

SPARSHOTT SERIES N° 3

# FIRST MAN IN!

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"Oh!" roared Plum, as he went over backwards in the Buccaneers grasp

# FIRST MAN IN!

By FRANK RICHARDS

HATS OFF!

“HATS off!” chuckled Barnes-Paget.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oh!” ejaculated Mr. Lamb.

Mr. Lamb, the master of the Fourth Form at Sparshott School, was taken quite by surprise. He had not expected his hat to become detached from his head so very suddenly.

It was a windy day. There was half a gale blowing at sea. A strong wind whistled round the old red roofs of Sparshott, and scattered leaves from the ancient beeches. Fellows in the quadrangle clutched their caps every now and then. Mr. Lamb, who had been busy with Form papers in his study for an hour since class, had not noticed that it was very windy—till he came out of the House in hat and coat, and started walking to the gates. Then he noticed it—as his hat was suddenly lifted from his head by a sudden sharp gust, and bowled away before him on its brim.

“Oh!” repeated Mr. Lamb, “My hat! Oh! Vernon—Rake—Barnes-Paget—Tumpton—Banks——.”

“After it!” shouted Barnes-Paget.

He led the rush in pursuit of the spinning hat. Harry Vernon, Tom Rake, and Eustace Percival Tumpton, rushed with him. The three chums of No. 3 Study were more than willing to oblige their form-master by recapturing his fugitive hat. Barnes-Paget’s intentions were not quite so obliging. Barnes-Paget was nicknamed the ‘Buccaneer’: a name he liked, and tried hard to live up to. There was a wicked gleam in Barney’s eyes as he chased after the bowling bowler.

Harry Vernon, however, would have reached it first, with Tom Rake a good second, had not Plum Tumpton lent his aid. Eustace Percival Tumpton, with the best intentions in the world, could always be relied upon to do the wrong thing at the wrong moment. The wind whisked the hat over the low chain that surrounded the Sixth-form green. Plum Tumpton caught a foot in that chain, threw out his arms wildly to save himself, clutched Vernon with one, and Rake with the other, and all three went to earth.

“Oh!” roared Tom Rake.

“Ooooooh!” gasped Vernon. “Oh, you clown!”

“Oh, gum!” stuttered Plum, as he sprawled over his chums.

Barnes-Paget reached the hat. No. 3 Study were *hors de combat* for the moment, and the Buccaneer got there first.

The hat had come to rest for a moment. Perhaps it was by accident that Barnes-Paget, as he reached it, caught it with his foot. Or more likely not! Anyhow, he did catch it with his foot, and the hat sailed on again. Then the wind caught it fair and square once more, and it whirled away.

“Ha, ha, ha!” came a yell from a crowd of fellows watching the chase. From their point of view, it was rather entertaining to see the Buccaneer playing football with his form-master’s hat.

“On the ball, Barney!” shouted Carboy.

“You fathead, Barnes-Paget!” exclaimed Harry Vernon, as he pitched Plum away and scrambled to his feet, “Stop that!”

The Buccaneer did not heed. He was after the hat again, at top speed. An eddy of the wind carried it back towards the spot where Mr. Lamb was standing, his hair blowing out like a mop. Mr. Lamb made a plunge at the hat. Barnes-Paget made a plunge at

the same moment—and crashed into Mr. Lamb. Lamb's clutch missed the hat by a foot or more, and it whirled onward.

"Sorry, sir—!" gasped Barnes-Paget.

"You clumsy boy—!" gasped Mr. Lamb.

"I'll get it, sir!"

Barnes-Paget raced after the hat again. Vernon and Rake and five or six other fellows came after him. But Barnes-Paget had the lead, and he kept it: it was he who overtook the whirling hat. And again, as if by accident, his foot came in contact with it, and lifted it into the air and the wind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Barnes-Paget!" almost shrieked Mr. Lamb, "How dare you kick my hat? Boy!"

"An accident, air——."

"Nonsense! You kicked the hat! I——."

"I'll get it, sir."

"If you kick that hat again, Barnes-Paget——!"

Barnes-Paget did not kick the hat again. That was rather too palpable, after two 'accidental' kicks. There were other ways of extracting a little more entertainment out of the fugitive hat. The bowling bowler stopped, righted itself, and settled on the ground on its brim. Barnes-Paget, reaching it, clutched at it with his hand—his foot slipped, and he dropped on his knee—on the hat!

Crunch!

"Got it!" yelled Carboy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Harry Vernon. He was only a yard behind the Buccaneer: but too late to save the hat.

Barnes-Paget scrambled up. He picked up the hat. His knee had gone through the crown, smashing it in. It was the wreck of a hat. Harry Vernon stared at it, and at Barnes-Paget. Barney closed one eye at him.

"Got it!" he remarked.

"You ass, you've smashed it——."

"Accident, of course," drawled the Buccaneer, "Foot slipped—any fellow's foot might slip."

"Let's hope Lamb will believe that!" said Vernon.

Barnes-Paget shrugged his shoulders, and carried off the hat, to present it to his form-master. His face was very serious: there was nothing in his look to indicate that he regarded it as a lark to smash his form-master's hat. But Mr. Lamb, though not a suspicious man, was no fool.

"Your hat, sir!" said the Buccaneer, respectfully, "I got it, sir! Sorry it's had rather a knock——."

"You—you—you have ruined my hat, Barnes-Paget!" gasped Mr. Lamb, "You reckless young rascal——!"

"Oh, sir, quite an accident——."

"That will do, Barnes-Paget! Give me the hat! Upon my word!" Mr. Lamb strove to punch the bowler into shape again. His knuckles came through the crown. "Oh! Upon my word! I shall have to get another hat! Boy!"

"Sorry, sir," said Barnes-Paget, meekly, "I did my best——."

"Go to my study, Barnes-Paget——!"

"Oh, sir! What for?"

"Go to my study. I have no time to deal with you now. Remain in my study until I return."

"But, sir——!"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Lamb, and the Buccaneer, biting his lip, went. Mr. Lamb, frowning, went into the House for another hat: and sallied forth again, taking more care of his headgear this time.

Barnes-Paget, with a knitted brow, watched him from the study window. He had to remain in that study till Mr. Lamb returned to the school—and how long that might be, Barney had not the faintest idea. The Buccaneer had not expected this result of his reckless lark—though really, he might have. After the feast came the reckoning.

### A TRICK ON THE TELEPHONE.

**B**UZZZZZZZZ !

"Brr-r-r-r !" grunted Barnes-Paget.

It was the telephone bell in Mr. Lamb's study.

Barnes-Paget had been more than half-an-hour in that study. Barney was an active fellow, and loathed hanging about doing nothing. The sunny, windy quadrangle was crowded with fellows, who seemed to be enjoying life, as Barney stared at them gloomily from Mr. Lamb's window.

The Buccaneer expected "four up" when Lamb came in—but even that prospect was not so bad as the weary wait in the study with time on his hands. He could not even console himself with a "rag" on Mr. Lamb's books and papers, though he was tempted to do so: he had enough coming to him without that. He loafed about the study, or stared from the window, and waited and fumed, growing angrier and more resentful every moment: and still there was no sign of Lamb returning. Then, suddenly, the telephone-bell rang, and he scowled at it.

Buzzzzzzzz !

Barnes-Paget picked up the receiver.

It was a call for Mr. Lamb, and if the bell continued to ring, someone would come to the study to take the call, as Mr. Lamb was not there. It occurred to Barnes-Paget to take the call. He was simply longing for a chance to "get back" on Lamb for sticking him in the study to wait, and this might be a chance. It might be an important call: and by forgetting to report it to Lamb quite a spot of trouble might be caused. Barnes-Paget hoped so.

"Hallo !" he grunted into the transmitter.

"Hallo, uncle." It was a young man's voice that came through: a cheery, vigorous voice, with a pleasant tone in it, that Barney would have liked, had he been in a less disgruntled mood. But at the moment Barney was not disposed to like anything that had the remotest connection with Mr. Lamb: and this, evidently, was some nephew of his form-master.

"Who's speaking?" he grunted.

"You don't remember my voice, uncle? Well, it's five years since you've heard it—though you heard it often enough when I was in your form at Sparshott—too often, perhaps! What!" A chuckle followed.

Clearly, this was some Old Boy of Sparshott: a nephew of Lamb's who had once been in his form: long before Barnes-Paget's time, of course. Lamb had been master of the Fourth at Sparshott for unnumbered years, with only an interval in the War time, when he had gone away on some War job.

"I thought I'd ring you up, uncle," went on the cheery voice, "Only back from Germany yesterday—occupation duties, you know. Glad to get back, you can bet."

"Oh! Yes! But——!"

"You don't know my voice, uncle! Well, I don't seem to know yours either, if you come to that. It's your dutiful nephew Randolph speaking—Randy, you know—officially, Captain Randolph Lamb. Got it now?"

"Oh! Yes! Of course!" mumbled Barnes-Paget. He had not decided yet whether to tell the caller that Mr. Lamb was out, or wha-

ther to let him run on. In the meantime he was non-committal. The cheery voice rattled on.

"Of course I want to see you, uncle, and the old school, now that I'm back at last. You'd like to see Randy, what?"

"Oh! Yes! Quite."

"Of course you would. There must be quite a new lot at Sparshott since my time—nobody to remember me but you and the Head, I expect, and old Charne. Is old Charne still portering, and shutting fellows out of gates if they're half a tick after time? Ha, ha."

"Oh! Yes! Charne is still porter. Certainly."

"He must be ninety by this time, or thereabouts. Shall I run down to-morrow, uncle? It will be a half-holiday, and you'll have leisure to enjoy my company—Wednesday's still a half-holiday at Sparshott, I suppose?"

"Yes! Quite! Do come, my dear boy!" said Barnes-Paget, making his voice as deep as he could.

"What-ho! But what about trains?" asked the voice on the wire, "Have they rebuilt the old line since the Huns knocked it to pieces, or does one come another way or what? I'm quite a stranger in the land now, you know."

Barnes-Paget's eyes gleamed over the telephone.

He was aware, though evidently this young man was not, that the railway line had been rebuilt since German bombs had knocked it out in the War time. But he did not intend to tell Captain Randolph Lamb so. Quite another idea was working in his active brain.

"We're still rather cut off from the world, Randolph!" he said, coolly, speaking as if he were Mr. Lamb, "Nothing nearer than Westwood."

"Oh, my hat! That's ten miles from Sparshott, uncle."

"Quite! But I shall send a car for you, Randolph, if you let me know the time of your train."

"Good man, if you can do that—"

"Oh, quite easily. There is a Master's Meeting to-morrow afternoon, and I may not get off in time to come personally. But the car will be there. There is a good train that gets into Westwood at three o'clock. Can you come by that?"

"Suit me down to the ground, uncle."

"Then that is settled. Three o'clock at Westwood, and look out for the car," said the Buccaneer, "I shall be very, very glad to see you again, Randolph, after so long. You must excuse me now—the Head is expecting me, and I cannot keep Dr. Oliphant waiting."

"Good old Elephant! Byebye, uncle."

"Good-bye, Randolph."

Barnes-Paget put up the receiver, with a cynical grin on his rather hard face.

Having done so, he immediately left the study. He had been bidden to remain there till Mr. Lamb returned—but after that talk on the telephone, it was no safe place for him. Having misdirected Mr. Lamb's nephew, and consigned him to a totally unnecessary trip to a place ten miles from the school, it behoved the Buccaneer not to let Lamb know that he had been in the study at all.

True, if Lamb did not find him in the study, he might get six or eight instead of the expected four: but he had to take that chance: he simply dared not risk being called to account for that talk over the wires with Captain Randolph Lamb. If that talk was inquired into, as very likely it would be, it had to remain a mystery who had taken it in Mr. Lamb's absence.

The Buccaneer strolled into the quad with his hands in his pockets and a grin on his face. Tom Rake called to him.

"Didn't Lamb tell you to stick in his study, Barney?"

"Did he?" yawned Barney.

"I heard him say so!" exclaimed Harry Vernon.

"Lamb says so many things!" drawled the Buccaneer, "Fellow can't be expected to remember all he says."

"You're asking for more, you ass!" said Plum Tumpton. "Go to Lamb's study, and stick there, and don't be a goat."

"I prefer your company, old clown!" said the Buccaneer, affably, "Even your company's better than sticking in a study all on one's lonely own."

"Didn't I see you looking out of Lamb's window ten minutes ago?" grinned Carboy.

The Buccaneer gave him a hard look.

"If you did, you'd better forget it!" he said, "I haven't been to Lamb's study—I'm not going—so you couldn't have. See!"

Carboy chuckled.

"O.K. I'm mum!" he said.

"If that means that you've been playing the goat in Lamb's study, Barnes-Paget—" began Harry Vernon.

"How could I, when I haven't been there!" drawled the Buccaneer, "Lamb shouldn't have sent me in for picking up his hat for him, and I'm not going. That's that!" And Barnes-Paget walked away, whistling.

## PAINFUL FOR PLUM!

"PLUM, old chap!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Plum Tumpton, in surprise.

He stared round.

It was the following afternoon. Plum's chums, Vernon and Rake, were at games-practice, but Plum had not joined them. Plum was thinking over a matter of what was—or seemed to him—of greater import.

With his hands in his pockets, and a thoughtful expression on his pink chubby face, Plum was leaning on a buttress under the Fourth-form windows. His eyes were fixed on Ridd of the Fourth, who was loafing in the quad. Plum did not like Ridd of the Fourth very much—regarding him rather as a weed and a worm. Nevertheless, he was considering whether to chum up with Ridd that afternoon.

Reggie Ridd, not personally attractive, had one considerable attraction—his sister at Headland House School, a mile from Sparshott. Plum was deeply interested in Margaret Ridd. Plum would have been glad to trot over to Headland House that half-holiday: while Ridd, who could have trotted over if he had liked, was evidently not thinking of anything of the kind. Plum was considering whether to suggest that walk to Reggie—with his own company added. A walk with Plum was, in Plum's opinion, rather a distinction for a weed like Ridd: he ought to jump at it if Plum suggested it. And Plum would be able to tolerate his uninteresting company, and his silly talk about the odds on Bonny Boy for the two-thirty, with Margaret Ridd at the other end of the walk. On the other hand—

At this point in Plum's deep meditations, those meditations were interrupted by a voice behind his head: which, as he was leaning on a wall, naturally surprised him. He stared round, and found that the voice proceeded from an open window just above him. Barnes-Paget of the Fourth was looking out of that window.

"Oh! You!" said Plum.

"Yes, old fellow," said the Buccaneer, amiably, "Little me."

Plum gave him a suspicious look. Generally, when the Buccaneer took the trouble to address Plum at all, he addressed him as "clown," or "fathead," or "ass." Barney had the lowest possible opinion of

Plum's intelligence, and never concealed that opinion. So it was rather surprising to Plum to get "old chap" and "old fellow" from Barney. Plum was not by nature suspicious: but this sudden promotion from fathead to old fellow indicated, even to Plum, that Barnes-Paget wanted something.

"Well!" said Plum. "Look here, Barney, you'd better not talk to fellows at the window. You're in detention. If Lamb came along—."

"Blow Lamb!" The Buccaneer scowled, "I've got a half-holiday's detention for not going to his study when he told me yesterday—."

"I jolly well believe you did go," said Plum, "Two or three fellows saw you looking out of his window, and chance it. You jolly well did something while you were there, and Lamb hasn't found it out yet. That's why—."

"It's always a pleasure to listen to you, old chap, but there's no time now," said Barnes-Paget, "Will you do something for me?"

"I'd guessed that one! What is it?"

"Get my bike out—."

"Oh, gum!" said Plum, staring, "Your bike! You don't want a bike in detention, I suppose!"

"It's exactly what I do want."

"Going to ride it round the form-room, instead of writing lines?" asked Plum, with a grin.

"Oh, don't be a goat!" snapped Barnes-Paget, "I'm going to cut detention."

"That means a whopping."

"You needn't worry—you won't get the whopping. I can dodge out of the back of the House, and cut along to the old spinney in Elm Lane, easily enough, without getting spotted. If you get my bike out, and wait for me at the old spinney, it will be O.K."

"I advise you not," said Plum, shaking his head, "Lamb's pretty mad with you already, Barney. It will put the lid on if you cut detention"

The Buccaneer breathed hard. He was tempted to reply that, if he wanted advice, he would not ask a born idiot for it. But that reply would not have been judicious, in the circumstances. Plum was the only fellow available to do what he wanted done—moreover, most fellows would have hesitated to take a hand in the reckless proceedings of the scapegrace of Sparshott. Plum had plenty of pluck, and not too large an allowance of sense, so really he was just the fellow the Buccaneer wanted, at the moment. Barney choked back angry words, and smiled instead of scowling.

"You're right, old man, as you generally are," he said, "You're the man for solid horse-sense, Plum."

"I fancy I'm no fool!" assented Plum, complacently.

"But I'm going, with or without the bike," said Barnes-Paget, "Look here, it's all right. Lamb's set me lines to keep me busy till five—."

"Get them done, old bean."

"They're done," grinned Barnes-Paget, "I had three hundred in stock. Lamb won't come to the form-room till five. I shall be back before then. Safe as houses—if you get out my bike."

"Better not—!"

"Of course, if you funk it—!"

"Who funks it?" hooted Plum, "I'll go and get out your silly jigger if you like. Yah!"

"Good man!"

Plum grunted, and started off for the bike-shed.

Barnes-Paget grinned as he watched him go. He had been an hour in the form-room—and was utterly fed up with it, on a fine sunny afternoon, when the wind and the sun seemed to call him out of doors. If he "cut," it behoved him to get out of the vicinity of Sparshott as

fast as he could, to avoid the eyes of masters and prefects—and a spin on his bike, across the wide heath that lay between Rodwood and Westwood, would serve that purpose, as well as being infinitely more enjoyable than the dusky form-room. Even a clown like Plum had sense enough to wheel out a jigger without attracting the attention of all the school—at least, Barney hoped so.

He backed from the window, and quietly opened the form-room door. The corridor outside was deserted: there were few about the House on a fine half-holiday. Lamb, probably, was in his study correcting Form papers—or perhaps with the Head—anyhow not bothering about the junior in detention. Having set him a task for the afternoon, Lamb had dismissed him from mind. With luck, the Buccaneer would get away unseen—and return unseen in time for Lamb's visit at five—and if his luck failed him, he was prepared to face the consequences with his usual hardihood. He stepped out of the form-room, tiptoed down the corridor, and in less than a minute afterwards, was dropping from a secluded back window. Another minute, and he was climbing a wall that gave on Elm Lane in the rear of the school buildings.

Meanwhile, Plum Tumpton arrived at the bike-shed. He found several fellows there, among them Carboy and Root, who stared at him as he lifted Barnes-Paget's handsome and expensive bicycle from the stand.

"Did Barney tell you you could borrow his bike, Tumpton?" asked Carboy.

"Eh! I'm not borrowing it," answered Plum.

"What the thump are you doing with it, then?" asked Root.

"That's telling!" answered Plum, astutely, "Don't you ask questions, and you'll be told no lies, see? Barney may have asked me to take his bike out for him, and he may not. No bizney of yours."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Carboy and Root. From that diplomatic reply, they guessed how the matter stood.

Plum, who saw nothing to laugh at, sniffed, and wheeled the bike to the door, and out—where he ran it into the long legs of Wilmot of the Sixth, who was just coming in.

"You clumsy young ass!" snapped the captain of Sparshott, "Keep that bike away from my bags, you young idiot. Can't you see where you're going?"

"Oh! Yes! No! Sorry!" stammered Plum, backing the bike. Even Plum realised that it was judicious not to attract a prefect's special attention, if he could help it. But the clown of Sparshott was fated to do the wrong thing at the wrong moment. "I—I'm in rather a hurry, Wilmot. Sorry."

"Oh, get out, you young ass."

Plum gladly got out. Wilmot glanced at him, and glanced at the grinning faces of Carboy and Root, and then glanced after Plum, as he rushed the bike away to the gate. He seemed a little suspicious.

Plum lost no time. Outside the gate, he jumped on the bike, and pedalled round to Elm Lane. Barnes-Paget was not to be seen as Plum came to a halt, by the fence of the spinney. So Plum waited. He was feeling safe enough, as the spinney was out of sight of the school. A few minutes later there was a quick running step in the lane and the Buccaneer arrived, a little breathless.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed.

"Here's your jigger," said Plum, "But if you'll take my advice, Barney—"

"I'll take the bike instead!" said Barnes-Paget, laughing "Did you really manage to wheel it out, without letting all Sparshott know you were getting my jigger out for me, Plum?"

"Think I'm a fool?" demanded Plum.



"Well, yes, if you ask me," said Barnes-Paget, with a nod. It was no longer necessary to waste "soft sawder" on Plum!

"Well, I like that, after what I've done!" snorted Plum, "I should get four of the best for helping you cut detention, if Lamb knew. And I might have been spotted, as I ran into Wilmot getting your bike out, too. If he'd noticed it was your bike—"

"Oh, you clown!" snarled Barnes-Paget. The Buccaneer's bike, like most of his possessions, was the most expensive that money could buy, and it was quite likely that Wilmot had noticed that Plum was not wheeling his own machine. "You can't do anything without making a muck of it, can you?"

"You cheeky ass—Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Plum, as a figure appeared in the lane, and a sharp voice called:

"Barnes-Paget! Stop!"

"Oh, crikey, it's Wilmot!" gasped Plum, "He must have noticed—"

"You dummy!" hissed Barnes-Paget.

He stared up the lane at Wilmot's tall figure. Evidently the prefect had been suspicious: for here he was, coming up at a run. Barnes-Paget set his teeth. He was spotted now—Wilmot knew that he was detained that afternoon, and was coming to march him in. But Barney was not going to be marched in if he could help it. He was quite reckless now. He gave Plum a shove out of the way—so suddenly and forcefully, that Plum sat down in the lane with a bump and a splutter. Then he threw a leg over the machine.

"Stop!" roared Wilmot. He came on at top speed.

Barnes-Paget drove at the pedals. Few fellows at Sparshott School would have had the nerve to bolt, under the eye of a prefect: but Barney was one of the few. He bent low over the handle-bars and ground at the pedals.

Wilmot, his face red with wrath, put on a spurt. He clutched at the rider, and very nearly had him. But his grasp missed, and his hand banged on the rear mudguard as the bike shot away: and, over-balancing with the effort, he fell on his knees in the dusty lane. The bike shot on.

"Stop!" raved the captain of Sparshott.

Barnes-Paget did not stop, or think of stopping. He turned the corner by the spinney, going fast, and disappeared from sight.

Wilmot of the Sixth staggered to his feet. His knees had had a nasty jar, and his trousers were dusty. Wilmot was a good-tempered fellow, as a rule: but he did not look good-tempered now: far from it.

"Oh, crikey!" murmured Plum, in dismay, as the prefect's glare turned on him. "I—I say, Wilmot, I—I—I—"

"You young sweep!" gasped Wilmot, "Come in with me."

"I—I—I say——!"

"You can say anything you want to say to your form-master."

"Oh, lor!"

Plum followed Wilmot into the school in low spirits. His spirits sank still lower, when he arrived in Mr. Lamb's study. They were down to zero, or lower still, when Mr. Lamb, having heard the prefect's report, picked up his cane.

"Bend over that chair, Tumpton!"

Swish! swish! swish!

"Yow! Ow! Wow!" roared Plum.

"Cease that absurd noise at once, Tumpton, or I shall cane you again!" said Mr. Lamb, sternly.

Plum contrived to cease that absurd noise: but it required an effort. Mr. Lamb was a little gentleman: but he packed a lot of muscle in his good right arm. Those three swipes had made Plum feel, for the moment at least, that the life of a schoolboy at Sparshott was hardly worth living.

"Now follow me to the form-room," said Mr. Lamb, "I shall set you a task in deponent verbs, Tumpton—you are particularly weak in deponent verbs—and you will be detained until five o'clock."

Plum could only mumble with anguish. This was what came of helping a fellow out of detention! No doubt something still more severe was awaiting the Buccaneer when he returned: but that was no comfort to Plum. Mr. Lamb left him in the Fourth-Form room with a paper on deponent verbs—those irritating verbs which are passive in form, but active in meaning, and which Plum loathed more than he loathed all the other parts of speech put together.

"Oh, lor!" said Plum.

He wriggled at his desk, and tried dismally to fix his attention on deponent verbs. His chief desire was to punch Barnes-Paget's head—his next, to punch Wilmot's head—indeed, the awful thought crossed his mind that he would have liked to punch Lamb's head! But all these comforts were denied the unhappy Plum: and he wriggled, and mumbled, and grunted, and did deponent verbs. If there was a fellow at Sparshott School who thoroughly and whole-heartedly didn't enjoy that half-holiday, it was Eustace Percival Tumpton.

### NECK OR NOTHING!

"OH, gad!" ejaculated the Buccaneer.

He glanced back over his shoulder startled.

After getting away from Elm Lane at a burst of speed, Barnes-Paget had slowed down, and was riding his bike easily, on the track that wound among the gorse and furze on Rodwood Heath. He was heading for the road along the top of the cliffs, which made a very pleasant ride on a summer's afternoon, with the green heath on the one hand, the sea creaming in on the sands of the beach, far below, on the other. But he had not yet reached the cliffs when, glancing back, he spotted a startling sight—nothing less than a big Sixth-Form man, mounted on a big machine, pedalling in his wake—and coming up hand over fist.

"Wilmot!" breathed the Buccaneer.

It had not occurred to him that he might be pursued. Wilmot of the Sixth, he had no doubt, would be as mad as a hatter, and the rebel of Sparshott had plenty of trouble to expect when he returned to the school. But he had not supposed that Wilmot would run out his bike and follow on. Evidently the captain of Sparshott was not only as mad as a hatter—but "madder" than Barney had anticipated—his wrath would not keep till the reckless truant chose to come back. Moreover, it went against the grain with a Sparshott prefect to let the rebel get away with this act of defiant rebellion. Barnes-Paget was not going to have a free afternoon, out on his bike, if the Sparshott captain could prevent it—and it looked as if he could. Barney was a good rider, and hard goer, on a bike—but he could hardly hope to compete in a bike race with a powerful Sixth-form man on a big machine.

He set his lips: and his bike, which had been travelling at a leisurely pace, leaped into speed. Whether he could win that race or not, the Buccaneer was going to give Wilmot a run for his money. He shot away along the rather rugged heath-land track: and after him came Wilmot, grim of brow, his long legs grinding at swift pedals.

Several times, Barnes-Paget disappeared from his sight, winding through the gorse, or dipping into hollows of the heath: but he always came in sight again, and all the time, hard as the junior rode, Wilmot was drawing nearer.

But Barnes-Paget put his beef into it. He was prepared to face punishment—which was likely to be severe—after his day out. But to be caught at the very start, and marched back to the school under

the eye of a prefect, perhaps with a hand on his shoulder, was too bitter. He was going to get away somehow—anyhow.

"Stop!" came a roar from behind. Wilmot was within hail now: and his voice came clearly to Barnes-Paget's ears.

The rebel of Sparshott looked back again. His face was crimson with exertion, beads of perspiration were on his forehead, and his eyes gleamed savagely. Wilmot released one hand from his machine to wave a command.

"Stop!" he repeated, in a roar.

"Rats to you!" yelled Barnes-Paget. It was not the sort of reply that a Sparshott junior was supposed to make to a Sixth-form prefect: but the Buccaneer was quite reckless and desperate now.

He flew on. From the heath track, he came out on the road that ran along the top of the cliffs. In one direction, to the left, it led towards Headland House School and on to Sparshott: in the other direction, on the right, it led far out of school bounds for Sparshott fellows, towards the distant village of Westwood, on the coast. It was to the right that the Buccaneer whirled on his machine. Cliffs and beach near Sparshott, on a half-holiday, were likely to have plenty of Sparshott fellows about—perhaps a prefect or two among them—and Barney did not want to run into an enemy ahead, with one so close on his track behind. Nobody belonging to Sparshott was likely to be seen on the cliff road towards Westwood.

It was easier going, on the road, than on the heathy track: and Barnes-Paget's bike was almost like an arrow in its flight. Big and muscular as he was, Wilmot of the Sixth had plenty to do, to keep pace with the desperate fugitive. But he did keep pace, and gained foot by foot. Barnes-Paget did not waste a second looking back again: but he knew that the Sixth-form man was overhauling him—that he would be run down, inevitably, long before he had covered the miles to Westwood.

But he gritted his teeth hard. All the stubborn obstinacy in his nature was roused now. He would not give in—not to save his life would he give in now, if he could help it.

But savagely enraged and exasperated as he was, the Buccaneer was quite cool. While he was putting every ounce into that desperate race, his wits were working. Miles had fled under the whirling wheels: but the end was inevitable—he could not escape by speed. He glanced to his right, where the green heath stretched inland—wondering whether he could hope to dodge his pursuer among the bushes and trees that dotted the heath here and there: but he gave up that idea. Wilmot was not to be shaken off so easily as that. Then he glanced to the left, where the high rugged cliffs fell away steeply to the beach. A hundred feet below lay the ribbed stretches of sand, with the water curling in. In places, the cliffs were accessible to a climber—but only a fellow with an iron nerve and a steady head would have cared to tackle such a climb. But that was what the Buccaneer was thinking of now.

"Stop, you young sweep! Chuck it, will you?" came a shout from behind. Wilmot did not have to roar now: he was drawing close: he was not twenty yards behind the racing junior.

Barnes-Paget realised that in a few more minutes it would be over. That settled it for him. Suddenly, he swerved to the side of the road, and jammed on his brakes so sharply that his machine jumped and skidded. Leaping clear of it, and leaving it clanging on the ground, the Buccaneer sped on foot towards the edge of the cliff high over the beach.

Wilmot, taken off his guard by that sudden stop, shot past the spot where the Buccaneer's bike lay. Then he jammed on his brakes, whirled round, rode back.

"Barnes-Paget !" he yelled, "You mad young fool ! Stop ! Come back." His eyes started, as he stared at the junior.

Barnes-Paget had reached the cliff-edge. He swung himself over to clamber down, and Wilmot almost in horror, watched him as he disappeared beyond the verge.

"You mad young ass ! Stop !" panted Wilmot.

He jumped from his machine, and ran to the edge of the cliff. He dropped on his knees there, to stare over and down, his face white. Not for a moment had he anticipated such a desperate move on the part of the Fourth-form rebel. All his angry wrath had vanished now, in his alarm.

But there was nothing he could do. Barnes-Paget was already a dozen feet down, far out of his reach. To Wilmot, dizzily looking down, it seemed as if a sea-bird could hardly have found a resting-place on that steep cliff-face. But Barnes-Paget found foot-hold and hand-hold—though scanty. He was risking life and limb in that desperate attempt to escape recapture—and the captain of Sparshott felt his heart in his mouth as he watched him.

"Barnes-Paget !" His voice was quiet now. "Don't be a mad fool ! Come up—come up at once ! Don't you know you're in danger ! Come back."

The Buccaneer paused in his downward scramble, held on to a putting point of rock, and grinned up at him breathlessly. He knew that he was in danger—only too well—and he did not care. He had beaten Wilmot to it, and that was all the reckless young rascal cared about, at the moment.

"Come after me !" he invited.

Wilmot breathed hard. He would have gone down after the young rascal fast enough, and dragged him back by his collar, had it been practicable, But he knew—as Barnes-Paget did—that the junior's life hung by a thread—the merest touch would have lost him his precarious hold, and sent him whirling down to the distant beach.

"Will you climb back, Barnes-Paget?"

"No, I won't !"

Wilmot said no more. He remained where he was, watching the junior as he clambered lower and lower down the cliff, till the Buccaneer, clambering round a great bulge of rock half-way down, disappeared from his sight. With his heart in his mouth again, he continued to watch for the junior to reappear. Suddenly, from below, came a sharp cry.

"Oh !" panted Wilmot. His face was white, as he watched, fully expecting to see a whirling form go slithering down the cliff to crash on the beach below.

But it did not happen. Several long minutes dragged by, and then the Buccaneer came in view again, beyond the bulge of rock, still climbing downward, though more slowly, and, as it seemed, painfully. The sight of him was a relief : and Wilmot watched him till he clambered, at last, from the cliff, and sank down exhausted in the sand at the foot.

He was safe, and that was all the captain of Sparshott wanted to know. He did not think of pursuing the fugitive by the same dangerous route : indeed, he doubted very much whether he could have descended the cliff in safety as the Buccaneer had done. Neither did he feel disposed to abandon his bicycle, as Barnes-Paget had, and walk six miles back to the school. The young rascal had reached safety : and for the rest, that could wait till he came back to the school.

Wilmot walked back to the road, and picked up his machine. He glanced at Barnes-Paget's, and frowned. Barney had abandoned that expensive jigger without a single thought, careless whether he ever saw it again : the millionaire's son could afford to be careless in such matters. But, deeply incensed as he was, the captain of Sparshott

did not care to leave it lying there to be picked up by a passing tramp : and he lifted it, and wheeled it away with him as he cycled back to Sparshott School. His brow was grim as he rode : and boded no good to the scapegrace of Sparshott when he did, at long last, turn up at the school—and Wilmot did not guess that, in those very moments, the scapegrace was lying in the sand at the foot of the cliffs, groaning with the pain of a twisted ankle, and helpless to stir from the spot.

### THE BIG WALK !

“**T**HAT tears it !” muttered Barnes-Paget.

He made an effort to rise, and sank back again in the sand, his face colourless with pain. He did not make another effort. It was useless : and it was borne in upon the Buccaneer’s mind that he had to remain just where he was, till by chance help came.

It was while he has hidden from Wilmot’s sight by the bulging rock, that the Buccaneer had found disaster. Hand-hold had failed him on the steep cliff and he had slipped—and for a moment, the shadow of death had hung over him. That was when the cry had reached Wilmot’s ears above. But somehow, he hardly knew how, he had clung on, after slithering several yards, his foot jamming into a narrow cleft in the rock, his hands grasping a little jutting ledge. There he had hung, breathless, jolted, dizzy, till at length he was able to move again : and then he realised that he had twisted his ankle when his foot jammed into the cleft. The pain of movement was excruciating : but his strength was going, and he had to reach the bottom of the cliff somehow, before he fell. He reached it : but he was all in, as he sank into the sand : and for long minutes he lay without motion. And when he tried to move, it was only to discover that he was helpless—that he could not put his left foot to the ground : and that he had to lie where he was till help came.

Even so, the Buccaneer did not repent of his reckless tenacity. He had beaten Wilmot to it—he was not going to be marched into the school with a hand on his collar like a truant fag—that was his chief thought. But when half an hour had passed by, and no one had appeared on the beach, his thoughts took a very different turn.

The sea was far out : but the murmur of the water was closer, after the lapse of half-an-hour : and it dawned upon him that the tide was coming in. It was still a long way out—it would be a long time yet before it reached the cliffs : there was ample time to get clear—if he could walk. But he could not walk—and he could not even crawl without overpowering pain that almost made him faint. It came into his mind that, if no one came along during the next hour, it would be too late for him.

He did not feel fear—fear had been left entirely out of the composition of the Buccaneer of Sparshott : but a black and bitter look came over his face, as he realised his position. Was he doomed to lie there, helpless, till the sea washed in : round him, and over him—dashing him—on the rocks like a fragment of driftwood?

He was quite cool, and he thought the matter out coolly—if savagely. People sometimes came along that beach, the walk by the sea being a short cut from Westwood to several places near Sparshott. But when the tide was on the turn, few if any ventured on the beach path—and the tide now was long past the turn. It was borne in on Barnes-Paget’s mind that he was unlikely to see anyone come along the beach from either direction. It was unlikely that anyone would take that walk till the tide turned again—and that would be too late for him.

“By gad !” muttered the Buccaneer, “By gad ! I’ve asked for this—and I’ve got it ! Even that fool Tumpton gave me good advice !

By gum, what wouldn't I give to see Vernon or Rake come along on a bike !"

There was hope, for a moment, in that thought. He remembered that Harry Vernon and Tom Rake had once cycled to Westwood by way of the sands. If they did the same that half-holiday—! Then he remembered that the chums of the Fourth were at games-practice that afternoon—as he would have been, also, had he not been in detention. It was useless to think of that. He could only lie and wait, and hope—with hope growing fainter—that some unusually venturesome walker might be taking the way by the sea, and that he would find help.

But as the long minutes dragged by, the faint hope became fainter and fainter still. The murmur of the lapping waves was in his ears more loudly—when he looked at the sea, he saw the curling waters terribly closer. If there had been a chance before, there was no chance now—nobody in his senses would be walking on the sands, between the incoming sea and the tall line of almost inaccessible cliffs. The Buccaneer had, as he had said, asked for it,—and he had got it !

Yet he did not give up hope. Lying in the sand, keeping still to soothe as much as possible the bitter pain in his leg, he watched—his eyes roving alternately in either direction : hoping against hope to see a figure emerge into sight from beyond the irregular rocks. But the minutes passed, and there was no footstep. Then——!

"Oh !" gasped Barnes-Paget, almost giddy with relief, as a figure came into sight suddenly round the cliffs, from the direction of Westwood.

He stared at it, afraid for a moment that his hopes had deluded him. It was a young man who had come into sight—a young man with a bronzed face that had a pleasant expression : in civilian clothes, yet with something in his vigorous walk that told of the military man. He looked strong, and sturdy, and healthy and fit—some young chap recently out of the Forces, the Buccaneer guessed.

He was well out from the cliffs, and walking vigorously and fast : probably aware that he had no time to cut to waste, with the tide coming in. He did not glance towards the cliffs, and would have passed the helpless junior unseen, had not Barnes-Paget called to him.

"Hallo ! Stop, will you?"

The young man gave quite a start, at that sudden and unexpected call, in a spot where he certainly could not have expected to hear a human voice. He stared round in surprise, sighted the Buccaneer, and came quickly towards him.

"You young ass !" he exclaimed, "What the dickens are you doing here? Don't you know the tide's coming in fast? Do you want to be drowned?"

"Not the least little bit in the world !" answered Barnes-Paget, coolly, "That's why I called to you."

"Get up ! Come with me, you young duffer ! I shall have to walk hard and fast to get through—you'll have to trot ! Don't lose a minute."

"Can't be done !" said Barnes-Paget, "You wouldn't have found me here if I could walk ! I hurt my leg getting down the cliff."

The young man stared at him, and then glanced up at the steep cliff over him.

"You came down that?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you ought to be licked for your foolhardiness." The young man's glance turned on the Buccaneer's cap. "You're a Sparshott boy?" Evidently he recognized the school colours.

"Yes ! Know Sparshott?" asked Barnes-Paget.

The young man smiled.

"I ought to—I'm an Old Boy," he said, "If I were a stranger

in these parts, I shouldn't be on this beach—but I knew I had just time to get through, if I walked hard."

Barnes-Paget gave a violent start, and then a yelp as his leg gave a pang at the movement. He guessed!

"You've come from Westwood?" he asked.

"Yes—landed there from a train at three, and had to walk—or cool about in cross-country trains all the afternoon. My uncle must have forgotten to send the car—and there was nothing to be had at Westwood for love or money—But a walk doesn't hurt any man——."

"Ten miles is a jolly good walk," said Barnes-Paget.

"Not a lot when you're a walker! But there's no time to talk—we shall both be food for fishes if we hang on here." The young man wrinkled his brow. "By gum, it will be a close fit. You'll have to do your best, and I'll help you. I'll give you a hand up."

The Buccaneer tried to suppress a howl of pain, as the sturdy young man lifted him to his feet. But he could not. He clung on to his rescuer, white as chalk, with only one foot on the beach.

"I—I can't!" he panted, "My ankle's twisted—I can't put it to the ground. I can't walk, even with your help. I can't take a step. If you can't get help to me somehow, I'm done for."

"The deuce and all!" said the young man, knitting his brows, "I can't get any help but my own, that's a cert—if I leave you here to fetch help, it would never reach you. Well, if you can't walk, you've got to be carried."

"You can't do it," panted the Buccaneer.

"I've got to! Think I'm going to leave you here to drown, you young ass? It's four miles and more from here to Headland—and I've got to do it with you on my back—and, by gad, I shall have to step out! I've done some walking in my time—but this is going to be the Big Walk of my life! What?"

"Are you Captain Lamb?" muttered the Buccaneer. He had guessed it—it was his form-master's nephew the man upon whom he had played that miserable trick on the telephone, who was rescuing him—who was saving his life, if it was yet to be saved. It was not often that the hard, cynical Buccaneer of Sparshott repented of an action, or felt ashamed of himself—but he did both now.

"Yes! How did you know? But never mind that now—no time for talk!" said Randolph Lamb, tersely, "We've got to get going—and it will be touch and go at the best. Up you go! Lucky I left my bag to be sent on by the carrier—what? I should have had to drop it here—you'll be enough on my shoulders, young 'un."

"I—I—I!" stammered Barnes-Paget.

"That's enough—up you go!"

Captain Lamb swung the junior on his back. The Buccaneer shut his teeth on a yell of pain.

"Hold on!" said the young man, "leg hurt, what? I'll land you at the school doctor's at Headland, and he'll do something for it."

"If we get through!" muttered Barnes-Paget.

"Oh, we'll get through."

The Buccaneer did not feel so sure of that: neither did he believe that Captain Lamb felt sure of it himself. It was certain that with the schoolboy's weight to carry, the young man would be slowed down—and he had no time to cut to waste to get through. He was risking his life to save the schoolboy, and the Buccaneer knew it well enough. But risk counted for little with a man who had gone through hordes of Huns, from the Norman beaches to victory beyond the Rhine. Leaning forward to support the weight on his back, he started: and the Buccaneer hung on, as the young man tramped on the sand, heading for the distant headland and safety. Randolph Lamb was a walker—but this, as he had said, was going to be the "Big Walk" of his life!

## THE BUCCANEER'S LUCK I

“YOU clown !”

“You frumptious chump !”

Plum snorted at his chums.

“You can call a fellow names—!” he said, indignantly.

“There aren't any names for you, old man,” said Tom Rake, “Language fails ! Nothing in English to describe you ! Idiot is the nearest.”

“Or lunatic !” suggested Vernon.

“Look here—!” roared Plum,

“You've helped Barnes-Paget cut detention ! You've got detention yourself and a licking ! Hadn't you sense enough not to get Barney's bike out for him?”

“He made out I funk'd doing it—.”

“He would have made out that or anything else, if he was afraid that you had a glimmer of sense, and wouldn't !” remarked Vernon.

“And you've got him a flogging, to come !” said Rake.

“Well, he wanted me to get out his thungunbob—I mean his what's-its-name—and if I hadn't run it into Wilmot's legs—.”

“You would !” said Vernon.

“You'd have run it into the back of the Head's neck, if you'd had a chance,” said Rake, “You all over !”

Plum snorted again. He had got through his detention, though he was still feeling a twinge from Lamb's cane. He had joined his chums expecting sympathy ! And this was what he got ! Plum was indignant.

“When a fellow wants to play the giddy goat, why give him a helping hand?” asked Harry Vernon, “Barney will have the time of his life when he gets back. You don't know what's happened while you've been in detention, Plum. Wilmot went after him, on his jigger, and he came in boiling, because Barney led him a dance for miles and miles and then got away at the finish.”

“Wilmot will slaughter him, when he comes in,” said Rake, “Then Lamb will slaughter what's left of him. After that the Head will flog what remains of him—if there's any remains. I don't envy Barney after call-over.”

“Serve him jolly well right !” said Plum, “Who the thump is Barnes-Paget that he can't stick in detention like any other fellow ? I know I've jolly well made my headache with filthy deponent verbs—and it's all his fault.”

“You shouldn't have—— !”

“Oh, shut up !” roared Plum, and he stalked away, realising that there was no sympathy to be had from his bosom pals.

It was getting near calling-over, and many fellows were thinking about Barnes-Paget, and wondering where he was, and when he would come in. Likely enough, he would not relish turning up at Sparshott for roll, knowing what was in store for him. But he had to come in—or was he going to make a day of it—adding absence from roll to his list of offences, already long enough?

When the bell rang for calling-over, there was much speculation in the Fourth on that subject.

“Is he sticking it out?” Carboy asked, with a whistle, “I don't see him about, Root.”

“In for a penny, in for a pound !” remarked Root, “Barney likes to make fellows stare at his nerve. Might stay out till dorm.”

“Just like him, if he did !” agreed Carboy, “He will go too far one of these days, and it will be the long jump. Might get the sack this time, I shouldn't wonder. If you have tears, old bean, prepare to shed 'em—when Barney gets the boot.”



Root laughed, and Carboy laughed. They were Barnes-Paget's pals—in their own way. That was their way!

Towler, the master of the Shell, was taking roll in hall. When he called the name of Barnes-Paget, there was no responsive "adsum."

"Barnes-Paget!" repeated Mr. Towler.

Then he marked the Buccaneer absent.

"Cheeky ass!" whispered Tom Rake, "He's sticking it out! I wonder when he will come in——."

"With the milk in the morning, perhaps!" suggested Carboy. And there was a subdued chuckle in the ranks of the Fourth.

Lamb was seen to be frowning portentiously, when he went to his study. In the Lair and the passages, the juniors discussed Barnes-Paget, and the reckless defiance of authority that he was carrying to so unusual a length.

The Buccaneer was a rebel by nature: and he liked to give all the trouble he could to masters and prefects: but this was the limit, even for Barney. He had not come in, when the Fourth went to their studies for prep.

"I wonder——!" said Plum, looking up thoughtfully from Virgil in No. 3 Study.

"You wonder what 'et' means?" asked Tom Rake, affably, "It means 'and,' old chap."

"You silly ass!" roared Plum. Plum was no whale at Latin: but really he did not need to ask the meaning of that monosyllable.

"Isn't that what you were wondering?" inquired Tom, "If it's 'que' tacked on to the end of a noun, that means 'and' just the same."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Vernon, quite entertained by the expression on Plum's plump face, "Is that the trouble, Plum?"

"You jolly well know it isn't!" shrieked Plum, "I was just wondering——."

"Whether 'Aeneas' is a noun or a verb?" asked Tom, "It's a proper noun, old chap."

Plum breathed hard.

"Will you talk sense?" he demanded.

"To you?" asked Tom, "What's the use? You wouldn't understand, old fellow."

"If you want me to chuck this inkpot at your silly head, Tom Rake, you're going the right way to get it!" said Plum, darkly, "Look here, you men, I was just wondering whether Barney's had an accident. Even Barney ain't fool enough to hang it out like this if he could help it. He was on a bike——."

"Barney doesn't ride a bike like you do, old bean," said Tom, shaking his head, "He doesn't specially look round for a car, and head for it."

"He chucked his bike," said Harry, "Banks saw Wilmot wheeling it in, he told me. I've heard that he slithered down the cliff, half-way to Westwood, leaving Wilmot at the top."

"What about the tide?" asked Plum. "I was jolly nearly caught in the tide on that beach once."

"You might be!" agreed Rake.

"It might happen to any chap!" roared Plum.

"Any chap with a brain-box of solid wood! But you're the only man at Sparshott with a brain like that Plum."

"The one and only!" agreed Vernon, laughing.

"Yah!" snorted Plum. And he transferred his attention to Virgil.

Prep was still going on, when there was a sound of wheels in the quad below. Plum looked up.

"I wonder if that's Barney!" he remarked.

"Barney would be likely to come home swanking in a car, after

staying out till after prep !” grinned Tom, “There’s a limit, even to Barney.”

“But if there’s been an accident—.”

“Bow-wow.”

Plum, with a snort, went to the study window to look down. In the dimming light of evening, he saw a taxi that had stopped outside the House. From the House, Mr. Lamb had emerged, and was standing on the steps, speaking to a bronzed young man who, evidently, had alighted from the car. Plum stared down at him, wondering who he was. He had never seen him at Sparshott before.

“Oh, scissors !” ejaculated Plum, suddenly.

“What’s up?” asked Harry Vernon, looking round from the table.

“Is it Barney?” grinned Rake.

“Yes !” gasped Plum.

“What?” The two juniors made a bound to join Plum at the window.

Mr. Lamb had stepped to the door of the taxi, with the bronzed young man. Evidently there was a second passenger inside—for they lifted him out between them. Barnes-Paget of the Fourth, with a face like chalk, hung heavily upon them, as he was half-helped, half-carried, into the House.

“What on earth’s happened?” muttered Rake.

“Didn’t I say there’d jolly well been an accident?” crowed Plum, triumphantly, “Barney’s got a bandy leg—he’s had a tumble, and that chap’s brought him home in the thingummy. I jolly well said so.”

It could not be denied—Plum had jolly well said so ! And it was only too clear that Barnes-Paget had found trouble of some sort.

“Didn’t I jolly well guess? You didn’t, Vernon—.”

“No !” agreed Harry.

“And you jolly well didn’t, Rake.”

“No !”

“But I jolly well did !” said Plum, “See? Am I the brainy man in this study, or am I not?”

“Not !” said his two friends, simultaneously.

“Yah !” snorted Plum.

And he went back to prep.

It was not till after prep, that they learned what had happened. When they came down, Barnes-Paget was in the junior day-room—alias the ‘Lair.’ He was in an arm-chair, with a leg stretched over another chair, his ankle bandaged—still a little pale, but with a grin on his face. He was still in some pain, but he showed no sign of it.

“Had a good time, old bean?” asked Carboy.

“Fine !” answered Barnes-Paget, “Cut detention—led Wilmot a dance—stayed out to all hours—and nothing’s going to happen ! Sounds good, what?”

“You haven’t been let off !” exclaimed Harry Vernon, staring.

The Buccaneer chuckled.

“What can they do to a fellow who’s sprained his ankle, got caught in the tide, and jolly nearly drowned?” he asked, “You can’t whop a fellow after all that. Besides, the Old Lamb is fearfully bucked by the Young Lamb doing such stunts—he carried me four miles on his back, racing against the tide, and just got through in the Headland gully—just ! Close shave for both—.”

“Who on earth’s the Young Lamb?”

“Old Lamb’s nephew—just out of the Army and occupied Germany. Demobbed just in time to pick me up on the beach—lucky, wasn’t it?” drawled Barnes-Paget, “We were both all-in—but we got that taxi at Headland, and here we are. And Lamb—I mean Old Lamb—hopes it will be a warning to me. He’s got a hopeful nature, you know. He thinks what I’ve had is punishment enough.

So do I! I don't often agree with Lamb, but on that point, I endorse him heartily. It really is enough—if anything, a spot too much.”

And Barnes-Paget told the story—and even the mocking, sardonic Buccaneer became serious, as he told of that desperate tramp of long miles on the sand, between the rushing sea and the beetling cliffs—with the water washing round his rescuer's knees before the finish: his footing almost gone, the hungry sea claiming its victims—till a last effort had saved them both, and Captain Lamb had carried him up the gully to safety.

“Must be a splendid chap!” said Harry.

“Out of the top drawer!” said Barnes-Paget, “and—and I—I wish—.” He broke off, and did not say what he “wished.” But the trick he had played on Captain Lamb was worrying him. The Buccaneer had a conscience—of sorts!

### NOT LIKE BARNEY!

“LOOK out for squalls!” murmured Carboy.

“Stormy weather coming!” remarked Tom Rake.

It looked like it, as Mr. Lamb came up the form-room passage that morning. His form, waiting for him at the form-room door as usual, noted the signs in his speaking countenance as he came.

Generally the ‘Little Lamb’ was amiable and placable—quite lamb-like, and looked as if his name particularly suited him. But there were other times when the master of the Fourth was not in the least lamb-like, but a much closer resemblance to the Big Bad Wolf. On this particular morning, there was more of the wolf than the lamb in his aspect.

Something, clearly, had got the Lamb's goat and the juniors wondered what it was—at the same time resolving to be very good in class. When Lamb had that grim frown on his brow, it behoved his form to walk warily.

Barnes-Paget fancied that he could guess the cause of that grimness in Lamb's looks. But he said nothing. He was safe—safe as houses—so long as he was prepared to lie with a steady voice and a calm face—and for that the Buccaneer was always prepared, when dealing with authority. Among his fellows in the form, Barney would have disdained to lie—but he had no scruple whatever in “telling the tale” to masters or prefects—his natural enemies, as he considered them.

He had been pardoned for his escapade the previous day—in view of his hurt, and his narrow escape from death in the tide. But if it came out that he had played that wretched trick on the telephone, landing Captain Lamb ten miles from the school at a remote little country station, there was trouble in store. But how was it to come out? The Buccaneer felt safe enough.

In the form-room, Mr. Lamb coughed, and frowned, and eyed his class. Obviously he had something to say before lessons. The juniors waited for it.

“I have to inquire into a certain occurrence, in my study, the day before yesterday!” said Mr. Lamb, grimly. “Someone played a miserable, a wretched, a rascally trick on my telephone. I command any boy who went to my study on Tuesday afternoon, during my absence, to stand up.”

“No takers!” murmured Carboy. Nobody stood up.

“The matter,” said Mr. Lamb, “will be very strictly investigated. The offender will certainly be found and severely punished. It transpires that my nephew, Captain Lamb, phoned me on Tuesday afternoon: and someone took the call in my absence—deceived him into believing that it was I speaking, misinformed him as to the state of the railway here, and caused him to take a train to Westwood—ten miles from

here—instead of coming to Rodwood.”

“Oh !” murmured the Fourth. And a dozen fellows at least glanced round at Barnes-Paget. The Buccaneer sat immoveable, with an expressionless face.

“Barnes-Paget !” rapped Mr. Lamb.

“Yes, sir !”

“On Tuesday afternoon I sent you to my study. Did you go, or not?”

“I, sir !” said Barnes-Paget, raising his eyebrows, “Don’t you remember, sir, you gave me a detention for not going?”

“I remember perfectly, Barnes-Paget. But someone certainly was in my study, and took my nephew’s call, and deceived him over the wires. Was it you?”

“Oh, no, sir !” said the Buccaneer, calmly, “This is the first I’ve heard of it, sir. I’m very sorry to hear of such a thing.”

“Did you go to my study at all, Barnes-Paget?”

“No, sir.” said Barnes-Paget, hardily.

Mr. Lamb drew a deep breath.

“Very well,” he said, “The matter will rest where it is, for the present : but there will be further and very rigid investigation.”

“I hope you take my word, sir !” said the Buccaneer, meekly.

“I am afraid, Barnes-Paget, that I cannot place very much reliance on your word. But I shall certainly not condemn you without proof. That is all for the present.”

Barnes-Paget closed one eye at Carboy, who suppressed a chuckle. And lessons began in the Fourth-form room.

There was not a fellow in the form who did not believe that Barnes-Paget was the guilty party. Probably Mr. Lamb’s belief was precisely the same. But the Little Lamb, even when he was understudying the Big Bad Wolf, had to be just. What the other fellows believed, Barney did not care a boiled bean : and what the Little Lamb could not prove, did not worry him.

Barney was limping a little, when the juniors went out in break. But the damage to his ankle, though painful at the time, was slight : it was not likely to trouble him long. As the Fourth went into the quad, Plum Tumpton gave him a poke in the ribs, and Barnes-Paget stared round at him.

“Rotten trick !” said Plum.

“Thanks. . .”

“Man saves your life, and you give him a ten-mile walk !” said Plum.

“You unspeakable idiot, I gave him the ten-mile walk before he saved my life !” snapped the Buccaneer, “Think I was a prophet to know what was going to happen next day?”

“Oh ! That’s so,” agreed Plum, “All the same, it was a rotten trick. You told him crammers on the telephone, and I think——.”

“Don’t you ever tell crammers?” asked Barnes-Paget.

“No !” roared Plum.

“You’ve just told me one—you said “I think”—didn’t you? Well, if that isn’t a crammer, what is it? Biggest one I’ve heard,” said Barnes-Paget, and he walked away before Plum could think of a suitably crushing reply.

Many fellows glanced, with interest, at a sturdy young man, with a bronzed face who was sauntering in the quad. After what Barney had told them of his rescue, Harry Vernon and Co. had a great respect for Mr. Lamb’s nephew, and they capped him when they passed. Apparently the “Young Lamb” was staying at the school—he was sauntering in the old quad like a man quite at home there. No doubt he was deeply interested in the old place where he had been a school-boy in the pre-war days.

He gave Barnes-Paget a very curious look, and stopped to speak to him.

"How's the leg?" he asked.

"O.K. thanks," answered Barnes-Paget, "Right as rain by to-morrow."

"Good! You know why I was walking from Westwood yesterday afternoon," said the Captain, slowly, his eyes intently on the junior's face. "I was fooled on the telephone from my uncle's study."

The Buccaneer coloured a little.

"I've heard so, sir!" he mumbled.

"And I've heard," said Randolph Lamb, very quietly, "that a boy of the name of Barnes-Paget was sent to the study that afternoon and punished afterwards with a detention for not going where he was sent. And that boy had since denied that he did go to the study and take a call for Mr. Lamb."

"That's so, sir."

"No business of mine," said Captain Lamb, "I'm here as a visiting Old Boy—not to help my uncle run his form. I shall not interfere." The quiet contempt in his face and voice stung the Buccaneer like a lash. "But—I've a fairly keen ear, Barnes-Paget. I had not heard my uncle's voice for some years, and though it struck me as unfamiliar, I guessed nothing—on the phone. But—" He paused a moment, "As I said, I've a keen ear. You disguised your voice a little on the phone, Barnes-Paget—trying to make it sound like a man's voice, I suppose. But I know it again."

Barnes-Paget stood very still. He had had to take that risk in tricking Mr. Lamb's nephew over the wires: but in ordinary circumstances it would have amounted to nothing for the captain, whether he stayed at Sparshott or not, would not have been likely to come into contact with him: it would have been easy to keep out of his way. But the circumstances, as it happened, had not been ordinary.

"I've said I shall not interfere," said Captain Lamb, "No business of mine. But—I'll say this! A jape is a jape—I've been a school-boy myself, and not such a jolly long time ago, either. But a lie is lie—and lying is a dirty business, Barnes-Paget! When I was a school-boy, I hope I'd rather have owned up and taken a licking, than have told a string of lies. I fancy most of the fellows here would. That's all."

With that, the captain turned and walked away.

Barnes-Paget bit his lip hard. For long minutes, he stood where he was—thinking. Then he turned and walked back to the House.

"Come in!" rapped Mr. Lamb, as a tap came at his study door.

He stared at Barnes-Paget as he came in, and frowned.

"Well?" he rapped.

"I've come here to own up, sir!" said the Buccaneer, quietly.

"What?"

"I did come to this study on Tuesday, sir, when you sent me—I took Captain Lamb's telephone-call, and sent him on a fool's errand to Westwood!" said Barnes-Paget, "I was not telling you the truth in the form-room this morning."

Mr. Lamb looked at him, grimly.

"I had little—or rather no doubt of it," he said, "and I should certainly have pursued the matter very strictly, Barnes-Paget." He picked up his cane, "You played an unfeeling trick on a stranger—presumably because he was my nephew. You will bend over that table, Barnes-Paget."

It was "eight up." Seldom did the Little Lamb hand out more than four. But there were times when the Lamb laid it on, hard and heavy: and this was one of the times. It was hard work for the Buccaneer to keep back a yell, as the cane down, hard and harder: and at

the last of the eight, he could not keep silence, and a sharp howl escaped him. When the eight had been administered, he was quite pale.

Mr. Lamb pointed to the door with the cane. Barnes-Paget limped out of the study, breathing deep.

He limped as far as the Lair, where he leaned on the big table, mumbling and twisting. He was still pale, and still twisting, when the bell called the Fourth back to the form-room for third school. He sat very uneasily.

Several times, during that class, Mr. Lamb glanced at him, grimly. At last he rapped out.

"Will you keep still in your place, Barnes-Paget."

"I can't, sir!" said the Buccaneer.

"Eh! What? Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Lamb. And he smiled.

After that, the Buccaneer wriggled unrebuked. He was still wriggling, when the hour was up, and the Fourth were dismissed.

"Eight up" was not soon forgotten—and the Buccaneer of Sparshott called himself a fool, and an idiot, and a goat, for having owned up and taken them. But he was glad that he had done so, all the same. It was not like Barney—not at all like him—but he was glad that he had done it. At least he was able to meet Captain Lamb's eyes afterwards without feeling like a worm.

### BORROWING IT OF BARNEY!

"I've been thinking—!" said Plum.

Plum Tumpton made that announcement in No. 3 Study. Plum did not expect it to have a startling effect on his study-mates. But it had.

Harry Vernon raised his eyebrows, and raised them and raised them, till they looked like disappearing over the top of his head. Tom Rake was still more deeply affected. He leaned on the study table, apparently overcome, and moaned.

Plum regarded them with astonishment.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Don't!" said Rake, faintly.

"Don't what?" demanded Plum.

"Don't startle us like that! Think of our nerves! Tell us something easier."

"You silly ass!" roared Plum. "I tell you, I've been thinking—."

"And what's the good of telling us so?" asked Tom, "We'd take your word, of course, about anything else. But that one's too steep."

"Altogether too steep!" said Vernon, shaking his head, "But if it's true, Plum, when did you begin, and how did it happen?"

"And what are you doing it with?" demanded Tom Rake.

Plum gazed at his chums speechless, for a moment or two. Plum's own persuasion was that he was the brainy man of No. 3 Study. He had that persuasion all to himself. His chums were deeply attached to Plum, and prized him highly—but that did not prevent them from regarding him as a clown and a howling ass. And, with the frankness of real friendship, they often told him so.

"Look here—!" howled Plum.

"Well, if you're been thinking, old bean, what's the result?" asked Harry Vernon, laughing, "Any?"

"If you don't want me to tell you—!" hooted Plum.

"But we do!" said Tom, "If you've been thinking—mind, I don't believe it, but if you have—we're frightfully interested in the experiment. First of all, did it give you a pain?"

Plum disdained to answer that frivolous questions.

"It's about Lamb," he said, "And my idea is, a jolly good feed in the study—with Lamb. I mean Young Lamb, of course."

"Good—if you can get it," agreed Tom, "Young Lamb is jolly

good prog—with green peas, I suppose?”

“I don’t mean that kind of lamb,” shrieked Plum, “When I say Lamb, I mean Lamb, not lamb.”

“Lucid, at any rate !” said Tom, “I suppose if you said mutton, you’d mean mutton, not mutton. And if you said beef——.”

“Shut up !” yelled Plum, “I mean Young Lamb—Old Lamb’s nephew——.”

“Great pip ! But we can’t eat him !” exclaimed Rake, “That’s all very well for the Solomon Islands, Plum—not for the British Isles.”

“I’ll jolly well buzz a book at you if you don’t shut up, Rake. You jolly well know what I mean. Young Lamb’s a splendid chap—been all through the War, and knocked out no end of Huns—and look how he rescued that fathead Barnes-Paget ! And he’s an Old Boy of Sparshott—not that he’s very old either. I’ve heard that he was in this very study when he was at Sparshott. Well, what about asking him to tea in his old study?”

“Is that what you’ve been thinking?” inquired Vernon.

“Yes, it jolly well is.”

“You’ve rung the bell for once, old bean,” said the captain of the Fourth, cordially, “If you think at this rate, Plum, you might keep it up—do it again, you know, every now and then.”

“Not too often, in case something goes conk,” said Tom, “Every now and then, Plum—slowly at first, till you get used to it. See?”

“Yah !” said Plum, “Now, look here, we can raise the wind somehow, and lay in a pretty decent feed. What?”

“One word for Captain Lamb, and two for Plum !” remarked Rake, “Trust Plum to think of a feed.”

“Well, hospitality’s the thing,” said Plum, “But we want something decent, asking an Army man to tea. If money’s short——.”

“It’s never very long !” sighed Tom.

“Well, we can raise the wind. I could sell your radio for pounds, Rake.”

Tom Rake jumped.

“Could you?” he gasped, “I shouldn’t, Plum.”

“Why not?”

“Because you’d be found dead afterwards.”

“Yah ! What about your camera, Vernon?”

“Nothing about my camera, old man. If you sold my camera, you’d be found twice as dead as if you’d sold Tom’s radio.”

“Well, if you fellows are going to be mean——.”

“We are—so far as radios and cameras are concerned,” said Rake, “But it’s O.K. Plum. We’ll sell your bike.”

“My bike !” ejaculated Plum, “Talk sense !”

“Ha, ha, ha !”

“Perhaps we can manage without selling anything,” said Plum, rather hastily, “We can ask Barney to the spread—and he can bring his stuff—he’s always got tons.”

“Forget it,” said Vernon, “Captain Lamb doesn’t like Barney. I’ve noticed that, the few days he’s been here. I believe he jolly well knows that it was Barney who pulled his leg on the phone, and told a stack of lies about it.”

“Oh, blow !” said Plum, “Well, never mind ways and means just now. The idea’s a jolly good one, ain’t it?”

“Best ever—if Captain Lamb will come.”

“Well, he’s tea’d with Wilmot of the Sixth, and Bramper of the Fifth—and we’re better company than they are,” said Plum, “Anyhow we can ask him, and something will turn up. How much money have you got, Vernon?”

“Twopence.”

“And you, Rake?”

"Threepence."

"Oh, gum! I've only got a French penny."

"Can we feed an Army man, in the style to which Army men are accustomed, on fivepence and a French penny?" asked Tom, thoughtfully. "Cutting it rather fine, don't you think?"

"We shall manage," said Plum, "We may have a spot of luck. The first thing is to see whether he'll come—so we'd better ask him."

"Make sure of the feed first," said Tom, "It's much easier to get a guest than a feed."

"Oh, rot! I might get a pound from my uncle by the next post. We want to make sure he'll come, first. I'm going to ask him."

Plum headed for the door. Plum was a man of action. He did not believe in letting the grass grow under his feet.

"Look here—!" said both his chums together.

Unheeding, Plum went out of the study. Vernon and Rake exchanged glances. Argument was wasted on Eustace Percival Tumpton, and they could only hope that if Plum succeeded in securing that distinguished guest to tea in the study, he would also succeed in securing something to feed him upon.

Plum went out into the quadrangle. Captain Lamb was standing by the old fountain, talking genially to a group of Fourth-form fellows—he seemed to take a very friendly interest in his uncle's form.

But Plum noticed that when Barnes-Paget strolled up and joined the group, Captain Lamb gave the juniors a pleasant smile and nod, and walked away. There was nothing marked in it—but the Buccaneer, at least, understood, and a sullen look came over his face.

Plum planted himself in the Captain's way, as Randolph Lamb walked towards the House. The young man gave him a friendly nod.

"Excuse me, sir—!" began Plum.

"Carry on, my boy!" said the captain, with a smile.

"We—that's Vernon and Rake and me, sir—we'd be glad—I mean honoured—that is I mean both—"

"Yes?"

"I mean, we'd be had—that is, glonoured—I—I mean—." stammered Plum rather confused, "I mean to say, if you'd come to tea in the tuddy—"

"Eh?"

"I mean tea in the study—we'd be glased—I mean glad! It's your old study, sir—No. 3 in the Fourth. If you'd come, sir—if you don't think it a cheek to ask you, sir—"

"Not at all," said Randolph Lamb, smiling, "In fact, I shall be glad of the opportunity for a little talk with the captain of your form. I've got something to say to him. When do you tea, Tumpton?"

"Half-past five sir!"

"Then rely on me in No.3 Study," said the captain, and he nodded to Plum and went into the House.

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Plum.

The captain had accepted the invitation—that was O.K. But he had accepted it for that very day—evidently supposing that that was what Plum meant.

Plum had been going to say "to-morrow," giving a little time for a spot of luck to turn up. But Plum hadn't said to-morrow, and he felt that he could'nt cut after the captain now and say "to-morrow."

He looked up at the clock-tower. It was half-past four. In one hour, Captain Lamb would arrive for tea in No. 3 Study—and the resources of that study, at the moment, were limited to fivepence and a French penny!

This needed thinking out. Plum walked about the quad, thinking it out, for quite a long time. When five o'clock struck, he was still thinking—but was no nearer to a solution of the knotty problem.



He went into the House at last to seek his chums and take counsel.

He found No. 3 Study vacant. Vernon and Rake had gone out.

"Blow!" breathed Plum.

He stared down from the study window. Plenty of fellows were in sight—not Vernon or Rake however. He saw Barnes-Paget, stalking along by the beeches by himself. The sight of the Buccaneer put a new idea into Plum's head.

Barney had lots! Lots and lots. The millionaire's son's study was a land flowing with milk and honey. Couldn't a fellow, at a pinch, borrow it of Barney? It was no use asking Barney—he looked too cantankerous at the present moment for preferring such a request. Moreover, he would probably lack enthusiasm on the subject of the man who had snubbed him. No good asking Barney—but—

The quarter chimed!

Plum was getting desperate.

Vernon and Rake would come in to tea—such as it was—at five-thirty. Doorsteps and ditch-water were all very well for the Fourth—but obviously not good enough for a distinguished visitor. Plum made up his mind. It was a case of any port in a storm—and the port was near at hand—Barnes-Paget's study up the passage!

Plum cut out of No. 3. He returned in five minutes, heavy-laden.

When half-past five chimed from the clock-tower, there were footsteps and voices in the Fourth-form passage. Vernon and Rake, it seemed, had fallen in with the captain on his way to his old study, and were coming in with him. The three arrived together—and two of the three stared blankly at the study table-spread and garnished, almost stacked, with excellent things of all kinds.

They wondered dizzily how Plum had done it. Anyhow, he had done it—for there it was! There was a feast of the gods for the distinguished guest whom No. 3 Study delighted to honour.

#### INTERRUPTED TEA-PARTY!

"WALKING?"

"Just walking!"

"Oh!" said the three, together.

Tea was going on pleasantly in No. 3 Study. Captain Lamb was an "Old" Boy—he had been through grim War, he had seen battle murder and sudden death—yet he seemed a good deal of a boy still. He made himself quite at home in the study once his own, in the days when he had been in the Fourth Form at Sparshott. He had had hard tack at times in the War years; but he seemed to have retained a boyish liking for good things to eat—he did justice to that handsome spread. The chums of the Fourth had liked him from the first—they liked him more than ever as a guest in their study.

Vernon and Rake were glad that Plum had been able, by some amazing "spot of luck," to provide that sumptuous spread. Plum, inwardly, was feeling a trifle uneasy.

Barnes-Paget was to be indemnified, of course, for the borrowed tuck—but that was a matter of time: and Barney was not a patient fellow. When Barney discovered what had happened to the store in his study cupboard, it was fairly certain that Barney would go off at the deep end, and raise Cain up and down the passage. Plum could only hope that Barney would not make that discovery until after the honoured guest had departed from the Fourth-form quarters.

Captain Lamb talked on the subject of games—a welcome subject to No. 3 Study. Then he switched on to walking. Walking, it seemed, was the captain's favourite form of athletics.

That was no end of a walker, the juniors knew, from his Big Walk on the beach, with Barnes-Paget on his shoulders. Now he told them more about it—of walking races, mile walks, seven-mile walks

ten-mile walks. And he wound up with the suggestion of a Fourth-form walking race, while he was at Sparshott to superintend the same—this, Plum realised, being what he had wanted to speak to Harry Vernon about.

"It's the best and healthiest form of exercise, really," said Captain Lamb, "You want to be keen on it. Useful, too—we had some tough marches in the War, and I was glad I'd learned to step out and keep going before Army days. You young fellows whiz about on bikes but you can't beat Shanks' pony."

Vernon and Rake gave keen attention—but Plum's thoughts wandered a little. He had heard voices passing the door of No. 3—Barnes-Paget's, Carboy's, and Root's. He guessed that Carboy and Root were going to tea with the Buccaneer.

The discovery of the raid could not be long delayed now. On the other hand, would Barney spot the study to which the loot had gone? Plum could only hope that he wouldn't—so long as the captain was there, at all events. Later, it would not matter so much.

"Do I interest you?" asked Captain Lamb, with a laugh.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Harry Vernon, "We're keen enough."

"Topping idea!" exclaimed Rake, heartily, "and you can be that every man in the Fourth will roll up, sir, if you take it in hand."

"I'll take it in hand with pleasure, and fix it on a half-holiday," said the captain, "Seven-mile walk, what—I'll map out the route, and go over it—seven miles by road out and back. Start from the School House steps—and finish up at the same spot—route, say, by Rodwood, Parsley, Crampton, Woodford, and Sedge—you see I remember my local topography. You'd have to train a bit—you can't walk on jam-puffs."

"That washes out poor old Plum!" grinned Rake.

"Eh, what?" said Plum. He had been listening anxiously for sounds from the passage, and he fancied he heard the Buccaneer's voice, on a raised note, at a distance, so he had missed some of the talk. "What's that about jam-puffs? I like jam-puffs."

"Like to try walking on them?" asked Vernon, laughing.

Plum blinked at him.

"Catch me walking on them!" he said, "Why the thump should a fellow walk on jam-puffs? Bit sticky to walk on, even if it wasn't a waste of good prog. What are you driving at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Vernon and Rake while the captain grinned.

"Where does the snigger come in?" asked Plum, puzzled, "If any fellow dropped jam-puffs near me, I'd jolly well pick them up—I certainly shouldn't walk on them. Why should I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We were discussing diet for walking," said the captain, laughing.

"Oh!" said Plum, "I see! I can walk on anything—a good feed is a good beginning, don't you think so, sir? I mean to say, in a walking match, I should prefer to pack in something solid to start with. Might get hungry in the middle of the walk, and that would be pretty awful, I think."

"Horrible!" said Vernon, solemnly.

"Dreadful!" sighed Tom.

"Well, I don't know about horrible and dreadful," said Plum, innocently, "But it would be pretty rotten. A good solid cake, say to start on—"

"And a bag of cream tarts to go on with!" suggested Rake.

"Yes, that sounds good!" assented Plum.

"Might take a rucksack, packed with jam-tarts and currant buns, and nibble all the way!" suggested Vernon.

"Well, that might be over-doing it!" said Plum, shaking his head, "I shouldn't over do it. Perhaps a bag of bullseyes—"

'Ha, ha, ha !'

"I fear," said the captain, "that our plump friend will not be the first man home. Not on those lines, at any rate."

"We'll see that he keeps fit, sir," said Tom, cheerfully, "If I catch him bolting jam-puffs or cream tarts, I'll shove them down the back of his neck. That's a tip, Plum."

"Look here—!" hooted Plum.

"One thing's quite certain," said Harry, "This study has got to pull it off. This is the sporting study. If Barney beats us, we shall never hear the end of it. And Barney's a dark horse."

"Is—is—is that Barney?" ejaculated Plum, as a distinct shout was heard from the passage.

"Sounds like him," said Tom, "Sounds like Barney in one of tantrums."

It did ! Plainly and distinctly, Barnes-Paget's shout could be heard, apparently addressed to everybody in the passage.

"Who's been in my study ?" There was intense wrath in Barney's tones.

Captain Lamb knitted his brows slightly. He had saved Barnes-Paget from dire peril on the tide-swept beach : but his opinion of that youth was not a flattering one. If he thought little of him, he thought less, now that he heard him in his "tantrums." Sparshott fellows were supposed, and expected, to exercise self-restraint, not to let their temper rip. But in that matter, as in others, the Buccaneer of Sparshott was a law unto himself.

What reply was made to Barney's shouted inquiry, the juniors did not hear—other fellows were not shouting. But Plum hoped that nobody had happened to see him carting his cargo to No. 3.

"Have—have another jam-roll, sir?" he asked, anxiously. With stormy weather approaching, Plum would have been rather relieved for the distinguished visitor to take his departure—welcome as he was in No. 3 Study. Really and truly, Plum would have hated him to learn the real origin of that feast of the gods.

"Thank you," said the captain, politely. He was not going yet. Probably it was not the tuck that detained him, but the subject of walking, on which he was an enthusiast. Anyhow he was not going, and Plum could only hope that Barnes-Paget would not trail his tuck to No. 3.

Alas for Plum ! That hope was ill-founded. In point of fact, two or three fellows had seen Plum on his foraging expedition : and the Buccaneer was not likely to be long in learning what they had seen.

"Now, talking about walking—!" said Captain Lamb, genially, "Why—what—Gad !"

He was suddenly interrupted.

Crash ! The study door flew open, hurled from outside. A junior with a face crimson with rage rushed in, brandishing hostile fists. Barnes-Paget did not know that Captain Lamb was in the study. He had no idea that Harry Vernon and Co, were entertaining a distinguished visitor. One glance round would have been enough—but Barney did not glance round. He rushed right at Eustace Percival Tumpton.

"You !" he roared.

"Here, I say—Oh, crikey !" spluttered Plum, as Barnes-Paget, grabbing him by the back of the neck, dragged him bodily away from the table. Plum's chair went over backwards with a crash—over it sprawled Plum, yelling frantically.

Vernon and Rake leaped to their feet, in amazement. Captain Lamb sat where he was, staring blankly at Barnes-Paget across the table, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Yaroooh !" roared Plum, "Leggo ! Ow ! Great pip ! Whooop !"

"You!" yelled Barnes-Paget, "Every dashed thing gone—not a crumb left—you never left me so much as a currant! By gum, I'll—"

"What do you mean, Barnes-Paget?" roared Harry Vernon, in wrath, "Get out of this study, you ruffian!"

"Chuck him out!" gasped Rake.

Barnes-Paget did not heed them. He was pitching into Plum. Plum, scrambling up frantically, found his head in chancery. Thump! thump! thump! Plum roared and raved and struggled. Thump! thump! thump!

"Go it, Barney!" chirruped Carboy, from the passage, "Give him jip!"

"Yarooop! Leggo! Help! Back you, you men!" shrieked Plum.

"Take that—and that—and that—!" yelled Barnes-Paget. "Not a crumb—not a currant—By Gum! Take that—and that—"

"Yooo-hoo-hoop!"

Vernon and Rake hurled themselves on the Buccaneer.

What was the cause of this outbreak—rather the limit, even for Barney—they did not know. Neither did they care! This was a deplorable impression to make on a distinguished visitor—an honoured Old Boy of Sparshott. What was Randolph Lamb going to think of the Sparshott Fourth? They collared Barnes-Paget, and dragged him away from the suffering Plum by main force.

"Outside!" gasped Rake.

"I'll smash him!" roar of the Buccaneer, "I'll—! Oh, my hat! Oooooooh!"

Bump!

In two pairs of strong hands, Barnes-Paget was whirled to the door. Through the doorway he went, with arms and legs flying. He landed among the fellows in the passage with a bump and a roar.

He was on his feet in a second, flaming with rage. Then he saw the captain—and checked himself. He stared at Captain Lamb.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I—I didn't know you were here sir,!"

"I imagine not!" said the captain, drily.

"I—I—I—I—" stuttered Barnes-Paget.

"I think you had better go, my boy," said the captain, quietly.

Barnes-Paget seemed to think so, too. With a burning face, he tramped away up the passage, and Vernon threw the study door shut.

"Sorry, sir," he said, apologetically, "Barney is a bit of a cough-drop, at—at times."

"So I see!"

"Oooh! Oooh! Ow!" mumbled Plum, "Woooh!" He dabbed a streaming nose with a handkerchief that came away crimson, "Ow! Oh crikey! Ow."

"Well, I must be getting along," said Captain Lamb. He gave the juniors a pleasant smile and stepped to the door, "We'll have another talk about that walk, Vernon, and fix things up."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Harry, "Sorry this has happened, sir—"

"Not at all!" said the captain, politely. And he walked out of the study, and went along to the stairs.

The captain of the Fourth breathed hard. That tea-party in No.3, which had been a happy success almost up to the finish, had been utterly spoiled—ruined—dished—by Barnes-Paget's unaccountable outbreak of fury. The matter was not going to rest where it was.

"The ruffian—the rotter!" said Harry, "By gum, we'll make him sorry for himself—come on, you men."

"We'll scalp him!" breathed Tom, "We'll ship his study, and leave him a wreck in the middle of it. Come on, Plum."

"I—I say—I!" stammered Plum.

"Don't waste time, fathead—we're going to rag Barnes-Paget bald-headed. Just come on!"

"But I—I say—I—I wouldn't," stuttered Plum, "You—you see—Barney was an awful beast, but—but missing his tuck like that, you know—"

"Like what?"

"You—you see—I!" mumbled Plum.

"Oh, gum!" yelled Tom Rake. It dawned on him, "You—you fat villain—you plump pirate—you bloated brigand—is that where you got the feed?"

"Barney's tuck!" gasped Vernon, blankly.

"I—I had to get a feed, hadn't I?" protested Plum. "Lamb said he would come—and we hadn't any money—and—and—and—so—there was lots and lots in Barney's study, and—and—and—"

They gazed at him, speechless, for a moment.

"You—you—you—I!" gasped Vernon, at last, "You raided Barney's study for all this tuck! You burgled his study cupboard! No wonder he got a bit excited! You—you—you—I!"

"We won't scalp Barney!" roared Tom Rake, "We'll scalp that fat image! Collar him!"

"Here, I say—I!" yelled Plum, "Leggo! Chuck it! I say—yar-ooooop!"

Bump! Plum was swept off the floor in the grasp of his incensed chums, and he smote that floor with a heavy concussion. Plum's frantic yell rang the length of the Fourth-form passage.

Bump!

"Yaroo! Stoppit! I had to get the feed, hadn't I?" shrieked Plum, "I—"

Bump!

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, crikey! Will you leggo? Ow!"

Bump!

"Whooooooooooooop!" roared Plum.

"That will do," gasped Rake. He grabbed the last jam-puff from the table, and crammed it down the back of Plum's neck. "There! Next time you throw a tea-party, Plum, wait till there's something in the larder. See?"

"Urrrrrggh! Grooogh." gurgled Plum, "I'm all jammy—urrrrggh!"

Vernon and Rake strolled out of the study, leaving Plum to it. It was a breathless, unhappy, and sticky Plum—a Plum that was fairly certain to think twice, if not three times, before he "threw" another tea-party on the same lines.

## BARNEY MEANS BUSINESS!

"WE win this!" said Barnes-Paget.

"Do we?" said Carboy, very doubtfully.

"Um!" said Root.

The Buccaneer eyed them unpleasantly. They did not seem enthusiastic. The Buccaneer himself perhaps, was not enthusiastic: but he was keen, and he was determined.

"First three in!" he said.

"But—I!" said Carboy and Root together, in dismay.

They liked palling with the millionaire's son. They liked the spreads in the study—they liked his expensive cigarettes—they liked to borrow small sums which Barney seldom or never mentioned afterwards. A smoking-party, a surreptitious trip out of bounds, even "breaking out" after lights out, had the sympathy and co-operation of Carboy and Root. But if the Buccaneer, who with all his shady ways

as a great man at games, talked cricket to them, they yawned. And now he wanted them to walk their legs off! Carboy and Root did not want to quarrel with Barney—but were they going to walk their legs off, to please him? Not if they could help it.

"We're going to beat that crew in No. 3!" said Barnes-Paget, savagely, "See? Vernon and Rake are jumping at this! Even that fat fool Tumpton is keen on it. That study isn't going to pull it off."

"You'll pull it off, Barney, old man," said Root, "We'll stand round and cheer, what?"

"You can play their heads off, at cricket, football, fives, rowing, running, jumping—and walking!" said Carboy, "It's up to you, Barney."

But flattery was of little use with the Buccaneer. Even if he liked it, he saw through it all the same.

"Wash that out!" he said, curtly, "You're my pals, and you've got to stand by me against No. 3. We're first, second, and third in this stunt. And it's not only that crew, either—it's that man Lamb."

"He doesn't seem to love you too much!" grinned Carboy.

Barnes-Paget scowled.

"I liked him," he said, "He did a big thing for me—and I liked him. He chooses to look down his nose at me, because—because—well, I'm goin' to make him own up that I'm the best man in the Fourth, in his own dashed special line, see—even if I do pull his silly uncle's silly leg. And if I can't pull it off, my pals are going to which is the next best thing. See that?"

"But you can Barney! You'd beat us hollow." urged Root.

"There's my dashed ankle," growled the Buccaneer, "It's a week since I gave it that twist, and it's all right now—but—it's not quite O.K. It may give trouble under seven miles."

"Better not enter, if your leg ain't sound—."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Barnes-Paget, "I'd enter, and show that man that I'm something better than a scug telling lies to his beak, if my leg were in splints. If the leg holds out, all right—if not, he will have to own up that I'm game—and one of you two will pull it off instead. We're goin' to beat that crew he seems so fond of."

Carboy and Root exchanged glances. They did not, like the Buccaneer, care a boiled bean what Randolph Lamb thought of them. They would rather have liked to put No. 3 Study's nose out of joint, if that had been possible without undue exertion. But they were not going to exert themselves, for that end or any other.

"Oh, all right," sighed Carboy, "Have it your own way, Barney! Now let's put on a fag—where's the box?"

"You're not putting on any fags till after the walk," snapped Barnes-Paget, "Do you think you can walk on cigarettes, you fathead?"

Carboy breathed hard. He liked a smoke, or fancied he did: anyhow it was against the rules, and so had a charm. If Barney was going to put his foot down on smokes till after that rotten walking-match—!

"We're training," said Barnes-Paget, "No smokes, not too much pastry, and plenty of exercise."

"Life won't be worth living!" groaned Root.

"You'll feel better for it," said Barnes-Paget, "Not such a frowsy, scowsy smug, after a bit. We're walking to Rodwood this afternoon for practice."

"It's a mile."

"And back by Parsley—."

"Why, that will be three miles."

"We'll do four to-morrow," said Barnes-Paget.

Carboy and Root were driven to the edge of rebellion. But the Buccaneer had his way—as he generally did. Three fellows sallied

forth—two of them looking, as Root had put it, as if life was no longer worth living.

Three miles did not worry the Buccaneer: and he was delighted to find that his somewhat uncertain ankle gave no trouble in that distance. But three miles landed Carboy and Root back at the school in a gasping state.

And even the comfort of a smoke was denied them. Barnes-Paget had locked up his own smokes: and solemnly warned them that if he spotted them putting on a fag, he would weigh in with a fives bat. Barney, they knew, would be as good as his word. It was frightfully tyrannical: but there it was: and Barney's pals could only groan and submit.

Barney and Co. were not the only fellows putting in walking practice. All the Sparshott Fourth had risen to the idea. Mr. Lamb gave it his benevolent approval. He even thought of a prize for the winner of the walking-race, and of providing a handsome brand-new Lation Dictionary for the purpose! At which his dutiful nephew chuckled.

It was settled, in No. 3 Study, that that study was coming out on top. Exactly the same thing was settled in Barney's study and in other studies. Banks, Cook, Lennox, Scaife, Hanson, Jones minor, in fact nearly all the Sparshott Fourth, were going to beat all comers in that seven-mile walk. Captain Lamb was delighted with the keenness he saw on all sides. He was an enthusiast on walking—and he hoped that when he left, he would leave a lot of enthusiasts behind him at Sparshott.

Plum Tumpton was as keen as anybody. He told his chums very seriously that they would have to back him up, and get in second and third if they could! Which Vernon and Rake, grinning, faithfully promised to do—if they could! Rake, indeed, offered to ask Captain Lamb whether it would be within the rules to roll Plum along like a barrel where the route was downhill—an offer that elicited only a scornful snort from Plum.

Plum, it was certain, had more weight to carry than the others. Few believed that he would carry it seven miles—unless he finished on his hands and knees. It was doubtful, too, whether Plum could resist the fascinations of jam puffs and cream tarts—though his friends had promised him that if they saw him with so much as a currant bun, they would scalp him bald-headed, and then boil him in oil.

Captain Lamb was willing to coach, and he was pleased with Plum's keenness, if not with his circumference. He gave the keen plump Plum his special attention. Plum learned that there was more in walking than he had previously supposed. You didn't just shove one foot before another and let it go at that—not, the captain explained, when you really walked. Plum, walking under the captain's eye, found that there was more than that in it.

"Swing your leg from the hip!" said the captain, as Plum walked by his side in the quad, "No—don't try to cover the universe with a single step—"

Plum shortened his stride to about three inches, willing to oblige.

"That better?" he asked.

"No," said the captain, genially, "That's worse! A fairly short step—not too short—and even! Keep it even."

"I see!" said Plum. "I say, I rather think I've got a chance, sir." Plum was too modest to say that he rather thought he had a cert.

"I did a mile in a quarter of an hour yesterday, sir."

"Not really?" asked Captain Lamb.

"Yes, really!" said Plum.

"How old are you?" asked the captain.

"Nearly fifteen."

"Ah! Not nearly five hundred?"

"Eh! No! Of course not!" stuttered Plum, blinking up at him.

"Well, if you were nearly five hundred, a mile in a quarter of an hour would be pretty good going. But at your present time of life, you'd better try to do a mile in ten minutes, or less, if you don't want to be odd man out at the tail of the crowd next Wednesday."

"Oh!" said Plum, rather dashed.

But the next day, Plum did a mile in twelve minutes. The next, he did three miles in a little over the half-hour. The next, he was going to do four in even less time—so he anticipated: but alas for Plum! A remittance arrived from his Uncle Tumpton: the tuck-shop tempted him, and he fell.

Plum started on that four-mile walk with a varied cargo of all kinds of indigestible pastry packed in his extensive inside. He came back by getting a lift on the carrier's cart. And when his chums found him gasping and perspiring in No. 3 Study, and learned what had happened, they played up in the most pally manner for Plum's sake—first bumping him on the floor, then taking away all that remained of his remittance and dropping it into the school poor-box. Which was rather tough on Plum, but no doubt much for his good.

"How many, and what time?" asked Barnes-Paget, as he met Harry Vernon at the school gates: both coming back, in different directions, from a long walk after class.

"Six miles, average ten minutes," answered the captain of the Fourth, cheerily, "What's yours?"

"Oh, ten miles, at a mile a minute!" said Barnes-Paget, airily, as he went in. Vernon stared after him: and then laughed. If Barney did not choose to state what he had done, it looked as if No. 3 Study was doing better.

Barney was scowling as he went into the House. Actually, he also had done six miles—taking Carboy and Root with him. But they had conked out and he had had to leave them on the road: and his own average was eleven minutes. Worst of all, the sixth mile had brought a twinge into that wretched ankle. What a fool he had been to cut detention, and clamber down that rotten cliff! Barney often realised that his stubborn self-will caused him to play the fool: the realisation coming too late to be of any practical use.

But he was going to beat No. 3 Study. He was going to show that man Lamb that he was game! Somehow or other, he was going to do that, though the skies fell.

## DOGGED DOES IT!

"OFF!"

They were off.

Most of Sparshott School had gathered to see the start. It was a fine day—fine and clear, with a nip in the air. Two dozen fellows—nearly all the Fourth Form—had gathered, almost all of them looking fit and fine, all of them looking keen.

Even Carboy and Root mustered up a little keenness at the start—for, as a matter of fact, the Buccaneer's grim insistence on training, and on cutting out smokes, had done them a world of good—there was a new spring in them, and a trace of colour in their usually pasty cheeks. Plum Tumpton was keenness itself—and merely sniffed with disdain when disrespectful voices inquired whether his pals were going to roll him along, or whether he expected to burst like an atom bomb after the first mile. Harry Vernon and Tom Rake were as keen as mustard. Barnes-Paget was not so much keen as fiercely determined.



Of the twenty-four starters, it was fairly certain that a dozen would be left spotted along the road after a while. The route had been mapped out from Sparshott to Rodwood: one mile: Rodwood on to Parsley, two miles: Parsley to Crampton: a mile and a half: Crampton to Woodford, a mile: then round by the little village of Sedge, another mile: home from Sedge to Sparshott School, the last half-mile—roughly a seven-mile circle, by high-road, bye-road, lane and woodland path. Wilmot, Campion, and Quin, of the Sixth, were on the route, on their bicycles—to roll Plum Tumpton home when he burst, according to Carboy. Many Sparshott fellows, after the start, cut off to the various points of the route, to cheer—or chip—the walkers as they passed.

Everybody started with a swing. "Lazy" Lovelace lounged, it was true, but Tom Rake kindly touched him up with a toe, and he jumped into activity. Plum went off, after the first few yards, at about 50 m.p.h.—then remembering that there was a finish as well as a start, he slowed down to a snail's crawl—after which he managed to hit a medium pace, and kept it up.

Barnes-Paget gave Captain Lamb a sidelong look, and the captain glanced at him curiously. Then the Buccaneer swung on with the rest, and Snape of the Fifth, with a sportsman's eye on him, offered a pal in that form three to two on Barney, in half-crowns. Certainly Barney looked very fit and strong and capable: and but for a lingering doubt about his ankle, he would have been willing to back his own chances at two to one, in quids—or even in fivers. But if the ankle gave out—If it did, he would not give in: he would rather hop than stop.

Twenty good men and true walked into Rodwood in ten minutes: four had tailed off. Six would have tailed off, in fact had not the Buccaneer's grim threats lingered in the minds of Carboy and Root. A mile was as much as they wanted, unusually fit as they were that day.

At Parsley; fifteen men were still going strong. Five more were hopelessly out of it.

At Crampton there were twelve. Harry Vernon and Tom Rake had not turned a hair. The Buccaneer, though a little behind, looked as fresh as when he had started. Plum had bellows to mend: but was determined that he hadn't: and puffed and blew on his way rather like a grampus. At Crampton, Carboy and Root disappeared. Four and a half miles on their feet were enough for Carboy and Root—by that time, they did not care if the Buccaneer pitched into them with a fives bat later—that was better than dragging their weary legs another yard—in their present opinion at least. But Lazy Lovelace, surprisingly, was still going on. It was at Woodford that his constitutional laziness overcame him, and he was among the missing.

From Woodford on to Sedge the walkers had thinned out very considerably. Harry Vernon was walking with a steady swing—Tom Rake was level with his chum—Barnes-Paget a yard or two in the rear, Plum spluttering on behind with deadly resolve, but agonizing want of wind—Banks, Cook, and Scaife tailing off, though still game. Many eyes were on them as they went through the village street of Sedge: and there were many smiles for Plum, who was as red as a turkey cock, and ejaculating, as he marched:

"Urrggh! Urrggh! Urrggh!"

After Sedge, poor Plum was not seen. No doubt he was still struggling gamely on: but his circumference was against him, and he was plugging on at the pace of a very old and very tired snail. Banks, Cook, and Scaife passed him, easily: but by the time they passed Plum, the leaders were out of their sight—Vernon, Rake, and Barnes-Paget. And Barnes-Paget's lips were set hard. There was a twinge in the ankle that had been damaged in his reckless climb down the cliffs: and that twinge was growing into a bitter pain.

His glance fixed blackly on Harry Vernon's back. The captain of the Fourth was swinging on cheerily, with an elastic swing that told of plenty of reserve force. Tom Rake was showing signs of wear and tear, by this time. Barney could still hope to beat him at the finish. But the hope of beating the captain of the Fourth was faint—and growing fainter. And then—!

The path from Sedge lay across a corner of Rodwood Heath—and Vernon, had apparently, caught his foot in a trailing root, for he suddenly staggered and almost fell.

"Harry! What—!" exclaimed Rake, stopping.

"Get on, fathead!"

"But—!"

"O.K. Get on, ass!"

Tom Rake got on. But the momentary pause had brought Barnes-Paget level. Harry Vernon re-started: but he was limping a little. He was not really hurt: but his leg had had an unpleasant twist. He was still game: but he knew that he was out of the race: and if No. 3 Study were going to beat that swanking ass, Barnes-Paget, it depended now on Tom.

Barney's eyes were gleaming.

The pain in his over-strained ankle was now almost excruciating. But he did not care. So long as he could keep going, he did not care. It was torture: but it could not stop the Buccaneer of Sparshott.

He swung on, neck and neck with Tom Rake.

Sparshott School was in sight now. There was a crowd outside the gates, and a shout went up, as the first walkers came in sight.

"Here they come!"

"Step it, Barney!"

"Carry on, Rake!"

"Vernon's out!"

"Where's Plum?"

"Burst miles back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Rake was red, and breathing hard. Barnes-Paget, on the other hand, was pale—strangely pale, and breathing harder. His lips were set: his eyes had a dull gleam in them. Every time his left foot touched the ground, a pang went through him that made him feel sick.

But he swung doggedly on. Vernon, limp and all, was not far behind—but the Buccaneer had him beaten—owing to that trifling mischance on the road, it was true—he had the captain of the Fourth beaten, if he could carry on—and he was going to carry on. That man, Lamb, who looked down his nose at him, was going to see that Barnes-Paget was the best man in the Sparshott Fourth—he had Vernon beaten, and he was going to beat Rake—if only that accursed ankle would hold out, and not let him down—and he dreaded that it would.

Neck and neck—at the gates! The crowd of Sparshott fellows parted, to leave a lane through for the walkers. The walk ended at the School-House steps—fifty yards on. Tom Rake put on an extra swing, which he had been saving for the finish, and Barnes-Paget saw his back. His glare at that back was black and bitter.

"Rake wins!"

"Go it, Barney!"

Snape of the Fifth looked anxious. A Fifth-form man had taken his bet on Barney, and Snape looked like losing his three half-crowns. The crowd closed in and followed the weary walkers towards the House.

Captain Lamb stood there, with Mr. Lamb, and some of the Sixth and some of the masters. The captain's eye was curiously on Barnes-Paget. He could see that there was something amiss with him.

Ten yards more—and Rake well ahead. Barnes-Paget summoned all his remaining strength, every atom of energy that remained to him, and drew level. There was a cheer from the Sparshott crowd.

“Good man !”

“Carry on, Barney !”

“Barney wins !”

“Good old Buccaneer !”

Five yards four ! And Barney was ahead ! His face was like chalk, in spite of his exertion : the pain in his ankle was overpowering. It made his head reel—he moved like a fellow in a dream. One more effort !

“Barney wins !”

“Bravo, Buccaneer !”

“Good old Barney !”

But Barnes-Paget did not hear the cheers. Darkness suddenly rushed on him—and he would have fallen to the ground, had not Captain Lamb’s strong arm caught him in time. He did not know that he was lifted and carried into the House. He did not know that he had beaten No. 3 Study, and all the Sparshott Fourth, in the seven-mile walk. For the first time in his life, the hardy-iron-nerved Buccaneer of Sparshott had fainted.

### A NEW LEAF ?

“YOU young ass !”

Barnes-Paget grinned.

He was in his study. His faint had not lasted long—and when he had come to, the aches and pains in his leg rather made him wish he hadn’t. Now he was in his study, feeling better : his leg resting on a stool, his ankle wrapped in lint : his face a trifle drawn, but otherwise merry and bright. Captain Lamb, standing in the doorway, regarded him a little grimly.

“You shouldn’t have entered for a seven-mile walk, if your ankle was dicky,” he rapped.

“I know !” admitted Barnes-Paget.

“And you should have chucked it, when the ankle gave trouble.”

“I know !”

“You’re a young ass !”

“I know !” admitted the Buccaneer, for the third time.

Captain Lamb’s frowning face broke into a smile.

“Well, why did you do it?” he demanded.

“Just to show you, sir !” said the Buccaneer, coolly, “You seemed to think such a lot of No. 3 Study. You looked down your nose at me. So I was jolly well going to beat them, just to show you, see? I didn’t care a boiled bean if I lost the leg, so long as I beat that study—.”

“And showed me?” said the captain.

“Exactly.”

“Well, you’re a young ass——!”

“We’ve had that !” said Barney.

“And cheeky——!”

“I’ve heard that one, too !”

The captain laughed.

“But you’re game,” he said, “You’re a cheeky young ass, Barnes-Paget, but you’ve got some good stuff in you, and—and——!” He paused.

“I owned up to Lamb about—about that yarn I spun him !” said the Buccaneer, quietly, “You made me feel horried mean, and I went straight to him and owned up.”

“I know you owned up—wasn’t that strategy, to get off easier because it had to come out?”

“No !” roared Barnes-Paget, savagely, “It wasn’t ! Lamb jolly well knew, if you come to that : but he couldn’t have fixed it on me

—I wasn't afraid of that. Lamb's just, see? I banked on that, and I was all right. I went to him and owned up because—because!"

"Because?" asked Captain Lamb.

"Well, because I jolly well chose to!" snapped the Buccaneer. "That's all."

"I think I catch on!" said the captain, slowly, "and perhaps I haven't quite done you justice, in my mind. I've heard a good deal about you, Barnes-Paget, during my stay here—and most of it wasn't to your credit."

"Give a dog a bad name!" sneered the Buccaneer.

"If you've got a bad name, kid, you've asked for it," said the captain, quietly. "But you've got pluck, and you've got grit; and you owned up because you were ashamed of telling lies—and you'll be a fellow that your school will be proud of, if you give yourself a chance. Why not try it on? Chuck up—a good many things I've heard about you—make a fresh start, and next time I hear of you, let me hear that you're a credit to Sparshott. What?"

There was a moment's silence. Then Barnes-Paget said, quietly: "Done!"

THAT famous walk was remembered in the Sparshott Fourth. Long after Captain Lamb had gone. Plum Tumpton told all who wanted to listen, and a good many who didn't, how he would have come in first, if he hadn't happened to come in eleventh. Harry Vernon and Tom Rake gave the Buccaneer sincere 'gratters,' and found him unusually cordial and friendly. Carboy and Root were a little uneasy; but to their relief Barnes-Paget said nothing about a fives bat. Many fellows observed a change in the Buccaneer—and in the following days, the Little Lamb sometimes blinked at him in the form-room, with surprise but approval.

Captain Lamb's good counsel seemed to have fallen on fertile soil. There was undoubtedly a change in the Buccaneer—and Carboy and Root, at least, did not like it. There were no more cigarettes in the study—no more surreptitious excursions out of school bounds—no more stealthy stealing out of the dormitory after lights out; and Carboy and Root were quite disgusted. Harry Vernon and Co., on the other hand, were glad to see that change in the rebel of the Fourth, and hoped that it would last.

They hoped, and rather believed, that it would. Carboy hoped, and rather believed, that it wouldn't! It remained to be seen whether Barney would keep on the new path he had marked out for himself from the day of the walk—and perhaps it was a little uncertain, for there was no doubt that the path of reform was a thorny one to the Buccaneer of Sparshott.

## THE END.