrey anxiously.

"No," answered Harry, laughing.

"Good! He's dead on new kids; often has a fellow's pocket-money off him, you know, before the unhappy stranger knows what's happenin'," said St. Leger. "You want to keep an eye on Bunny, you know; he will borrow the shirt off your back before you know where you are. It's said that he's even borrowed money of Catesby; but I don't quite believe that. Catesby is too wide I say, do you mind Bunny in the study?"

"Is it his study?" asked Harry. "If so, it wouldn't be much use minding, would it?"

"Blessed if I know! He says it is," answered Algely amiably.

"But isn't it?"

"I suppose so, as he says so. He used to dig with Catesby and Jones minor in No. 1—and after that he was with Myers and Wheatford in No. 4. This term he's been with me in this study. I thought I was goin' to have it to myself this term, but Bunny blew in. I kicked him out at first," St. Leger explained confidentially. "But he came back. I kicked him out again, but he came back again. So, somehow, he's stayin', and it seems that this is his study now."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Of course, he's horrid," said St. Leger cheerfully. "But there's so many horrid things in this life it's no good grumblin' at one or two. He's not any more horrid than risin'-bell, or Catesby's neckties, or Carsdale of the Sixth. Besides, a chap expects to rough it at school."

"Rough it!" said Harry, glancing round at that well-appointed study. "I shouldn't quite call this roughing it."

"I say, Algy——" A fat face blinked in at the doorway with an injured expression.

St. Leger waved an impatient hand.

"Do go away, Bunny!"

"What about tea?"

Algy turned to his new study-mate.

"I suppose you're fairly ready for tea, old bean?" he suggested. "Have you had anything since you came?"

"No."

"You ought to have seen the house-dame. You'll have to see her when your box comes, anyhow. I'll take you. Why, you must be famished!"

"I'm a little hungry," said Harry, with a smile. "But when and where do you have tea here? I don't know yet."

"You'll have tea in the Hall," broke in Bunny Bootles, before the dandy of the Fourth could speak. "And you'd better get a move on, or you'll be late!"

"Shut up, Bunny!"

"Look here, Algy——"

"If you call me Algy again I'll take the golf club to you. I've told you fifty times I won't be Algyed by you, Bunny!"

"Well, you call me Bunny!" said Bootles warmly.

"That's different. You are Bunny—a fat little beastly bunny-rabbit!" said St. Leger. "Do shut up! I keep on askin' you to shut up!"

"But what about tea?" bawled Bunny.

"Didn't you just say tea was ready in the Hall? Go an' have it. Nameless is havin' tea with me, here."

"You have tea in your study?" asked Harry, with interest.

"Oh, yaas, when we like!"

"The new chap's having tea here, and you want me to go down to Hall!" ejaculated Bunny Bootles, almost breathless with indignation. "Why you—you silly owl! What have you got that chap here at all for, I'd like to know! I never asked him into the study!"

"I never asked you, Bunny, dear boy."

"It's my study, ain't it?" howled the fat junior.

"Don't howl, Bunny; you know I can't stand your howlin' at me," said Algernon Aubrey plaintively. "Your voice isn't musical, you know it isn't, for I've told you lots of times."

"Look here, you ass!"

"Nameless is sharin' this study with me," explained Algernon. "Diggin' here, you know. I'd like you to go back to Jones minor if you don't mind, Bunny. Three is rather a crowd." The fat junior spluttered with wrath.

"Why, you—you—you think you're going to turn me out of my study for that—that boulder without a name——"

"Shut up, Bunny!"

"Let me see you turning me out, that's all!" gasped Bunny. "Why, I'll—I'll—I'll——" Words failed the indignant Bunny.

"Well, if you really don't want to go——" said Algy, relenting.

"I'm jolly well not going!"

"What do you say, old bean? Do you mind if Bunny digs here, too?" asked Algernon Aubrey. "He seems to think it's his study, and he's got an astoundin' idea that he's a friend of mine—blessed if I know why! Think you can put up with him?"

"Yes, certainly," said Harry, laughing.

"Good!" said Algernon, relieved. "After all, it's trainin'—trainin' for the temper, you know, and the patience, and all that. Chap who can stand Bunny can stand anything—makes you hardy, you know, like a cold tub in the mornin'. You can stay, Bunny. The new chap says he doesn't mind."

Bunny Bootles almost exploded.

"Do you think I care tuppence whether he minds or not?" he shrieked.

Algernon held up a warning finger.

"You're yellin' again," he said. "You know my feelin's when a fellow yells. Shut up,

there's a good bunny-rabbit. You can go on diggin' in the study, and what more do you want? Only don't leave your beastly bull's-eyes stickin' about over everythin'. Now for tea!"

CHAPTER 14.

Algy Means to be Kind!

CARTON looked into Study No. 5 soon after the three juniors there had finished tea. He smiled and nodded to Algy St. Leger, seemingly oblivious of the fact that Harry was in the study at all.

"We want you, Algy," he said.
"What's the game?" asked the dandy of the Fourth, looking up.

"Just a little game in my study before prep. Comin'?"

Algernon Aubrey looked fixedly at Carton. The latter's deliberate ignoring of Harry Nameless was not to be mistaken even by so usually unobservant a youth as Algy.

"Thank you, I'm not comin'!" said Algernon frigidly.

Carton compressed his lips.
"Do come," he urged. "Tracy and Durance are there. There'll be a foursome. Do come!"

"My dear old bean, I'm engaged at the present time. You don't seem to have noticed that I've got a friend with me," said Algernon sarcastically.

"If you mean Bunny—"
"I don't mean Bunny!"
"You can bring Bunny, if you like."
"I don't like!"

"Well, if you won't come, don't!" snapped Carton, and still without having taken any official notice of Harry's existence, he withdrew from the study and closed the door hard.

Harry Nameless coloured uncomfortably.
"Don't let me keep you away from your friends, St. Leger," he said.

"My dear chap," he should only be bored in Carton's study," answered Algy nonchalantly. "I shall be bored here. I dare say; but you may as well bore me as Carton. Besides, I'm taking you under my wing. I'm goin' to show you round St. Kit's before dark. Then you've got to claim your box from the house-dame—it's delivered by this time—and there's several things you've got to do, and I'm going to tell you the how and the way. Catch on?"

"Quite. I—I think if my box has come I'd like to change my clothes," said Harry. "These things belong to Carton."

"Then we'll see the house-dame first."

Leaving Bunny Bootles finishing what remained of the spread—which he did to the last crumb—Algernon Aubrey and his new friend left the study, and Harry was piloted to the house-dame's room, where he made the acquaintance of Mrs. Brown—a kindly, buxom lady. His clothes were dry, but they required further attention before they were suitable for use. Algernon Aubrey privately wondered how a

fellow could think of again wearing clothes that had been soaked through in a river, but refrained from expressing his wonder in words.

But Harry's box had arrived from the station, and had been taken up to the dormitory to be unpacked there, and the contents transferred to a chest of drawers which was in readiness for him—Mrs. Brown already having looked into the box to ascertain that there were no contra-band goods therein.

Algernon Aubrey piloted the new boy next to the Fourth Form dormitory, and sat on a bed while he changed out of Carton's clothes into some of his own. Harry did not look so elegant a figure when he had changed, his clothes were not so expensive or well-cut as Carton's. But he looked a sturdy healthy, handsome fellow; he would have looked that in any clothes. Algernon Aubrey surveyed him when he had finished.

"Now you can get along to Carton's room with his blessed clothes, if you want to return them, or you can leave them on his bed. Better leave them on his bed—saves trouble. You can take them to his study, if you like, of course," added Algy, seeing that Harry hesitated, in doubt. "Perhaps it would be a bit more gracious, as he lent them to you." Equally good-natured of Carton to lend a chap his clobber."

"Oliphaunt told him to."

"Oh, I see! Well, amble along with them, and I'll wait for you outside Study No. 5," said Algy; and the new chums left the dormitory together. Harry Nameless with the borrowed clothes over his arm. Algernon Aubrey sat on the broad banister at the top of the staircase, while the new junior walked along the Fourth-Form passage to the upper study, and tapped at the door.

CHAPTER 15.

Carton Asks for It!

TAP! There was a slight sound of commotion in Carton's study as Harry Nameless tapped at the door. He heard two or three chairs move quickly, as if several fellows had risen hurriedly from the table.

"Is that you, St. Leger?" called out Vernon Carton's voice.

"It's I!"
"By gad! It's that new fellow!" came Durance's voice. "What the merry thump does he want?"

"He's not comin' in, anyway. Clear off, you cad! You're not wanted here!"

"I've brought your things back, Carton," said Harry quietly.

"What things?"
"The clothes you lent me."
"My hat!"

A key turned back; the door had been locked. Vernon Carton threw the door wide open, and

the light from the study streamed out into the dusky passage. Durance, Tracy, and Lumley were standing by the chairs they had risen from round the table. In a half-open drawer there was a glimmer of cards—playing-cards—and about the atmosphere of the study hung a haze of cigarette-smoke. It was rather a festive gathering that had been interrupted by the new junior's tap at the door.

That was no business of Harry's, however; and, though he could not help seeing what he saw, he did not allow his thoughts on the subject to be reflected in his face. He made a step to enter with the things he carried, but Vernon Carton waved him back with an insolent smile. "Don't come in here!" he snapped.

Harry stopped.

"Well, here are your things, Carton," he said. "I thought I'd better bring them to you, but I'll take them back to the dormitory, if you like. Thank you for lending them to me."

Carton glanced at the clothes, and then looked Harry in the face.

"I didn't lend them to you," he said deliberately. "I gave them to you."

"You lent them—"

"Not at all. I'm not in the habit of lendin' my clothes, I assure you," said Carton, with flushed sarcasm. "I gave them to you. Don't worry. I always give my old clothes to the poor, and I dare say you're a deservin' case."

There was a chuckle from the nuts of the Fourth in the study. The great Carton was in a very witty vein evidently.

Harry's face flamed crimson.

"You—you dare!" he stammered.

Carton raised his eyebrows.

"My dear fellow, you're quite welcome to them," he said, affecting to misunderstand. "They're rather old; and, anyhow, I couldn't wear them again after you. I'm not particular, but I rather bar puttin' on clothes after they've encased the unwashed limbs of the lower classes. There's a limit, you know. Now, buzz off, will you? You're interruptin' the merry party."

"You cad!" burst out Harry.

Carton turned his back on him.

"Shut the door after you," he said.

Whiz!

The clothes came swinging through the air in a tangled bundle, and they landed on the back of Carton's neck and curled round him. He staggered forward in surprise and bumped on the table. He gave a gasp of surprise and rage. Harry Nameless turned on his heel and walked down the passage, his cheeks hot, and his eyes gleaming.

"Why, the—the unspeakable cad!" gasped Carton, furiously enraged at this unexpected ending to his bitter gibing, though really he might have expected something of the kind. "I—I—I—I—I!" he spluttered with rage.

"Cheeky cad!" ejaculated Tracy.

Carton kicked the clothes aside.

"I'll smash him: I'll—I'll—!" He sprang

towards the doorway, followed by his cronies, and reached Harry Nameless as the new boy joined Algernon Aubrey at the door of Study No. 5.

"Now, you nameless tramp!" stuttered Carton. "I'll—I'll—"

Harry Nameless made a step towards the captain of the Fourth. His eyes were gleaming.

"You've been calling me a variety of names, Carton," he said very quietly.

Carton's hands clenched.

"You—you dare to talk to me like that, you tramp!" he snarled.

"I am talking to you," said Harry. "You've called me plenty of names, and I've said nothing so far. But you've got to stop it!"

"I've got to stop it!" ejaculated Carton.

"Yes. I've stood all the cheek I'm going to stand from you," said Harry. "If you call me names again I shall stop you fast enough. I'm not looking for trouble, but I mean that."

"And how will you stop me?" demanded Carton, staring at the nameless schoolboy in surprise and rage. "Why, you nameless cad, you sneaking son of a tramp— Oh!"

Smack!

Harry's open palm struck the captain of the Fourth across the face with a sounding smack that rang like a pistol-shot.

Vernon Carton staggered back.

Harry dropped his hand again, and stood looking at his enemy with a gleam in his eyes. For a moment or two Carton blinked at him as if hardly realising what had happened.

"By gad!" murmured Durance.

"I—I—I—" Carton almost foamed. "You—you nameless cur, you—you've laid hands on me—me! Why, I'll—I'll smash you—I'll smash you to little pieces. I—I—I—I—I!"

He sprang at the new junior like a tiger, striking out savagely. His hurried, furious blows were swept aside, and a fist that seemed like a lump of solid iron came out, and caught the captain of the Fourth on the point of his chin. Vernon Carton staggered through the open doorway of Study No. 5, and fell with a crash on the study carpet.

Crash!

"Oh, gad!"

Durance and Tracy started back in the doorway, staring. Vernon Carton lay on his back on Algernon Aubrey's expensive Persian carpet, blinking at the ceiling, not quite clear yet as to what had happened. Bunny Bootles blinked on wide-eyed.

"Bravo, old bean." Algernon Aubrey spoke with cheery calmness. "Right on the spot, begad!"

"Oh!" gasped Carton.

He raised himself on one elbow, staring round him dizzily. His eyes burned as they fell upon Harry Nameless.

The captain of the Fourth lifted himself slowly from the carpet with a helping hand from Tracy.

"You rotter!" muttered Carton. "You know what that means, I suppose? You've got to fight me now."

"I'm ready!" answered Harry quietly.

"I am sure my friend Nameless is quite ready to oblige you, old bean," chirruped Algernon Aubrey.

"When and where, you cad?" hissed Carton.

"Here and now, if you like," answered Harry.

Carton sneered.

"We don't fight in the studies here," he said. "I'll meet you by the chapel rails; I'll be there in ten minutes."

"As you like."

Carton turned on his heel and strode from the study, Durance and Tracy going with him.

"Nameless, old bean," said Algernon Aubrey. "you'd like me to be your second, I suppose?"

"Thank you, St. Leger."

"Not at all—pleased," said Algy, beaming. "I think very likely you're going to knock out Carton."

"I shall try."

"We shall want a basin and a sponge and towel. Go and bag them from somewhere, Bunny, an' take them down behind the chapel."

Algy left the study with the new junior. They left the School House together, and two or three of the Fourth followed them. Some more were sighted heading for the old chapel of St. Kit's. The news that there was a fight on had spread, and there were few of the Fourth who wanted to miss a "scrap" in which Vernon Carton was to figure.

By the time the new chums arrived behind the chapel there was a crowd gathering there. Bunny Bootles turned up with the tin basin, the sponge, and the towel.

Carton was very soon on the scene, with Durance and Tracy, Lumley, Howard and Catesby. There was a grim expression on Carton's face and a glitter in his eyes.

As yet it had not occurred to him that the new junior might prove his match, or more than his match. Nutty as he was, Carton was a good fighting man, and he had few equals in the Fourth Form at St. Kit's. It was his intention to give the nameless school-boy a merciless thrashing, and his nutty friends agreed that that was the very best way after all of dealing with the obnoxious intruder.

Carton threw off his elegant jacket and rolled back his sleeves, preparing for serious business.

The Honourable Algy adjusted his eyeglass and turned round.

"Gloves?" he inquired of Tracy, who was seconding the captain of the Fourth.

Catesby cut off at once to the gymnasium for gloves, and returned with a couple of pairs. The adversaries donned them.

"Who's goin' to keep time?" inquired Algy. "Durance."

"I'm ready," said Durance, taking out his watch. "Now, then, seconds out of the ring. Two minute rounds; one minute rests. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

And the fight began.

CHAPTER 16

Licked to the Wide!

VERNON CARTON came on hard and fast from the call of time, pressing his adversary hard.

His eyes glittered over the gloves, and every blow he struck with savage force and bitterness.

The juniors looked on in silence with deep interest. Carton's form as a fighting man was well known, and the St. Kit's fellows were curious to see how the "Foundation boulder" would shape. Certainly Harry Nameless looked an athletic fellow; certainly he was very steady on his "pins," and his eyes were very clear and unswerving. His calm, handsome face most decidedly showed no trace whatever of "funk." Win or lose, it was evident that he was going to put up a jolly good fight and take his punishment coolly. And it was soon pretty clear that he knew something about the noble art of self-defence.

For Carton's bitter and vigorous attack did not get through his guard. Harry gave ground a little, and that was all. And his clear, steady blue eyes never swerved in their glance.

Carton forced the fighting harder and harder, and still Harry Nameless gave ground. But just at the finish of the round he seemed to wake up, as it were, and he met the attack with a counter-attack of great vigour. Carton, to his surprise, found himself driven back in his turn, and his guard was not so good as his opponent's. Harry's fists came through—once, twice, thrice, and the captain of the Fourth staggered. Only the call of time from Durance saved him from going to the grass.

"Time!"

Harry Nameless dropped his hands and stepped back. The dandy of the Fourth grinned as he made a knee for him.

"You're all right," he said. "You're a dark horse, begad. The ferocious tiger isn't goin' to chew you up yet."

"I think not," smiled Harry.

"Time."

Harry stepped up smartly enough to meet the rush of Vernon Carton. Perhaps Carton felt already the first inward symptoms of "bellows to mend"; at all events, he seemed to be in a hurry to down his antagonist. He was in too much of a hurry, as it turned out. Harry Nameless walked him round the ring.

and drew him on till he was panting, and then plunged in with close fighting, which fairly doubled Carton up. The captain of the Fourth hardly knew what was happening as he strove in vain to dodge the raining blows. Rap, tap, rap, tap, came the hard gloves on his face, his chest, his chin, his nose, till Carton was blinded and bewildered.

"Bravo, old bean," shouted Algernon Aubrey, waving his eyeglass in great excitement.

Crash, crash, crash! came the blows, and Vernon Carton staggered helplessly under his punishment; and again the call of "time" saved him from the grass.

"Time!"

Carton reeled blindly to his second, and Tracy drew him on his knee, and sponged his heated face.

Tracy's looks were very serious now.

The quality of the nameless schoolboy was fairly evident by this time, and the "Goats" of St. Kit's were exchanging very dubious glances.

It certainly was not going to be the sweeping victory they had anticipated; and which Vernon Carton had anticipated most confidently of all. It was beginning to be doubtful whether it was going to be a victory or a defeat.

"Time!"

Carton came on furiously for the third round; and in that round there was hard fighting. For the first time, several heavy blows got home on Harry Nameless, and he staggered once or twice under them.

The hopes of Carton's nutty pals rose again. "Go it, Carton," sang out Howard and Lumley encouragingly.

Algernon Aubrey smiled serenely.

He had no doubts now about his man, and he was watching with complete confidence.

It had to be admitted, however, that Harry Nameless had the worst of the third round. Still, he was fighting gamely when "time" was called, and was not anywhere near the end of his resources.

Vernon Carton tried the same tactics in the fourth round. But his spurt was over; he was troubled now with "bellows to mend," and he could not keep up the fierce offensive. In spite of his efforts, he found the attack pass to his adversary, and he was driven helplessly round the ring, with Harry's blows coming home to roost every other second.

Crash!

"Man down!" roared Jones minor.

"Hurrah!"

"Pick up your man, Tracy!"

"Time!"

Tracy helped Carton to his feet. The captain of the Fourth rested on his knee dizzily. His handsome face showed plain traces of the punishment he had received, in spite of the gloves.

"Goin' on?" asked Tracy, as Durance looked at his watch.

"Hang you! Yes!"

"Time!"

Carton staggered into the ring.

The fifth round was fierce enough. Carton fought gamely, and he put all he knew into it. The very knowledge that he was outclassed, and doomed to defeat, made him more bitterly determined. Even up to the finish he fought fiercely, hoping yet to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. But he hoped in vain. A crashing blow on the point of the jaw sent him spinning, and he came to the ground with a heavy concussion.

Durance looked at him and began to count. He counted slowly enough—though two or three sarcastic voices urged him to hurry up. But he was at nine when Vernon Carton made an effort to rise, and sank back again, helpless. He was spent.

"Out!" said Durance, and snapped his watch shut.

"My man wins, I think," remarked Algernon Aubrey St. Leger cheerfully. "Give me your gloves, old bean—feelin' bad? I'm sure not. Bunny, hand over that jacket!"

Tracy bent over Carton as he lay in the grass. Carton had been counted out—but if Durance had gone on counting to a hundred, it would have made no difference—the captain of the Fourth could not even get on his feet. He sat up and leaned on Tracy, breathing in jerks.

"Licked!" he muttered thickly. "Licked by that cad! Oh, gad! I'll make him pay for this! I'll make him suffer for this! I'll make him suffer—" He choked.

CHAPTER 17.

Very Perplexing!

"I'M awfully perplexed."

It was the Honourable Algernon Aubrey St. Leger who made that remark as he reclined at ease in the armchair in Study No. 5.

The day was Wednesday, which was a half-holiday at St. Kit's.

Harry Nameless was in the study with the dandy of St. Kit's, and he looked at him as he made his remark.

Harry had been a week now at his new school, and by this time he had settled down into his place. Much had happened since the day Bunny Bootles had met him at Wicke Station—not all of it pleasant. But Harry had found himself happy at St. Kit's.

In the Form-room he was in Mr. Rawlings' good graces—in the Common-room he was by no means unpopular. The defeat of Vernon Carton, in the fight behind the chapel, had indeed made him popular with a section of the

Fourth. And other fellows who might have been disagreeable fellows—fellows like Catesby—realised that it would not be wholly wise to provoke the fellow who had licked Carton.

Carton was in the position of the hapless hunter who looked for a rabbit and found a tiger. Nobody else in Carton's select circle was anxious for a fight by the chapel rails with this nobody from nowhere, who was such an extremely hard hitter.

Certainly, Carton's bitterness had not been diminished by his defeat. It was understood that he was now the fellow's enemy; and fellows who knew Carton well expected that he would stop at little to make his enmity felt. But Harry Nameless gave him little heed. So long as Carton & Co. let him alone he was prepared to go his own way, regardless of them.

In some little ways Carton made his bitterness felt—but Harry had a chum in Algernon Aubrey, and was on friendly terms with nine or ten other fellows, more or less—so any scheme of sending him to Coventry was not of much use. The idea was debated in the top study, but Durance declared that there was "nothin'" in it, and it was dropped. A fellow who was chummy with the most popular junior at St. Kit's, and on good terms with half the Form could not be sent to Coventry with much success. Carton & Co. had to bide their time—and probably the Co., so far as they were concerned, would have let the whole affair pass, only treating the Foundation boulder to lofty looks, had Carton been willing to forget or forgive. Carton was not willing to do either; and so the feud was kept up.

Harry's friendship with the Honourable Algy was a settled thing now. More than once Algy had informed him, cheerily, that he did not bore him—or, at least, not so much as any other fellow at St. Kit's. And Harry was a useful friend in some respects; he helped Algy with his prep and Algy had much more peaceful mornings with Mr. Rawlings in consequence.

On this particular Wednesday afternoon Algernon Aubrey had gone to his study soon after dinner with a wrinkle of deep thought on his brow. Harry Nameless had joined him there to ask the noble youth if he was coming out for the afternoon. Algy woke up from a deep reverie with the statement that he was awfully perplexed.

He looked so serious that Harry looked serious, too, at once.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" asked Harry.

"I don't know," said Algernon Aubrey thoughtfully. "Perhaps I'd better state the case. It's awfully perplexin'. My uncle, Colonel Wilmot, is comin' down to the school to see me to-day."

"I suppose you won't want to come out of the gates, then, if your uncle's coming?" said Harry.

"No; I'm goin' to the station to meet him

at three, that's all. After that I'm goin' to be a sacrifice on the altar of relationship," said Algy. "As a dutiful nephew, I'm bound to let my uncle bore me. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps he won't bore you," suggested Harry.

"Bound to, though really he's a decent old card," said Algy considerably. "Not so very old, either, and I like him really; he's a soldier, you know, and he doesn't tire a fellow so much as a fellow's other uncles. A bit solemn; the poor old bean had a disappointment in love, I believe, or somethin' of the sort, I think I've heard one of my aunts say; anyhow, he's a solemn johnny. But the right stuff, you know, and he killed so many Huns in the War that a chap can't help respectin' him. I'm goin' to do him decently while he's here, especially as he's coming on purpose to see me."

"But what is there perplexing in all that?" asked Harry, puzzled.

"Well, now, my uncle lectures me sometimes," said Algy; "I'm a good-natured chap, you may have noticed that."

"Yes," said Harry, with a smile.

"Bein' so good-natured, I get imposed upon," said Algy lazily. "Fellows stick to me, and I let 'em. Uncle Wilmot spoke about that last time. I forgot as soon as he was gone, but I remember now that he's comin' again. You see, I'm his favourite nephew; I'm sure I don't know why. Now, the merry old colonel is goin' to have tea in the study with me; he was a boy himself once, you know."

"I suppose he was."

"Yaas—amazin' if you look at him, you know—but he must have been, it stands to reason. In fact, he was a St. Kit's boy, and once upon a time he was captain of the Fourth, and was in the top study with his pal Rake—Rake, you know, who did terrific stunts as a flying man in the War. Rake, V.C., you know. Well, it reminds him of his own merry schooldays—must have been a thumpin' long time back—it reminds him of them when he has tea in the study. Am I borin' you?" added Algy suddenly.

"My dear chap, I'm quite interested," said Harry. "I wish I had an uncle to visit me here."

"Begad! Do you? I've got half a dozen uncles you can have if you like. But to come to the point, I said it was awfully perplexin'. Do you mind helpin' me out with my uncle, old bean?"

"I'd like to."

"Good man!"

"But—but—"

"Well, dear boy?"

Harry Nameless flushed.

"I—I shouldn't like your uncle to—to thin"

—"he stammered.

"I knew I'd put my foot in it," said Algernon Aubrey. "I'm always doin' it. My dear old bean, don't be touchy. I assure you

that I really do most sincerely want you to help me out with my uncle. Now I've got to float away, or I shall be late at the station. The colonel is nuts on punctuality—military old gent, you know. I wonder if you'd look round the study and see that it's tidy for nunky?"

"I'll have the study like a new pin," said Harry smiling.

"Dear old bean," said Algy affectionately. "I knew I could rely on you."

And with that parting injunction Algernon Aubrey took up a pair of beautiful gloves, donned them with care, selected a cane, picked up a shining silk hat, and drifted out of the study.

CHAPTER 18.

A Little Rag!

"QUIET!" muttered Carton.

There was a soft chuckle in the Fourth Form passage.

That quarter of St. Kit's was fairly deserted. It was a fine half-holiday, and everybody was out of doors, excepting those who had special business indoors. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was on his way to the station to meet his military uncle. Harry Nameless was in Study No. 5, giving the room some finishing touches to make it suitable to greet the eyes of a very distinguished visitor. And Vernon Carton, Durance, Tracy, Lumley, and Catesby came down the passage on tiptoe, grinning, evidently in the enjoyment of a great jest.

They paused outside Study No. 5, and listened.

They could hear Harry moving in the study, and a sound of tidying.

"All serene," breathed Carton. "The cad's alone there. Bunny was quite right. Nobody else in any of the studies, I think. We've got the cad to rights this time."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Tracy.

"Mind the beast doesn't have time to hit out, though," muttered Lumley. "He hits like the kick of a mule."

"There's almost enough of us to handle him if he does," said Durance sarcastically.

"Hush!"

Carton put his hand quietly on the door.

"The 'Goats' of St. Kit's had planned a rag. They had planned it quickly, but with care. Bunny Bootles had met Algernon at the school gates, and the dandy of the Fourth had tactlessly revealed his mission. Bunny had wasted no time in passing on the information to the top study. It was in this manner that the Goats had learned that Harry Nameless was going to help entertain Colonel Wilmot, uncle of the Honourable Algernon Aubrey, and brother-in-law of a belted earl. And Carton & Co. had decided to have a word or two to say about that

Vernon Carton turned the handle of the door and opened it quickly.

The five juniors rushed in a body.

"Collar him!" panted Carton.

Harry Nameless spun round. There was a flower-jar in his hand, from which he was removing dust with a duster. He was taken quite by surprise.

The jar went to the fender with a crash as he was collared, and he struggled in the grasp of his assailants.

In a second he was down on the rug, with the five ragers sprawling over him and clinging to him like cats.

Harry panted for breath. The five of them were on him and his resistance was futile. He lay helpless on the carpet securely held by the ragers.

"What do you want, you rotters?" he gasped.

"Lock the door, Tracy. We don't want any interruptions."

The key clicked in the lock.

"Now the cord, sharp!"

Harry struggled again as a cord was looped over his wrists and knotted. As soon as his hands were bound he was allowed to get on his feet. He stood with his chest heaving, his eyes gleaming at the ragers. But he was helpless now.

"What's this game, you silly asses?" he exclaimed. "I'll punch your heads for this!"

"Perhaps!" assented Carton, with an evil grin. "Just at present the game is in our hands, dear boy. You're getting the study ready for Algy and his uncle?"

"Yes."

"Algy's goin' to introduce you?"

"Yes; that's not your business."

Carton grinned.

"We're not goin' to let the dear old colonel be imposed upon," he explained. "If you're goin' to be introduced, you're goin' to show up in your true character. The giddy old colonel's goin' to see you in your real character as a nameless tramp, which is what you are. Catchy on, as dear old Algy says? You're goin' to wait for the merry visitor with rags and tatters on you, an' a dirty face to suit your birth an' breeding—see?"

"You rotter!"

"Go it, you fellows!"

The ragers "went it" cheerfully. There was no help for the hapless victim of Carton & Co.'s peculiar sense of humour. They proceeded cheerfully, coolly, and methodically to rag him; his collar was torn out and left hanging by one stud, his jacket and trousers rent in a dozen places and rubbed with ashes and soot from the grate, his boots unlaced, his hair ruffled and rubbed with ashes, his face daubed with cinders and ink.

The Goats chuckled as they proceeded. This was indeed a merry rag from the point of view of Carton & Co.

In a quarter of an hour a startling change had been wrought in the looks of the nameless schoolboy.

A more ragged, dirtier, more untidy-looking young tramp had certainly never been seen before at St. Kit's than Harry looked now.

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled Carton, in great glee. "Stick him in the chair an' tie his hoofs to the legs!"

The nameless schoolboy was hustled into Algy's luxurious armchair, and a cord secured him there. Durance glanced from the window.

"Beat it, you chaps; they're comin'."

"Phew!"

Carton jumped to the window. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was visible in the quad, crossing towards the School House by the side of a tall, handsome, soldierly-looking gentleman with a grey moustache.

Carton pinned a paper to Harry's collar.

"Beat it, you chaps!"

The ragers "beat it" promptly, they did not want the military gentleman to catch them in the study. They scuttled out and vanished, Carton closing the door as he went. Harry Nameless was left alone, his heart throbbing with shame and rage, unable to escape, able only to wait till Algy returned, and to meet the eyes of Algy and his uncle in this guise.

"You know the study, uncle?"

"Yes, my boy," came a deep voice.

There were footsteps outside Study No. 5.

Harry Nameless shuddered.

He had had a lingering hope that the colonel might not come directly to the study; he had thought it probable that the visitor might call on the Head first, or stop to chat with some of the masters below. But evidently that hope was ill-founded. The colonel was striding up the Fourth Form passage with his dutiful nephew. His heavy footsteps rang on the old oaken plank, and he stopped outside the study.

The door was thrown wide open.

Algernon Aubrey stood respectfully aside for his uncle to enter. So it happened that he was not the first to see the extraordinary state of his new chum.

Colonel Wilmot entered.

His glance fell upon the junior in the chair, and seemed to freeze there. Under the ashes and ink on his face Harry's cheeks were burning. He would have been glad at that moment if the floor had opened and swallowed him up.

Colonel Wilmot stood rigid.

He was a handsome gentleman, with a deeply bronzed face, a little scar on one cheek, where a German bullet had gone close, in Flanders. His eyes were deep and clear and steady, and had a look in them that made it evident that the colonel was not a man to be trifled with.

"What!" he ejaculated.

Algy followed him in, surprised and uneasy, but he understood as soon as he saw the junior in the chair.

"Begad!" he stuttered.

"What—what—what is this?" exclaimed the colonel, finding his voice at last.

He tugged at his grey moustache and stared. The tattered, ragged, dusty, untidy figure

astounded him, as well it might. And the paper Carton had pinned to Harry's collar was in full view, and it astonished him still more. It bore the words, daubed with a brush:

THIS TRAMP IS NOT WANTED AT ST. KIT'S.

"A—a—a tramp!" ejaculated the colonel. Certainly Harry looked a pretty thorough tramp, of the most dusty and dilapidated variety, at that moment.

"I—I—" he stammered. "Cut me loose, St. Leger, for goodness' sake! It's a rag; I've been tied up here!"

"Oh begad!"

Algernon Aubrey almost stammered with anger and annoyance.

He stared round for something to cut the cord, and found a knife. He sawed at the cord mechanically, his face crimson.

Colonel Wilmot seemed to have recovered from his astonishment now. But the expression on his stern face was not promising.

He crossed to the window, and stood with his back to it, looking on grimly, while Algernon Aubrey released his hapless study-mate.

Algy pitched the insulting paper into the fire first, to get it out of sight. But the colonel had seen it, and he did not forget—that had been written on it.

Not a word did the military gentleman speak while Algernon Aubrey was fumbling with the knotted cords. The dandy of the Fourth was troubled and confused as well as angry, and he was slow and clumsy for once. Every moment was a pang to Harry Nameless. He read—perhaps misread—the grim expression on the colonel's bronzed face, and he thought that he saw scorn and contempt there.

But he was free at last.

He rose from the chair trembling with agitation and a mingling of bitter feelings.

"Hook it, dear boy!" whispered Algy.

Harry Nameless nodded.

He felt that he ought to speak to the colonel; to utter some word of explanation or apology, but the grim bronze face chilled and checked him.

Without a word he crossed to the door and hurried away.

Algernon Aubrey turned to his uncle. His face was full of distress.

The situation could not have been more unfortunate, and Algy was feeling extremely uneasy. He hardly dared to meet the stern, steady eyes that were fixed upon him.

It was the colonel who broke the silence.

"Who is that boy, Algernon?"

"My—my study-mate, uncle."

"The new friend you mentioned to me on the way from the station?"

"Yaas."

"What is his name?"

Algernon groaned inwardly.

Coming on top of what had already happened, it was painful and disconcerting to have to state the facts on that subject. The new boy, ragged and branded as a tramp by the nuts of St.

Kit's, had cut a miserable enough figure in the eyes of the distinguished visitor, and now Algy had to explain that the fellow had no name even.

"His name is—is Nameless," stammered Algernon Aubrey.

"He has no name?"

"N-n-o. He's called Nameless be——"

"Is he entered on the books of the school by such a ridiculous name as that?"

"Y-a-a-as."

"This is extraordinary," said the colonel coldly. "How does it happen that the boy is at St. Kit's at all, if he has no name, and apparently no connections?"

"He came in on the Foundation."

"Oh!"

"I—I suppose it was a rag."

"You mean his Form-fellows treated him like that?"

"I—I suppose so."

"They call him a tramp?"

"That's only their rot, you know—just rot. He isn't a tramp; he passed the exam for the Foundation scholarship, and had an old St. Kit's man behind him."

"Has he any relations?"

"I—I suppose he can't have——"

"And you have made him your friend?"

"Yaas."

"How did he come to be your study-mate? Was he placed in this study by the Head or your Form-master?"

"I—I asked for him——"

"Why?"

"He—he pulled me out of the river——"

"A brave action, doubtless," said the colonel coldly. "Courage is not, however, an uncommon quality. During the War I have seen great courage displayed by many men of the most unpleasant character. Algernon, you know that you are my favourite nephew; that I have looked upon you almost as a son, since it pleased Heaven that I should lose my own boy." The colonel paused for a moment, his grim, bronzed face twitching slightly. "It is for that reason that I have sometimes spoken to you as otherwise only your father would speak. But I think if Lord Westcourt was here he would say what I am going to say."

Algernon gave another inward groan.

"But, uncle——"

"Give me your attention, Algernon. Of this boy whom you call Nameless I know nothing but what you have told me. He has no name, he comes from nowhere—he has no connections of any kind. His early training cannot have been of a kind to fit him to be your associate."

"But——"

"He pulled you out of the river; a brave action, probably. You owe him gratitude. But you could not possibly have known anything of him when you asked for him to be put in your study."

"I knew he was a splendid chap, and——"

"You can have known nothing of the sort,"

said Colonel Wilnot decisively. "His Form-fellows, apparently, are not of your opinion. They denounce him as a tramp, and rag him." "That cad Carton——" burst out Algy fiercely.

"Would this boy allow himself to be handled in such a manner by a single junior?"

"No fear! He thrashed Carton the day he came; there must have been a crowd of them."

"Exactly. A crowd of the Fourth Form here regard him with contempt and repugnance. It is perfectly plain to me, Algernon, that you have acted with your usual utter thoughtlessness. You have made a friend of a boy of whom nobody knows anything from a good-natured impulse, or, more probably, he has selected you as a foolish and good-natured fellow to fasten himself upon."

"Not at all. He——"

"I have nothing to say against the boy," continued the colonel grimly. "I know nothing of him, and desire to know nothing. I only know that he cannot be a suitable associate for you—that is impossible. Either you have acted weakly from foolish good nature, or else he has fastened upon you unscrupulously, because it is to his advantage, as has happened before. In either case, I advise you strongly to have nothing further to do with him. That you should act unkindly or uncivilly towards the boy I do not desire for a moment. It would be bad form. But you should stop at once this absurd friendship, in which you are clearly a victim. You understand me, Algernon?"

Algernon Aubrey raised his head proudly.

"I'm stickin' to my pal, uncle. You see——"

"I have no authority over you, Algernon," said the colonel with increased grimness of look and tone. "If your regard for me, as your uncle, does not make you desire to meet my wishes, I cannot command you. It is for your father to command, and it is my duty to acquaint your father with the circumstances. I shall do so without delay."

The colonel crossed to the door.

"Uncle, you're not goin'?" ejaculated Algernon Aubrey in dismay.

"I am going at once, Algernon. Good-bye!"

"But——"

But the colonel was gone.

"Oh, begad!" ejaculated Algy blankly. "What a go!"

The heavy footsteps died away down the passage.

CHAPTER 19.

A Broken Friendship!

FOR a long time Algernon had been alone in the study, walking restlessly to and fro in a deeply troubled frame of mind. From the window he had seen Colonel Wilnot stride away to the gates. The colonel had not, apparently, even delayed to call on the Head. It was clear that he was deeply displeased.

"Where the thump is he?" St. Leger ejacu-

lated at last. He was thinking of Harry Nameless. "Why don't he come in?"

He left the study at last, anxious to find his chum. He guessed that Harry had gone to the dormitory to clean and change his clothes after the ragging. But when he looked in at the Fourth Form dormitory Harry was not there.

Algernon Aubrey came downstairs with a clouded brow.

Carton & Co. met him in the lower passage, and the nutty Co. were grinning merrily.

St. Leger gave them a dark look.

"You rotters!" he began.

"Was nunky waxy?" grinned Tracy. "Did he go off the deep end? Didn't he take to your nameless pal, in his proper get-up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the nuts.

"It was for your own sake, you know," explained Carton. "We thought that dear old nunky ought to know the facts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You awful rotters," said Algernon Aubrey. "You—you unspeakable outsiders: You've done a lot of harm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we're quite unrepentant," chuckled Carton.

"We are, we is," grinned Tracy.

"I'm lookin' for Nameless now. Have you seen him?"

"He's in the quad, the dear boy," said Carton cheerily. "He came into the Common-room. His face was worth a guinea a box."

"More than that," said Lumley. "Call it a five."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think he was goin' to pick a row with us," continued Carton. "But when he heard that dear old nunky had gone off in a raging huff it seemed to double him up a bit."

"Very painful to the dear boy," chuckled Tracy. "Go an' comfort him, Algy: he's your pal, you know. Kiss him on his baby brow."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the happy nuts.

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger turned his back on Carton & Co., and hurried away. His face was darkly clouded. So Harry Nameless knew—he knew—

Algy hurried out into the quad.

He found him under the old oaks in the quad. Harry Nameless was leaning against a tree, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his eyes on the ground. His face was pale, and there was a deep line on his brow.

He looked up quickly at the sound of Algy's footsteps.

A flush came over his pale face.

"I—I'm sorry," faltered Algy.

He hardly knew what to say. But his distressed look softened Harry's face; he smiled faintly.

"Nothing to worry over, old fellow," said Harry with an effort. "It can't be helped."

"Of course, you know Carton is a lyin' beast!"

Again that faint smile crossed Harry's pale face.

"He was telling the truth," he said. "I'm not surprised. I—I oughtn't to be surprised. You've got into a row with your uncle—for making friends with me." He had a catch in his throat. "I—I can't believe, St. Leger, that you ever thought I—I was making use of you; sticking to you for what you were worth," he choked.

"Of course I didn't! I couldn't! You couldn't—"

"Your uncle thinks so."

"Old bean—" murmured Algernon Aubrey, deeply distressed.

"It's natural enough. Why shouldn't Colonel Wilmot think so? Of course, he would think so. Of course, your father will think so. Why shouldn't they? You'll be ordered not to speak to me again. Why not? But—but—"

"I'm stickin' to you, old bean!"

Harry shook his head.

"You're not!" he said.

"But—"

"You see, even a nameless bounder—a rank outsider who doesn't even know his father's name—may have a little self-respect," said Harry Nameless bitterly. "It won't be needed for Colonel Wilmot to get you out of my clutches. I'm going to let you off on my own accord. I'm changing out of the study. The colonel will never be shocked to see me there again."

Algernon Aubrey coloured.

"You're treatin' me badly," he said. "You don't understand—"

"How could I understand?" said the nameless junior with bitter irony. "A nameless nobody—a pushing bounder—doesn't understand things as Lord Westcourt and Colonel Wilmot understand them. My class is different, you know. In my class, we don't suspect fellows of being base and unscrupulous without any proof. We give a fellow credit for being decent until he's proved otherwise. But then, I was brought up among sailormen and fishermen. When you write to your uncle, St. Leger, tell him—tell him that you no longer know Harry Nameless; that you've done with the pushing cad, and are out of his clutches. That's the end."

He turned and walked quickly away.

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger stood rooted to the ground, staring after him, a strange pain in his heart.

"Harry!"

The nameless junior did not turn his head.

"Harry!"

St. Leger called once more, and there was no answer. He turned away unsteadily; there was a dimness before his eyes. A mocking face loomed up before him in the blur—the face of Vernon Carton, grinning, evil, triumphant.

"So you've done with your nameless pal? You've—"

With all the force of his arm St. Leger struck



Lord Westcourt went with a crash into the grass, the ruffian sprawling over him. "Now then——" The bludgeon whirled up in the tramp's hand, but before the blow could fall Harry Nameless rushed in. He threw his arms round the ruffian's neck and dragged him from his victim. (See Chapter 23.)

at the mocking face, and Vernon Carton yelled and rolled under the oaks. Without a glance at him, Algernon Aubrey St. Leger strode away to the School House.

CHAPTER 20.

Algy is Not Nappy!

ALGERNON AUBREY ST. LEGER groaned. It was a deep and dismal groan.

Judging by that dismal groan, the dandy of St. Kit's did not, at that particular moment, find life quite worth living.

Algernon Aubrey was walking up and down his study, No. 5 in the Fourth Form passage, with his hands driven deep into the pockets of his elegant trousers, and a deep wrinkle on his youthful brow. His celebrated eyeglass dangled unheeded at the end of its cord.

He paused and glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. It indicated half-past two.

"Rotten!" said Algy.

He scowled at the clock, and resumed his tramp up and down his study. The wrinkle deepened in his brow. Evidently there was weighty trouble looming over Study No. 5.

"Beastly!" said Algy, after a pause. Then, addressing space, he propounded the query:

"What the merry thump is a fellow goin' to do?"

Anybody looking into Study No. 5 just then might have wondered what St. Leger of the Fourth had to grumble at. It was a very handsome study—the most expensively furnished at St. Kit's. Even Beauchamp of the Sixth, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Upper School, hadn't quite so elegant a study as Algy of the Fourth. Its elegance was only marred here and there by a trace of Bunny Bootles. Bunny had a way of leaving bulls-eyes and aniseed-balls about, which was very hard for a fellow like Algy to bear.

Indeed, one of the problems of Algy's existence was how and why he stood Bunny Bootles.

Algy himself did not look exactly like a fellow under the frown of fortune. His beautifully creased trousers were the admiration and despair of all the nuts at St. Kit's. His waistcoat was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. His tie was the last word in ties; and it was tied as only Algernon Aubrey's ties ever were tied.

Any fellow in the Fourth would have said that Algy, so far from having anything to grouse about, was a lucky barge.

But he was grouching now, most dismally.

He trod on a bulls-eye that adhered to his expensive Persian rug. But he hardly noticed it. Evidently his present "grouse" was not on the subject of Bunny Bootles. Far more weighty and worrying matters than the fat Bunny occupied his mind—though Bunny was worrying enough, and decidedly weighty!

Algy looked at the clock again. It indicated twenty minutes to three now.

"Rotten! Oh, rotten!" groaned Algy.

The door opened.

A fat face, with a smear of jam adorning an extensive mouth, looked in. The face and the smear belonged to Cuthbert Archibald Bootles, more familiarly known as Bunny.

Algernon Aubrey stopped his tramping, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and fixed it on the fat junior. There was a deadly glare behind the eyeglass; but Bunny did not notice it. His fat face was merry and bright.

"Hallo, old top!" said Bunny.

No answer from Algernon Aubrey. Only a glare. Merely that, and nothing more.

"They're coming this afternoon, ain't they?" pursued Bunny.

Algy groaned.

"Yaas."

"They'll be here soon?"

"Yaas."

"Good! I'll be on hand, old top," said Bunny. Bootles affectionately. "Rely on me. How many are coming with your pater?"

"I don't know."

"When are they coming exactly?"

"Go an' eat coke!"

"Look here, old top. I want to know, you know," said Bunny. "I want to be on hand. I don't want Lord Westcourt to feel neglected, you know."

"Rats?"

"If that's your gratitude to a fellow who's giving up a half-holiday to stand by you, Algy—"

"Blow away, for goodness' sake, Bunny," said Algernon Aubrey plaintively. "I've got to stand a lot of things to-day; but there's no reason why I should stand you, too. You see that, don't you?"

"Look here—"

"Bunny, you're superfluous—you're the Thing-too-Much—blow away. I shall kick you if you don't disappear."

"Look here—" roared Bunny, in great wrath.

"Begad," continued Algernon Aubrey, "I think I'll kick you, anyhow, Bunny. It will be some relief."

"You siffy ass!" hooted Bunny. "I tell you — Why, you burbling chump, wharrer you up to? Leggo! Yowl! Ow!"

Algernon Aubrey, apparently feeling the need of some relief, and hoping to find it in kicking Bunny, took the fat junior by the collar, and spun him round in the doorway.

Bunny struggled.

"Leggo, you siffy ass! I've come here to stand by you! Yaroooh! I'm going to help you entertain your—yoop!—pater! I'm going —"

"You are!" assented Algernon Aubrey.

Blif!

And Bunny went.

The fat junior rolled into the passage, and brought up against the opposite wall. There he turned, gasping, to fix a ferocious glare upon Algernon Aubrey. That noble youth, in the

doorway of Study No. 5, was grinning now—evidently having found the relief he wanted.

"Yow! Ow!" spluttered Bunny. "You awful rotter! Ow! I won't show up this afternoon, now—ow!—I won't be bored by your dashed pater—ow!—and you can have your silly old aunts all to yourself—wow!"

"Begad! I shall have to kick you again, Bunny!"

"Yah!"

Bunny Bootles beat a strategic retreat as the dandy of St. Kit's came out of the study. He bolted down the passage; and it was sheer ill-luck that Carton and Tracy of the Fourth were coming along from the stairs just at that moment. There was a terrific collision as Bunny Bootles met the nuts of the Fourth in full career.

Crash!

"Yoooooop!"

"Oh, gad!"

"By Jove! Ow!"

Carton staggered against the wall, and Tracy was hurled headlong. Bunny Bootles sat down and gasped.

"Ow, ow, ow! Wharrer marrer? What—what—oh! Ah! Ow!"

"You fat idiot!" shrieked Vernon Carton. "What the deuce do you mean by bumpin' into a fellow?"

"Ow!"

"Spifficate him!" panted Tracy.

"I say, old tops— Oh, my hat! Yaroooooh!"

Carton and Tracy were hurt, and nearly wounded. But they found energy enough to begin operations on Bunny Bootles. That fat youth squirmed away frantically from two lunging boots, and fled for the stairs with loud yells.

"Give it to him!" called out Algernon Aubrey enthusiastically. "Give him beans! He's been borin' me! Kick him! Kick him hard!"

Bunny Bootles disappeared down the staircase. His voice could still be heard, raised in lamentation, compared with which the celebrated lamentations of Job were a mere whisper.

CHAPTER 21.

Parted Chums!

HARRY NAMELESS sat at his desk in the Fourth Form room in the School House of St. Kit's.

His books were before him on the desk, and he was at work; but his work was very desultory.

It was a half-holiday, and a sunny afternoon, and he was not feeling very much inclined for work.

Through the open window he could hear shouts from the football-ground, where a match was going on—a senior match between St. Kit's and Lyncroft, watched by a big crowd of St. Kit's fellows. Oliphant and his merry men were apparently beating the visitors, to judge by the

enthusiastic cheering that rolled from the distance.

The nameless schoolboy would have been glad enough to join the other St. Kit's fellows on Big Side, but his task held him to the Form-room. But his attention was not quite fixed on his task.

He could not help his thoughts wandering—he was thinking, and the cloud on his handsome face showed that his thoughts were not pleasant.

Nameless!

That was what he was called—it was the only name he had.

In the little village of South Cove, where he had lived during his early years, it had not mattered so much—he had hardly felt that it marked him off from other fellows. But two or three weeks at St. Kit's had brought a change.

Nameless! He had no name, he had no people. St. Kit's fellows often talked of their people. A fellow who had no people was strange enough to them. Harry Nameless had none; he had not even a father. He had no name! The strange name he bore was an intimation of the fact. He had felt it little before he came to St. Kit's. But he felt it now.

His books lay unheeded—the pen was idle in his hand. He sat in deep and painful thought, unconscious of the fact that an elegant figure had stepped into the open doorway of the Form-room.

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger stood regarding him in silence.

For some minutes he did not speak; but he watched the cloud on the nameless schoolboy's face, the deep line on his boyish brow; and Algy's own face clouded.

He coughed at last.

"Ahem!"

Harry started and looked up.

A flush came into his cheeks as he saw the eyes of the dandy of St. Kit's fixed upon him. St. Leger came into the Form-room.

"Swottin'?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What are you workin' at?"

"Virgil."

"Mr. Rawlings detained you this afternoon?" asked Algy sympathetically.

"Oh, no."

"You're not swottin' from choice?" ejaculated Algy in astonishment.

Harry smiled slightly.

"Yes," he answered.

"Oh, begad!"

Harry Nameless turned his attention to his books again. Perhaps it was a hint to the dandy of St. Kit's that he would have preferred to be alone. But if it was a hint, Algernon Aubrey did not take it. He seated himself on the end of the desk, evidently having come to stay.

"Am I interrupting you, dear boy?"

"Well, yes."

"That's too bad," said Algernon Aubrey placidly. "Do you mind bein' interrupted?"

Harry laughed.

He was in despondent spirits when Algy dawned upon the dusky old Form-room. In spite of himself, he was feeling more cheerful already. The elegant Algy had come in like a ray of sunshine.

"It isn't exactly that," said Harry. "But I've got to work. I've put in for the Fortescue prize."

"I see—out for giddy glory?"

"Not exactly that, either—though I should be glad to get on. I want the prize."

"Is it worth havin'?"

"I think so."

"I've often looked over the St. Kit's list," said Algernon Aubrey reflectively. "My people would be no end delighted if I bagged a prize for classics. I'm goin' to. I haven't decided which one to go in for yet. I don't want to be in a hurry, you know. I've thought of the Fortescue—and the Gold Medal, and the Woodford—but there's maths in that and I'm not a great gun at mathematics. I've never decided—but I'm goin' to. Still, I won't put in for the Fortescue this year, Nameless, if you're goin' in for it. I'll give you a clear field."

"Thank you!" said Harry, smiling.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, if you like. I'll give you some coachin'," said Algy. "I'll help you to bag the prize, Nameless."

"Thanks awfully," said Harry. "You're very good, St. Leger. Do you mind if I get on with the Virgil now?"

"Not at all, dear boy." Algernon Aubrey did not move from the desk, however. He polished his eyeglass in a thoughtful way. "I'm in frightful trouble this afternoon, old bean."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Harry, seriously enough.

"My people are comin' down to see me."

"Is that a trouble?"

"Simply awful!"

"I don't quite see it. I wish I had some people to come down and see me," said Harry Nameless in a low voice.

Algernon Aubrey nodded.

"Yaas, I dare say. Fellows always want what they haven't got. I've noticed that lots of times. Not that I don't like my people, you know. I love 'em. My pater is an old trump. My Uncle Wilmot is no end of a cheery old card. My aunts are all ducks. Delightful family in every way. And I wish they'd stop at home."

Harry's face clouded.

"Is Colonel Wilmot comin'?" he asked.

"No; as it happens, the cheery old colonel isn't in the party. He came last week, you know."

"I know."

"When those cads, Carton & Co., ragged you in the study, and left you to see the colonel in an awful state. I punched Carton's nose."

Harry did not speak.

"Since then," continued Algernon Aubrey, "you've given Study No. 5 the go-by. You've done your prep. in the Form-room, and you

haven't put your foot in my study. Do you like Form-rooms to work in?"

"Not specially."

"You haven't a study now?"

"No."

"Don't you want a study?"

"Ye-e-es."

"I think you've acted in rather an unfeelin' way, Nameless. You've left me to endure Bunny Bootles all on my lonely own," said Algy pathetically. "I don't call that friendly. We chummed up when you came to St. Kit's, and I think that as a friend you ought to help me bear Bunny."

Harry was silent.

"Now, I want you this afternoon," said Algernon Aubrey amiably. "My pater is comin'. I'm afraid he'll be here soon. Aunt Georgina is comin'—and Aunt Cordelia. I'm goin' to be lectured—horrid. I want you to stand by me."

Harry shook his head.

"You won't?"

"I can't!" Harry Nameless made a restless movement. "Look here, St. Leger, better have it out plain. We can't be friends. I'd like to no end."

"Oh! You'd like to?"

"Yes, of course. But it's impossible. Can't you see? I'm a poor fellow—so poor that you can't even understand it. I'm here on the Foundation—without paying any fees. Half the fellows look down on me for that reason—Carton and his friends make things as rotten for me as they can. I can stand all that." Harry's lips curled. "But you're in a different position—you're rich, and the son of a nobleman. I made friends with you when I came, without thinking of all that. But when your uncle came—"

"He put his foot in it," murmured Algy.

"Colonel Wilmot was right, from his point of view," said Harry. "I don't bear any malice. I—I've tried to look at it fairly. He thought I was a rank outsider, sticking on you because you're good-natured. What else could he think? I don't blame him. Carton & Co. helped to make that impression on him. He was angry with you on my account—he's angry now. Your people are coming down to see you on that matter. Isn't it so?"

"Yaas."

"Well, then"—Harry flushed—"how can we be friends, when your father and relations are coming down to see you, to make you agree not to speak to me any more. It's not possible. I—I think I spoke rather bitterly the other day—I'm sorry. But that doesn't change the position. We can't be friends—and I shall keep out of your study. I'm not a hanger-on, and I can't be treated as one, can I? But that isn't all. I can't get you into trouble with your people. You are going to be called over the coals now, and I don't blame your people for the view they take—it's natural. But—but—" Harry hesitated. "Their attitude is quite natural, but it's an insult to me, and—and there's an end."

Algernon Aubrey nodded.

"But I'm going to set all that right," he said.

"How?"

"I want you to meet my people this afternoon," explained the dandy of St. Kit's. "When they see you, an' make your acquaintance, it will be all right. See? They're bound to like you."

Harry laughed.

"I don't think it at all likely," he said. "They certainly won't like me. And—and Colonel Wilmot thought I was making a claim on you because I pulled you out of the river." He crimsoned. "I don't blame him; I've tried to be just. But I can't stand it. You'd better cut off now, St. Leger; your people will be here soon."

"But I'm quite sure, old chap, that if you had a jaw with my pater he would like you no end."

Harry shook his head.

"And I want you to turn up," continued St. Leger serenely. "You leave it to me; I'm no end of a tactful chap. You see, I'm goin' on being your friend whether you like it or not. You're the only fellow at St. Kit's who doesn't bore me, and I can't forget it. Besides, you did pull me out of the river—"

"Oh, rats!"

Algernon Aubrey slid off the desk.

"You're an obstinate ass, Nameless!"

"Thanks!"

"An' a silly jabberwock," added Algy thoughtfully.

"Go it!"

"And a young duffer," said Algy, "and I'm goin' to stick to you, and I'll jolly well punch your silly nose if you won't be pally."

Harry Nameless laughed.

"I mean it," said Algy. "I'm a no end determined chap. And if you won't come and see my people—"

"I can't."

"Then I shall bring them to see you."

"What?"

"Here, in the Form-room," said Algernon Aubrey calmly. "If the giddy mountain won't come to Mahomet, you know, merry old Mahomet has to bunk off to the mountain. Prepare to receive guests in the Form-room. Perhaps I ought to warn you that Aunt Cordelia is a little deaf, and rather tryin'. Aunt Georgina fixes you with a lorgnette, and stares you out of countenance. But you'll take it smilin', for my sake, I know."

"Look here, St. Leger!" exclaimed Harry, in dismay.

"Consider it done, dear boy."

And Algernon Aubrey walked out of the Form-room, his mind evidently made up. Harry Nameless stared after him blankly.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

He sat for some moments in thought, and then rose from his desk and put his books away. Evidently there was no more "swotting" for him that sunny afternoon. It was disconcerting; for there were reasons—weighty reasons

—why the nameless schoolboy was anxious to capture the Fortescue prize. But to remain in the Form-room till the happy Algy marched his people in upon him was out of the question. In spite of Algy's faith in his own judgment, the interview was likely to be too awkward for all concerned.

Harry Nameless looked out of the doorway. St. Leger had disappeared—and Harry took his cap, and hurried out of the School House. He lost no time in crossing to the gates.

CHAPTER 22.

Stranded!

"O H dear!"

"How very distressing!"

"Oh gad!"

Two rather high-pitched feminine voices, followed by a man's deep tones, fell upon Harry Nameless' ears.

Harry had turned from the Wicke road, and followed the footpath through Lyncroft Wood. He intended to keep out of gates all that afternoon in order to make sure of not coming into contact with Algernon Aubrey St. Leger's people. And as he had never yet seen Lyncroft School, which was only a mile or so from St. Kit's, he had turned his steps in that direction, to have a look at the school on the hill. He came out of the winding woodland footpath into the Lyncroft road, in time to hear the three disconcerted ejaculations.

He paused.

A large, handsome motor-car was halted in the road, and from underneath it protruded a pair of legs. Evidently the legs belonged to the chauffeur, who was examining some damage in that rather cabined, cribbed, and confined position. Three persons stood looking on—two ladies and a gentleman.

The two ladies were elderly. One of them was watching the chauffeur's wriggling boots through a pair of tortoiseshell eyeglasses which she held over her Roman nose. She was rather a severe-looking lady. The other had a benevolent countenance and a fluttered manner. The gentleman, who was tall and stately, had an eyeglass screwed into his right eye, and his brows wrinkled over it. He was evidently in a state of deep annoyance.

"Oh, gad!" he repeated.

He looked as if he would have made use of a more strenuous expression if the ladies had not been present.

"How very distressing!" said the lady with the eyeglasses. "How long are we likely to be delayed, Edward?"

Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"Stumson is doing his best, Georgina!" said the other lady.

Georgina gave a slight sniff.

"The question is, how long are we to be delayed?" she said.

"We must rely upon Stumson for that!"

remarked the gentleman. "Ah, here is a boy! I will ask this boy how far it is to walk. I do not think it is very far, if we could only find some sort of—ah!—a short cut, or something. By the road it is a considerable distance, but no doubt some path exists through the wood."

The gentleman signed to Harry Nameless while he was speaking.

Harry had paused for a moment, as he came out into the road, to glance at the halted party, ready to lend any assistance if that was in his power. He came up as the tall gentleman signed to him, and raised his hat politely to the two ladies.

"Why, it is a St. Kit's boy," said the gentleman, glancing at Harry's cap, which was adorned with the school badge. "How very fortunate. He will be able to tell us exactly how to reach the school by walking. My boy, is there a footpath through this wood?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Is it very far?" asked the lady with the tortoiseshell eyeglasses, turning them upon Harry.

"Only a mile or so, madam."

"How very fortunate," said the gentleman. "Of course, I was sure there was a footpath. In fact, I remember most distinctly that there is a footpath. But there are several footpaths, if my memory serves me well, and it is quite possible that we might take the wrong one. Hem!"

"The boy will guide us, I am sure," said Georgina.

"Perhaps the boy is going somewhere, Georgina," murmured the milder lady. "Perhaps—"

"I am sure he will guide us, Cordelia."

"Let us see. You belong to St. Kit's, my boy?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

His voice faltered a little as he spoke.

He had little doubt now as to the identity of this stranded party. Algernon Aubrey had mentioned his aunts Georgina and Cordelia. It was not likely that two other elderly ladies of the same names would be going to St. Kit's that afternoon. In leaving the school to avoid St. Leger's people, the nameless schoolboy had walked right upon them—out of the frying-pan into the fire, as it were. He did not need telling now that the tall gentleman was Lord Westcourt, the pater of the Honourable Algernon.

His cheeks deepened a little in colour, and he would gladly have retreated from the spot. But that was scarcely possible. His aid was wanted.

There was a grunt from beneath the halted car. The legs wriggled, and a body emerged and a red face turned his eyeglass upon the flustered chauffeur.

"I'm afraid I shall have to go back to the garage in the village we passed, sir, and get 'elp with it," said the chauffeur.

"Oh, gad!"

"If the school is only a mile away, we will walk," said Miss Georgina St. Leger decidedly. "The car can come on after us."

"Only a mile away, you say, boy?" asked the gentleman.

"Through the woods, sir. It's four or five miles by road, I think," answered Harry.

"We will walk, Edward."

"Quite so, my dear. Stumson, you will—ah!—bring the car on to the school as soon as—as practicable."

"Yes, my lord."

"And now, my young friend," said his lordship, turning to Harry, and giving him the full benefit of the eyeglass, "if you are not busily occupied, will you have the kindness to show us the way through the woods? There is, I believe, a total absence of signposts—"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "If you don't know the woods I don't think you'd find your way very easily."

"But you were a St. Kit's boy once, Edward!" remarked Miss Cordelia.

"It is forty years since I was a St. Kit's boy, Cordelia. And in my day the Lyncroft Woods were not open to the public. If this young gentleman will be kind enough to show us the way—"

"Certainly, sir," said Harry.

The junior wished himself anywhere else at that moment, but it was scarcely possible to decline. He could not help wondering what his lordship would have thought if he had known that he was asking aid from the very person he had come down to St. Kit's to lecture his son about.

Evidently such a possibility did not even cross his lordship's noble mind.

"Thank you very much," said Lord Westcourt graciously. "Shall we start at once, my dears?"

"Certainly," said Miss Georgina.

"Now, my boy, if you will kindly guide us."

"This way, sir."

Harry Nameless re-entered the wood he had just quitted, and Lord Westcourt and his sisters followed. The unhappy Stumson was left to solve the problem of the car, probably feeling a little happier now that his lordship's sisters were off the scene.

In a few minutes the deep brown woods swallowed up the party.

Harry Nameless had been only a few weeks at St. Kit's, but he had spent a great deal of time in the woods, and he knew his way well. To a stranger the woods were perplexing enough, with a tangle of footpaths, some of them little more than tracks scarcely marked.

It was a pleasant walk, with the afternoon sun glinting through the foliage overhead and birds twittering on all sides. Harry had no objection to putting in that extra walk to assist the stranded party, but he kept a little ahead of them to avoid possible conversation.

A meeting at St. Kit's would have been awkward enough, but just now the awkwardness would have been extreme if Algy's relations had discovered his identity. They were coming down to St. Kit's apparently to save Algy from his unscrupulous clutches, and to find that they were receiving a favour from the "unscrupulous outsider" would have been very disconcerting indeed to his lordship and Co.

Keeping ahead of the party, Harry Nameless led the way, winding through one leafy foot-path after another, deeper and deeper into the heart of the woods. But suddenly he stopped. A burly figure in tattered garb lurched into view from the thickets and stopped in the middle of the narrow path, and a husky voice ejaculated:

"Old on!"

CHAPTER 23.

The Fight in the Wood!

MR. WILLIAM HUGGINS—known more familiarly in the intimate circle of his friends as Bill 'Uggins—had been dozing under the trees in the middle of the wood. Mr. Huggins had his own reasons for taking his repose in a secluded spot. There were occasions when Mr. Huggins hated publicity. This was one of them. In one of Mr. Huggins' pockets was a stolen fowl, and over by Lyncroft a farmer was thirsting for Mr. Huggins' blood. In another of his pockets was a lady's purse, and a flustered lady was even at that moment telling a tale of woe at Wick Police Station. In that lonely spot Mr. Huggins was about the last person anyone with a good coat to his back would have desired to meet. "Old on!" repeated Mr. Huggins.

The party held on. There was a faint shriek from Miss Cordelia and a stern sniff from Miss Georgina. Lord Westcourt set his lips hard. He had not even a cane with him, and under one of the ruffian's arms was a heavy, knobby stick which he slid down into his hand. A grin came over Bill Huggins' dirty, stubby face. Two elderly ladies and an old gentleman, evidently wealthy, had walked fairly into his hands—a rich prize for Mr. Huggins in the depths of the solitary wood. As the party stopped, Bill Huggins lurched towards them. Of the schoolboy Mr. Huggins took no notice at all.

"Arternoon, ladies and gents," said Mr. Huggins humorously: "Fancy meetin' you 'ere. Wot?"

"Good-afternoon!" said Lord Westcourt, with cold politeness.

Perhaps his lordship was a believer in the soft answer which turneth away wrath. But Mr. Huggins was on the warpath.

There was evidently sufficient cash about this party to keep him going for weeks, if he could get it into his stubby hands—and he had no

doubt on that point. He was prepared to rob his lordship and Co. with as much violence as was necessary for the purpose, and then make "tracks" for the next county without delay—there to enjoy life in his own happy way till the supply ran out.

"P'raps you wouldn't mind 'elping a poor cove on his way," said the tramp.

"Give him a shilling, Edward!" said Miss Cordelia faintly.

"I'm afeared that a bob wouldn't see me through, mum," grinned Mr. Huggins. "I'm going to trouble you for hany loose cash you 'ave about you, likewise your watches and rings. No objection, I 'ope?"

Mr. Huggins flourished his knobby stick as a hint of what would happen if objections were raised.

Harry Nameless set his teeth.

The hulking ruffian was a formidable fellow to tackle, and it was for his lordship to decide whether he would resist the robbery. But if there was resistance, it was quite certain that the St. Kit's junior would not be left out of the tussle.

Lord Westcourt set his teeth.

"Keep behind me, Cordelia, Georgina," he said in a low voice, and he made a step towards the tramp and raised his hand. "Now, you rascal, stand out of my path at once! Do you hear?"

The ruffian eyed him evilly.

His lordship had a commanding manner, but the spot was solitary, and he was at the mercy of the footpad.

"You torkin' to me?" demanded Mr. Huggins.

"Yes. Stand aside."

"Are you goin' to 'and over your spondulics, you ole fool?" was Mr. Huggins' reply. "'Cause if you ain't I'll crack your 'ead in as soon as look at yer!"

"I will not give you a sixpence," said his lordship grimly. "But I will see that you are sent to prison for this, you scoundrel!"

"That's enough!"

The ruffian made a spring towards the old gentleman, whirling up the bludgeon. Lord Westcourt sprang back with an activity beyond his years, and eluded the slash of the weapon, and then, closing in quickly, he struck hard at the ruffian's face.

Bill Huggins gave a howl as he received a hard set of knuckles full upon his nose. But the blow hardly made him stagger. The next moment the slim old gentleman was in his powerful grasp, and he crumpled up like a reed.

Loud shrieks rang out from Miss Cordelia and Miss Georgina as Lord Westcourt went with a crash into the grass, the ruffian sprawling over him. One heavy knee was jammed on his lordship's chest, and the bludgeon whirled up again in the ruffian's hand.

"Now then—"

Before the blow could fall Harry Nameless rushed in.

He threw his arms round the tramp's neck and dragged him by main force from his victim and rolled in the grass with him.

The bludgeon fell from the ruffian's hand, and he fastened his grasp savagely on the schoolboy.

"By gum! I'll smash yer!" he panted.

Shriek after shriek rose from the two terrified women.

Lord Westcourt lay gasping in the grass, dazed and dizzy, hardly knowing now what was happening.

Harry Nameless was rolling over with the ruffian, fighting like a tiger.

Boy as he was, Harry was strong and sinewy, no match for the big ruffian, but a dangerous adversary all the same. Harry had roughed it in his early days at South Cove among the sailors and longshoremen; his muscles were like steel and his courage dauntless. He planted one fierce blow right in Mr. Huggins' eye, which half-blinded the ruffian, but he had no time for a second. He was struggling, wrestling, twisting, rolling over in a fight that was like the fierce scrambling of wild cats.

The schoolboy went under at last, the ruffian sprawling over him and raining blows, but he twisted out like an eel, dazed but undaunted, and renewed the fight. A fierce drive that caught Mr. Huggins behind the ear laid him gasping in the grass, and in a flash Harry threw himself upon him.

His knee jammed down on the ruffian and both his fists came crashing down in the tramp's face, jamming his head hard on the earth beneath. Bill Huggins howled like a wild animal, and his sinewy arms closed round the schoolboy in a savage hug like that of a bear.

"Now I got yer!" he panted.

Harry Nameless fought on, fiercely savagely. But the tramp had the advantage now, though the junior would not yield an inch.

But his lordship had staggered up now, breathless, dazed, but trying to pull himself together. He blinked at the struggling pair, while shriek on shriek rang through the wood from the two old ladies. The bludgeon dropped by the tramp lay almost at his feet.

Lord Westcourt stooped and clutched it and tottered towards the two combatants.

Harry was underneath again, and a heavy, savage fist was crashing down on him with stunning force.

Thud!

With all his remaining strength Lord Westcourt brought the bludgeon down on the tramp's head.

Bill Huggins gave a sharp cry and a groan and rolled off his victim. He dropped into the grass like a log.

He was stunned.

"Oh, gad!" gasped his lordship, reeling against a tree. "Oh, gad!"

Shriek, shriek, shriek!

"Compose yourselves, please," stammered his

lordship. "The danger is over—the scoundrel is stunned, I think. Bless my soul, I—I—I feel—extremely upset. Dear me!"

"The poor boy is hurt!" exclaimed Miss Cordella.

Bill Huggins still lay motionless. It was likely to be some time before he recovered from that crashing blow on the head.

Harry Nameless sat up dazedly.

There were bruises all over his body and several on his face, and a thin stream of crimson oozed from under his dark hair.

He felt utterly dazed and exhausted, and his senses were swimming.

Miss Cordella knelt by his side and supported him.

"My dear, brave, good boy!" she stammered. "You are hurt—"

"N-n-not much!" gasped Harry. "I—I—I'm all right, ma'am."

"A very, very brave lad," said the severe Miss Georgina with stern approval. "You have acted like a hero, my dear boy."

"By gad!" spluttered his lordship, detaching himself from the tree at last. "By gad! A credit to my old school, by gad—a braver lad I never saw—and, by gad, you must have some muscle, my boy, to put up a fight like that against that hulking ruffian! Are you hurt much?"

"N-no!" gasped Harry.

He gained his feet with an effort and pulled himself together.

"You—you had better get on," he panted, "before he comes to."

"Yes, begad!" said his lordship. "Come on, take my arm, my dear Cordella, you are overcome. Come on at once, Georgina. We will—hem—send the police to look for that scoundrel when we—oh dear!—get to the school. Let us lose no time—hem!"

Leaving Mr. William Huggins still stretched in the grass, the party hurried on.

There was still half a mile before them of winding footpaths, and it was necessary to hurry. Mr. Huggins was likely to prove dangerous if they were within his range when he came to his senses.

The flustered trio were glad enough when the open Wickle road lay before them at last and the wood was left behind.

The grey old tower of St. Kit's was now visible in the distance above the oaks.

Harry Nameless stopped.

"You know the way now, sir," he said.

"But you are coming on to the school—"

"I—I'll trot down to the village, sir, and tell them at the police-station about that footpad," stammered Harry. "They may be in time to catch him."

"A very good idea," said his lordship approvingly; "but I want to see you again before I leave the school. What is your name, my boy?"

Harry did not seem to hear that question.

He raised his cap to the ladies and started for Wicke at a run.

"Begad! I am feeling very upset," said his lordship. "The boy seems in a hurry—he hasn't told me his name! Let us go on. I—I shall be very glad to sit down. I suppose you feel the same, my dears!"

And Lord Westcourt and his sisters walked on towards St. Kit's, Harry Nameless disappearing in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER 24.

Some Excitement!

IT'S the pater! Begad! What's happened?"

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger came sprinting across the quadrangle, his eyeglasses streaming at the end of his cord.

A number of St. Kit's fellows gathered round as the visitors came in at the gateway.

The dishevelled looks of Lord Westcourt, who was well known at St. Kit's, attracted surprised attention at once.

His lordship was a governor of the school, a peer of the realm, and several other important things; and, as a rule, his looks and manner had all the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Now he looked as if he had had a fight with a tramp—as, indeed, he had; a most unusual experience for the stately old gentleman.

With a flustered elderly lady leaning on either arm, his lordship sailed into the quadrangle, and was at once the cynosure of all eyes. Old Coote, the porter, fairly blinked at him. Old Coote had never seen a peer of the realm before with his collar torn out, his hat knocked in, and his trousers rumpled and dusty. Old Coote was rather shocked at the sight, and wondered whether the peer of the realm had been drinking.

"Father!" stammered Algernon Aubrey. "Auntie! Oh, dear! Has anythin' happened?"

"Yes, Algernon."

"Car busted?" asked Algy.

"The car broke down, Algernon. Did you learn that offensive expression—busted—from your peculiar new friend?" asked Aunt Georgina, fixing her tortoiseshell eyeglasses on her nephew.

"My dear auntie—"

"Come along, my dears," said Lord Westcourt; "I am extremely fatigued. I shall really be glad of a cup of tea. I will speak to you presently, Algernon."

"Yaas, dad."

The Head was on the steps of the School House when the old gentleman and the two old ladies arrived there. Mr. Rawlings, the master of the Fourth, and Mr. Tulke, of the Fifth, hovered in the offing. Oliphant and Wake of the Sixth, fresh in from the football match,

gazed on from a respectful distance. Hilton of the Fifth peered over the banisters. From every available corner juniors looked on. There was evidently a deep and general interest in St. Leger's people. Catesby of the Fourth remarked that his lordship, at that moment, was as good as a circus.

Carton & Co. came out of the Common-room to look on; Lickie and Stubbs and another crowd emerged from the Glory Hole. Even when he was "on his legs" in the House of Lords the Earl of Westcourt never had such an attentive audience. Dr. Chenies was blinking at him—it was impossible for even the stately old Head to avoid looking surprised. No governor of the school had ever arrived at St. Kit's before with his collar hanging on a single stud.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "What—what—what— There has been an accident?"

"An outrage, sir!" said his lordship. "My car broke down, and I had to walk through the wood—and we were attacked—"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Attacked by a desperate ruffian, sir—a footpad—a—an unspeakable ruffian of—of—the most brutal nature, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I have been handled, sir—actually handled, sir—by a footpad, and considerably upset!" gasped his lordship. "My sisters have been frightened—alarmed—terrified! I should have been seriously injured—probably killed—but for the courage of a brave lad who was showing us the way through the wood—oh, dear!"

"Pray come in at once," said the Head. "You are in need of rest. Pray come with me—"

The agitated party faded into the house.

They left an excited crowd buzzing behind them when they disappeared from sight.

Aunt Cordelia and Aunt Georgina were taken charge of by the Head's wife, to be soothed, restored, and put to rights. In their agitation they had almost forgotten the purpose of their visit to St. Kit's—certainly they were not wasting much thought upon the nameless schoolboy just then. Mrs. Chenies received an agitated account of the terrific happenings in the wood—or, rather, she received two agitated accounts at the same time, and patiently tried to make head and tail of them. In the Head's study his lordship—after having set himself in order in a more private apartment—gave Dr. Chenies another agitated account. Then he requested the use of the Head's telephone. In order to give the police-station in Wicke an account in its turn.

By that time all St. Kit's was buzzing with the story of the adventure. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was in a state of great excitement. There was much speculation on all sides as to the identity of the heroic youth who had helped his lordship in the hour of danger. It was known that he was a St. Kit's junior—but his

name was not known. It was impossible to guess which fellow it was, for there were thirty or forty juniors out of gates that sunny half-holiday, and it might have been any one of them; but there was keen interest in the subject.

CHAPTER 25.

Bunny Obliges!

BUNNY BOOTLES stopped, stared, and sniffed.

Bunny was surprised—Bunny was shocked—and Bunny was disgusted. Labouring under all those feelings at once, it was no wonder that Bunny sniffed.

Bunny was sitting on a grassy bank by the side of Wickel Lane when Harry Nameless came along—fresh from his combat in the wood. Bunny sat up and regarded him. Bunny was in a disappointed mood. Not a single fellow at St. Kit's had condescended to take any note of Bunny's tale that his uncle had promised to send him a pound, the said pound being freely offered by Bunny as security for a present loan. The security, somehow, did not seem good enough. Algernon Aubrey, generally a good resource when Bunny was hard-up, had failed him, being too worried that afternoon about his people to give Bunny any attention beyond a drive of his boot.

So the fat and fatuous Bunny was cross that afternoon, and feeling inclined to kick somebody. Probably he would have sniffed anyhow at the sight of the nameless schoolboy; but in these circumstances his sniff was loud, prolonged, and scornful.

Harry paused and looked at him.

The junior was feeling severely the effects of his fight with the tramp in the wood. He was torn, dishevelled, dusty, and he was aching all over from Bill Huggins' hefty blows. He had hurried away from Lord Westcourt towards the village, simply to escape from the party with his identity undiscovered—to give information to the police of the outrage was little more than a pretext. He was feeling greatly in need of rest and quiet. But it had been necessary to get away, and certainly he did not intend to get back to St. Kit's until he was assured that his lordship had left. The affair in the wood had made an encounter more awkward than ever.

Sniff! sniff! came from Bunny Bootles.

"Hallo, Nameless! Been through a mangle?" he asked.

"I feel a little like it," answered Harry.

"You look like it!"

"Dash it all! Am I very untidy?" asked Harry.

It occurred to him that it would be as well to brush down a little more before entering the village.

"You might give me a brush-down," he remarked.

"What have you been up to?" asked Bunny.

"Scrap," said Harry briefly.

"Carton again?"

"No—no. A tramp in the wood."

"Shouldn't have thought a tramp would go for you!" grinned Bunny Bootles. "They say dog don't eat dog, you know!"

Harry Nameless gave the fat junior a quiet look.

"Do you want me to give you a thick ear, Bunny?" he asked.

"Eh? No!" Bunny jumped up in alarm.

"Here, you keep off!"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, then, you fat duffer!"

"Did the tramp rob you?" asked Bunny.

"No. I've nothing to be robbed of. He wanted to rob somebody else."

"You chipped in?" asked Bunny, opening his eyes.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"No reason that you'd understand, probably," answered Harry Nameless dryly. "I say—"

He paused.

He was extremely desirous of keeping the part he had played in the affair from the knowledge of Algy's people. To place them under an obligation when they had come down to the school to denounce him, as it were, was something like heaping coals of fire on their heads, and he did not want to do that. Unjustly as he felt he was treated, he was very wishful of sparing the feelings of Algy's people for Algy's sake. Parted as the chums were, Harry Nameless was not likely to forget the friendship Algy had shown to him on his first coming to St. Kit's, or how much easier Algy's kindness had made his first days at the big public school. His only desire was to keep clear of Algy's people; certainly not to make them feel awkward or humiliated.

"Look here, Bootles!" he said. "A tramp has tried to rob Lord Westcourt in Lyncroft Wood."

"Pshaw!"

"I was going to the police-station at Wickel to tell them. The tramp's still in the wood; he was stunned. Lord Westcourt knocked him on the head."

"Great Scott!"

"Will you go to the police-station and tell them?"

"Why?"

"I—I'd rather not go," said Harry. "I—I'm going for a ramble, and if you'd go, Bootles—"

Bunny Bootles' fat face brightened. He was very willing to go—quite willing to do anything that would mix him up with such an exciting affair. Anything in the nature of limelight—even of reflected limelight—was welcome to Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

"Right, old top!" he said. "I'll go."

"Tell them the tramp is still in the wood at the cross-paths near the dead elm, and if they're quick they may find him before he clears off."

"Right-ho! But, I say! Why don't you want to go, though?" asked Bunny curiously.

"If you were mixed up in the scrap I dare say the old coddler would stand you a quid or so if you gave him a hint."

Harry laughed.

"Possibly," he said. "But I don't want Lord Westcourt to stand me a quid, Bunny!"

"You're an ass, then!" said Bunny sententiously. "A quid is a quid. I wish he'd offer me a quid. Oh, I catch on!" Bunny grinned. "Old Westcourt's sent you to tell the bobbies, and you're in a hurry to get back to St. Kit's before he goes. How much do you think he will shell out?"

"I'm not going back to St. Kit's now."

"But I say, old Westcourt won't stay long. You'll miss your chance."

"I'm willing to miss it."

"Blessed if I understand you, Nameless! You haven't got such a thumpin' lot of money that you can turn up your nose at a quid!"

"That's true enough," assented Harry. "Cut along to the station now, will you, Bunny?"

"I don't quite see why you don't want to go, though," said Bunny inquisitively. "You're not pulling my leg, are you? Not stuffin' me?"

"Of course not!"

"No; I've noticed you don't tell whoppers," said Bunny, with a nod. "I expected you'd be an awful liar, you know, considering how you were brought up, but you ain't. I say! What are you looking waxy for?"

Harry burst into a laugh. It was not much use being angry with the egregious Bunny. Bunny did not seem to be aware of anything offensive in his valuable observations.

"Cut off!" said Harry.

"But you haven't told me yet why you don't want to go to the bobby-station." Bunny was inquisitive.

"I'd rather keep clear of the business," said Harry impatiently. "For goodness' sake, cut off, Bunny, and don't talk about this at St. Kit's till Lord Westcourt is gone—not at all, in fact!"

"Blessed if I understand you at all!" confessed Bunny. "If a man were down on me, and I helped him in a fight, I'd jolly well rub it in and make him jolly well ashamed of himself! Why, you could make him feel awful uncomfortable!"

"Will you cut off, Bunny?"

"Oh, all right! I think you're an ass!" said Bunny. "You're not a very intelligent chap, Nameless! Well, I'm off!"

And Bunny Bootles rolled off at last.

Harry Nameless turned out of the road into a lane that led towards Wicke Heath, and on the wide, open heath he lay down to rest in the grass. He was feeling badly in need of a rest, and he was very glad to be relieved of his task by Bunny Bootles. If he had gone personally to the police-station he would have had to give his name, and his name could scarcely have failed to be reported to Lord Westcourt, who would naturally want to know who his rescuer was. Now it looked as if his whole connection with the affair would remain unknown to his lordship—a consummation devoutly to be wished from Harry's point of view.

Meanwhile, Bunny rolled into Wicke, and made straight for the little village police-station.

The police force of Wicke, consisting of one plump constable, was smoking a pipe on the steps when Bunny arrived.

P.-c. Bandy gave ear to Bunny Bootles' information with a rather dubious, not to say incredulous, expression on his fat face.

"You stuffin, Master Bootles?" he asked suspiciously.

Just then the ringing of the telephone-bell called Mr. Bandy into the station, and he left Bunny to himself.

He came out in a few minutes with his helmet and truncheon on and started down the street at a great rate.

Bunny stared after him.

"I say, Mr. Bandy!" he shouted.

"It's all right, Master Bootles," answered Mr. Bandy; "I've just 'card it from the school."

He hurried on, and called to a friend who was walking a straw outside the Red Cow. Mr. Bandy felt that help might be required in dealing with a tramp who was of so desperate a character as to have laid hands on a peer of the realm. Mr. Bandy and his friend hurried away together, and lost no time in getting into Lyncroft Wood, and they reached the cross-paths by the dead elm in a state of breathlessness. There they found many signs of the conflict in trampled footprints and a spot or two of crimson on the grass. But, to their great disappointment, they did not find Mr. William Huggins.

That gentleman, with a headache and a temper that was nothing short of Hunnish, was already a mile away, tramping for his life, possibly reflecting that honesty was, after all, the best policy.

CHAPTER 26.

Called Over the Coals!

"ALGERNON!"
Three voices pronounced that name at once as the dandy of St. Kit's came into the visitors' room, with a sinking heart, to interview his people.

Lord Westcourt was quiet and severe. Aunt Georgina was more severe, but less quiet. Aunt Cordella had an expression that was more of sorrow than of anger.

But all three were what would have been described in the language of the St. Kit's Fourth as "stuffy" or "frumptious." There was trouble in the air.

"Now, Algernon——"

"Now——"

"Yaas?" said Algernon.

"You may sit down, Algernon," said his lordship.

Algy sat down.

"Your aunts and I," said Lord Westcourt, "have come down specially to the school to see you, Algernon!"

"Specially!" said Aunt Cordella.

"Particularly!" said Aunt Georgina.

Algernon Aubrey suppressed a groan.

"It's awfully kind of you!" he said. "I feel that—enormously. I—I hope you are feelin' all right, after your rather rotten experience in the wood?"

"Allow me to speak, Algernon," said Lord Westcourt.

"Oh, certainly!"

"It appears that you have made friends with a—a certain youth, a boy who has come to this school on a Foundation scholarship?"

"Yaas."

"He has no name, his parents are unknown, he was brought up among rough sailors and fishermen?"

"I—I believe so."

"On the occasion when your uncle, Colonel Wilmot, came to see you he found this boy in your study—"

"He's my study-mate."

"The boy had been tarred and feathered, I understand, by contemptuous schoolfellows," said Aunt Georgina.

"Nothin' of the sort, auntie. Some rotters ragged him for a rotten lark, because Uncle Wilmot was comin'—"

"Some what, Algernon?"

"Rotters, auntie," said Algernon Aubrey innocently.

"What a word! Did you learn that offensive word from this boy Nameless?"

"Nunno!"

"I fear, Algernon, that you must have done so."

"Really, auntie—"

"Now, Algernon, your Uncle Wilmot was very unfavourably impressed with this boy Nameless," resumed his lordship.

"He only saw him for a few minutes, dad, tied to a chair, and lookin' awfully mucked up owin' to those rotters—ahem—"

"Why are his schoolfellows prejudiced against him if there is nothing wrong with the boy?"

"It's only a few snobs, father."

"Algernon, you are of too easy-going a disposition. You are liable to be victimised by any unscrupulous boy. I am surprised—really surprised at Dr. Chenies admitting the boy here. Doubtless he was in an awkward position, as the—person had some legal rights founded upon an—ah—obsolete scholarship. Now, Algernon, it is quite possible that this boy may be quite—quite a nice person in his own class, but—but that does not make him a suitable associate for you."

"But, dad—"

"Algernon is growing argumentative," remarked Aunt Georgina. "I fear that this is due to the influence of a bad associate."

"Oh dear! I say—"

"I wish to be just," said Lord Westcourt ponderously. "My desire is to be strictly just. The desire of your aunts, Algernon, is to be strictly just. We will see this boy."

"By all means," said Aunt Cordelia.

"We will see him," said Aunt Georgina grimly.

"Call him here, Algernon."

Algernon shifted uneasily.

"I—I'm afraid he won't come, dad."

"What?"

"How?"

"Indeed!"

"He—he's awfully hurt at bein' treated like this," said Algernon, his face crimsoning. "He's in the Form-room now, workin'—he's swottin' for an exam, you know. He—he's been tryin' to drop my acquaintance—"

"Very proper on his part, since he knows that your relatives do not approve of your friendship with him," said Aunt Georgina.

"I presume he will come here when he knows it is my wish," said Lord Westcourt in his most stately manner. "He may be aware that I am a governor of the school."

"I—I hope so, father. But—but perhaps you'd like to step into the Form-room and catch him?" suggested Algy. "I—I think he's rather—rather shy, and—and Uncle Wilmot hurt his feelin's, you know. He's a very sensitive chap."

Lord Westcourt rose.

"We will proceed to the Form-room," he said with great dignity. "Since this—ah—young person will not deign to come to us, we will—ah—go to him. Certainly we must see him."

"Undoubtedly!" said Aunt Georgina.

"Yaas. This way," said Algy.

Poor Algy's heart was sinking yet lower as he led the way to the Fourth Form-room. Having left Harry Nameless there "awotting" for the afternoon, Algy fully expected to find him there still. But he was no longer expecting Harry to make a favourable impression upon his relations. Evidently, there was a very strong prejudice to overcome.

The Form-room was empty.

Algernon Aubrey blinked round it in surprise and dismay. This was worse than ever. It looked as if the nameless schoolboy was actually "dodging" a meeting with his lordship, as indeed he was. The august relatives were now likely to attribute that simply to pride or sensitiveness. A guilty conscience seemed more probable to them.

"Well, where is the boy?" asked his lordship.

"He—he—he isn't here!" babbled Algernon.

"Where is he, then?"

"I—I told him I was goin' to bring you in here," said Algernon Aubrey wretchedly. "I—I suppose he—he—he cleared off!"

"To avoid us?" exclaimed Aunt Georgina in an awful voice.

"Perhaps—perhaps he's just round the corner somewhere," gasped Algy. "I—I—I'll look for him."

"We will return to the visitors' room," said Lord Westcourt with intensified dignity. "We will await you there, Algernon."

"Yaas, father."

"Bring the boy with you, if he is still within the school. If he has deliberately gone out of gates to avoid us, I shall know what to think."

"Oh, begad!"

The old gentleman and the two old ladies paraded solemnly back to the visitors'-room, what time Algernon Aubrey rushed to and fro, in great dismay, inquiring after the missing junior.

But his inquiries failed to unearth Harry Nameless.

It was with a heavy heart that the dandy of the Fourth repaired to the visitors'-room at last with the news that Harry Nameless could not be found.

His statement was received in chilling silence. "The boy is deliberately avoiding us," said Aunt Georgina, breaking the painful stillness at last.

"He knew we were coming, Algernon?"

"Yaas, father."

"You told him you would bring us to see him?"

"Ya-a-as."

"Then there is no doubt whatever that he is intentionally avoiding facing us."

"You—you see—" stammered Algy.

"I see only too clearly," interrupted Lord Westcourt icily. "You may go, Algernon. I shall now express my views to the Head."

"Oh dear!"

Algernon Aubrey almost limped away.

He had looked forward with dread and misgiving to this afternoon, but he had not expected it to be quite so bad as this. He limped away with a weebegone look that made Carton & Co. chortle when they sighted him in the passage.

CHAPTER 27.

His Lordship is Not Pleased!

Lord Westcourt was gone.

His lordship's interview with the Head had been short and not particularly sweet.

The old gentleman was in a state of annoyance, and he had a feeling that he had been treated with something like disrespect, or, at least, negligence.

He had come down to St. Kit's specially that afternoon to lecture his son on the subject of forming thoughtless and reckless friendships, and to see the nameless schoolboy, and ascertain exactly what sort of a fellow he was. His lordship desired to be just.

And he had not seen the boy at St. Kit's.

He had taken it for granted that the boy would be at his beck and call as it were. A peer of the realm, who was also a governor of the school, did not consider it necessary to make a special appointment in advance when he wanted a few words with a fag in the Fourth Form.

That was natural enough. It was also natural that a junior not under detention should choose to spend his half-holiday out of gates. But that, though natural, was exasperating in the circumstances.

As Lord Westcourt explained to the Head, he

was a busy man. His duties in the "House" made it impossible for him to come down to the school again for some time. It is barely possible, too, that grateful as Lord Westcourt must have felt to his two elder sisters for their affectionate interest in his son Algy, he did not wholly enjoy excursions accompanied by both of them at once, especially Georgina.

Lord Westcourt was a peer. He sat in the House of Peers. He had held important appointments. But to Georgina he was still her younger brother Edward, whom she was a little doubtful about trusting out of her sight.

This was very kind and affectionate of Miss Georgina St. Leger. But it caused a mingling of feelings in his lordship's breast, not all of them of a satisfactory nature.

Certainly he was not anxious to repeat that family visit. Moreover, the episode of the tramp in the wood had upset his nerves a little and made him irritable. In that state of mind he was inclined to take the darkest possible view of the conduct of Harry Nameless. The fact that the Head of St. Kit's seemed to entertain a rather high opinion of the nameless schoolboy somehow irritated his lordship further. He had a high opinion of Dr. Chenies as a scholar and a headmaster; of the Head's knowledge of the world he had not a very high opinion. He thought it probable that the amiable old Head might be deceived quite easily.

"The boy has deliberately avoided meeting my son's relatives," said his lordship in the Head's study. "Knowing I was coming, he left the school, not by chance, but deliberately."

"But—" murmured the Head.

"I have the worst possible impression of the boy, Dr. Chenies. I cannot say I am pleased at his admission to St. Kit's."

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"Every investigation was made, Lord Westcourt," he answered with a touch of loftiness. "The boy was poor, and brought up in poor surroundings, but his record was spotless."

"Still—"

"It is true that his origin is—ah—obscure. But Mr. Carew, an old St. Kit's man, answers for him. In fact, taught him most that he knows, and helped him prepare for the Foundation examination."

"I remember Carew; he was here in my time," said Lord Westcourt. "A kind-hearted fellow, and no judge of character."

"Hem! But—"

"I fear, Dr. Chenies, that this boy, this—this Nameless—what a very extraordinary appellation!—I really fear that he may be quite unsuitable to associate with St. Kit's boys. His deliberate avoidance of me gives me that disagreeable impression, at least."

"The boy may have felt shy—awkward—"

"Boys suitable to associate with my son do not feel shy or awkward. Far be it from me to criticise your administration of the school, Dr. Chenies," said his lordship, apparently unconscious of the fact that he had been criticis-

ing it fairly freely. "But with regard to my own son—"

"Oh, certainly!"

"I prefer that he should see nothing of this boy, who ekuks away to avoid seeing my son's relatives."

"Very good," said the Head quietly, "your wishes shall certainly be met. I will see that Nameless does not occupy the same study."

"Chance meetings in the Form-room and about the school, of course, can do no great harm. But intimate association—I set my face very seriously against that, Dr. Chenies."

"I will see that your wishes are observed, Lord Westcourt."

"Very good!"

"On another occasion I will give the boy instructions to remain within gates—"

"I fear that I shall be unable to visit the school for some time to come. My duties in the House—"

"Yes, yes, no doubt. I may mention that the boy's Form-master has a high opinion of him," said the Head.

"I am glad to hear it." His lordship did not look glad, however. "I desire to be just. I only request that my own son may be relieved from—ah—contact with this—this young person from—from, in fact, possible contamination. He made a bad impression upon my brother-in-law, Colonel Wilmot, whose judgment I respect greatly. But I think we understand one another."

"Oh, quite so, quite so!" said the Head, with the corner of his eye on the clock.

Lord Westcourt rose.

"One other matter, Dr. Chenies. You are aware that some lad belonging to St. Kit's acted very gallantly when I was—ah—attacked by a scoundrel in the wood to-day. I should like my—ah—thanks to be conveyed to that boy. I should like to know his name. His conduct was very creditable to the school. Perhaps you would ascertain—"

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "I will inquire into the matter, and ascertain which of the boys had the happiness to be of service to you."

And so his lordship took his leave, greatly dissatisfied with the result of his visit to St. Kit's.

That dissatisfaction was laid to the account of Harry Nameless, and Lord Westcourt took away a very bad impression of that hapless youth in consequence.

So did Algy's aunts, especially Georgina.

Stumson had long ago arrived with the car, repaired. Lord Westcourt and his sisters entered the car, perhaps to the relief of the Head—certainly to the relief of Algernon Aubrey.

Algy was an affectionate son and an affectionate nephew. But there were trials that were hard to bear, and this visit was one of them.

Affectionate youth as he was, Algernon Aubrey could not help experiencing a feeling of relief when the car glided out of the gates of St. Kit's.

CHAPTER 28.

Bunny Has a Brain-Wave!

HARRY NAMELESS went into the Hall to tea after call-over, and for once Algernon Aubrey omitted to ask him to come up to the study. Although, since Colonel Wilmot's visit, Harry had refused steadfastly to enter Study No. 5, Algy had never omitted to press him to do so, especially at tea-time. But on this occasion Algy was feeling sore and worried, and he let the nameless schoolboy have his own way without remark.

Harry found himself the centre of a great deal of interested observation at the Fourth Form table.

Not half the Fourth were there; most of the juniors had tea in their studies. It was generally a tightness of funds that drove them to the common table in the hall. But the fellows who happened to be there all looked at Harry with great interest. His "cool cheek," as they considered it, in going out of gates when a governor of the school wanted to see him had been talked of up and down the Fourth, and it elicited great admiration for the nameless schoolboy's nerve.

After tea a number of the Fourth gathered round Harry Nameless in the passage, and marched him off to the Glory Hole, there to give a full account of his daring.

Harry gave a modest account enough. Algernon Aubrey sauntered in while he was speaking to his very attentive audience, and Carton & Co. also dropped in.

"Hallo, here's old Oliphant!" said Catesby.

The captain of St. Kit's came into the Glory Hole, eyed rather suspiciously by the juniors.

The Glory Hole was their own special domain, where seniors had no admittance. Even prefects were not supposed to venture into that sacred apartment save on very special occasions. Carsdale of the Sixth had once been mobbed there for breaking the unwritten law. Oliphant, the popular captain of the school, was too much liked for his presence to be objected to anywhere. Still, the fags eyed even Oliphant suspiciously. In the Glory Hole even Oliphant's authority carried less weight than elsewhere.

"I'm looking for a fellow," said Oliphant amiably. "The Head's asked me to find the kid who pitched into a tramp to-day in Lyncroft Wood. Is he here?"

No answer.

Was there, as a matter of fact, but he did not care to speak. Harry Nameless fervently hoped that his connection with that affair would never come to light.

"Not here?" asked Oliphant, looking round. "It's dashed queer. I've asked a horde of fags, and nobody seems to be the chap. Lord Westcourt is certain that it was a St. Kit's fellow. I suppose I've got to go on huntin'. Dashed bore."

And the St. Kit's captain went out.

"Begad!" remarked Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "I want to find that chap, too. I'm

awfully obliged to him for savin' my pater from bein' knocked on the napper. Doesn't anybody know who it was?"

"Blessed if I do," said Carton. "I dare say it's a lot exaggerated, and there wasn't much in it."

"Yaas, that's just what you would think, dear boy," said Algy. And he walked out of the Glory Hole to join in the search for the missing hero.

Harry Nameless escaped from the crowd as soon as he could, and looked for Bunny Bootles. Bunny was the only fellow who knew of his connection with the affair in Lyncroft Wood, and Harry was anxious to secure the fat junior's silence. He found Bunny in the Fourth Form passage, just leaving Study No. 5, after finishing up Algy's supplies for tea.

Bunny greeted him with a grin.

"I say, I've been hearing a lot about you," he said. "His ribs—I mean Algy's pater, you know—was waxy about your being out of gates."

"I'm afraid so," said Harry.

"And he met you and doesn't know it," chuckled Bunny. "Awfully queer, ain't it, I say, they're inquiring for the chap who helped old Tin-ribs in the wood. No end of kudos. I suppose you're going to be called up before the Form and complimented, and so on. That's what you've been thinking of, isn't it?"

"No," said Harry quietly. "You didn't mention my name at the police-station, Bunny?"

"Never thought of it. Besides, I didn't have a chance. Old Tin-ribs telephoned from here, and interrupted when I was telling the bobby."

"Good! I want you not to mention me at all, Bunny."

Bunny winked a fat wink.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"There isn't any game."

"Oh, come off!" said Bunny.

"Nothing of the sort," said Harry patiently. "I simply don't want to be talked of in connection with the affair."

"Do you mean to say you're not going to own up, and you're going to keep it dark about helping old Tin-ribs?" he ejaculated.

"Yes."

"I don't catch on. I'd rather you told me what the game was," said Bunny suspiciously.

Harry Nameless laughed. The fat junior knew his motives, as a matter of fact, but did not believe in them in the least. Delicacy of that kind was an unknown quantity to the fat Bunny.

"Well, will you keep it dark, Bunny?" he asked. "Simply say nothing. Nobody knows you know anything about it, and you needn't say anything. The whole thing will be forgotten in a day or two."

"If it was me I wouldn't let it be forgotten in a hurry," said Bunny. "Still, I don't mind keeping it dark if it comes to that. No bisney of mine to go around blowing your trumpet, is it?"

"Exactly!" said Harry, relieved.

"In fact," said Bunny, with another wink. "I

rather think I catch on. It wasn't you at all."

"If it was you you'd own up fast enough and bag the glory," said Bunny, wagging his head sagely. "I know. You can't spoof me, you know. I'm pretty wide."

"Why, you young ass—" began Harry indignantly.

Bunny wagged a fat forefinger at him reprovingly.

"Come off!" he said. "It wasn't you. Old Tin-ribs asked you to go to the bobby-station all right, same as you asked me. But it was another fellow in the wood. I see that now. I wonder I didn't tumble before. Do you know who it was all the time, Nameless?"

Harry stared at him.

Evidently the fat youth was satisfied with the new theory that had entered his powerful brain. He simply couldn't imagine any fellow who had a chance of getting into the limelight would prefer to blush unseen.

"Well," said Harry, laughing, "I don't mind what you think about it, Bunny, so long as you don't say it was I."

"Not likely to say so when I know it wasn't," retorted Bunny. "The queer thing is, who was it? Got any idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to bubble at, Nameless. My idea is that it wasn't a St. Kit's chap at all, or he'd have spoken up before now," said Bunny. "Old Tin-ribs was mistaken in thinking it was a St. Kit's chap. What?"

"Let it go at that, if you like," said Harry.

"Might have been me, for all you know," said Bunny.

"Eh?"

"Well, I was out of gates," said Bunny argumentatively, "and I think my boundless pluck is pretty well known—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you cackle at me, you rotter, I'll—"

Harry Nameless walked away, laughing. He went to the Form-room to put in some time with P. Virgilius Maro before prep. Bunny Bootles sat in the window-seat, at the end of the Fourth Form passage, and thought.

He thought deeply.

Bunny wasn't much given to thinking, but now he was thinking hard, with a deep wrinkle on his fat brow. There was a peculiar gleam in his little round eyes, and several times he grinned gleefully. Great thoughts were working in the fat brain of Cuthbert Archibald Bootles, and the outcome of that "big think" was to be quite surprising.

CHAPTER 29.

The Missing Hero!

THE following day there was considerable discussion and speculation at St. Kit's—on one topic.

That topic was the missing hero! A St. Kit's fellow—unknown—had chipped in

to rescue a governor of the school from a tramp's savage attack. And that St. Kit's fellow couldn't be discovered.

It was a remarkable state of affairs.

Lord Westcourt was grateful, his sisters were grateful, and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger was grateful, and ready to testify his gratitude for the valuable service rendered to his pater.

With so much gratitude going begging, so to speak, it was extremely odd that there should be no claimant.

Moreover, as Catesby of the Fourth—a very keen youth—remarked, Lord Westcourt's gratitude was likely to take a solid and practical turn, if he found the proper recipient. A gold watch, Catesby thought, was the least his lordship could do, in the circumstances.

Catesby, indeed, expressed his regret that he had been watching the senior football match at the time. If only he had been out of the gates he would have been tempted to "put in" for the gratitude.

At Lord Westcourt's request, the Head was inquiring after the modest hero who was hiding his blushes in this unexpected way. And he had called on the Sixth Form prefects for assistance. The prefects had gone up and down, and round about, without discovering the hero.

"The chap's too modest to come forward," Algernon Aubrey observed. "Real heroes, you know, are modest. I'm awfully modest."

A remark which called forth a loud chortle from Algernon Aubrey's hearers.

Modesty carried to that extent was decidedly uncommon in the Lower School at St. Kit's.

An impression spread that his lordship had been mistaken, and that the gallant rescuer wasn't a St. Kit's fellow at all. Might even have been a Lyncroft cad, some of the fellows thought.

Harry Nameless heard the verdict, and was quite willing for any possible glory to be attributed to some unknown Lyncroft fellow.

An interview he had with the Head that morning made him all the more anxious that his part in the affair should not come to light. After morning lessons, Mr. Rawlings had told him that the Head wished to speak to him in his study, and Harry repaired thither. He found the Head as amiable and benevolent as usual; in fact, a little more so, but slightly hesitating in his manner, which was very unusual.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Harry.

Dr. Chenies coughed.

"Yes, I—I sent for you, Nameless," he said. "I have an er—a—ah—communication to make."

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly. He could guess that the Head's communication had some connection with the visit of Lord Westcourt the previous day.

The Head coughed again. He was feeling most uncomfortable.

"Pray understand, in the first place, Nameless, that I have no fault to find with you," he said.

"Thank you, sir!"

"You are aware that St. Leger's father came

down yesterday—he wished to see you. Unfortunately, you were out of gates."

"It was a half-holiday, sir."

"Quite so, quite so. You had every right to be out of gates. It was, however, rather unfortunate. His lordship wished specially to see you, and he—ah—has an impression that you were intentionally eluding an interview."

"That is correct, sir," said Harry.

"Eh?"

"I did not wish to see Lord Westcourt, sir," said Harry, flushing.

"Hem—hem! As Lord Westcourt is a governor of the school, Nameless, it would have been more respectful—"

"Lord Westcourt objects to my friendship with his son, sir," said Harry, his colour deepening. "As soon as I knew that, I told St. Leger we could no longer be friends. It was quite unnecessary for his lordship to speak to me on the subject. I have some pride, sir."

"Hem—hem! Quite so, my boy. I understand that you share St. Leger's study in the Fourth?"

"Not now, sir."

"Indeed! I was not aware—"

"I left the study, sir, after Colonel Wilmot's visit a week or two ago. As soon as I knew St. Leger's relations objected."

"I see. A very proper step on your part, Nameless," said the Head. "It shows a proper pride—very proper, indeed. What study do you occupy now?"

"None at present, sir. I work in the Form-room."

The Head regarded him rather curiously over his glasses.

"Ah! I must speak to Mr. Rawlings on that subject," he said. "It is—ahem!—then unnecessary for me to mention, Nameless, that your intimacy with St. Leger should cease?"

"Quite, sir. I have explained very clearly to St. Leger. He is a good, kind fellow, and—and—I—Harry's voice faltered a little—"I've never liked a fellow so much as I do Algy—I mean St. Leger. But I keep out of his way now all I can."

"Quite right, Nameless, quite right. Pray understand that I do not share Lord Westcourt's views in the least. But you know that I am bound to respect a parent's wishes. You may go, Nameless. By the way, your Form-master has spoken to me very highly of you, Nameless, and I have no doubt that you have—ah—a very useful and honourable career before you at St. Kit's."

So Harry Nameless left the Head's study rather pleased than otherwise, but almost passionately determined that Lord Westcourt should never know to whom he was under an obligation.

And the missing hero remained missing.

But not for long.

Bunny's brain-wave was about to produce its effect, to the astonishment of St. Kit's, and to the astonishment, most of all, of Harry Nameless.

CHAPTER 30.

Amazing!

BOOTLES!"

"Yes, sir?" said Bunny Bootles in an expiring voice.

Mr. Rawlings frowned.

Afternoon lessons were on in the Fourth Form-room, and Bunny Bootles was drawing some unusual attention to himself.

Bunny had let the morning pass, to give the missing hero a last chance, as it were, of turning up. He had not turned up, and Bunny felt safe. Babble of the Shell had proved to his own satisfaction, and many other fellows, that the missing hero wasn't within the walls of St. Kit's at all. So the fat and fatuous Bunny felt that the coast was clear—clear for the entrance of the unknown hero in all his glory.

Blissfully ignorant of the amazing thoughts working in Bunny's remarkable brain, Mr. Rawlings was only perplexed and annoyed by his conduct that afternoon. The fat junior was always as inattentive as he dared to be—now he was openly, almost flagrantly, inattentive. He leaned his head on his desk several times with a tired and suffering air, and when his Form-master sharply told him to sit up, he sat up with the look of a patient martyr.

All the Fourth began to take note of Bunny and his mysterious stunts, and wondered what was the matter with him.

The general opinion was that he was looking for trouble, and would undoubtedly find it. Mr. Rawlings was getting very restive.

Once more Bunny's elbows rested on his desk, and his head dropped into his fat hands for support, with an exhausted air. And then Mr. Rawlings thundered:

"Bootles!"

"Now he's goin' to catch it!" murmured Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "The silly ass is simply askin' for it!"

And the Fourth grinned in anticipation.

Mr. Rawlings came towards Bunny, thoughtfully picking up his cane on the way.

"Bootles," he said grimly, "you are always inattentive, always idle, and always obtuse. This afternoon you seem resolved to exhibit these qualities until I cane you. In order to save time, Bootles, I will cane you now. Hold out your hand, Bootles."

There was an audible smile from the Fourth. Mr. Rawlings was being grimly humorous. A Form-master's humour has to be acknowledged by his Form—on such an occasion a chuckle is expected and delivered.

But Bunny did not hold out his fat paw. He gave his Form-master a sad and reproachful look.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said meekly, "but I feel so bad—"

"Have you been over-eating again, Bootles?"

"Oh no, sir—I never do! I eat very little!"

"Oh, begad!" murmured St. Leger.

"But—but that blow on my chest, sir—" said Bootles.

"That what?"

"Blow on my chest, sir."

"What do you mean, Bootles? If you are ill—"

"Not exactly ill, sir, but that fearful blow—"

"Will you kindly tell me at once what you are talking about, Bootles!" exclaimed Mr. Rawlings angrily. "Have you met with an accident? Is that your meaning?"

"No, n-not exactly, sir. But that blow—"

"What blow?"

"I—I was hit awfully hard, sir, when—"

"You have been fighting?"

"Ye-es, sir, yesterday. I—I had to, sir—"

"With whom were you fighting, Bootles?"

"A—a—a tramp, sir."

"A tramp! You should not fight with a tramp," said Mr. Rawlings crossly. "What nonsense! How dare you go out of the school and fight with tramps, Bootles?"

This was not a good beginning. Mr. Rawlings evidently did not suspect yet the particular tramp Bunny was alluding to.

"I—I couldn't help it, sir!" murmured Bunny.

"Do you mean that you have been attacked by a tramp, and injured?" exclaimed the puzzled Form-master.

"Nunno, sir! I—I attacked him in—"

"Bootles! You venture to tell me that you deliberately picked a quarrel with some disreputable character, and fought with him!" exclaimed Mr. Rawlings. "You have the impudence—the audacity—"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunny. "I—I—"

All the Fourth was watching Bunny very curiously now. What had not yet dawned on Mr. Rawlings had dawned upon them.

"Then tell me what you mean!" snapped the Form-master. "I warn you, Bootles, that I am very near the end of my patience!"

"I—I couldn't help it, sir!" gasped Bunny.

"I—I couldn't see an old man knocked about—"

"What?"

"And—and robbed, sir—"

"Wha—a-at?"

"And two old ladies, sir!" said Bunny. "I couldn't stand by and see it, sir! A—a St. Kit's chap was bound to play up, sir!"

Mr. Rawlings blinked at Bunny.

The Form stared at him.

A pin might have been heard to drop in the Fourth Form room of St. Kit's for one astonished moment.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Rawlings at last. "You—you—you attacked a tramp, to—to—to save an old gentleman and two old ladies from—from robbery—"

"I felt bound to, sir," said Bunny; "I should have felt an awful cad, sir, if I'd stood by and—"

"Are you alluding to Lord Westcourt and the Misses St. Leger?"

"I—I never meant to say anything, sir—"

"Answer my question."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunny.

The die was cast now—it was a case of "jacta est alea." The egregious Bunny was fairly committed now to the role of hero.

Mr. Rawlings regarded him long and attentively.

Like the other masters at St. Kit's, he had wondered who was the unknown junior who had so gallantly tackled the hulking ruffian in Lycroft Wood. Certainly he had never thought of Bunny Bootles.

Bunny's name was not one that was likely to occur to anybody's mind in such a connection.

And Mr. Rawlings had very strong doubts now. He was willing to give credit where it was due; but he was well aware that Cuthbert Archibald Bootles was not a disciple of the late lamented George Washington. That excellent gentleman, according to his own statement, could not tell a lie. Bunny Bootles could, and did—often.

"So you are the—the—" stammered Mr. Rawlings at last.

"Yes, sir," Bunny smirked. "I—I wasn't going to mention it, sir—I—I hate to seem like bragging of a little thing like that, sir—a thing any fellow would have done—any fellow with my pluck, I mean! But that—that fearful blow on my chest, sir! The ruffian fought like a tiger, sir, and—and I'm not feeling very well to-day, sir, in consequence."

"My only hat!" murmured Carton. "The awful little liar! He's makin' out that he's the chap—"

"The giddy hero!" grinned Durance. "What a surprise! If Rawlings swallows that, I reckon he will swallow anything!"

Harry Nameless sat silent. He was too astonished to speak, even if he had felt inclined to do so. The barefaced audacity of Bunny's impudence quite took his breath away.

"This is a most remarkable statement, Bootles," said Mr. Rawlings, breaking another silence.

"Is it, sir?" said Bunny. "Quite an ordinary thing, I think, sir. Any fellow would have—"

"I shall require proof of your assertion, Bootles."

"But I'm not making an assertion, sir," said Bunny calmly. "I'm only explaining why I feel bad this afternoon, sir. I hope you don't think, sir, that I'm telling you this with the idea of getting any credit for my brave action. I'm too modest, sir!"

"Bless my soul! You are a—a very odd boy, Bootles. If you are really the person concerned in the affair, great credit is due to you. But—but I am somewhat surprised!" Mr. Rawlings glanced over the class, and saw a grin upon nearly every face. Evidently the Fourth Form was not taking Bunny the Hero very seriously, so far. "Can anyone tell me where Bootles was yesterday afternoon at the time of the outrage in Lycroft Wood?"

"He was out of gates, sir," said Stubbs; "I saw him go."

"At what time, Stubbs?"

"While the Senior football match was on, sir."

"That would be about the time. However—" Mr. Rawlings paused. "Bootles, you assure me that what you have stated is the truth?"

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir!"

"You are aware, Bootles, that the matter can be put to an unmistakable test?"

Bunny quaked.

"Oh, sir! I—"

"The boy concerned was sent to the Wicke Police Station, by Lord Westcourt, to give information, regarding the assault," said Mr. Rawlings; "as the boy has not come forward, Dr. Chenies intends to apply at the police-station for his name. It will, of course, be known there."

Bunny smiled.

"That's all right, sir."

"You are prepared to stand that test, Bootles?"

"Of course, sir! A fellow who's telling the exact truth has nothing to fear, I suppose?"

Mr. Rawlings coughed.

"N-n-no; quite so, Bootles—" Mr. Rawlings paused. He was a little impressed now. "If you are really suffering from the effects of a struggle with a brutal ruffian, Bootles, I shall excuse you from lessons this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Bunny made a prompt move.

"You need not leave the Form-room yet, Bootles. I shall speak to Dr. Chenies, and ask his leave to telephone immediately to Police-constable Bandy at Wicke. The matter shall be set at rest immediately. Boys, you will continue your task, and kindly keep order here while I am absent for a few minutes."

Mr. Rawlings left the Form-room.

CHAPTER 31.

Found at Last!

ALGERNON AUBREY ST. LEGER extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat-pocket, polished it thoughtfully, and adjusted it in his noble eye. Then he fixed it upon Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

"Bunny, you awful fabricator," he said; "is there a single word of truth in what you've been tellin' Rawlings?"

"I disdain to answer that question!" said Bunny.

"What?"

"It's a reflection on my personal honour!" said Bunny loftily.

"His personal honour!" said Catesby; "my only winter bonnet! His honour—Bunny's honour!"

"I never knew Bunny was such a dashed funny merchant!" remarked Carton. "Where do you keep your honour, Bunny?"

"Jolly dark, somewhere," said Jones minor. "I've never seen anything of it!"

Bunny sniffed.

"Wait till Rawlings comes back," he said; "you'll know the truth then!"

"The truth?" exclaimed Harry Nameless, speaking for the first time, with a stare of contempt at Bunny, which had no perceptible effect upon that fat and unashamed youth.

"Yes, the truth—the frozen truth," said Bunny calmly. "If you're hinting that I'm not telling the truth, Nameless—"

"You awful little liar!" exclaimed Harry indignantly.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Carton, inclined at once to take Bunny's side as soon as the nameless schoolboy came out on the other. "You can't know anything about it, Nameless. You weren't there!"

"I—" began Harry hotly.

He checked himself abruptly.

It was evidently too late for him to state the facts, even if he wanted to—and he did not want to.

To state them now was not to find believers, he realised; it was to enter into a ridiculous competition with Bunny Bootles.

He would be in the position of claiming credit for a brave deed—a position that no earthly consideration would have induced him to take up, and in competition to Bunny—disputing with Bunny which was the hero!

Harry sat down again and closed his lips.

Carton grinned, feeling that he had scored for once. With a leering grin at Harry Nameless, the captain of the Fourth went on:

"After all, Rawlings has gone to find out for certain. It's just barely possible that it was Bunny. It was somebody, and nobody else has laid claim to the merry distinction."

"If it is true that you helped my pater, Bunny, I am very grateful to you," said Algernon Aubrey thoughtfully; "but—"

"Hallo, here comes Rawlings!"

"Look out for the cane now, Bunny!"

"You're going to be bowled out, you fat fraud!"

The juniors scudded back to their seats as Mr. Rawlings' footsteps were heard in the corridor. They were all in their places when their Form-master entered.

All eyes turned upon him.

He came towards the class with a very grave brow.

The juniors noticed that he did not pick up his cane.

"Bootles!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I have telephoned to the police-station at Wick, and Police-constable Bandy has informed me that it was you—Master Bootles—who came to him yesterday afternoon with the news of the outrage in Lyncroft Wood."

Bunny smiled serenely.

There was a buzz of astonishment in the Form-room.

"Begad!" murmured Algernon Aubrey.

"Bunny! Then it's true!"

"I can no longer doubt your statement, Bootles," continued Mr. Rawlings kindly. "I am sorry that I doubted it at all, but—"

"Oh, don't mench, sir," said Bunny cheerfully; "it's all right! I knew you'd do me justice, sir, when you knew the truth!"

"Certainly, Bootles! I understand that the boy—I mean, you—had a very severe struggle with the rascally tramp—"

"Frightful, sir!"

"No doubt you are feeling the effects of it to-day—"

"Awful, sir," said Bunny pathetically. "Aching all over, sir. A fearful blow on my chest—"

"If there is a bad bruise, Bootles, you had better go to the louse-dame immediately, and—"

"Oh, no, sir, it's not so bad as that!" said Bunny hastily. "Just a-a-ache, sir. I'm not a fellow to complain. But—but I am a bit tired to-day, sir. I had a terrific fight—simply terrific!"

"I shall excuse you from lessons for the remainder of the day, Bootles. You may leave the Form-room. When the Head is disengaged he wishes to speak to you, and you may go to his study at half-past five."

"Yes, sir," said Bunny. "I—I don't want a fuss made, sir. I—I'm sure any fellow would have done what I did."

Bunny Bootles, scarcely daring to believe in his good luck, crossed to the Form-room door. The Fourth stared after him speechlessly.

Bunny—Bunny was the hero—Bunny of the Fourth! If he was officially accepted as the hero by the Head and the Form-master, there could be no further doubt on the subject. But—but it was astounding.

CHAPTER 32.

Heroic!

"HERE he is!"

"Here's the merry hero!"

"What does it feel like to be a hero, Bunny?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you bark your knuckles on his boko, Bunny?"

"Three cheers for the giddy hero!"

Quite a crowd surrounded Bunny Bootles in the passage when the Fourth Form came trooping out at last, dismissed by Mr. Rawlings.

Harry Nameless hurried away at once. He was not likely to take a deep interest in the new hero of St. Kit's. He was, in fact, sorely exercised in his mind on the subject.

It was too trying to hear Bunny Bootles rolling out astounding "whoppers," and to see the young rascal swanking on his borrowed glory. Yet Harry could not see what was

be done. He took it for granted that Bunny would be bowled over sooner or later, and he had to leave it at that for the present.

Seated on a bench in the quad, with his Virgil on his knees, Harry put in the interval to tea-time in extra study, and soon forgot all about the hero of the Fourth.

But he was the only member of the Fourth Form who wasn't interested.

Even the lofty Carton & Co. condescended to join the crowd round Bunny Bootles, and give him a little attention.

Some of the fellows were rather admiring—all were surprised. Algernon Aubrey felt some compunction at being so surprised at Bunny turning out to be a hero. He felt that it implied want of gratitude to the fellow who had saved his father from injury.

He dropped his hand on Bunny's fat shoulder in the most cordial manner. Somehow or other, he couldn't like Bunny very much, heroic as he was; but he was determined to be very kind, and to make up for some past shortcomings. The fellow who had saved Lord Westcourt's "napper" from being broken by a tramp's bludgeon was a fellow whom Algernon Aubrey delighted to honour.

Bunny Bootles bore his blushing honours thick upon him—not modestly. If, as Algy had said, real heroes were modest, there must have been some doubt about the reality of Bunny's heroism.

For he was not modest. Far from that. He swanked, he almost strutted. Limelight so seldom came Bunny's way, that perhaps it was pardonable in Bunny to make the most of it, now that he had it in liberal measure.

"My dear old bean," said Algernon Aubrey, "I feel bound to apologise. I—I admit I doubted your word at first, old chap. I'm sorry!"

Bunny waved a fat hand loftily.

"You know better now," he said.

"Yaas, I'm awfully obliged to you, Bunny! My pater said he would have had his head cracked if you hadn't chipped in; might have been awfully dangerous at his age, you know! I'm no end obliged to you, Bunny! I'm sorry this didn't come out while my pater was here! Bunny wasn't!"

Lord Westcourt's presence would have been extremely disconcerting to the fat youth who claimed to be his heroic rescuer.

But Bunny was careful not to mention that.

"Well, I'm sorry, Algy," he said. "But a fellow couldn't very well seem to be bragging of a little thing like that. You can write and tell your father, if you like. But I don't want his thanks—I don't really!"

"Blessed if I can catch on to this!" said Carton, in wonder. "Bunny's such an awful funk, as a rule—"

"Look here, Carton—" bawled Bunny indignantly.

"Well, you are," said Carton; "and you're such a braggin' ass, too! If you did a thing like this, it's like you to shout it all over the

place—right from the giddy housetops, by Jove! But you've kept it dark—"

"I'm not a fellow to brag!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It came out by accident, didn't it?" demanded Bunny. "I just mentioned it to Mr. Rawlings, by chance—"

"Before all the Form!" said Durance. "Couldn't have timed it better for everybody to hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter, Durance! I—I—"

"Dash it all, that's rotten!" said Algernon Aubrey. "It isn't as if there's any doubt on the subject, Durance. It's proved. Mr. Bandy at the police-station knows whether it was Bunny came to him—"

"That's what beats me!" said Carton. "It must be true—and it's too steep to swallow, at the same time. Jolly odd!"

Algernon Aubrey slipped his elegant arm through the fat arm of Cutbert Archibald Bootles.

"Come up to the study, dear boy," he said; "I'm sure you're ready for tea—"

"You bet!" said Bunny. "Come on, old chap!"

That afternoon the brew in Study No. 5 was a right royal one. Algernon Aubrey could not help feeling puzzled, but the main fact was assured that Bunny had saved Lord Westcourt from injury—at least, Algy thought it was. And Algy was quite pleased to expend a whole pound-note on a royal feed as a testimony of his gratitude.

And Bunny, as he did justice—full justice—to the brew, reflected upon the advantages of being a hero, and perhaps wondered a little, incidentally, who on earth had really rescued Algy's pater.

CHAPTER 33.

Too Much Bunny!

"A RMA virumque cano—"
"Eh?"
"Trojae qui primus ab oris—"
"What?"

"Italian, futo profugus—"
"What the dickens are you driving at, St. Leger?"

"Refreshin' your memory, dear boy," answered Algernon Aubrey, dropping into a seat on the desk. "Didn't you tell me you were muggin' up merry old Virgil for the Fortescue prize?"

Harry Nameless laughed.

"Yes; but I'm a little beyond 'arma virumque,'" he said. "St. Leger, if you don't mind, I—I'd rather you didn't interrupt!"

"I'm botherin' you?"

"Yes."

"Too bad! But what's to be done?" asked Algy. "Bunny's botherin' me, and I've fled for my life. If I venture out of the Form-room he will have me again. I'm not exactly dodgin'

Bunny, of course; only keepin' out of his way. Can I help you with your Latin?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Come up to the study."

"I wish you'd look at things as they are, St. Leger. The Head has told me to keep clear of you, practically, owing to your relations' view of the matter. You place me in a rotten, awkward position by coming and speaking to me!"

"I suppose a chap is entitled to speak to his pal?"

"But we're not pals."

"Yaas we are, dear boy," assured Algernon Aubrey calmly.

"But your father, your uncle, and aunts—"

"My pater misunderstands, my uncle misapprehends, my aunts don't know anythin'. Wash them out!" said Algy cheerfully.

"But I can't wash them out!" said Harry, half laughing and half vexed. "It's awfully decent of you to want to stick to me; St. Leger, and I'd like it no end if it was possible; but it isn't. Do be a good fellow and cut it out!"

Algy shook his head.

It was four or five days since Lord Westcourt's visit to St. Kit's, and during that time Algernon Aubrey had had several letters from his people.

He had sighed over them lugubriously.

He had other worries, too. There was Bunny—Bunny the Hero.

At the first flush Algy had been quite grateful to Bunny the Hero for the supposed assistance rendered to his pater. He had stood Bunny nobly; he had lent him ten-bob note after ten-bob note; he had even walked in the quad with Bunny's fat arm through his—an experience that made him shudder, but which he felt it his duty to go through with patience.

Perhaps it was not surprising that Algy's gratitude was wearing a little thin. Bunny Bootles would certainly have worn out anybody's gratitude in the long run.

Algy had fallen into the way of dodging along passages and disappearing round corners when he caught sight of Bunny.

He felt that he could not be brusque to the fellow who had heroically helped his noble pater in the hour of peril. But every nerve in his aristocratic body rebelled against the familiarity of Cuthbert Archibald.

He missed his chum sorely.

Harry Nameless was the only fellow at St. Kit's whom Algy felt seriously disposed to pal with, and it seemed quite "rotten" that he should be parted from his chum just when he needed him. Harry, he felt, would have helped him to endure Bunny.

At this very moment he knew Bunny Bootles was looking for him. He felt rather a beast for dodging the heroic rescuer in this way. But he could not help it. Hero or not, he could not stand too much Bunny.

Harry Nameless dropped his eyes on his work again. He had been getting some extra tuition—extra toot, as the juniors called it—from Mr.

Rawlings, and he was beginning to have high hopes of the Latin prize.

Carton & Co. were already referring to him sneeringly as "the prize-hunter." Harry did not heed the sneers; the money prize was wanted to help old Jack Straw in his cottage at South Cove, and for that object Harry could have tolerated a good deal of sneering.

He went on with his work, while Algernon Aubrey sat on the desk and polished his eye-glass and watched him.

Two or three times Algy glanced apprehensively at the door. He feared to see a fat face looking into the Form-room.

"Gettin' on all right, old bean?" he asked at last.

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

"You want me to look it?" said Algy dismally.

"You—you see, my dear old chap, I—"

"I wish you'd seen my people last week, Nameless," said Algernon Aubrey wistfully. "I've got a feelin' that that would have made it all right. You don't really know what my pater's like, as you've never seen him."

Harry smiled a little over P. Virgilius Maro.

His meeting with Lord Westcourt in Lyncroft Wood was still a secret, and not likely to be revealed now.

Bunny's claim to be the missing hero covered up the nameless schoolboy's tracks completely.

"He's quite a good old scout," pursued Algy.

"He was offended at your goin' out to avoid meetin' him, and that's really done the mischief. Now, if he comes down to St. Kit's again—"

Harry made a restless movement.

"I hope he won't!" he said.

"He's bound to come sooner or later," said Algy. "In fact, if he can find time he may come down in the car and see Bootles."

"Bootles?"

"Yaas; I've told him about Bunny, of course."

"About Bunny?" repeated Harry Nameless.

"About Bunny bein' the giddy rescuer, you know. The pater's awf'ly keen to know who saved his napper from bein' cracked by that tramp. He was no end pleased when I wrote and gave him the chap's name."

Harry bit his lip hard.

"You told him Bunny—"

"Yaas."

"But it's not true, St. Leger. Bunny's lyin'—"

"Begad!"

"It's a rotten spoof from beginning to end!" exclaimed Harry, his face flushing with anger. "Surely you ought to be able to see that!"

"My dear old bean, you're mistaken. You see, it's proved."

"A lie can't be proved!" growled the Foundation junior.

"But it isn't a lie this time. I admit that it's rather remarkable for Bunny to be tellin' the truth. And—and he does pile on the agony about the terrific combat," Algy grinned.

"But there's no doubt he's the chap. The Head himself has commended him—"

"He's taken the Head in!"

"And Mr. Rawlings—"

"He's taken Mr. Rawlings in!"

"But all the fellows—"

"He's taken all the fellows in!" exclaimed Harry impatiently. "I tell you, Bunny would have scooted like a bunny rabbit if he'd been there at all!"

"Yaas, so I should have thought; only, you see, it's proved. I'm rather surprised to see you so down on Bunny, old scout, when he's played up decently for once in his life!"

"He hasn't!"

"Bow-wow!" said Algernon Aubrey good humouredly. "I suppose you find Bunny rather disagreeable; but honour where honour is due, you know. Give a chap credit when he earns it!"

"When?" grunted the nameless junior.

"That's one reason," continued Algernon Aubrey thoughtfully, "why I want you back in the study, Nameless. I'm bound to stand Bunny now. As a pal, I think you ought to help me stand him—what?"

"Why should you stand him at all?"

"Because he rescued my pater."

"Spoof, I tell you!"

"Bow-wow! You're prejudiced, old chap! It's awfully on my conscience that I kicked him that very afternoon," said Algernon Aubrey remorsefully. "I did, you know. I was feelin' bothered about my people comin', and he came into the study an' bored me an' I kicked him out."

"Serve him right!"

"And he went straight off and chipped in to help my pater—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Do you know, Nameless, that you're the only fellow in the school that doesn't believe Bunny did that?"

"Very likely!"

"Of course, he exaggerates a lot; but he did it. It's taken as proved. I really think, Nameless, that a decent chap like you might do a chap justice. I—I'm rather surprised—" Algy paused. "You've talked like this before, old bean, and some fellows put it that you're jealous of Bunny gettin' so much kudos. I'm mentionin' that just to put you on your guard. It's so unlike you to run any fellow down. And Bunny is—"

"Oh, hang Bunny!" said Harry Nameless.

"Hallo, old tops!"

It was Bunny's fat voice in the doorway, and Algernon Aubrey groaned. The fat junior looked in with an agreeable grin.

"I've been looking for you, Algy."

"Ha-have you?" stammered Algy guiltily.

"Yes, everywhere. Coming out, old fellow?" Algernon Aubrey detached himself from the desk.

"Yaas, if you like."

"Mrs. Cootie has some new tarts in," said Bunny confidentially. "I'm going to stand you

some, Algy; you've stood me a good bit lately. One good turn deserves another! Come on, old top! You won't mind lendin' me a few bob; my uncle's promised to send me a pound-note, and when it comes—"

Bunny's voice died away down the passage as he led Algernon Aubrey St. Leger away to his fate.

Harry Nameless sat down with a frown on his face, and it was some minutes before he resumed his work.

CHAPTER 34.

Bunny's Little Bill!

"TROUSERS, two guineas!" Harry Nameless glanced at Bunny Bootles.

The fat junior was seated at the table in Study No. 5 in the Fourth. He had a pen in his hand, ink on his fingers, and a dab of ink on his fat little nose. There was a wrinkle of thought on his fat brow as he scrawled on the sheet of impot paper before him.

Bunny was deep in calculations.

Harry Nameless had come up to the study to look for a book. The nameless schoolboy was still doing his work in the Form-room, and carefully avoiding Study No. 5. But one of his books had been overlooked in the study book-case, and having seen St. Leger on the football ground, Harry slipped up to the study to fetch it, having need of it just then. He found Bunny in the study.

Bunny looked up—and frowned.

"What do you want?" he inquired. "This ain't your study now, Nameless. The Head said—"

"I've come for my Horace," said Harry quietly. "It's here."

Bunny gave a fat sneer.

"You do Horace, do you, you blessed swot?" he asked. "Make out that, you can read Horace."

Harry Nameless did not trouble to answer that question. He looked through the book-case for the volume he wanted.

Bunny gave a sniff, and his attention returned to his calculations.

"Trousers, two guineas—that's moderate. Waistcoat—say thirty bob. Thirty bob ain't too much."

Harry found his Horace, and turned round to Bunny again.

"I've been wanting to speak to you, Bootles," he said. "Now I'm here, I'll take the opportunity—"

"The want's entirely on your side," snapped Bunny. "I don't usually talk with nameless bouncers. Buzz off!"

"You've been getting money out of St. Leger—"

"St. Leger may have lent me a little money. No bizney of yours that I know of."

"You've made him believe that you helped

his father in the tussle with the tramp in Lyncroft Wood on—"

"I've told him the facts, if that's what you mean."

"The facts!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes."

"You lying young rascal—"

"That's enough!" Bunny lifted a fat forefinger, considerably inky, and pointed to the door. "Get out!"

"I've something to say, first," said Harry Nameless quietly. "You can tell silly lies and swank as much as you like, Bootles—"

"There's the door!"

"I suppose that's not my business, but when it comes to getting money out of St. Leger it's time to stop."

"Can't you mind your own bizney?" demanded Bunny.

"This is my business, as I'm the only fellow in the school who knows that you are lying, and that you were miles away when the tramp attacked Algy's father."

Bunny stared.

"What do you know about it?" he asked.

"You know that it was I," exclaimed Harry angrily. "I told you at the time, when I asked you to go to the police-station that afternoon."

Bunny winked.

"Draw it mild," he said. "I admit you pulled my leg at first, but I soon saw that you were gassing. That chicken won't fight, you know. If you're going to claim to be the chap who—"

"I'm going to say nothing about it. But you're not going to draw money out of St. Leger—"

"I'm going to do exactly as I choose," said Bunny Bootles calmly. "As for borrowing money of St. Leger, I should disdain to do anything of the kind after his ingratitude."

"Oh!" said Harry. "If you've stopped that—"

"I may have borrowed a few quids, which I shall settle up when I'm in funds," said Bunny, with dignity. "A low-bred fellow like you wouldn't understand that a gentleman's bound to settle up his little personal debts, and that I never fail to do so."

"Why, you—you—"

"I can excuse you, Nameless, because you've been brought up among some sort of dashed hoodlums, and don't know any better. But you ought to be careful how you express your low opinions in the presence of a gentleman."

Harry looked at him fixedly.

"You're not worth licking," he said, after a pause. "But you've got to stop sticking St. Leger for money, Bootles. If you don't stop, I shall think out some way of stopping you. That's all."

With that the nameless schoolboy quitted the study.

Bunny sniffed.

He dismissed Harry and his warning from his fat mind, and bestowed his attention on his

calculations again. Those mysterious calculations kept Bunny Bootles busy for quite a long time, and it was past tea-time when he had finished. Algy had not returned to the study.

Without Algy, tea in the study was not a possibility, and Bunny hurried down to Hall in a very discontented frame of mind.

He found Algernon Aubrey at the Fourth Form table there.

It was seldom that Algy honoured the school table with his presence at tea, but he was dropping into the habit of late. There was too much Bunny in Study No. 5, and since the rescue Algy did not feel that he could treat Bunny as of old. He could not kick his noble pater's rescuer, and without a due allowance of kicks Bunny was intolerable. So Algy was getting into the way of avoiding his own study, excepting for prep.

Bunny squeezed into a seat at the Honourable Algernon's side, and bestowed a lofty glance upon him.

"I want to speak to you after tea," he said. Algy did not reply.

But he had taken the tip, and after tea he vanished. Bunny looked for him in vain.

At the usual hour for prep Bunny sought him in Study No. 5, confident of running him to earth then.

But No. 5 was empty.

"Where the thump is the silly ass?" Bunny exclaimed wrathfully. "I believe he's dodging me on purpose."

Bunny's belief was well founded.

Bunny had his own prep to do, and the dread of Mr. Rawlings in the morning made him do it. He finished early, and looked along the passage for Algy. He found that noble youth in No. 6 doing his prep in company with Stubbs and Elliott.

"Oh, here you are!" said Bunny angrily. "You've been dodging me all—"

"Yaas."

"Well, I want—"

Elliott interposed at this point. He picked up a fives bat and started towards Bunny. That fat youth dodged into the passage just in time. The door slammed on him.

Prep in No. 6 finished uninterrupted. Bunny did not like fives bats at close quarters.

But he hung about the passage in a state of growing wrath and indignation till No. 6 disgorged its occupants. Then he rolled after Algy.

"Look here, St. Leger—" he began.

"Oh, blow away, Bunny," said Algernon Aubrey plaintively—"blow away and give a fellow a rest."

Algernon Aubrey went downstairs. He wore a slightly worried look as he walked into the Common-room. Too much Bunny was getting on his nerves, and he was debating in his mind whether it would be consistent with proper gratitude towards an heroic rescuer to give Bunny a gentle kicking.

Bunny followed him in. There were a good many of the Fourth and the Shell in the Common-room after prep. Algernon Aubrey crossed the room to an armchair, and Bunny tracked him down and stood before him.

"Now, St. Leger—"

"Oh begad! Won't you blow away, Bunny?"

"I'm not going to ask you to lend me money, St. Leger," said Cuthbert Archibald, with a great deal of dignity, "I merely want a few words. I want you to settle up the money you owe me."

"Eh?"

"You've lent me a little money lately," said Bunny. "I'm prepared to deduct that from the account."

"The—the account?"

"Yes. That will leave a balance due to me, which I will thank you to settle up at your earliest convenience," said Bunny, still in the same lofty and dignified manner.

Algernon Aubrey adjusted his eyeglass with care and stared at Bunny.

"I owe you money?" he ejaculated. "Are you dreamin', dear boy?"

"Look here—"

"Go an' take a nap, old bean, and dream again!" suggested Algy.

"I've got the account here."

"My hat! He's wanderin' in his mind, I suppose," said Algernon Aubrey, in great perplexity. "Any of you fellows know what's the matter with him?"

Some of the juniors had gathered round, grinning. They were quite interested in this curious conversation.

"Of course, I'll send the bill to your pater, if you prefer it, St. Leger," said Bunny.

"But what—what—"

"I think you ought to pay it. Otherwise, I shall certainly send it to your father. I can't be put to heavy loss on account of your family."

"Babblin'!" said Algy, in wonder. "Burbli'n' and babblin'. Quite potty! Poor old Bunny! I wonder how long this has been comin' on?"

"Here's the bill!" roared Bunny.

"Oh, begad!"

A sheet of impot paper covered with scrawling blots and smudges dropped on the knees of Algy's elegant trousers, and he turned his eyeglass upon it in wonder. Then he jumped, for the inky document ran as follows:

ACCOUNT IN COMPENSATION OF DAMMIDGES
RECEIVED IN FITING WITH A TRAMP.

	£	s.	d.
Trousers badly tawn	2	2	0
Waistcoat burst	1	10	0
Cap tawn	0	10	6
Koller tawn	0	2	6
Valleuable gold sleeve-link lost	10	10	0
Diamond stud lost	10	10	0
TOTAL	£25	5	0

CHAPTER 35.

Unpaid!

"O H begad!"

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger's voice was quite faint as he uttered that amazed ejaculation.

He blinked at Bunny's little bill.

Bunny Bootles folded his arms across his podgy chest and stood looking at the dandy of the Fourth in a very lofty and dignified attitude, an attitude reminiscent of that of Ajax in his celebrated lightning-defying act.

The juniors crowded round Algy's armchair to stare at the little bill, and there was a howl of merriment in the Common-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Twenty-five quids!" roared Stubbs. "Oh, my hat!"

"Why, the fat duffer isn't worth that melted down into tallow, with all his clobber thrown in," said Catesby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Valuable gold sleeve-links!" sobbed Howard. "I've seen those sleeve-links. Penny a pair at a fair."

"Look here, Howard—"

"Diamond stud, ten guineas!" shrieked Durance; "Bunny—with a ten-guinea diamond stud!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, this ain't any business of you fellows!" roared Bunny. "I want this bill paid, St. Leger."

"You—you want it paid!" stuttered Algy. "Oh, begad! Oh, my only Aunt Belinda! You—you want it paid."

"If you're short of cash, I'm willing to give you time—"

"Give him time!" said Carton, with a chuckle. "I fancy a judge will be giving you time, Bunny, if you keep on like this."

"I'm asking for my due, St. Leger," said Bunny loftily. "For rescuing your father from deadly peril I make no charge—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I suppose this is—is—is some deep joke, Bunny," said Algernon Aubrey, at last.

"Nothing of the kind. I'm waiting to be paid."

"But you never had a diamond stud, dear boy—"

"Look here, St. Leger—"

"You never had any gold sleeve-links—"

"If you doubt my word, St. Leger—"

"Your word! Oh begad! I suppose I should have seen somethin' of them, in the same study—"

"You did see them, St. Leger, often enough."

"If you mean that tin stuff—"

"I mean those valuable gold sleeve-links," said Bunny firmly. "You're not going to wriggle out of it like that, St. Leger, now that they're lost beyond recovery. I rushed to the rescue that time, without thinking of the—the danger—or—or of losing my valuable gold sleeve-links,

and—and diamond stud. They went! Dropped in the grass, you know, while I was fighting like a tiger—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Why, I could stick you for compensation for the fearful injuries I received,” exclaimed Bunny indignantly. “This is moderate—jolly moderate. I suppose Lord Westcourt doesn’t want a chap to be put to heavy loss for rescuing him, does he? I hope your pater’s a gentleman, Algy?”

“I—I hope so,” gasped Algy.

“He can scarcely do less than pay this account. I can’t afford to lose valuable gold sleeve-links and diamond studs for nothing.”

“But you never had any to lose!” shrieked Algy.

“If you’re going to prevaricate, St. Leger—”

“Wh-a-at?”

“Prevaricate. If you’re going to prevaricate, I disdain to discuss the matter with you. Are you going to pay this account, or are you not going to pay this account?” asked Bunny Bootles categorically.

Algy blinked at him. The fat junior was in deadly earnest—that was evident.

The juniors were yelling with laughter. Bunny’s little bill had taken Algy by surprise, and it had taken the Common-room by storm. They yelled—and howled—and almost wept. It was Bunny’s greatest success.

Bunny looked serious enough. He did not seem to see anything to laugh at.

“I’m waiting, St. Leger!” he said, with lofty calmness.

“But—but—but—” stuttered Algy.

“Are you going to pay up?”

“Begad! No jolly fear!” said Algernon emphatically.

“If you’re thinking of swindling me, St. Leger—”

“What?” shrieked Algy.

“Swindling me—I can tell you—”

“Why, you—you—fat, spoofing, swindlin’ rotter!” spluttered Algy. “I’ll—I’ll—I’ll jolly well kick you!”

“Then I shall send the account in to the proper quarter!”

“What?”

“I shall send it through the post to Lord Westcourt.”

“You—you will send that awful rot to my father?”

“Look here—yarrooch—”

Algernon Aubrey leaped up. His noble temper failed him—which was not really surprising. He grasped Bunny with one hand, and Bunny’s little bill with the other and jammed the little bill down the back of Bunny’s fat neck. Then he spun the roaring Bunny round, and planted an elegant but forcible boot behind the hapless Cuthbert Archibald.

There was what a novelist would call a sickening thud, and Bunny Bootles spun away, amid a roar of laughter.

“There!” gasped Algy; “I knew it would come to that! I knew that he would make me kick him, in the long run! I felt it!”

CHAPTER 36.

His Lordship is Shocked!

“S T. LEGER!”

“Yaas.”

“You’re wanted—Head’s study.”

“Oh begad!”

Oliphant of the Sixth walked on, regardless of Algernon Aubrey’s evident desire to seek further information. Algy would have been glad to know what the Head wanted him for. But the captain of St. Kit’s walked on his way, lofty and regardless.

“Now, I wonder what’s the row?” said Algernon Aubrey plaintively. “I haven’t been kickin’ over the traces, that I know of. What the thump does the Head want?”

Algernon Aubrey betook himself reluctantly to the Head’s study. That apartment was seldom approached with willing steps by members of the Lower School. Unless it was a “row,” Algy could not guess what he was wanted for. And his noble conscience was quite clear just at present. Somehow or other, he had dropped going out of bounds with Carton & Co., ever since Harry Nameless had come to St. Kit’s. He was glad of it now. It would have been distinctly awkward to be called up before the Head on account of a surreptitious visit to the Lizard Inn.

He tapped at the Head’s door, and entered as the doctor’s deep voice bade him “Come in.”

To his great relief, Dr. Chenies was looking as benevolent as usual, and there was no sign of a cane.

“St. Leger—”

“Yaas, sir.”

“Your father has telephoned—”

“Oh!” ejaculated Algy.

“He desires to speak to you,” said the Head. “You may take the receiver, St. Leger.”

“Thank you very much, sir!”

Algy noticed now that the receiver was off the telephone. He took it up; and Dr. Chenies walked to the most distant window, and stood looking sedately out into the quadrangle.

Algy was still feeling uneasy. He was no longer uneasy with regard to the Head, certainly; he had transferred the uneasiness to the account of his father. It was most unusual for Lord Westcourt to telephone to his son at the school. Algy wondered whether there was illness at home, or whether it was a fresh “jaw” on the subject of Harry Nameless. He feared that it was the latter, and his voice was quite dispirited as he spoke into the transmitter.

“That you, dad?”

“Yes,” came Lord Westcourt’s voice over the wires. “Is that you, Algernon?”

“Yaas, I’m here, dad. Anybody crocked?”

“No, no.”

“I’m glad. What’s the matter?”

“I have received a letter, Algernon—a letter from the school—signed by a—a person named Bootles.”

“Oh!” said Algy.

He understood now. Then Bunny Bootles had sent his amazing account through the post in spite of the kicking he had received. It was upon the subject of Cuthbert Archibald's little bill that his lordship desired to speak.

Algy was greatly relieved. For once he was not to hear about the nameless schoolboy from his respected parent.

"It is a most extraordinary letter," went on his lordship. "The—the boy claims a large sum of money—a very large sum—"

"Yaas, dad."

"According to his letter to me, Algernon, this—this person—this Bootles—is the youth who assisted me when I was attacked by a ruffian in the wood—"

"Yaas."

"You are doubtless aware, then, whether he—ahem!—whether he actually possessed the very expensive jewellery enumerated in his letter to me?"

Algy grinned.

"He had some sleeve-links, dad, and a stud—I don't know whether he really lost them in scrapper with the joiner in the wood."

"Is his word not reliable, then?"

"Ahem!"

"Have you known him to tell untruths, Algernon?"

"Oh, begad! Yaas—a few million," gasped Algy.

"Oh! Have you any idea, Algernon, of the actual value of the articles of jewellery he declares that he has lost?"

"About a shillin', dad."

"Eh?"

"Perhaps eightpence," said Algernon; "that's on the safe side."

"It appears, then, that this—this person—this Bootles—is attempting to impose on me?"

"Ahem!"

"What did you say, Algernon?"

"Bunny's a born idiot, sir."

"Bunny! What do you mean? What bunny? I am not talking to you about rabbits, Algernon."

"Oh, dear! We call him Bunny, sir—that's Bootles. He's a born idiot, sir—no more brains than a Cabinet Minister. He simply doesn't know right from wrong, you know."

"Nonsense!"

"Oh!"

"The boy must be dishonest."

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Algernon Aubrey feebly. He really did not know how to make his noble pater understand quite what a peculiar youth Bunny Bootles was.

"Yet he intervened in the most gallant manner to save me from injury," said his lordship. "It is astounding. Are you absolutely certain, Algernon, that this—this Bootles, is really the person who helped me on that occasion?"

"I—I suppose so, sir. Nobody else has turned up—"

"I am very much perplexed. I am both shocked and astonished," said Lord Westcourt.

Algy was silent. If his noble parent was in

that mixed and painful state, Algy did not see how any remarks of his would help.

"This matter must be probed to the bottom," said Lord Westcourt. "I shall come down to the school to-morrow, Algernon. It is very awkward and inconvenient, but I must see this boy. While I am at St. Kit's I will take the opportunity of seeing Nameless—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"What did you say, Algernon?"

"N-n-nothin', sir."

"I thought you uttered a foolish and slangy ejaculation."

"Oh!"

"Kindly ask Dr. Chenies to speak to me for a moment."

"Yaas, sir."

Algernon Aubrey willingly relinquished the receiver to Dr. Chenies. He quitted the study, leaving the Head to enjoy Lord Westcourt's further conversation. The Head heard, with mingled feelings, that he was to be honoured with another visit from Lord Westcourt on the following day. His lordship was coming down in his car; and he particularly desired that two junior boys, named Bootles and Nameless, might be on the spot when he came. His lordship's time, it appeared, was valuable.

To all of which the Head politely assented; and when he hung up the receiver he sighed.

Even a public-school headmaster's life was not all a bed of roses. There were thorns; though it would have surprised Lord Westcourt very much to learn that he was one of the thorns.

CHAPTER 37.

Gating for Two!

THE next day was a half-holiday at St. Kit's, and there was junior football in the afternoon. Carton's team was playing the Shell, and Algy, who sometimes honoured the Fourth by playing for them, asked Carton to scratch his name after dinner that day. So far, Algy had said nothing to anyone of his father's intended visit. He felt instinctively that it would have a dismaying effect on Bunny Bootles; and the good-natured Algy did not want to dismay Bunny. He considered it probable, too, that Harry Nameless would take his half-holiday out of gates if he knew; and Algy did not want that to happen a second time. So—with his usual policy of following the line of least resistance—Algy said nothing.

"Scratch you!" said Carton, when Algy proffered his request. "Why ain't you playin'?"

"My pater's comin'," confessed Algy. "I shall have to be on hand to do the dutiful stunt."

"My only aunt! Is your pater goin' to live at St. Kit's?" said Carton, with a grunt. "Is he bringin' the giddy old gals this time?"

Algernon Aubrey frowned.

"If you want me to pull your nose, Carton, you've only got to repeat that remark!" he said.

"Bow-wow!" answered Carton, and he walked away.

Algy felt a tug at his sleeve. He turned to see a fat, scared face at his elbow—the startled countenance of Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

"Algy! I—I say, did you say your pater was coming?" stammered Bunny.

"Yaas."

"Why didn't you tell me before, you beast?"

"Eh?"

"I suppose that's why he hasn't sent the cheque?" said Bunny. "He hasn't, you know."

"I know!" grinned Algy.

"I've been expecting it every post but—"

"Blessed are those who expect!" said Algy generally. "Perhaps he'll bring it with him, Bunny. Perhaps! If you make good your claim you'll get the tin. You've only got to make it good."

"But—but—" stammered Bunny in great dismay.

"He wants to see you, you see."

"I—I can't see him—"

"Why not?" demanded Algy.

"I—I've got a special appointment out of gates," stammered Bunny. "I—I'm sorry I can't stay in to see your father, St. Leger. Tell him I'm sorry, and—and ask him to leave the money with you."

"No jolly fear!"

"Look here, you rotter—"

"Cut it out, here's Rawlings!" said Jones minor.

Mr. Rawlings came out of his study. He glanced over the juniors and signed to Bunny Bootles.

"Bootles!"

"Yes, sir!" faltered Bunny.

"Lord Westcourt will be here about three o'clock, and he specially desires to speak to you."

"I—I'm going out, sir—"

Mr. Rawlings raised his eyebrows.

"You are not to go out, Bootles."

"I—I—"

"You are to be in the visitors'-room at three o'clock precisely," said Mr. Rawlings curtly. "You need say no more, Bootles. If you should go out of the gates the consequences will be very serious for you."

"I—I—I—"

"I cannot understand you, Bootles. Probably his lordship desires to thank you in person for the service you rendered him."

"Ow!" gasped Bunny.

"In any case, you are to be here to see him. Nameless is also required. I do not see him here. Does anyone know where Nameless is?"

"In the Form-room, sir," said Stubbs.

"Thank you, Stubbs."

Mr. Rawlings rustled away to the Form-room. He found Harry Nameless there, deep in Latin. The Foundation junior rose respectfully to his feet as his Form-master entered. Mr. Rawlings blinked at him over his glasses.

"Ah! At work, I see, my boy," he said kindly.

"I'm putting in a little extra, sir," said Harry colouring.

"You must not overdo it, Nameless. However, that is not the subject upon which I came here to speak to you. I do not wish you to go out of gates this afternoon."

"Very good, sir."

"You did not intend to go out of gates, Nameless?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Very well, Lord Westcourt is coming—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Harry.

Mr. Rawlings smiled slightly at his dismayed look.

"I am aware, Nameless, that you avoided Lord Westcourt on the occasion of his last visit. That must not occur again."

"But—but, sir—" stammered Harry.

"You have nothing to fear from an interview, Nameless."

"I know, sir. But—"

"A governor of the school has a right to see any boy he chooses to see. You must be aware of that."

"Oh! Yes, sir; but—"

"You will observe my wishes, Nameless—the Head's wishes. Lord Westcourt is not coming specially to see you, but another boy—Bootles. But he desires to see you while he is here. You will remain here till his lordship comes."

"Very good, sir."

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Mr. Rawlings quitted the Form-room, very much perplexed, and a little annoyed. Both Nameless and Bootles had puzzled him.

Harry sat down at his desk again with a clouded brow.

There was no help for it, the long-avoided interview had to come at last—he was helpless. If he had refused to give his word to the Form-master the Head would certainly have ordered him to be detained to meet the visitor even to the extent of having him locked in the punishment-room if necessary. There was no help for it, and Harry Nameless, with deep dismay and uneasiness, had to resign himself to the inevitable.

But deep as his dismay was, it was nothing to that of Bunny Bootles, the hero of St. Kit's. Compared with Bunny's dismay, it was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine!

CHAPTER 38.

The Woes of Bunny Bootles!

BUNNY BOOTLES was quaking. He quaked with good reason. Every nerve in his fat body shrank from that interview with his lordship.

Lord Westcourt was coming to see his heroic rescuer who had made on him such a very extraordinary claim for compensation.

And it was absolutely certain that, at the first glance, he would know that Bunny wasn't the heroic rescuer.

Bunny couldn't have any doubt on that point.

Who on earth had rescued Lord Westcourt Bunny didn't know and didn't care. He scouted Harry Nameless' statements on the subject. But whoever had or hadn't done it, Bunny hadn't!

That, at least, was certain.

The prospect of meeting his lordship face to face made the fat junior tremble in every pody limb.

In spite of Mr. Rawlings' stern warning, Bunny felt that there was only one thing to be done. He had to escape that interview. Better a licking from the Head afterwards, than exposure and punishment for having made a false claim. It was, in fact, a licking in any case, as Bunny dismally saw.

If he was bowled out, it certainly was a licking; if he dodged the interview, it was a licking; wherever the hapless Bunny turned his eyes he saw only lickings on the horizon.

He could have kicked himself for having sent that claim for damages to Lord Westcourt. But, as he dismally asked himself, who could have expected this? Fancy the old bounder coming down specially to St. Kit's about a miserable twenty-five quid! In his distress of mind, Bunny actually referred to a peer of the realm as "an old bounder."

Escape was evidently the only way, and Bunny decided upon escape. But the fates were against him.

For a dozen fellows at least had discerned the

very obvious fact that Bunny Bootles earnestly desired to avoid the personal thanks of the peer he had so heroically rescued.

Doubts as to Bunny's heroism had always lingered. The thrilling details he frequently gave of the Homeric combat in the wood added very considerably to the doubts.

Now his anxiety not to see Lord Westcourt—his feverish desire to keep out of that nobleman's sight—put the lid on, as Catesby expressed it.

So when Bunny Bootles drifted down towards the gates, to his horror he discovered that seven or eight juniors drifted after him.

The hapless Bunny realised that there was no escape. He was still vainly imploring his heartless Form-fellows when the buzz of a big motor-car was heard at the gates. There was a yell from Stubbs.

"Here's his nibs!"

Lord Westcourt's big car rolled in and rolled on to the house. Bunny Bootles gave a squeak of terror.

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunny.

But the hilarious juniors did not let go. They collared Bunny on all sides and marched him off towards the School House. In the midst of a chortling crowd Bunny Bootles rolled to his interview with Algy's pater—and to his doom!

Bunny Bootles cast a desperate glance round. Even at that late moment he would have bolted, if it had been possible. He would have given the amount of his little bill—if he had possessed it—to be safe in his study or locked up in a box-room.

But there was no escape. The hilarious Fourth-Formers saw to that. And Mr. Rawlings was visible in the distance, and through the open doorway of the visitors' room was visible a slim, aristocratic-looking gentleman, with a curved nose and an eyeglass. Never had Bunny hated so much the company of a peer of the realm.

"Come on, Bunny, old bean," said Algy encouragingly.

"Oh lor!"

Bunny was marched in.

Algernon Aubrey walked into the room with him, the rest of the juniors remained at the doorway. They were deeply interested in what was to happen.

Lord Westcourt glanced at his son and at Bunny. He seemed perplexed.

"Well, Algernon?"

"Here he is, father."

"Eh! Who is that?"

"Bootles, father."

"What?"

"Bootles—Bunny, you know," said Algy, perplexed in his turn. "You wanted to see Bootles, father."

"I wanted to see the boy who helped me in Lyncroft Wood," snapped his lordship.

"This is the chap."

"What?"

"It's Bootles, anyhow."

"Oh dear!" moaned Bunny.

Lord Westcourt jammed his glass a little more tightly into his eye and surveyed Cuthbert Archibald Bootles with a glance that made C. A. Bootles quake.

"Are there two boys of St. Kit's named Bootles, Algernon?"

"Nunno. One's enough, dad."

"I received a letter from you stating that it was Bootles who fought with the tramp in the wood—"

"Yaas."

"I received a letter signed with the name of Bootles demanding compensation for losses sustained in that affair—"

"Yaas."

"And this is Bootles?"

"Yaas."

"Then you have been deceived!" thundered his lordship. "This is not the boy who helped me in the wood."

"Oh!"

"He bears no resemblance whatever to the boy."

"Oh gad!"

"Boy!" Lord Westcourt's eyeglass seemed to be boring a hole into the unhappy Bunny, "you have deceived—"

"Nunno, sir."

"You have stated—"

"Not at all, sir," spluttered Bunny. "It—it's all a mistake, sir! I—I can explain if—you'll give me time, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean—I meant—" Bunny spluttered helplessly. "I—I—it was a joke, sir—I—I was simply pulling Algy's leg, sir—Algy being such a silly ass, as you know, sir—"

"Oh begad!" ejaculated Algy.

"You—you understand, sir—" stuttered Bunny.

"I understand quite well," said Lord Westcourt grimly. "You have claimed the credit of a brave action you never performed; you have claimed money in compensation for losses never incurred; you are a young rascal, sir."

"Oh crumbs!"

"And I shall take you to your headmaster at once, sir!" thundered Lord Westcourt. "Upon my word! I never heard of such a thing! Come."

"Yaroooooh!"

His lordship's slim but sinewy hand fell on Bunny's fat shoulder and closed there in a grasp of iron.

"Follow me, Algernon."

"Yaas," said Algy faintly.

Bunny Bootles limped out of the room, with a grip on his shoulder that made him wriggle. Algy followed. They passed through a grinning crowd of juniors. Bunny blinked round at the grinning faces pathetically. But there was no sympathy for Bunny.

The spoofer was exposed with a vengeance now; there were dry eyes in all the Fourth Form. Nobody had any sympathy to waste upon Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

"I—I say, sir—" gasped Bunny, as they reached the Head's study.

"Silence!"

"Oh lor!"

Lord Westcourt tapped at the door and opened it; and Dr. Chenies blinked over his glasses as Bunny Bootles marched into the study with a peer of the realm grasping his fat shoulder.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "What—what—"

"This boy, sir—this Bootles," said Lord Westcourt, in a very deep voice. "My son informs me that this is Bootles—"

"Oh, yaas," said Algy.

"That certainly is Bootles," said the Head, "the—the boy who aided you so—so gallantly, Lord Westcourt, on—"

"Nothing of the kind, sir! This is not the boy."

"What?"

"An impostor, sir," said his lordship. "An unscrupulous impostor! Look at that letter, sir."

Bunny Bootles yelped with terror as he saw his precious little bill tossed on the Head's desk. He knew what to expect now. Dr. Chenies gazed at the little bill with eyes that almost bulged through his spectacles.

"Bless my soul! Extraordinary! And—and you say he is not the boy at all."

"Most decidedly not."

Bunny's fat knees knocked together as the Head turned a terrifying gaze upon him.

"Bootles, what have you to say?"

"I—I—"

"Wretched boy!" thundered the Head. "You have deceived me—deceived your school-fellows—"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I think—his lordship is—is making a mistake, sir," gasped Bunny. "He's forgotten what the chap was like—"

"What?"

"He's rather short-sighted, I think, sir—he doesn't recognise me," spluttered Bunny. "That—that—that's it, sir. I—I forgive him, sir—c-c-can I go now, sir?"

"Bless my soul! You cannot go, Bootles. Do you dare to maintain that you are the boy that helped Lord Westcourt, against his lordship's explicit statement that you are not?" thundered the Head.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped the quaking Bunny.

"The boy appears to be little more than an idiot!" said Lord Westcourt, who was staring in great wonder at Bunny.

"He is undoubtedly very obtuse," said the Head. "But for that fact, I should be disposed to expel him from the school for this action—"

"Ow!"

"Bootles, you will be flogged—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Most severely—"

"Wh-wh-what for, sir?"

"What for?" gasped the Head. "Do you not know what for, you utterly stupid boy?"

"Nunno, sir! After my gallant conduct—"

"Leave my study!" gasped Dr. Chenies. He really felt unequal to dealing further with the

amazing Bunny just then. "Go! I will deal with you later."

Algy gently led Bunny to the door and pushed him out.

CHAPTER 39.

A Startling Recognition!

"NAMELESS!"

Mr. Rawlings looked into the Form-room.

"Yes, sir?" said Harry, rising from his desk.

"Kindly go to the Head's study now, Nameless. Lord Westcourt is there, and will speak to you."

"Very well, sir," said Harry, compressing his lips.

He put away his books and left the Form-room. Two or three juniors met him on the way, and Stubbs gave him a consoling whisper.

"Keep your pecker up, kid. The old sport doesn't bite."

Harry Nameless smiled faintly, and nodded, and passed on. He was not afraid that his lordship would "bite." But he was shrinking inwardly from the interview that could no longer be avoided. He had no doubt that Algy's pater would recognise him at a glance; the secret that had been kept so long would be a secret no longer. But it could not be helped; and he nerved himself for the ordeal.

He tapped at the Head's door and entered.

Algernon Aubrey gave him a look in which commiseration and encouragement were mingled. Dr. Chenies looked at him very gravely over his glasses. Lord Westcourt started to his feet.

"The boy!" he ejaculated.

The severe frown which Lord Westcourt had all ready for Harry Nameless melted away at once at sight of the boy who had rescued him so gallantly from the tramp of Lycroft Wood.

His look became extremely genial and cordial.

"Yes, this is the boy," said the Head, misunderstanding.

"My dear boy!" exclaimed Lord Westcourt, advancing towards the junior, who stopped with a flush in his cheeks. "I am glad to see you." Algy jumped.

A dreadful suspicion shot across his mind that his respected parent had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

The Head rose to his feet in blank amazement.

Lord Westcourt's prejudice against the nameless schoolboy had already worried the Head. He had been prepared for a disagreeable five minutes in his study. Instead of which, here was his lordship smiling most benignly upon the nameless junior, and holding out his hand—actually holding out his aristocratic hand to Harry Nameless.

"Upon my word!" gasped the Head.

"Father!" stammered Algy blankly.

Lord Westcourt did not heed.

"Give me your hand, my boy," said his lord-

ship, with a benignant smile at the crimson junior. "I am proud, my boy, to shake the hand of a lad so brave, so plucky, so worthy of the best traditions of my old school!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head, wondering whether he was dreaming.

Harry Nameless mechanically held out his hand. He could not do otherwise, with the aristocratic fingers of a peer of the realm outstretched to shake it.

Lord Westcourt shook hands with him heartily.

Then he turned to the Head.

"This is very fortunate," he said. "I understood the boy was unknown—"

"His—his origin is certainly unknown," stammered the Head. "That is why he is called—"

"I do not quite follow, sir. The boy Bootles made a false claim—"

"Eh?"

"Which this boy could have dispersed at once. It appears that he had not spoken of the matter—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It is fortunate that he came to your study at this moment, while I am here," said Lord Westcourt. "I was very desirous of making his acquaintance."

"You—you—you were desirous of making his acquaintance—" stammered the Head.

"Certainly."

"But—but—you—I— Bless my soul! Do you know who this boy is, Lord Westcourt?"

"I do not know his name, sir; but I know he is the lad who helped me so gallantly one day last week—"

"What—"

"Oh, my only aunt!" yelled Algernon Aubrey, forgetting the august presence in which he stood. "So that's it?"

He shook his fist at Harry Nameless.

"You spoofing bounder, why didn't you tell me?" howled Algy.

"The boy appears to have kept quite silent on the matter," said his lordship, in some perplexity. "Modesty, of course, is—quite becoming, but this was really carrying it very far. Have you quite recovered from the injuries you received, my dear boy?"

"Yes," gasped Harry.

"That is good, Algernon!"

"Ye-e-es, father?"

"There is no need for you to seek friends among—among persons of—of obscure origin and unknown antecedents," said his lordship severely. "A boy like this would be a much more suitable friend for you."

"Oh, gad!" gasped Algy helplessly.

"I hope you will be friends, Algernon."

"We—we—we are, sir!"

"I am glad to hear it—very glad to hear it. By the way, I do not yet know your name, my boy," said his lordship, turning to Harry with a smile. "I must know the name of the brave lad to whom I owe my personal safety."

Harry Nameless looked helplessly at the Head. That gentleman seemed to be in a dazed state.

"Lord Westcourt," stuttered the Head, "I—I am amazed—this is most—most extraordinary! This—this boy—this is Nameless!"

"Harry Nameless, father!" said Algernon, with a chirp of glee.

Lord Westcourt stood stock still.

His noble brain did not seem quite able to grasp the startling information for a moment or two.

"Nameless!" he repeated vaguely. "I—I was waiting here to see Nameless—"

"He came because he was sent for to see you, sir," said the Head. "This boy is Nameless, whose friendship with your son has—"

"Good gad!"

Harry's cheeks burned.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" he faltered. "It—it was not my wish to see you, sir—"

"You—you are Nameless!" Even yet his lordship did not seem quite able to grasp it. "But you are the boy who assisted me so gallantly in the wood—"

Harry smiled faintly.

"Yes, sir."

"The two are one and the same, apparently, Lord Westcourt," said the Head, with a smile. "It was Harry Nameless who helped you—"

Lord Westcourt sat down.

"I—I am somewhat at a loss," he said. "I—I never knew—I did not think—I—I— Boy, why did you not give me your name when I asked you? I asked you that afternoon, and you did not tell me—"

Harry's colour deepened.

"Because—" He spoke haltingly. "I—I knew why you'd come down to St. Kit's, sir, and—and—"

"You did not choose to let me know that I was under an obligation to you?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

"But—but—" His lordship was not often at a loss for words. But he was at a loss now. He looked long and earnestly at Harry's flushed, proud face. And he found words at last. "My desire was to be just, Nameless. That is it—to be just. If I had seen you when I came—in fact, I did see you, it appears—not as I expected. I mean, if you had been here I should have formed a different opinion of you. Your avoidance of me gave me a bad impression. Perhaps I did not make a sufficient allowance for your natural feelings. My brother-in-law,

Colonel Wilmot, saw you under very unfavourable circumstances, I believe. That

accounts—" His lordship paused again. He coloured a little as he rose to his feet. "My boy, I feel that I owe you an apology—"

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Harry.

"I do—and I now render it," said his lordship in the most stately manner. "Algernon."

"Yaas, father?"

"I hope that you and Nameless will be great friends."

Algy's eyes danced.

"Yaas, rather!" he said. "I'll make him be pally."

"I trust, Nameless, that you will let bygones be bygones and not remember any—any unfortunate misunderstandings—"

He shook hands again with Harry Nameless.

"Algernon, you may take your friend away while I speak to the headmaster a few minutes, and if you youngsters will ask me to tea in your study—"

"What-ho!" chuckled Algernon Aubrey.

It was a right merry tea-party in Study No. 5 that afternoon.

Lord Westcourt had on his most charming manners.

Harry, rather to his surprise, found that he liked Algy's pater immensely.

When his lordship was gone the Honourable Algernon Aubrey St. Leger looked rather comically at his chum.

"All serene now—what?" he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry, laughing.

The door opened and a dolorous face blinked in.

"Has he gone?" groaned Bunny Bootles. "Anything left to eat?" Oh, dear! I say, the Head has been pitching into me! I—I've been flogged!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Algernon Aubrey rose to his feet.

"So long as I believed it was you helped my pater, Bunny, I felt that I oughtn't to kick you," he said. "Now I know it wasn't you, I feel that I ought. Catchy on?"

"Look here, you beast— Yaroooooh!"

The study door closed on Bunny. And that evening peace and contentment reigned in Study No. 5, and all was calm and bright for Harry Nameless and Algernon Aubrey—no longer parted chums.



SCHOOL RAGS!

Famous school rags in the past have in nearly every case been brought about by some blazing instance of injustice. The schoolboy does not rise for nothing. He will often sooner submit to the caprice of the tyranny of an unpopular master than bring disrepute on his school by assisting in an attack on discipline. A barring-out which took place some years back was occasioned by the folly of a temporary master. This person imperilled the very existence of the establishment by his vexatious exactions. Lines were inflicted without rhyme or reason and, unfortunately, the Head was too deep in his own studies to realise what was happening until it was too late. Driven fairly mad by gatings, and a tremendous list of minor penalties, the Lower School rose en masse. To make matters worse, at any rate so far as the ill-judged system brought in by the hated master was concerned, the prefects were also as much fed up as the fags.

The Rebellion I

That is how the row began, but it developed. The fire once caught burst into a conflagration which shook the foundations of the place. The Head woke up to the danger too late. The seniors had been goaded to desperation. Time-honoured privileges had been docked. Now, it is the prefects who really maintain the order of a school. They are the delegates of the authority of the masters. But in this notable instance prefects had been treated like little boys. What happened was just what might have been expected by any rational being. At the start the seniors stood for authority and the masters. The unpopular newcomer took another false step. He visited the long-suffering monitors with ridiculous punishments for their neglect in allowing the fags to break out. That was the last straw. The camel's back broke. In this big row, which took place some seventy years ago, the prefects had from the start done their level best to keep the peace. Their sympathies were with the Lower Forms. The youngsters had been put upon in abominable fashion. No credit was given to the monitors for what they had done to stave off a riot. The captain of the school was the last word in popularity. He was virtually a king among the kids. The juniors revered him. But there is a breaking point. The youngsters saw their hero supporting a tyrant. That was their view. Hence they threw over the respected captain, and started out for themselves. The "inky fingered fags" had not got it right. The prefects held a meeting with the captain in the chair. "This can't go on, you fellows," he said. "This is no fags' brawl, but a school fight for freedom." The prefects threw in their lot with the youngsters, and the affair,

which had started with a fags' row, became an out and out rebellion. Masters found themselves held at bay. It was no little shindy to be settled in a day with a few birchings and a reprimand. The leaders issued orders. Barricades were thrown up in approved style, food was brought in, the school furniture was smashed, and the dreamy old Head received an ultimatum which roused him at last from his dreams.

A Compromise I

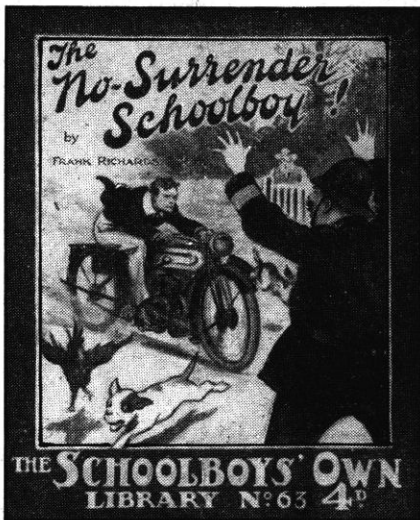
In this barring-out the fags showed themselves thoroughly amenable to discipline. They had always been ready to obey their prefects, but the wholesale deprivation of liberties by the misguided master, his spying methods, his cat-like tread in the corridors, his abominable hobby of interfering in matters which had hitherto been the province of the captain of the school, all served to make the youngsters ready for a fight. The struggle lasted a week. At the end of that time the school authorities had to consent to a compromise. It was a combined school victory.

In the main, however, masters are liked. They are picked men who understand boys. In another direction the ragging of a newcomer who has not toed the line, or who has flouted the school, either through sheer ignorance (which is inexcusable) or from obstinacy, is a business with which the masters have nothing to do.

Playing the Game I

The honour of a school is safe in the keeping of fellows who are proud to belong to the establishment. That there are sometimes instances of injustice cannot be denied, but once again we have the splendid fairness of the schoolboy. He is out to play the game. If he makes "pie" of the belongings of an outsider who is bringing disgrace to the school, who will blame him? There are unsporting actions which cannot be punished under any known code of law. There is a pernickety form of tale-bearing which is hard to detect; there is a type of fellow who seems unable to understand that some things are not done—just simply not done, such as ragging some unlucky little fag, or currying favour with the masters, or acting like a prig, a snob, or any other kind of cad. Those who err in this way get it in the neck. They have asked for it. They have refused to fall in with the unwritten rules of the school. In short, they are outsiders, and one evening they find their study a hopeless chaos, with ink where it should not be and gum and treacle intruding amidst their belongings. As like as not they swallow it down—not the gum!—and become decent chaps, thanks to the lesson.

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