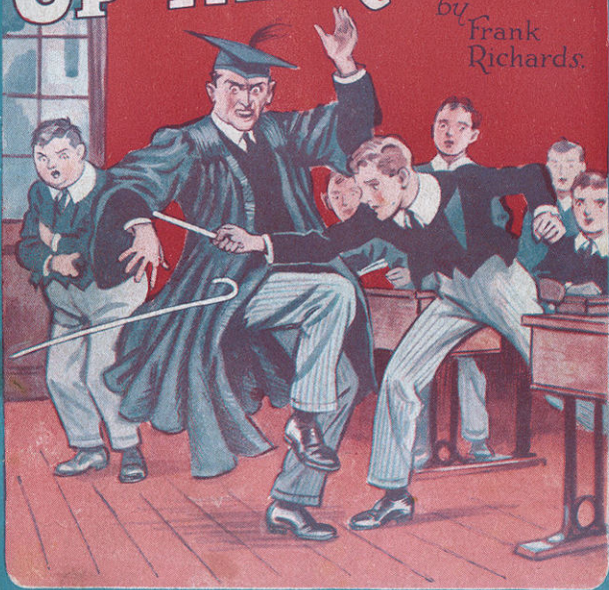


UP-THE REBELS!

by
Frank
Richards.



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**"I Say,
You Fellows!"**



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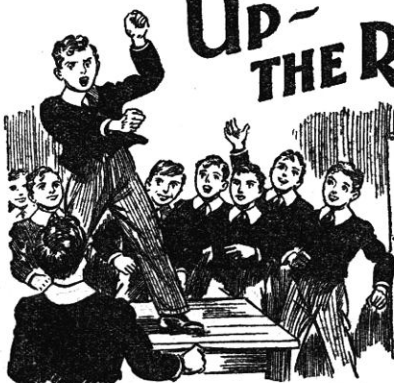
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"I say, you fellows!" says Billy Bunter, the fattest, funniest school-boy in the world. "I say—you know lots of things about me, and know how hard I have to work to get a good square meal. Well, you can read heaps more about me in the 'HOLIDAY ANNUAL.' Don't miss this big budget of school and adventure yarns. Not only can you find out more about me, but you will also meet all the other famous schoolboy pals of Greyriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools. They are featured in many of the stories, too! Get this topping book to-day."

UP— THE REBELS!

By Frank
Richards.



NOTICE TO ST KIT'S
DOWN WITH CARKER
IT IS HEREBY ANNOUNCED
THAT THE FOURTH FORM
HAVE DECIDED TO
SACK CARKER
ALL OTHER FORMS
ARE CALLED UPON TO
BACK UP THE FOURTH
MEETING AT 12-30 IN THE
GLORY HOLE
SIGNED *H. Wilmot*

A tyrant of the worst type is Mr. Carker, the new Head of St. Kit's, and his reign of tyranny sets the whole school in an uproar. But the climax comes when the Fourth Form, led by **HARRY WILMOT & Co.**, rebel against him!

CHAPTER I.

Three Out of Bounds!

"THE Head!"

"Oh, rotten!"

"Horrid, dear boys!" sighed Algernon Aubrey St. Leger; "it's a fair catch." The three juniors of St. Kit's, who had been looking quite merry and bright a few seconds before, wore expressions of dismay.

It was the sudden sight of Dr. Chenies, the reverend Head of St. Kit's, that caused the change.

Even in the quad at St. Kit's the Head was an awe-inspiring figure. Now he was a terrifying one.

For Harry Wilmot & Co. of the

Fourth were a good mile from St. Kit's—and out of bounds.

They had never dreamed for one moment of encountering the Head on the footpath in Lynn Wood. But there he was!

They sighted him quite suddenly at a turn of the footpath.

They knew that the Head was absent from the school that afternoon. Naturally, they couldn't guess that he would return by way of Lynn, and walk through the wood of St. Kit's. Still less could they guess that he would happen along just when they were following the path towards Lyncroft.

But there he was—and the three juniors blinked at him in dismay.

For it was quite a serious matter.

There had been so many rows and "rags" of late between the heroes of St. Kit's and the Lyncroft fellows that the Head had placed Lynn Wood out of bounds for a week as a lesson and a warning.

Obviously, both the lesson and the warning had been lost on Harry Wilmot & Co., for there they were, progressing cheerily along the footpath towards Lyncroft, just as if the Head's notice had never been placed on the board.

They had not meant any disrespect to the Head. They had not meant anything but a "rag" on Turkey & Co. of Lyncroft. But it rushed into their minds—as they beheld Dr. Chenies—that the Head would take quite a different view of the matter.

They halted, staring at the advancing figure, still at a good distance. They waited for the thunderbolt.

Then it suddenly dawned upon Bob Rake that the Head had not seen them yet.

The old gentleman was walking along very slowly, his hands folded behind his back, his eyes fixed on the ground—an expression of deep thought on his clear-cut, kind old face.

Bob caught Harry Wilmot by the arm with one hand, Algernon Aubrey by the ear with the other.

"Cover!" he breathed. "He's not spotted us yet—"

"Cover, you ass!"

"Quick!" breathed Harvey.

"Ow!"

The three Fourth-Formers backed hurriedly into the underwoods.

"Hold on a minute—" gasped St. Leger.

"Quick—"

"I've dropped my eyeglass—"

"You thumping ass—quick!"

Algernon Aubrey was dragged out of sight. He cast a regretful glance at his celebrated monocle, lying in the grass. But evidently it was not safe

to attempt to retrieve that celebrated monocle. The Head was coming on, slowly but surely; and if he looked up—

"Safe as houses!" breathed Bob Rake, peering through the brambles. "He won't see us as he passes."

"Suppose he—" began Algernon Aubrey.

"He won't!"

"But suppose he—"

"Quiet. It's all right."

"Suppose he treads on my eyeglass—"

"He won't notice it if he does, fat-head!"

"Begad! I wasn't thinkin' whether he would notice it or not! I was thinkin' of my dashed eyeglass."

Harry Wilmot peered out of cover. The Head was still ten yards away, and he had not looked up. He had heard nothing; the juniors' footsteps had been quite noiseless on the carpet of fallen leaves that covered the footpath. Evidently Dr. Chenies did not dream that he was anywhere near three juniors of the Fourth Form who had recklessly disregarded his lesson and his warning.

"What a giddy relief!" murmured Bob Rake. "I suppose he came by train to Lynn."

"Looks like it."

"Looks as if he's thinking out some merry mathematical problem," said Bob, with a grin.

"He's been to see my pater. I believe," remarked Algy. "There's been some jaw among the governors, and the pater is the chairman of the governing board, you know. P'raps that's what he's thinkin' out. The governors must have bored him fearfully."

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob, in suppressed tones. "There's another johnny on the footpath. Look there!"

"Oh, gad!"

The juniors simply stared.

The Head was quite near now, walking slowly, wrapped in thought.

Behind him, on the footpath, another figure had appeared.

It was the figure of a thick-set man, dressed rather loudly, with a red face, and narrow, sharp, cunning eyes. The man looked like the worst class of racing "tout." He was evidently following the Head; he was running, but so cautiously that his footsteps made no sound, and gradually overtaking the old gentleman.

There was a short, thick stick grasped in his right hand, and his whole look told of his intentions.

The juniors gazed at him dumb-founded.

It was evident that the red-faced, narrow-eyed rascal was following the Head of St. Kit's with hostile intentions, and that a brutal attack was about to take place.

It did not look as if the man's object was robbery, for it was clear that he was stealing behind Dr. Chenies to knock him down from the rear, without a word spoken.

For some seconds the juniors were rooted to the spot in their utter amazement.

Why anyone, even a ruffian, should meditate such an attack upon a kind-hearted old gentleman who could not be supposed to have an enemy in the world was an amazing mystery.

But there was no doubt of the man's object, and Harry Wilmot quickly recovered himself.

There was no thought in his mind now of concealment—"out of bounds" did not matter now. His only thought was to save the Head from the blow that was about to descend upon him. He made a sudden spring out of the brambles into the footpath, shouting as he did so, and racing towards the Head.

"Look out, sir!"

"Look out!" yelled Bob Blake, dashing into view after his chum. And Algernon Aubrey St. Leger followed fast, without even stopping to pick up his eyeglass.

CHAPTER 2.

Struck Down!

DR. CHENIES gave a jump. The sudden sight of three excited juniors racing up the footpath towards him and yelling a warning brought him out of his deep meditations—whatever they were—with a violent start.

"Why—what?" he ejaculated.

"Look out, sir—behind you——" yelled Harry desperately.

"What?"

"Danger—look——" shrieked Bob.

The narrow-eyed man had paused for an instant at the sight of the schoolboys.

But it was only for an instant. A hard and desperate look came over his stubby face, and, throwing concealment to the winds, he rushed right on Dr. Chenies, with his cudgel uplifted.

The Head spun round, half-realising his danger.

He gave a startled cry at the sight of the ruffian rushing on him with uplifted cudgel, and threw up his arms to ward off the blow.

Harry Wilmot & Co. were tearing towards the spot at frantic speed to intervene.

But the blow fell before they could reach their headmaster.

It was a savage, crushing blow, and Dr. Chenies uttered a sharp cry of pain as he caught it on his arm, saving his head.

His arm dropped numb to his side, and the cudgel swept up again for another blow.

"Stop, you villain!" panted Harry.

He put on a desperate spurt and came up. The ruffian struck again, but the junior was so close to him now that he struck wildly, and the blow landed on Dr. Chenies' shoulder, glancing off.

Before he could recover the cudgel to lift it again Harry Wilmot was upon him.

The captain of the St. Kit's Fourth struck out with all his strength, and his clenched fist landed full in the red face.

The ruffian spun back and rolled on the footpath.

Dr. Chenies staggered against a tree, his face white as chalk, his lips compressed with pain.

Bob Rake ran to him to support him, and St. Leger lent his aid.

The narrow-eyed man was on his feet again, glaring savagely at the group, and for a second he seemed about to hurl himself upon Wilmot.

But the other two juniors were ready to back up their chum; and the ruffian changed his mind and darted away into the wood.

His nose was streaming crimson as he ran.

"After him, you fellows!" shouted Harry.

He was springing into the wood in pursuit when the Head called out faintly:

"Wilmot! Stop!"

Harry turned back.

Bob and St. Leger were supporting the Head, and he needed their support. It was evident that he was hard hit.

"Come back, Wilmot," said the Head. "I forbid you to go into danger—come back at once."

"Very well, sir," said Harry, returning to the footpath.

"The police will deal with that—that ruffian!" gasped the Head. "I—I need your help, my boys."

He leaned on the tree, panting for breath. His terrible experience, brief as it had been, had almost overcome him.

It was some minutes before he spoke again.

"I—I am afraid I must ask you to help me to the school," he said at last.

"I—I feel very faint! My arm is hurt. Thank you for coming to my help as you did."

"Shall I cut off and get the hack from Wicke, sir?" asked Bob Rake. "I can get it on the road by the time these chaps help you to the end of the footpath."

"A very good thought, Rake! Go at once!"

Bob Rake dashed off down the foot-

path at top speed towards the village. He disappeared from view in a couple of seconds.

The Head, leaning heavily on Harry and St. Leger on either side of him, moved slowly in the same direction.

The juniors helped him dutifully. By the time they reached the end of the footpath where it gave upon the Wicke road Bob Rake was there with the hack from the station.

The juniors gave a sigh of relief as Dr. Chenies sank upon the seat in the old dusty vehicle.

"Drive to the school as fast as you can," said Harry Wilmot to the driver. He looked in at the door. "Shall I go for the doctor, sir, and send him up to the school?"

"Please do, Wilmot," said the Head faintly; "and call at the police-station and give information of this outrage."

"Certainly, sir."

The hack drove off towards St. Kit's, and Harry Wilmot & Co. turned their steps in the opposite direction towards the village.

CHAPTER 3.

Surprising News!

THERE was some excitement—and a good deal of concern—at St. Kit's the next day. It was known that the Head lay ill in bed, with the doctor in attendance. Police-constable Bandy, of Wicke, was seen at the school, and Inspector Chater came over from Lynn and had a rather long interview with the Head. Harry Wilmot & Co. observed the inspector when he left, and they read the puzzled expression on his face.

The attack on Dr. Chenies perplexed the police-inspector, as it perplexed all St. Kit's and the neighbourhood generally.

On Saturday the Head was not seen, and on Sunday he did not take the service as usual in school chapel.

On Monday Bunny Bootles had news. He burst into the top study at teatime full of it.

"Heard, you fellows?" he spluttered.

Algernon Audrey groaned.

"More news?" he said.

"Yes, rather."

"Go and tell somebody else, old bean."

"Look here——"

"Run off to No. 5—I believe Tracy and Durance would be awfully interested, Bunny."

"You silly ass——"

"Blow away, old bean! Don't I keep on tellin' you that you talk too much, Bunny?" said Algy reproachfully.

"Oh, I say! Is that the way you thank a chap for coming to tell you the news—the great news?" demanded Cuthbert Archibald Bootles warily. "I say, the Head——"

"Worse?" asked Harry, looking up.

"No; better, I believe——"

"That's good."

"Yes, I'm rather sorry for the old bird," said Bunny. "Really, you know, though he's our headmaster! But the news is that he's too crooked to keep on his duties at St. Kit's——"

"Poor old Head!" said Bob.

"The doctor's ordered him away," said Bunny. "He's going off to Bournemouth to-morrow with Mrs. Chenies——"

"Did he tell you so?"

"Ahem! I heard Mr. Rawlings saying so to Mr. Rattrey. I say, you chaps don't seem very interested," said Bunny. "If the Head goes away there'll have to be somebody in his place. The question is, who will it be? Old Tulke, the master of the Fifth, is senior master."

"Old Tulke's not a bad old sparrow," remarked Algy. "We can do with him as headmaster—especially as we shan't have anythin' to do with him."

"But it won't be Tulke!" said Bunny.

"Why not?"

"There's a new man coming in the Head's place!" announced Bunny Bootles.

Harry Wilnot & Co. "sat up and took notice," as it were, at last.

"What rot!" said Bob. "If the

Head's only going away for his health, it's pretty certain that Mr. Tulke will carry on in his place."

"So the masters thought," grinned Bunny. "So old Tulke thought. I fancy old Tulke feels his nose rather put out of joint. But the board of governors have decided——"

"How do you know, fatty?"

"I happened to hear Rawlings and Rattrey talking. I was behind the door—I mean, I was stooping in the passage to tie up my bootlace. Some of the governors think a lot of Carker——"

"Who the merry thump is Carker?"

"Carker's the new man—he's coming to take the Head's place while he's away. I say, there's been a lot of jaw about it," said Bunny. "Fancy us never hearing a word. But I heard it all from Rawlings—he's ratty. So is Rattrey. They don't like it. You see, the governors have been discussing whether the Head ought to retire—some of them are so keen on this man Carker. It was only Lord Westcourt standing up for the Head so strongly that kept them from asking him to retire! Fancy that!"

"My pater?" said Algy.

"Yes. Your pater backs up the Head through thick and thin. The governors had to drop the idea—he got a majority," said Bunny. "Rawlings and Rattrey know all about it. But now the Head's crooked, and going away, they've fixed it up, and Carker is coming here as temporary headmaster."

"Then that brute attacking the Head was rather a stroke of luck for this Carker merchant," remarked Bob Rake.

"Couldn't have happened better for him," said Bunny. "I hear that Carker is a bit of a goer—strong on discipline—the iron hand, you know. That was how Rawlings put it."

Algernon Aubrey yawned.

"Bunny, old man," he said, "you seem to me to hear a thunderin' lot when you stop to tie up your bootlace."

"Yes, and I heard——"

"Ease off now, old bean! Don't tell us any more."

"But I heard——"

"Dry up!" roared Algy.

"But I heard——" gasped Bunny, fairly bursting with his news.

"Oh, gad! Is that chap wound up?" moaned Algernon Aubrey. "Isn't there any way of stoppin' him?"

"I heard——"

"Blow away, Bunny!"

"I heard Rawlings say that there'll be trouble if Carker tries to introduce his methods at St. Kit's," gasped Bunny. "And Rattrey said that he could not count upon the support of the masters in introducing any innovations—old Rattrey always spins out the giddy syllables. He meant that there's going to be a shindy."

"Yaas. I can see Rattrey punchin' the new Head's nose—in my mind's eye, Horatio!" grinned Algernon Aubrey.

"Of course, it won't come to that," said Bunny. "But there's going to be trouble when Carker comes. The Head don't like it, and the masters don't like it, and I don't approve of it myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Better let Carker know that, Bunny, and he will keep away."

"And I heard——" resumed Bunny, apparently not yet at the end of his budget of news.

But at this point Algernon Aubrey St. Leger exerted himself to the extent of rising from the armchair, taking Bunny by one fat ear, and leading him out into the passage.

"Blow away!" he said.

"Look here, you ass——"

"Go and tell Tracy! Go and tell Licke! Go and tell Gunter of the Fifth! Don't come back till you've blown it all off. Catchy on?"

"You silly owl——"

Algernon Aubrey closed the door on Bunny. That fat youth snorted, and rolled away to impart the news along the Fourth-Form passage.

Bunny's news was not always well-founded; but on this occasion Bunny

was right, for the next day the St. Kit's fellows saw the Head drive away in his car, and they capped him with great respect and sympathy as he went. And there was official news that Mr. Carker was to arrive the next day to take up the headmaster's duties at St. Kit's. And enough was known, or rumoured, about Mr. Randolph Carker to make the whole school, from the captain to the smallest fag in the Second Form, keenly interested in his arrival.

CHAPTER 4.

The Interfering Stranger!

"WHAT about this afternoon?" Rake propounded that query after lessons on Wednesday.

It was a half-holiday and a fine sunny day. That day the new Head was to arrive at St. Kit's; but the top study were not specially interested—not to the extent of staying within gates to see him when he came, at all events.

"Football?" suggested Harry.

Algernon Aubrey groaned.

"Oh, let's get out of gates!" said Bob. "There's no match on, excepting a Sixth Form match, and——"

"Olfphant would be flattered!" said Harry, laughing.

"Well, we don't want to waste time watching Sixth-Form football. The Lyncroft fellows come to Wicke sometimes on half-holidays," said Bob. "I haven't seen any of that crowd yet, and the fellows are always talking about Turkey & Co. What about a trot down to Wicke?"

Algy gave another groan.

Apparently the idea of a walk to Wicke afflicted him as much as the idea of playing football. The dandy of the Fourth was stretched upon the sofa in the top study, and he seemed disposed to stay there.

"Feeling tired?" asked Bob.

"Yaas."

"Don't feel equal to exerting yourself this afternoon?"

"No."

"You'd rather stick to the sofa?"

"Yaas."

"I thought so," said Bob cheerily. "I'll give you something to cure all that."

And the stalwart Cornstalk grasped Algernon Aubrey by his elegant shoulders and rolled him off the sofa.

Bump!

"Oh, gad!" gasped Algernon Aubrey, as he landed on the carpet.

"Feel better?" asked Bob.

"You howlin' idiot——"

"Like some more?"

"You dangerous maniac——"

Algernon Aubrey scrambled to his feet.

"Now, we're ready," said Bob.

"Come on, Algy, old pippin. Take my arm."

"Keep off!" yelled Algy.

"Then I'll take yours."

"Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilnot, as he followed Bob and Algy. With Bob's powerful grip on his arm, Algy was progressing along the Fourth Form passage at a great rate. As a rule, Algernon Aubrey St. Leger cultivated the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But in the presence of the exuberant Bob, there was not much of the repose.

In the quadrangle Algy succeeded in detaching himself, breathlessly. He regarded Bob through his eyeglass, probably with a doubt in his noble mind as to whether he had done wisely in chumming with this exceedingly exuberant youth from "down under."

Bunny Bootles rolled up to the three in the quad.

"Staying in to see Carker?" he asked.

"No jolly fear!"

"Where are you going?" demanded Bunny.

"Wicke."

"Good; I'll come. They've got some jolly decent cakes at the village shop," said Bunny.

"Come on," said Bob. "Glad of your company, Bunny. We're going to look for the Lyncroft rotters——"

"Eh?"

"There'll be a scrap——"

"What?"

"And we want you in the fore-front of the battle, like giddy old Uriah!" said Bob. "Come on!"

Bunny Bootles backed away.

"Now I think of it, I promised Olphant to turn up to see the senior match!" he said hurriedly. And Bunny Bootles scuttled off to Big Side, not, perhaps, very keenly interested in Sixth Form football, but very keen indeed to keep at a distance from a scrap with Turkey & Co. of Lyncroft.

Harry Wilnot & Co. walked down to the gates and strolled out.

Algy looked thoughtful as the chums of the Fourth sauntered down the lane.

He was thinking of the strenuous afternoon Bob Rake had mapped out for the three.

"I'll tell you what, you chaps," said Algy confidently. "Bunny's quite right about these cakes at Uncle Shrub's. We'll jolly well go in and sample them, what?"

His comrades chuckled. Algy's sudden enthusiasm on the subject of Uncle Shrub's cakes was a little too "thin."

"We jolly well won't!" said Bob. "We'll root through Wicke in search of Lyncroft bouncers."

"By the way," said Algy, still thoughtful, "there's a jolly old ruined castle near Lynn, Bob. You don't have that kind of thing in New Zealand——"

"Australia, fathead!"

"I mean Australia, fathead. I'm sure you'd be no end interested in those giddy old ruins——"

"Ruined castles will keep!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "I say, is that a Lyncroft cap?"

"Begad! I hope not."

But it was! A Lyncroft junior was strolling down the lane, and he halted at the sight of the St. Kit's trio. Without waiting for them to come nearer,

the Lyncrofter turned and ran back towards the village.

"Tally-ho!" roared Bob.

He broke into hot pursuit at once, and Harry Wilmot rushed after him. Algernon Aubrey gazed after his comrades through his eyeglass, and considered. Algy feared no foe, and he was a great fighting man when his noble blood was roused. But he preferred the primrose path of ease. He sauntered on at his leisure, and in a few seconds Bob and Harry Wilmot had vanished from his sight round the bends of the lane.

"Let the dear boys rip!" murmured Algy. "I'll come in at the death!" And he polished his eyeglass as he walked on.

Harry Wilmot and Bob Rake were going strong on the track of the fleeing Lyncroft. Not that they had any very ferocious intentions towards the Lyncroft junior. Lyncroft and St. Kit's seldom or never met without a rag, but there was no great harm done in the ragging.

The Lyncrofter trotted into the village and vanished into Uncle Shrubbs' tuckshop, opposite the railway-station.

"Run to earth!" chuckled Bob. "Come on!"

Harry Wilmot laughed, and ran on by the side of his chum. They came up to the doorway of the tuckshop in a rush.

"Here they are!" yelled the cornered fugitive.

Three more Lyncroft caps showed up in the village shop. Turkey & Co. were there—Dick Hawke, otherwise known as "Turkey," Buster Bunce, and Topford. Bob and Harry Wilmot stopped suddenly in the doorway. They realised now that the Lyncroft fugitive had been leading them into a trap.

"Trot in, old beans!" said Turkey agreeably.

"Fancy meeting you!" said Buster Bunce, with a fat chuckle.

"We came along to look for St. Kit's cads!" grinned Topford. "Trot in!

Don't be bashful! Can't you see we're glad to see you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lyncroft were two to one, Algy being far behind. Bob and Harry Wilmot exchanged a glance and backed out of the village shop. Uncle Shrubbs peered at them across the counter.

"Walk in, young gentlemen," he said. "I've just finished serving these young gents. Please walk in."

"They don't seem to care for our company!" grinned Turkey. "We were only going to anoint them with soda-water, and put a few tarts down their necks! Sure you fellows won't come in?"

"Thanks, no," said Harry.

"Then we'll come out."

Four Lyncrofters came out with a rush. Turkey had a soda-siphon in his hands, and it was only too clear that he intended to use it on the St. Kit's fellows.

Sizzzzzzzz!

Wilmot and Bob jumped back. There was a box of eggs exposed for sale outside Uncle Shrubbs' establishment. Bob Rake grabbed at the nearest egg.

Whiz!

"Yoooooch!" spluttered Turkey.

There was a crash as the siphon went to the ground. Turkey staggered back, clutching frantically at the egg that had broken on his nose.

Uncle Shrubbs' eggs were marked "Best Fresh!" If they were best, it was only too clear that they were not fresh, to judge by the sample that Turkey had received. That egg, at least, was only suitable for electioneering purposes.

"Grooogh-hoogh-oooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give them some more!" roared Bob.

"Collar the cads—oooch—down them!" spluttered Turkey.

Buster Bunce and Topford and Fowler rushed on the two. Another egg squashed on Buster Bunce, but he came on unheeding. Turkey followed up his chums. In a moment there

was a terrific scrap raging outside Uncle Shrubbs' little shop.

"Scraps" between Lyncroft and St. Kit's were far from uncommon in the old High Street of Wick. Two or three pedestrians laughed and got out of the way. But a tall, thin gentleman, with a Roman nose who had just come out of the railway-station stopped and stared, and then crossed the street with long, vigorous strides towards the scene.

"Stop this disgraceful disturbance!"

His sharp, metallic voice rang out loudly. The juniors did not heed him.

Harry Wilmot was struggling with Bunce and Fowler, and Bob was keeping his end up against Turkey. Topford, fortunately, had sat in the box of eggs, and he was in a horrid state, and hors de combat for the present.

"Do you hear me?" thundered the tall gentleman with the Roman nose. "Stop this uproar at once."

Still he was not heeded.

But he was heeded the next moment, as he strode up to the scrapping juniors and laid about him with his walking-cane.

"Yarrah!"

"What the thump——"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors separated then and jumped away. They were wild with wrath and indignation and they fairly glared at the Roman-nosed gentleman.

"Confound your cheek!" roared Bob Rake. "What the thump do you mean, you old bouncer?"

"What?"

"Keep that stick to yourself, if you jolly well don't want your silly shins lashed!" roared Bob.

"You insolent young rascal——"

"You cheeky old donkey!"

"What? What?"

The Roman-nosed gentleman made an angry stride at Bob. His walking-cane was uplifted.

Who the man was Bob had not the faintest idea—he had never seen him or his Roman nose before. But he knew

that he was not going to be licked by a stranger, who had "buted into" an affair that did not concern him in the least.

Bob grabbed up an egg as the stranger advanced on him. Without stopping to think he hurled it.

Crash!

The egg smashed on the Roman nose.

"Goal!" yelled Turkey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooch!" The tall gentleman spluttered frantically. "You—you insolent young villain—grooph—you—you ooooh! I will—ooooh!"

Smash!

Another egg smote the interfering stranger, catching him behind the ear this time.

"Right on the wicket!" gasped Wilmot.

The tall gentleman jumped back from the pavement into the road. His soft hat fell off, and he stooped to grasp it, and as he did so a third egg caught him in the collar. Bob's blood was up now, and he was quite reckless. He was prepared to pay Uncle Shrubbs for the ammunition he used and the interfering stranger was welcome to all of it.

"Oh! Ah! Oooch! Groogh!"

The Roman-nosed gentleman picked up his hat and fled.

"Give him some more!" roared Bob.

St. Kit's and Lyncroft united to punish the interfering stranger, who had butted into their scrap. A perfect volley of eggs flew across the High Street after the Roman-nosed gentleman and half a dozen of them smashed on his back before he dodged into the railway-station and disappeared.

CHAPTER 5.

Simply Awful!

"O H, my hat!" gasped Bob Rake. "What an afternoon!" murmured Wilmot.

"Oh, dear! Look at my bags!" moaned Buster Bunce. "I'm all eggs."

Turkey burst into a laugh.

"I think that meddling bouncer is sorry he butted in," he remarked. "What the thump business was it of his?"

"None at all," said Harry, laughing. "I think we'd better make it pax, Turkey, and pay Mr. Shrubb for those eggs."

Turkey grinned.
"Done!" he said.

There had been some damage done in the tussle, but the heroes of St. Kit's and Lyncroft never bore malice. They entered the tuckshop together, and amicably discussed ginger-pop and jam tarts together, as if they had never thought of scrapping in their lives. Buster Bunce cast sidelong glances down at his eggy trousers, but he was comforted with jam tarts and the smiles returned to his chubby face. There was cheery amity on all sides when an eye-glass gleamed in at the door.

"Enjoyin' yourselves, dear boys?" drawled Algernon Aubrey St. Leger.

"No end," said Bob. "Trot in, Algy—it's all over. We've licked Lyncroft—"

"You've been licked, you mean!" exclaimed Turkey.

"Now, you ass—"

"Now, you fathead—"

"If you want some more—"

"If you want—"

Algernon Aubrey St. Leger held up his hand.

"Can it, dear boys, can it," he said. "There's a bird with a beak hoverin' in the offing, I think."

For a moment it had looked as if the scrap would be renewed. But at Algy's warning the juniors calmed down again.

"Master coming along," asked Turkey, "or a dashed prefect?"

"Neither, dear boy. But old Coote's waitin' across the way in the school trap, which looks to me as if our merry new headmaster must have arrived by the last train—and it's been in some time now."

"Oh, Carker?" exclaimed Bob. "I'd forgotten Carker."

"We don't want him to drop on us scrappin'," said Algy. "Might give him a mistaken impression of St. Kit's. Might lick us, too."

"It's pax, Turkey," said Harry Wilmot laughing.

"Right you are," said Turkey.

And having settled with Uncle Shrubb, the chums of St. Kit's quitted the village tuckshop. Certainly if their new headmaster was likely to come out of the station at any moment, they did not want to be engaged in a scrap with the Lyncrofters. There was no harm in a good-humoured scrap certainly; but there was no telling what view Mr. Carker might take of it. It was wiser to be on the safe side.

Harry Wilmot glanced across the street. Old Coote, the St. Kit's porter, was visible there, sitting in the school trap. As a matter of fact, old Coote had been there a considerable time, but the juniors had not observed him before—being too interested in the rag.

Old Coote was looking across the street at them, with a very curious expression on his crusty face.

"May as well ask if the Carker bird has arrived," remarked Algernon Aubrey. "If he has, we'll give him a polite greetin', and let him see at the kick-off what nice boys we are; what?"

"May as well," agreed Bob.

The three juniors crossed the street and stopped by the trap. Old Coote still eyed them, and there was a lurking grin on his weatherbeaten countenance.

"Good-afternoon, Coote," said Algernon Aubrey politely.

"Arternoon, Master St. Leger!"

"Waitin' here for Mr. Carker?"

"Yes, sir."

"The train's in, isn't it?"

"Been in ten minutes," grinned Coote.

"Begad! Mr. Coote seems to be enjoyin' some little joke all on his own," remarked St. Leger. "Where does the grin come in, Coote?"

"Oh, my eye!" was Coote's answer. "Nice goings hon! I never did!"

"Anybody know what he's drivin' at?" asked Algy.

"Blessed if I do," said Bob. "Has Mr. Carker arrived, Coote?"

"Which he has, Master Rake."

Harry felt a sudden misgiving.

"Has he been outside the station yet?"

"Yes, Master Wilmot."

"Did he see us—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Great pip! Did he see us scrapping with the Lyncroft bounders, Coote?"

"Jest so, he did, sir."

"Just our luck!" groaned Bob. "But where he is he now?"

"Gone in to wash off the heggs, I expect."

Wilmot and Bob Rake stared at Coote. For the moment they could not fully take in the dread import of his words.

"The—the eggs!" repeated Bob faintly.

"The heggs!" assented Coote.

"But—but—what—how—who—which—" stammered Bob.

"You've done it now, young gents!" said Coote comfortingly. "Such goings hon I never did 'ear of, never."

"You don't mean to say," gasped Harry Wilmot, "you—you—you don't mean to say that that beaky bounder—the meddling ass we pelted, was—was—was—"

"Mr. Carker, sir!" grinned Coote.

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Oh, gad!" murmured Algy. "Have you been peltin' somebody with eggs—oh, you frabjous asses!"

"An interfering ass—" gasped Bob. "A silly jossler who butted into our row with Turkey. It—it—it couldn't have been Carker."

"It was, sir," chuckled Coote. "Never seed such a thing in my life—peltin' a 'eadmaster with heggs, never."

"Oh, dear!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The utter dismay in the faces of the

juniors touched even old Coote's crusty heart. He bent from the trap.

"Cut orf, young gents," he whispered. "I ain't saying anything. P'raps he won't recognise you agin. 'Ook it!"

"Good man!" said Algy. "Come on, you chaps!"

Coote's advice was too good not to be taken. The chums of the St. Kit's Fourth, like the gentleman in Macbeth, stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

They vanished from the station entrance—they disappeared down the old High Street at a rapid trot.

CHAPTER 6.

Mr. Carker Takes Control!

HARRY WILMOT & CO. kept on the trot till they reached the gates of St. Kit's.

There they dropped into a walk, and strolled in at the gates with all the carelessness of manner that they could muster.

They sauntered across the quad to the School House with an elaborate air of leisurely unconcern.

But when they were safe within the walls of the top study, they looked at one another—and they did not look unconcerned.

"We've done it," Bob Rake remarked.

"Looks like it," said Harry ruefully.

"Never say die, old beans," said Algernon Aubrey encouragingly. "All we've got to do is to prove a giddy alibi. Not a word about ragging with Turkey & Co.—not a word about going down to Wicke. Anyhow, you were strangers to the Carker man, and probably he doesn't even know you belong to St. Kit's."

"You're out of it, anyway, old fellow," said Harry. "I'm jolly glad you weren't there."

"Bow-wow!" said Algy. "I'm sorry I wasn't there! I should have enjoyed givin' the Carker man an egg or two."

"He knows we belong to St. Kit's,"

said the captain of the Fourth, after a thoughtful pause.

"How do you make that out, old bean?"

"That must be why he butted in. We thought he was simply an interfering stranger. But he must have known us, and we didn't know him. Not personally, of course, but no doubt he knows the St. Kit's caps."

"Oh, gum!" said Bob, in dismay. "I hadn't thought of that! Yes, I suppose that's why he wedged in, if you come to think of it."

"Still, he doesn't know you personally," said Algy comfortingly. "After all, a new headmaster wouldn't want to start his career with a row and a caning if he could help it. If he's got tact, he may let the matter drop."

"You haven't seen his face!" grunted Bob. "Judging by his jaw and his boko, he's about as likely to let it drop as a bulldog is likely to let go a bone."

"Just about," said Harry.

"You can explain that you didn't know him from Adam," said Algy. "After all, he's not our headmaster until he arrives at St. Kit's and takes over control from Mr. Tulke."

"I hope he'll look at it like that," said Harry. But he did not speak very hopefully.

Bunny Bootles rolled into the study about half an hour later.

"He's come!" he announced.

"Who has?" asked Algy, as if he had quite forgotten that there existed such a personage as a new headmaster.

"The Carker merchant," said Bunny. "Old Cote's been down to the station to drive him up."

"Has he really?"

"You fellows don't know anything," sniffed Bunny. "I keep my eyes open. I saw he looks a bit of a cough-drop."

"What's he like?" grinned Bob.

"Face like a gargoye," said Bunny. "Jaw like a steel trap, and nose like an eagle's beak."

"What a merry brute!" said Algy. "He would feel no end flattered if he heard you, Bunny."

"Catch me letting him hear me," said Bunny. "I'm going to be jolly careful with Carker. He's ruffled old Cote already. I heard him grumbling to the sergeant. He was as short and sharp as you please with Mr. Tulke. Old Tulke had got up a bit of a speech, I believe—he looked like it. You know how he lets his chin run. Carker interrupted him, and snapped that he would see the masters in his study in an hour's time. He said he had already received a very bad impression of the state of discipline in St. Christopher's. He calls the place St. Christopher's. Said some of the boys seemed to him nothing but young hooligans. What could have made him think that, Wilmot?"

"What, indeed?" said Harry grimly.

"I wonder!" murmured Bob.

"He's put old Tulke's back up," continued Bunny. "Never saw a man so like a wolf, and a fox, and a mad dog, all rolled into one. I'll bet you that he'll be hated like poison before he's been here a week. I jolly well wish Dr. Chenies would come back."

Harry Wilmot & Co. were not in their happiest mood over tea that day. Daring tea Stubbs of the Fourth looked in.

"Seen the new beak?" he asked.

"I have," said Bunny. "Horrid, ain't he?"

"Horrid isn't the word," said Stubbs. "He's a rank outsider. He's just been jawing Oliphant."

"Jawing old Oliphant?"

"Yes. Some Third Form kids were leap-frogging in the quad," said Stubbs; "he asked Oliphant whether the prefects here considered it their duty, or not, to keep some kind of order among the fags. Old Oliphant turned as red as a turkey, and said he hoped so. Carker said it did not look like it, so far as he could see. Then he walked on, leaving old Oliphant staring. He's put our skipper's back up."

"Looks as if he's goin' to put everybody's back up," yawned Algy; "I think we'd better cut him, you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nobody seems to want to catch his

eye," said Stubbs. "He's got all the masters in his study now--the Head's study. I saw them going in--they didn't look happy."

"The dear man doesn't seem to possess the gift of conferrin' happiness."

"Hall at five-thirty," added Stubbs, as he turned to the door.

"What for?"

"It's a giddy inspection. Carker is going to inspect us."

"What rot!"

"Perhaps the good man is anxious to make our acquaintance," smiled Algy.

"I think I shall go."

"I think you will!" grinned Stubbs, and he strolled away.

"Hall at five-thirty, and a general inspection!" murmured Bob Rake. "I wonder--"

"You wonder what?" asked Bunny.

"Nothing, old top."

Bunny Bootles rolled away when tea was over and there was nothing eatable left. Then the chums of the Fourth were able to discuss the situation.

"He's going to look us over and pick out the chaps he saw at Wicke," said Harry Wilmot.

"Could we cut it?"

Harry shook his head.

"The roll's certain to be called."

"That's so," said Algy: "stayin' out would attract attention, which would be worse than ever. He mayn't recognise you."

"Let's hope so."

"Anyhow, it's only a lickin'!" remarked Algy.

Bob rubbed his hands in painful anticipation.

"That Carker-man looks as if he could hand out a rather hefty licking," he said. "Head's licking will be a joke to it. Never mind--it's all in the day's work!"

In a rather subdued mood, the chums of the top study joined the crowd going into Hall at five-thirty.

Harry glanced at Oliphant, in the ranks of the Sixth, and noted that the captain of St. Kit's had a grim look. Several other prefects had much the

same expression. All the masters were very grave, and one or two of them were a little irritable. Evidently Mr. Carker's arrival had disturbed the even tenor of things at St. Kit's.

That the new Head was a "tartar" was common knowledge at St. Kit's by this time, and the assembled school was very quiet and orderly. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Carker's eye, as Stubbs had put it. When Mr. Carker entered by the upper door there was a deep silence.

Mr. Carker looked over the assembled school with a searching eye, not at all disconcerted by the steady stare of over two hundred pairs of eyes. His own eyes were very searching--it seemed as if he was noting specially every face there. Each fellow had an impression that Mr. Carker was taking special note of him. Any hope Harry and Bob Rake had had of escaping recognition faded away now. They fully expected Mr. Carker to call them out before the school on the spot. But that did not happen.

Mr. Carker addressed the assembled school in what he would doubtless have considered a few well-chosen words.

He stated that he had been appointed by the Governing Body to take control during Dr. Chenies' absence. He intended to take control--full control. He had an impression that discipline was slack in the school. That would be remedied. He had an impression that there was some reluctance, in some quarters, to afford him the loyal support he had a right to expect. He hoped that that was not so. He hoped that he could count upon masters, prefects, and the school generally to support him. He hoped so sincerely; but if it did not prove to be so, he would know what measures to take.

St. Kit's fairly blinked at Mr. Carker during his short but very pointed speech.

Lack of taste and lack of tact were very evident in Mr. Carker's speech, and Hilton of the Fifth ventured to murmur to Price a wondering query as to where

Mr. Carker could possibly have been brought up.

The speech was followed by a dead silence.

Every word had jarred upon somebody.

Mr. Carker had implied that he was not satisfied with the state in which Dr. Chenies had left the school, which was a reflection on the absent Head. He had hinted that he expected trouble, and was ready to be very unpleasant about it—about the most tactless thing he could have hinted.

Everybody present was anxious to escape from Mr. Carker's flinty eye. But they were not to escape yet.

After a brief pause, he resumed:

"There is another matter to which I must refer—a matter that must be inquired into and disposed of at once."

"Little us!" Bob murmured in Harry Wilmot's ear.

"On my arrival in Wicke this afternoon I saw several juniors of this school engaged in a disgraceful disturbance. Eggs were hurled at me by these juniors when I interposed and commanded a cessation of the disgraceful scene. Every boy who was in Wicke this afternoon will now stand forward, so that I can discover the culprits."

Harry Wilmot drew a deep breath.

"It's all up," he murmured; "better get it over, Bob."

"Right-ho!" groaned Bob.

And the two juniors stepped out of the ranks of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 7.

Going Through It!

RANDOLPH CARKER fixed his eyes upon Wilmot and Bob Rake, and a glitter came into them. It was evident that he recognised the two juniors at once, now that they stood out of the crowd.

He signed to them to advance up the hall.

Several other fellows who had been

in the village that afternoon were coming forward, but Mr. Carker waved them back.

"These two boys are the boys concerned!" he said. "Come here! Your names?"

"Wilmot, sir."

"Rake, sir."

"Your Form?"

"The Fourth."

"You are the two boys who were fighting with Lyncroft boys near the station?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who refused to obey my command to cease, and pelted me with eggs?" said Mr. Carker.

"You see, sir——" stammered Bob.

"Yes or no!"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good!" said Mr. Carker. "Very good!"

"Will you let us explain, sir?" asked Harry.

"Certainly, if you have anything to say!" answered Mr. Carker, with a very unpleasant smile.

"We did not know you at the time, sir," said the captain of the Fourth. "We took you for some stranger interfering with us——"

"That is no excuse."

"But, sir——"

"Enough!"

Harry was silent, compressing his lips. Mr. Carker glanced across to Mr. Tulke, the master of the Fifth.

"Kindly lend me a cane, Mr. Tulke."

"I did not bring a cane into the Hall, Mr. Carker," answered the master of the Fifth coldly.

"Wilmot!"

"Yes, sir."

"Fetch a cane from my study—the headmaster's study."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wilmot walked down the Hall and disappeared. Bob Rake stood where he was, silent and uncomfortable. There was a dead silence until Harry returned, with a cane in his hand.

He handed it to Mr. Carker, who swished it and tested it, as if to make

sure that it was in good condition for a severe castigation.

There was little doubt that Randolph Carker was anticipating the punishment with pleasure; the man had a cruel strain in his nature, and he was going to gratify it.

"You first, Wilmot! Hold out your hand."

Harry obeyed quietly.

Swish!

There was a deep-drawn breath in the crowded hall as the lash of the cane rang through the long, lofty apartment.

It was a savage cut, such a cut as Dr. Chenies would never have dreamed of delivering. Harry Wilmot compressed his lips to keep back a cry of pain.

"The other hand, Wilmot."

Swish!

"Now the other again!"

Harry Wilmot hesitated. Mr. Rawlings, who was standing with his Form, frowned darkly, and made a movement, but restrained himself.

"You hear me, Wilmot?"

The hand came out again, and the cane lashed on it.

"Now the other again!"

Swish!

"You may go back to your place, Wilmot."

The captain of the Fourth returned to his place, his face quite white.

"Now your hand, Rake."

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Bob Rake was made of tough material, but his ruddy face was quite pale when he had received the four cruel lashes.

He stumbled as he went back to his place in the Fourth.

"By gad!" murmured St. Leger, setting his teeth. "By gad! The dashed ruffian! There'll be trouble if this goes on."

"Oh, dear!" squeaked Bunny, quite alarmed. "Oh, I say! Suppose—suppose he should ever cane me! Oh, crumbs!" That alarming possibility quite startled Bunny, and left him no leisure to feel

sympathy towards those who had already fallen victims.

Mr. Carker's flinty eye roved round the assembly. It was really as if he were looking for some sign of resentment or disapproval, which would give him a pretext for further use of the cane. With lowered eyes, and in dead silence, St. Kit's endured his inspection.

"Dismiss!" snapped Mr. Carker.

He left the hall by the upper door.

Still in silence, the St. Kit's fellows crowded out of hall. But in the corridors a buzz broke out.

Oliphant of the Sixth tapped Wilmot on the shoulder. Harry looked at him silently.

"Let me see your hands," said Oliphant.

Harry held them up without speaking. The captain of St. Kit's glanced at the palms, already swelling.

He made no comment, but nodded and passed on with his face set. Harry Wilmot & Co. went up to their study at once. Wilmot and Bob wanted to be out of sight just then. Their hands were very painful, and they were not in a mood for the rather noisy sympathy of the Fourth. Algernon Aubrey followed them into the study—and closed the door on the fat nose of Bunny Bootles. Bootles was not wanted.

There was a long silence in the top study.

Algernon Aubrey looked utterly miserable.

He blamed himself for not having been present in the rag in the village, and having thereby escaped where his chums had suffered, though the thought of such an infliction upon his delicate palms made the dandy of the Fourth shudder.

"By gad!" said Algy at last. "This is awfully rotten."

"Ow!" murmured Bob.

"The man's a tartar, and no mistake."

"A dashed hooligan!" muttered Bob.

"If this goes on—"

"There'll be trouble," said Harry.

Wilmot. "This sort of thing's not good enough for St. Kit's. I suppose he has a right to lick us for pelting him, though he might have made allowance for our not knowing who he was. But the man's a cruel brute—he likes caning chaps."

"I could see that in his eye!" groaned Bob.

"We shall have to try to give him a wide berth," said Algernon Aubrey. "Luckily, the Head doesn't have much to do with the Fourth. I shouldn't care to be in the Sixth while Carker is here."

"Lucky for the Sixth they can't be caned," said Bob, with a faint grin. "But I'll bet that he'll make them sit up some other way."

There was a tap at the door, and Durance of the Fourth looked in. The sight of a member of the "St. Kit's Goats" made the top study frown. But Durance had not come to be unpleasant.

"You fellows have been through it," he said.

"Yes," answered Harry shortly.

"The man's a brute," said Durance. "I'm sorry you've had it like this." He hesitated a moment. "We're not friends, Wilmot, but I'm really sorry. If there's trouble to come with that ruffian, I'm ready to back you up. That's all."

And Dick Durance withdrew.

"Trouble to come!" repeated Algernon Aubrey. "By gad! There will be trouble if that tyrant keeps on as he's started. What?"

"Yes," said Harry quietly.

"But——" said Bob. "But—what can we do?"

"I don't know—yet! But I'm not going to be caned like that a second time," said Harry Wilmot. "I'd rather clear out of St. Kit's. We'll keep clear of the brute if we can—but if we can't, there'll be trouble."

And the trouble was to come much sooner than Harry Wilmot and the members of the Fourth thought.

CHAPTER 8.

The Reformer!

ST. KIT'S was in a turmoil!

The school had had a sample of their new headmaster. That sample had made the school realise what a loss they had sustained in losing Dr. Chenies. The old Head had inspired awe rather than regard among his boys, but since the change to Mr. Carker, the St. Kit's fellows realised that they had lost a friend.

In the Sixth Form-room, when Mr. Carker took charge of that Form, there were gloomy faces. The Sixth, of course, could not be caned; they had no chastisement to fear. But Mr. Carker had a tongue that was as sharp as his cane. It was not a happy morning for the Sixth, and Mr. Carker succeeded in making himself thoroughly unpopular, if he had not done so already.

But with the seniors Mr. Carker used some restraint. There was a limit to what they would stand. In the Sixth Form there were half a dozen powerful fellows who could have picked up Mr. Carker and thrown him over a desk. Certainly they were not likely to proceed to any such extreme measures. But the fact that they were able to do it had a restraining influence upon the tyrant of St. Kit's. Although they found his tongue a bitter one, and although he treated them as slackers whom it was his unpleasant duty to drive, the Sixth found that they could endure him.

But Mr. Carker was not content with handling the Sixth. Whether he was afflicted with a strong sense of duty or not, it was apparent that he had a very strong love of interference.

In the afternoon he put in an appearance in the Fifth Form-room, leaving the Sixth to look after themselves, much to their satisfaction.

Mr. Tulke was surprised to see him, and looked it.

The new Head explained curtly that he intended to take each Form in hand

in turn, and satisfy himself that matters were progressing satisfactorily. If changes were needed he was ready to introduce them. Above all, he was determined that there should be no slackness.

Mr. Tulke, with feelings too deep for words, handed his class over to the new Head, and retired into a shell of dignified silence.

The Fifth did not enjoy being put through their paces by Randolph Carker. He was well up to his work, so far as scholastic attainments went, and he made some of the Fifth perspire. It was a drastic change after the easy rule of Mr. Tulke.

Gunter of the Fifth was in quite a state of nerves when Mr. Carker had done with him. Gunter was not a bright youth, and his private opinion of the classics was that they were "all rot." Gunter had often told Price, his study-mate, how he would enjoy having the gloves on with Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Thucydides. Gunter would have taken on all four together and enjoyed it. He would have enjoyed it very much more than he enjoyed their works. So Gunter was reduced to nerves and perspiration by Mr. Carker, and his feelings were shared more or less by all the Fifth.

After school Mr. Carker's "latest" was reported up and down St. Kit's and freely commented upon.

"Takin' all the Forms in turn, is he?" said Babbie of the Shell. "Then he'll drop on us to-morrow."

"And on us next!" said Stubbs of the Fourth, with a very long face.

It was not a happy prospect.

The Head had always been a rather far-off figure to the Lower School. But Mr. Carker, evidently, was going to change all that.

There was not a fellow in St. Kit's who was not to make his close acquaintance.

Next morning the Shell went into

their Form-room with dire anticipations, which were fully realised.

Mr. Rattrey, the master of the Shell, had no choice about handing over his class. But he retired from the room while Mr. Carker was in charge, declining to remain as a witness.

He did not make any secret of the fact that he did not like Mr. Carker's interference. But his dislike did not worry Randolph Carker at all.

Mr. Carker took the Shell for an hour that morning. It was an hour's nightmare to the Shell, to judge by their looks when they came out of the Form-room after lessons.

The Fourth were very anxious to know the result, because they were aware that their own turn was coming.

Harry Wilmot & Co. looked for Babbie after morning lessons; and they found Babbie talking to his comrades in the quad—and his comrades talking to Babbie—all talking at once, emphatically and furiously. Obviously they had not enjoyed their "turn" with Mr. Carker.

"How did you get on, dear boys?" St. Leger inquired.

Babbie breathed fury.

"I was caned three times!" he said.

"Oh gad! What for?"

"First," said Babbie, "for not sittin' up straight! Second, for lookin' sulky after bein' caned! Third, because the villain caught me out in Ovid!"

"I had it twice!" groaned Lister.

"Twice for me!" said Verney major.

"The old bounder's arm must ache after the way he ladled it out," said Babbie savagely. "He seems to enjoy it. I know his game. He daren't cane the seniors, though he'd like to. He's goin' to take it out of the Lower School. Not that the Shell are really Lower School," added Babbie hastily.

The Shell prided themselves on being Middle School. If they weren't exactly seniors, at least they weren't juniors—in their own estimation. Apparently Mr. Carker had not realised this important distinction.

CHAPTER 9.

Nice for the Fourth!

IT was not a happy Fourth that went into the Form-room that afternoon. The juniors hoped against hope that Mr. Carker would put off "taking the Fourth" till a later date. But it was a faint hope. It was plain that the new Head meant to work his way through the school, impressing his methods on all the Forms. The Fourth came next in order after the Shell, and their turn was due.

Some of the juniors wondered how Mr. Rawlings would take it. The Fourth-Form master was a quiet and reserved gentleman, but he had a strong character, as his pupils knew. There was a vague hope that Mr. Rawlings might "stand up" to the tyrant.

Certainly it was a very subdued Form that met the eye of Mr. Carker when he sailed in that afternoon.

Mr. Rawlings happened to be taking his pupils on a personally-conducted tour through "English literature" when the new Head came in. Mr. Carker stood for a few minutes listening. But he could never stand for long without interfering.

"You are taking Shakespeare, Mr. Rawlings?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Rawlings. "Julius Cæsar."

"Kindly give me the book."

Mr. Rawlings paused.

"Is it your intention to take the class?" he asked.

"For this lesson, yes."

"In that case I will retire from the Form-room," said Mr. Rawlings.

"Better remain, sir," said Mr. Carker. "It is my intention to speed up, to some extent, the work in all the Forms here. I have discovered a very alarming amount of slackness. By observing me, sir, you will be able to study my methods, and later to apply them."

Mr. Rawlings looked fixedly at the new headmaster.

"My own methods, sir, have not

failed to give satisfaction to Dr. Chenies," he said quietly.

"Dr. Chenies is no longer headmaster of St. Kit's, Mr. Rawlings. It is I that you have to deal with in the future."

"Temporarily," reminded Mr. Rawlings.

"That remains to be seen," answered Mr. Carker. "It is not at all certain, I understand, that Dr. Chenies will return to St. Christopher's at all. However, we need not discuss that. While I am in authority here I shall require my methods to be followed; and I may as well say plainly that I am surprised and shocked by the slack state of the school. It may have satisfied Dr. Chenies; it does not satisfy me."

The Fourth-Form master breathed hard.

"I fear, sir, that I am too old to change my methods," he said dryly. "Neither do I see any necessity for doing so unless it becomes certain that Dr. Chenies will not return. If you are taking charge of the class, sir, I will withdraw."

And Mr. Rawlings sailed out of the Form-room, with rustling gown, without waiting for the new Head to reply.

Mr. Carker's eyes glistened. He had not scored off the Fourth-Form master, at all events. Unfortunately for Stubbs of the Fourth, he ventured to grin—and Mr. Carker spotted the grin.

"Stubbs!"

Poor Stubbs' face instantly became as serious as a judge's—indeed, a great deal more serious than a modern judge's. With Mr. Carker's basilisk eye on him, the junior had no inclination to smile.

"Yes, sir," he faltered.

"You were laughing, Stubbs."

"Oh, no, sir," groaned Stubbs.

"Come here."

Percival Stubbs fairly limped out before the class. He realised, vaguely, that he had to pay for Mr. Rawlings' disregard of the new Head's overbearing authority. Mr. Carker wanted a victim, and he had found one.

Swish! Swish!

Stubbs crawled back to his place.

"You will proceed, Wilmot," said Mr. Carker. "Read aloud from where Mr. Rawlings left off."

"Yes, sir."

Harry stood up, book in hand. His clear, rather musical voice did justice to the lines:

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this,
You have condemned and noted
Lucius Pella
For taking bribes here of the
Sardians.
Wherein my letters——"

Mr. Carker held up his hand, and Wilmot stopped.

"Who were the Sardians, Wilmot?"

"The inhabitants of Sardis, sir."

"Where was Sardis?"

Wilmot did not answer. He had completely forgotten where Sardis was in ancient times. It was an unexpected question.

"You do not know," said Mr. Carker maliciously.

"No, sir," said Harry frankly.

"Are you a dunce, Wilmot?"

"I hope not, sir."

"Merely careless and slovenly. Is that it?"

"Neither, I hope, sir," said Harry.

"Do not answer me in that impertinent manner, Wilmot."

"I did not mean to be impertinent, sir," said Harry, controlling his feelings with difficulty.

"I am afraid that I cannot accept that statement, Wilmot. I have observed that this is an unruly Form, and that you have several times displayed insolence. You are head boy, I believe."

"Yes, sir."

"Go to the bottom of the class."

The captain of the Fourth obeyed that command in silence, but with deep feelings.

"Do not sit there scowling," added Mr. Carker.

"I was not scowling, sir."

"Don't contradict me, boy!"

Harry was silent; silence seemed the safest refuge. Mr. Carker's eye lingered on him, but he had no pretext to proceed further, and he had to let Wilmot alone. He glanced at Mr. Rawlings' volume in his hand, but Mr. Carker had no taste for Shakespeare. He preferred worrying his pupils, or speeding them up, as he had described it.

"I shall ask you a few questions about the characters in this play," he said; and the Fourth summoned up all their energies for the occasion. They knew, as well as if Mr. Carker had told them so, that he was going to try to "catch them out."

Bunny Bootles made himself as small as possible. He was already in Mr. Carker's black books, and his ignorance of Shakespeare was like Sam Weller's knowledge of London—extensive and peculiar. But the basilisk eye fixed on Cuthbert Archibald.

"Bootles!"

Bunny gasped.

"Who was Brutus?"

"B-b-brutus, sir," stammered Bunny.

"Don't repeat my words, Bootles. Answer my questions."

"He—he—he—he was a—a man, sir."

"What?"

"I mean a—a Roman, sir," gasped Bunny.

"That is scarcely an adequate description of Brutus, Bootles."

"Isn't it, sir?" mumbled Bunny.

"If you cannot tell me more than that of a well-known historical character, Bootles——" said Mr. Carker, picking up his cane.

Bunny shuddered. He hurried to reply.

"Oh, yes, sir. I—I know all about Brutus, sir; my—my favourite character in Milton, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean in Shakespeare, sir," stammered Bunny, who hardly knew what he was saying so dire was his

terror. "He—he was the man—who—who—who——"

"Well?"

"The man who—who—who——"

"Who what?"

"Who let the cakes burn, sir."

"What?"

"And—and never smiled again," gasped Bunny.

"Bootles!"

The Fourth Form certainly would have smiled but for the presence of Mr. Carker. But under Mr. Carker's eye, even Bunny's description of Brutus could not make them smile.

Bunny, utterly confused now, only desiring to ward off the evil moment, plunged on desperately.

"And he—he stood on the burning deck, sir!"

"Upon my word!"

"And—and when he died, he said 'Kiss me, Hardy!'"

"He said what?"

"He—he said, 'Kiss me, Hardy—had I but loved my country as I have loved my King, I—I—I——'"

"So this is the state of ignorance in this Form," said Mr. Carker, very unfairly assuming Bunny Bootles to be a sample of the Fourth. "There is a very evident need for change here. Bootles, stand out!"

Bunny Bootles groaned dismally and did not move. He simply could not screw up the nerve to face that terrible cane.

"Do you hear me, Bootles?"

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir!"

"Come here at once!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Bunny crawled out before the class.

"Hold out your hand, Bootles."

Very gingerly Bunny's fat paw came out. The cane swept up, and it swept down. If that cut had landed on Bunny's palm it would have hurt Bunny; but it didn't. Involuntarily, acting simply on instinct, Bunny jerked his hand back in time.

The cane, meeting with no resistance, swept on.

Every bullet is said to have a billet. The cane, with so much vim in the lash, had to land on something. What it landed on was Mr. Carker's own calf with a crack that rang through the Form-room like a pistol-shot. The crack of the cane was followed by a frantic yell. Mr. Carker did not seem to dislike inflicting pain on others, but apparently he was not fond of it himself. And the lash of the cane certainly hurt him. He dropped the cane, and the Fourth Form were treated to the extraordinary spectacle of a tall, thin gentleman hopping on one leg and clapping the other and yelling at the top of his voice.

It was too much for the Fourth—especially in the state of nerves to which Mr. Carker had already reduced them. A yell of laughter rang through the Fourth Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 10.

Rebellion!

"H A, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers roared. "Oh, gad!" murmured St. Leger. "Jevver see anythin' quite so funny as this? Oh, great gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker ceased to hop. Bunny Bootles, frightened out of his wits at what he had done, stood frozen to the Form-room floor. He could not have moved to save his life.

The new Head's glance swept over the class, and the laughter died away quite suddenly.

"So—so——" Mr. Carker choked with passion. "So—so—so this is how you intend to treat your headmaster!"

Dead silence.

Mr. Carker rubbed his leg and winced. Then he picked up the cane and turned on Bunny Bootles with a deadly gleam in his eyes. Like a very fat bird fascinated by a serpent, Bunny watched him with frozen eyes. Mr. Carker

gripped the cane with his right hand and Bunny's collar with his left. He twisted the fat junior over a desk, and then the cane rose and fell.

Lash Lash! Lash!

Bunny Bootles struggled and yelled and kicked.

Lash! Lash!

The fat junior's frantic howls rang through the Form-room and far beyond. They reached other Form-rooms, where the fellows started and looked at one another.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

The tyrant of St. Kit's seemed beside himself with passion. He lashed at Bunny Bootles with ruthless lashes.

"Ow! Ow! Yoop! Help!" yelled Bunny. "Murder! Police! Oh, you beast! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

The Fourth Form looked on with stony eyes. Lickings were not uncommon at St. Kit's; floggings were not unknown, but never had the St. Kit's fellows been punished like this.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

Harry Wilmot sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing. He could stand it no longer. Utterly reckless of the consequences, the captain of the Fourth intervened.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Mr. Carker stopped in sheer astonishment. He stared round at Harry.

"Wilmot—you—you spoke!"

"You are hurting Bootles, sir. I think you have forgotten yourself!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth.

"You think I have forgotten myself!" articulated Mr. Carker, as if he could not believe his ears.

Bunny Bootles rolled off the desk and staggered away. He reeled against the wall and howled dismally.

Mr. Carker did not heed him further. His eyes were fixed on Harry Wilmot, and he was trembling with passion.

"Wilmot, come here!"

"What for, sir?" asked Harry steadily.

"What for? I am going to give you such a thrashing, Wilmot, as will never

be forgotten in this school!" said Mr. Carker, between his teeth.

Harry set his lips. He knew what he had risked in stopping the tyrant's brutality. It had come to a crisis now, and Harry did not falter.

"I refuse!" he said curtly.

"You refuse to obey me?"

"Yes!"

There was a murmur in the Fourth of suppressed excitement. The die was cast now—the gauntlet was thrown down.

Mr. Carker stared across the class at Harry.

Standing erect, with a flash in his eyes, Wilmot returned his gaze.

"Do I understand you aright, Wilmot?" said Mr. Carker. "You refuse to obey my command?"

"I refuse to be caned!"

"If you do not come to me at once, Wilmot, I shall come to you, and your punishment will be all the more severe."

"I shall defend myself, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Harry Wilmot jerked open his desk and picked up a heavy ebony ruler as Mr. Carker strode round the class towards him. He stepped into the open space beside the forms and waited for the master to advance—the ruler gripped in his hand. His handsome face was pale, but there was no sign in it of faltering.

"Put that ruler down, Wilmot!" said Mr. Carker thickly.

"I refuse!"

"I shall take it from you, and——"

"Keep your distance, sir! If you lay a finger on me I shall hit you!" said the captain of the Fourth.

A sudden bound forward was Mr. Carker's answer. The cane swept in the air. There was a crash as the heavy ruler swept up and came on to Mr. Carker's uplifted arm.

The cane did not reach Wilmot—it flew out of Mr. Carker's hand, and the new headmaster staggered back clasping his arm with his left hand.

The ruler had caught him on the elbow, and it had hurt.

"Oh!" spluttered Mr. Carker. "Oh! Ooooh! What! You dare—yaroooh! Ow! Ow! Ow! Grrrrrr!"

Mr. Carker clasped the damaged elbow. His "funny bone" was twitching, and he was quite out of action for some minutes. His aspect was comical enough, but the Fourth Form did not grin—the crisis was too terribly serious for that. Bunny Bootles' groans were still rolling out dismally, and they mingled with Mr. Carker's ejaculations.

Harry Wilmot stood where he was, the ruler still in his hand. What was going to follow he could not even surmise, but he was prepared to defend himself if necessary. And Bob Rake and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger were ready to help him if their help was needed.

But Mr. Carker was "hors de combat." The quivering and twitching of his "funny bone" was too much for him. He cast a venomous look at the captain of the Fourth, and, still clasping his elbow in his hand, he strode away to the door. The Fourth Form breathed hard. It seemed too good to be true that the tyrant was really going; but he was going, and in a moment more he was gone.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Algy breathlessly.

"Oii, gum!" said Bob Rake.

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Bunny Bootles. "I'm hurt! Ow! Wow!"

"Good for you, Wilmot!" gasped Stubbs. "But—but what's going to happen now?"

That was a question to which no answer could be given. There was open rebellion in the school on Mr. Randolph Carker's third day at St. Kit's; and how Mr. Carker would deal with it was known only to himself, if indeed it was even known to himself. It is easier for a tyrant to rouse rebellion than to deal with it when roused.

Harry Wilmot sat down in his place,

and a few minutes later Mr. Rawlings re-entered the Form-room.

The juniors looked at their Form-master, but he did not meet their eyes. There was a very grave expression on Mr. Rawlings' face.

He made no reference whatever to what had happened, though it was certain he knew. He quietly resumed charge of his class, and lessons went on quietly. Nothing more was seen of Mr. Carker by the Fourth Form during the afternoon. Perhaps he was still occupied with his "funny-bone"!

CHAPTER 11.

In the "Rat-trap":

OLIPHANT of the Sixth came along the Fourth Form passage with Carsdale. The Fourth were mostly at tea in their studies—but as soon as the captain of the school was sighted in the passage every study doorway was filled with excited juniors. It was easy to guess that Oliphant was there on Wilmot's account.

"After Wilmot?" asked Durance, looking out of Study No. 5.

Oliphant nodded without speaking.

"It's a rotten shame," said Durance.

The St. Kit's captain passed on without answering; but Carsdale, the bully of the Sixth, paused.

"You'd better mind how you talk, Durance," he said. "Wilmot is going to be made an example of. Mr. Carker has his eye on the rest of you. Take care!"

Durance's lip curled. The juniors had already observed that Carsdale, alone of the St. Kit's prefects, was in Mr. Carker's good graces. There was much in common between the tyrant and the bully. Carsdale was evidently backing up the new Head heartily; while it was clear that Oliphant was acting very unwillingly in the matter, constrained to do his duty as head prefect. The Sixth Form bully gave

Durance a threatening look, and passed on up the passage after Oliphant.

Rex Tracy burst into a low laugh as his study-mate turned back into Study No. 5 with a dark brow.

"Let them rip!" he said, with a sneer. "Wilmot will not be sacked if he goes on as he's started—and all the better for us."

"Don't be a rotter, Tracy!" growled Durance. "It's up to the whole Form to back Wilmot up in this."

"What rot!"

"Well, I'm backing him up whatever line he takes," said Durance. "So will you if you're decent."

At which Tracy shrugged his shoulders, but made no rejoinder. A dozen juniors followed the two prefects up the passage to the top study, eager to know what was to happen to the rebel of the Fourth.

Oliphant tapped at the door of the top study and threw it open. Harry Wilmot & Co. were at tea there—Bunny Bootles wriggling very painfully on his chair, and occasionally uttering a painful ejaculation.

The chums of the Fourth rose as the prefects entered. They had been wondering what would happen—and waiting. Now it was going to happen.

"You're wanted Wilmot!" snapped Carsdale.

"Mr. Carker?" asked Harry.

"Yes, you cheeky young rascal."

"I shall not go."

Carsdale grinned.

"Won't you?" he said. "You'll get carried, then."

"Shut up, Carsdale!" growled Oliphant. "What's the good of rubbing it in when the kid's in trouble? Wilmot, we've orders to take you to the punishment-room and lock you in. You're not to be taken to the Head—not now, at any rate."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"I'm sorry," went on Oliphant. "You seem to have kicked over the traces in the Form-room this afternoon pretty

freely. A few days in the 'Rat-trap' may do you good. Come on!"

The captain of the Fourth hesitated.

Bob and St. Leger were both on their feet, only too evidently ready to back him up if he resisted. But a struggle of three juniors against the two stalwart Sixth-Formers would not have been of much use. And the breathless crowd looking on from the passage were certainly not prepared for a rag on "old Oliphant." Carsdale alone they might have handled, perfect as he was; but Oliphant was too popular. And he would have been a difficult proposition even for a crowd of juniors.

Wilmot thought it out.

He was quite determined that he would not be taken to Mr. Carker's study, there to be dealt with at the tyrant's mercy. But that apparently was not intended.

"Say the word, Wilmot," muttered Bob.

"Don't be a young ass," said Oliphant patiently. "I've got my duty to do. Wilmot's to be put in the punishment-room until Mr. Carker decides what is to be done with him. That's all at present. Come with me, Wilmot."

"Very well," said Harry quietly.

"You've finished tea?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

Wilmot followed Oliphant from the study, taking no notice of Carsdale. The latter followed, scowling.

The punishment-room at St. Kit's—the "Rat-trap," as the juniors called it—was a small room in the oldest part of the ancient building. It was on the third floor, and reached by a narrow staircase from the dormitory corridor. In silence Wilmot followed the captain of St. Kit's, Carsdale bringing up the rear. At the door of the Fourth Form dormitory Oliphant stopped.

"Get your things!" he said briefly.

"I'm to sleep in the Rat-trap tonight?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"And until further orders," grinned

Carsdale. "That will bring down your cheek a little—bread and water for a week or so."

Harry did not reply. He went into the dormitory for his pyjamas and the things he would need, and then followed Oliphant up the narrow staircase to the little landing on which the Rat-trap opened. Oliphant unlocked the door with a big rusty key, and it swung open with a creak. In Dr. Chenies' time the Rat-trap had seldom, or never, been used, and it was musty and dusty and extremely uninviting. A small square window, barred with iron, was clouded by masses of thick ivy.

The furniture consisted only of a small table, a chair and a bedstead and washstand. The floor was bare, and the walls of oak panel over solid stone, were filmed with damp. Oliphant threw the little window wide open, and glanced round the room with grim disapproval.

"Tuckle will bring you a bed," he said. "I'll tell him to light a fire here to air the room."

"Mr. Carker says there is to be no fire lighted," said Carsdale, from the landing. "He doesn't want the young sweep coddled."

Oliphant hesitated.

"Never mind about a fire, Oliphant," said Harry quickly, anxious to avoid getting the good-natured prefect into trouble with the Head. "I shall be all right."

Oliphant nodded without speaking.

He remained in the room while Tuckle, the page, brought up a mattress and sheets and blankets. Tuckle gave the captain of the Fourth a look of sympathy, but did not venture to speak. The bed was made, and then Harry was left to himself.

The ponderous key turned in the rusty lock, and the heavy oaken door was fast!

Harry Wilnot sat on the edge of the bed.

It was bitterly cold in the "Rat-trap," and certainly a fire was needed.

But the cold, apparently, was to be part of his punishment.

The junior set his lips.

For some time he sat thinking, in deep silence. Hardly a sound from the school reached the secluded "Rat-trap."

He rose at last, mounted on the chair, and looked out of the window. The iron bars were eaten through with rust, and Harry tested them and smiled faintly. It would not have needed a very powerful wrench to displace the rusty bars.

Outside, he could see little. The thick, tough old ivy clambered all over the stone walls and half-hid the window. He had a glimpse of a slit of the quad, with the playing-fields beyond. The ground seemed a very great distance below. He glanced back into the chilly, dusty room. The early winter darkness was coming on, and it was apparent that he was not to be provided with a light. Mr. Carker's way with rebels was a drastic one.

For a moment Harry regretted that he had submitted to being placed in the punishment-room. But a struggle would not have served him, as circumstances were then. And a savage struggle with Oliphant, whom he liked and respected, was out of the question. With Mr. Carker, headmaster as he was, it would have been very different.

He stood looking down into the growing dusk, thinking. A whistle came faintly from below, and he started. He made out the figure of Bob Rake, far below, waving his hand.

Then a sudden thought came into Harry's mind. He waved his hand from the window, to show Bob that he was seen.

Then he took an old letter from his pocket, scribbled on it hastily with a pencil, wrapped it round his penknife to weight it, tying it with a piece of twine, and dropped it from the window. He did not hear it fall; the distance was too great. But he looked from the window again, and Bob Rake waved his hand.

Bob returned to the top study in the Fourth, with the folded note in his pocket. He found Algy and Bunny there, looking dismal—Algy on Wilmot's account, Bunny on his own! Bob laid Harry's note on the table, and the Dandy of St. Kit's glanced at it. It was brief.

"Unfasten the back box-room window after lights out. I'm coming back to the dorm. to-night.

"H. W."

Algernon Aubrey drew a quick breath.

"Comin' to the dorm!" he murmured. "But he's locked in."

"The window——" said Bob.

"It's barred."

"He must have some way of getting out, or he wouldn't have written that," said Bob.

"Yaas, that's so."

"We'll see that the window's left unfastened for him."

"Oh, yaas."

And Wilmot's chums took comfort in the knowledge that he was not, after all, to spend the winter night in the "Rat-trap."

After lights out that night, Bob Rake turned out of bed and crept cautiously to the back box-room and unfastened the window, raising the sash an inch. Then the Australian junior crept back to bed, leaving the way open for Harry Wilmot to enter—when he came. And while the Fourth Form slept, in the big dormitory, there were two who remained wide awake—Bob and the Honourable Algernon Aubrey St. Leger.

CHAPTER 12.

A Midnight Mystery!

ELEVEN strokes boomed out dully from the clock-tower of St. Kit's into the misty winter night. In the "Rat-trap" all was dark. Only the faintest glimmer of starlight

came in at the barred window to the imprisoned junior.

Harry Wilmot had rolled himself in the blankets on the bed, to keep as warm as possible. But the chill of the damp room was penetrating. If he had remained, there would have been little sleep for him. But he did not intend to remain.

At eleven o'clock all St. Kit's was asleep in bed, unless one or two of the masters sat up later. Harry Wilmot had no anticipation of falling in with anyone on his way to the dormitory.

As for trusting himself to the ivy from the height of the "Rat-trap" window, he did not think of hesitating. He knew that it was more than strong enough to bear his weight, and the feat only required nerve. And nerve he had in plenty.

He stood on the chair and tested the iron bars. They were deeply penetrated with rust, and, as he expected, a powerful wrench dragged them away. He laid them quietly on the floor, one by one.

The window was small, and would not have been easy for a man to pass through, but it was easy enough for the Fourth-Former.

Wilmot pushed through the square opening, and found himself on the narrow sill, holding on to thick tendrils of ivy.

The ivy rustled and swayed as he tested it with his weight, but it held well, as he was sure it would.

He drew a deep breath and trusted himself to it.

Hand below hand, with his legs hanging in space, the determined junior worked his way downward, never letting go the hold of one hand till he had found a new and secure hold lower down with the other.

He gave almost a sob of relief when his boots touched the solid ground at last.

He released his hold on the ivy, and quietly and cautiously picked his way in the darkness into the quadrangle.

A light glimmered on his eyes.

There was only one lighted window in the whole great dark mass of the School House, the window of the Head's study, now occupied by Randolph Carker. Mr. Carker had not gone to bed yet.

Harry glanced towards the window, and drew back quickly in the shadow of an oak, for the window was only partly curtained, and one wing of the casement was open. Black against the light was the silhouette of a figure he knew well.

Mr. Carker was standing at the open casement, looking out into the darkness of the quad!

Half-past eleven chimed from the clock tower.

Still the figure at the window had hardly moved. Wilmot waited, more and more puzzled and mystified.

He started as a sound came to his ears—the sound of a stealthy step in the darkness. The blood thrilled to his heart.

Who was abroad in the dark quadrangle at that hour?

He stood silent, close to the sheltering oak. The footstep sounded again—it came closer—and passed! Within six or seven feet of the hidden junior a shadowy figure passed, straight towards the lighted window of the Head's study.

As it came out full into the light Harry's eyes followed it, and again he gave a start. There was something familiar in that heavy, thick-set figure outlined against the window.

Where had he seen the man before?

The shadowy figure reached the window. Then, in the silence, came the sharp, metallic voice of Mr. Carker—in low tones, which, however, reached the junior's ears in the dead silence.

"Slaney! You fool!"

"I'm here, guv'nor," was the reply, with a low chuckle.

The man stood at the lighted window, and the light was on his face, partly turned now, so that Wilmot saw it clearly. The junior suppressed a gasp of amazement.

For he knew that face—with his red,

blotchy skin and narrow eyes! It was the face of the man he had seen a week ago in Lynn Wood, the face of the man who had struck down Dr. Chentes.

It was the Head's assailant, the ruffian for whom the police were searching, and searching in vain.

Wilmot stood and stared, wondering if he was dreaming. What could there be between that ruffian and the new Head of St. Kit's? They seemed as far as the Poles asunder—the hard, severe-featured headmaster, the low-browed, red-faced ruffian! What did it mean? Like a flash of light, the meaning of it came into Harry Wilmot's mind.

CHAPTER 13.

The Secret!

MR. CARKER stared from the window at the low, grinning face. His expression showed plainly enough that the midnight visitor was not welcome. Slaney, as he had called the man, evidently knew it, and he was not at all disturbed by it. He grinned up at the angry face.

"Ain't you lettin' me in?" he asked.

"You fool! If you were seen—" muttered the man at the window.

"More likely to be seen outside than inside, guv'nor! And it's cold standin' 'ere."

Mr. Carker drew back from the window and the narrow-eyed man stepped lightly in.

The casement snapped shut and the curtain fell across the glass.

Harry Wilmot stirred at last.

His mind was in a whirl with what he had seen and heard.

The man who had attacked the Head—he was sure of it! The recognition was certain. Slaney was the man the police wanted for that brutal attack in Lynn Wood.

That man—visiting the new Head of St. Kit's close on midnight, when all the school was sleeping! He was shut up in the Head's study now with Randolph Carker! No doubt he would

leave as he had come, secretly, hidden in the darkness, and only Randolph Carker would know that the visit had taken place—excepting Harry Wilmot of the Fourth! The tyrant's tyranny had over-reached itself. It was by Mr. Carker's own act that he had caused a witness to be present at the secret meeting.

Wilmot stole silently from under the oaks and made his way round the school buildings.

He reached the outhouse under the box-room window and climbed to the leads.

He was sure that he would find the box-room window open; he knew that Bob Rake would not fail him. He stood on the leads and tried the window; the sash pushed up at his touch. A minute more and he was in the box-room, the window closed and fastened.

He entered the Fourth Form dormitory without a sound, but as the door closed behind him there came a whispering voice:

"That you, dear boy?"

"You awake, Algy?"

"Yaas, old bean."

"Same here," said Bob Rake. "How the thump did you get out of the 'Rat-trap'?"

"By the ivy."

"You ass! You might have broken your neck."

"All serene," said Harry.

"Hallo! Who's that?" yawned the voice of Stubbs. "My hat! Is that Wilmot?"

"Yes. Quiet, old man."

"Oh crumbs! Wilmot!"

"Wilmot's come back!"

Half a dozen of the Fourth were awake now and sitting up in bed, peering in the darkness of the dormitory.

"I've shoved some pyjamas on your bed, Wilmot," chuckled Algernon Aubrey. "Turn in, old bean. Feelin' all right, what?"

"Right as rain," said Harry.

"But—"

"But what?"

"I've got something to tell you fellows—"

"Go ahead!"

Harry Wilmot paused.

He was eager to tell his chums what he had seen in the quad, to consult with them as to what he should do—if he should do anything. It was his duty—anyone's duty—to send information to the police which would help them to capture the man they wanted.

But that was not practicable now. The man Slaney was not likely to stay long with Mr. Carker; he might even be gone already. Certainly he would be long gone before Wilmot could possibly have brought the police on the scene—if he had decided on such a measure.

The meeting between the two men could mean only one thing. It was almost too terrible to be believed, yet it was certain that Randolph Carker had been a party to the attack on Dr. Chenies in Lynn Wood. The ruffian's motive had been a mystery—it had puzzled the police and the school—but it was clear to Wilmot now. The man was a hired ruffian, and he had been carrying out the orders of the unscrupulous man who hoped to step into the Head's shoes at St. Kit's!

But who would believe such an accusation?

To tell his chums, with a dozen pairs of ears eagerly listening, was impossible. It was a matter for thinking out, and for the present the captain of the Fourth simply did not know what he should do.

His silence puzzled his chums.

"Go ahead, old bean," repeated Algy.

"What's the trouble on your little mind?"

"You didn't run into the Carker-bird coming here, did you?" chuckled Bob.

"N-no."

"Well, then—"

"I'll tell you about it in the morning," said Harry at last. "I'll turn in now."

"Right you are old bean," said

Algernon Aubrey sleepily. "By gad, I shall be dashed sorry to hear the risin'-bell in the mornin'. Still, there's goin' to be some fun to-morrow! Fancy the Carker man's face when he finds that you're here!"

"There'll be an awful row!" said Stubbs.

"Yaas, probably."

And Algy turned over to go to sleep, evidently not much disturbed by the prospect of an awful row on the morrow!

Harry Wilmot turned in.

But it was long before he slept. He could not help thinking of the mysterious meeting he had witnessed in the quad, and of the morrow. He would be missed from the punishment-room; he would be found among his Form-fellows, and then—

It was open war now!

He slept at last, and slept soundly, till the rising-bell clanged out over St. Kit's—in the dawn of the most eventful day in the history of the old school.

CHAPTER 14.

Trouble to Come!

CLANG! Clang!

Bob Rake sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Kit's and yawned.

Bob was usually the first out of bed in the Fourth, up and active before the rising-bell ceased to clang. On this especial Saturday morning, however, he sat and rubbed his eyes and yawned portentously:

Clang! Clang!

Harry Wilmot, the captain of the Fourth, sat up, and he, too, yawned. And Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, the dandy of St. Kit's, yawned more deeply than either of his chums.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" came from Algernon Aubrey. "Oh, gad! I'm dashed sleepy! Bother the risin'-bell!"

"Blow it!" said Bob Rake. "This is what comes of keeping late hours, my infants!"

"Wilmot! You here!"

Bunny Bootles uttered that ejaculation as he caught sight of the captain of the Fourth.

Harry glanced at him and smiled.

"Looks like it," he answered.

"But—but weren't you locked up in the punishment-room for the night?" ejaculated Bunny.

"I was," assented Harry.

"How did you get out?"

"Climbed down the ivy from the window."

"And we stayed up to greet the prodigal son when he came hiking home," said Bob Rake. "That's why we're so jolly sleepy this morning."

"I say, there'll be a row when old Carker finds that you've hooked it out of the punishment-room, Wilmot," said Bunny.

"Most likely."

"Never mind," said Bunny Bootles consolingly. "I'll stand by you, Wilmot. You rely on me."

Harry Wilmot laughed. Bunny's assistance was not likely to be of much use when he had to face Mr. Randolph Carker. It was quite certain that there was going to be trouble in the Fourth Form of St. Kit's that Saturday morning.

Harry was taking it calmly enough.

Most of the Fourth were enthusiastic in supporting him—and they were prepared for trouble with the tyrant of St. Kit's. Already there had been whispers of a "barring-out" in the Fourth.

So far as Mr. Carker knew, Harry was still a prisoner in the "Rat-trap." It was certain that there would be considerable surprise when he came down from the dormitory with the rest of the Fourth.

The three members of the "Top Study" were taking the peculiar situation in their own peculiar ways. Harry Wilmot was quiet and grave, Algernon Aubrey nonchalant, as usual, while Bob Rake seemed to be looking forward with keen zest to trouble with Mr. Carker.

"We'd better stick together when we go down," said Bob. "By gum, I want

to see Carker's face when he catches sight of you, Wilmot! It will be worth a guinea a box."

"Yaas, that's so," chuckled Algernon Aubrey. "But what are you goin' to do if he orders you back to the 'Rat-trap,' old bean?"

"I shall refuse to go," said Harry quietly.

"And we'll back you up," said Bob Rake. "And if Carker cuts up rusty, we'll scrag him."

"Scrag Carker!" ejaculated Stubbs, of the Fourth.

"Oh, I say!" murmured Bunny.

"I believe I could handle him," said Bob. "He's twice as long as I am, but 'o wider——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One good 'cosh' on his watchchain would double him up like a pocket-knife," said Bob confidently.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tracy. "Are you thinkin' of punching your headmaster?"

"He's not really our headmaster," retorted Bob. "Dr. Chenies is our headmaster, and Carker's only in his place while he's away ill. And I'm jolly sure that Dr. Chenies wouldn't approve of the way Carker is running things at St. Kit's."

"Very likely, but he's Head, all the same, for the present," said Tracy. "The Governors appointed him."

"Blow the Governors!" said Bob.

"Draw it mild, old bean," said Algernon Aubrey. "My pater's chairman of the giddy Governors, and Wilmot's pater is a Governor."

"Well, blow them all, excepting your pater and Wilmot's pater!" said Bob, laughing. "Now, are you ready, my infants? Where's my mouth-organ?"

"What the thump do you want a mouth-organ for?"

"To play the 'Conquering Hero' when we take Wilmot along," chuckled Bob. "Sort of triumphal march, to announce to the Carker merchant that we don't care a German mark for him."

"Fathead!"

Bob Rake found his mouth-organ and

blew a fearful blast on it to begin with. Then he hurled open the dormitory door and marched out, with heavy footsteps. Wilmot and St. Leger followed him, and after them came Stubbs and Scott and Myers and Wheatford and Jones minor and Durance, and a crowd of the Fourth.

"For goodness' sake, old bean, stop that awful row!" murmured Algernon Aubrey plaintively, as Bob Rake headed the juniors with the mouth-organ going strong.

Bob ceased for a moment and glanced round.

"What awful row?" he demanded. "Haven't you any ear for music, you ass?"

"Music? Oh, gad!"

Bob blew again.

"Well, what the thump do you want to play the 'Dead March' in 'Saul' for, anyhow?" demanded Algy.

"You silly owl! I'm playing the 'Conquering Hero.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth Form "processed" down the big staircase, to the accompaniment of fearsome blasts on the mouth-organ. Oliphant, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Kit's, looked up from the lower passage.

"Stop that thundering row!" he shouted.

"Oh, ah! Yes, Oliphant," said Bob meekly, and the mouth-organ disappeared into his pocket.

Oliphant gave a jump the next moment as he sighted Harry Wilmot among the Fourth.

"Wilmot!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Oliphant!" said Harry cheerfully.

The captain of St. Kit's fairly blinked at him. The evening before he had left Harry locked in the punishment-room, and the keys were still in Mr. Carker's keeping. The sight of the ghost of Banquo did not startle Macbeth more than the sight of Harry Wilmot startle the St. Kit's captain just

"Did Mr. Carker release you, after all?" ejaculated Oliphant, at last.

"Oh, no!"

"Then how did you get out?"

"By the window."

"But the window's barred!" exclaimed the prefect.

"The bars were rusted through, and I snapped them off."

"The merry dickens you did!" exclaimed Oliphant. "So you've been to bed in the dormitory, after all."

"Yes," said Harry.

Carsdale of the Sixth was lounging in the lower passage, and he came up, staring at Harry. Oliphant seemed puzzled to know what to do; but the Sixth Form bully had no doubts.

"So you cleared out, did you, you cheeky young rascal!" exclaimed Carsdale. "Well, you're going back pretty sharp. Come on!"

Harry stopped on the lowest step of the staircase. His chums stopped with him, breathing hard. The trouble was beginning.

"Where do you want me to come, Carsdale?" asked the captain of the Fourth quietly.

"Back to the punishment-room, of course."

"I'm not going."

"What!"

"Deaf?" asked Bob Rake. "He's not going! Carker can go and eat coke! Is that plain enough?"

"Here, this won't do!" said Oliphant uneasily. "You mustn't speak of Mr. Carker like that, Rake."

Bob opened his lips to retort, but he closed them again. He did not want any trouble with the popular captain of St. Kit's if it could be helped. Carsdale broke in:

"I shall report your words to Mr. Carker, Rake."

"Report, and be hanged!" said Bob disdainfully.

"I'll deal with you when I'm through with Wilmot," said the bully of the Sixth, with a black scowl. "Come with me, Wilmot?"

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

Carsdale laughed grimly and dropped his heavy hand on the junior's shoulder. He was far from expecting resistance from a Fourth-Former. The persons of the Sixth Form prefects were sacred; "punching a prefect" was a delightful dream to many juniors, but it had never been put into practice. But the Fourth Form were in an unusual mood that morning. The tyrant of St. Kit's had ruled with too heavy a hand, and the fellows who were prepared to "back up against Carker" were not likely to be overawed by Carsdale.

As Carsdale's grip closed on his shoulder, Harry Wilmot's lips set. He clenched his hand and struck upwards.

Crack!

Carsdale's wrist caught the blow, and it was a hefty blow. The prefect gave a howl of pain as his hand flew from Wilmot's shoulder.

"Good man!" murmured Algernon Aubrey.

Carsdale clasped his right wrist with his left hand, and stood fairly gasping with rage and astonishment.

"You—you—you've struck a prefect!" he stuttered.

"I shall strike again if you touch me again!" said Harry coolly.

"Bravo!" chirruped Stubbs.

Carsdale's reply was not in words. He made a savage spring at the captain of the Fourth.

Had Harry Wilmot been left alone to deal with the powerful Sixth-Former, he would certainly have fared badly. But his chums sprang to his aid as if moved by the same spring.

Three pairs of hands closed on Carsdale, and he was hurled back from the stairs and went sprawling along the hall.

Crash!

"Oh!" roared Carsdale. "Ow! Oh! Ooooop!"

He sat up dazedly.

"Come on and have some more!" bawled Bob Rake.

Oliphant stood looking on in a sort of stupefaction. It was the first time

he had seen a St. Kit's prefect handled by juniors.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Oliphant.

Gerald Carsdale staggered to his feet. He was almost foaming with wrath. A score of fellows had gathered at the sight of the amazing altercation at the foot of the staircase. Gunter of the Fifth remarked to Price that things were coming to something! Price agreed that they were. But they did not dream of interfering.

"You—you young scoundrels!" roared Carsdale.

"Rats!"

"Go home, Carsdale!"

"Go and eat coke!"

It was a roar of defiance from the crowded staircase. The example set by Harry Wilmot & Co. had fired the blood of the Fourth. At that moment the St. Kit's rebels were prepared to tackle all St. Kit's—headmasters, staff, and prefects, with the Sixth Form thrown in.

"Oliphant! Help me deal with these young villains!" howled Carsdale.

Oliphant shook his head.

"Leave them to Mr. Carker," he said. "You can report that Wilmot is out of the punishment-room. It's Mr. Carker's business, not ours."

And Oliphant walked away, very much perplexed and distressed by this new state of affairs at St. Kit's. If he blamed the juniors, he did not blame them so much as he blamed Mr. Randolph Carker, whose iron-handed tyranny had brought about the revolt. Mr. Carker had roused the trouble, and Mr. Carker could deal with it—that was Oliphant's idea.

Carsdale stood stuttering with rage, glaring at the juniors on the staircase. He was greatly inclined to "run amok" among them, hitting out right and left. But that obviously was a game that two sides could play at, and Carsdale realised that it was "not good enough." He shook a savage fist at the Fourth and turned away.

But at the sight of a Sixth Form prefect retreating, after being bowled over by the fags, the Fourth broke through

all restraint. They felt the intoxication of victory.

"After him!" roared Stubbs.

"Scrag him!" yelled Bunny Bootles, valiant in the rear. "Scrag him, you fellows! Down with the prefects!"

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush of excited fags after Carsdale. The prefect stared round, gaped and gasped, and fairly bolted into his study. Had not Gerald Carsdale turned the key in his door very quickly St. Kit's would have been treated to the amazing and unheard-of sight of a Sixth Form prefect being "bumped" by a crowd of juniors.

Fortunately for Carsdale, the key turned in time. But a prefect locking himself in his study to escape from juniors was the last touch—all that the Fourth required to encourage them to reckless revolt. A dozen boots kicked and crashed on Carsdale's door—a dozen ferocious voices yelled to Carsdale to "Come out!"

"By gad!" yawned Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, as he strolled out into the quad with his chums, "things are beginning to look lively. Do you know, dear old beans, I really think that I shan't be bored to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, there's the Carker-bird in the Head's study!" exclaimed Bob. "He's looking out of the window. March past."

And the Top Study, arm-in-arm, marched past Mr. Carker's window, to give him a full view of the junior whom he still supposed to be a prisoner in the punishment-room.

CHAPTER 15.

A Surprise for Mr. Carker.

MR. RANDOLPH CARKER had not risen in a good temper that eventful morning.

Mr. Carker was, indeed, very seldom in a very good temper.

He was breakfasting in his study that,

morning, and he had snapped at Tuckle, who brought his breakfast in. Tuckle, with deep feeling, had retired to the kitchen, where he confided to the cook that he would give a week's wages to "land" the "old jossler" a "oner."

Mr. Carker was thinking of Wilmot of the Fourth as he breakfasted. He probably had other troubles on his bitter mind, but Wilmot of the Fourth was prominent.

Wilmot of the Fourth had resisted his authority—Wilmot of the Fourth had had the audacity to defend himself with a ruler when attacked with a cane! There was no end to the offences of Wilmot of the Fourth!

Mr. Carker set his thin lips as he thought of it.

The young rascal was locked in the punishment-room, and that morning Mr. Carker intended to take the birch to the "Rat-trap" and administer such a terrific flogging as would be a lesson to Harry Wilmot for the remainder of his youthful days.

There was satisfaction in the thought; Mr. Carker almost smiled. The picture of Wilmot of the Fourth wriggling under the birch gave a flavour to his breakfast egg, and added aroma to his morning coffee. It was the kind of mental picture that gratified Mr. Carker's peculiar nature.

He rose from the breakfast-table and stepped to the window, and looked out into the quadrangle.

Then he jumped.

The picture of Wilmot, half-frozen after a night in the cold, unheated "Rat-trap," squirming under the birch, vanished from his mind, and was replaced by another picture, not imaginary but real, which was the picture of Harry Wilmot strolling past the window, with his arms linked in those of Bob Rake and Algernon Aubrey St. Leger.

Mr. Carker's pale eyes, almost leaden in colour, seemed to bulge out under his brows.

He stared at the three cheery juniors

—he blinked at them—and his lean jaw dropped in his astonishment.

It really was Wilmot—there was no mistake about it! Mr. Carker realised that his prisoner was no longer a prisoner, and, to judge by his looks, the imprisonment had had little effect on his spirits.

Mr. Carker leaned from the window and waved a long, lean hand at the juniors.

"Wilmot!" he shouted.

The captain of the Fourth halted. The three juniors swung round in line to face Mr. Carker's study window.

They faced it—and him—with equanimity.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Why are you not in the punishment-room?" thundered Mr. Carker. "Has anyone released you without my authority?"

"No, sir."

"Then how do you come here?"

"Walked, sir."

"What?"

"Walked."

Mr. Carker spluttered.

"Is that reply intended for insolence, Wilmot?" he howled.

"Not at all, sir. I'm just stating the fact in answer to your question," said the captain of the Fourth.

"I asked you how you came here when you were left locked in the punishment-room last night?"

"Walked!" repeated Wilmot.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Rake, greatly tickled by the extraordinary expression upon Mr. Carker's face. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger indulged in a faint grin, and put up his celebrated eyeglass the better to survey the enraged headmaster.

"This—this—this is rebellious insolence!" gasped Mr. Carker. "Wilmot, return to the punishment-room at once!"

Harry shook his head.

"I've had enough of that, Mr. Carker," he answered.

"Do you dare to disobey me?"

"Yes."

Mr. Carker spluttered again. That unexpected answer seemed to take the wind out of his sails, so to speak.

"Straight from the shoulder, old bean," murmured Algernon Aubrey. "By gad! I hope the Carker-man isn't subject to apoplexy! If he is, he's booked for a fit."

Mr. Carker really seemed on the verge of an apoplectic seizure as he stood at the study window, spluttering with rage and staring at Wilmot.

"Wilmot!" he spluttered out. "You—you young scoundrel—"

"Better language, please!" said Harry.

"Wha—a—at?"

"Yaas, begad!" said Algy. "That isn't the way for a headmaster to talk, you know. Yellin' at a fellow gets on his nerves. Besides, consider your choice of expressions, sir—not at all gentlemanly."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"I shall flog you both for insolence!" raved Mr. Carker. "And you, Wilmot, you—you—you—" He almost foamed. "Come into my study immediately!"

He turned back into the study and grasped at his cane. He seemed to have no doubt that Wilmot would obey his command, and appear in the study in a couple of minutes.

As a matter of fact, nothing was further from Harry's thoughts. He walked on with his chums—and Mr. Carker, waiting for him in the study, waited in vain. Tuckle, who came in to remove the breakfast things, was quite startled by the expression on Mr. Carker's face. He was glad to get out of the study, and in his haste and agitation he dropped a teacup to the floor, and it smashed. And Mr. Carker addressed him with a flow of vigorous language as he fairly fled with the tray. Tuckle even had doubts about whether he was quite safe from the cane if he remained within reach of Mr. Carker. He quite gasped with relief when he escaped into the shelter of the kitchen.

"Looked as if he'd lay the blooming cane round me!" said Tuckle to the cook. "Me, you know! I'd show him! I ain't one of his blessed boys that he can wallop as much as he likes—no'fear! I can give notice if I choose—which is more than they can do! I'd jolly soon show him that he can't treat me as if I was a St. Kit's bloke!" said Tuckle disdainfully.

From which it appeared that Master Tuckle compared his position at St. Kit's very favourably with that of Harry Wilmot & Co.

CHAPTER 16.

What Harry Wilmot Knew!

"COME into the Cloisters!" said Harry.

"Yaas."

"Brekker soon!" remarked Bob.

Bob Rake had brought a very healthy appetite with him from Australia.

"I've got something to tell you fellows before brekker," said Harry. "It—it's rather serious."

"Oh, all right!"

The three chums strolled into the Cloisters, a spot where they were not likely to be interrupted at that early hour of the morning.

Harry Wilmot's handsome face was very grave. His chums regarded him curiously.

"I fancy somethin' happened when you bunked out of the 'Rat-trap' last night, old bean," said Algy. "Is that it?"

"Yes."

"Blessed if I can see what," said Bob. "You got to the dormitory all right. What happened, Harry?"

"I'm going to tell you fellows—I don't know whether I ought to let the school know yet," said Harry. "It's rather serious. You fellows remember how the Head was attacked in Lynn Wood by a rotten ruffian?"

"Not likely to forget it, as we chipped

In to help the merry old sport," said Bob.

"You'd know that hooligan again if you saw him?"

"Yes, rather—a rather burly brute with narrow eyes like a—like a dashed fox," said Bob.

"That's it!" said Harry, with a nod.

"Not likely to see him again, though," said Bob. "The police have been looking for him ever since, and they can't trail him out. I'll bet you he's miles out of Sussex long ago."

"It was rather mysterious why a hooligan should pitch into the Head like that," said Harry. "It wasn't robbery he meant—he just went for Dr. Chenies with a stick. He hurt him, and would have hurt him more if we hadn't come up when we did."

"Yaas!" said Algy.

"I never thought then of a connection between the affair and Mr. Carker," said Harry. "but I believe that detectives say that when a crime is committed you have to look for the man who benefits. Mr. Carker has benefited by that attack on the Head."

"He's bagged the Head's place here, certainly," said Bob, with a stare. "From the talk that's been going round the school it looks as if he was after the Head's job, anyhow, but—"

"That's true," said Algernon Aubrey quietly. "I've heard about that from home. My pater and Wilmot's pater stood up for the Head at the meeting of the governors—the Head was coming back from that meeting when the Johnny pitched into him in the wood, I believe. Some of the duffy old fossils wanted the Head to resign and give up the job to Carker. The cunnin' rotter wormed round them somehow—they can't know the kind of man he really is."

"But—" said Bob. He drew a deep breath. "Wilmot, old man, you can't suspect that Carker had a hand in that attack on the Head?"

"I never suspected it till last night," said Harry. "Now I know it."

"You know it!" ejaculated Bob.

"For certain!" said Harry.

Algernon Aubrey's eyeglass dropped from his eye.

"Dear old bean!" he murmured in gentle remonstrance.

Bob Rake was shaking his head vigorously. Low as his opinion of Randolph Carker was, he could not imagine that a man in Mr. Carker's position could, or would, mix himself up in a crime.

"There's no doubt about it," said Harry Wilmot quietly. "Listen to me, you chaps. After getting down from the 'Rat-trap' window I came round by the quad and found, between eleven and twelve at night, Carker's study window open. Carker was standing at it looking out—and, of course, I lay doggo till he should clear. And then a man come out of the dark and joined him and entered his study by the window. They met as friends—in a way, at least; Mr. Carker certainly did not seem pleased to see him. And the man was the ruffian who attacked Dr. Chenies in Lynn Wood!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Bob.

"Oh, great gad!"

Harry Wilmot's chums stared at him. He was speaking with quiet, grave seriousness; but they could scarcely believe that what he stated was correct. Brute Mr. Carker certainly was—cruel, ruthless, tyrannical. Unscrupulous, he certainly was. But this—

"It's not possible," muttered Bob. "You—you must be mistaken, old man. It was dark last night—"

"I saw his face in the light of the study window—the window where we've just been speaking to Mr. Carker."

"But—but—" stammered Bob.

"You're sure, old bean?" muttered Algy.

"Perfectly certain."

"If—if you're right, Carker is no better than a dashed criminal!" said St. Leger. "But—but—"

"There's no doubt that I'm right—"

in my mind, at least," said the captain of the Fourth. "I saw the man plainly enough. I want to know what I ought to do."

Algernon Aubrey whistled.

"If—if you made a mistake——"

"Why should any man visit the Head secretly, by his window, at close on midnight?" asked Harry. "If it was not that man, it was some man. What could such a secret meeting mean? Mr. Carker was seeing someone who dared not show his face here till all at school was in bed.

"That's so," assented Bob.

"It looks suspicious," said Algy. "But—but it's too awfully thick! Even Carker——"

"I heard him speak to the man by name," said Harry. "He addressed him as Slansy."

Algernon Aubrey and Bob were silent. They knew that their chum would not speak lightly on so terribly serious a matter; but they simply could not credit that Mr. Carker had leagued with a ruffian to clear the way for him to the headmastership of St. Kit's.

"I want to know what to do," said Harry after a pause. "That man, Slansy, as Mr. Carker called him, is wanted by the police. I can give them his name, at least—it may help to trace him. He could have been caught last night in the school——"

Algernon Aubrey shuddered.

"What a disgrace for St. Kit's if he had been!" he muttered.

"I thought of that," said Harry. "But, anyhow, I could have done nothing—it was fairly certain that the man would not stop long, and you know how long it would have taken to fetch P.-c. Bandy from Wicke. Of course, Mr. Carker would have denied that he had ever been there, if I had brought a policeman along after the man was gone."

"Of course he would! But—but the policeman wouldn't have come on such a yarn," said Algy. "He wouldn't have believed it."

Harry smiled faintly.

"You fellows don't quite believe it," he said.

"Well——"

"Of course, we believe you," said Bob. "But—but I can't help thinking that—in the dark—you made a mistake. There's something fishy about Carker, if he has midnight visitors at his window after the school's in bed. But—but—there's a limit—you must have been mistaken, Harry."

"I was not mistaken."

"Well," said Bob, following a new train of thought, "Carker saw somebody late last night—that's so much certain. If it was the man of Lynn Wood, that's not proof that he was mixed up in the attack on the Head. He might have been seeing the man about something else——"

"What else?"

"Oh, I give that up, but—but it's too thick, Harry. Carker is a brute and a bully, but he's a University man and a Master of Arts—dash it all, he couldn't stoop so low."

Harry Willmot was silent. It was borne in upon his mind that he was helpless—that it was useless to speak. His own chums could not credit his staggering statement—what reception was it likely to meet with from others? Would it not be looked upon as a wild and reckless slander—with an obvious motive, too—the bitter feud between the new Head and the captain of the Fourth furnished a very plausible motive.

"Then you advise me to say nothing at present?" asked Harry at last.

"For goodness' sake don't tell anybody else what you've told us," said Bob hastily. "It can't be right—there's a mistake somewhere. Thank goodness you didn't bring it out before all the dormitory last night. You can't make a fearful accusation like that without proof."

"I suppose not," admitted Harry slowly.

"Yaas, keep it dark, at least unless

we can get to know somethin' more," said St. Leger uneasily. "If you're right, Harry, the brute ought to be pickin' oakum in chokey. But you've got no proof—only a glimpse of a man's face at a window on a dark night. And depend on it Carker would deny that there ever was a man—"

"I'm sure of that."

"Then how would you stand?" said Algy.

The captain of the Fourth nodded. "I can see that I'd better say nothing at present," he said. "That's all right. But—I know in my heart that Mr. Carker is no better than a criminal. And I'll stand up against that brute all the way and all the time." A blaze came into Wilmot's eyes. "He got his headmastership here by a crime. He's using it like a bully and a tyrant. We—"

"Oh, I say! Here you are." Bunny Bootles came rolling along the Cloisters. "I've been looking for you chaps. Don't you know the brekker bell's gone?"

"We're coming," said Harry.

There was nothing more to be said, and the Top Study started for the School House, Bunny trotting along with them.

"Carker's after you, Wilmot," the fat junior announced.

"Hang Carker!"

"I heard him tell Mr. Rawlings that he ordered you to come to his study, and you didn't come," chuckled Bunny. "He says you're to be looked for and sent to him at once."

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

The chums of the Fourth entered the School House together, and went into the dining-room, where St. Kit's were already at breakfast. Mr. Rawlings, the master of the Fourth, was at the head of his table, and he cast a very curious glance at Harry. Like all the rest of the school, he had been astonished to find that Wilmot was at liberty that morning.

Harry went to his place and sat down.

Mr. Rawlings coughed slightly.

"Ahem! Wilmot!"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Mr. Carker requires your immediate attendance in his study."

Harry drew a deep breath.

"I know what Mr. Carker wants, sir," he answered. "He wants to act like a brute and a bully—"

"Wilmot!"

"I do not intend to submit, sir."

Mr. Rawlings paused. In Dr. Chenies' time, if the Head had sent for a junior and the junior had made such an answer, Mr. Rawlings would have acted promptly and drastically. But matters were changed now. Mr. Rawlings had been "nagged" in his own Form-room before his class—he had been troubled and interfered with by the tyrant of St. Kit's—and he was, in his heart of hearts, fully in sympathy with Wilmot.

He reflected for a few moments and then let the matter drop, saying nothing further.

The Fourth Form breakfasted in a state of tension. At any moment they expected to see Mr. Carker stride in at the door, cane in hand. But he did not appear, and breakfast finished without an interruption.

CHAPTER 17.

Too Much for Carstairs!

"I S he going to back down?" Bob Rake asked that question when the bell rang for morning classes.

So far the chums of the Fourth had seen nothing of Mr. Carker. Wilmot's refusal to go to his study had passed—without incident. It really looked as if the tyrant of St. Kit's realised that he was "up against" something that it was beyond his power to subdue, and had decided to beat a timely retreat.

But Harry Wilmot did not think so

for a moment. He was quite assured that Randolph Carker had not done with him.

He was very wary when he came into the School House for class, and his chums kept close to his side. Carsdale of the Sixth passed them on his way to the Sixth Form; he scowled, but did not speak. The bully of the Sixth evidently had not yet forgotten the happenings of that morning.

The Fourth went into their Form-room with a great deal of suppressed excitement.

Was Mr. Carker going to take it "lying down," after all? If so, it was certain that Mr. Carker would not receive much respect from the Lower School while he wielded authority at St. Kit's.

The St. Kit's tyrant, in fact, had reached a point at which it was difficult to proceed, but quite impossible to retreat, if he was to retain a tatter of authority in the school.

The "heavy hand" had provoked resistance, and unless the resistance were crushed, Mr. Carker's authority would be at an end. The captain of the Fourth was quite assured that the tyrant would make some effort to crush the resistance he had provoked. It only remained to see what Mr. Carker's method would be.

Mr. Rawlings began lessons with a gloomy brow. He felt the thunder in the air.

Very soon after the commencement of lessons Carsdale of the Sixth entered the Fourth Form-room. Mr. Rawlings glanced at him inquiringly.

"Message from the Head, sir," said Carsdale. "Wilmot is to be taken to his study at once."

"I leave that matter entirely in the hands of Mr. Carker, Carsdale," said the Form-master. "You may tell him so."

"Mr. Carker's instructions are that I am to take Wilmot with me to his study, sir."

"Very good."

"You hear me, Wilmot?" called out Carsdale.

"Oh, yes!" answered Harry.

"Well, I'm waiting."

"Wait, then!"

"Wait till you grow whiskers," said Bob Rake. "Wilmot's not coming."

"Would you mind waitin' in the passage, Carsdale?" asked Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, with elaborate politeness. "Your face worries me a little. Catch on?"

There was a chuckle in the Fourth. Carsdale breathed hard. The remembrance of his morning's experiences made him hesitate.

"Mr. Rawlings, will you order Wilmot to accompany me?" he asked.

"I have already said that I leave the matter entirely in Mr. Carker's hands," answered the Fourth Form-master icily. "I have nothing to add to that."

Carsdale set his lips.

"I shall have to take Wilmot by force if he does not come quietly," he said.

"That is your own affair," answered Mr. Rawlings.

The bully of the Sixth made a step towards Harry. Every eye in the Fourth was fixed on him; and most of the eyes were gleaming threats. He paused—but he had already experienced the bitterness of Mr. Carker's tongue, and he did not care to retreat and report that the junior would not come. He strode to Harry and grasped him by the collar.

"Now come, you young cad!" he snarled.

Harry Wilmot did not hesitate for a moment. He nit out straight from the shoulder, and Carsdale staggered as he caught with his chin a set of knuckles that seemed like iron.

He gave a howl that rang through the Form-room.

As he staggered Bob Rake hurled a Latin grammar, and it came with a mighty smite upon Carsdale's nose. The contents of an inkpot flew from Algy's hand at the same moment, catching Carsdale in one ear.

The example of the Top Study was enough for the Fourth. Seven or eight juniors were on their feet, and a shower of missiles rattled upon Carsdale. Latin grammars, rulers, and inkpots whizzed around him. Mr. Rawlings prudently retired behind his high desk. The aim was not always good, and a whizzing inkpot was no respecter of persons.

"Stop it!" yelled Carsdale. "Stop it, you young fiends! Oh, my hat! Yarooch! Oh, crumbs! Ow! Oooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him socks!" yelled Bob.

"Give him beans!"

Five or six juniors jumped from their desks. Carsdale backed to the door and fled. A flying inkpot caught him on the back of the head as he went, and a fiendish yell floated back from Carsdale.

Then his fleeting footsteps were heard dying away in the corridor. There was uproar in the Fourth Form-room. Mr. Rawlings emerged from behind his desk.

"Order!" he rapped out. "Take your places at once!"

Some of the Fourth were disinclined to obey; the spirit of riot had spread; but Harry Wilmot set the example of returning quietly to his place, and the rest followed. The Top Study wanted to make it quite clear that the revolt was against Mr. Carker's tyranny, and not against just authority. In a few minutes all was quiet in the Fourth Form-room, and the lesson recommenced—without much prospect of finishing in peace. Meanwhile, Carsdale of the Sixth hurried to the Head's study, breathless, bruised, and splashed from head to foot with ink.

Mr. Carker was waiting there, cane in hand. Whether he really expected to find Wilmot coming with the prefect is a doubtful point. But he scowled as he saw Carsdale alone.

"Where is Wilmot?" he snapped.

"He wouldn't come!" gasped Carsdale.

"What!"

"The whole crowd set on to me!"

"Nonsense!"

"I—I had to cut!" gasped Carsdale.

"Fool!"

"I've done my best," muttered Carsdale sullenly. "They—they're entirely out of hand, sir."

Randolph Carker's jaw set grimly.

"I shall very quickly bring them to heel," he said. "Follow me!"

Cane in hand, Mr. Carker started for the Fourth Form-room. It was now or never—neck or nothing. Carsdale followed at his heels doubtfully. He hoped that he was going to witness a thorough all-round flogging of the rebels of St. Kit's. He hoped so, but he had his doubts. And his doubts were justified.

CHAPTER 18.

Hand-to-hand!

"HERE comes the Carker-bird!" Bob Rake made that observation quite loudly as the tall, lean form of Mr. Randolph Carker appeared in the doorway of the Fourth Form-room. Bob did not seem to care whether Mr. Carker heard him or not—and certainly Mr. Carker heard him, and his flinty eyes glittered.

Mr. Rawlings turned wearily round. He was finding his duties as master of the Fourth much more onerous than they had been in Dr. Chenies' time.

"Mr. Rawlings!" snapped the new Head.

"Sir!"

"I want Carsdale to bring Wilmot to my study."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"You have allowed Carsdale—a prefect of the Sixth Form—to be assaulted under your eyes by the boys of your Form. Is that what you consider your duty, Mr. Rawlings?"

"I do not require you to teach me my duty, Mr. Carker," said the Form-master icily. "And if you intend to interfere in this Form-room I shall retire and leave the Form in your hands, as I did yesterday."

"Retire by all means!" snapped Mr. Carker. "I am well aware that I cannot count upon your support in dealing with this rebellious Form. I am aware that you encourage them in insubordination."

"That's not true, sir!"

"Mr. Rawlings!"

"Insubordination has certainly taken place," said Mr. Rawlings. "It has been caused entirely by you, Mr. Carker. After what you have said I decline to act any longer as Form-master under your direction."

"You may resign your post, sir, the moment you think fit," snarled Mr. Carker. "I shall easily fill your place, have no doubt on that point."

"I shall not resign my post," answered Mr. Rawlings calmly. "But I shall refuse to act with you, Mr. Carker, and leave the matter between us to be settled by Dr. Chenies and the Board of Governors. I wish you a very good-morning, sir!"

And the Form-master, trembling with anger and indignation, rustled out of the Form-room.

Mr. Carker turned to the class with a malevolent eye.

"Wilmot, stand out before the class!"

Harry Wilmot did not stir.

"You hear me, Wilmot?"

No answer.

"Carsdale, bring that boy to me!"

The hapless Carsdale hesitated. The Fourth were ready for him, and he knew it. Mr. Carker turned a bitter eye on him.

"Do you hear me, Carsdale?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered the bully of the Sixth, fervently wishing at that moment that he had not curried favour with the tyrant of St. Kit's, and been selected as his henchman.

"Then obey me!" rapped out Mr. Carker. "If there is resistance I shall assist you."

"Very well, sir," mumbled Carsdale.

He advanced towards the class in a very gingerly manner. An inkpot whizzed from somewhere and landed on

his chin with a crash. Carsdale gave a wild yell.

"Goal!" howled Bob Rake.

"Ha. ha, ha!"

"Bring that boy here!" thundered Mr. Carker.

The wretched Carsdale made another step forward, and a Latin grammar crashed on his nose. He staggered back.

"You—you see, sir!" he stuttered.

Mr. Carker strode savagely forward and reached out at Harry Wilmot. He grasped the junior by the collar, and by main force dragged him over the desk and out into the middle of the Form-room.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

The cane rose and fell.

Harry Wilmot struggled and struck fiercely. Like an arrow from a bow Bob Rake came rushing out from the desks, with a heavy Latin dictionary in his grip. He did not hurl it—he swung it up and smote Mr. Carker on the head with a mighty smite.

"Bravo!" chirruped Algernon Aubrey.

"Give him socks!" yelled Stubbs.

"Back up, Fourth!" roared Durance. And Durance was the next to reach the tyrant of St. Kit's with a ruler in his hand.

Mr. Carker released Harry Wilmot perforce, as six or seven assailants closed round him, all hitting out.

Carsdale made a half-hearted attempt to help his chief, but Algernon Aubrey headed him off with a thick ebony ruler which he had thoughtfully placed in his desk that morning. The ruler rapped on Carsdale's nose, and the Sixth-Former jumped away. Myers and Wheatford rushed at him, also armed with rulers, and Carsdale backed to the door.

Even Licke, the bug-hunter, wildly excited, glaring ferociously through his big glasses, clutched up the cane from Mr. Rawlings' desk and rushed into the fray. His first slash caught Carsdale across the face; his second landed on the back of St. Leger's neck, and there was a fearful yell from Algy. His third

would probably have booked Wheatford for the school hospital, had not someone fortunately tripped him behind and sent him sprawling with the cane along the Form-room floor.

Meanwhile, Mr. Carker had his hands full with Wilmot, Bob, and Stubbs, and Durance, and several other fellows. Of all the Fourth, only Rex Tracy sat tight and took no part in the riot. Even his nutty pals, Lumley and Howard, Verney minor and Leigh, were up and doing. It was the Fourth against the tyrant now, and if Harry Wilmot & Co. were subdued it would go hard with the whole Form, and even the Nuts realised it and joined in the fray. Not that their aid was much needed—there were more than enough to deal with Randolph Carker now that the juniors had fairly taken the bit between their teeth.

The tall, angular form of Randolph Carker swayed to and fro with never fewer than five or six juniors clinging to him.

He came down at last with a terrific crash on the Form-room floor. Two or three juniors sprawled with him.

"Sit on him!" roared Bob.

"Sit on his head!"

"Here, Bootles, sit on his head!" yelled Stubbs. "You're heaviest! Sit on his head, Bunny!"

"Oh, I say——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" It was a breathless howl of laughter from the excited Fourth. "Sit on his head, Bunny!"

Bunny Bootles rolled forward, eager to distinguish himself, but fearfully afraid of the tyrant, fallen as he was. Three or four hands pushed him, and he sat down—on Mr. Carker's head. Mr. Carker, struggling with his foes, was vainly endeavouring to rise. His struggles petered out suddenly as Bunny Bootles sat down. There was no arguing with the extensive avoirdupois of Cuthbert Archibald Bootles.

"Goooooooch!" came faintly from Mr. Carker.

Carsdale dodged out of the Form-room and fled, followed by a derisive yell. Licke scrambled up and groped

for his spectacles, and jammed them on his nose and blinked round wildly.

"Somebody tripped me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I got in two jolly good whacks," panted Licke. "Two jolly good ones! I gave it to Carsdale—I did——"

"Ow!" groaned Algernon Aubrey, caressing the back of his neck. "You gave it to me, too, you thumpin' idiot! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's that cane?" Licke blinked round. "I say, give Carker the cane. He's given us enough of it."

"By gad! What a ferocious bug-hunter!" ejaculated Algy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Licke, the bug-hunter, was on the war-path with a vengeance. He clutched up the cane and rushed towards the struggling tyrant, who was gasping and hooting under Bunny's weight.

"Let's give him some of his own medicine. Stand clear!" shouted Licke, whirling up the cane.

"Yaroooh!"

"Look out, you blind idiot——"

"Stop him!"

Stubbs got the first lick from the short-sighted hero and Bob Rake the second, then Bob jerked the cane away.

"You're more dangerous than the Carker-bird, you image!" he cried. "You run away and leave this to a chap who can see straight."

Licke's blood was fairly boiling now, however, and he glared angrily at the Australian junior.

"I'm in this just as much as you are, Rake!" he cried. "A man like Carker is a danger to the community. As I said in a speech in the Glory Hole last term, if——"

"Shut up!"

"If——"

Bob Rake interrupted the bug-hunter with a gentle push which sent the excited Licke sprawling over Mr. Carker's flying legs.

There was a loud howl from Licke as

he received a violent kick on the back of his head.

"My hat!" cried Harry Wilmot. "That sounded a hefty one! We shall have to pay interest on that!"

"Give it to Carker!" shouted Wheatford.

"You bet!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Hurrah!"

The Form-master's cane came lashing down across Mr. Carker's struggling, thrashing legs. There was a gurgling gasp from Mr. Carker, and then a fiendish howl from Bunny Bootles. The fat junior leaped up raving.

"Sit down, Bootles——"

"What's the matter with you, Bunny?"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm bitten! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! The beast bit me—yow-ow-ow! I'm bitten—yaroooh!" yelled Bunny. He staggered to a form and sat down—but jumped up again as if the form were red-hot. Apparently the bite had made Bunny disinclined to sit down.

Mr. Carker made a desperate effort to rise.

He struck out savagely on all sides with clenched fists, and succeeded in getting to his feet.

His collar and tie were gone, his gown was in rags and tatters, his hair wildly ruffled. He stood and panted and glared breathlessly at the Fourth-Formers—only too evidently out of hand now. Then, as there was a rush at him, he turned and fled.

With almost a wolfish howl, the Fourth rushed in pursuit. Mr. Carker just got out of the Form-room—just! Bob's cane lashed along his back as he escaped—and he went down the corridor like a deer.

Bob slammed the Form-room door.

"Hoorah for us!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hip—hip—hoorah!"

Every voice in the Fourth joined in the roar that rang and echoed through

St. Kit's from end to end. In the other Form-rooms masters and boys started and stared—and in the Fourth Form-room pandemonium reigned.

CHAPTER 19.

Law and Order!

HARRY WILMOT, the captain of the Fourth, jumped upon a form.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth——" he shouted.

"Hurrah!" roared the rebels.

"Speech!" yelled Bob Rake.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah! Go it, Wilmot!" shouted Stubbs encouragingly. "Speech, old chap!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth, we've stood up for our rights and downed the tyrant——"

"Bravo!"

"But we haven't finished yet," continued Harry Wilmot. "We've been over the top, but we've got to consolidate the position."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Carker had cleared——"

The orator was interrupted by a series of deep groans for Mr. Randolph Carker. He had to wait a full minute before he could resume.

"Gentlemen, we've only made a beginning! Carker has cleared, but Carker is still about. He will come back——"

"Let him!" roared the Fourth beligerently.

"He may bring the Sixth-Form prefects with him——"

"Oh!"

The rebels of St. Kit's had forgotten the Sixth-Form prefects in the wild excitement of the outbreak. There was a hush in the shouting, and faces became graver. If the prefects of the Sixth backed up the unpopular headmaster, the rebels were not yet out of

the wood by any means. And it was very probable that the Sixth would support authority—that was what prefects were appointed for. Much as they might dislike Mr. Carker and despise him, even, and condemn his methods, it was only too probable that the Sixth Form prefects would consider it their duty to put down a rebellion in a junior Form.

"Oh, blow the prefects!" said Stubbs, rather doubtfully, however. "We can handle the prefects."

"Phew!"

"They can handle us, I fancy," said Howard. "I jolly well know that I'm not scappin' with any hefty Sixth-Formers, for one."

"You're a funk!" roared Stubbs.

"Order! Gentlemen——"

"Go it, Willmot!"

"It's agreed," said Harry, "that we never give in to Carker. We're willing to obey our own Form-master until the Head comes back——"

"I don't know about willing," said Stubbs dubiously. "But we'll do it."

"We're willing," insisted Harry.

"This affair isn't simply a rag——"

"Isn't it?" ejaculated Stubbs.

"No, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what is it, then?" demanded Percival Stubbs. Apparently, Stubbs had been under the impression that this struggle for freedom and right was merely a "rag" of unusual dimensions. It was to be feared that some more of the Fourth shared Stubbs' view.

"It's a vindication——" began Harry.

"A what?"

"A which?"

"Vindy whatter?"

"A vindication of the rights of the Fourth——" said Harry.

"Oh, I see! Good!"

"Carker is a brute and a Hun——"

"Hear, hear!"

"We're not standing him——"

"Never!"

"We're standing up for the right and——and law and order——"

"Are we?" ejaculated Stubbs, in astonishment.

"Yes, we are, you fathead!"

"Blessed if it struck me like that. Still, I don't mind! Hurrah for law and order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Law and order, in the Fourth, are represented by our Form-master, Mr. Rawlings," explained Harry Willmot. "We're up against Carker. No more lessons for the Fourth——"

"Hurrah!" There was a tremendous burst of enthusiasm at that. Even Tracy looked interested at last; and Bunny Bootles brightened up wonderfully.

"No lessons for the Fourth until Mr. Carker has agreed to leave us entirely in the charge of our own Form-master until the Head returns. You see, the ruffian——"

"That's right—he's a ruffian!"

"Down with the ruffian!"

"The ruffian has sacked Mr. Rawlings, so there can't be any lessons unless Carker handles us himself. We shouldn't stand that."

"No fear!"

"He will get a new Form-master, most likely—a fellow of his own kidney—and you know what that would be like."

"Never!"

"So that's our programme," said Harry Willmot. "Law and order—which means that we'll accept no master but Mr. Rawlings——"

"Hurrah!"

"Toppin', old bean," said Algernon Aubrey heartily. "Law and order sounds ever so much better than red-hot rebellion. And it doesn't make any difference, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's in a name?" grinned Bob Rake. "Shakespeare was offside when he said there was nix in a name. There's lots."

"Law and order—and down with Carker—that's the watchword," said the Captain of the Fourth. "Is that agreed? Hands up for yes."

Every hand in the Form-room went up. Rex Tracy followed the example of the rest. There was unanimity in the Fourth Form at St. Kit's for once.

"Now I propose a deputation to Mr. Rawlings, to ask him to take command," said Harry. "We don't want trouble—"

"Don't we?" murmured Stubbs.

"We don't want to put ourselves in the wrong—"

"No; that's right."

"When the Head comes back we shall have to answer for what we've done—"

"Oh! Ah! That's so."

"Dr. Chenies isn't likely to approve of Carker's little games. If he learns that we went on strike simply to stand by our Form-master, it ought to make a good impression on the Head."

"By gum, you're a born leader, Wilmot, old chap!" said Bob admiringly. "I shouldn't have thought of that! We're jolly well going to have our own way, and keep in the right all the time. That's good."

"Yaas, toppin'!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll go in a deputation of the whole Form to Mr. Rawlings," said Harry. "We must keep together—Carker may be up to some trick already. I think he will want a bit of a rest before he tackles us again—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But there's no time to lose. We don't want a scrap with the Sixth—they're rather hefty for us to handle. If Mr. Rawlings agrees to take us in charge, that settles it."

"Good!"

"Come on, then!"

Harry Wilmot jumped down from the form. Bob threw the door open wide. The Fourth streamed out into the corridor with their captain at their head—most of them armed with rulers, or canes, or inkpots, in case the enemy should be lurking without. But they did not see anything of Mr. Carker as

they marched to the Form-master's study. Mr. Carker was in no state, just then, to deal with the refractory Fourth.

The rebels reached Mr. Rawlings' study, and Harry tapped respectfully at the door.

"Come in!"

Harry Wilmot, Bob Rake, and Algeron Aubrey St. Leger entered the study. The rest of the Fourth crowded in the corridor, as close to the doorway as they could cram. And Mr. Rawlings, as he looked at them, rose hastily to his feet. For a moment the Fourth Form-master had the impression that the St. Kit's rebels were extending the "rag" from Mr. Carker to himself, and that it was a hostile invasion of his quarters. But he was reassured the next moment, as Harry Wilmot addressed him in tones of deepest respect.

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Rawlings breathed more freely. His Form had never been out of hand before; and what might happen in this extraordinary state of affairs he could hardly surmise.

"Yes, Wilmot—"

"We've turned Mr. Carker out of the Form-room, sir—"

"Kicked him out!" yelled Stubbs from the passage.

"Hurrah!"

"Ahem! I—I heard a—a—a disturbance—" murmured Mr. Rawlings.

"We are standing up for law and order, sir—"

"Good old law and order!" murmured Stubbs.

"We want you to take charge of the Fourth, sir, and keep Carker out of our Form-room," said Harry. "That is, until the Head comes back. We're all determined to have nothing more to do with Carker."

"Hear, hear!"

"But we don't want to slack, sir! We want things to go on as usual. Will you take charge of the Fourth Form, sir, and I will answer for it that there

will be no disturbance or trouble, so long as Mr. Carker keeps his distance?"

And Harry Wilmot paused, like Brutus, for a reply

CHAPTER 20.

A Difference of Opinion!

MR. RAWLINGS coughed.

He was rather at a loss.

In his heart he was fully in sympathy with the juniors.

As he had chosen to resign his position rather than submit to Mr. Carker's tyrannic dictation, he could hardly condemn the juniors for having refused to submit in their turn.

But the situation was a very awkward one; it was impossible for a Form-master to place himself at the head of a school rebellion—and that was practically what it amounted to—though the juniors did not realise it.

He coughed—and coughed again.

"I—I am afraid, Wilmot, that I cannot do as you ask," he answered at last. "It would be—hem—impossible. I do not conceal that I disapprove of Mr. Carker's methods. But the fact remains that he was appointed Head of St. Kit's during Dr. Chenies' absence, by the Board of Governors duly constituted. Mr. Carker holds supreme authority here."

"But, sir—"

"I can only recommend you, my boys, to submit for the present, and bear Mr. Carker's rule with patience."

"You haven't submitted, sir!" yelled Stubbs from the passage.

Mr. Rawlings coughed again.

"Shut up, Stubbs!" called out Bob Rake.

"Well, he hasn't!" persisted Stubbs.

"I have resigned my position, for the present," said Mr. Rawlings.

"We can't resign, you see, sir," said Harry.

"N-n-o! I am aware of that, Wilmot."

"We should like to keep Mr. Carker

in his place, sir, and keep on as before," said Harry. "We are all prepared to obey your orders."

"I fear it is impossible, Wilmot. I cannot set myself up against the head-master appointed by the governors."

The captain of the Fourth was silent for a minute or so. He realised now the difficulty of the Form-master's position. But it made no difference to his determination.

"Very well, sir," he said at last. "I'm sorry. But we don't intend to submit to Mr. Carker. The Fourth Form will go on strike."

"Bravo!" came in a roar from the passage.

"Suppose, sir, that Mr. Carker should ask you to take charge of us again, agreeing not to interfere—"

"That would be quite a different matter, Wilmot. I should consent at once. But Mr. Carker is not likely to make such a request."

"Very well, sir, the Fourth goes on strike until he does," said the captain of the Fourth. "That's all, sir! Clear off, you chaps."

"Hurrah!"

The deputation quitted Mr. Rawlings' study, leaving that gentleman in a very disturbed and thoughtful mood. The rebels of St. Kit's adjourned to the Glory Hole to debate their next step.

In the Form-rooms there was much suppressed excitement. The Sixth were left to themselves—Mr. Carker usually took the Sixth, but he was not taking them now; he was repairing damages. But the Sixth, of course, were much too lofty to dream of such things as "rags"; there was sedate quiet in the Sixth Form-room.

The Fifth, being seniors, were almost as sedate as the Sixth—Mr. Tulke had no difficulty with them. But in the Shell-room Mr. Rattrey was hard put to it to keep down the buzz of excitement. And in the Third Form-room Mr. Sheldon simply could not suppress the excitement of the fags, and lessons were more or less of a farce.

It was known all over St. Kit's that the Fourth were in open rebellion, and in such an amazing state of affairs it was not easy for the other Forms to pursue the even tenor of their way.

In the Glory Hole there was much excited discussion among the rebels. A barring-out was the favourite topic.

Mr. Carker was defeated—for the moment! But when he had time to rally his forces the struggle would come.

There was a heavy responsibility on Harry Wilmot's shoulders. But the captain of the Fourth was equal to it.

While the rebels were engaged in excited discussions Harry Wilmot was busy with pen and ink and a sheet of impot paper.

When classes were dismissed at St. Kit's that morning there was a large notice on the board—and crowds of juniors of all Forms gathered round to read it. It was written in Wilmot's hand, with plenty of capitals:

**NOTICE TO ST. KIT'S
DOWN WITH CARKER!**

It is hereby announced that the Fourth

Form have decided to

SACK CARKER!

All other Forms are called

upon to

BACK UP THE FOURTH!

Meeting at 12.30 in the Glory Hole.

Signed, H. WILMOT.

The Shell and the Third, and even the fags of the Second, crowded round that notice and read it, and re-read it, and commented upon it.

"Back up the Fourth!" said Babbie of the Shell. "That's all very well—but the Shell, of course, couldn't play second fiddle to the Fourth!"

"Impossible," said Verney major.

"If they like to ask us to lead——" lead——" said Babbie.

"And obey our orders——" said Verney major.

"Something might be done——"

"It might."

"We'll go to the meeting, anyhow."
"Oh, yes!"

Very nearly all the Lower School had decided to go to the meeting, at any rate. Very soon after 12.30 there was a crowd in the Glory Hole—that celebrated apartment was crammed.

Harry Wilmot & Co. watched the juniors crowding in with much satisfaction. They were prepared to stand up to the tyrant alone; but if all the Lower School came in their position would be ever so much stronger. Even the Sixth, if they backed up the tyrant, would find it difficult to deal with the Lower Forms in rebellion.

The Shell were there to a man, and nearly all the Third, and a swarm of the Second. At 12.45 Bob Rake closed the door of the Glory Hole, and Harry Wilmot mounted on the table to address the crowded gathering. Babbie of the Shell mounted on a chair at the same time.

"Gentlemen of St. Kit's——" began Wilmot.

"Gentlemen of St. Kit's——" began Babbie.

"Order!" bawled Bob Rake.

"Stand down, Babbie!"

"Go it, Babs!"

"Shut up, Wilmot!"

"Cheese it, Babbie!"

"Gentlemen——"

"Gentlemen——"

"Order!"

The door of the Glory Hole opened, and Oliphant of the Sixth appeared, with his Ashplant under his arm. And the hubbub died away suddenly.

CHAPTER 21.

Desperate Measures!

OLIPHANT strode into the Glory Hole with a grim expression on his rugged face.

Harry Wilmot & Co. look grim, too.

They liked "old Oliphant," but they did not intend to let even the popular captain of St. Kit's interfere with them

now. If Oliphant backed up Mr. Carker, they were done with Oliphant.

"There's a paper on the board," said Oliphant. "You put it there, I think, Wilmot?"

"That's right!" assented Harry. "Are you going to join us, Oliphant?"

"What?"

"We'll back you up as leader if you'll stand up against Carker."

"Hurrah!"

"Back up, Oliphant."

"You young asses!" roared the captain of the school. "Dry up. I've come here to tell you that this meeting has got to disperse immediately. You are to take that notice down from the board, Wilmot, and take it to Mr. Carker in his study."

Harry laughed.

"We've done with Carker!" he answered.

"Quite finished, old bean," said St. Leger. "The excellent Carker doesn't exist any longer so far as the Fourth Form are concerned. Catchy on?"

"Silence——"

"Let's have this plain, Oliphant," said Harry Wilmot quietly. "Are you backing up Mr. Carker?"

"The prefects are bound to support the headmaster," growled Oliphant. "Whether we like the job or not doesn't matter—we're going to do our duty."

"Then you're against us?" demanded Bob Rake.

"Yes, of course."

"Then you can buzz out of this room," said Bob. "Only sympathisers are wanted at this meeting."

"Take care, Rake——"

"Sorry, Oliphant," said Harry politely. "If the prefects back up Mr. Carker we decline to recognise the prefects any longer. Will you walk out of the room? We don't want to handle you."

"Handle me!" stuttered Oliphant.

"We shall have to if you don't go quietly."

"Yaas, begad!"

"You cheeky young ass!" roared Oliphant, beginning to lose his temper.

"I've come here to disperse this crowd. Clear out at once before I lay my ash-plant about you."

"Rats!"

"You—you——"

"Rats!" roared Bob Rake.

"Yaas, rats, old bean!" said Algernon Aubrey. "Go and masticate coke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oliphant breathed hard. He had come alone to the Glory Hole, never doubting for a moment that the juniors would toe the line, as usual, at the command of the head prefect and captain of the school. They might "rag" Mr. Carker, Head as he was; but Oliphant had never dreamed that they would venture to rag him. He woke up now, as it were.

"Better go quietly!" said Harry.

"Go?" repeated Oliphant.

"Yes, otherwise you'll be put out."

"Put!" stuttered Oliphant.

"Yes. Take your choice."

Oliphant's choice was soon taken. He made a rush at Harry Wilmot and grabbed him by the collar.

Then there was a rush of the juniors.

Oliphant of the Sixth was surrounded—hands were laid on him on all sides, and before he knew what was happening he was on the floor, and a crowd of juniors were dragging him to the door.

The St. Kit's captain struggled wildly.

But there were two or three pairs of hands grasping each arm and leg, and he went fairly whirling and spinning along the floor.

"Here, that's rather too thick!" exclaimed Bable of the Shell.

But the Fourth did not heed Bable.

They rushed the gasping, struggling captain of St. Kit's to the doorway and shot him out into the corridor.

Oliphant went rolling.

The doorway was crammed with belligerent fags, yelling defiance, as the captain of St. Kit's sat up. He sat up dazedly, with a feeling as if the world were coming to an end.

He blinked at the crowd in the doorway.

"M-m-my hat!" he gasped.

"Clear off!" roared Stubbs.

"Go home, Oliphant!"

"Yah! Down with the prefects!"

"Kick him along the passage!" yelled Stubbs.

"Hurrah!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wilmot.

"Let him alone, you chaps! Sorry, Oliphant——"

"You—you cheeky young villain!" gasped the St. Kit's captain.

"Sorry—but you've got to go. If you come in here again you'll be handled rather roughly."

"More than rather!" hooted Bob Rake.

"Yaas. Blow away, old bean," said Algy.

Oliphant staggered to his feet. He made a step towards the doorway of the Glory Hole, and the Fourth closed up to meet his attack. An inkpot flew out and narrowly missed him.

He paused.

It was evident that he could do nothing single-handed now that the Fourth were in determined revolt. Gasping for breath, the captain of St. Kit's turned away—wondering what on earth things were coming to. The juniors were glad enough to see him go. It went against the grain to handle "old Oliphant," though they would not have hesitated if he had attempted to enter the Glory Hole again.

The victorious Fourth crowded back into the Glory Hole. Babbie of the Shell was on the table now.

"Now, listen to me——" Babbie was saying.

"Shut up, Babbie!" howled Stubbs.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Harry.

Babbie went on:

"We're as fed-up with Carker as you are. But what's the game? Carker's backed up by the governors."

"Blow the governors!"

"We're going to bar Mr. Carker," said Harry. "We want the Lower School to join us—the seniors, too, if they like."

"Who's going to be leader?" demanded Babbie.

"Wilmot!" roared the Fourth.

Babbie shook his head.

"That won't do! I'm willing to take the lead—within reason."

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Stand down!"

"As for a barring-out, that's a bit thick," said Babbie. "You fags——"

"What?"

"You fags are too reckless. Now, we've got more sense in the Middle School——"

"Hear, hear!" concurred the Shell fellows.

"Bless your Middle School!" snorted Bob Rake. "You're juniors, the same as we are!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"Juniors, perhaps—but not the same as you are," said Babbie loftily. "We're the Middle School. We're prepared to take the lead in standing up to Carker—within reason——"

"Within reason!" assented Verney major.

"But——"

The door opened, and Mr. Rattrey, the master of the Shell, stepped into the Glory Hole. Babbie ceased suddenly.

Mr. Rattrey held up his hand.

"All Shell boys will leave this room immediately," he said, taking no notice of the Fourth.

Babbie hesitated. All eyes were fixed on him, and some of the Fourth were grinning.

Now was the time for the aspirant to leadership to show his quality. Certainly the daring leader of a school rebellion could not step down quietly and walk out at his Form-master's order. But Eric Babbie was not cut for a daring leader of revolt—he was quite mistaken on that point. Under Mr. Rattrey's calm, cold glance Babbie felt all his belligerency oozing out at his finger tips.

"You hear me?" said Mr. Rattrey.

And Babbie of the Shell answered meekly:

"Yes, sir!"

He stepped down from the table, his face reddening under the mocking glances of the Fourth. He walked to the door, and the rest of the Shell followed him. Under Mr. Rattrey's eye they were shepherded out of the Glory Hole, and the door closed on them. But it was opened again for the Third Form fags to steal quietly away. The Third did not wait for their Form-master to call for them. And among the fags Rex Tracy of the Fourth slipped away unostentatiously, and Howard and Lumley followed him.

The cold fit had followed the hot fit. Some of the Fourth looked dubiously at one another—and Bunny Bootles made a strategic movement towards the door.

Bob Rake's grasp closed on his collar and jerked him back, and there was a howl from Bunny.

"Yow-ow!"

"Where are you going?" demanded Bob.

"Only—only—only to the tuckshop!"

"The tuckshop can wait!" said Bob grimly. And he locked the door of the Glory Hole, and put the key in his pocket.

CHAPTER 22.

The Fourth Agree to Fight!

HARRY WILMOT glanced round over the crowd of the Fourth in the Glory Hole. There was doubt in a good many faces now. Evidently the Lower School was not going to join in the revolt; the Fourth they rebelled, had to rebel alone. The prefects were against them—and the rest of the school was indifferent. But there were three fellows who were quite determined still—Wilmot, Algy, and Bob Rake. But for that firm and unyielding trio it is very probable that the Fourth-Form revolt would have "fizzled out," and that the St. Kit's rebellion would have proved nothing but a flash

in the pan. But Harry Wilmot was a leader of a very different calibre from Babbie of the Shell.

His cool, determined face was an encouragement in itself. Looking at him, the juniors could see that he would hold out to the bitter end, if he held out alone. And that was the kind of leader they needed in this emergency.

And Harry Wilmot realised this. He shared a secret with his two chums, Algy St. Leger and Bob Rake—a secret that he was bursting to tell the loyal followers.

"By gad!" exclaimed Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, suddenly, "we've forgotten somethin'."

"What's that?" asked Smith.

"Foot-warmers."

"Foot-warmers!" repeated several astonished voices.

"Yaas, dear boys," answered the dandy of St. Kit's amiably. "We ought to have taken some measures against cold feet."

There was a laugh.

"We—we haven't got cold feet, of course," said Stubbs. "But—but things don't seem to be going very well. Rawlings won't help—and now the Lower School has given us the go-by."

"Wilmot's ideas don't seem much good, do they?" remarked Lumley.

"Rotten, in fact!" agreed Verney minor.

The knots, at least, were weakening.

"Gentlemen!" The captain of the Fourth addressed the crowd. "We're up against it. I hope nobody here is thinking of surrender."

"Ahem!"

"N-n-no—but—"

"B-b-but—"

"If Carker gets the upper hand now, you can guess what you'll have to go through," said Harry. "He will take it out of you all for what's happened this morning."

"Ye-e-es."

"There are three of us who will never give in," continued Harry. "If the Fourth deserts us, we shall hold Top



"Rescue!" panted Howard. "Let us in!" howled Lumley. Mr. Carker was not far behind the two juniors. "Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wilmot, and he gave Lumley a helping hand over the barricade, while Scott and Wheatford dragged in Howard—but only just in time!

Study against Carker, and all St. Kit's, if necessary."

"Hear, hear!" bawled Bob Rake.

"Yaas, that's the game," assented Algy. "By gad, a barrin'-out in the Top Study isn't half a bad idea."

"You won't be three—you'll be four!" said Dick Durance quietly. "I'm with you all along the line."

"Same here!" said Stubbs, resolutely.

"Count me in," said Scott.

"What about trying to make terms?" asked Catesby, uneasily.

"It's too late to think of that if it was any good," said Harry. "We've got to beat Carker, or Carker will beat us. But any fellow who funks going on can clear out."

"Rot!" snorted Bob.

"Better so," said Harry. "Funks are no good in a scrap—and there's going to be real trouble. Unlock the door, Bob, knuckle under to Carker. Bear in mind, you chaps, that Carker will take it out of any fellow who's fool enough to get into his hands."

Catesby was already moving towards the door—but he stopped at that. Bunny Bootles was moving—and he stopped, too.

"You can bet on that!" said Bob.

"Anybody going?" asked Harry, and Bob Rake took the key out of his pocket. But there were no "takers." The risks of the revolt were better than the certainty of falling into Mr. Carker's ruthless hands. Surrender was not likely to placate that gentleman, and all the juniors knew it.

"We—we're standing by you, Wilmot," stammered Catesby. He realised that there was no choice left.

"Yes, rather," said Bunny. "We—we—we're backing you up, old fellow—right to the finish! No surrender."

"Seem to have landed ourselves in a precious fix," remarked Verney minor. "Wish I'd chanced it with Howard and Lumley and Tracy now."

"It's not too late," said Harry, with a curl of the lip. "I fancy Howard and

Lumley and Tracy will be sorry for themselves when Mr. Carker spots them—if not already. I think it's very likely he's taking it out of them in his study now."

"Serve 'em right!" said Bob.

"Yaas, begad!"

"But I say, what about dinner?" persisted Bunny Bootles. "Anybody got any toffee? I could hold out a bit on toffee."

"Shut up, Bunny!"

"Oh, I say!"

"Yes, dry up a minute, fatty," said Harry Wilmot. "You fellows—we've got to think this out clear. We've held our own so far—"

"Hurrah for us!" chortled Bob.

"It's come to this—there's got to be a barring-out—"

"Hear, hear!"

"If the rest of the Lower School had joined up we'd have collared the School House and held it against Carker."

"But they jolly well haven't," said Stubbs.

"No; but there's the Fourth Form passage—we can hold that against all comers. There's only the staircase up, and that's a narrow one. We could hold it against all the Sixth if they back up the prefects—as they will very likely."

"Yaas, begad!"

"It's settled," said Harry, looking round. "We've gone too far to retreat now, if we wanted to. If Carker gets the upper hand now it's floggings all round and the sack for some of us. Who's for a barring-out?"

"Bravo!"

"Hands up for a barring-out!" shouted Bob Rake.

Every hand went up, Bunny's fat paw as prompt as any. All the Fourth realised that there was no retreat open for them unless they could make honourable terms with the enemy—and that was only possible after a successful revolt and resistance. And the idea of a barring-out appealed to the excited juniors.

"Done, then!" exclaimed Harry

Willmot. "We bar out Carker & Co., and our motto is 'No surrender!'"

"No surrender!" roared the Fourth.

"But what about dinner?"

"Shut up, Bunny!"

"That's all very well, but dinner——"

"Kick him somebody!"

"Yow-ow!"

"The fellows will all be going in to dinner now," said Harry. "We've got to get to our studies quiet and all together. If we're stopped we've got to fight our way!"

"We're ready!" breathed Bob Rake.

The Fourth-Formers drew together, every fellow grasping a weapon of some sort—ruler, or poker, or shovel, or chair-leg. Bunny Bootles squeezed into the midst of the array. Bob Rake quietly unlocked the door of the Glory Hole.

The passage outside was vacant. Mr. Carker probably thought that the rebels would remain locked in for security—probably he was at that moment devising means of getting at the garrison of the Glory Hole.

From the direction of the dining-room came a sound of knives and forks, and Bunny's mouth watered. But even Bunny did not think of venturing into the dining-room. Some of the prefects, at least, would be there—possibly even Mr. Carker himself.

"Quiet!" breathed Harry.

On tiptoe the rebels of St. Kit's filed out of the Glory Hole and headed for the big staircase. They were prepared to make a rush for it and fight their way if they were stopped. But discretion, in the circumstances, was obviously the best part of valour. There was a gasp from some of the juniors as they crossed the hall and Mr. Rawlings came in sight. But the Fourth Form master passed on into the dining-room without glancing at the juniors, though certainly he saw them. They reached the big staircase.

There was a shout from a distance.

"Why—why—here they are!"

It was Carsdale's voice.

"Hook it!" called out Harry.

And throwing further concealment to the winds, the Fourth Formers scampered up the staircase with a rush. Carsdale, rushing after them, was collared on the stairs and hurled back into the hall, where he sprawled, yelling. And with a breathless rush, the juniors swarmed up the Fourth Form staircase above, and reached their own quarters.

CHAPTER 23.

Barred Out!

RANDOLPH CARKER was pacing the Head's study, his brows knitted, his hands clenched, his lead-coloured eyes glittering under his scowling brows.

His new methods at St. Kit's had not been a success—and the thought of the Governing Board hearing of the present state of affairs filled him with anxiety. The governors had sent him there—but not to turn St. Kit's into a pandemonium. His prospects of permanently replacing Dr. Chenies in the headmastership would be remote if this revolt became known to the august governors.

There was a tap at the door, and Carsdale of the Sixth looked in—rather dusty and ruffled.

Mr. Carker gave him a glare.

"Well, Carsdale?" he rapped.

"The Fourth Form have gone up to their studies, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. I spotted them as I was going to the dining-room—they've come out of the Glory Hole and gone to their studies."

Mr. Carker breathed deeply.

"So they are in their studies now, Carsdale?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Carker smiled and picked up a cane.

"I will go to them there," he said.

"I have no doubt that I shall find the young rascals submissive enough now—no doubt they are thoroughly frightened"

at what they have done. Wilmot and Rake I shall expel from the school—however, I shall flog them first. I shall flog the whole Fourth Form. Carsdale, you will come with me and tell Oliphant and the rest I may require their assistance. It is possible that there may be some slight trouble when the floggings commence."

Carsdale thought it very probable.

Mr. Carker whisked out of the study.

Very reluctantly the Sixth Form prefects gathered and followed Mr. Carker up the staircase.

There was something of a din from the Fourth Form passage above—a sound of dragging furniture. It puzzled Mr. Carker a little, and he hurried up the second flight of stairs and crossed the landing that gave access to the Fourth Form staircase.

That staircase led to the Fourth-Form passage, and nowhere else. It was a rather narrow one with a curve in it. That staircase was the sacred property of the Fourth; it was an unwritten law that any fellow of any other Form found on that staircase could be rolled down on his neck. Mr. Carker mounted the stairs with his "tail" of prefects behind him. He mounted as far as the bend.

Then he stopped.

There were heavy oaken banisters on one side of the staircase, a wall on the other. Between the banisters and the wall half a dozen study tables were jammed with legs interlocked. Over the top of that barricade, hurriedly jammed into position, appeared the cheery face of Bob Rake. He had a hammer and nails in his hand, and was cheerily driving long nails through the legs and tops of the tables, nailing them together into a mass. Behind him a dozen of the Fourth were busy stacking chairs and desks against the barricade of tables, filling the upper half of the staircase to the level of the passage above.

Mr. Carker stopped—and stared.

It was not surrender, after all. That

was evident. Bob Rake spotted him looking up, and nodded cheerily.

"Hallo, old bird!" he said.

"Rake!" spluttered Mr. Carker.

"Here's the merry old reptile!" roared Bob Rake.

The barricade was crowded with faces at once. Mr. Carker mounted the stairs till he reached the up-ended tables.

"Wilmot!" he shouted.

"Adsum!" said Harry, with a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Remove this furniture at once——"

"Oh, don't be a goat," remonstrated Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You hear me, Wilmot?" thundered Mr. Carker.

Oliphant looked at the other prefects, and the other prefects looked at Oliphant. The same thought was expressed in all their faces. They were fed up!

Without a word the Sixth-Formers turned and descended the stairs and went back to their interrupted dinner.

Mr. Carker laid hands on the barricade.

He gave a wrench, and the barrier creaked. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger reached over with his bonnie little walking-cane and gave a slash at the headmaster's knuckles, coolly and smiling.

"Yaroooop!"

Mr. Carker jumped back and almost lost his footing on the stairs. He clutched at the banisters for support.

"Have some more, old bean?" said Algy, amiably.

"You—you young—young ruffian. I shall expel you for this, St. Leger!"

"Dear man!" said Algy.

"I shall expel you, Wilmot——"

"Rats!"

"And you, Rake——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Give him beans!" roared Stubbs.

An inkpot flew, it was followed by a cushion, and then by an apple in a state of over-ripeness. The inkpot missed, but the cushion caught Mr.

Carker under the chin, and the ripe apple landed in his eye. It squashed there, and spread.

Mr. Carker gave a choking howl and lost his hold. There was a roar of laughter from the Fourth as he rolled down to the landing.

"Oh! ah! ow! yow! I—I will flog you all—I will expel you all—I—I—I will—I—I—" Mr. Carker fairly babbled with fury.

"Go home, Carker!" chirruped Bob Rake. "It's a barring-out, old top—a merry barring-out, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it. Go home, Carker! Go and eat coke!"

"I—I—I—"

An inkpot whizzed down the staircase and dropped on Mr. Carker's head as he sat spluttering. Ink streamed down his face.

"Goal!" yelled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Randolph Carker staggered to his feet, daubed with ripe apple, streaming with ink, and scrambled away. A roar of hoots and cat-calls followed him.

The St. Kit's barring-out had begun! And nobody at St. Kit's—not even the rebels themselves—could surmise how it was going to end.

CHAPTER 24.
The Rebels!

BANG!
Bump!
Thump!

"They're going it!" said Babbie, of the Shell.

"Going it, and no mistake!" remarked Gunter of the Fifth. "Cheeky young sweeps."

The din from the Fourth Form passage indicated that the rebels of St. Kit's undoubtedly were "going" it.

Dinner was over, and most of the St. Kit's fellows had crowded up the stairs to listen and look on, in a buzz of excitement.

The wide landing which gave access

to the Fourth Form staircase swarmed with fellows of all Forms.

As far as that landing, at the top of the second staircase, anyone was free to go if he liked. Beyond, the way was barred. On the Fourth-Form staircase itself no one was allowed to set a foot. It was a case of thus far and no farther!

At the bend of the staircase study tables were jammed in a stack and nailed together. Bob Rake was still driving in nails, with hefty swipes of a big hammer. He was improving the barricade, certainly not the tables. But it was no time to think of the damage done to the school furniture—that was only a detail, and it could not be helped.

Chairs and desks and other articles were being stacked behind the tables; even Algernon Aubrey St. Leger's sofa had been dragged from the top study to be added to the barricade. Algy's eyes followed it rather sorrowfully, but he raised no objection. It was a time for sacrifice.

"It's a giddy barring-out!" said Babbie. "I never believed they meant business, but they do."

"Looks like it," grinned Price of the Fifth.

"What on earth will Carker do?"

"Echo answers, what?"

Bang, bang, bang!

Bob Rake's hammer was going strong. Bump! A heavy desk rolled against the barricade and jammed there. A chair rolled from the top of the stack and pitched down the stairs, rolling from step to step with a series of crashes. It narrowly escaped Gunter of the Fifth as it came to a rest on the landing.

"Here, look out!" roared Gunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wilmot looked over the barricade.

"You kids had better clear off!" he called out.

"Kids!" ejaculated Gunter.

"Yes; you'll be in the way."

"You cheeky fag!"

The crowd was thickening on the

landing, and there was scarcely standing room. Gunter, of the Fifth, stepped up on the Fourth-Form staircase and leaned on the banisters there. To a large extent Gunter sympathised with the Fourth in their rebellion against Mr. Randolph Carker. But he wanted to make it clear that he, Gunter, a Fifth Former and a senior, was far too lofty a personage to pay any regard to fags of the Lower School.

Wilmot waved his hand to him.

"Get down from there, Gunter."

"Oh, cheese it, kid!"

"Nobody allowed on the staircase!" called out the captain of the Fourth.

"Hop it, Gunter!"

"Rats!" retorted Gunter.

"Are you going down?"

"No!"

Whiz!

A cushion flew from above and caught Gunter of the Fifth on the side of his lofty head.

There was a wild yell from Gunter.

He fairly spun off the stairs and crashed down on the landing—or, rather, on the fellows who thronged the landing.

Babbie and Verney major of the Shell collapsed under him—Gunter was not a light-weight. Three or four fellows staggered right and left. There were howls of wrath and protest.

"You ass, Gunter——"

"Where are you butting to, you duffer?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gunter.

He found himself sprawling among innumerable feet, many of which trod on him hard. He sprawled and spluttered, and scrambled up in a dusty and furious state, and shook an enraged fist up the Fourth-Form staircase.

"You cheeky fags!" bawled Gunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think you can treat me like that old ass Carker?" roared Gunter.

"Just a few!" grinned Bob Rake.

"I—I—I'll——"

"Keep clear of them, old man!" mur-

mured Price of the Fifth. "What's the good——"

Gunter did not heed. He charged up the Fourth-Form staircase like a bull.

"Hallo! Here comes Gunter!" roared Bob Rake.

"Give him beans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors who had stood up to Mr. Carker, temporary Head of St. Kit's, were not likely to flinch before Gunter of the Fifth. Gunter seemed to expect it, somehow; but Gunter often expected things that never came to pass.

He reached the barricade and clambered on to it, and at the same moment a chair leg—used as a cudgel by Stubbs of the Fourth—smote him on the head. A fives bat clumped him on the shoulder. A golf club, the property of Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, wielded by Algy himself, lunged at his ribs, and a cane that had once belonged to Carsdale of the Sixth lashed at his fingers.

Gunter had been very quick in getting up the staircase. He was still quicker in coming down.

He came down in a yelling heap. The fellows below crowded back to give him room to land, roaring with laughter. Bob Rake grinned over the barricade.

"Try it again, Gunter!"

"Oh, my hat! Ow, ow, ow, ow!" Gunter picked himself up in a dizzy state. "You cheeky young villains! Ow, ow, wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This ought to be put down!" gasped Gunter. "Cheeky set of young scoundrels! If that old ass, Carker, had the sense of a bunny rabbit, and the pluck of a poodle, he would put it down fast enough! Ow!"

Gunter's sympathies seemed to have veered round from the rebels to the headmaster.

"Dry up, old man!" whispered Price.

He had spotted the lean form of Mr. Carker coming up the lower staircase, but Gunter was too enraged to heed.

"I tell you any headmaster who knew

his business would put this down at once!" he roared. "Precious state St. Kit's is coming to—fags barricading themselves in their passage and cheeking the Fifth! That dummy Carker ought to be booted out—that's what I think! That silly ass Carker——"

"Gunter——"

It was Randolph Carker's voice, sharp as steel.

"Oh!"

Gunter broke off quite suddenly.

The crowd on the landing made way for Mr. Carker. They were silent now; the laughter had died away. The look on Mr. Carker's lean, hard, savage face made them disposed for anything but merriment. The rebels of the Fourth were safe behind their barricade, but the fellows who had not rebelled were at close quarters with the tyrant of St. Kit's, and there was a cane under his arm which he now slipped down into his bony hand.

"Gunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Gunter.

"What were you saying, Gunter?"

"Oh, nothing, sir."

"I heard you!" thundered Mr. Carker.

"I—I—I mean——"

"Did you apply disrespectful and opprobrious epithets to me, your headmaster, Gunter?"

"Oh! I—I—no—yes—oh——"

Gunter of the Fifth became quite incoherent under the glare of Randolph Carker's malevolent eye.

"Bend down, Gunter."

"What!"

"Bend down over that stair!"

Gunter fairly jumped. Fifth-Formers were never caned; they were never ordered to "bend over" by a master. Only a full meeting of the prefects could order a beating for a senior.

"Sir!" gasped Gunter.

"Do you hear me?"

"The Fifth are never caned, sir!" said Price, putting in a word loyally for his chum.

Mr. Carker gave Price of the Fifth a cold glare.

"Are you instructing me in my duties Price?"

"Oh, no, sir! Oh, no!"

"You will take five hundred lines for impertinence!"

"Oh!"

"If you speak again I shall cane you!"

Price of the Fifth did not speak again.

Mr. Carker turned his basilisk eye upon Gunter once more.

"You heard my order, Gunter!"

"I—I——"

"Am I to understand that you are joining in the rebellion of a portion of the Lower School against my authority, Gunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Gunter.

"I am glad of it," said Mr. Carker.

"If you do not obey me instantly, Gunter, I shall expel you from the school on the spot. I will brook no opposition to my authority while I am headmaster of St. Christopher's. Bend down!"

Gunter, with a crimson face, bent over.

Whack!

The cane came down hard, and there was an agonised gasp from Gunter of the Fifth. The barricade above was lined with faces, staring down. Some of the rebels chuckled.

"Poor old Gunter! Carker's taking it out of him!" said Wheatford. "He's a giddy scapegoat!"

All the fellows below heard Wheatford's remark. No doubt it was well founded. Certainly Mr. Carker was very keen to "take it out" of somebody, and he could not take it out of the rebels. Gunter had come in useful.

Whack!

"Yow-ow!"

Whack! Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Carker seemed to think that he was beating carpets. The whacks came down on Gunter with terrific vim.

"Now you may go, Gunter."

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Let that be a lesson to you."

"Wow!"

Gunter squirmed away, crimson and furious. Once more his sympathies had veered round, and he would have been glad to see Randolph Carker handled to any extent by the junior rebels. Indeed, Gunter would not have seen any cause for regret had Harry Wilmot & Co. lynched the unpopular headmaster.

Mr. Carker looked round at the silent crowd with a baleful eye.

"Let that be a warning to all of you!" he said, in a grinding voice. "This rebellion will be put down. Every participant in it will be punished with the utmost severity. Any boy expressing sympathy with those rebels, or holding any communication whatever with them, will be punished. Did you speak, Babbie?"

"Oh no, sir!" gasped Babbie.

"You whispered to Verney major."

"I—I——"

"What did you say, Babbie?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" almost groaned Babbie of the Shell. "I—I——"

"Will you repeat what you whispered to Verney major or not, Babbie?"

"I—I only said——"

"What did you say?"

"I—I said this was rather thick, sir!" groaned the unhappy Shell fellow.

"Indeed! Hold out your hand, Babbie."

Swish!

"The other hand!"

Swish!

"Now disperse, all of you!" said Mr. Carker.

The fellows were glad enough to disperse. They crowded down the lower stairs in silence, Babbie of the Shell squeezing his hands almost frantically as he went.

Mr. Carker was left alone on the landing, staring up at the faces that looked over the barricade with a black and bitter glance.

"WILMOT!"

"Adsum!" called out the captain of the Fourth cheerfully.

He looked down at Mr. Carker, meeting that gentleman's baleful gaze fearlessly.

"The bell will shortly ring for afternoon classes," said Mr. Carker. "I am taking the Fourth Form in a special class this afternoon, and I shall expect all of you to return to your Form-room."

Harry Wilmot laughed.

"You can expect," he answered.

"Yaas, old bird, you can go on expectin'," said Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "No harm in that! Expect anythin' you jolly well like."

"Go home, Carker!" roared Stubbs.

"Clear out, Carker!"

"We're fed-up with you, old scout!" said Bob Rake. "Take your face away and bury it! It spoils the view."

"You are head boy in the Fourth Form, Wilmot," went on Mr. Carker, unheeding the remarks of the rebels, though his lean face was pale with rage. "The responsibility for this outbreak rests on your shoulders."

"Admitted!"

"Mine, too, old man!" chuckled Bob Rake.

"And don't forget little me," said Algy cheerily. "We're all in it, Carker—the whole giddy family. Catchy on?"

"Hear, hear!"

"If you do not return to your Form-room you will be dealt with by the prefects," said Mr. Carker. "I shall flog the whole Form, and the ringleaders will be expelled. You will leave the school to-day, Wilmot!"

"I think not," said Harry.

"And you, St. Leger——"

"Bow-wow!"

"And you, Rake——"

"Can it, old bean!" said Bob carelessly.

"You three will be expelled," said Mr. Carker, with a livid face. "The

rest will be flogged. I warn you to return to your duty, and not to try my patience too far."

"I've asked you to take your face away," retorted Bob Rake. "If you don't do it, Carker, you will catch this sardine-tin with it."

"You young rascal——"

"Last time of asking!" said Bob, and he poised the missile to take aim.

Mr. Carker gave him a glare and jumped back. He disappeared down the lower stairs rather hurriedly.

Bob Rake chuckled.

"Well, we're for it now!" he remarked. "Who cares? We've handled the prefects once, and we can handle them again."

"Yaas, old bean!"

"I fancy the prefects are getting rather fed-up with Carker," said Harry Wilnot. "Anyhow, we can hold the Fourth Form passage."

"You bet!"

"We'll hold it against all the Sixth, with the Fifth thrown in," said Bob. "We're all right."

"But I say——" began Bunny Bootles.

"Don't!" said Algy. "Nothin' for you to say, Bunny."

"Look here——"

"You talk too much, old fat bean. I keep on tellin' you that you talk too much."

"Look here!" roared Bunny wrathfully. "We haven't had dinner."

"Don't I know it?" grinned Bob.

Bob Rake had brought a healthy appetite with him from Australia.

"Well, then, I suppose we can't miss dinner!" said Bunny. "A barring-out is all very well. I'm as keen as any chap on cutting lessons——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But dinner's dinner," argued Bunny. "We can't live without grub! I jolly well know I can't!"

"You never know what you can do till you try," said Bob encouragingly. "You can hibernate, like a giddy Polar bear, you know—live on your own fat. It ought to last you for weeks."

"You silly owl!" roared Bunny. "Look here, I'm up against Carker, and I'm keen on cutting class; but I've got to have my rations. If we haven't any grub we can't hold on—that's clear. After all, we can make terms with Carker."

"Fathead!"

"Do you think he will send our meals up here?" demanded Bunny.

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"Well, then, we've got to do something. I'm frightfully hungry already. And what do you think I shall feel like at tea-time?"

"Like a hungry octopus," suggested Bob Rake. "But I don't see that it matters, Bunny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I do!" howled Bunny. "I'm not going to starve. After all, Carker can't sack the lot of us. If you three have to go, I shall be sorry. I shall miss you, really. You'll have my sympathy. But, of course, we can't stay up here without grub!"

"Dear old Bunny!" grinned Algernon Aubrey. "Have you finished?"

"No, I jolly well haven't! I——"

"Your mistake—you have," said Bob.

"Sit down and take a rest for a bit, old fat man."

Bump!

"Yoop!"

Cuthbert Archibald Bootles sat down hard in the Fourth Form passage. The subject of dinner, important as it was from Bunny's point of view, was dropped. For some time afterwards Bunny's remarks were confined to "Ow, ow! Yow, ow!"

Many of the rebels as well as Bunny Bootles, however, were thinking rather seriously on the subject of provisions. There were some supplies in the study cupboards, doubtless; but that quantity was not likely to last a hungry crowd of juniors very long. And it was quite certain that they had nothing to expect from Mr. Carker in the way of meals so long as they barred him out. On that point there was no shadow of doubt—no possible, probable shadow of

doubt, no possible doubt whatever! Still, there was no idea of surrender.

It was "up" to Harry Wilmot, as leader, to solve the difficulty, and it was left to him. As a matter of fact, Mr. Carker's drastic measure had the effect of defeating their own end. If the ring-leaders of the rebellion were to be expelled and the rest flogged, there was nothing to be gained by surrender; if the tyrant of St. Kit's was to come down his heaviest, he could not come down heavier. So, unless they were starved out, there was very little prospect of the rebels giving in.

More and more articles of furniture were dragged from the studies and added to the barricade, nailed and screwed and jammed there till the defences were quite imposing.

Then a round was made of the studies, and every window was carefully nailed up, so that it could not be opened. There were several tool-chests in the Fourth Form studies, and their contents were used freely. If the staircase was found impracticable, the assailants were likely enough to try the study windows, and now the windows were likely to be found equally impracticable.

Meanwhile, Harry Wilmot had directed a collection to be made of all the eatables in the study cupboards. In the top study and in Study No. 5 there were a good many things. The other studies were rather bare. All the supplies were pooled; it was a case of share and share alike. And while the rest of St. Kit's were preparing to go into the Form-rooms for class that afternoon the rebels of the Fourth picnicked in their passage.

The juniors were strictly rationed, as it was very necessary to husband supplies. It was a decidedly thin dinner, but it kept the garrison going for the present, at least. Only Bunny Bootles was deeply lugubrious. He was hungry when he started; he felt still hungrier when he had finished. A light collation only whetted his Gargantuan appetite.

Bunny's view of the rebels' prospects was growing more and more dismal. Certainly he did not like the idea of a flogging that would be administered by Mr. Carker, but he was beginning to think that even a flogging was better than this. A flogging was painful enough for the outer Bunny, but a shortage of foodstuffs affected the inner Bunny—a much more important Bunny.

Fortunately, no one else shared Bunny's views. And a generous offer of Bob Rake's to roll him over the barricade was declined by Bootles without thanks. Doubtless, if he had led a surrender on his own he would have obtained his dinner. But he did not want to face the first fury of Mr. Carker's vengeance. If it came to a flogging Bunny hoped to be last on the list, when Mr. Carker's arm would perhaps be getting a little tired.

But he was feeling very dismal, and he gave Harry Wilmot & Co. a series of deeply reproachful blinks, which did not seem to affect them in the very least. They seemed, indeed, heartlessly regardless of the yearning, empty state of the inner Bunny.

Clang! Clang!

"There's the jolly old bell!" said Durance.

A footstep sounded on the stairs, and Bob Rake picked up an inkpot.

"That's for Carker's boko if he pokes it up this staircase again," he remarked.

But it was not Carker; it was Mr. Rawlings, the master of the Fourth, who appeared on the landing below.

Bob dropped the inkpot at once. There was no intention on the part of the rebels to show disrespect to Mr. Rawlings. They were quite aware that he disliked the tyrant of St. Kit's quite as intensely as they did, and was, perhaps, even more anxious than themselves, to see Dr. Chenies return to his old place.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said Bob.

Mr. Rawlings looked up with a very troubled face.

"My boys," he said, "Mr. Carker has requested me to take my Form as usual. I hoped to see you in the Form-room."

"Would Mr. Carker leave us alone there, sir, if we came?" asked Harry Wilmot.

"I cannot answer for that."

"We're not coming, sir."

"This is a shocking state of affairs, Wilmot."

"I know it, sir, and I'm sorry. But we're done with Mr. Carker."

"You refuse to return to the Form-room?"

"Yes, sir; we do not refuse you—we refuse Mr. Carker," explained Harry.

"Yaas, that's how it stands, sir," said Algernon Aubrey. "No disrespect to you personally, sir."

"We are willing to make terms," went on Wilmot. "If Mr. Carker will promise to leave us alone, entirely in your hands, sir, until Dr. Chenies returns to St. Kit's, we will stop the barring-out at once—that is, of course, if you will answer for it that he will keep his word."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am afraid that Mr. Carker will not consent to that, Wilmot."

"Then there's nothing doing, sir."

"I will at least tell Mr. Carker what you have said."

And the Form-master disappeared down the stairs.

"And now look out for the giddy fireworks!" said Bob Rake cheerily. "After we've given the giddy prefects another licking, Carker may come to his senses! If not, the barring-out goes on."

"What-ho!"

And the rebels waited in a cheerful and warlike mood.

CHAPTER 26.

Mr. Rawlings Speaks Out!

MR. RAWLINGS coughed. He had stepped into the Head's study after tapping at the open door. Mr. Carker was there,

standing by the windows, and talking to Carsdale of the Sixth.

He did not look round at the Form-master.

There had been bitter disagreement between them already; Mr. Carker's handling of his Form had drawn emphatic protests from Mr. Rawlings. Had he consulted only his own desire, the Fourth Form master would have kept entirely clear of the dispute, leaving Randolph Carker to still, if he could, the storm he had raised. But he had the good of the school at heart, and he felt a sense of responsibility towards the absent headmaster, whose place Mr. Carker was filling so badly. So far as he could, therefore, Mr. Rawlings wished to pour oil on the troubled waters.

But with reckless rebels on one side, and a hard, ruthless, suspicious man on the other, his task was not an easy one.

Mr. Carker knew he was there, but he did not turn his head. His manner was not pleasant to any of the St. Kit's masters—to Mr. Rawlings it was least pleasant of all. He had received opposition from Mr. Rawlings—and his autocratic nature would not brook opposition. He found a pleasure in humiliating the Form-master.

Mr. Rawlings coughed again.

Still Mr. Carker did not turn his head.

"Excuse me, sir," said Mr. Rawlings, with a heightened colour.

The Head gave him a careless glance.

"Kindly wait," he said.

Mr. Rawlings, breathing hard and deep, waited.

The Head continued to speak to Carsdale in a low voice for several minutes. Then the bully of the Sixth quitted the study with a lurking grin at the Fourth Form master as he passed him. Mr. Rawlings did not deign to heed Carsdale's impertinence; he fixed his eyes on the Head.

"Now, Mr. Rawlings——"

The unpleasant gentleman might have been speaking to Tuckle, the page, so far as his manner went.

"I have spoken to the boys of my

Form, sir as you desired me," said Mr. Rawlings, in a choking voice.

"Well?"

"They refuse to return to the Form-room."

"I am not surprised," said Mr. Carker—"not at all! I am quite convinced that it is necessary to make an example of the ringleaders of this disgraceful revolt."

"Wilmot has offered——"

"To submit?"

"No; I'm afraid there is little prospect of submission in the present circumstances, sir. But the boys appear willing to return to their duty on condition that they remain in my charge—without interference from you, sir—until Dr. Chenies returns."

Mr. Carker sneered.

"Do you think that is an offer I can accept, Mr. Rawlings?"

"Probably not, sir; but you are the best judge of that," said the Form-master coldly. "I merely tell you what they have said."

"Doubtless with encouragement from you!" sneered Mr. Carker. "It would suit you, Mr. Rawlings. No doubt they are aware that you are in sympathy with their disgraceful conduct."

"That is enough, sir," said Mr. Rawlings. "I will retire——"

"As for Dr. Chenies' return," went on Mr. Carker, as if the Form-master had not spoken, "it is very doubtful—very doubtful indeed—whether Dr. Chenies ever will return to St. Christopher's. At the governors' late meeting there was only the chairman's casting vote in favour of retaining his services as headmaster. Now that he is ill—obviously incapable of discharging his duties here—it is practically certain that he will retire. And in that event—a very probable event—I remain permanently headmaster of St. Christopher's."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, sir, indeed!" snapped Mr. Carker. "Disagreeable as it may be to you, Mr. Rawlings, such is the case."

"I do not pretend that it would be

agreeable to me, sir," said Mr. Rawlings. "Is there anything else you wish to say to me?"

"Only that it is your duty to keep your Form in a proper state of discipline, and that the present difficulties have arisen, sir, from your disregard of that duty!" snapped Mr. Carker.

Mr. Rawlings' eyes gleamed.

"The present difficulties have arisen, sir, from your utter incapacity to fulfil the duties you have taken on yourself," he said grimly.

"What—what?"

"You are utterly unsuited for the post of a schoolmaster, and it is your tyranny that has driven my Form into rebellion, Mr. Carker."

"Mr. Rawlings!" shouted the Head.

"I will not mince my words with you, sir!" said Mr. Rawlings. "Nothing of this kind occurred in Dr. Chenies' time. I had no trouble with my Form before your arrival at St. Kit's. You, sir, are the cause of the whole trouble, and you may get out of it, sir, as best you may, without further assistance from me."

Mr. Carker gasped.

"Sir, you will leave St. Christopher's! I discharge you from your duties here! I——"

"I shall not leave St. Kit's, and I shall not accept dismissal from you, Mr. Carker."

With that the indignant master of the Fourth turned to the door. Mr. Carker made a stride after him, his face crimson with rage, and his lean hands clenched as if he would have struck him.

Mr. Rawlings faced him again with a grim look.

"Well, sir?" he said.

The new headmaster of St. Kit's backed.

"Nothing! Go!"

And the Fourth Form master went. Mr. Carker cast a bitter look after him, and remained for some minutes in the study after Mr. Rawlings had gone. Then he left and went slowly down the corridor. At the foot of the big stair-

case the Sixth Form prefects were gathered in a group.

Undoubtedly, Oliphant and the other prefects would have been glad to keep clear of the rebels.

All of them showed signs of the battle with the rebels that had taken place that morning. All of them were fed-up with the new Head and his methods. Apparently they still felt that it was their duty to support the Head, but their allegiance was wearing thin. Even Carsdale was far from keen.

Mr. Carker looked at them with a frowning brow.

"Oliphant!"

"Yes, sir," grunted the captain of St. Kit's.

"You are aware that the Fourth Form refuse to go to their Form-room?"

"Yes."

"You and other prefects will see that they go there at once," said Mr. Carker. "I shall take them in a special class this afternoon."

Oliphant looked at him.

"How?" he asked gruffly.

"You need not ask me to point out your duty to you, Oliphant. Order the juniors to their Form-room, and if they refuse to obey, use force. You are authorised to use any amount of force that may be necessary."

Oliphant seemed to swallow something with difficulty.

"We'll do our best, sir."

"I shall await you in the Fourth Form-room," said Mr. Carker. "I shall expect you to bring the juniors there without unnecessary delay."

Oliphant breathed deep.

"It looks to me, sir, as if you've set us a job rather above our weight," he said. "We'll do our best; we can't do more."

"That is not the way to answer your headmaster, Oliphant."

The captain of St. Kit's made no rejoinder to that. He turned away to the stairs with feelings almost too deep for words. He had never been so strongly tempted to tell Randolph Carker what he thought of him.

CHAPTER 27.

Holding the Fort!

THE Sixth-Formers tramped up the stairs, Carsdale bringing up the rear. Carsdale was the only St. Kit's prefect who was keen to back up the new Head, and approved of his methods; but his keenness did not give him any desire to appear in the forefront of the battle. He was quite content with a humble place in the rear when it came to exchanging hard knocks.

With glum faces, the prefects reached the landing at the foot of the Fourth Form stairs.

Bob Rake waved a cheery hand to them over the barricade.

"You fellows looking for trouble?" he called out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young rotters!" growled Oliphant. "Come down out of that at once, or you'll be fetched."

"Up, the rebels!" shouted Bob Rake.

"Come on!" roared Stubbs, brandishing a fives bat.

"This way for a licking!" howled Wheatford.

Oliphant set his foot on the stairs. There was some hesitation among his companions. Never had they felt so fed-up as they did at this moment—looking up at the barricade and the grinning faces above it, and the variety of weapons brandished ready for them.

As a matter of fact, the St. Kit's prefects were not in sufficient force to carry the barricade by assault if the defenders stood to their guns. And the magic of the prefects' name had departed—accustomed authority had broken down. A few days before no mob of Lower boys would have dreamed of entering into a scrap with the Sixth Form prefects; now they were not only ready to do so; but quite keen on it.

"Look here, Oliphant," muttered Beauchamp, "it's not good enough. What I say, is, chuck it!"

"I've told Mr. Carker we'll do our best," muttered Oliphant.

"We jolly well can't get over that barricade unless they let us."

"We'll try."

"Oh, come on!" said Rupert Wake. "We've got to make those cheeky young sweeps respect the Sixth!"

"Back up!" said Oliphant.

He marched up the stairs. The prefects followed him, with many misgivings. Carsdale trailed in the rear.

"Fire!" shouted Bob Rake.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! Crash!

Missiles rained on the Sixth Formers as they came on. Empty sardine-tins, and cushions, and books, and boots, all sorts and conditions of things, showered on them. A Greek lexicon landed on Carsdale's head—though he was farthest out of range—and he was swept over. He crashed down on the landing—and stayed there.

The rest of the seniors rushed up resolutely.

They reached the barricade and clambered savagely over it, lashing out right and left with their ashplants.

There were wild yells from the rebels as the hefty blows fell on arms and heads and shoulders. Bunny Bootles made a hurried bolt for the top study, and one or two other fellows followed him. But most of the Fourth stood firm, with Harry Wilmot & Co. Lashing ashplants were opposed by all sorts of weapons with reckless energy, and Oliphant made the discovery that a golf club was a more formidable weapon than a cane. He rolled off the stacked furniture as Algernon Aubrey St. Leger landed him with a golf club.

"Oh!" roared Oliphant.

"Sorry, dear boy, but you've got to go—"

"That's for you, Beauchamp!"

"Oh, gad!"

"Down with the Sixth!" roared Stubbs, lashing at Wake with a fives bat a terrific lash that Rupert Wake just escaped by falling back and rolling on the stairs.

Oliphant came on again desperately. He was in a furious temper now, and he threw prudence to the winds. The

vigorous defence drove back the rest of the assailants, but Oliphant clambered on desperately and sprawled across the barricade. There his leg slipped into an opening of the stacked tables and chairs and desks, and as he strove to drag it out the other leg slipped into another crevice. He was held a prisoner, within reach of a dozen lunging weapons.

"Give him jip!" roared Stubbs.

"Mop him up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oliphant struggled desperately. His comrades rushed on once more to his assistance, but again the defence drove them back, and one or two of them rolled down to the landing.

"Stop it, you young scoundrels!" gasped Oliphant.

His ashplant had been wrenched away, and Licke was belabouring him with it in great excitement and with great energy. Scott was jamming a poker into his ribs, and Bob Rake fairly hammered him with a shovel. The captain of St. Kit's realised that it was not good enough.

"Get going, then!" said Harry Wilmot, laughing.

"You—you—you—"

"Travel, dear man," said St. Leger, shoving the business end of the golf club under Oliphant's chin.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Down with the prefects!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Oliphant, dazed and dizzy.

He made a desperate effort and wrenched himself free; but he was no longer thinking of coming on. He scrambled back to the stairs and went staggering down to the landing to join his comrades there. A roar of triumph from the rebels followed him.

"Licked!" shouted Rake.

"Our win!" chortled Algernon Aubrey.

"Give them some more."

"Hurrah!"

Missiles whizzed down on the prefects and they were glad to seek the shelter of the lower staircase. Carsdale was already gone.

"Come back, Oliphant!" yelled Scott.
 "Come back and have some more."

"Funks!" shrieked Licke.

"Licked to the wide. Ha, ha, ha!"

On the lower staircase the prefects gasped for breath and looked at one another with deep feelings.

"I'm done!" growled Beauchamp, and he tramped away. And the others followed him.

Oliphant lingered a moment or two, but it was clear that if he made another attack he would have to make it "on his own." With a moody brow he tramped after the others. And deafening cheers from the victorious rebels followed him as he went.

CHAPTER 28.

The Vials of Wrath!

MR. CARKER was waiting in the Fourth Form-room.

His cane lay ready on the Form-master's desk.

Had the Sixth Form prefects succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the rebels, and marched a defeated Fourth into the Form-room, there would have been an administration of punishment which would have been a record for St. Kit's—even under Mr. Carker's rule.

Whether Mr. Carker expected his prefects to succeed is doubtful. He hoped, at least. His gaze was on the door in the hope of seeing Oliphant and his merry men arrive with the defeated Fourth, shepherding them in to punishment.

Three members of the Fourth Form were in the room—the three deserters—Tracy, Howard, and Lumley. They did not look as if they were enjoying life. They had been licked—severely—by the new Head; their submission had not saved them. Already they had repented of their desertion, feeling that they would have been better off sharing the risks of the rebels. The look on Mr. Carker's face roused their most dismal

anticipations. Tracy, indeed, had not so far shared in the revolt at all; but that little circumstance seemed, in Mr. Carker's eyes, a trifle light as air. He had caned Tracy as well as Howard and Lumley; perhaps as a warning to him, or perhaps because he felt such an intense desire to cane somebody. And in the Form-room, with Mr. Carker, the wretched trio felt a good deal like three Daniels in the den of lions. Really, there was no telling whether Mr. Carker might not turn on them at any moment.

But for the present, at least, Mr. Carker did not heed them. His gaze was fixed on the doorway. If the rebels were brought to heel, doubtless the submissive three would escape further wrath. But if Mr. Carker was disappointed—Tracy & Co. were dismal, and they had reason to be dismal.

There was a footstep in the corridor, and Oliphant of the Sixth appeared in the doorway.

Mr. Carker stared at him. Tracy & Co. blinked at him. Oliphant was in a parlous condition.

He was dusty and dishevelled, his hair was like a mop, his coat was a torn rag, his nose streamed red, and one of his eyes was closed and fast blackening. Obviously, the captain of St. Kit's had been through it—badly.

"Well?" exclaimed Mr. Carker angrily, "I see you are alone, Oliphant. Where are they?"

"Where I left them, sir," gasped Oliphant. "They beat us off—"

"What?"

"We did our best," said Oliphant.

Snort—from Mr. Carker.

"Do you seriously mean to tell me, Oliphant, that the Sixth Form prefects are incapable of dealing with a handful of rebellious Lower boys?"

"Yes, I do," growled Oliphant. His temper had suffered much, and he was in no mood to be "slanged" by Randolph Carker.

"What? What? Answer me a little more respectfully, Oliphant. Do you

mean to tell me that you have left the juniors alone?"

"Yes."

"I gave you orders——"

"We've done our best, Mr. Carker," said Oliphant doggedly, "and we're not doing any more."

"What? Go back at once, Oliphant, with the other prefects, and bring those young scoundrels here by force!"

"Force is no good, sir; they mean business, and they're too many for us."

"Are you a coward?" bawled Mr. Carker.

Oliphant's eyes gleamed at him. It was the last straw.

"No, sir! I think a man is a coward who raises a storm like this and then keeps out of the trouble and leaves it to us!"

Mr. Carker gasped.

"What! Oliphant, how dare you——"

"We've never had this trouble with the juniors before!" exclaimed Oliphant. "The ringleader, Wilmot, is one of the most decent juniors in the school. We've backed you up because you're headmaster, not because you're in the right. And now we're done! Finished! See?"

And with that Oliphant of the Sixth tramped out of the Form-room, turning his back deliberately on Randolph Carker.

"Oliphant!" roared Mr. Carker.

The captain of the school did not heed. He tramped away and disappeared, leaving Mr. Carker panting with rage.

Tracy and Howard and Lumley sat tight at their desks. They hoped that the new Head would follow Oliphant. They trembled at the thought of catching his eye.

But Mr. Carker did not follow Oliphant. It was clear, even to his dull and obstinate mind, that he had gone too far, and that he could no longer rely on the support of the Sixth. As for punishing Oliphant, that was out of the question—the captain of St. Kit's could

have handled Randolph Carker with ease, and certainly would have done so had Mr. Carker laid a finger on him. Mr. Carker's last resource had failed him, and he was left to deal alone with the outbreak he had provoked.

His glance turned on the quaking three. They had done little or nothing to offend him, and what little they had done had been punished severely. But Mr. Carker was in want of a victim. He picked up the cane from the Form-master's desk.

"Tracy!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Tracy.

"Come here!"

The wretched Tracy dragged himself out before the desks.

"I—I've done nothin', sir," he panted.

"I—I was against the barrin' out, sir—I haven't joined in it——"

"Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

Tracy gave a wild yell as he received the cut. Howard and Lumley jumped up. They felt that their turn was coming, and they raced for the door.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Carker.

But the two nuts of the Fourth were vanishing out of the Form-room. Mr. Carker rushed after them.

Tracy squeezed his hand frantically, almost weeping with anguish. He went to the Form-room door and looked out. There was a sound of flying feet in the distance. Howard and Lumley had fled to join the rebels—the Fourth-Form passage was the safest place for them, with all its risks, as they realised rather late.

Tracy hurried out of the Form-room with the same intention. But Mr. Carker was in the way, and he dodged into a recess in the passage, still squeezing his hand.

Lumley and Howard were racing desperately up the stairs, with Mr. Carker behind them. There was a shout from the Fourth-Formers above as they sighted the fugitives.

"Ha, ha, ha! The jolly old deserters!" roared Bob Rake. "Are you fed-up with Carker already, you chaps?"

"Rescue!" panted Howard.

"Let us in!" howled Lumley. "For goodness' sake let us in. That beast is after us! Wilnot, old chap!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wilnot; and he gave Lumley a helping hand over the barricade, while Scott and Wheatford dragged in Howard. The two nuts rolled breathlessly among the garrison, panting with relief. Mr. Carker was not far behind.

As he appeared on the landing a tomato-tin whizzed and landed on his chin, well-aimed by Bob Rake.

Crash!

"Oh!"

Mr. Carker disappeared again.

He hurried downstairs to the Fourth Form-room. He passed Tracy in the recess in the corridor without observing him, and hurried into the Form-room only too clearly to visit his vengeance upon the junior he supposed to be there. Tracy's heart almost ceased to beat as he passed, and the moment he was gone Tracy raced for the stairs.

"Stop!"

It was Randolph Carker's voice behind him.

Tracy panted and tore on. After him came the infuriated Mr. Carker. Tracy ran desperately, but as he reached the upper landing he felt the grasp of the tyrant of St. Kit's on his shoulder. He spun round and in sheer desperation hit out at the angry face with all his force, and Mr. Carker, with a gasp, sat down on the stairs. Tracy tore on, panting up the Fourth form staircase, and helping hands from the rebels drew him into safety.

Mr. Carker picked himself up. He dabbed his nose with his hand—his fingers came away red. In a frame of mind that could only be described as Hunnish, Randolph Carker stamped down the stairs again.

CHAPTER 29.

Drastic Measures!

"YOU, Carker!"

Bill Slaney's manner was not respectful.

Mr. Carker set his lips hard.

It was a dirty, shabby room he had entered in an inn near Lynn, some miles from St. Kit's. Any St. Kit's fellow would have been astonished to see the headmaster entering such a resort. But Mr. Carker's ways were not the ways of the former Head of St. Kit's.

Slaney was smoking a pipe, and the room was thick with the odour of a rank tobacco. He did not trouble to rise as Randolph Carker came in. He grinned and nodded familiarly.

"This 'ere is an honour, sir, this 'ere is!" said Slaney. "Never expected you to give me a look in! Take a blooming pew!"

Mr. Carker sat down.

There was something like hatred in his look as he fixed his eyes on the frowsy ruffian. Bill Slaney pulled at his pipe, blew out a cloud of smoke, and spat. Apparently he wished to impress upon the headmaster of St. Kit's the undoubted fact that he cared nothing for his annoyance or anger.

"I've come to see you, Slaney, about —"

"You'd rather see me 'ere than up at the school!" grinned Slaney. "I s'pose nobody seed me when I called the other night?"

"No."

"That's all right, then! 'Ave a smoke?"

"No."

"Please yourself, old man! What 'ave you come for?" demanded Mr. Slaney. "I agreed not to see you agin for a week, and it ain't a week yet. So long as you keep up the screw you ain't nothing to fear. And don't scowl at me, Mr. Carker! You can't frighten me like you can the boys in your school!"

You wouldn't be in that school much longer if they knowed what I could tell them!"

"That will do!" muttered Mr. Carker.

"Will it?" sneered Slaney. "Keep a civil tongue, Mr. Carker!"

"You had better bear in mind," said Mr. Carker, with a livid face, "that if you should be discovered as the man who attacked Dr. Chenies in Lynn Wood you will go to prison for assault!"

"And where will you go?" sneered Mr. Slaney. "What will they say of a man who put me on to that job to get a man's place away from him?"

"You could prove nothing!" muttered Mr. Carker.

"That's as it may be," said Slaney coolly. "I've got a pal who could prove that you came 'ere to speak to me the day afore Dr. Chenies was knocked on the 'ead. You was seen here, Carker. And a story like that don't want much proving, either. If I owned up that it was me knocked the old schoolmaster out, your being a friend of mine would give you away."

"A friend of yours!" exclaimed Mr. Carker, with a look of disgust.

"A visitor, anyhow!" grinned Slaney. "Praps it couldn't be proved enough to send you to chokey along with me, Carker, but it could be proved enough to get you chucked out of your job, and you know it. You've got more to lose than I 'ave. I've been in chokey before, and shall be again, I expect, on and off. But you'd lose everything if you was shown up. You'd never get a job in your own line again."

"That is enough, I tell you! I have not come here to quarrel with you, Slaney! I—I want your assistance!"

The ruffian chuckled.

"Somebody else to be knocked on the 'ead?" he asked. "You give me a tenner for the last job and thought it was finished with. Well, it wasn't! I ain't a man to be chucked overboard when you've done with him! You're

getting a handsome screw as a headmaster. You can squeeze out a few pounds at a time for the man who get you the job—what?"

Mr. Carker breathed hard.

He had been unable to carry out his unscrupulous scheming without placing himself in the power of this ruffian. He did not regret what he had done, but Slaney's impudence and familiarity were hard to bear.

"But what's the new job?" asked Slaney. "I ain't the man to refuse if it's a fair offer."

"There has been some trouble at the school," said Mr. Carker. "A number of the junior boys have rebelled against my authority."

"Oh, my eye!"

"It is necessary that the rebellion should be put down at once, of course. Force is needed for that."

Mr. Slaney nodded comprehendingly. He began to catch Randolph Carker's drift.

"I suppose you are acquainted with plenty of—of characters like yourself?" said Mr. Carker. "Fellows who will not object to a little rough handling, and will do as they are told if they are paid for it. Say six or seven men who will be willing to assist me in the matter. It is simply a matter of dealing with a number of boys who have barred themselves in an upper passage and barricaded the stairs. They are to be fetched out. It does not matter if they are handled roughly so long as no serious injury is inflicted. You understand?"

"I get you, sir," said Slaney.

"Well, then——"

"I'll find you a dozen blokes at an hour's notice, if you like. It's easy enough," said Slaney. "Some of the crowd who go down to Lynn races. I'll bring them along when you say the word."

Mr. Carker shook his head.

"You had better not come personally," he said. "Your description is

known, and it is possible that you may be recognised. In fact, it is not safe for you to stay in the neighbourhood at all, Slaney. I should be much more easy in my mind if you were in the next county."

"I dessay!" agreed Mr. Slaney, with a grin. "But I ain't going into the next county, all the same. But if you think it ain't safe for me to butt in at the school, I'll keep clear. I ain't anxious to see the inside of the stone jug again. When do you want the blokes?"

"At once—say, to-morrow morning"

"I'll fix it!"

Ten minutes later Mr. Randolph Carker left the inn and walked back to the school.

His face was dark and thoughtful as he went.

To do Mr. Carker justice, he was not quite satisfied with the methods he was adopting to crush the revolt at St. Kit's. He would have preferred any other methods.

But there were no others. Only force could quell the rebellion, and Bill Slaney's ruffianly associates were the only force he could call upon. Indeed, the thought of Slaney, bitterly as he detested the ruffian, had come into Mr. Carker's mind like a ray of light in the darkness. He dared not let the rebellion continue, and he was fully aware by this time that there would be no surrender on the part of Harry Wilmot & Co. He was as far as ever from admitting that the wrong was on his side, or from thinking of concession and conciliation. And he flattered himself that the schoolboys would be very promptly dealt with now. The hired ruffians need not be within the walls of St. Kit's more than an hour—perhaps not more than a quarter of an hour. Then all would be over—Wilmot and Rake and St. Leger—expelled from the school, the rest of the Fourth reduced to submission and obedience. It was quite a happy prospect, and Mr. Carker's brow cleared as he thought over it.

The dusk was falling as he reached the school, and he stopped at old Coote's lodge to speak to the porter. Old Coote saluted him with bare civility. He shared in the universal dislike which Randolph Carker had awakened at St. Kit's. But Mr. Carker did not heed, even if he noticed, old Coote's surly looks.

"Coote."

"Yessir," mumbled old Coote.

"Some men will come here in the morning—some men whom I am employing for—for a certain purpose," said Mr. Carker. "They are to be admitted at once and sent to the House."

"Workmen, sir?"

Mr. Carker coughed.

"Not exactly workmen, Coote."

Old Coote blinked at him curiously.

"They will probably be rather roughly dressed," said Mr. Carker. "That, however, will not concern you. Admit them without question."

And he walked on to the House, leaving the porter staring and wondering what was "up."

Mr. Carker entered the House and came on Mr. Rawlings in the Hall. He favoured the Fourth Form master with a sneering smile.

"Have your boys returned to their duty yet, Mr. Rawlings?" he inquired.

"I have had no communication with them whatever, sir," answered the master of the Fourth coldly.

"You will be pleased, no doubt, to hear that I have taken measures—drastic measures—to put an end to this rebellion," said Mr. Carker satirically.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Rawlings. I have arranged for certain men to come here who will deal with the young rascals and overcome any resistance they may offer. No doubt you will be glad to see order restored in the school."

And Mr. Carker walked on to his study, leaving Mr. Rawlings with a new topic for masters'-room.

CHAPTER 30.

Spadger's Gang!

ST. KIT'S buzzed with excitement the following morning.

The night had passed without alarm or disturbance—perhaps a little to the disappointment of the rebels. Having been victorious so far, they were more than ready for the fray, and would have welcomed the entertainment of a night attack. But nothing had happened. Indeed, although Harry Wilmot & Co. did not believe that Mr. Carker would give up the struggle, they could not quite see where he was to obtain forces from to renew the assault. It was quite clear by this time that he was receiving no more backing from the St. Kit's prefects. So they were not surprised that the night passed quietly, and that the morning dawned in peace.

But that morning the school was in a buzz. It had leaked out that Randolph Carker had some new card up his sleeve. Mr. Rawlings had mentioned the Head's words in masters' Common-room, some of the masters had mentioned the matter to some of the prefects, it had spread to the other Forms, and all St. Kit's knew that something was to happen that day.

What it was nobody knew, but they knew that something was to happen. The unpopular Head had, apparently, gathered forces from somewhere, and they were to arrive and deal with the rebels. It was known that old Coote had orders to admit them when they came.

"But who the thump can they be?" Babbie of the Shell asked his friends. "He can't be calling in the police! They wouldn't deal with a row in a school."

"Not likely!" said Verney major.

"Then who's the giddy enemy?"

"Goodness knows!"

The Shell had to give it up. Other fellows discussed the matter in equal perplexity.

"Beats me!" said Gunter of the Fifth to Price. "Carker's got help from somewhere, but where and what and who beats me."

Gunter's tone implied that if the mystery beat him it was of little use for any other fellow to attempt to penetrate it.

But, as a matter of fact, less obtuse fellows than Gunter of the Fifth failed to guess what was coming.

All they knew was that something was coming, and they were on the qui vive to see what it was when it came.

Naturally, the rebels of the Fourth had ample warning.

More than a score of fellows in the Third, the Shell, and the Fifth shouted up to the study windows at different times, watching their opportunity when Mr. Carker was not in the office.

They could tell the rebels little—only warn them to look out because Carker was making a new move and something was impending. But that was enough for Harry Wilmot & Co. They were very keen and watchful that morning when the rest of St. Kit's went into the Form-rooms.

"Of course, the jolly old bird can't give in," remarked Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "He's bound to try every trick he can think of! But we're goin' to put 'paid' to all of them—what!"

"You bet!" agreed Bob Rake.

"He can't touch us!" said Stubbs confidently. "The prefects ain't backing him any longer, and even if they did they couldn't touch us. We're all right."

"Right as rain."

"We can play footer in the passage, or sit down and do cross-words," said Stubbs. "We're done with Carker—and he's done with us, if he only knew it!"

"I don't think he quite knows it yet," said Harry Wilmot, laughing.

"Then he'll learn."

"Anyhow, we're keeping on guard, and we'll be ready for them," said the captain of the Fourth.

And the rebels of St. Kit's watched and waited. The school had gone into Form. All St. Kit's excepting the Fourth were at classes. Even the prefects had gone in with the rest of the Sixth. All the masters excepting Mr. Rawlings were busy with their own

Forms, and Mr. Rawlings had taken the Sixth, in the absence of Mr. Carker, who had no time for classes that morning. He had been somewhat surprised by Mr. Carker's request that he should do so. It was a favour to ask, and they were on the very worst of terms. But Mr. Carker did not allow any question of dignity to stand in the way of his convenience.

The school, therefore, saw nothing of the new arrivals at St. Kit's when they arrived. But, in point of fact, they were not paying much attention to Form work. Even in the Sixth there was excitement, and in the lower Forms the masters had to go very easy with their pupils. In such a state of excitement and tension it was quite possible that the rebellion might spread. Success was an advertisement, as it were, for the rebellion. Had Randolph Carker continued his policy of interfering with the Form-masters and taking their classes out of their hands, there is little doubt that there would have been further revolt, after the successful example of the Fourth. But even the dull and obstinate mind of Mr. Carker realised that one revolt on his hands was enough at a time, and he did not even look into the Form-rooms.

Once the Fourth had been subdued and broken in he was prepared to carry on in his old style. But it was clear even to him that he had better get "through" with the Fourth first of all. So the rest of St. Kit's was given a rest from the attentions of the obnoxious Head.

Mr. Carker had sagely arranged for Slaney's gang to arrive while the school were all in the Form-rooms. He hoped that they would be able to finish the affair and go before the St. Kit's fellows were dismissed for morning break. Hard and domineering man as he was, Mr. Carker felt a little ashamed of his new allies, and wanted the school to see as little of them as possible.

Old Cootie came out of his lodge as his bell clanged, soon after the school had assembled for lessons in the Form-

rooms. Old Cootie stared through the bars of the gate at the man who clanged at the bell.

He was rather a startling sort of visitor for a place like St. Kit's.

He was a burly man, in a shabby check suit, with a battered bowler-hat on the back of his bullet head, and a short black pipe sticking out of the corner of a very wide mouth. His chin was adorned with three or four days' stubble; he had not taken the trouble to shave before calling at St. Kit's. His nose had been broken in some past encounter, and one of his eyes was missing, the place being covered by a black patch. Taken altogether, he could not be described as a thing of beauty.

Old Cootie fairly blinked at him.

Behind him there were seven more roughly-dressed fellows, most of them grinning, and all of them seriously in need of a wash and a shave.

"My eye!" said Cootie.

It did not occur to him for the moment that these were the men the Head had ordered him to admit that morning. Certainly Randolph Carker had told him that the men he expected would be "roughly dressed," but he had not mentioned that they would be a crew of unwashed, frowsy, racecourse roughs—and such these men obviously were.

So old Cootie stared, and made no motion to unlock the gates. Indeed, he was feeling very glad that they were locked just then.

The one-eyed gentleman with the broken nose nodded at him affably.

"Let a cove in, old codger!" he said.

"Let you in!" stuttered Cootie.

"Jest that, and sharp!"

"You haven't any business here."

"Ain't this 'ere St. Kit's School?"

"Yes."

"Then it's all right. Let us in, and tell Mr. Carker we've come."

Cootie jumped.

"Mr. Carker? Mean to say Mr. Carker's expecting you?" It dawned

upon old Coote now that these were the men the Head had mentioned to him. He gazed at them in something like horror.

"Name of Spadger!" said the one-eyed gentleman. "That's me. I'm waiting to come in, old 'un."

"But——" gasped old Coote.

"Let a cove in, don't I keep on telling you!" exclaimed Mr. Spadger impatiently. "It's a cold mornin', and we ain't come 'ere to cool our 'eels! You get me?"

"I—I—I'll tell Mr. Carker you're here!" gasped old Coote.

"Tell 'im we're the blokes Bill Slaney has sent along according to horders."

Coote hurried across towards the house in a state of bewilderment. He met the Head coming down to the gates.

"Some—some men, sir——" gasped Coote. "A gang, sir, of lawful ruffians, and they say you expect them! They're sent by somebody named Slaney——"

"That is correct."

"Am—am I to let them in?" gasped Coote.

"At once!" snapped Mr. Carker.

"Oh!"

Old Coote almost tottered back to the gates, Mr. Carker striding after him with knitted brows. The gates were opened, and Mr. Spadger and his comrades slouched in.

Mr. Carker started a little as he looked at them.

He had directed Slaney to send him men who would not object to a little rough handling, and he had expected rather rough characters. But he was rather startled by Spadger & Co. If there was a single member of that crowd who had not been in prison more than once, it could only have been because the police had unaccountably overlooked their claims.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Carker.

Spadger touched his battered hat.

"You Mr. Carker, sir?"

"Yes!" gasped the Head of St. Kit's.

"Then you're the bloke we've got to see! Name of Spadger, sir—Jim Spadger! Where's the young blighters? We're ready for them!"

CHAPTER 31.

Fighting it Out!

MR. CARKER breathed hard as he stared at Jim Spadger and his gang of roughs.

After all, he had to use what materials he could find for the very peculiar business in view. These men certainly looked as if they were accustomed to any amount of "scrapping," and could give a good account of themselves—and that, after all, was what he needed. The Fourth Form rebellion had to be put down somehow.

"Quid each, sir, for the job—that's the terms as I understand from Bill Slaney," said Mr. Spadger.

"Oh, yes! Quite so!" gasped Mr. Carker.

"Set of cheeky young rips to be knocked about, ain't it, sir?"

"We'll knock 'em about all right, sir, don't you fear!" said another of the gang cheerily.

"Bless your little 'eart, sir," said Spadger, "we won't leave 'em a nose to smell with when we get through with them!"

"Hem! The fact is, my man, I—I—I have a little difficulty with some rebellious boys," said Mr. Carker. "They have barricaded themselves in an upper passage. You will climb over the barricade and—and bring them out and hand them over to me. You are authorised to thrash them until they submit——"

"'Ear, 'ear!"

"Leave them to us, sir!"

"But you will be careful not to inflict any injury," said Mr. Carker hastily. He really was a little alarmed. "I am answerable for the boys, and, of course——"

"Leave 'em to us, sir," said Jim

Spadger. "We'll give 'em a thundering good 'iding, sir, and leave it at that."

"Very well," said Mr. Carker. "Follow me."

"We're arter you, sir!"

And Mr. Carker led off his flock towards the School House. Old Coote gazed after them blankly. He wondered in a dazed sort of way what St. Kit's was coming to, and what Dr. Chenies would have said had he been able to see that gang slouching across the old quadrangle.

"My eyes!" murmured old Coote. "This beats it! This do beat it, and no mistake!"

Quite heedless of the opinion of old Coote, Mr. Carker led his merry men into the House.

They tramped up the stairs after him and arrived at the landing below the Fourth Form staircase, where they stared in grinning surprise at the barricade. And there was a shout above:

"Look out!"

"The giddy enemy!"

Harry Wilmot looked over the barricade.

He looked and stared.

He had wondered where the Head would gather forces for the forthcoming attack, but certainly it had not occurred to him that a man holding the dignified post of headmaster of St. Kit's would gather his allies among the riff-raff of a racecourse. The captain of the Fourth stared blankly at the ruffianly gang gathered on the landing below.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, gad!" murmured St. Leger. "What a crowd!"

"What a crew!" said Durance.

Mr. Carker stared up at the rebels, as they looked down, with a bitter scowl.

"Wilmot!"

"Hallo!"

"You see these men?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "They look as if they want washing. Friends of yours, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"These men have come here to assist me in restoring order in the school,

Wilmot!" said Mr. Carker, between his teeth.

"New sort of a job for them, sir—what?" asked Algernon Aubrey. "They don't look as if they're specially keen on law and order! How on earth did they all get out of chokey at once?"

"Silence, St. Leger! I give you young scoundrels a last chance of yielding to authority before force is used," said Mr. Carker. "I warn you that if you do not remove that barricade immediately, and descend and place yourselves under my authority, these men will compel you to do so by force. Take warning in time."

"Rats!"

"Thanks for your warning, old scout!" said Bob Rake. "One good turn deserves another, so take that in return!"

"That" was a potato, which whizzed down the staircase with a deadly aim. Mr. Carker took it with his nose.

"Goal!" roared Stubbs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker spluttered.

"Go on at once, Spadger! All of you—at once!" he shouted. "Lose no time. Attack those young scoundrels—"

"Leave it to us, gov'nor!"

Mr. Carker did not need telling that. He had no intention of taking part in the conflict personally. Like the celebrated Duke of Plaza-Tor, he preferred to lead from behind. He found it less exciting.

Jim Spadger started up the staircase, with his merrie men grinning behind him. Evidently they did not expect to find much trouble in dealing with a crowd of schoolboys.

Wilmot held up his hand.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Not 'alf!" grinned Mr. Spadger.

"I warn you that you will be knocked over if you come on."

"I don't think! Arter me, mates!"

"We're arter you, Jim!"

And there was a rush.

"Back up!" shouted the captain of the Fourth.

It was a formidable attack—much

more formidable than that of the St. Kit's prefects.

Once this gang got across the barricade, they were not likely to find much difficulty in dealing with schoolboys at close quarters.

But the barricade was there, and there were vallant and determined defenders behind it. The rebels were serious enough now. They realised that it was going to be a desperate struggle. Oliphant and his fellow-prefects were a mere jest to this hefty crowd.

But they did not shrink.

Tracy and Howard and Lumley, and one or two more of the nuts, bolted into Study No. 5 and locked the door. The mere look of Spadger & Co. was enough for them. Bunny Bootles made himself as small as possible under a study table.

But there were plenty of good men and true to back up Harry Wilmot.

The barricade was crammed with defenders, every one with a weapon of some kind in his hand.

"Hit hard!" panted Harry. "Once they get over, we're done! Hit hard and hit often!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"Back up, St. Kit's!" roared Bob Rake.

Jim Spadger was already clambering over the stacked furniture. He was the first in the fray, and the first to receive a terrific swipe from a golf-club.

He gave a wild roar.

"Oh! Oooop! I'll smash yer! Come on, mates!"

"Ere we are!"

"Give 'em socks!" roared Stubbs.

"Pile in!"

"Hurrah!"

The fight was fast and furious.

Eight hefty ruffians, all of them in savage tempers now, clambered and tore at the barricade, and the defenders had their hands full. The din was terrific. More than once a clambering ruffian, dislodged from his hold, went crashing on the stairs, and one rolled right down to the landing to the

feet of Mr. Carker. But he scrambled up and came on again, with a flow of language that almost bade fair to turn the atmosphere blue.

Mr. Carker looked on almost breathlessly.

He did not doubt for a moment that this rough gang would succeed in conquering the Fourth-Formers. He was feeling rather uneasy about the amount of damage they might do. Thrashings were all very well, but such matters as smashed noses and missing teeth would require a great deal of explaining afterwards.

But it dawned upon Mr. Carker gradually that the ruffians were not carrying all before them as he had expected.

The schoolboys' fists certainly would not have driven back the clambering gang. But hard rulers and fives-bats and pokers and golf-clubs told a different tale. It was no time for standing on ceremony; there was too much at stake. Defeat meant a rough handling from Spadger's gang, and then unlimited punishment from Mr. Carker. So the rebels of the Fourth obeyed to the full their captain's command, and they hit hard and hit often.

They had the advantage behind the barricade and on a higher level. They crashed at heads and shoulders and grasping hands, amid a wild chorus of yells and imprecations from the roughs.

The terrific din rang through the school from one end to the other. It was heard in all the Form-rooms, and the fellows started and stared at one another. Form-masters stepped out of their rooms to listen, with grave faces. It was an unprecedented happening in the history of St. Kit's.

Spadger & Co. dragged at the stacked furniture, striving to make a passage. But the barricade was strong. Innumerable nails and screws held it together. It was almost a solid mass of tables and chairs and desks, with legs sticking out at all angles. It was impossible to tear away. It was difficult to clamber over—impossible

with lashing weapons above raining blows on heads and hands and faces.

Minute followed minute, with terrific uproar echoing through the school. Jim Spadger clambered desperately over the barricade as if impervious to the hefty swipes that showered on him. But his followers essayed in vain to follow him. Spadger rolled among the defenders and jumped up, hitting out right and left. But a chair wielded by Bob Rake crashed on the side of his head, and Jim Spadger went rolling over. Three or four juniors jumped on him and pinned him down.

"We've got this brute!" gasped Stubbs, jamming a knee in Mr. Spadger's neck. "You keep off the others!"

"What-ho!" panted Bob.
Crash! Bump!

Two of the gang went rolling down the stairs again. They reached the landing and rested there, completely winded and very considerably damaged. Five of the ruffians were still clambering savagely at the barricade.

But the swiping blows from above sickened them at last, and one by one they dropped back and backed down the stairs.

In a battered, bruised, and breathless group they gathered on the landing, panting and gasping and furious. And Jim Spadger, wriggling and struggling in the grasp of the St. Kit's juniors, remained a prisoner in the hands of the rebels. The attack was over.

CHAPTER 32.

Defeated!

"GO on! Go on at once! Do you hear?" Mr. Carker was spluttering with rage. "What do you mean by this? Go on at once!"

The battered gang gasping on the landing did not heed Mr. Carker. They rubbed their bruises and bumps, which were almost innumerable, they panted for breath, and the language they used

exceeded in potency that of the "Army in Flanders" in old times. And they showed not the slightest desire to come to close quarters with the St. Kit's rebels again.

Had Mr. Carker joined in the attack and felt the impact of a five-bat on his head, probably he would have realised that such an impact was very painful indeed, and would not have been keen for more. But as he led his men on the principles of the Duke of Plaza-Toro and remained behind while the scrapping was going on, he was surprised and enraged by the retreat of his myrmidons.

From above came anguished howls in the voice of Jim Spadger.

"'Elp! 'Ands off, you young raskils! 'Elp! Mates, buck up and 'elp a cove! Oh! Ow! 'Elp!"

But the bruised and breathless gang had no help to spare for Mr. Spadger. They were too deeply concerned with their own damages.

Mr. Carker almost danced in his fury.

He even went to the length of shaking an enraged fist at the breathless ruffians.

"Will you go on?" he shrieked. "What do you mean? What am I paying you for? How dare you run away like this? Are you afraid of schoolboys? I order you to go up that staircase at once and —"

"'Old your row!" growled one of the gang savagely, taking notice of Mr. Carker's angry objurgations at last.

"What? What?"

"'Old your row! Do you want a wipe on the jor?"

Mr. Carker jumped back. A leg-of-mutton fist was flourished under his nose, and most decidedly he did not want a "wipe" on the jaw.

"But—but—but——" he stuttered.

"'Old your row!"

The gang were feeling now that they were earning their money dearly. Instead of an easy task they had taken on a very difficult one—as it now seemed, an impossible one. They were

savagely enraged and they were painfully damaged and it was no time for Mr. Carker to objurgate. One of the ruffians, indeed, gave him a shove which helped him down the lower stairs, and the new Head of St. Kit's realised that he had better leave them alone for a time.

In the Fourth Form passage above, Harry Wilmot & Co. were triumphant. But they had paid for their triumph; there were darkened eyes and swollen noses on all sides. But certainly they had not suffered anything like the damage of the defeated gang. And they were victorious, and they had the enemy's leader a prisoner in their hands, and they were satisfied. Jim Spadger, wriggling under six or seven juniors who were sitting or standing on him, swore most luridly until Bob Rake jammed the end of Algy's golf-club into his mouth. Then he spluttered into silence.

"Shall we chuck him over?" asked Stubbs.

Wilmot shook his head.

"No fear! They may come on again! We'll keep him a prisoner in one of the studies!"

"Better tie him up, then!"

"Get a box-ropo!"

A box-ropo was brought, and knotted round Mr. Spadger's legs. Then his wrists were looped together.

"Heave him along!" said Bob.

"Oh, my eye! Oh, you young raskils! 'Elp!" howled Spadger, as he was heaved into the nearest study.

"Now shut up!" said Bob Rake. "Any more of your jolly language, my man, and you get a swipe from this club—see?"

"I'll smash you!" gasped Spadger. "I'll out you! I'll—"

"Are you going to dry up?"

"No, I ain't!" yelled Badger. "I Yaroooooh!"

Rap!

"Have another?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Spadger did not want another. He relapsed into furious silence. Harry Wilmot & Co. left him mumbling in the study.

CHAPTER 33.

Spadger Talks!

HALF an hour later Wilmot carried half a loaf and Bob a jug of water into the study where Mr. Spadger still lay bound on the floor. The one-eyed ruffian glared at them as they came in.

"Ow long you young villains keeping up this 'ere game?" he demanded.

"As long as your pals stay in the school!" said Harry. "As soon as they're gone we'll kick you out, with pleasure! Hungry?"

"Yes!" growled Mr. Spadger.

"Here's your dinner."

"Call that there a dinner?" snorted Mr. Spadger.

"I call it all you'll get!" complained Harry. "Take it or leave it! Now then, yes or no!"

"Yes!" growled Spadger.

Spadger's right arm was released, and he clenched a huge fist; but he realised that it was not good enough, and unclenched it again. With a black and scowling brow, he munched the bread and gulped at the cold water. The juniors waited till he was finished, and then prepared to tie up his arm again.

"Look 'ere! You let a bloke loose!" pleaded Mr. Spadger. "You let me go, and I'll clear! I will, on my davy!"

"Can't trust you!" said Harry curtly. Mr. Spadger's low-browed face and cunning eye did not inspire confidence.

"I'm getting cramped, I am!" mumbled Mr. Spadger. "I wishes I hadn't never took this 'ere job on!"

"It will be a lesson to you!" suggested Bob.

"Look 'ere! I want to go!" pleaded Mr. Spadger. "What's a quid for a job like this 'ere? I wouldn't 'ave gone through this for a fiver if I'd known! I don't mean you young gents any

'arm, don't really! I jest took the job on because Slaney asked me! By gum, I'll ammer that Slaney when I see him agin, landing me in this 'ere!"

"Slaney!" repeated Wilmot, with a start.

Bob Rake started, too.

Back into Harry Wilmot's mind came that scene at the window of the Head's study on the night he had escaped from the punishment-room. Slaney! Mr. Carker had addressed his mysterious midnight visitor as Slaney, and Harry Wilmot had recognised the man as the ruffian who had attacked Dr. Chenies in the wood, and thus paved the way for the arrival of Randolph Carker at St. Kit's.

Slaney was the man who had attacked the old Head. Slaney was Mr. Carker's midnight visitor whom Wilmot had seen—though as yet Mr. Carker did not suspect his knowledge.

Bob and Algy had been told of the incident, but they had been simply unable to share Wilmot's view of it. That even Randolph Carker had been base enough to hire a rough to injure his rival for the headmastership of St. Kit's had seemed to them impossible.

Bob Rake's eyes met Harry's with a startled look.

"That was the name——"

Wilmot made him a sign and Bob broke off.

"You say Slaney asked you to take on this job, my man?" asked the captain of the Fourth quietly.

"That's it!" groaned Mr. Spadger. "Told me it was an easy job, he did—jest knocking about some silly school-boys! I'll tell him off when I see him agin!"

"Who is Slaney?" asked Harry.

"Pal of mine!" grunted Spadger.

"Pretty sort of a pal, too, to land a bloke in a job like this—I don't think!"

"Mr. Carker must have asked him to interfere," said Harry. "He has no concern with us on his own account, I suppose?"

"'Course Mr. Carker must 'ave asked him!" said Spadger.

"Then Mr. Carker knows this man Slaney?"

"I s'pose he does! Look 'ere! You let me go——"

"Where is Slaney now?"

"What does that matter to you?" growled Mr. Spadger. "You're askin' me a blinking lot of questions!"

"You must have seen him lately if he set you on to this job," said Harry.

"'Course I 'ave! He sent me a message to see 'im at the Peal of Bells, night to Lynn!" grunted Mr. Spadger.

"Is he there now?"

"He was last night!"

"I mean, is he staying there? Has he a room there?"

"Yes, I believe he has. Anyhow, that's where he's to be found if you want to call on 'im!" said Mr. Spadger sarcastically. "Slaney 'appen to be a friend of yours as well of your 'ead-master's?"

Wilmot drew a deep breath.

Mr. Carker, of course, was totally unaware that Wilmot has seen his midnight visitor—unaware of Wilmot's deep suspicion. He had no knowledge that the mere name of Slaney would mean anything to any St. Kit's fellow. Harry Wilmot & Co. had seen the attack on Dr. Chenies and seen the rough who attacked him, and given his description to the police; but they had not, of course, known his name. It was that surreptitious interview at the Head's window, on the night of Wilmot's escape from the Rat-trap, that had placed the captain of the Fourth in possession of the facts. Quite unconsciously Mr. Carker had played into the hands of the leader of the St. Kit's rebellion.

"This will want thinking out, Bob!" said Harry. "You remember what I told you that morning in the cloisters——"

"I remember."

"Slaney was the man, and Slaney, it seems, is the man Carker went to to

raise this gang!" said Harry. "I suppose you will believe now that he knows the man, at least?"

Bob Rake nodded.

"Looks like it! But——"

"We shall have to think it out! Come on!"

"Look 'ere! You ain't leaving me tied up 'ere like a blinking turkey!" yelled Mr. Spadger.

Unheeding the indignant Spadger, the two juniors left the study, and the key was turned on the prisoner.

"I say, Wilmot——"

"Shut up, Bunny!"

"I'm hungry——"

Bump!

Bunny Bootles sat on the floor, and the chums of the Fourth left him there. While the hapless Bunny struggled with the pangs of hunger and bemoaned his awful fate, Harry Wilmot & Co. were deep in discussion on the subject of Bill Slaney and Mr. Carker's confederacy with that disreputable being.

"Whatever Carker's connection with the man may be, we know now where he's to be found!" said Harry. "The police want him for the attack on Dr. Chenies! We've got to let them know!"

"How!" asked Bob. "We are barred up here. And I suppose Carker wouldn't let us send a message if we told him!" He chuckled.

"They omitted to put telephones in the Fourth Form studies. 'It was an oversight, but they did.'"

"We've got to manage it somehow," said Harry. "And then, perhaps——"

"Here they come!" shouted Durance.

And then the discussion ceased, and there was a rush to the barricade.

CHAPTER 34.

Hot Stuff!

SPADGER'S gang were on the war-path again.

It had not been easy for Mr. Carker to screw their courage up to the

sticking-point, but he had succeeded at last. Their "job" at St. Kit's was much more difficult than hustling and pilfering in a crowd at the races, which was the way Spadger's gang turned a dishonest penny as a rule. Their roughest day at the races had not earned them so many damages as they had received in the tussle with the St. Kit's Fourth. They really did not want any more. But Mr. Carker succeeded at last. A good dinner, provided by the horrified Mrs. Honour—who had never seen such guests within the walls of St. Kit's before—liquid refreshment to follow on a liberal scale, and a promise of double pay—these inducements told upon the battered gang, and they announced their willingness to try their luck again.

When St. Kit's had gone into the Form-rooms for class that afternoon, therefore, the gang gathered for the attack; and this time they did not come with bare hands. Knuckles, tough as they were, were of no use against fives bats and pokers and golf-clubs. Each of the roughs had provided himself now with a hefty cudgel, and their looks showed that the weapons would be used with energy.

Mr. Carker had his misgivings. If serious damage was done he was answerable for it. But he had little choice left—the struggle had gone too far for compromise, even if he thought of compromise. Spadger's gang were his last resource, and if they were defeated he could devise no other means of dealing with the rebellion.

So he decided to take the risk—though with misgivings. If the schoolboys resisted it was their own look-out.

So the ruffians marched up the staircase, and Durance, on guard at the top of the stairs, shouted his warning and the defenders gathered once more to hold the fort.

Bob Rake whistled softly as he sighted the cudgels.

"Looks like business this time," he said.

"Yaas, begad!"

"That's the finish," muttered Rex Tracy. "That means cracked heads if we try to keep them off, Wilmot."

Harry Wilmot's lip curled.

"Very likely! You can surrender if you like."

"Carker looks as if he would like to get hold of a jolly old victim," grinned Algernon Aubrey.

"I'm not havin' a hand in it," muttered Tracy. "It's not good enough, and—and it's all rot!"

"Get into your study and lock the door," said the captain of the Fourth scornfully.

"Funk!" bawled Stubbs.

Tracy crimsoned, but he went to his study, and two or three of the nuts followed him, and the key was heard to turn. Much more plucky fellows than Tracy looked serious enough as the gang of roughs grouped on the landing below.

But Harry Wilmot & Co. were staunch. Danger or no danger, they did not think of shrinking from the combat.

Mr. Carker stared up at the captain of the Fourth over the bannisters from the lower stairs, keeping a wary eye open at the same time to dodge a missile.

"For the last time, Wilmot——"

"Rats!"

"For the last time——" hooted Mr. Carker.

"You've said that before, old bean," remarked Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "you're beginnin' to repeat yourself."

"If you do not surrender immediately you will take the consequences!" shouted Mr. Carker.

"Bow-wow!"

"Trot out the jolly old consequences, old bean!"

"Back up, you fellows!" said Harry Wilmot. "Hit hard—hard as you jolly well can! Bob—Where's Bob?"

Bob Rake had disappeared.

"Rake!" shouted Stubbs. "Where's Rake? He's not gone skulking along with Tracy."

"No, you ass! Bob!"

"Adsum!" called out the Australian junior's cheery voice. Bob Rake came speeding along from the top study with a canister in his hands.

"What on earth's that?" asked Durance.

Bob chuckled.

"Niff!" he said.

He jerked off the lid of the canister and held it under Durance's nose.

"Atchoo! You silly ass—atchoo—choo!" spluttered Durance.

"Pepper!" ejaculated Algy.

"Just that!" agreed Bob. "I had it in the study for seasoning stews and things, you know. If those rotters are going to use bludgeons we can use pepper—what?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You fellows stand clear when I hand it out."

"Oh, gad! Yes, rather."

Mr. Carker was still shouting up. He would have been intensely relieved had the rebels been scared into surrendering by the sight of the roughs with cudgels in their hands. The possible consequences of such an affray rather worried him, though he was quite determined to carry on.

"I will give you five minutes, Wilmot, to make your submission!" he yelled at last. "Do you hear?"

"Rubbish!"

"You talk too much, Carker," said Algernon Aubrey. "If you're goin' to talk durin' the five minutes, old bean, we'd rather you cut out the interval."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why don't you jolly well lead them on, Carker? You haven't been over the top yet, you know!"

"Funk!" shouted Wheatford.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the last time——" shrieked Mr. Carker.

"Oh, gad! He's repeatin' himself again!"

Mr. Carker, almost beside himself, signed to the roughs to begin the attack. The rowdy gang trampled up the

Fourth Form staircase, cudgels in hand. They were grinning savagely now; this time they were going to carry all before them, and how much damage they might do they did not care in the least. They came up with a rush and hurled themselves at the barricade. And as they clambered on the stacked furniture they lashed out with the cudgels at the defenders with terrific swipes.

It was then that Bob Rake "weighed in" with the pepper canister. There was little doubt that the gang of roughs, careless of the damage they did, would have driven back the defence and negotiated the barricade had the combat remained hand to hand.

But the pepper canister made all the difference.

With a swing of his arm Bob Rake flung a shower of pepper in the savage, threatening faces that glared over the barricade, and there was a wild eruption of frantics sneezing at once.

Sneeze! Sneeze! Sneeze!

"Groooogh!"

"Atchooooh!"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Atchoo—choo—choo—chooo!"

Another swing of the canister, and another shower of pepper scattered over the heads of the assailants.

They were not assailing now.

They tottered on the stairs, sneezing frantically, their eyes streaming with peppery tears—gasping and spluttering and spitting. A cloud of the pepper descended on Mr. Carker below, and his sneeze was added to the chorus.

"Atchoo—choo—chooo!"

"Go it!" yelled Algernon Aubrey, waving his eyeglass in great excitement. "Go it! Give 'em some more! That's the stuff to give 'em! Pile it on!"

"Atchoo—choo—choooop!"

"Grooo—hoooh!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Some of the defenders were sneezing, too; the air was full of floating particles of pepper. They sneezed and blinked water from their eyes, and coughed.

But the attack had stopped.

Spadger's gang were in no state to continue it. Sneezing and coughing and weeping pepper, they staggered down the stairs, almost falling over one another as they went.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Rake. "Atchoo—atchoo! Do you want any more—atchoo!—pepper? Have you had enough?"

"Looks like it!" gasped Harry Wilmot. "Atchoo!"

"Yaas, begad—atchoo—choo! Where's my dashed handkerchief? Oh, dear! Atchoo—choo—chooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sneezing, coughing roughs gathered on the landing again, but they did not linger there. Bob Rake made a motion as if to hurl the pepper canister among them, and they went down the lower stairs with a desperate rush, carrying Mr. Carker along with them. They did not stop till they were in the fresh air of the quadrangle, where they sneezed and sneezed and sneezed as if they would never leave off sneezing.

"Licked!"

"Hurrah for us!"

And the St. Kit's Fourth cheered their own victory, the cheers punctuated with sneezes.

CHAPTER 35.

Marching Orders!

"MR. CARKER!"
"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the temporary Head of St. Kit's.

It was a couple of hours later. Mr. Carker, his nose crimson with sneezing, his eyes still watery, was in his study when the master of the Fourth looked in. Spadger's gang were hanging about in the quadrangle, eyed curiously by all the St. Kit's fellows, who were out of the Form-rooms now.

"I am aware, sir, that you ordered those—those unspeakable ruffians, sir—those riff-raff—to attack the boys of my Form, armed with cudgels!" exclaimed

the Fourth Form-master. "Did you reflect, sir, what serious injuries might have been caused?"

"That is my business."

"Mine also, sir! I have consulted with the other members of the staff on the subject, sir," said Mr. Rawlings. "I ask you now, is it your intention to keep those rowdies within the walls of the school any longer?"

"Yes," snarled Mr. Carker. "That is my intention, and it is my intention, Mr. Rawlings, to subdue the rebellion you have encouraged, and I have already devised a plan for doing so, as perhaps you will be pleased to hear. I have telephoned, sir, for a number of ladders to be brought to the school, and those men—those ruffians, as you call them—will mount to the windows of the Fourth Form studies and affect an entrance there."

And Mr. Carker gave the Form-master a triumphant glare.

"That, sir, will put down this rascally revolt—those young rascals will not be able to defend seven separate windows at the same time, and in a few hours more, sir, the revolt will be at an end. Now leave my study; I will not bandy words with you, Mr. Rawlings—a man I have already dismissed."

"So that is your intention, sir?"

"That is my intention."

"Regardless of the injuries that may be inflicted in such a struggle between the juniors and those lawless ruffians."

"Regardless of that or of anything else, Mr. Rawlings. Is that a sufficiently plain answer for you?" sneered Mr. Carker.

"Quite. I have only to say that you will not be allowed to carry out any such plan."

"What? And who will prevent me?" roared Mr. Carker.

"I have already consulted all the masters in the school, and the prefects of the Sixth Form," said Mr. Rawlings. "They agree with me that those ruffians cannot be allowed to remain within the

walls of St. Kit's. Will you direct them to go at once, Mr. Carker?"

"Direct them to go!" exclaimed Mr. Carker.

"Yes, otherwise they will be ejected."

"Ejected!"

"Precisely. All the Sixth Form prefects have agreed to give me their support in the matter."

"Why, you—you—you——" Mr. Carker gasped.

"I take the responsibility on my own shoulders, sir," said Mr. Rawlings. "I am prepared to report the whole matter, what I have done, and my reasons for so doing. And now, Mr. Carker, will you give these men an order to go?"

"No, sir!" spluttered Mr. Carker.

"I will not!"

"Very good!"

Mr. Rawlings left the study.

A few minutes later he stepped out of the House, with him Mr. Tulke, master of the Fifth, Mr. Rattrey and Mr. Sheldon. Oliphant of the Sixth followed them out, and after him the whole array of the prefects of St. Kit's. And nearly every other member of the Sixth Form came out with the prefects.

Mr. Carker stared from his study window.

He realised that it was useless to interfere. His interference would not have been regarded.

There was an excited buzz among the St. Kit's fellows in the quad. The news spread quickly that Spadger's gang—the headmaster's remarkable allies—were not to be turned out of the school. And Hilton and Gunter, and a crowd more of the Fifth, hurried on the scene to give the Sixth any help they might need.

The gang were loafing near the Head's windows, smoking their pipes and eyeing the St. Kit's fellows morosely. It was with difficulty that Mr. Carker had kept them to their allegiance after the second attack on the Fourth; but he had explained to them his latest plan, and they had agreed to give it a trial. They drew to-

gether, scowling and uneasy, as the crowd of St. Kit's seniors advanced towards them with the Form-masters in the lead. Behind the array of Sixth and Fifth there was a mob of the Shell and the fags.

Mr. Rawlings raised his hand.

"You are no longer needed here," he said. "You will kindly leave the school at once and will not return."

"Wot's that, guv'nor?" growled one of the gang.

"You will not go!" shouted Mr. Carker from the study window. "I order you to remain where you are!"

"We're staying on, guv'nor!"

"You will go, or you will be ejected by force," said Mr. Rawlings calmly. "You may take your choice."

The gang eyed him, and eyed the overwhelming forces of the St. Kit's fellows. They had not the remotest chance in a struggle against such odds, and they were well aware of it.

"Sharp's the word!" broke in Oliphant of the Sixth. "You're not wanted here. Get out!"

"Boot them out!" roared Gunter.

"Now, then, are you going?" howled Babbie of the Shell, from behind the seniors.

The ruffians exchanged looks. They had to go, and they knew it.

"We'll go, guv'nor," said the spokesman more civilly. "We was asked to come 'ere by Mr. Carker. We ain't paid yet—two quid a man is the figure."

"I will pay you nothing!" hooted Mr. Carker. "Remain where you are, or I will not pay you a penny!"

"Won't you, by gum?"

"Certainly not. I—"

"Shall we shift them, Mr. Rawlings?" asked Oliphant impatiently.

"If they have been promised payment for their services it is only fair that they should be paid," said Mr. Rawlings. "Mr. Carker, will you have the kindness to pay these men at once what you have promised them?"

"Not a shilling!" raved Mr. Carker.

"Ain't we done our job, sir?" hooted

one of the ruffians wrathfully. "Ain't we done all we could? Look 'ere, we ain't going without being paid!"

"No blinking fear, we ain't!"

"That is only just," said Mr. Rawlings, rather perplexed. "You certainly are not to blame—Mr. Carker is responsible for your presence here. Mr. Carker, you are bound to pay these men!"

"Not a shilling!" hooted Mr. Carker. "If they go at your orders they will receive nothing from me—nothing!"

The roughs glared at the lean figure in the study window. They whispered together, and then one of them spoke to the Fourth-Form-master.

"Give us five minutes to talk to Mr. Carker, sir, and we'll go peaceable, without raisin' a 'and."

"Very good!" said Mr. Rawlings, taking out his watch. "That is very reasonable. I shall expect you to go down to the gates in five minutes; and, in the meantime, you will not be interfered with."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

Mr. Rawlings motioned to his numerous array to move farther back. The gang of rowdies crowded closer to Mr. Carker's window.

"Now, are you going to pay up, sir?"

"No! I—"

"Then mind your eye, you blinking bilk!" yelled the spokesman. "Bunk a cove up, mates!"

"'Ere you are, Gedgy."

Three or four of the roughs bunked up Mr. Gedge promptly. He sprawled in headlong at Mr. Carker's window. The lean gentleman jumped hurriedly back. Probably he had not anticipated this development.

Mr. Gedge flourished a knuckly fist under Randolph Carker's startled and dismayed face.

"You squaring?" he roared.

"Upon my word! I—I—I—" stuttered Mr. Carker.

"You squaring up? Yes or no?"

"I—I—"

Crash!

Mr. Carker found himself reposing on the carpet in the study, with a feeling in his sharp nose as though a large hammer had smitten it. The threatening visage of Gedge loomed over him.

"You squaring?"

"Oh! Ow, ow! Yes!" shrieked Mr. Carker. "Of—of course, I intended — Ow! Oh, my nose! I intended — Ow!"

"Money talks!" snorted Mr. Gedge.

From a short distance the grinning St. Kit's crowd had a view of a very peculiar scene—Mr. Carker handing out two pound-notes to every member of the rowdy gang he had brought into the school, with a face which Babbie of the Shell likened unto that of a demon in a pantomime.

There was no help for it—satisfied or unsatisfied, Randolph Carker had to pay up. And he paid.

Then Mr. Gedge and his companions slouched down to the gates, in the falling dusk, and slouched out into the road, and, with great relief, old Coote came out to lock the gates after them. Mr. Carker, in his study, raged with helpless wrath, unheeded. Even the fags of the Third and Second were making a mock of Mr. Carker now; in all St. Kit's there was none so poor as to do him reverence. The tyrant of St. Kit's had fallen down from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

CHAPTER 36.

A Surprise for Mr. Rawlings!

"HALLO, Mr. Rawlings!"

There was a step on the stairs and a rush of the rebels to the barricade at once. But it was only the master of the Fourth who was coming.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Algernon Aubrey St. Leger politely. "I suppose you're an ambassador, sir?"

"What?"

"You've brought Carker's terms of

surrender, I hope?" said the dandy of St. Kit's gravely.

Mr. Rawlings smiled.

"I have not come from Mr. Carker," he said.

"Just a little friendly visit, sir, to show your sympathy?" asked Bob Rake.

The rebels grinned, and Mr. Rawlings coughed.

"I have come to tell you that the— the men whom Mr. Carker brought here have now gone, and will not return."

"Oh, good!"

"They didn't want any more pepper," remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It seems that one of them remains in your hands," said Mr. Rawlings. "No doubt you will let him go now, and let him leave the school."

"We don't want to keep Spadger if the others are gone," asserted Bob. "The sooner he goes the better."

"Yaas, begad."

Harry Wilmot shook his head.

"We don't want him, of course, Mr. Rawlings," he said. "But we shall have to keep him for a time."

"Indeed. And why?" asked the Form-master, raising his eyebrows.

"For a special reason, sir, which I should like to speak to you about; but it's not a matter I can shout out," he said. "I want to ask your advice—and help. I will come over."

"Mind your eye," whispered Stubbs. "If Carker should spot you—"

"That's all right!"

Harry Wilmot climbed down over the barricade to the stairs below. Mr. Rawlings, considerably astonished, descended to the landing with the captain of the Fourth, and most of the rebels, equally astonished, watched him from above. Excepting Bob and Algy, the rebels were puzzled as to what this mysterious colloquy could be about.

"What's the game?" asked the mystified Stubbs. "Anybody know?"

"What on earth's up?" asked Durance. "Do you know, St. Leger?"

Algernon Aubrey did not reply.

"Do you know, Rake?"

"Leave it to Wilmot," was Bob's answer.

And the puzzled rebels watched the captain of the Fourth on the landing below with Mr. Rawlings. Wilmot was speaking in a low voice, which did not reach his comrades.

"Mr. Rawlings, you remember the attack that was made on Dr. Chenies, in Lynn Wood—"

"Certainly, Wilmot. But what is

"You remember that my friends and I came on the scene and saved the Head to some extent from injury?" said Harry. "We saw the man who attacked him, and gave his description to the police. He has not been found yet."

"That is the case. But what is—"

"I know now, sir, where he is to be found."

"What?"

"His name is Slaney, and he is to be found at an inn called the Peal of Bells, near Lynn, sir."

"Bless my soul! How can you possibly know this, Wilmot?"

"I had it from Spadger, sir, the man we've got tied up in the study. Mr. Carker got the man Slaney to enlist that gang of rowdies for him."

Mr. Rawlings stared at him.

"That may be the case, Wilmot; but you were not aware of the name of the Head's assailant. How do you know that the man Slaney is the man?"

"I know it, sir! And Mr. Carker knows it. Mr. Carker was in league with the man, and a party to the attack on Dr. Chenies."

"Wilmot!"

"I know it sounds thick, sir—I mean unlikely—"

"It is impossible," said Mr. Rawlings sternly. "I am very far from approving of Mr. Carker and his methods, Wilmot, but I cannot listen to such an accusation as this."

"Let me explain, sir."

Harry Wilmot gave a succinct ac-

count of what he had seen at Mr. Carker's window—and heard—on the night of his escape from the punishment-room. Mr. Rawlings listened with some signs of impatience.

"I've said nothing before, sir, because I know it sounds incredible," said the captain of the Fourth frankly. "My own friends couldn't swallow it. But now it can be proved."

"And how?"

"The man Slaney can be arrested. I want you, sir, to telephone to Inspector Chater, at Lynn—he is in charge of the case—and tell him that the man who attacked the Head is now at the Peal of Bells, near Lynn. Whether Mr. Carker was in league with him or not, the man is wanted by the police."

"That is true. But—"

"But you do not believe that Mr. Carker set him on?"

"I cannot."

"I expected that, sir, and I should not have mentioned it only to warn you not to speak to Mr. Carker on the subject. I know that he would warn Slaney at once to escape."

"Impossible."

"At least, sir, it is better not to take the risk. There is no need for you to speak to Mr. Carker," urged Wilmot.

"I have no intention of speaking to Mr. Carker—we are on the very worst of terms," said Mr. Rawlings. "I shall not say one word to him on this subject or any other. If you have good reason, Wilmot, to believe that the man at the Lynn inn is the detestable ruffian who injured Dr. Chenies, I am bound to warn the police."

"I am absolutely certain of it, sir," said Wilmot earnestly. "That is why I am keeping Spadger a prisoner here—so as not to risk Slaney being put on his guard."

Mr. Rawlings pursed his lips.

"I will telephone to Inspector Chater," he said. "I will tell him that a man is at the Peal of Bells who may

be the man he wants. Mr. Chater will then act as he thinks fit."

"Very well, sir. You will lose no time?"

"I will telephone immediately."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Rawlings went down the stairs, and Harry Wilmot returned to the barcade, and clambered over again. There was a buzz at once.

"What's it all about?"

"What's the game?"

"What the thump—"

"Can't explain just now," said Harry.

"Sorry, but—"

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"Look here—"

"Curiosity is a giddy vice, dear boys," said Algernon Aubrey chidingly. "Little boys shouldn't ask questions."

"You silly ass!" hooted Stubbs.

"Don't bawl, dear man! I keep on tellin' you that bawlin' affects my nervous system," said Algy plaintively.

"Look here, Wilmot—"

"You'll know all about it to-morrow, you fellows," said Harry. "And I can tell you this much—it looks as if Carker will have to go now, and may even go as far as chokey."

"Phew!"

"Now let's have tea."

While the rebels of St. Kit's were at tea—and Bunny Bootles was permitted to take his "whack"—just in time to save his life, as he told Algy almost tearfully—Mr. Rawlings was sitting at the telephone in his study, speaking to Inspector Chater, at Lynn, and the Inspector, though perhaps a little doubtful as to the accuracy of the information, assured him that he would lose no time in visiting the Peal of Bells and ascertaining whether a man there answered to the description of Dr. Chenies' assailant. And an hour later there was a ring at Mr. Rawlings' telephone, and he took up the receiver and heard the inspector's voice from Lynn.

"We've got the man!"

CHAPTER 37.

The Last of Mr. Carker!

"BOOOOO!"
Randolph Carker started.
"Boo!"

It was not elegant, and assuredly it was not respectful. But there it was! A cheeky fag of the Third Form, peering round a corner at the Head of St. Kit's, was actually "booing" him.

Mr. Carker started, and stared, and breathed hard. Jones minimus, of the Third grinned and repeated his observation.

"Boo!"

There was a pattering of hurried feet, and when Mr. Carker reached the corner there was no one to be seen.

He gritted his teeth.

He walked back to the staircase, fuming. As he did so an orange whizzed from somewhere and smote Mr. Carker on the ear.

He jumped. The orange dropped to the floor, and Randolph Carker glared round in fury.

But the unseen individual who had hurled the orange was not to be discovered. He was gone—completely.

The unpopular headmaster breathed wrath. It had come to this, then—the Fourth Form in open revolt, still defiant after all his efforts to subdue them—and revolt spreading throughout the school. He no longer ventured even a word of reprimand to the Fifth or Sixth Form fellows—he, who had caned the Fifth and lashed the Sixth with his bitter tongue, in his first days at St. Kit's. Fags of the Third booed him and hurled oranges at him from corners. His authority, which he had stretched too far, had broken in his hands.

What was to be done now was a problem that might have perplexed a wiser man than Randolph Carker.

He could scarcely yield without losing every vestige of authority in the school; and subduing the rebels seemed further off than ever. And he realised, too, that at any moment they might receive

reinforcements from the other Forms. It even dawned upon his dull and obstinate mind that it was only the Form-masters who were holding their Forms in check—for Mr. Carker himself the St. Kit's fellows no longer cared a button. That was painfully clear, when fags of the Third went to the length of "booing" him in the corridors.

With the Fourth he could not deal, and from the other Forms he had only defiance to expect if he interfered with them. Only by carefully leaving them to their own masters could he avoid a further outbreak.

It was defeat; and Mr. Carker began to realise it. His headmastership at St. Kit's had been a hopeless failure. Even concession and conciliation could not have saved him now—the matter had gone too far. Had the revolt been crushed in its first stages he might have carried on tyrannically; but it had not been crushed, and the successful defiance of the Fourth had made him the mock of the school. A tyrant who could not make good his tyranny was an object for the finger of scorn to point at. On all sides now he was derided.

What was to be done?

He stood at the foot of the staircase and stared up. From above he could hear a murmur of voices. The rebels were there, safe behind their barricade; indeed, they scarcely needed the barricade now. Randolph Carker was their only foe within the walls of St. Kit's, and he, personally, they did not fear; any three or four of them could have handled him now that his authority was broken, and he had not support from the masters and prefects. And even Mr. Carker did not think of recruiting further support on the lines of Spadger's gang. It came into his mind that, if Wilmot & Co. chose to make a sortie from their stronghold, he was at their mercy—there was no one to stand by him.

It was defeat—hopeless defeat. It was for this that he had dabbled in crime—that he had placed himself in

the power of a man like Bill Slaney—only to throw away what he had gained by ruthless tyranny, which had provoked resistance he could not deal with.

Yet somehow—somehow, he told himself savagely, he would yet bring the rebels to heel, and unmerciful punishment should break their spirits. How, was the problem—a problem that was difficult to solve. As he stood in savage reflection, listening to the murmur of voices from above, it dawned upon him that one of the voices was that of Mr. Rawlings, the master of the Fourth. The Form-master, then, was in communication with the rebels. Mr. Carker's eyes gleamed with rage, and he strode up the staircase to the landing.

There was Mr. Rawlings, standing on the Fourth Form staircase below the barricade, speaking to Harry Wilmot & Co. across the packed furniture on the stairs.

Randolph Carker was about to break furiously in upon the talk when a name caught his ears—and he started, his face growing white.

"They've got Slaney, sir?"

Harry Wilmot was speaking.

"Yes, Wilmot! Inspector Chater has telephoned that the man was arrested at the Peal of Bells. The man answers to the description of the ruffian who is wanted for the assault upon Dr. Chenies, and his name appears to be Slaney."

"Oh, good, sir!"

"You and St. Leger and Rake will be wanted to identify him, Wilmot, as you were witnesses to the assault upon Dr. Chenies and saw the man."

Mr. Carker leaned on the banisters.

Neither the Form-master nor the juniors had noticed him, so far, and he did not speak.

He seemed, indeed, incapable of speech; what he had heard seemed to have crumpled him up. His face was like chalk.

Slaney arrested!

Identified—charged with assault, with

a sentence in prison inevitable now, he knew that Slaney would not be silent. Why should he?

He had nothing to gain by silence; and he might gain by telling the facts—that he had been induced to make that brutal attack upon the old Head by Randolph Carker's bribe!

The truth must come out now.

True, proof would be difficult to come by. Slaney's bare assertion would not count for much in law; it might not carry conviction to a judge and jury. But it would carry conviction enough to ruin the headmaster of St. Kit's. For how was he to explain his association with the man—an association that could be proved? What was there between Randolph Carker and Bill Slaney unless Slaney had been the tool he had hired for his wicked purposes.

There was something like despair in Randolph Carker's heart as he leaned weakly on the banisters and listened.

"I understand," Mr. Rawlings resumed, "that the man has made a statement to the police. I do not know what that statement is—"

Mr. Carker suppressed a groan.

Mr. Rawlings might not know, but Randolph Carker could guess very easily what Slaney's statement was.

"I gather, however, from the inspector's words, that the statement is a very surprising, indeed startling, one," said Mr. Rawlings. "Inspector Chater is coming to the school this evening, and he will have to see you boys."

"Very well, sir," said Harry.

"Begad," murmured Algernon Aubrey St. Leger, "it looks as if you were right all along the line, old bean! Carker was in it."

"I was quite certain of that," said Harry quietly, "and I'm sure that Slaney's statement is simply that he was hired to attack Dr. Chenies, and that Mr. Carker paid him to do it."

"Looks like it, now," said Bob.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Stubbs. "Draw it mild, you know."

"Well, we shall see when Inspector Chater comes here," said Wilmot. "I don't know whether Mr. Carker can be arrested on Slaney's statement—"

"Great pip!"

"But, at any rate, they've got the man who knocked out Dr. Chenies—that's a good thing!"

"And they'd never have got him but for this jolly old barrin'-out!" grinned Algernon Aubrey. "Dear old Carker has done himself in, if it's as you think, old bean."

"We can let Spadger go, now that Slaney is safe under lock and key," said Harry. "You will let us know when the inspector comes, Mr. Rawlings?"

"Certainly. He must see you and hear what you have to tell him," said the Fourth Form-master. "Even yet I cannot credit that Mr. Carker was concerned in the matter; but the truth, whatever it is, will undoubtedly be established now."

There was a groan from the dusky staircase, and Mr. Rawlings started and looked round.

"Bless my soul! Mr. Carker!"

"Hallo! There's the jolly old bird!"

"Good news for you, Carker!" shouted Bob Rake. "They've got your pal Slaney!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker stared at the grinning juniors, with a haggard face. The Fourth Form-master regarded him curiously.

Mr. Carker opened his pale and trembling lips, but he did not speak. He turned in silence and went down the stairs.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Rawlings.

It was borne in upon the Fourth Form-master's mind then that Harry Wilmot had been right, and that Randolph Carker was guilty. If ever guilt and apprehension were written in a human face they were written in Mr. Carker's as he stumbled down the stairs.

Mr. Carker disappeared.

He did not heed Mr. Rawlings—he did not heed the Fourth Form rebels further. In his study he paced to and fro with a haggard face, trying to think out the situation.

His confederate was under arrest and had betrayed him—that much was certain. Inspector Chater was coming! For what was he coming? He could deny the facts—he could brazen it out; but it was clear that much was known, and it was possible—possible— He shivered, as if he already felt the cold contact of the handcuffs. Was it possible—was he to leave St. Kit's, like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrists? His heart failed him.

When Inspector Chater arrived that evening he received news that surprised him—or, perhaps, did not surprise him very much. Randolph Carker was not there to see him.

Mr. Carker had driven away to the railway-station half an hour before the inspector arrived from Lynn.

He had left no message—no word as to when he might be expected to return. Mr. Chater had a very shrewd suspicion that he did not intend to return—a suspicion that proved to be well founded. The tyrant of St. Kit's was gone—for ever.

CHAPTER 38.

Victory!

HARRY WILMOT & CO. were in a cheery mood that evening.

After the talk with Mr. Rawlings the rebels of the Fourth hauled Spadger out of the study, and the one-eyed gentleman was released. He was assisted over the barricade, not very gently, and he landed on the stairs below with a series of lurid remarks which brought a shower of missiles after him. Mr. Spadger picked himself

up and fled, extremely glad to get outside the gates of St. Kit's.

Fellows came up the stairs to chat with the rebels over the barricade, no longer in fear of Mr. Carker. The Head was not to be seen; wherever he was he was not thinking of interfering further. Much more pressing matters occupied his mind.

There was a swarm of St. Kit's fellows on the staircase, when a stout gentleman in uniform mounted with Mr. Rawlings.

"It's a jolly old inspector," remarked Bob Rake.

Inspector Chater stared at the barricade and smiled. Mr. Rawlings had apprised him of the state of affairs in the school. He stopped at the barricade, over which a dozen heads rose to greet him.

"Good-evening, sir!" said Harry Wilmot politely. "Sorry we can't ask you to come in—it's a barring-out, you see."

"I see," assented Mr. Chater. "An extraordinary state of affairs—very extraordinary. Set of young scamps—what?"

"Standin' up for our rights, old bean," explained Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "We're keepin' this up till Carker goes! You see, we've sacked Carker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Chater grinned.

"If you are keeping it up till Mr. Carker goes, you have kept it up long enough," he said. "Mr. Carker is gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes; he seems to have been called away—ahem!—on rather sudden business," said Mr. Chater, with a cough. "At all events, he has left the school. I understand from Mr. Coote that he drove Mr. Carker to the station to catch the express."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bolted!" roared Bob Rake.

"Yaas, begad; it looks like it!" said St. Leger. "You were right, Wilmot—"

old bean—he was hand-in-glove with the Slaney man.

"I knew it!" said Harry.

"Bolted!" ejaculated Stubbs. "Then it's true! It's jolly thick, but it's true! The awful rotter!"

Mr. Chater coughed.

"Mr. Carker has gone, at all events," he said. "It is possible—hem!—that he does not mean to return. Mr. Rawlings tells me that he has telephoned to Lord Westcourt, the chairman of the governing board, and that his lordship will arrive here early in the morning. In the circumstances, I advise you young gentlemen to cease these—hem!—these extraordinary proceedings. Hem!"

Harry Wilmot shook his head.

"Not till we're sure we're done with Carker," he said.

"No fear!"

"Wait till my jolly old pater comes, and we'll explain to him," said Algernon Aubrey. "Besides, if we keep it up there'll be no prep to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I require a statement from you, Master Wilmot, with regard to an alleged interview between Mr. Carker and the man Slaney—"

"I'll come down," said Harry.

"Very good."

Wilmot clambered over the barricade. He went downstairs with the inspecetor and Mr. Rawlings through a buzzing crowd of St. Kit's fellows—the leader of the successful barring-out was the cynosure of all eyes.

A quarter of an hour later he rejoined his comrades in the Fourth Form passage.

Supper was going on there, and the rebels of St. Kit's were in a state of great hilarity. They were victorious, and they knew it now. Randolph Carker was gone, and they hoped and believed that he was gone for good. The barring-out had done it; and the St. Kit's rebels had reason to be pleased with themselves.

"Looks like the finish, you fellows,"

remarked Harry Wilmot. "Carker's gone—and it's pretty plain that he's bolted. I believe Mr. Chater thinks him guilty, though he doesn't say so. He's bolted to dodge a charge of conspiracy."

"Rotten!" said Bob.

Algernon Aubrey shook his head.

"All the better, so long as he's gone," he said. "Least said soonest mended, so long as we're clear of the Carker-bird."

"And we've won all along the line."

"Hurrah!"

"Let's keep it up!" said Stubbs "We've beaten the prefects, we don't care a rap for the masters, and we'll jolly well keep it up to the end of the term. No more classes, what?"

"Hear, hear!" said Bunny Bootles, with enthusiasm.

"Fathead!" said Harry.

"Look here—"

"We didn't rebel to get out of lessons, you ass!"

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"Didn't we?"

"No, fathead!"

"There's jolly well not going to be any floggings, or lickings of any sort if we chuck it," said Stubbs warmly.

"That's got to be understood."

"Yes, rather!"

"We shall have to make terms, of course," said the captain of the Fourth. "But that will be all right, now Carker's gone. Nobody else wants any trouble. And now supper."

"I say, Wilmot——"

"Dry up, Bunny!"

"But I say——"

"Cheese it!"

"Look here," roared Bunny. "You listen to a chap! It's important. Now Carker's gone, and old Westcourt's coming——"

"Who?" demanded Algy. "Are you speakin' of my pater, Bunny?"

"I mean Lord Westcourt! Keep your boot away from me, you beast! Now Lord Westcourt's coming, and Carker's gone, it's all over, isn't it? We shall get good terms and chuck it——what?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Well, then, there's no need to ration the grub any longer——"

"What?"

"The grub," said Bunny. "What's the good of eking out the grub if the whole bizney is going to fizzle out to-morrow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's really a duty to finish it up," urged Bunny. "Waste not, want not, you know."

"Pile in, Fatty!" said Harry Wilmot, laughing.

"Oh, good!"

Bunny Bootles did not need telling twice.

He piled in. Rations were a thing of the past; it was obvious to all now that the barring-out was coming to an end. Supper was ample on all sides, and in the case of Bunny Bootles it was more than ample.

Apparently he felt it his duty to see

that the amount left over was reduced to the smallest possible minimum.

Long after the other fellows were finished Bunny was still going strong. His manful efforts slacked down at last, and he rested from his labours with a fat and breathless and very sticky and shiny look. He had "done" himself remarkably well; for once even Bunny admitted that he had had enough to eat. It was later that it dawned upon Bunny's fat mind that he had done himself a little too well—that he had, in fact, considerably over-done himself.

After the rebels had turned into their blankets that night, and slumber reigned in the Fourth Form passage, a mumbling and groaning sound began to be audible. Algernon Aubrey St. Leger raised his head and rubbed his eyes and listened.

"Oh, gad! What——"

Groan!

"Great gad! Is that you, Bunny?"

"Oh, dear! I—I think I'm dying, Algy."

"Go it; but no need to wake me up," said Algernon Aubrey. "A considerate fellow would die quietly, Bunny, at this time of night."

Groan!

Groan!

"Bunny, you groaning villain, you——"

"Ow! It wasn't the pickles!" moaned Bunny.

"The pickles?"

"It couldn't have been! I've had pickles often enough, without trouble like this afterwards. And it couldn't have been the jam."

"Oh, my hat!"

Groan!

"Dry up, Bunny!"

"I—I say, Wilmot, will you—will you cut down to Wicke and fetch a doctor——"

"Yes, I can see myself doing it," chuckled the captain of the Fourth.

"Bob, old man, will you fetch a doctor——"

"My dear man, I wouldn't even fetch you an undertaker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'll tell you what I'll do, Bunny," said Bob Rake, sitting up in his blankets. "If you don't stop that awful row I'll come along and kick you till you do stop! See!"

"Yah!"

It was not a happy night for Cuthbert Archibald Bootles. Almost he wished that supper had been on rations, after all.

CHAPTER 39.

All Serene!

"THE jolly old pater!"

"Upon my word!" said Lord Westcourt.

His lordship stood on the landing, beside Mr. Rawlings, and stared up at the barricade.

He extracted an eyeglass from some recess, jammed it into his noble eye, and stared again.

He had learned from the Fourth Form master the story of the barring-out, so he was prepared. Still, he seemed astonished, and undoubtedly shocked.

Many years since—more than he liked to remember—Lord Westcourt had been a St. Kid's fellow himself. For many, many years he had been an Old Boy and a governor of the school. But in all his experience in connection with St. Kit's he had never seen the like of this.

"Upon my word!" he repeated.

Algernon Aubrey waved a dutiful hand.

"Good-mornin', dad."

"Algernon!"

"Yaas, father!"

"This is—is shocking, Algernon!"

"Yaas, dad! We've given Carker some shocks, no mistake about that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This must end at once!" said Lord Westcourt.

"Yaas! Carker still gone?"

His lordship coughed.

"Mr. Carker has chosen to absent himself, Algernon, and he has not

returned to the school this morning, neither has he sent any message. A startling accusation has been made against him in connection with the attack on Dr. Chenies, and Mr. Carker should have been here to rebut it. But he is not here. In the circumstances, pending a meeting of the governing body, Mr. Rawlings will take control."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Bob Rake.

"Bravo!"

"I have no doubt," resumed Lord Westcourt, "that the governors will decide to leave Mr. Rawlings in control until Dr. Chenies is able to return and resume his headmastership. You have, therefore, no occasion—no pretext—for further—hem!—insubordination, and I trust I shall see you all return to duty and obedience at once."

"Certainly, sir," said Harry Wilmot.

"Any old thing, sir," said Durance. "But it's got to be understood that by-gones are by-gones, and that there are no lickin's."

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Bunny. "That's important!"

His lordship coughed and glanced at Mr. Rawlings. The Fourth Form master coughed also.

"In the circumstances, Lord Westcourt, I suggest that the whole matter should be dropped—that this—this un-presented affair should be forgotten and forgiven on condition that the boys return to their duty at once," said Mr. Rawlings.

"Quite so," agreed his lordship.

"Good enough!" said Wilmot.

"Then you will restore order in this passage, and I shall expect you in the Form-room for third lesson," said Mr. Rawlings.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, begad, the jolly old barrin'-out is over, dear boys, and it's time to toe the line again," said Algernon Aubrey St. Leger. "It was fun while it lasted; but everythin' comes to an end—even Carker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilmot & Co. marched into the

Fourth Form room for third lesson—as if there never had been any barring-out at St. Kit's. Once more affairs at the old school resumed the even tenor of their ways.

Mr. Carker did not return, and certain inquiries that were made after him failed to elicit news of his whereabouts. Bill Slaney received a sentence of six months at Lynn, and it remained a question what would have happened to Mr. Randolph Carker had he been there for it to happen. But he was gone—and St. Kit's never saw him, and everyone concerned was glad to see the last of him.

Mr. Rawlings carried on to the satisfaction of that august body, the governors of St. Kit's, and even to the satisfaction of the lately-rebellious Fourth Form, until Dr. Chenies—restored to health at last—returned to the school. There was a tremendous ovation for the Head when he came back; the cheers of the St. Kit's fellows rang and echoed from one end of the school to the other, and the

Head was deeply moved. Especially from the Fourth Form came tremendous cheers.

"We did it, you know," Algernon Aubrey St. Leger remarked to his comrades. "If we hadn't chucked Carker, the jolly old Head might never have come back—catchy on? The old scout ought to single us out for a special vote of thanks, but I don't suppose he will."

"Not quite," grinned Bob.

"At least, he ought to give us a special whole holiday, in recognition of our services," said Algy. "Do you feel disposed, as captain of the Fourth, to suggest it to him. Wilmot, old bean?"

"Ha, ha! I leave it to you!"

Algy shook his head.

"No, perhaps it's better taste not to mention it," he said. "It's even possible that the jolly old Head doesn't know how much he ought to feel obliged to us."

On which point Algernon Aubrey was doubtless right, though Harry Wilmot & Co. never learned what Dr. Chenies thought of the barring-out at St. Kit's.



THE ROOKWOOD ROBBERY

By OWEN CONQUEST.

A Splendid Short Story of the Chums of Rookwood School.

CHAPTER 1.

At the Bird-in-Hand!

"LETTER for you, Towny!"
Topham entered Study No. 4, and handed the letter to Cecil Townsend. Mornington and Smythe were there, and their eyes were on Townsend as he gazed at the envelope.

"Remittance, Towny?" asked Mornington.

"Don't think so," replied Townsend. "I don't recognise the writing."

"Well, open it, then, and see," said Topham.

Townsend tore open the envelope, and took out the letter it contained. Then he commenced to read the message.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens does the chap want to come and see me for?"

"Who?" questioned the knuts.

"My cousin," explained Townsend. "He's a chap I've never seen, and, what's more, don't want to see!"

"What's he coming for?" asked Topham.

"Goodness knows!" said Townsend, with a snort. "He's been to see my father, and, having heard all about me, wants to pay me a visit!"

"Very kind of him," commented Mornington.

"You may think so," grunted Townsend. "But what about our little outing to the Bird-in-Hand that we'd fixed for this afternoon?"

"Better bring your cousin along," said Mornington.

"How can I?" said Townsend. "He's not arriving here until half-past four. And, besides, we couldn't take him to

the Bird-in-Hand. He's one of those goody-goody chaps!"

"Doesn't he play nap?" asked Topham.

"Not he!" said Townsend. "Cards are an abomination to him from what I've heard!"

"Phew!" gasped Mornington. "What a chap to have for a cousin! You'd better wire him that you're engaged for the afternoon!"

"He doesn't give his address," said Townsend hopelessly, "and I'm hanged if I know where he lives!"

Adolphus Smythe laughed.

"I fancy you're in a deuced rotten fix, Towny, dear boy," he said. "You'd better come along with us to the Bird-in-Hand, and leave early for the purpose of entertaining your affectionate cousin."

"You mean to say that you're not going to back me up?" said Townsend.

"Back you up in what?" asked Mornington.

"Why, in entertaining my blessed cousin."

Mornington roared.

"No fear!" he said. "I personally am jolly particular in what company I keep. Little Georgie doesn't appeal to me at all!"

"Nor me," said Smythe.

Townsend glared at his knutty chums.

"Well, I reckon you're a lot of beastly rotters!" he exclaimed. "I simply must meet the chap. If I don't, the governor will probably hear of it, and then there'll be ructions!"

"Poor Towny!" laughed Smythe.

"You can keep your sympathies to yourself!" snapped Townsend.

"Cheer up, Towny!" urged Mornington. "Come down to the Bird-in-Hand with us, and then we'll see what can be done with regard to your cousin."

"You'll back me up?" said Townsend hopefully.

"We'll see about it," said Mornington.

"Right-ho!" said Townsend. "I'll come!"

"Good!"

Directly after dinner the four knuts wended their way in the direction of Coombe, where the Bird-in-Hand was situated.

There they were met by Joey Hook. Joey Hook was a doubtful character; but the knuts were ever eager to play a hand of nap with him, and, as was often the case, to lose their money.

Joey Hook led the way to a little back parlour, and very soon the knuts were deeply engrossed in a game of nap with their coarse companion.

To Mornington and Smythe the game was most enjoyable. They had extraordinary luck, and were very soon in possession of two pounds belonging to their chums.

By the time four o'clock came Townsend and Topham were each about thirty shillings out of pocket.

Townsend looked at his watch

"Four o'clock, by gum," he exclaimed.

"I must be going."

"Going!" exclaimed Joey Hook.

"Why, Mr. Townsend, we've only just started!"

"Sorry!" said Townsend. "But—"

"Sit down, Towny!" bade Mornington. "We're all coming along soon. Wait for another half an hour. You may win your money back in that time!"

The gambling spirit was in Townsend, and he found it hard to resist the temptation to go on with the game. After all, there was every possibility of his winning back the money he had lost.

"All right," he said, after a moment's pause. "I'll stay; but, mind, only for another half-hour!"

"All right!" said Mornington; and the game recommenced.

Strange to say, Townsend's luck changed completely on the resumption. In less than a quarter of an hour he had won back all the money he had lost, and a little over.

Mornington was the chief loser, and it annoyed him considerably to see Townsend meeting with such good luck.

Try as he would, he could not alter matters, and when Townsend rose to his feet at the end of the half-hour, Mornington possessed the small sum of half a crown.

"Sorry to have to go," said Townsend, with a grin. "But time's getting jolly short. Coming, Morny?"

"Don't go yet," said Smythe.

"Yes, I'm going," said Mornington. "We promised to knock off in half an hour, and a promise is a promise!"

"Phew!" gasped Topham and Smythe, but they did not argue the matter.

Mornington led the way out of the inn, and there was a peculiar light in his eye.

Mornington had a very spiteful nature, and the loss of his money had considerably upset him, so he resolved to take Townsend down before his goody-goody cousin.

But Mornington was to receive a very big surprise within the next hour or so.

CHAPTER 2.

Cousin Bob!

TOWNSEND and his fellow knuts entered Study No. 4, to find a stranger sitting in the easy-chair. He was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age, but there was a gaunt, aged look about his face, and his hair was cut quite short.

Townsend gazed at the stranger in surprise.

"Are you cousin Bob?" he asked.

"That's me, Cecil, old boy," said the

stranger, rising to his feet and laughing slightly. "Jolly glad to meet you—what! My, what a fine boy you're getting!"

Mornington & Co. sniggered; but Townsend, keeping a straight face, shook hands with his cousin. His cousin's manner had surprised him considerably, for, whereas he had imagined Bob to be a quietly-spoken fellow, he seemed to be rather breezy, and had a lot to say for himself.

"Aren't you going to introduce me to your pals, Cecil?" asked Townsend's cousin. "I'm sure they're longing to shake hands with me. Ah, I thought so."

Mornington & Co. shook hands with Cousin Bob, and then Townsend set about getting the tea ready.

The cloth was laid on the table, and cups and saucers and plates followed. Topham brought out the bread and butter, and Mornington offered to make the tea.

"Where's the teapot, Towny?" he asked.

"In the cupboard," said Townsend.

"It isn't," said Mornington.

"Where's the bread-knife and the jam-spoon?" asked Topham.

"They're in the cupboard as well," said Townsend.

Mornington searched the cupboard from top to bottom, but the missing articles were not to be found.

"Look here, Towny," said Mornington, "either you're mistaken where you put the things or else somebody's boned them!"

"I'm sure I put them there," said Townsend.

Cousin Bob jumped to his feet.

"You'll excuse me," he said, "but I believe I can throw some light on this matter. Whilst I was sitting here a boy came in, and helped himself to some things from the cupboard. He said something about having permission to help himself."

"What was he like?" asked Townsend eagerly.

"Ah," said Cousin Bob, "that I can't tell you! I didn't look at him close enough for that."

"I wish I could get hold of the chap," said Townsend.

"I'll go and see if I can find the things," said Topham. And he darted out of the study.

Mornington proceeded to prepare the tea, whilst Townsend conversed with his cousin.

Suddenly the door opened, and Jimmy Silver put his head inside.

"You chaps been on the prow?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" asked Townsend.

"Why, somebody's pinched our silver teapot!" said the Classical captain.

"That's funny!" said Townsend. "Ours has gone as well—and our butter-knife and jam-spoon!"

"Phew!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That's rotten! I suppose those Modern chaps are responsible."

The Classical captain shut the door and went down the passage. A moment later the door of Study No. 4 was opened again, and Conroy, the Australian junior, looked in.

"Where's our copper kettle?" he asked.

"What? You've lost something as well?" said Townsend.

"Yes; our kettle's gone," said Conroy. "Have you got it?"

"No," said Townsend. "We've lost our things as well, and so has Jimmy Silver. I expect Tommy Dodd & Co. have taken them for a lark."

"All right!" said Conroy. And he left the study.

Very soon Topham returned.

"Found 'em?" asked Townsend.

"No," said Topham. "I've been in every study, but there's not a sign of them. It's jolly strange, too!"

"What is?"

"Why, there are about a dozen chaps out in the corridor hunting for their

property," explained Topham. "It seems that everybody's lost something."

"Well, it can't be helped," said Townsend. "I expect Tommy Dodd & Co. have been on the ramp."

Cousin Bob looked up at that moment.

"Surely there are no thieves in this school!" he said.

"Certainly not!" said Townsend. "Some of the chaps do this sort of thing for a lark. Of course, they're only kids, and, as it amuses them, we don't mind. We shall easily get our things back later on."

"Oh, good!" said Cousin Bob.

"I say," said Townsend, "I'm awfully sorry we can't offer you a cup of tea; but—"

"Don't trouble," said Cousin Bob, with a wave of his hand. "Perhaps you've got a drop of whisky?"

Townsend gasped.

"Whisky!" he gasped. "B-b-but—"

"I suppose you've got a bar of some sort here?" said Cousin Bob.

"Er—er!" stammered Townsend.

"You s-s-s-see, the fact is, we're not allowed to keep whisky in this school."

Cousin Bob sniffed and rose to his feet.

"Well," he said, "it'll do me good when I come to see you again! Here I take the trouble to pay you a visit, and all you offer me is a bit of bread-and-butter!"

"I say, Bob," said Townsend, "I'm awfully sorry, you know; but if I had known that you drank whisky I would certainly have smuggled some in for you. I always thought you were a teetotaler."

"Bah!" growled Cousin Bob. "I had expected to have a good afternoon here, but I have been grievously disappointed. To think that a cousin of mine should offer me such a paltry tea! Bah! I have done with you! Good-bye!"

"Good-b-b-bye!" stammered Townsend. And next moment Cousin Bob left the study, taking with him rather a big traveller's bag.

Townsend looked out of the window and watched Cousin Bob mount on his motor-bicycle and disappear down the road.

CHAPTER 3.

Brought to Book!

MORNINGTON turned away from the window.

"Well," he said, if I had a cousin like that I'd bury him! I thought we were going to have a bit of fun with the chap, but I fail to see where the fun comes in."

"It's jolly funny!" said Townsend. "I shouldn't have thought a chap could change so much! Why, from what my people used to tell me, he was a jolly good-looking chap, and very quiet; but now—"

"He's not what one might call handsome," said Topham. "And as for his manners, I— Hallo! Who's this?"

The knuts looked round as the door opened, and a young, smartly dressed fellow, with a silver badge on the lapel of his coat, entered.

"Excuse me," he said, with due politeness, "but I understand that this is Cecil Townsend's study?"

"Quite correct!" said Townsend, stepping forward. "I'm Townsend."

"Oh, good!" said the stranger. "I'm jolly pleased to meet you, Cecil!"

"I'm afraid I don't know you," said Townsend haltingly.

"Don't know me?" said the stranger, with a smile. "Why, I'm your Cousin Bob! You got my letter, surely?"

"Cousin Bob!" gasped Townsend.

"Why, my Cousin Bob's just gone!"

"Just gone?"

"Yes."

The stranger's face had become serious all of a sudden.

"What was he like?" he asked. "Was there a drawn look about his face, and did he have his hair cropped close?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the stranger. "How long has he been gone?"

"About five minutes," said Townsend. "He went off on a motor-bike, and——"

"By Jove, the daring rascal!" cried the stranger. "I say, Cecil, you've been taken in! That fellow was not your cousin! I got in conversation with him on the way down, and gave him a lift in my side-car. He appeared to be quite pally, and I told him I was coming to see you. But when I went into a tobacconist's he bolted off on my bike, and I had to come on by train."

"By gad!" exclaimed Mornington, ever eager for adventure. "I'm going after that chap!"

"You'll never catch him," said Townsend. "You can't run——"

"I'm not going to run!" declared Mornington. "I'm going on my push-bike."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the real Cousin Bob. "Can I borrow a bike?"

"Yaas, dear boy," said Adolphus Smythe. "You can have mine. I really couldn't do any scorching this afternoon."

In another moment Cousin Bob and Mornington were tearing down towards the quadrangle at top-speed. Mornington soon had the bikes out, and then the two set off for Coombe, in which direction the impostor had gone.

Mornington made inquiries in the village, and learned that the man had gone in the direction of Brantford. The two, therefore, pedalled their hardest in the direction of the village.

Brantford was about five miles from Coombe. When they had covered about three miles Mornington pointed ahead.

"Look!" he cried. "He's had a breakdown!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Cousin Bob. "Whack on the speed!"

The two tore along madly, and when they were about fifty yards away from the motor-bicycle the impostor happened to look round, and caught sight of them.

Immediately he took to his heels; but escape was hopeless. Mornington

put his brakes on quickly, and dismounted. Then he tore after the man for all he was worth.

Mornington had a good turn of speed, and quickly overtook the impostor. He gripped him by the arm, but the man wriggled free. The next moment, however, Cousin Bob joined in the fray, and very soon the impostor was a helpless captive.

The two dragged the man back to the bicycle, and then Mornington gave a gasp of amazement. For in the side-car was an open bag, and in the bag were silver teapots, silver jam-spoons, and many other silver articles—all of which had been stolen from the studies in the Fourth-Form passage at Rookwood!

"Wherever did these come from?" asked Cousin Bob.

Mornington explained.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Cousin Bob. "What a daring scheme! The chap had some nerve, and no mistake! Just hold on to him for a bit whilst I put this bike right. Then we'll take him to the nearest police-station!"

Cousin Bob soon had the bicycle in working order; then they set off back to Coombe once again. The impostor was handed over to the local police, and Mornington and his companion learned that the man had only been released from prison a week ago, and was quite a desperate character.

Mornington and Cousin Bob returned to Rookwood with the bag of stolen property. The various articles were returned to their rightful owners, and then the knuts of Rookwood set about entertaining their visitor.

Strange to relate, for once in a way, the knuts were quite decent, and there was no mention of cards or smokes in Cousin Bob's presence. The result was that Cousin Bob went away quite impressed, and the knuts themselves were forced to confess afterwards that they had enjoyed Cousin Bob's visit.

OUR MAGAZINE CORNER

AMAZING CAR CRASHES

SOMERSAULTING in a racing car at 110 miles an hour, and then continuing the race, sounds a bit far-fetched, doesn't it? But it's true.

It happened to Borzaccini, the famous Italian driver, at a race on the Monza track—the Italian Brooklands—a few years ago, and it all started when the speeding car threw a wheel and crashed tail over radiator. Of course, the car was completely smashed, and everyone expected to find the driver dead. But, to their amazement, he crawled out of the wreckage untouched, and a few moments later was in the race again, having taken over another of his team's cars.

"Crash at 100 m.p.h., and you'll probably sustain a few bruises; crash at 60 m.p.h. and you can kiss yourself good-bye," say the racing men—and it certainly seems to be true, for there are heaps of instances that prove it.

Six Racers in a Smash!

One of the most sensational crashes that have ever happened occurred in 1927, during the Le Mans Grand Prix, a twenty-four-hour event, in which the cars race throughout the night.

It started when one of the drivers of the big Bentley team came round a blind corner all out, and found that another car had crashed right across the road.

He was going much too fast to stop in time, and he had to choose between ramming the wrecked car or going into the ditch. Naturally he chose the ditch, his car hitting the bank with such force that it was thrown back across the road on its side, in which position it was immediately rammed by a second Bentley, whose driver had been right on the heels of the first.

The road was now completely

blocked, and before anyone had time to warn them, three more cars—a third Bentley, a French Schneider, and an S.A.R.A. racer—had crashed into the melee.

The headlights of the racers, cutting through the darkness, showed a piled-up tangle of twisted metal that had once been cars, out of which it looked impossible that anyone could have escaped alive. Yet, with the exception of the driver of the first car, who had two broken ribs and sprained a shoulder, not one man was scratched!

But the most wonderful thing about the crash was that the third Bentley was extricated from the wreckage, re-started, and actually won the race!

A Record Pile-up!

But the world's record pile-up—and, incidentally, the world's record narrow escape—occurred on the American Indianapolis track during their famous five hundred miles race.

Instead of being oval or round like ordinary racecourses, the Indianapolis track is square, the proper way to drive a car round it being to skid it round the turns like a dirt-track bike.

It was this method of skidding corners that caused the crash, for one driver skidded too much. Before he had had time to straighten out, a Duesenberg racer had gone into his tail, with the result that the Duesenberg skidded, too, and got mixed up with a third car.

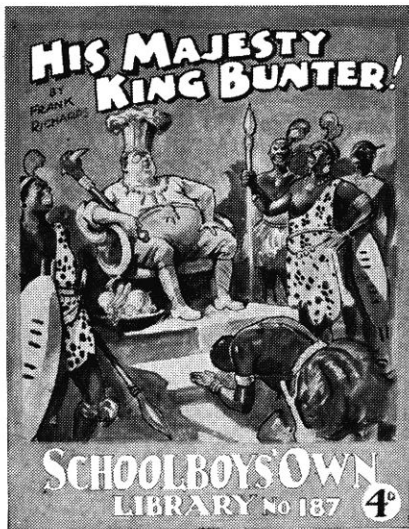
Within a second two more cars were involved in the mix-up, the first one smashing off a front wheel and then ramming a low wall at the outer edge of the track, while the second actually collided head-on with the first car of all, which had by this time turned completely round.

At 100 m.p.h. the whole five cars skidded madly down the track, to stop completely wrecked some two hundred yards down the straight.

Yet, with all this, the only damage was a sprained wrist!

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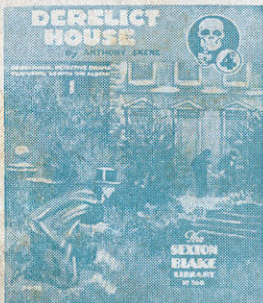


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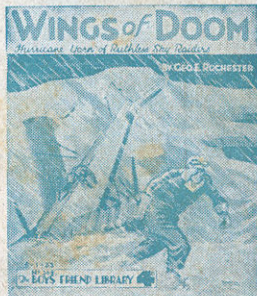


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