

The **FOURTH FORM** *at* **CARCROFT**



by

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CHAPTER ONE

FIRST DAY OF TERM

HARRY COMPTON sat silent in the corner of the carriage.

Nobody else was silent in that crowded carriage. There was a babel of voices round the new junior who was going to Carcroft.

It was the train from Ridgate Junction to Combe—the local train that had been waiting to carry the Carcroft crowd on to the school, on the first day of term.

The carriage had been empty when Harry Compton stepped into it, and sat down in the corner by the door. That was before the crowd arrived. Now Ridgate Station was swarming with Carcroft fellows, and there was a rush for the train.

Seven or eight fellows pushed in, some of them treading on the feet of the new junior in the corner, but taking no other heed of him. Other fellows came along, looking for seats. Everybody seemed to be talking at once; and hardly anybody waiting for an answer.

"Don't barge, Barrick!"

"Who's barging?"

"That's my seat, Drake!"

"No fear—it's mine, Levett, old bean."

"Look here, Lee—"

"Oh, don't shove!"

"Vane-Carter, you swob—"

"Chuck it!"

"Look here—!"

Harry Compton was silent; he did not know a fellow in the buzzing crowd, all of whom seemed to know one another. Two or more fellows pushed in—every seat was taken, one or two fellows were sitting on other fellows' knees, and several were standing. There never was room for the whole crowd on the first train; and nobody seemed to want to wait for the next.

"Shut that door!" called out the fellow addressed as Barrick—a big, burly fellow, "We're packed like sardines already. Shut that door, will you?"

Barrick was at the other end of the carriage, and Harry Compton did not realise that he was addressed. He made no movement.

"Deaf?" bawled Barrick.

"Or silly?" asked Levett.

Still Compton did not realise that the

remarks were addressed to him. He was, in fact, a little confused by his noisy surroundings. An hour ago, he had been in the quiet of home; now he was in a new world.

"Here, you silly ass in the corner, will you shut that door?" roared Barrick.

Then Harry, with a start, realised that Barrick was addressing him, and he looked round, reddening a little.

"Oh! Yes, certainly!" he stammered.

He reached out to pull the door shut.

Before he could do so, a fat figure rolled in the way. A plump youth, with rather bulging eyes that squinted a little, grabbed the door wide open again.

"Look here, you chaps, I'm coming in!" he squeaked.

"No room, Turkey!"

"Buzz off!"

"Go along the train!"

"Shut that door!"

Harry Compton could not shut the door, with the fat junior standing in the way. He gave it up.

His eyes glimmered, as they rested on that plump youth. Turkey—if his name was the remarkable one of Turkey—was the plumpest fellow he had ever seen. His fat cheeks were like ripe apples. His mouth, which was extensive, had a smear of toffee round it. There were traces of toffee on his collar, and on his fat hands. And he was excited and indignant.

"I'm coming in," he bawled, "There ain't a seat left along the train. Gunter of the Sixth pushed me out of the next carriage—"

"We'll push you out of this, if you barge in!" said Levett.

"No room, Turkey, old man!" said the boy called Drake—a very pleasant-looking fellow, with blue eyes and a shock of fair hair.

"I'm coming in!" hooted Turkey.

He wedged in at the doorway.

"Roll out the barrel!" roared Barrick.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There really isn't room—" said Harry Compton, politely.

Turkey squinted at him.

"Eh! Who are you? You ain't a Carcroft man! You shut up! Lee, you swob, will you give me a hand in?"

Lee laughed.

"I'll give you a foot out!" he suggested.

"I say, V.C. you help me in! You stick by a fellow in your own study."

"Rot!" answered the fellow called Vane-Carter—apparently called "V.C." for short. "Wait for the next train, Turkey Tuck."

"Shan't!" roared Turkey.

It was not easy to wedge into the crammed carriage—especially for a fellow who seemed to have more weight to lift than any other fellow at Carcroft School. But the fat Turkey did his best. He pushed and squeezed and wedged, and shoved and barged, and got half-way in.

"Outside!" roared Barrick, from the other end.

"Yah! I say, Lee, I'll sit on your knees, what?" gasped Turkey.

"Oh, my hat! No fear!" ejaculated Lee. He was a slim, slightly-built fellow, and looked as if he might disappear entirely if the fat Turkey sat on him.

"What about you, Drake?"

"Nothing about me, old fat porpoise!" chuckled Drake, "If you stick in, you'll have to stand."

"Shove him out!" snapped Barrick. "I'll boot you if you barge in, Turkey."

"Oh, let him rip, if he likes to stand!" said Drake, "Don't be such a beastly bully, Barrick."

Turkey heaved his weight in at last. He squinted round at the fellows who were sitting down, apparently in search of a seat. But there was no seat for the fat Turkey. He had to stand. His squint rested on Harry Compton.

"Look here, you ain't a Carcroft man!" he bleated, "Look here, you get out, see!"

"What?" ejaculated Harry, staring at him.

"This is the Carcroft special train!" declared Turkey, "You don't travel on this train! You get out, and I can have that seat."

"But I'm going to Carcroft!" said Harry.

"Oh, haddocks! Are you a new man?"

"A what?"

Harry Compton was a new boy. He had not yet learned that at Carcroft all boys were 'men.'

"Are you a new man?" repeated Turkey.

"I'm a new boy, if that's what you mean."

There was a chuckle in the crowded carriage. Every fellow, including the fat Turkey, was a Carcroft 'man'; Compton was the only 'boy' present!

"Oh, haddocks!" said Turkey, "Ain't he green? Well, look here, you get out, see—there's lots of room in the next carriage, and I want to travel with my pals! The next carriage is nearly empty."

"Oh! All right!" said Harry.

He half-rose.

But the grinning faces round him put him wise—as well as the recollection of Turkey's own remark that there was not a seat left along the train! Turkey Tuck, it seemed, was not understudying Truthful James. All he wanted was to get the new man's seat—and he did not mind if the new man was left behind at Ridgate.

Compton sat down again.

Turkey's fat face, which had brightened with anticipation, fell. He squinted at Compton in great annoyance.

"Look here, you swob, I tell you there's tons of room in the next carriage!" he hooted.

Harry Compton laughed.

"Room for you, in that case!" he answered, "I'm staying here."

"Well, you swob! I say, Bob, chuck him out for me, will you?" bleated Turkey.

"I'll chuck you out, you fat ass!" answered Drake.

"Look here—!" roared Turkey.

"Look out!" exclaimed Harry Compton.

A porter was coming up to slam the door, the train was about to start. Turkey was in the carriage—with his back to the doorway—but he was not wholly in. "Quick—!"

"Eh!" bleated Turkey. Turkey was not quick on the uptake, "Wharrer you mean? I—yarooooooh!"

Slam!

The slamming door banged on Turkey's trousers. With a frantic howl, Turkey pitched forward, headlong, and sprawled among countless feet.

"Yoo-hoop—!" roared Turkey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, haddocks! Oh, crikey! Yaroop!"

There was a roar of laughter in the crowded carriage. Turkey roared too—though not with laughter. The train rolled out of Ridgate Junction, with Turkey sprawling and spluttering among legs and feet that seemed innumerable.

CHAPTER TWO

TAKING THE STRANGER IN!

"This rotten train's always crammed!" grunted Levett.

Levett was standing by the door, jammed between Harry Compton's knees on one side, and Bob Drake's on the other. Drake was half-off his seat, having squeezed up to make a spot of space for the fat Turkey between himself and Lee. Turkey's rotund figure was squeezed in somehow, though every time the train jerked, he almost slid off to the floor.

Harry Compton, from his corner, glanced over the many faces in the crowded carriage. He liked the look of Bob Drake—hefty, healthy, with cheery blue eyes and an unruly mop of hair; and he liked the look of Lee, a slimmer fellow, unusually good-looking, and evidently very good-tempered. These two were clearly friends—and it came into Harry's mind that he would like them both to be his friends at Carcroft.

Other fellows in the carriage did not seem quite so pleasing.

Barrick was a burly fellow with an aggressive look. Vane-Carter had a rather hard face, with a sardonic curl to his lip. Levett, who stood by the door, had keen and shifty eyes, and thin close lips. His shifty eyes turned on Compton every now and then with a disagreeable expression—perhaps because Compton was sitting while he, Levett, was standing. There were other fellows, whose names the new junior had not heard; they looked decent enough, he thought; the only one whose looks he really did not like was Levett.

"Look here, you chaps, make a bit more room!" urged Turkey Tuck, "You're pushing me off, Lee. You're jamming your elbow in my ribs, Drake. I say, can't one of you fellows stand?"

Harry Compton glanced curiously at the fat junior.

Drake and Lee had squeezed up most uncomfortably for themselves to make a spot of room for the fat fellow who had barged in at the last moment. This, it seemed, was the fat Turkey's way of expressing thanks.

"Oh, shut up, Turkey!" said Drake. "If you haven't got room—"

"I jolly well haven't!" hooted Turkey.

"I'll drop you out when we stop at Greengates, if you like."

"Yah!" retorted Turkey.

"Beastly scrum!" growled Levett, "Look here, somebody ought to get out at Greengates—we can't cram like this all the way to Combe. I say, Drum, your pals are in the next carriage—I saw them. Why not join up with them next stop?"

Drum, a fair-haired, freckled youth, grinned.

"Honest Injun!" said Levett, "I saw Scott and Carr in the next carriage!"

"And a dozen other chaps!" said Drum, "I'm staying here, thanks."

"Chuck it, Levett!" chuckled Bob Drake, "You can't pull a Scotch leg."

"Not a whole lot!" grinned Drummond.

Levett grunted. He glanced at the new fellow in the corner seat again, and Harry Compton smiled faintly. Levett, it was clear, did not want to stand; and Harry could read his thoughts quite easily; he was wondering whether he could somehow bag the new fellow's seat. Then, rather to his surprise, Levett addressed him in a quite agreeable tone.

"So you're a new kid?" he asked.

"Yes!" answered Harry.

"What's your name?"

"Compton!"

"Compton!" repeated Levett, "Then you're the chap Roger was asking about at Ridgate. Have you seen Roger?"

"N-no! I don't know him—who is he?"

"Roger's our beak!" explained Levett, "You ought to have seen him at Ridgate—he was inquiring up and down the platform for a new kid named Compton. He's in the third carriage up, with old Billy Groom."

"Oh! I haven't seen him yet," said Harry, "I never knew—"

"You'd better see him, I think," said Levett, "We stop at Greengates, and you'll have plenty of time to step along to his carriage. His carriage is full of beaks—ask for Roger and it will be all right. You ought to have reported to him at Ridgate, you know."

"Oh! Thanks!" said Harry.

"Ask for Roger—don't say Mister Roger; he doesn't like it—just ask for Roger," said Levett, "He won't keep you long—only wants to know you're on the train—you'll have bags of time."

"Thank you very much!"

"Not at all," said Levett, airily, "Always glad to do a new kid a good turn. You don't know the ropes yet, of course. You don't want to begin by putting Roger's back up."

"No fear!" agreed Harry.

"Look here, Levett—!" began Bob Drake.

"Shut up, Drake, and keep your knees to yourself!" said Levett, "and don't take up all the floor with your feet! A fellow with feet your size ought to hang them out of the window."

"Look here—!" repeated Bob.

"Don't you butt in, Drake!" roared Barrick, "You leave Levett alone, see!"

"That's all very well," said Bob, "But—"

"Chuck it, Drake!" said half-a-dozen voices at once.

Bob Drake seemed about to speak again; but he 'chucked' it, as requested. Why the whole carriage full were grinning, Compton did not know. He was glad that Levett had given him that tip; he certainly did not want to begin at Carcroft by putting a beak's back up. If 'Roger' had been inquiring for him at Ridgate, the sooner he reported to Roger that he was on the train, the better.

The train was now slowing into Greengates.

As soon as it stopped, Harry Compton opened the door and stepped out. Levett promptly dropped into the vacated seat.

Compton hurried up the train, to the third carriage up. Levett shut the door as he departed, and there was a chortle in the crowded carriage. Only Harry Compton was unaware of the fact that, now that Levett had bagged the new

fellow's seat, he was going to keep it!

How long the stop was at Greengates, Compton did not know; but Levett had told him that he had plenty of time. However, he did not lose any; in a few moments, he arrived at the carriage three from from the one he had left.

It was, as Levett had said, full of 'beaks.'

Which one was Roger, Compton did not know. The glass was down, and he looked in at the door. Several pairs of eyes were turned on him from within.

"Please is Roger here!" asked Harry.

That question caused the Carcroft masters in the carriage to jump. They all stared blankly at the boy's face at the window.

One of them, a portly gentleman, frowned.

"What did you say?" he rapped. "Who are you?"

"Compton, sir."

"Compton! You are the new boy in my form, then—the Fourth Form!"

"Are you Roger, sir?"

There was a chuckle in the carriage. The other masters seemed amused. Only the Fourth-form master did not seem amused.

"What do you mean, Compton?" he snapped, "Is this intended for impertinence?"

"Oh! No, sir! I was told that Roger has been inquiring for me, and that I had better let him know that I was on the train," explained Harry, "If you are Roger, sir—"

"I am Mr. Ducas," snapped the portly gentleman, "and you should surely have intelligence enough to know that you should not address a member of Dr. Whaddon's staff in such a manner, Compton."

"Oh!" stammered Harry.

"I will excuse you, as you are a new boy, and apparently a very stupid one!" snapped Mr. Ducas, "Go back to your carriage at once, or you will lose the train."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Harry, his face crimson, "I—I thought—I"

"That will do!"

Compton turned away, his face burning. His leg had been pulled by the cheery Levett. He heard a laugh in the masters'

carriage as he went. He hurried back to his own carriage.

The door was shut. It did not open as he pulled at it. Through the open window, he glared at Levett's grinning face. There was a roar of laughter in the carriage.

"Seen Roger?" asked Levett, blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I've seen him, you silly ass—!"

"Did he seem to like you calling him Roger?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go this door!" snapped Harry, "I'm coming in! You're holding the door."

"You're coming in?" asked Levett.

"Yes; let go that door-handle."

"Well, you may be right," said Levett, "but I think not! My idea is that you're staying out, now you've got out."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole carriage-full.

"Look here, Levett, it's rather rotten to pull a new kid's leg like that, to bag his seat!" grunted Bob Drake.

"Dear me!" said Levett.

"Will you let of that door-handle!" roared Compton. The train was about to start again; and he could not get the door open.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chaps, jevver see such a soft ass?" chuckled Turkey Tuck, "Ha, ha! Fancy calling old Ducas 'Roger' to his face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stand back there!" shouted a porter. The train was in motion.

Harry Compton's eyes gleamed at Levett's grinning face within. But he had to stand back, as the train started; and he let go the door and stood back.

The train rolled on to Combe; leaving him standing on the platform, and Levett of the Fourth in comfortable possession of his seat.

CHAPTER THREE
NOT WANTED!

"Keep out of this!"

"What?"

"Keep out!"

Harry Compton stared at the speaker.

He had waited a quarter of an hour, and the second train was in. It was not so crowded as the first train, but it was fairly full; however, the new junior spotted a carriage that was half-empty, and made for it at once. He pulled open the door, and three hostile stares were fastened on him, from within.

There were three fellows in the carriage—seniors of Carcroft. There was also a faint blue haze of cigarette-smoke, though no cigarettes were to be seen when the train stopped. One fellow, in a corner seat by the door, had his feet across, resting on the opposite seat. Compton expected him to move them, when the door was opened; but they remained where they were, barring his way in. And their owner, a rather hard-faced fellow with sharp eyes, gave him a glare, and told him to keep out.

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Compton, angrily, "There's three empty seats here—and I've got to get to Carcroft—"

"That will do—clear off, and shut that door."

"Well, I won't!" snapped Harry.

Compton was not in the best of tempers, after the trick Levett had played on him, and the wait at the station. He was not in the least disposed to keep out of a carriage in which there were three vacant seats, at the behest of a disagreeable fellow who was a stranger to him.

"Oh, let the kid get in, Cutler!" said another fellow.

"You shut up, Aubrey, old man."

"Yes, shut up, Tunstall!" said the third occupant of the carriage, "Keep out of this, young 'un."

"I'm coming in!" said Harry, stubbornly, "I've lost the other train, and I'm not going to lose this! Let me pass."

Cutler did not move his legs. Harry Compton got a foot inside, but the legs

barred his way.

"Look here," snapped Cutler, "You're not wanted here! Keep out."

"I'm coming in, whether I'm wanted or not!" retorted the new junior, "If you don't like my company, you can get out."

Aubrey Tunstall gave a chuckle, at that remark. Cutler scowled. The third fellow—Crewe of the Sixth, if Compton had known it, and a prefect of Carcroft School, waved a dismissing hand at the junior.

"Get out!" he said.

"I won't!"

Tunstall chuckled again.

"It's a new kid, Crewe," he said, "He doesn't know you're a jolly old prefect."

"I'll let him know!" growled Crewe, "Look here, you cheeky little tick, get out of it, or I'll give you six when you get to Carcroft—see?"

What 'six' might be, was unknown to the new junior. But he knew that he was not going to lose that train if he could help it. As Cutler did not remove his legs, he gave them a hefty shove to shift them, and Cutler's feet slipped off the seat. Then Compton pushed in.

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Cutler.

He leaped up, and grasped the intruder.

"Tip him out!" said Crewe.

"I'm going to!"

"You're not!" said Compton, between his teeth.

He struggled in the grasp of the big Fifth-former. A Fourth-form junior was no match for Cutler of the Fifth; but the senior did not find it easy to 'tip' him out. Compton had a temper, and it was fully roused now.

Why these fellows wanted to keep the carriage to themselves, he could not guess. He was blissfully ignorant of the fact that he had butted in on the 'bad hats' of the Upper School at Carcroft; and that Cutler and Co. had been whiling away the tedium of a railway journey with cigarettes and banker. Cigarettes and banker had been suspended while the train stopped at Greengates; to be resumed when the train went on; and Cutler and Co. certainly did not want a junior as witness—especially as one of the three was a Sixth-Form prefect!

But whatever their reason was, they

were not getting away with it, if the new junior could help it. He put all his beef into the tussle with Cutler.

"Look here, Monty, chuck it!" exclaimed Tunstall. Aubrey Tunstall seemed a good-natured fellow, rather unlike his associates, "Let the kid rip."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Aubrey!" said Crewe, "Why don't you tip him out, Cutler!"

Cutler was doing his best to tip out the intrusive junior. But Compton was sturdy and strong, and not easy to handle. Cutler, his face flaming with anger, released one hand, and smacked.

Smack!

"Oh!" gasped Harry, as that hefty smack landed.

He was hitting out the next moment. So far, he had only struggled to keep in the carriage. But as soon as that smack landed on his head, his fist dashed out, crashing on Monty Cutler's nose.

There was a spurt of red, and a roar from Cutler. Probably it had never occurred to the Fifth-form senior that a junior—and especially a new junior—would have the nerve to punch his nose. But it had been punched—hard!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tunstall.

"Chuck him out!" growled Crewe.

Cutler, with a face of fury, grasped the junior again. He exerted all his strength, and it was too much for Harry Compton. He went spinning out of the doorway, and landed on the platform with a heavy bump.

He sat there gasping for breath.

Cutler glared down at him, and pulled the door shut. Then he sat down again, and dabbed his nose with a handkerchief. The handkerchief was soon liberally spotted with red.

Compton staggered to his feet. Along the train, many windows were packed with faces, some of them laughing.

But it was too late to renew his attempt on the carriage—and too late to find another along the train. The whistle was already shrieking.

The train rolled on, leaving Harry Compton stranded for the second time. He stood panting for breath, a good many grinning faces looking back at him from

the train windows.

Harry Compton stood breathing hard. At length, he put his collar and tie straight, dusted his clothes, and went along to the exit, where he found the porter. Having lost two trains, he was beginning to wonder at what time he would arrive at his new school.

"Next train half-an-hour, sir!" the porter answered to his enquiry, "That was the second train for the school, if you're going there."

"Is it far to walk?" asked Harry.

"About a mile, if you go by the lane and the bridge."

Having waited a quarter of an hour on a solitary platform, Compton was not disposed to wait half-an-hour longer. He decided to walk. Greengates Lane, the porter told him, led to the bridge over the Wynd; after which he would see the Ridgate road and Carcroft School.

Not in a happy mood, he left the station.

At home, at Compton Court, he had wondered a good deal what his new school would be like; but he was not getting a favourable impression on his first day. Only two fellows, so far, had made a good impression on him—Bob Drake and Lee, in the carriage from which Levett had excluded him. But it was a fine, sunny day, with a glow of sunshine on fields and woods, and on the blue Channel rolling in the distance beyond the Sussex cliffs; and his spirits revived, as he pushed on.

A mile from Greengates, he arrived at a little stone bridge, across a stream which the porter had told him was called the Wynd. Further on, in the distance, a grey tower rose over green tree-tops, which he could guess indicated Carcroft School. He sat down on the low stone parapet of the bridge, to rest before he resumed his walk.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOUCH AND GO!

"Carcroft cad!"

"Barge him!"

Harry Compton started, and glanced round quickly. The shouting voices came

from the river bank. Looking up the river, he saw three figures on the tow-path.

From the direction of Ridgate, a very elegant figure came sauntering. It was junior, about Compton's own age, extremely well-dressed, and wearing a topper.

Nearer at hand, two others emerged from under the trees by the towpath. They wore green and black caps, from which Compton knew that they did not belong to his school—the Carcroft colours were blue and white.

"Oh, gad!" He heard the voice of the elegant junior, "Topcliffe rotters! Don't rag on the first day of term, Corton. Keep off, Stacey, you cad."

"Barge him!" grinned Corton.

"Look here—oh, gad!"

The youth in the topper staggered under a barge from the two Topcliffe fellows. The shining silk hat fell from his head, and dropped in the rushes by the edge of the tow-path.

There was a shout of laughter from Corton and Stacey. Leaving the Carcroft junior sitting in the grass, they rushed after the hat. Its owner leaped up and rushed after them.

From the bridge, Harry Compton looked down on the scene.

He had never seen the Carcroft junior before, but he would willingly have lent him a hand, had it been possible. But he was up on the bridge, and they were down on the tow-path, and he could do nothing.

Corton grabbed the top-hat from the rushes, and kicked it into the air. It dropped into the water, a couple of feet out from the bank.

"Oh, you rotter!" panted the hatless junior.

"Ha, ha! Go after it, Talboys!" chuckled Corton.

"Swim for it," grinned Stacey.

The topper floated, eddying on the current. The bareheaded junior reached out from the bank, the two Topcliffe fellows watching him with grinning faces. Talboys held on to a willow branch, and leaning out over the water, just touched the hat with his finger-tips.

Another moment, and he would have recovered it. But at that moment, the willow branch cracked under the strain,

and with startling suddenness, he pitched headlong into the water.

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the two Topcliffians. This seemed to Corton and Stacey the cream of the joke.

But their merriment lasted only a moment. Then Harry Compton, from the bridge, saw both their faces become startled and white.

There was a strong current on the Wynd, where it flowed down to the bridge. The schoolboy who had fallen in, made one wild clutch at the bank, and then was torn away. Almost in the twinkling of an eye, he was whirling down the stream to the bridge, struggling wildly in the rapid current.

"Oh!" gasped Harry staring down at a white face in the water, and a hand thrown helplessly up, as Talboys shot under the bridge.

The two Topcliffe fellows stood as if turned to stone, their faces like chalk. They seemed petrified by the sudden catastrophe, and could do nothing but stare in horror.

For a petrified moment, Harry Compton stood, as the face below vanished under the bridge. Either Talboys could not swim, or he was a poor swimmer; he was whirling away to his death.

Only for a moment Compton stood; then he ran across the bridge, and jumped on the parapet on the other side.

There was not a second to waste. He threw off his jacket, and put his hands together and dived.

It was a good dive from the bridge, and he went deep under. But he came up like a cork, swimming strongly, just as Talboys came sweeping through under the bridge. One swift stroke, and Compton reached him and grasped.

Twice Talboys had been under; but he did not go under again. A strong hand kept his head up, and the current whirled them on together down the stream.

"Hold on to me!" breathed Harry.

Talboys blinked at him with half-closed eyes.

He seemed unable to speak; but he held on while Compton swam.

Harry Compton was a good swimmer;

he was at home in the water. But swimming with his clothes on, drenched and dragging him down, was a very different proposition from swimming in a bathing suit; and a fellow who could not help himself was a heavy burden. He struck out strongly for the bank, but the whirling current drove him out again, and at almost dizzy speed he was swept down the middle of the Wynd.

Below the bridge, the stream was wider. The banks seemed terribly far off. Then Harry Compton knew that he was in danger. Twice, thrice, he struggled towards the shore, and each time the current tore him out again, and his wet clothes were dragging him down.

Talboys seemed to be barely conscious. He held on, as Harry had told him to do, but he could do no more. The new junior had to save both, if they were to be saved.

Again he strove to reach the bank. Again the current whirled him back to midstream.

He set his teeth and struggled on. He knew that he could have reached the bank alone. But he could not abandon the schoolboy who, almost unconscious, hung to him, a heavy and helpless burden.

There was a surge of water over his head. He choked for breath; but he struggled up again, and his face came out into the sunlight. With all his strength, he fought for his life, and the life of the boy who still clung instinctively to him.

It seemed to Harry Compton that a giant's hand was dragging him down—down to his death in the dim water. There was a roar in his ears; and once more he ducked under, and choked; but he came up again, still fighting for his life. Then, suddenly, a shout rang in his dizzy ears.



Twice Talboys had been under . . . but a strong hand kept his head up and the current whirled them on down the stream.

A boat loomed over him—a hand grasped him, and dragged him up. In that strong grasp he was dragged from the water, still with his burden; and both were dragged into the boat. He sank down barely conscious, drenched and dripping—he tried to speak, but he could only pant and pant for breath.

"All right now, sir!" He saw the boatman as in a mist, "I got you! I'll have you in my cottage in a jiffy."

Compton tried to speak again; but he could not. He sat dizzily, streaming water, Talboys' unconscious head on his knees, while the boatman pulled to the bank.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SPOT OF TROUBLE!

"You got me out?"

Compton smiled faintly.

"Yes," he said, "At least, I came in for you."

"I never saw you—where were you?"

"On the bridge—I saw you tumble in, and—"

"You dived from the bridge?"

"Yes."

"Good gad!"

"We should both have been done for, I think, if the boat hadn't turned up," said Harry, "Thank goodness it did."

"Yes, by Jove!"

It was half-an-hour later. Clothes were drying before the fire, in the riverside cottage of old David Jay, the boat-keeper of Combe. The two schoolboys sat wrapped in blankets while they waited.

Harry Compton was recovering; though he was still feeling a heavy fatigue from his exertions in the river. But Talboys, it was plain, was harder hit. He was a slim graceful fellow, lacking Compton's sturdy strength; by no means a weakling, but evidently utterly spent by what he had gone through. His face was pale, and his voice was faint, when he broke a long silence.

"Jolly good of you to go in for me!" he said.

Harry smiled again.

"I couldn't watch you and leave you to it," he said.

"I fancy those Topcliffe cads did! By

gad, I'm feeling rotten. Fancy this, on the first day of term! It was such a ripping day, I thought I'd walk to the school, by the river, instead of taking a taxi from Ridgate. Wish I'd taken the taxi now, by gum! Dished and done for! Old Jay will have to get me carted to the school somehow!"

The boatman looked in at the door.

"I've sent word to Combe, your lordship," he said, "Giles will be bringing his trap round a bit later, to take you to Carcroft."

"Thank you, Jay!" said Talboys, "I'll wait for the trap—dashed if I think I could walk a yard! I'm feeling just washed out."

Harry Compton moved across to the fire, and looked at his clothes. They were almost dry, and he began to dress.

"You pushing on?" asked Talboys.

"I think so."

"Then you don't feel such a wash-out as I do!" sighed Talboys.

"I left my hat and jacket on the bridge," said Harry, "I think I'd better get on. I'm all right now."

"Lucky bargee," said Talboys, "I'm sitting it out till the trap comes round. I say, it was frightfully decent of you to jump in for me—a stranger to you. You're a better swimmer than I am, old thing! I'm not bad at ducker, really, but—well, I was going down when you lugged me up. Thanks again."

"Right as rain!" said Harry. "Jolly glad I was on the spot."

"Not so glad as I am!" grinned Talboys.

Harry Compton laughed, and with a friendly nod to the schoolboy huddled in blankets, he left the boat-keeper's cottage. It had not taken him long to dress; and he was anxious to get on to the school—and he was hatless, and in his shirt-sleeves, until he got back to the bridge.

He started up the river at a swinging pace—which, however, soon slowed down.

The struggle in the water had told on him more than he had realised; and there was a heavy weariness in his strong limbs.

And it was a longer walk than he had expected. He found that he had been swept a good half-mile downstream, before he came opposite the boat-keeper's cottage,

and Old Jay had fortunately spotted him and come to the rescue. That half-mile seemed to him the longest he had ever covered, by the time he reached the bridge.

But he arrived at last, and clambered up the bank. Voices from above fell on his ears, as he did so, and he realised that the two Topcliffe fellows were there: he had forgotten them till now.

"Look here, Corton, we can't leave it at this—" It was a shaky voice.

"Don't be a fool, Stacey." Corton's voice came cool and incisive, "I tell you that Carcroft lout is all right! We don't want to get mixed up in a fearful row."

"He couldn't swim for toffee—you could see that—"

"Somebody went in for him—I saw somebody dive from the bridge—"

"Well, I didn't."

"He left this jacket! Do you think it walked here?"

"That's all very well; but we don't know—"

"Don't be a goat, Stacey! The less we know about it, the better—but I'm certain it's all right! I'm not asking for a row, if you are."

"You're a rotter, Gus Corton."

"And you're a weak-kneed fool, Reggie Stacey."

"Look here—"

"Oh, rats! I tell you—!" Corton broke off, sharply, as Harry Compton, having clambered up the steep bank, came out on the bridge.

The two Topcliffe fellows stared at him. Compton gave them a glance of cool contempt. Neither of them knew what had become of the Carcroft junior who had fallen in; and they had come no further than the bridge to investigate. Stacey, it was clear, was in a nervous flutter; but Corton was cool, and evidently chiefly concerned about the possible consequences to himself.

Both of them, however, looked eagerly at Harry. From the fact that he was in his shirt-sleeves, they knew that he was the owner of the jacket left on the bridge. Even Corton, hard and selfish as he was, was anxious for news of the schoolboy who had been swept away in the river.

"Are you the chap who went in from this bridge?" exclaimed Corton.

"Yes!" answered Harry, briefly.

"Did you get him out?" exclaimed Stacey.

"A boatman got us both out."

"Then Talboys is all right?" asked Stacey.

"Quite."

"Oh, good!"

"I told you he was all right, you ass!" snapped Corton; but he was clearly as relieved as his companion.

"You never knew, any more than I did," snapped back Stacey, "and we ought to have gone down the river—"

"Oh, pack it up."

"Clumsy ass to tumble in as he did!" went on Corton. He gave Harry Compton a very unpleasant look. He was not blind to the contempt in Compton's face. Gus Corton was not, perhaps, wholly satisfied with his own proceedings; but he had no use for scorn from others. "You another Carcroft cad?" he asked.

"I'm going to Carcroft," answered Harry, "and you'd better keep your fancy names to yourself, if you don't want them knocked back down your neck, you rotter."

"You're askin' me to mop up this bridge with you!" said Corton.

Compton laughed contemptuously.

"Get on with it, as soon as you like!" he said, "If you had a spot of decency you'd have tried to help that chap in the water—or at least tried to find out what had happened to him. You were only thinking of your own cowardly skin."

Corton's eyes blazed.

"By gum! That does it!" he said, "I'll—"

"Oh, stop it," exclaimed Stacey, "Let's get back to Topcliffe—"

"Not before I've punched that Carcroft cad's cheeky head." And Corton made a rush at Compton, hitting out.

In a moment, they were fighting.

Harry Compton had to give ground. He realised in a moment that he was in no condition for a scrap, weighed down with fatigue from that struggle for life in the river. But it was too late to think of that now; and he did his best. Twice the

Topcliffe fellow's fists crashed in his face, drawing a spurt of red from his nose, and he was driven across the bridge to the parapet on the other side.

There he rallied, and came on, with gleaming eyes, and lashing fists. Corton gave ground in his turn; and a sudden jolt to the chin sent him spinning over on his back.

Compton stood panting.

"Oh!" gasped the Topcliffe fellow. He sat up, with his hand to his chin. But he did not rise. That hefty jolt seemed to have satisfied him.

Harry Compton waited—glad of the rest before the scrap re-started. But when Gus Corton picked himself up at last, the scrap did not re-start. He backed away, with a bitter look at the Carcroft junior.

"Is that all you want?" asked Harry with a curl of the lip.

Corton made no reply. He made a sign to Stacey, and walked off the bridge, followed by his companion.

Compton shrugged his shoulders. He was glad that the scrap was over, so far as that went; he was not hunting for trouble; neither was he anxious to present himself, on his first day at the school, with the marks of combat on his face. But there were already marks of combat—his nose was streaming red; and there was a bruise on his cheek.

He looked round for his jacket, and uttered an angry exclamation.

That jacket lying on the bridge, had been trampled on by both the combatants, and was in a shocking state. Harry Compton picked it up, extracted the handkerchief from the pocket, and dabbed his nose. When the red, at length, ceased to stream, he shook the dust out of the jacket, as well as he could, and put it on. Corton and Stacey had long disappeared, when Compton, at last, turned to leave the bridge, and walk on to Carcroft School.

The great bronze gates of Carcroft School stood wide open; several fellows were standing there, looking out; among them he recognised Levett. They all stared at him, and grinned. His clothes, soaked and dried before a fire, had a crumpled look—his jacket had been

trampled on, and was dirty and untidy; his nose was red and a little swollen; altogether, he realised that he was in anything but a state to do credit to his new school. His face burned as he walked in, under the stare of many amused eyes.

CHAPTER SIX

ROGER IS NOT PLEASED!

Mr. Roger Ducas, master of the Fourth Form at Carcroft, started a little, and frowned portentously.

He was standing in the doorway of the House, in conversation with Mr. Groom, master of the Fifth, when his eyes fell on a dragged figure coming across the quadrangle.

Ducas frowned—Groom smiled.

Mr. Ducas was a portly gentleman. He was considered, in the Fourth, rather a decent beak, though he had a heavy hand with a cane, and a sharp edge to his tongue. Groom was plump and genial. Ducas was shocked, and Groom rather amused, by the sight of the untidy youth who was coming to the House. And as that youth drew nearer, and Mr. Ducas recognized the boy who had called him "Roger" at Greengates, his frown intensified. He realised that that soiled, untidy, dishevelled youth was a boy of his own Form—the new boy Compton. Roger Ducas did not like to see a boy of his form in such a state, and he was deeply annoyed and irritated.

A good many fellows glanced at Harry as he came, and many smiled. Levett, as he came in, had asked him if he had travelled in a dust-cart, to which inquiry he had made no reply—though strongly tempted to punch Levett's head, as the cause of all his troubles that day. Vane-Carter had stopped him in the quad to ask whether he had washed before he left home—walking off laughing before Compton could think of a suitable retort. And as he drew near the House, a fat face grinned at the new arrival, and Turkey Tuck squeaked:

"Look here, you chaps—that's the new kid—I say, he wants a wash."

Then Compton became aware of the two masters in the doorway—one of them frowning, the other smiling. Both the frown and the smile were disconcerting: and his cheeks burned. And the portly, stern-featured master who was frowning was, he knew, his form-master. It was not pleasant to be greeted by a glance of angry disgust from the master of the form he was to enter.

Compton's face set doggedly.

Mr. Ducas raised a hand, as he came up to the door. Compton stopped. The Fourth-Form master surveyed him, with unconcealed distaste.

"You are Compton?" he rapped.

"Yes!" muttered Harry.

Roger's eyes glinted.

"What?" he snapped, "Yes what?"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry breathing hard.

"Why are you in this disgraceful state?"

rapped Mr. Ducas.

"I couldn't help—"

"You were not in this state when I saw you at Greengates—you were at least clean!" snapped Mr. Ducas, "You did not come on by the second train. You are very late. Why did you not come by the second train?"

"I couldn't get a seat—"

"Nonsense! There is always ample accommodation in the second train, if not in the first."

Compton set his lips. That was true enough—there had been plenty of accommodation. He did not feel disposed to tell Mr. Ducas that three seniors had kept him out of a carriage in which there were vacant seats. But if he had been so disposed, Ducas gave him no time. He rapped on:

"You have been fighting?"

"I couldn't help—!"

"Nonsense!"

Compton's lips set harder, and he was silent. It was not much use trying to exculpate himself, if Mr. Ducas was going to call everything he said nonsense. Really he had not had much choice about that scrap on the bridge, as Carton of Topcliffe had started punching.

"Where have you been all this time?" snapped Mr. Ducas, "Even if you lost the second train, you should have been here

before this."

"I walked from Greengates—"

"You should not have done so."

No reply.

"You are in a disgraceful state!" said Mr. Ducas, "You are late—you have been fighting—you are untidy and actually dirty! That is not the state in which a new boy is expected to arrive at Carcroft, Compton."

"It's not my fault—!"

"Nonsense!"

Compton's eyes gleamed. He had a temper, and it was rising fast.

He forgot for the moment that his form-master was wholly unaware of the series of misadventures that had befallen him, since he had been stranded at Greengates. Certainly Roger Ducas would not have rapped at him, had he been aware that hardly more than an hour ago, the new junior had been struggling for his life, and that of another member of Roger's form, in the deep waters of the Wynd. But of that, of course, the Fourth-form master knew nothing.

"Go into the House at once," rapped Mr. Ducas, "Go to my study, and wait for me there. I have no time to attend to you now—you should have been here long ago. Wait in my study till I come."

"Very well, sir!" said Harry, between his set lips.

He passed on into the House, Mr. Ducas frowning after him, glad to get out of sight of amused glances in the quadrangle, which was crowded with Carcroft fellows—and glad enough to get away from Roger Ducas.

But a minute later he came to a stop. Ducas had told him to go to his study: but the new junior had not the remotest idea where that study was. He turned back to ask: but Ducas and Groom had gone out into the quadrangle, and he did not care to follow them there.

As he stood at a loss, two juniors came down the staircase: and both of them smiled as they glanced at him—apparently entertained by the red and swollen state of his nose. They were two fellows he had noticed on the train—Bob Drake, with his shock of fair hair and cheery blue eyes: and Lee. In the train, Compton had

liked the looks of those two fellows, but he was fed up with smiles at his swollen nose, and the glance back he gave them was far from amiable.

"Oh, gum!" said Drake, "Where did you dig up that nose, kid?"

"Find out!" snapped Compton.

Drake stared at him.

"Are you always as civil as that?" he asked. He walked on without waiting for a reply to that question—probably it would not have been a very polite one! But Lee lingered.

"Come on, Dick!" called out Drake, in the doorway. And he went out into the quad. Lee did not immediately follow.

"You've been in the wars, kid," he said, "You'd better bathe that boko, before Roger sees it—"

"He's seen it already!" grunted Compton, "and the old ass has told me to go to his study without telling me where it is. Can you tell me?"

Dick Lee regarded him rather curiously.

"I can tell you where Roger's study is," he replied, "and I can tell you something else—better not call beaks old asses here—it won't make you popular."

"Never mind that—where's the study?"

"This way!"

Compton followed Lee, into a passage on which many study doors opened. Lee opened one of them.

"Here you are!" he said.

The new junior went into the study. Dick Lee turned to depart—but he turned back again.

"Has Roger ragged you?" he asked.

"The old ass jawed me, if that's what you mean! He seems to think that I got into this state for the fun of the thing," said Harry, savagely.

Lee smiled.

"You don't seem to have lost much time getting into a scrap," he remarked, "You can't have been long in the school—"

"I haven't been ten minutes in the school."

"Then you're a quick worker!" said Lee, laughing.

"I haven't been scrapping since I got here," snapped Compton, "I got into a row on the way here—not my fault—"

"It never is a fellow's own fault!" said

Lee, gravely.

"Well, it was not my fault, at any rate: though your precious Roger seems to take it for granted that it was."

"Roger's all right, when you know him," said Lee, "He's not a bad old bean—his bark is much worse than his bite. But if you'll take a tip from me, Roger won't stand cheek from anybody: and you'd better clear that scowl off your face before he comes in—it won't please Roger, I can tell you."

"I don't care a boiled bean whether Roger's pleased or not."

Lee laughed.

"You will, before long!" he said.

With that, Dick Lee pulled the door shut and walked away. The new junior was left alone in the study—to wait for Mr. Ducas to come in: and the dark look on his face, which Dick Lee had described as a scowl, deepening as minute followed minute, and Mr. Ducas did not come.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A ROW IN ROGER'S STUDY!

"Oh, rotten!" muttered Compton.

His first day at Carcroft did not look like being a happy one.

Half-an-hour had passed, and he was still waiting in his form-master's study.

On the first day of term, no doubt the Fourth-form master, like all other masters, had plenty to do, and an infinite number of matters to see to: and no time to waste on a junior who, by his own fault or not, had arrived late. No doubt Mr. Ducas considered that that junior could very well wait till he had time to see him, and no doubt he was right.

But the new junior's feelings as he waited, grew blacker and blacker. He had a pain in his nose, and he was weary to the bone. He would have been glad of a wash and a change: but he did not know his way about the school, and moreover he had been bidden wait in the study. He stood by the window, which was partly open, looking out into the thronged quadrangle, many voices floating to his ears. In a group of juniors, at a little distance, he recog-

nized some who had been on the train with him—Drake, and Lee, and Vane-Carter. He could hear what they were saying, but most of it was Greek to a fellow who knew nothing of Carcroft.

"Anybody seen the old Lizard yet?" Bob Drake asked. Compton wondered who and what the 'old Lizard' might be.

"I saw him at Ridgate," answered Vane-Carter, "He never came on in the train, though. Taxi from the station, I expect."

"He hasn't blown in," said Lee.

"Turkey's been looking for him!" chuckled Drake.

There was a laugh from the group, as if they saw something amusing in Turkey looking for the Lizard!

"He must have walked it, or he'd have been in before this!" said Levett.

"Catch the old Lizard walking—too jolly lazy!" said Bob, "Hallo, Babbers—had good hols.?" Another fellow joined the group, and Compton, at the window, wondered at the name of Babbers—unaware that it was a Carcroft variation of Babbie.

"Oh, ripping," said Babbie, "You here, V.C.?"

"Eh! Why shouldn't I be here?" asked Vane-Carter, staring at him.

"I mean, you're not sacked yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everyone except Vane-Carter laughed.

"Look here, you chaps," Turkey Tuck rolled up, "Where's the Lizard? I say, I've been looking for him everywhere."

"Looked in the old tower?" asked Levett.

"The old tower!" repeated Turkey, "I've looked jolly nearly everywhere else—I never looked in the old tower. What the thump is the Lizard doing in the old tower, blow him."

And the fat junior rolled off, apparently heading for the old tower, to search for the elusive Lizard there.

"He isn't in the old tower, is he?" asked Bob Drake, staring at Levett.

"Not that I know of," answered Levett, "No reason why Turkey shouldn't look for him there, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, have you seen that new kid?" asked Levett, "He came in looking like a

scarecrow, and Roger slanged him at the door. I fancy Roger didn't like him calling him Roger before a carriage-full of beaks at Greengates."

"Rotten trick," said Bob, though he laughed, "You're as full of tricks as a monkey, Levett, and it doesn't make fellows like you, see?"

"He looked a sketch when he came in," grinned Levett, "Nose like a danger-signal, and clobber like a rag-bag. I thought he was a tramp, at first, when he came up to the gate."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Drake, "Look here, I'm going to look for the old Lizard! He must have blown in by this time, even if he walked."

The group broke up.

Harry Compton, whom they had not noticed at the study window, gave the back of Levett's head a dark look, as they went. It was that playful youth who was the cause of all his troubles on his first day at Carcroft.

He turned from the window at last. It was more than half-an-hour since he had entered the study, and he was growing more and more discontented and resentful. He almost made up his mind to leave the study without waiting for Mr. Ducas—but he could not quite resolve on that. He sat down, at last, in the big, deep arm-chair by the fender. Juniors, he supposed, were not expected to sit in form-master's armchairs, when told to wait in a study: but he was tired of standing, and, in his present mood, was not disposed to care whether Ducas liked it or not.

Another ten minutes had passed, when he heard the door-handle turn, and someone enter the study. At the same moment, he heard a voice that he had heard before—though it was not the voice of Mr. Ducas.

"Don't he a goat, Monty! A beak's telephone—" It was the rather drawling voice of Aubrey Tunstall, of the Fifth Form.

"Safe as houses!" answered the cool, sharp voice of Cutler, "Ducas is with the Head—I saw him go—"

"Yes—but—"

"You keep cave in the passage."

"Oh, all right."

The study door closed, and Cutler of the

Fifth stepped quickly across to the telephone that stood on the form-master's desk, in the corner by the window.

Harry Compton did not stir.

Had it been Mr. Ducas, he would have risen to his feet at once: but he saw no reason for taking heed of the entrance of Monty Cutler, the bullying senior who had tipped him out of the carriage at Greengates.

Cutler, evidently, was unaware that anyone was in the study. The high back of the armchair was higher than Compton's head, and he could not be seen from the door: and Cutler did not glance in his direction, as he stepped across to the telephone. As Mr. Ducas was with the Head, and safe off the scene, Montague Cutler naturally supposed that the study was vacant.

He dialled a number rapidly, and spoke into the transmitter in a subdued voice.

"That you, Todgey?"

The reply was inaudible to Compton. But apparently it was not "Todgey" at the other end, for Cutler added quickly:

"Ask Todgey to come to the phone: Mr. Cutler speaking. Sharp's the word—I'm speaking from the school."

Harry Compton stirred in the armchair. He disliked Cutler of the Fifth, as much as he disliked Levett of the Fourth: but he did not want to listen to his talk on the telephone. He kicked his foot against the fender, to apprise Cutler that there was someone in the study.

He was surprised by the startling effect on the senior man. Cutler spun round from the telephone, his face suddenly white, his eyes starting. He fairly gasped as he stared at Compton.

The sudden terror in his face revealed, only too plainly, that that telephone-call he was going to put through, was not one that he would have cared for a master to overhear—and he had, for a moment, fancied that it was a master in the study! Harry Compton did not know—though a good many Carcroft fellows could have told him—that Mike Todgey was a racing man, generally to be found at the Lobster Smack on the sea-road a mile from the school: though even fellows who knew Monty Cutler, the "bad hat" of the Fifth, would have been surprised at his nerve in

ringing up Mr. Todgey on a master's telephone. No doubt the sporting man of the Fifth was eager to get going again, now that he was back at Carcroft.

There was sheer terror in Cutler's hard face, for a second—it changed to surprise, and then to fury.

"You!" he breathed. He recognized Compton at once, "What are you doing here, you spying young rascal?"

"Don't be a fool" retorted Compton, "I let you know I was here—I can't help hearing you, if you talk into the phone."

"Get out of this study."

"Go and eat coke."

A voice came through on the phone—Compton could hear a husky, beery voice, though not the words. But Cutler did not answer. He did not care to talk to Mike Todgey about the three-thirty, in the hearing of a junior! He put the receiver down, and made a step towards Compton.

"Will you get out of this study?" he breathed.

Harry Compton rose to his feet. He looked the Fifth-form man coolly in the face.

"No, I won't!" he answered.

"What are you doing here—you've no right in a master's study."

"More than you have, I think!" answered Harry.

"Will you get out?"

"Not in the least!"

Cutler's eyes glinted at him. He clenched his hands, and came towards the junior. Harry Compton made a quick step to the table, and picked up a large, well-filled inkpot. He had had one tussle with Cutler of the Fifth, on the train, and did not want another—he had no chance in a grapple with the big senior. But he was not going out of that study.

Another moment, and Cutler's grasp would have been on him. But the bully of the Fifth stopped short, as Compton's hand swung up, with the inkpot in it. He stopped just in time to save his face from a flood of ink.

"Put that inkpot down!" hissed Cutler.

Harry Compton laughed.

"Come on—if you want the ink!" he answered, coolly, "You'll get the ink, and the inkpot after it, if you lay your paws

on me, you bully."

"By gad! I'll—!" Cutler seemed hardly able to restrain himself, "Will you get out of this study! I've told you to get out."

"You can tell me till you're black in the face, and it won't make any difference."

That was enough for Cutler of the Fifth. Heedless of the inkpot, he made a stride at the junior. Harry Compton was as good as his word. His arm swept forward, and the contents of the inkpot shot out in a shower, full in the enraged face of the Fifth-form man. In an instant, Cutler's face was black with ink—it drenched him—flooding his face, his ears, his hair, and running down his collar.

He staggered back, with a gurgling gasp.

"Urrrrggh! Oooooogh! Oh!"

Swamped and blinded by drenching ink, Cutler grabbed and clawed at his face, spluttered frantically. He clawed ink away wildly. For two or three minutes, Cutler was busy with ink. Then, with eyes glinting from an inky face, he turned on the junior. At the same moment, the study door opened, and Tunstall's face looked in.

"Cave!" he whispered, "Ducas is coming! Why—what—who—how—!" Aubrey Tunstall's eyes popped in his face, as he stared at Cutler. "Hallo, where did that kid spring from? What the dooce—?"

"I—I'm going to smash him—I—"

"Cave, you ass! Ducas will be here in a minute." Tunstall backed from the door, and disappeared up the passage.

Cutler gave the junior a look—an expressive look. But, enraged as he was, he realised that he could not handle that junior, in Ducas's study with Ducas coming. Monty Cutler hurried out, and disappeared up the passage after his friend.

Compton shrugged his shoulders, and set down the inkpot. A few moments later, Roger Ducas entered the study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TURKEY DOESN'T LIKE IT!

Mr. Ducas gave the new junior a glance—of cold, grim disapproval.

Mr. Ducas was a rather particular

gentleman. He did not like to see boys of his form looking untidy, dusty, actually frowsy; neither did he approve of a new junior getting into a quarrel and a fight on his way to school. And he had been annoyed by the "Roger" incident at Greengates, which had made the other beaks in the carriage smile, but certainly had not made Mr. Ducas smile. And there was a stubborn, almost sullen expression on the new junior's face, that Mr. Ducas did not like at all.

Roger Ducas had a firm hand—a very firm hand—with his form at Carcroft. It seemed to him that this new boy was in need of the firmest of hands. Roger had no use whatever for sullen and stubborn resentment on the part of any member of the Carcroft Fourth.

His manner was dryness itself as he addressed him.

"Compton! You have your medical certificate, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"You may lay it on the table."

Compton extracted it from his pocket and laid it on the table.

Mr. Ducas looked over a form list.

"Your study will be No. 9, in the Fourth-form passage," he said, "There are two other boys in the study—Vane-Carter and Tuck."

That was not specially welcome news to Compton. He had seen both Vane-Carter and Tuck, and had not been favourably impressed by either of them. He had rather hoped that he might be placed with Drake or Lee—the two fellows to whom he had taken an instinctive liking. However, that was a matter for his form-master to decide, and he said nothing.

"There will be a call-over in Hall in twenty minutes," went on Mr. Ducas, "You had better go to your dormitory and make yourself a little more presentable, Compton, before you appear in Hall. And you had better lose no time."

Compton compressed his lips.

He realised very clearly that he needed to make himself a little more presentable. There had been ample time for that, during the hour he had spent kicking his heels in that study waiting for Ducas to come in.

But he answered quietly:

"Very well, sir."

Tap!

Mr. Ducas was about to speak again, but he stopped, and looked round, as a tap came at the half-open door. A fat face appeared there, squinting in.

"What is it, Tuck?" rapped Mr. Ducas.

"If you please, sir, has Talboys come yet?" squeaked Turkey Tuck, "I've been looking for him everywhere. I can't find the Lizard—"

"What?"

"I—I mean Talboys, sir—"

"I have not seen Talboys yet, Tuck. As you are here, you may take this new boy, Compton, to the Fourth-form dormitory—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Turkey, "If you please, sir, I—I was going to look for the Lizard, sir—I mean Talboys—I'm very anxious to see him, sir—being his best pal—"

"Be silent, Tuck! You will take Compton—"

"Oh! Yes, sir! But—!" stammered Turkey. It appeared that the fat Turkey was not willing to be impressed into service in that way. Turkey wished that he had not come to his form-master's study to inquire after the missing Lizard.

"Do you desire me to cane you on the first day of term, Tuck?"

"Oh!" gasped Turkey, "No, sir! N—n—not at all, sir."

"Then be silent! This new boy, Compton, will be in your study—take him to the dormitory, and then to the study."

Turkey gave the new junior an inimical blink. Turkey, it was clear, was very much annoyed. For reasons of his own—probably good reasons—Turkey was anxious to find Lord Talboys, otherwise the Lizard. He was not in the least anxious to bother his fat head about a new kid! But there was no help for it—Roger's word was law in the Carcroft Fourth.

"You will go with Tuck, Compton."

"Yes, sir."

Turkey, squinting resentment, backed out of the doorway. Harry Compton crossed to the door, but he paused there. The name of Talboys reminded him of the fellow he had left at old Jay's cottage down the river: and he wondered whether

he had better mention that circumstance to Mr. Ducas.

The form-master had already dropped into a chair at the table, and was busy with papers. Compton, looking round, saw only the top of a bent head. He gave that bent head a look of dislike. Lee had told him that Roger's bark was worse than his bite: but it seemed to him that Ducas was all bark and bite. He was about to speak, when Mr. Ducas looked up, suddenly and sharply, and fixed an impatient look on him.

"I told you to go with Tuck, Compton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir! But—"

"Leave my study at once."

Compton set his lips, and left the study. From what had been said, he could guess that Talboys was in Ducas's form, and the form-master would naturally want to know what had happened to him. But if Ducas did not want to know, that was that!

He pulled the door shut, and followed Turkey Tuck down the passage.

Turkey squinted at him inimically.

"Nice!" he snorted.

"If you mean Ducas, I don't agree!" answered Harry, drily.

"Eh! I don't mean Ducas—old swob!" grunted Turkey, "Bagging a man on the first day of term—bothering a man with a silly new kid—yah! I've jolly well got to find the Lizard, and I jolly well told him so. That old swob thinks a man's time's of no value."

Harry Compton laughed. He had already learned that boys at Carcroft were "men," but Turkey's indignant remarks struck him as funny.

The fat junior gave him an angry squint.

"Nothing to cackle at," he snapped, "Look here, get a move on—a man can't hang about all day looking after a silly new lout, see? I shan't find the Lizard before roll at this rate."

Compton followed Turkey up the big staircase. It led to an immense landing, from which a number of passages opened—the study landing, as he learned later. Another staircase led up from it: and Turkey, with a fat discontented frown, rolled across to the upper staircase, with

Compton at his heels.

There were a score of fellows, or more, on the study landing, and most of them glanced at Compton, and some of them grinned.

"That new man hasn't washed yet!" He heard Levett's voice.

"Oh, shut up, Levett!" said Bob Drake.

Compton, with burning cheeks, followed the fat Turkey up the upper staircase. They reached the dormitory landing, and Turkey threw open a door. Compton looked into a long, lofty room, with a row of white beds, with wash-stands between them. At the foot of each bed was a box.

"Look here, that's the dorm.," said Turkey, "I've got to go now—"

"Go as soon as you like, and bother you!" answered Harry.

"Yah!"

Turkey departed—promptly: to resume his search, doubtless, for the elusive Lizard. Perhaps he had forgotten that he had been told to take the new junior to his study, after the dorm.: perhaps he preferred to forget it. Anyhow, he disappeared down the dormitory staircase, and Harry Compton was left to his own devices.

Not displeased to be rid of that unwilling guide, the new junior entered the dormitory. He found his own box at the foot of a bed, which he could guess indicated that the bed was his. He was glad enough to get a wash, to bathe his damaged nose, and to change his dusty and rumpled clothes.

Mr. Ducas had told him to lose no time: and he did not lose any. But twenty minutes were fully occupied: and a bell was ringing in the distance when he left the dormitory. From what Ducas had said, he could guess that it was the bell for calling-over in hall, and he had no time left to find his study. He hurried down the stairs. Below, he could hear a scampering of feet: but the study landing was now deserted.

He hurried down the lower staircase. He sighted a sea of heads below: and following the crowd, arrived in Hall, where he answered to his name at his first roll-call at Carcroft.

CHAPTER NINE

THE OBLIGING LEVETT!

"Look here, you chaps, what's become of the Lizard?"

Turkey Tuck asked that question, after roll.

Many fellows had left hall, after calling-over: others remained: and Harry Compton was among the latter. In all the swarming crowd of fellows of all forms, he did not know a soul: some of the fellows he knew by sight, from having met them on the way to school: but nobody was interested in him. He stood near a group of Fourth-form "men"—Vane-Carter, Levett, Barrick major, Babcie, and others whose names he had not heard. Drake and Lee had gone out, and he had heard the former mention the 'Burrow'—but what the Burrow was, and where it was, he did not know.

At the upper end of hall, he glanced at a group of Sixth-Form seniors—among them Crewe, the prefect who had been with Cutler and Tunstall on the train. They were listening to a Sixth-Form man who was evidently regarded with great respect—a splendidly-athletic looking fellow, with a healthy good-natured face—plainly a very important man among the other "men." Compton tapped the sleeve of a junior passing him, to ask who the great man was.

Sutton of the Shell stared round at him.

"Who's that chap?" asked Harry.

"Eh! That's Langley," answered Sutton. And he passed on before the new junior could ask any more questions.

Langley, it seemed, was a great man at Carcroft. Compton was to learn later that he was head-prefect and captain of the school.

Two Fifth-form men lounged past him, and Compton caught a deadly glare from Monty Cutler, and a grin from Aubrey Tunstall. Cutler paused, as if with the intention of dealing with the new junior who had inked him in Ducas's study—but Tunstall caught his arm and walked him on.

Compton quite understood that he had trouble to expect from Cutler of the Fifth, at a more convenient time and place.

That did not trouble him very much, however. He was feeling a little lost, and a little downcast: but he certainly was not afraid of Monty Cutler.

He was thinking, in fact, of home: and the thought of it made his heart rather heavy. The change from home to school, on his first day, was drastic enough: added to which, he had made, as he knew, a bad beginning—and it was not his own fault. On the other hand, he had realised by this time that his own temper had done him no good—both Drake and Lee had spoken to him, cheerily enough, after his arrival, and he had snapped in return—and if they remembered his existence, they did not seem to want any more snaps.

He gave attention to the group of Fourth-formers, as he heard Turkey Tuck's fat squeak. He did not want to remain in hall, alone in a crowd: and he had not yet seen his study. Both the fellows Mr. Ducas had named were at hand—and one of them could tell him where his study was. So he moved towards the group.

"I say, the old Lizard never answered at roll," went on Turkey, "He wasn't here, you fellows! Somebody saw him at Ridgate, I know—"

"Bet you he walked it," grinned Levett, "I expect he fell down dead half-way to the school, if he did."

There was a laugh among the juniors. Compton, aware now that the "Lizard" was another name for Talboys, knew to whom they were referring.

"If the old Lizard walked, he will come tottering in about midnight," remarked Vane-Carter.

"Well, fancy a chap being idiot enough to walk, when he could take a taxi!" bleated Turkey, "Must be a silly ass! He will get into a row with Roger, if he ain't here in time for next roll. I've looked for him everywhere—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, snigger!" grunted Turkey, "I'm jolly anxious to see an old pal like the Lizard—"

"Perhaps that's why he hasn't turned up yet!" grinned Barrick major.

"Yah! I say, V.C., did you bring anything back—?"

"Lots!" answered Vane-Carter.

"I'll unpack it for you, if you like, old chap."

"And pack it too, what?" asked Levett.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I've brought a ton of stuff back," said Turkey, "Only I've lost the key of my box—"

"And he can't find the Lizard!" said Levett, "and so the poor dog had none!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Compton hesitated to butt into the group, who seemed oblivious of his existence. However, he made up his mind to it.

"Tuck—!" he began.

Turkey squinted round at him.

"Eh! What? Don't bother!" he said.

"I want to find my study—"

"Find it, then."

"You were told to take me to it, you know," said Compton, mildly.

"Yah!" was Turkey's elegant rejoinder. He did not seem to be a very obliging youth.

"Will you tell me where to look for it?" asked Harry, looking at Vane-Carter, "It's No. 9 in the Fourth—your study too, I think."

Dudley Vane-Carter stared at him.

"My study! Has Roger had the nerve to stick a new scug in my study?" he exclaimed.

"That's what he told me."

"Well, you go back to Roger, and tell him to think again!" said Vane-Carter, and he walked out of hall with Barrick.

The other fellows moved off, and Compton was left. But Levett turned back, and rejoined him.

"Are you really put into the Sportsman's study?" he asked.

"The Sportsman—?" The name puzzled Compton.

"Vane-Carter's!" said Levett.

"Oh! Yes! No. 9 in the Fourth—Vane-Carter and Tuck are there, Mr. Ducas told me—"

"I'll take you there, if you like."

"Oh! Thanks!"

That obliging offer rather surprised the new junior, but he was glad of it. Levett had not struck him as an obliging fellow at all—in fact, he had taken a dislike to him already. He was rather sorry for it

now: of all the crowd in Hall, Levett was the only one, apparently, ready to do him a small service. He followed the pasty-faced junior out of hall.

He had an impression that the junior studies were up the staircase, but Levett led him to a wide passage on the ground floor. For some reason unknown to the new junior, Levett halted, at the corner, and glanced up the passage before he entered it. Nobody was to be seen: and Levett made Compton a sign to follow him again.

He stopped at a door, and opened it.

"Here you are," he said, "Jolly decent study—one of the best in the Fourth! You're lucky to get this study."

Compton looked into the room. It was quite a large room, with quite nice furniture—a couple of comfortable armchairs, and nice curtains at the window, which looked out on the quadrangle: a good carpet, and a handsome rug. A white cloth was spread on the table, and it was laid for tea.

The new junior had rather wondered what his quarters at Carcroft would be like, but he certainly had not expected anything so good as this. It was, as Levett declared, a decent study—very decent indeed.

"Like it?" asked Levett.

"Yes, rather."

Compton stepped in, and looked round him. He certainly liked that study—any fellow must have liked it.

"Next bell you hear will be for tea," said Levett, "But if you prefer to tea in your own study, it's all ready. They do new chaps like this, you know. After the first day, you have to get your tea yourself, you see."

"I—I see."

"Well, there you are!" said Levett, affably, "Hope you'll find yourself comfortable, Compton."

And Levett shut the door and went, leaving Harry Compton in his new quarters.

CHAPTER TEN

TEA IN THE STUDY!

Harry Compton stepped to the window. He was feeling a good deal cheered.

It was a handsome and well-furnished study: better than anything he had dreamed of getting at Carcroft. And he was hungry—and tea was ready on the table. If they "did" new boys like this at Carcroft, as Levett declared, new boys certainly had little to complain of. There were eggs on the table, and a cake, and a pot of jam. A kettle was simmering in the fender, ready for making tea. That welcome meal was prepared for somebody—if not Compton! It did not, naturally, occur to Compton, after what Levett had said, that it was prepared for somebody else.

Looking from the window, he saw Levett come out of the House, and join some juniors at a little distance. They all burst out laughing as soon as Levett spoke to them—Levett, it seemed, had told them something funny. Babbie came across to the window, and seeing Compton looking out, grinned up at him.

"That your study?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Oh, gum! Had your tea?"

"I'm going to have it now."

"Oh, scissors!" said Babbie. And he walked away chuckling.

Why he chuckled, Compton had no idea. He turned from the window, as the door opened, and a diminutive youth came in. Compton had never seen him before: he did not know Boot, of the Third Form, by sight. The fag stared at him.

"Hallo, who are you?" he asked.

"My name's Compton," answered Harry.

"Is it? Did Langley tell you to come here?"

"Langley? No."

"Then you'd better cut!" said Boot.

Compton stared at him. He certainly had no intention of cutting. Boot went to the fender, picked up the kettle, and made tea. He placed the teapot on a tray on the table and lifted a dish of hot toast from the fender.

"Thanks!" said Compton.

Boot gave a jump, as if galvanized.

"Eh! What did you say?" he ejaculated.

"I said thanks!" answered Harry, staring. He did not see anything surprising in his saying thanks to a fellow who had come in and made his tea.

The fag blinked at him.

"You sticking in here?" he asked.

"Yes, of course."

"Does Langley know?"

"Not that I know of."

"Oh, crikey!" said Boot. And he stared at Compton, and then left the study.

Harry Compton sat down at the table. He was quite hungry, and eggs and toast and hot tea were very welcome: to be followed by cake and jam. He poured out a cup of tea, and started on eggs and toast.

He had finished the first egg, and started on the second, when the door opened,

and a big fellow came in. It was the athletic Sixth-former he had seen in Hall, and whose name, he had been told, was Langley.

Langley strolled into the study as if it belonged to him. Compton stared at him. He had no doubt, from what he had seen, that this chap Langley was a great man at Carcroft: still, he had no right to walk into a fellow's study in that manner, without even a tap at the door.

As for Langley, he gave a jump, nearly off the floor, at the sight of the junior sitting at the table having his tea. He fairly bounded.

"What the dooce—!" he gasped.

He stared across the study at Harry Compton, with utter amazement in his face. Never had the junior seen anyone look so utterly astonished.

"What does this mean?" he gasped.



"What the dooce—!" he gasped. He stared across the study at Harry Compton with utter amazement in his face.

"What does what mean?" answered Harry.

"Have you asked yourself to tea here, or what?"

"I'm having my tea, certainly! Why shouldn't I?"

"Why shouldn't you?" repeated Langley, blankly. "You're a new kid, I suppose—I haven't seen you before. Have you come here from a lunatic asylum?"

Compton reddened. He liked Langley of the Sixth, on his looks: but he did not like that question. Neither did he see any reason for it.

"Mad, I suppose," said Langley, staring at him.

"If that's all you've got to say, you may as well get out!" snapped Compton, "and if you come here again, knock at the door before you barge in."

"Wha—a—t?"

"Deaf?" asked Harry.

"Mad!" said Langley, "Mad as a hatter!"

"Look here, that's enough—get out."

"I fancy," said Langley, "that it's you that's going to get out, young shaver, and I fancy that I'm going to give you six before you go."

He came further into the study, and picked up an ashplant. Another face looked in at the door. It was that of one of the Sixth-Form men Compton had seen in hall.

"What's up, Langley?" asked the newcomer, "Tea ready—oh, my hat! Who's that? Having fags to tea?"

"I don't know who it is, but I'm going to whop him, Gaters," answered Langley, "I've seen cheeky ticks before: but I've never seen one cheeky enough to walk into a prefect's study and scoff his tea."

Gates of the Sixth stared at Compton.

"What the dooce—!" he said.

"Boot's just come to tell me that my tea's ready, and I come here, and find this young ruffian scoffing it!" said Langley, "Did you ever see anything like it, Gaters?"

"My only hat!" said Gates.

Harry Compton rose to his feet. Langley was swishing the ash, evidently with the intention of using it. But it was not the ash, it was what he had said, that caused the new junior to jump up in alarm. He

had a glimmering of the fact that he was in the wrong box.

"Now," said Langley, swishing the ash, "Tell me what you mean by this, you cheeky little scoundrel! Even a new kid has sense enough not to walk into a Sixth-form study and scoff the tea of the captain of the school."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "D—d—d—do you mean that—that—that this is your study?"

"Didn't you know it was?" roared Langley.

"Nunno!"

"Well, you knew it wasn't your own—"

"I—I didn't! Of course I thought it was my study!" stammered Compton. "Isn't it my study?"

"Mad!" said Gates.

"Look here, I was told that it was my study!" exclaimed Compton, angrily, "Isn't this No. 9 Study in the Fourth?"

"Number Nine in the Fourth!" stuttered Langley, "Oh, ye gods and little fishes! The Fourth form studies are up the staircase, you little idiot—this is my study—a Sixth-Form study—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gates, "He thought it was his study! Ha, ha, ha! Did somebody tell you it was your study?"

"Yes, he did!" exclaimed Compton, angrily, "I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all very well!" exclaimed Langley, "Mean to say you're idiot enough to have your leg pulled to that extent, you young ass?"

"I—I was told—!"

"Well, if you thought it was your study, you didn't think it was your tea—or did you think that new juniors have fags to wait on them?" roared Langley.

"I—I was told—I—I was told that it was my tea—being the first day—" stammered Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Gates.

"Well, you priceless little ass!" exclaimed Langley. But he lowered the ash, and burst into a laugh, "If somebody's been pulling your silly leg, I'll let you off—but get out of the study, and get out quick."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. He had demolished one egg, and made a deep

inroad into the toast. His face was crimson, "I—I say, I'm sorry—I thought—I was told—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gates.

"Oh, get out, you young ass!" said Langley, laughing, "I'm not going to whop you—get out! Come in, Gaters—there's enough left for us! Get out, you young ass!"

Harry Compton was glad enough to get out. The door shut after him: but after it was shut, he could hear the two Sixth-Form men roaring with laughter. He went down the passage with a burning face: less anxious now to find his own study, than to find Levett of the Fourth, and punch that obliging youth's head—and punch it hard!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TROUBLE IN No. 9 STUDY!

Dudley Vane-Carter, the Sportsman of Carcroft, sat at ease in the armchair in his study, with one leg crossed over the other, a cigarette in his mouth, blowing out little rings of smoke.

Levett sat on a corner of the table, also smoking a cigarette.

Smokes in the study were one of Vane-Carter's little ways. Levett was always glad to join him.

Turkey Tuck was in the study. Turkey was standing at the cupboard, helping himself to cake.

The cake belonged to Vane-Carter, and Turkey hoped that he would not look round while it was being scoffed: or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he would take no notice if he did. Vane-Carter, who was the son of a millionaire film-producer, always had more than he wanted—Turkey, on the other hand, always wanted more than he had.

Vane-Carter and Levett, heedless of Turkey, were smoking—and grinning. Levett had just told the Sportsman of his jape on the new junior, and it struck V.C. as funny.

"Fell for it like a baby!" grinned Levett, "I left him in Langley's study—"

"Oh, gad!" chuckled Vane-Carter, "The

captain of the school—!"

"Langley's copped him there, before this—scoffing his tea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vane-Carter.

"Jevver hear of such a silly ass—?"

"Never! Fancy Langley's face when he goes in for his tea—"

"And Compton's—when Langley gets going with the ash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, new kids are green, but I never heard of one quite so green as that before!" said Vane-Carter! "And that's the silly owl that Roger's parked in this study, from what he said in hall."

Vane-Carter gave an angry grunt.

He did not want a new 'man' landed in his study. Two to a study was enough, or more than enough, and he did not want three. Many of the other Fourth-form studies had three, and no doubt Mr. Ducas saw no reason why No. 9 should not have three, but the Sportsman did not like it.

Levett helped himself to another smoke, from the box on the table. As he did so, the door opened, and the new junior came in.

Harry Compton had found his study at last.

The expression on his face was not pleasant, as he entered. His adventure in Langley's study was no end of a jape, from Levett's point of view: but the view of the victim was quite different.

He had left Langley's study, resolved to punch Levett's head as soon as he saw that playful youth. Now he saw him.

His eyes flashed at the junior sitting on the table, and Levett grinned at him, over his cigarette.

"Had a good time?" he asked.

"Ha, ha!" came from Turkey, "I say, did Langley whop you, Compton?"

Compton took no notice of the fat junior at the cupboard. His eyes were fixed on Levett.

"I suppose you think it's funny!" he said.

"Just a few," agreed Levett, "Don't you?"

"I don't see anything funny in telling lies."

"Dear me!" said Levett. He lighted his

cigarette.

"I've a jolly good mind—!"

"Don't kick up a row in my study!" snapped Vane-Carter, from the armchair. "Look here, what has Ducas shoved you in here for? I don't want you here."

Compton looked round at him.

"You don't like it?" he asked.

"No, I don't."

"Then you can lump it."

"What?"

"Lump it! Do you think I want to come into a study reeking with tobacco like a tap-room?" snapped Compton, scornfully.

Dudley Vane-Carter's eyes glinted at him. There was a laugh from Levett.

"Good little Georgie has come to Carcroft to teach us manners!" he yawned. "You'll have to mind your step now, V.C."

Compton made a step towards him. He had landed in trouble after trouble, on his first day at Carcroft, and Levett was the cause of it all. His temper was very near boiling point.

"That's enough from you!" he snapped, "If you want your cheeky head smacked, you won't have to ask again."

"My good little Eric—!" grinned Levett. Smack!

"Oh!" roared Levett, as the smack on his head rocked him sideways, and he slipped off the table.

Bump!

Levett sat, suddenly, on Vane-Carter's expensive study carpet. He sat heavy and hard. The cigarette slipped into his mouth, and there was a frantic splutter from Levett. The burning end seemed hot—inside his mouth!

"Oooooooh!"

"Ha, ha!" came a bleat from Turkey Tuck.

"Urrrrggh!" spluttered Levett.

He grabbed frantically at the cigarette. Turkey chuckled: and Vane-Carter, in the armchair, grinned. Levett scrambled to his feet, wild with rage. He fairly hurled himself at the new junior.

"You cheeky rotter! By gum, I'll—!" He came on, hitting out right and left.

Harry Compton, in his present temper, asked for nothing better. He met Levett with his hands up, and his eyes gleaming

over them.

Levett got in one—which tapped the claret from the new junior's already damaged nose. Then came thump, thump, and left and right came home on Levett, and he backed away across the study.

Compton followed him up, hitting.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey, squinting with popping eyes at the scene, forgetful for the moment even of Vane-Carter's cake.

Vane-Carter jumped up from the armchair.

"Stop that!" he rapped, "Do you hear me, you new scug—stop that!"

Compton heard him—but he did not heed. He was driving Levett to the wall: the weedy, smoky slacker of the Carcroft Fourth crumpled up before his vigorous attack. In less than a minute, Levett, infuriated as he was, repented him that he had started handling the new junior. He had found it easy to pull the new fellow's leg: but handling him was quite a different matter. In that sudden scrap in No. 9 Study, Levett was simply nowhere.

He backed to the wall, gasping and panting for breath. Sudden exertion, after three or four smokes, left him helplessly winded.

He bumped on the wall, crumpled, and slid down.

"Keep off, you rotter!" he panted.

Harry Compton dropped his hands at once. He turned his back on Levett, and left him there. Levett sat leaning on the wall, panting. His pasty face was crimson with rage and exertion.

Vane-Carter gave the new junior a black look.

"You cheeky tick—!" he began.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Compton, unceremoniously.

"By gad! For two pins, I'd boot you out of the study."

"Get on with it, as soon as you like."

Dudley Vane-Carter looked at him, grimly. For a moment, he was evidently inclined to get on with it. However, he turned away, and gave Levett a helping hand to his feet.

Levett leaned on him, panting.

Had Herbert Levett been a fighting-man he would have renewed the combat—he

was simply yearning to punch the new junior all round the study. But there was little pluck in Levett: and what little there was, had been knocked out.

He gave Compton a dark, evil look, and crossed to the door.

"Don't go!" grunted Vane-Carter.

Without replying, Levett left the study.

Vane-Carter stood looking at the new junior, and Compton could read in his face that he was thinking of taking up the scrap where Levett had left it off. He waited coolly for the Sportsman to make up his mind. He had had two scraps that day, already: and he could tell, at a glance, that Vane-Carter was a fellow of a very different calibre from either Gus Corton, of Topcliffe, or Levett of the Fourth. But he was quite ready for trouble if it came.

However, Vane-Carter gave a grunt, and followed Levett from the study. He slammed the door as he went.

There was a fat chuckle from Turkey Tuck.

"I say, Compton, your nose is a real sketch! Ha, ha! I say, is it a nose or a beet-root?"

"You fat ass!" Compton dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. Levett had got in only one real punch, but it had done some damage.

Turkey chuckled, and got on with Vane-Carter's cake. Compton dabbed his nose.

Both were thus happily occupied when there was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Compton heard a bell ringing in the distance. The new junior went down to his second call-over with his handkerchief to his nose.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PICTURE-HANGING IN THE CORNER STUDY!

BANG!

Bang!

"Ow! Ooogh! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lee, you cackling ass—wow!"

"Sorry, old chap—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! My thumb! Wow!" roared Bob Drake, "What are you cackling at, you dummy? Wow!"

Harry Compton came to a halt. He was coming up the Fourth-form passage, with a pile of school books under his arm, when those startling sounds proceeded from the open doorway of a study. It sounded as if somebody was damaged.

Carcroft was an ancient building, and some of the passages had unexpected twists and turns. There was a turn in the middle of the Fourth-form passage, and the study from which the uproar proceeded was at the corner—No. 5, generally called the "corner study." Looking in, Compton beheld Bob Drake mounted, rather precariously, on top of a pair of steps, with a hammer in his hand. In the wall was a nail, which Bob, it seemed, had been driving in—it seemed, also, that he had smitten his thumb instead of the nail.

He jammed the damaged thumb in his mouth, and sucked frantically. At the same time, he glared down at Lee, who was holding a picture, apparently about to be hung in the study, and laughing. The steps were rocking, and to Compton's startled eyes, looked as if they might 'go' at any moment. Bob, as he maintained a precarious footing, sucked his thumb and spluttered.

"You'll be over in a minute, old chap!" said Lee.

"Urrrrgh! Ow!"

"Better come down, and give me the hammer—"

"I'll give it to you on your nut, you fat-head, if you cackle again! Wow! What is there to cackle at, you dummy? Yow-ow! The steps slipped while I was hammering—ow—why can't you hold them—wow? Can't you do anything but cackle like a mad hyena—ow—ow?"

Bob removed his suffering thumb from his mouth, and glared down at Lee. Then, as he saw the new junior outside the doorway, he called to him.

"Here, come in and hold these steps, will you?"

"Yes, certainly," answered Harry. He was willing to oblige. He deposited his books against the wall, and stepped into the study.

"What are you grinning at?" added Bob.

"Oh! Was I grinning?"

"Yes—like a monkey in a cage! Think

it's funny to get a bang on the thumb from a hammer?"

"Oh! No! Not at all!"

"Well, stop it, and hold those steps steady, if you're going to hold them."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Compton held the steps. Lee, grinning, laid the picture on the study table, and held them also. Even with two pairs of hands holding them, they seemed rather unsteady, as Bob turned to his hammering again.

Bang! bang! bang!

Bob Drake, it was clear, was an energetic fellow. Those energetic bangs ought to have driven the nail in up to the head; but some of them seemed to miss.

"Going into the next study?" asked Lee.

"What?"

"You'll be through the wall soon. It will surprise old Drum if you drop in suddenly."

Bob Drake paused in his hammering, to glare down at Lee again. The steps rocked as he turned round.

"Oh, crumbs! Look out!" exclaimed Compton.

"Steady the Buffs!" gasped Lee.

"You silly ass!" roared Bob, "Shut up, and hold those steps! Can't you help being a funny ass? I haven't got the nail in yet—"

"Why not hit it—?"

"What?"

"Instead of the wall?"

"You — you — you — !" gasped Bob, "You blithering idiot! You silly chump! You burbling cuckoo! You howling ass—"

"Speech may be taken as read!" suggested Lee, "Get on with it—we want to get this picture hung before dorm."

"Before dorm, you fathead? Dorm's two or three hours yet!"

"Think you'll be through in two or three hours?" asked Lee, innocently.

Bob Drake gave his grinning chum a concentrated glare, and turned to the wall again. Lee and Compton grasped the steps hard, as they rocked.

"Oh, my hat! You'll be down in a tick!" gasped Lee.

"If I do, I'll jolly well land on your napper!" hooted Drake. "It will be something soft to fall on, anyhow! Now shut

up."

Bang! bang!

"That's done it!" said Bob, "Now hand up the picture."

Lee released the steps, and took the picture from the table. It was a bright oleograph in many colours, in a gilt frame—not precisely a work of art, but undoubtedly striking to the view. Bob, apparently, had brought it back after the holidays, to adorn the corner study. Now he was going to hang it on the wall—if all went well!

He pitched the hammer, with a crash, into a corner of the study, and reached down for the picture, as Lee held it up. The steps gave a sudden rock, and Bob gave a yell.

"Can't you hold those steps, you ass?"

"I'm holding them!" gasped Compton, "Steady, for goodness sake. Don't come down on my head!"

"Nothing in it to damage, if I did!" snorted Bob. "Hand up that picture, Dick! Are you going to keep me up here all night?"

"Here you are, old chap!" said Lee, soothingly, and he held up the picture, and Bob, stooping, took it from his hands. The steps gave another rock, and Lee gasped at them. The junior on top swayed, but recovered his balance by a miracle, and turned to the wall with the picture.

Then it happened!

"Look out!" yelled Compton.

"Hold on!" gasped Lee.

"Oh, jiminy!" spluttered Bob as the steps rocked once too often, and slipped over. "Oh! Yarooooop!"

The steps went in one direction—Bob in another. There was a fearful yell from Lee, as his chum landed on him suddenly, clutched at him frantically, and rolled with him on the study floor.

Something crashed on Harry Compton's head. It was the picture. Luckily, there was no glass in the frame. Compton sat down under the crash, his head bursting through the picture, which clung, with its frame, round his neck.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Oh, crikey!" came from Lee, "Oh, crumbs! You howling ass—"

"Yarooooh!" Bob was roaring, "Oh,

scissors! Why didn't you hold those steps? You clumsy goat—ooooh!"

It was quite a mix-up in the corner study. Harry Compton sat quite dizzy, with the burst picture round his neck. Bob Drake scrambled up. His left hand was clasped to his right elbow, which seemed to have a pain in it.

"Oh! ow! oooogh! My funny-bone—ow!" howled Drake, "Ow! I banged my funny-bone on something—!"

"It was my nose!" moaned Lee. He clasped his nose, "Oh, crumbs! You howling ass, you've smashed my nose—"

"Oh, blow your nose! My funny-bone—!"

"My nose—!"

"Bless your nose! Where's that picture?"

"Blow the picture! You've pushed my nose through the back of my head—"

"Bother your silly nose! Why couldn't you keep your silly nose out of the way? Oh, my hat! Look at it!" roared Drake, as he spotted the picture—adorning the neck of the breathless new junior, sitting on the floor.

Compton staggered to his feet, still with the picture round his neck. Lee still rubbing his nose, burst into a roar of laughter. The new junior presented an extraordinary appearance with his head through the middle of the picture. He grabbed at it to drag it off.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lee.

"Look at that picture!" roared Bob, "It's done for now! You silly ass, what did you want to stick your head through that picture for?"

"You blithering chump!" yelled Compton, "What did you chuck it at my head for? You've nearly cracked my nut."

"Cracked already, I think!" hooted Bob, "There goes that picture! You had to stick your silly head through it—"

"You howling ass!"

Compton dragged the picture over his dizzy head, and hurled it away. Then he rubbed his head, which had a pain in it. Lee rubbed his nose—Drake rubbed his elbow. It was quite a list of casualties in the corner study. Bob cast a mournful glance at his picture. It was hopelessly damaged—and evidently had to be counted among the lost works of art!

"Look here, you chaps—!" A fat face and a pair of gooseberry-eyes squinted into the corner study.

"Oh, blow away, Turkey!" hooted Bob.

"But I say—"

"Buzz off!"

"I say, have you heard about the Lizard? I've come up to tell you!" hooted Turkey, "I say, he walked from Ridgate to-day—that's why he hasn't come—"

"You fat ass! Even the Lizard would have trickled in, long ago, if he's walked from Rodgate—"

"Yes, but he fell into the river—"

"What?"

"And jolly nearly got drowned!" said Turkey, impressively.

And all casualties, personal and pictorial, were forgotten, in the corner study, at that startling announcement.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HERO UNKNOWN!

"The Lizard—!"

"Talboys—"

"Nearly drowned—"

"What—!"

Drake and Lee exclaimed together. Harry Compton did not speak. He knew more about the mishap than the fat Turkey could have told him.

Turkey grinned.

That fat and fatheaded youth liked to impart startling news. He had startled the corner study: there was no doubt about that.

"They've just brought him in—!" went on Turkey, "They've taken him to sanny—"

"Brought him in!" repeated Bob, "Is the old Lizard hurt?" Compton could see that Lord Talboys, otherwise the Lizard, was popular in that study.

"Well, he looked pretty sick!" said Turkey, "They brought him in Giles' trap from Combe. Roger said take him at once to sanny—"

"But what's happened?" exclaimed Lee.

"He fell into the Wynd," explained Turkey, "So far as I can make out, his hat fell in, and he went in reaching after it—"

Harry Compton smiled as he heard that. Evidently Talboys had not mentioned the part the two Topcliffe fellows had played in the accident, which had so nearly turned out a tragedy.

"Where did it happen?" asked Bob.

"Just above Wynd Bridge, he told Ducas," answered Turkey, "and he was swept away under the bridge—"

"Good heavens!" breathed Bob, "The water's frightfully deep below the bridge—and there's dangerous currents—poor old Lizard! He swims like a stone, too! How on earth did he get out?"

"A chap dived off the bridge for him—"

"Oh!"

"So the Lizard told Ducas—I heard him!" said Turkey, "The chap went in for him from the bridge, and got him—but they were washed down half-a-mile before old Jay spotted them from his cottage, and got them both in his boat. I say, that's where the Lizard has been all the time, you know—while I've been hunting for him all over the shop—"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob, with a deep breath, "Jolly plucky chap who went in for him, from the bridge. Who was it?"

"Carcroft man?" asked Lee.

"Well, it couldn't be, or we should have heard by now," said Bob, "Who was it, Turkey—cough it up."

"I heard Ducas ask him that—but he doesn't know," answered Turkey, "It wasn't a Carcroft man, or Talboys would have known—and he never thought of asking his name. The chap went off, and left him at old Jay's cottage—he was there a long time—he looks pretty sick. He told Roger he'd rather not go into sanny, and Roger said 'Nonsense'—you know how he snorts at a chap."

"So he's in sanny now?" asked Lee.

"Yes—I shall get leave to go in and see him to-morrow," said Turkey, "It will do him good—"

"More likely to cause a relapse—"

"Yah!"...

"By gum, I'd like to know who got him out!" said Bob, "Langley of the Sixth dived off that bridge once—he's the only Carcroft man that's ever done it. Chap must have had nerve—a jolly good swimmer too! Lots of fellows wouldn't

have done it—"

"No fear!" agreed Turkey, "Of course, I'd have done it like a shot, if I'd been there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at?" hooted Turkey, "If I'd been there, I'd have gone in—"

"You wouldn't have come out again, if you had, old fat man!" chuckled Bob, "We should have lost our Turkey. I wonder who it was—one of the seafaring men from Seamark, perhaps—"

"No, it jolly well wasn't!" answered Turkey, "The Lizard told Ducas it was a boy about his own age."

"By gum! If it was a kid no older than a Fourth-form chap here, he was some lad," exclaimed Bob, "Might have been a Topcliffe man—"

"Catch one of that crew going in from the bridge!" said Turkey, with a derisive sniff.

"Well, some of them are decent chaps: they're not all like Corton and his gang," said Bob, "Still, I suppose the Lizard would have known, if it was a Topcliffe man. One of the village kids from Combe, perhaps. Thank goodness he was there—the old Lizard would never have got out on his own. I'll jolly well boot him, when he comes out of sanny, for getting into danger after his silly hat. I'd jolly well like to know who it was went in for him—must have been a splendid chap! What are you grinning at, Compton, you grinning gorilla! Don't you think he was a splendid chap?" demanded Bob, gruffly.

"Not specially—!" answered Harry, laughing.

"Well, you would if you knew what you were talking about," snorted Bob, "You've never seen the old bridge over the Wynd, so you don't know—"

"He jolly well has," said Turkey, "I heard him tell Roger he walked from Greengates, and he must have come by the bridge. Didn't you, Compton?"

"Yes, I came by the bridge," said Harry.

"Then you've seen it?" exclaimed Bob, angrily, "and you don't think that a chap was a splendid chap to dive off it for a fellow in the water?"

"I suppose any chap might have done

it."

"Oh! You suppose that any chap might have done it, do you?" exclaimed Bob. "Well, I can jolly well tell you that any chap mightn't! No Carcroft man except old Langley has ever dived off that bridge—and he's the best swimmer in the school. And from what Turkey says, the chap was no older than one of us—and I'm dashed if I know how he ever got through alive. And if you don't think he was a splendid chap to do it, the sooner you shut up, the better."

Harry Compton laughed.

"All right—I'll shut up!" he said.

"The chap must have had no end of pluck," said Bob indignantly, "More in his little finger than you've got from top to toe, I expect."

"Well, I don't agree to that," said Harry, shaking his head.

"You're a silly ass, Compton!" said Dick Lee, "Whoever went in for old Talboys, from the bridge, jolly well risked his life. You don't know what you're talking about, see?"

"I think I do."

"You don't, and you're just talking out of the back of your silly neck," growled Bob, "That chap was a giddy hero, nothing more or less, and if you can't see that—"

"Well, I can't."

"Then you're a measly tick, and I've a jolly good mind to punch your head!" roared Bob, "I tell you not one fellow in a thousand could have done it, or would have done it—"

"Rot!"

"By gum! If you want to go out of this study on your neck—!"

"Thanks—I'll go out on my feet!" answered Harry: and he went out, an angry and indignant snort from Bob Drake following him.

He picked up his pile of books, and walked on to No. 9, to deposit them there. Vane-Carter's voice fell on his ears, as he pushed open the door.

"Cutler's on Blue Moon for the three o'clock on Saturday—he told me—"

The Sportsman of Carcroft broke off, as the new junior came in. He had been speaking to Levett. Both of them scowled.

"What do you want here?" snapped

Vane-Carter.

"Isn't it my study?" asked Harry, mildly.

"Well, you're not wanted."

"What a coincidence," drawled Compton, "You're not wanted either."

"You cheeky tick—!"

"You're getting better company than I am, anyhow," said Harry.

"Roger might put you in another study, if you asked him," snapped Vane-Carter.

"You ask him!" suggested Compton, "Tell him you don't care for a fellow who doesn't take any interest in the three o'clock on Saturday."

Vane-Carter stared at him, and then laughed.

"Let's get out of this!" growled Levett.

They left the study together, and Compton was left on his own. He did not want the company of two fellows whom he had already discerned were black sheep in the flock: but he thought of the corner study, and the two cheery juniors there, and wished from the bottom of his heart that Ducas had assigned him to that study instead of No. 9. He could have made friends with Drake and Lee—but he had no desire whatever to make a friend of the Sportsman of Carcroft.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TURKEY AND THE TOFFEE!

Harry Compton took his place, the following morning, in the Fourth Form—and as he went into the form-room with the rest, he noticed that Mr. Ducas's sharp eyes turned on him, and lingered on his nose—still in a somewhat red and bulbous state.

The Fourth was a numerous form—there were more than thirty in it—but 'Roger' seemed to have an eye for every one of them: and especially for the new junior who had had the misfortune to displease him already.

But if Roger Ducas did not like that new junior, neither did that new junior like Roger Ducas: He was, at all events indifferent to Ducas and his opinion: and very probably Roger was able to read as

much in his face: which did not have a soothing effect on the master of the Carcroft Fourth.

Roger Ducas was a good man, and a just man: but he had no use for sulky faces, and if that new junior fancied that a form-master's frown was a trifle, light as air, Roger was the man to undeceive him on that point.

Compton found himself next to Turkey Tuck. First lesson, on the first morning, was rather desultory: fellows had not yet settled down to the collar, as it were. Turkey was chiefly occupied in disposing of a large chunk of toffee, with a watchful squint on Roger but Roger's eyes were very sharp. They fixed suddenly on the fat Turkey.

"Tuck!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Turkey. His fat sticky hand went behind him, with the half-devoured chunk of toffee in it.

"What is it you have there?" rapped Mr. Ducas.

"Oh! Nothing, sir! Only my book, sir—"

"You were eating—"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"I will not allow comestibles to be brought into the form-room, as you know very well, Tuck."

"Oh, yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! I wouldn't—I haven't any toffee here, sir," stammered Turkey.

"Toffee!"

"Yes, sir! No, sir! I—I don't like toffee—"

"Stand out before the form, Tucker."

"Oh, haddocks! I—I mean, yes, sir!"

Harry Compton gave a start. Something clammy and sticky was shoved into his hand, as Turkey rose to his feet. But he realised at once what it was! That was Turkey's way of getting rid of the offending toffee before he stepped out.

James Smyth Tuck rolled out—sticky but toffee-less.

Harry Compton sat with the toffee in his hand. It was sticky and horrid to the touch, but he did not want to give the fat Turkey away.

"Where is the toffee, Tuck?"

"I—I haven't any, sir!" Turkey held out two fat hands—both sticky and

grubby, and in need of a wash: but certainly containing no toffee. "I—I had some before class, sir—"

"Go at once and wash your hands, Tuck," snapped Mr. Ducas.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Turkey rolled out of the form-room. Mr. Ducas's frowning glance followed him. His eyes being off the class, Harry Compton took the opportunity of dropping the toffee under Turkey's desk. He was quite willing to oblige the fat Turkey: but he was not willing to sit with a chunk of sticky toffee in his hand until Turkey returned to the form-room.

It was ten minutes before Turkey came back. Ducas gave him another frown, as he went to his place.

Turkey sat down. Immediately his master's eye was off him, he gave Compton a nudge in the ribs with a fat paw.

"Gimme my toffee!" he whispered.

"You fat ass—!" breathed Harry.

"Look here, you jolly well gimme my toffee!" hissed Turkey, "I wasn't giving it to you! You gimme—"

Ducas's eye shot round.

"Are you talking in class, Tuck?"

"Oh! No, sir! I never said anything to Compton! Not a word, sir! Compton can tell you so—he heard me—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, he never heard me, as I never said anything—" stuttered Turkey, "O—I never opened my mouth, sir—"

"Take fifty lines, Tuck."

"Oh, crikey! But I never said a word, sir—never opened my mouth—never breathed a syllable—"

"Take a hundred lines."

"Oh, lor!"

Turkey gave it up at that! Roger looked like making it two hundred, if he said any more: so Turkey did not say any more.

"Compton!" rapped Mr. Ducas.

"Yes, sir!"

"You are new here, but you can hardly need telling that boys are not allowed to talk in class!" rapped Mr. Ducas, "If you do so again, you will be given an imposition."

Compton compressed his lips. But he sat silent, and turned his shoulder to Turkey. Certainly he did not want to

talk to Turkey: but Turkey, on the other hand, was not to be suppressed for long. Turkey wanted his toffee: and being unaware that it had been dropped under the desk, could only suppose that the new fellow was keeping it to eat—which roused Turkey's deepest indignation. A lioness robbed of her cubs was hardly fiercer than James Smyth Tuck deprived of his toffee.

Hardly five minutes had elapsed, when a fat paw poked in Compton's ribs again. He gave the fat junior a glare.

"Gimme my toffee!" hissed Turkey.

Compton made no reply. He could not tell Turkey what had become of the toffee, without speaking in class! And every moment he expected Ducas's penetrating eyes to shoot round at him.

Turkey squinted at the form-master, but Ducas's attention was elsewhere at the moment. He gave Compton another poke.

"Look here, you swob, that's my toffee!" breathed Turkey, in a whisper thrilling with indignation, "I never meant you to keep it—I was just passing it to you to hold for a minute! You ain't going to scoff that toffee, you awful tick!"

Harry Compton grinned—he could not help it. Even in a state of famine, he would hardly have 'scoffed' that sticky wedge of toffee from Turkey's sticky paw. Really, Turkey's toffee was in no danger, so far as the new junior was concerned.

But Turkey was far from realising that. To the fat Turkey, that sticky chunk was a spot of bliss. Turkey wanted his toffee.

"Will you gimme my toffee?" he breathed, "Quick—Ducas will look round in a minute! Gimme my toffee."

A fat paw clawed at Compton's sleeve. The new junior shook it off. But he did not speak.

"Shut up, Turkey, you ass!" came a whisper from Bob Drake.

Turkey did not heed.

"Compton's got my toffee," he breathed, "He won't gimme my toffee! He jolly well ain't going to scoff my toffee—I'll show him! Look here, Compton—" The fat paw clawed at Compton again.

"You blithering ass, it's on the floor

under your desk!" muttered Compton, driven at last to speech.

Roger's eyes fixed on him.

"Compton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You were speaking to Tuck!"

Harry Compton breathed hard.

"Yes, sir!" he answered.

"It appears that a warning has no effect on you, Compton! You will take one hundred lines, from the first book of Virgil, and bring them to my study at six o'clock."

"Very well, sir!" said Harry, through his set lips.

Luckily, there was no more conversation from Turkey Tuck. Having discovered where the toffee was, Turkey forgot the existence of the new junior, and fixed his attention on the sticky chunk under the desk.

Thud! Turkey dropped a book.

"Tuck!"

"I—I—I've dropped my book, sir! Mum—mum—may I pick it up, sir?"

"You should be more careful, Tuck! You may pick up your book."

"Oh! Yes, sir! Thank you, sir."

Turkey stooped for his book, and clutched up the toffee. Under the desk, he transferred the whole chunk to his mouth—fortunately capacious—and then picked up the book. After which, Turkey was quite happy, as the sticky chunk slowly and blissfully dissolved and travelled down his fat neck. Turkey was happy and satisfied—a mood which contrasted very much with that of the fellow sitting beside him—who had a hundred lines to hand in at six o'clock, and was feeling neither happy nor satisfied.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HARD LINES!

"Look here, Compton—"

"Don't bother!"

"But look here, you swob—"

"Dry up!"

"Yah!"

Harry Compton was writing lines in No. 9 Study after class. Turkey Tuck,

who also had a hundred lines on hand, was sitting in Vane-Carter's armchair, squinting at him. As there was no help for it, the new junior was getting his impot done. Equally there was no help for it in Turkey's case: but Turkey was not getting his lines done. For the last half-hour, Turkey had been just going to begin—but he had not started yet.

Compton had started at "arma virumque cano," and was working on steadily. It was a fine afternoon, and he wanted to get out of doors. He was not specially anxious to please Mr. Ducas: but he was sensible enough to know that the line had to be toed, at school, and he was toeing it: in rather an irritated mood. So those lines were going to be done before he went out.

"I say, you look here—!" began Turkey, again.

No reply. Compton's pen scratched on.

"Compton, you swob—"

"For goodness sake, don't chatter!" exclaimed Harry, impatiently, "How can a fellow write lines with you buzzing like a wasp in his ears?"

"I've got a hundred, and it's all your fault!" yapped Turkey.

"You fat ass, you got me these lines, gabbling in class! Now shut up and let me get them done."

"Well, if you hadn't chucked my toffee under the desk, I shouldn't have asked you for it, and I shouldn't have got lined!" persisted Turkey. "I think you ought to do half! You've nearly finished your own."

Compton stared round at the fat junior.

"A hundred is enough for me!" he answered. "Why the dickens don't you do your lines, instead of squatting in that armchair?"

"You got me the lines, and you ought to do half!" argued Turkey.

"Fathead!"

"Swob!"

Compton's pen scratched on again. Turkey, from the armchair, gave him an angry squint. Compton was a quick worker—Turkey was a slow one when he worked at all, which was only when he couldn't help it. Turkey preferred to take his chance with an excuse to Roger when called upon for delivery. Turkey

was never at a loss for excuses, at all events: and he was not trammelled by any regard for the truth. Besides, Turkey really did think that the new junior ought to do at least half his lines—having been the cause of Turkey getting them!

The study door opened, and Levett came in. He glanced round the study, probably expecting to see Vane-Carter: and then stepped to the table, and pulled open the drawer. The table jerked as he did so, and there was a blot from Compton's pen.

"Mind what you're at!" snapped Compton.

Levett stared at him, without answering, and lifted what looked like a Latin dictionary from the drawer. The cover of that dictionary lifted like a lid, revealing that it was a box, with cigarettes within. Levett selected a cigarette, dropped the box back into the drawer, and slammed it shut. The table rocked.

Turkey Tuck grinned.

"Stop that, Levett!" said Compton, with a gleam in his eyes.

Levett gave him another stare, lounged across to an armchair, and sat down. He lighted the cigarette, and blew out smoke.

"Know where V.C. is fatty?" he asked.

"He's gone to see the Lizard in sanny," answered Turkey, "I was going, only that brute Roger gave me lines. I say, Levett, like to do a few for me?"

"I don't think."

"I think Compton ought to do half, as he got me the lines! Don't you think so, Levett!"

"Oh, quite!" grinned Levett.

"He won't!" said Turkey, "Mean, I call it! I say, Compton, I think you're a mean tick."

"Shut up!"

"Shan't!" retorted Turkey, independently.

Levett finished his cigarette. He rose, yawned, and came back to the table, to help himself again from Vane-Carter's box. Harry Compton looked up at him.

"Don't touch the table again, Levett!" he said, quietly.

"I want a smoke."

"You're not going to smoke in this study."

"What!"

"Vane-Carter can play the goat, if he likes, as it's his study—it's not yours, and you're not going to smoke here."

"And who's going to stop me?" asked Levett.

"I am!"

Levett looked at him, and put his hand to the table-drawer. Compton half-rose; and Levett withdrew his hand. He gave the new junior a look: but it was clear that he did not want to repeat the experience of the previous day. He had crumpled up too quickly in the new junior's hands, to want to try that again.

"So you're laying down the law in V.C.'s study, are you?" he asked.

"Put it how you like! You're not going to smoke here—and if you rock the table again, I'll bang your head on it."

"Oh, I say! What a cheek!" squeaked Turkey.

Levett stood looking at the new junior for some moments.

Then he returned to his armchair, and sat down: without taking a cigarette, and without rocking the table. Compton, giving him no further heed, scratched on with his lines. Levett sat silent in the armchair, watching him with a glitter in eyes.

Levett, as a pal, or rather a hanger-on, of the millionaire's son, had the run of that study: but he was not disposed to contest the point with the fellow who had punched him across the study the day before. Levett was no fighting-man: but the Sportsman was, and he waited for the Sportsman to come in. Dudley Vane-Carter was the man to deal with this cheeky new scug!

But the Sportsman did not come in: and Harry Compton finished his lines, and rose, and glanced at Vane-Carter's expensive clock on the mantel piece. It was half-past five: and Ducas had told him to take in his lines at six. There was plenty of time for a run in the open air.

Leaving the finished impot on the table, Compton left the study. A squeal from Turkey followed him.

"I say, you swob, ain't you going to help me with my lines?"

There was no reply from Compton. He

went down the passage, and James Smyth Tuck expressed his feelings with an indignant snort.

"Jevver see such a swob?" He appealed to Levett, "All his fault that I got the lines, you know! His fault entirely! And now—"

Levett, now that Compton was gone, went to the table-drawer, and helped himself to a cigarette. He pointed with it to the impot lying on the table.

"What about that lot?" he asked.

"Eh!" Turkey squinted at him, "They're Compton's lines, ain't they?"

Levett laughed.

"He hasn't written his name—he doesn't know the rule."

"Oh!" said Turkey.

He caught Levett's idea, and his gooseberry eyes gleamed. It was the rule for a fellow to write his name on an imposition: but the new junior had not done so.

"Easy enough to shove in your name, and the lines are yours!" said Levett, "You said that he ought to do them for you—"

"So he jolly well ought!" said Turkey, warmly, "I told him so—you heard me—But I say his fist ain't much like mine."

"First day of term," said Levett, "Perhaps your writing's improved in the hols, what?"

"Oh, haddocks! Think that will do for Roger?"

"You'd have to risk it, if Compton had done them for you—"

"Well, he'd have had to make his fist a bit like mine, of course. Still, it means saving a hundred lines—that brute Roger always asks for them—not like old Tinsshaw in the Shell. But I say, Compton will kick up a row if he finds his lines gone—"

"Let him!"

"Yes, but I don't want him punching me like he did you!" explained Turkey, "I'm rather particular about that."

Levett shrugged his shoulders, and lounged out of the study. He left the idea to germinate in Turkey's fat brain, without doubt of the result. James Smyth Tuck squinted after him, and then squinted at the lines. For some minutes he was undecided.

It did not even occur to his plump

intellect that Levett's idea was to land the new junior in a "row" with Roger. All he was thinking of, was getting out of that impot. It was—Turkey had no doubt—all that new swob's fault that he had got lines! The trouble was, that if Compton cut up rusty—as was exceedingly probable—Turkey did not want to be punched across the study as Levett had been. He was, as he had said, particular about that—very particular indeed.

On the other hand, Compton wouldn't know! Encouraged by that reflection, the fat junior picked up the pen, and wrote, "J. S. Tuck" in the top corner. Then, grinning, he picked up the impot, and rolled out of No. 9, to take it down to Mr. Ducas's study.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN TROUBLE FOR TWO!

"What the dickens—!" exclaimed Harry Compton.

He came into No. 9 Study at five minutes to six. Now he stood staring at the study table.

He had left his imposition there, ready to take down to Ducas at the appointed time. Naturally he had expected to find it there, when he came back for it. But he did not find it there. It was gone.

Vane-Carter and Levett were in the study together, when he arrived. They were sitting in the two armchairs, each with a cigarette going. There was a haze of bluish smoke in the study: and Levett gave the new junior a vaunting look. Now that the Sportsman was present, he would rather have liked Compton to raise the subject of smoking again. But the new junior had no time to waste on that: he had to take his lines down to Ducas, and he wanted them.

There were books and papers on the table—he looked among them. But the imposition was gone.

"What the dickens has become of my lines?" exclaimed Harry, "Have you moved them—Vane-Carter?"

Vane-Carter gave him a careless glance. "What lines?" he grunted.

"I finished a hundred lines, and left them here—"

"If you left them there, they're there now, I suppose!" said Vane-Carter, staring at him, look for them!"

"I've looked for them, and they're not here."

"Oh, rot!"

"Have you shifted them, Levett?"

"No!"

Compton looked at him. The lines were gone, and obviously someone must have shifted them. Certainly it was not likely to occur to Compton that a fat and fat-headed Turkey had already taken them down to Ducas as his own!

Those lines, as a matter of fact, had been handed in to Mr. Ducas a quarter of an hour ago—somewhat to his surprise, for it was the first occasion on which James Smyth Tuck had been prompt in the delivery of an impot. Mr. Ducas had been pleased as well as surprised, by the great improvement in Turkey's "fist" since last term: moreover, there had been only one blot on the impot, instead of Turkey's usual assortment of blots, smears, and smudges. "Roger" was rather a stern gentleman: but he could be kind and encouraging to a fellow who was trying to improve—and these signs of grace in Turkey had made him quite genial! The happy Turkey had been dismissed with words of commendation!

Which was O.K. for Turkey—but very awkward for the fellow to whom the lines belonged, and who was booked for a row if they were not taken in at once!

Levett grinned over his cigarette. He had noted when he came in with Vane-Carter, that the lines were missing, and knew that J. S. T. had acted on his tip. Compton's search for the lines that had already been handed to Roger amused him. Still, he was able to state with truth that he had not shifted them. He had not touched them at all.

Compton's brow darkened. From the school clock-tower came the chime of six! Ducas would be expecting him with those lines now.

"Look here, Levett—!" he said, quietly.

"I'm talking to Vane-Carter," yawned Levett, "Mind shutting up?"

"Never mind the three o'clock on Saturday now!" snapped Compton, scornfully, "I want my lines—they've got to be taken in."

Vane-Carter gave Levett rather a quick look. He knew his Levett; and he knew Levett's feelings towards the junior who had punched him.

"You haven't shifted the fellow's lines, have you?" he asked.

"I've told him I haven't!" said Levett, "Why the dickens should I shift his silly lines? I never touched them."

"Then what has become of them?" asked Harry.

"How the dooce should I know?"

"Look here—"

"Oh, can it!" interrupted Vane-Carter, "If you've lost your lines, look for them, and don't bother."

"I haven't lost them. I left them here, to wait till six o'clock, and Levett was in the study when I left—"

"And the lines were on the table when I left," said Levett, "If anybody's been larking with them, I haven't."

Compton gave him a long, hard look. The lines were gone, and he could not help suspecting that Levett had had something to do with it. Whether that was the case or not, there was nothing to be got from Levett. If they were still in the study, as he supposed they must be, they had been put out of sight: and he began to search for them.

Ten minutes passed in a fruitless search. Compton was growing angrier and angrier. What Ducas would do, if the lines were not taken down, he did not know: but he knew that he had only grim severity to expect from Roger. He moved angrily about the study, searching for the impot: Vane-Carter taking no notice of him whatever, Levett every now and then giving him a sarcastic grin.

He stopped, when the quarter chimed. If the lines were still in the study, they were hidden where he could not discover them.

"Look here, Levett, I believe you know what's become of those lines!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming at the cad of the Fourth.

Levett shrugged his shoulders.

"I've told you I never touched them," he answered, "Do you think I've got them in my trousers pocket?"

Before Compton could answer, there was a step in the passage, and a portly figure and a stern face appeared in the half-open doorway.

"Compton!" rapped Mr. Ducas.

Harry spun round towards the door. He had wondered uneasily what Ducas would do, if the lines were not taken down. He knew now—Ducas had come up for them. He faced his form-master with a flushed and angry face.

But Mr. Ducas's attention was upon him for only one moment! The next moment, Roger sniffed, as the atmosphere of smoke from the study struck him. Then his eyes fixed on the two juniors in the armchairs.

Vane-Carter and Levett sat thunder-struck. Roger's arrival was so sudden, that they were taken completely by surprise. Each of them had a cigarette going—Levett in his mouth, Vane-Carter between finger and thumb. The look that came over Roger's face was simply terrific.

"Oh!" gasped Levett.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Vane-Carter.

There was no chance of getting the smokes out of sight! They were fairly caught in the act! They stared at Roger, as if he had been the grisly spectre of a form-master.

"Vane-Carter! Levett!" thundered Mr. Ducas.

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Both of you will follow me to my study at once."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I shall cane you severely! Upon my word! I shall cane you both with the utmost severity." Roger fairly thundered. "Throw those cigarettes away, and leave the study."

Vane-Carter twirled his cigarette into the grate. He had been taken utterly aback: but he was only a moment in recovering his coolness. The Sportsman of Carcroft had plenty of nerve. He was prepared to take what was coming to him, with cool hardihood. But it was different with Levett. Vane-Carter lounged coolly into the passage: Levett cringed after him,

looking quite sick. Ducas's glare followed them out: and then he turned to Compton again.

"You have not brought me your lines, Compton."

"I can't find them, sir—"

"What?"

"I did the lines, but they seem to have disappeared while I was out of the study—"

"Nonsense!"

Compton shut his lips hard. He realised that such an explanation sounded a little steep. Still, it was true.

"The lines should have been handed in at six o'clock!" rumbled Mr. Ducas, "I warn you, Compton, that this will not do. The imposition is doubled."

"But—!"

"You will hand me two hundred lines at six o'clock to-morrow, or you will be caned."

The portly figure revolved on its axis, and Ducas sailed out of the study. The new junior, with a black brow, sat down to lines again. From the passage, Roger's voice boomed:

"Vane-Carter! Levett! Follow me."

Harry Compton, grinding lines in No. 9 was not enjoying life. But Vane-Carter and Levett, in Roger's study, enjoyed it still less. A cane, in a hefty hand, swished and swished and swished in that study. Even the hardy Sportsman was barely able to repress a howl: Levett fairly yelled.

They trailed dismally away when the execution was over: Vane-Carter gasping, Levett looking as if he were trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. And Levett, probably, repented him of the trick with the lines—which had been the cause of Roger's visit to No. 9. Not for the first time, he made the discovery that the way of the transgressor was hard!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE FIGHT IN NO. 9 STUDY!

"You fool!" roared Dudley Vane-Carter.

"What?"

"You dummy!"

"That will do—!"

"You dunderheaded dummy, I've a jolly good mind to boot you all over the study!" roared the enraged Sportsman.

Harry Compton rose to his feet. He looked across the table at Dudley Vane-Carter, shouting—or rather raving—in the doorway of the study. There was surprise, and cool contempt, in his look. What was the cause of that outburst of rage, he did not know, and he did not care: but he had only contempt for a fellow who could not govern his temper and who roared out his wrath for everyone to hear.

Vane-Carter's voice rang in the Fourth-form passage. A dozen fellows came up from the landing, or out of the studios. They gathered round the doorway of No. 9, staring.

"Draw it mild, V.C." advised Bob Drake, "You're telling the world, old man."

"Soft-pedal!" suggested Lee.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Drummond.

Vane-Carter did not heed them. He had come up, sore and savage from the licking in Ducas's study, and his temper was boiling—very nearly boiling over. He glared at the junior in the study with blazing eyes.

"You fool—dummy—ass—idiot!" he bawled, "You brought that old ass Ducas up to the study—losing your silly lines—did you want to land me in a row with him, you dolt?"

"Oh! Is that it?" said Compton, contemptuously, "I never knew Ducas was coming up, any more than you did—and I never lost my lines—I believe Levett knows what became of them! And you've called me enough fancy names—stop it, or I'll stop you."

"You fool—you rotter—you scug—!"

"But what the thump!" exclaimed Bob Drake, "What did it matter if Roger came up to the study, V.C.?"

V.C. did not answer. He glared at Compton, with clenched fists, evidently hardly restrained from rushing at him and hitting out. But Harry Compton answered, with a scornful laugh.

"Ducas came up for my lines, and found Vane-Carter smoking! The dingy toad was asking for it."

"What?" yelled Vane-Carter. It seemed to be the Sportsman's idea that he could call the new junior anything he liked: but that fancy names were not to be applied to himself! He stamped into the study. "What did you call me?"

"A dingy toad!" answered Compton, coolly, "You've made this study reek with your filthy smoking—and you're going to stop it! I've got to use this study, and you're not going to turn it into a tap-room."

"Why, you—you—!" Vane-Carter gasped: hardly able to speak in his rage, "You cheeky rat—"

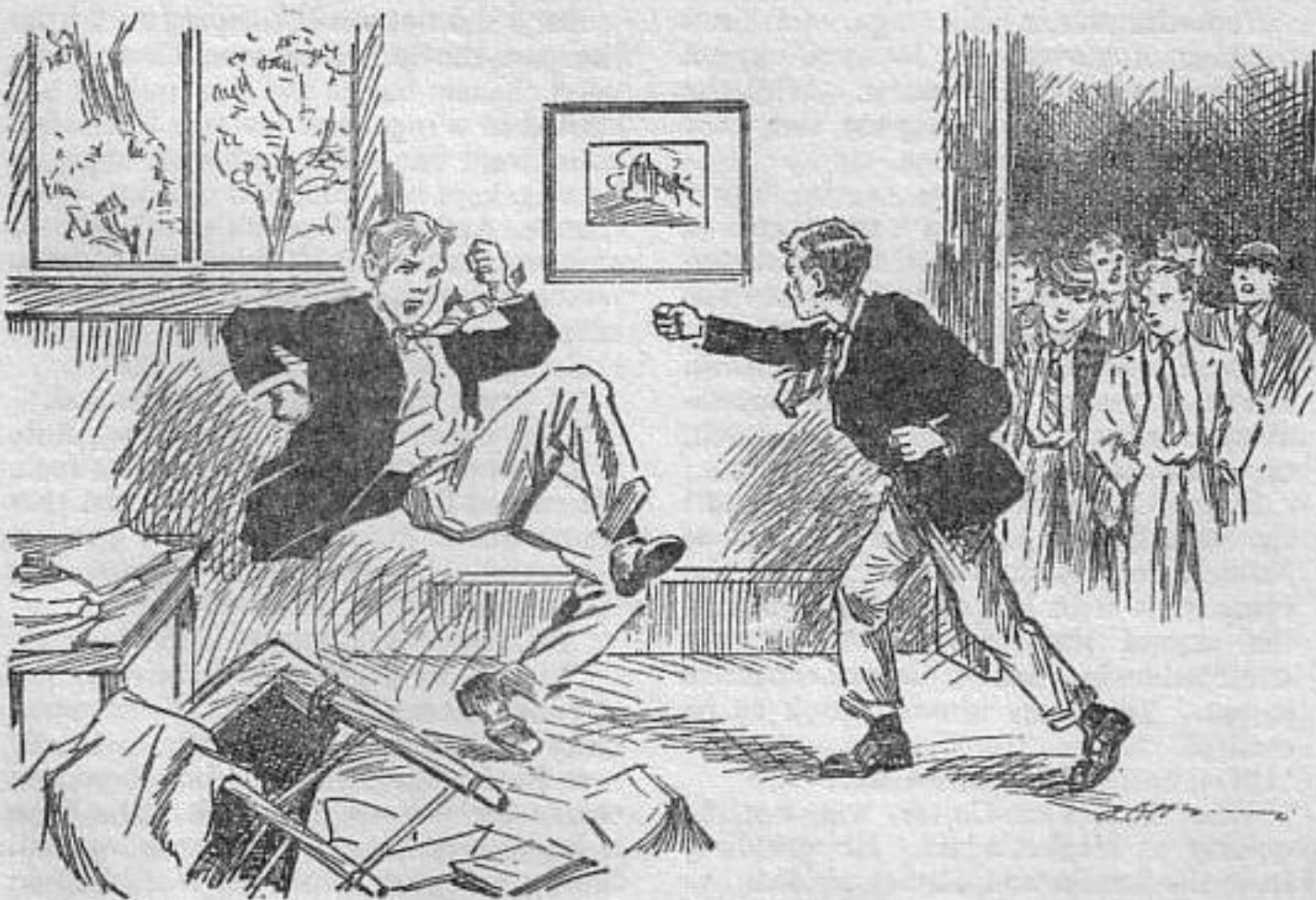
"Oh, shut up! If you've got licked, serve you right! And if you don't chuck smoking here, I'll ram your smokes down the back of your neck! And don't call me any more fancy names, or I'll knock them back into your cheeky mouth."

That was enough for Dudley Vane-Carter—more than enough. He rushed round the study table, and hurled himself at Compton. The Sportsman of Carcroft had a fierce temper, not always kept in control—and it was quite uncontrolled now. He came at Compton like a tiger.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob, "Look here, V.C. old man—"

"Stop it, V.C.!" exclaimed Dick Lee.

But the two in the study were already fighting. Compton's hands were up like lightning, as the Sportsman leaped at him: and they were going it, hammer and tongs. The table rocked as they crashed against it, and papers and inkpot slipped to the floor. A chair went flying and crashed over by the wall. Heedless of rocking furniture, the two juniors hammered and pommelled and thumped, both of them equally angry and excited.



"Go it V.C.!" called out Levett. "Knock the cad out!"

The study doorway was crammed. Every fellow who was up in the studies came along, at the uproar from No. 9.

"Go it, V.C.!" called out Levett. "Knock the cad out!"

Crash!

A falling form hit the floor. But it was not the new junior's—it was Dudley Vane-Carter's!

He sprawled, gasping for breath, red running from his nose: Harry Compton stood panting.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey, from the passage, "Look here, you chaps, let a chap see! I say, V.C.'s getting walloped!"

V.C. heard that fat squeak from Turkey, as he scrambled up. He came back at the new junior with a savage rush.

"Look here, hold on!" shouted Bob, "If you're going to scrap, have the gloves on. Look here, V.C.—"

But Bob's voice was not heeded. The fight had recommenced, and was going hot and strong.

Vane-Carter, in his rage, was not thinking of gloves: and Harry Compton had no choice in the matter. With the bare knuckles, and with great vim, they gave and took punishment.

V.C. was well known in the Lower School of Carcroft to be a tough nut—a good boxer, hard as nails, and with unlimited pluck. The breathless spectators at the doorway fully expected the new junior to go down under his whirlwind attack. But it was soon clear that the Sportsman, tough as he was, had met his match, or a little more than his match.

Harry Compton went spinning against the wall, from a jolt to the jaw: but as Vane-Carter followed it up fiercely, he came back with left and right: and for the second time, the Sportsman was stretched on his back on his own expensive carpet. The study almost shook as he crashed.

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Bob.

This time Vane-Carter was not so quickly on his feet again. He was dizzy from the knock, and almost winded.

"Buck up, V.C.—you ain't licked yet!" exclaimed Barrick.

The mere suggestion of being licked acted like a spur to the Sportsman. He

scrambled savagely up, and renewed the combat.

So fierce was his attack, that Compton was driven back to the wall. But he stalled off the savage drives, and came back, hitting hard: and the panting Sportsman went back against the table, with a terrific crash. The table went over, and Dudley Vane-Carter sprawled across it, with a panting gasp.

"Oh, gum!" gasped Bob.

Vane-Carter scrambled off the overturned table. Bob stepped in, and dragged it out of the way. The combatants were given a little more space: and in a moment, they were fighting again.

The Sportsman's face was set with rage. He quite realised, by this time, that he was not getting the upper hand: and it was beginning to dawn on him that his adversary was getting it. He put every ounce into his attack, determined not to see what was growing clear to the watching crowd in the passage.

But it did not avail! Keeping cool from the start, the Sportsman would have had a good chance: but he was not cool: he had started in a rage, and his rage intensified as he went on: while Compton, angry as he was, kept his head, and did not lose a chance. And Vane-Carter's attack, furious as it was, was losing its drive, and the new junior stalled it off with more and more ease.

Compton suddenly stepped back.

"If that's enough, chuck it!" he said.

"Yes, chuck it, V.C.," came from Bob.

V.C.'s only reply was a breathless rush. He rushed fairly on to a jutting fist that smote like a lump of iron: and the jolt almost lifted him off his feet. He went over like a sack of coke, and crashed.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey.

"Licked, by gum!" said Babbie.

Vane-Carter struggled up. His head was dizzy and swimming—he could hardly see. But he struggled up on his elbow, and strove to rise—sinking back again with a helpless gasp. He was knocked out. Slowly, savagely, he realised that he could not go on. Levett stepped in, and helped him to his feet, and he stood unsteadily, leaning heavily on Levett's arm.

Harry Compton dabbed his heated face

with a handkerchief. The fight was over—and he was the victor: but he was almost as much damaged as the Sportsman. He panted and panted for breath.

The study looked like a wreck. The table was up-ended in a corner—the chairs had been knocked over—books and papers—and Compton's lines so far as he had written them—were mixed up with flowing ink on the floor. And the two combatants looked almost as wrecked as the study. Vane-Carter dragged himself away from Levett, but he had to put a hand on the mantelpiece.

"You rotter!" he breathed, "I'll try this again, another time—and I'll make you sorry you barged into my study—I—I—"

Compton did not reply or heed. He walked out of the study—there was a tap at the end of the passage, and he went to bathe his face. The crowd in the passage broke up, in a buzz of excitement. Bob Drake kindly went with him to lend a hand. Levett, in the study, eyed the defeated Sportsman with a half-suppressed sneer.

"By gum, you look a picture, V.C.!" he said, "You'd better bathe that nose—"

"Leave me alone."

"But—"

"Get out!"

Levett shrugged his narrow shoulders, and got out. Vane-Carter slammed the door after him, with a bang that rang the length of the passage.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE SPLENDID CHAP!

"Hallo, there he is!"

"The jolly old Lizard!"

Drake and Lee exclaimed together.

Harry Compton gave a little start. It was the following day, after third school, and a number of the Fourth were in the junior day-room, which was generally called the "Burrow." The new junior was standing by the window, looking out into the quadrangle, with a somewhat knitted brow.

He was thinking of his lines. A further

search had failed to reveal what had become of the missing imposition: and the rather heavy task of writing out two hundred was before him. He had re-started on the task the previous day: but what he had done, had been inked and trampled on in the scrap in No. 9 Study, and was quite useless for showing up to Roger. He was thinking it over, moodily: not at all sure that he was going to do those lines at all—when the exclamations from Drake and Lee caused him to turn round from the window.

He forgot the lines, as his eyes fell on the junior who was sauntering elegantly into the Burrow. It was the fellow for whom he had dived into the Wynd on his first day: now, evidently, out of "sanny," and looking none the worse for what he had been through.

Slim and graceful, with a cheery smile on his face, and his hands in the pockets of his well-creased and immaculate bags, Lord Talboys strolled into the Burrow, and was immediately surrounded. Evidently the Lizard was a popular fellow in his form.

"You old ass, Lizard!" roared Bob, greeting his lordship with a smack on the shoulder that made him totter.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Talboys, "Go easy, old man! My backbone isn't made of reinforced concrete!"

"I've a jolly good mind to boot you for falling into the river—what did it matter about your silly hat?" demanded Bob.

"I say, Lizard, I was looking for you everywhere first day!" bleated Turkey Tuck, "Looking for you all over the shop, and couldn't find you, you know—"

"Wouldn't have been any use if you had, old fat bean!"

"Eh! Why wouldn't it?"

"I never brought back any tuck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you swob—!" hooted Turkey.

"Feel all right again, Lizard?" asked Dick Lee.

"Right as rain, old thing! I wasn't a case for sanny really—but Roger insisted on it! Couldn't argue with Roger—he goes off the deep end if you argue with him. Of course, I felt a bit washed out. But—"

"Was it really a near thing?" asked

Drummond.

"Frightfully near, old boy. If somebody hadn't jumped in for me, you wouldn't be enjoyin' the view now—as it was, I lost my hat—lucky I had another, what?"

"Oh, awfully lucky!" said Bob, "I suppose that's what you were thinking of chiefly, all the time."

"Well, not chiefly," said Lord Talboys, "I was thinkin' of my bags too—simply ruined, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who was it got you out?" asked Vane-Carter.

"Old Jay, in his boat, got us both out—!"

"Fathead! I mean, who was it went in for you?"

"That's what I'd jolly well like to know!" answered Lord Talboys, "You see, he left me at Jay's cottage, and I never saw him afterwards, and I never thought of askin' his name—"

"Do you ever think of anything?" asked Vane-Carter, sarcastically.

"Sometimes! I think you look a picture with your face decorated like that—how did you do it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Been usin' your nose to knock in nails, or what?" asked Lord Talboys.

Vane-Carter grunted, and passed his hand over his nose—on which the signs were only too visible of the scrap in No. 9.

"You don't know who went in for you, then?" asked Bob.

"Haven't the foggiest."

"I'd have done it, Lizard, if I'd been there!" said Turkey, "and you wouldn't have gone half-a-mile down the river, either—"

"I believe you, old fat bean!" assented Lord Talboys, "I should only have gone about four or five yards—straight to the bottom."

"You silly ass!" howled Turkey.

"Chap must have been plucky to dive off the bridge!" said Bob Drake, "Nobody you'd seen before?"

"No—but I hope I'll see him again some time," said Lord Talboys, "I can tell you, he was some swimmer—and as full of pluck as Turkey is of tuck."

"What was he like?"

"Nice-lookin' chap, and pretty strong. I'd know him again like a shot if I saw him! I've been wonderin' who the dooce he can have been—jolly good fellow, anyhow—we came frightfully near to goin' down together. Splendid chap!"

"Well, I said he was a splendid chap, when I heard about it!" said Bob, "It's no joke to dive off Wynd Bridge. I hope I'd have done it, if I'd been there—but that chap did it! And I'll punch anybody's head who says that he wasn't a splendid chap!" added Bob, with a glare round at Harry Compton, by the window.

Lord Talboys gave a jump, as his eyes fell on the new junior standing by the window. He stared at him blankly.

"You hear that, Compton?" bawled Bob.

"I'm not deaf!" agreed Harry.

"Well, was he a splendid chap or not?"

"Not specially!"

"By gum!" Bob made a stride towards him, "Do you still think that anybody might have done it?"

"Quite!"

"Then I'll jolly well punch your head!" roared Bob.

"Hold on!" gasped Lord Talboys. He grabbed at Bob's arm, and dragged him back, "Hold on, fathead—"

"I'm going to punch his cheeky head—"

"That's the chap!"

"Wha—at?"

"That's the chap who dived in for me—"

"Wha—at?"

Bob stood staring. Every other fellow in the Burrow stared. Lord Talboys, for once forgetting his leisurely manners and customs, rushed across to the new junior.

"So you're here!" he exclaimed, "Give us your fin, old bean! Fancy runnin' into you here! I've been wonderin' who the dooce it could have been, but never thought for a minute of a new man here—by Jove! Feelin' any the worse?"

"Not at all," said Harry, with a smile.

"And you a Carcroft man all the time, by Jove!" said Lord Talboys, "Why, I'd have run into you at once, if that ass Roger hadn't parked me in sanny. Why didn't you tell me he was here when you came to see me yesterday, V.C.?"

"You howlin' ass, how should I know

anythin' about it?" asked Vane-Carter.

"Look here, is that really the chap?" asked the astonished Bob, "If that's really the chap—is it?"

"That's the jolly old identical chap!"

"You silly ass, why didn't you tell us?" roared Bob. "Keeping it dark, and saying any chap might have done it—"

"So any chap might."

"Well, you can say so now, and I won't punch your silly head!" grinned Bob. "Oh, my hat—was that why you came in looking like a dish-clout—because you'd been in the river? Why didn't you tell Roger?"

"Roger didn't give me a chance."

"Well, you're an ass!"

"Thanks."

"But a jolly plucky ass!" said Bob, "In fact, a splendid chap, see?—whether you like it or not!"

"Rot!"

There was a clang of a bell. Turkey Tuck headed for the door at once. It was the dinner-bell. Lord Talboys slipped an arm through Compton's.

"Come on!" he said.

And Harry, smiling, came on.

"What about it, Dick?" murmured Bob Drake.

"O.K.," answered Lee.

"Then it's a go—here he comes."

Bob Drake and Dick Lee were in the doorway of the corner study, when the new junior came up after class that day. Compton had wisely decided to get on with those lines, and he was heading for No. 9—not very cheerfully. He would gladly have given No. 9 a miss—but there was no help for it.

Drake and Lee stepped out, as he came up the passage.

"Hold on!" said Bob.

Compton halted.

"I've got lines to do," he said, "What—"

"You don't pull with V.C. in No. 9?"

said Bob.

"Hardly!"

"Like to change out?"

"I'd like nothing better! But—"

"Well, it's all right, if a chap speaks to Roger—"

"Blow Roger!"

"You don't want to ask Roger?" inquired Lee.

"No!"

"Roger's all right, when you get to know him!" assured Bob, "A trifle too quick off the mark sometimes—but a good bean. Still, if you don't want to ask him, I'll ask him. That is, if you'd like to change into this study."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

"You'll find it a bit more peaceful than V.C.'s, in the jolly old circumstances," grinned Bob, "And we'd like to have you—"

"Honoured!" said Lee, gravely.

Harry Compton's face brightened. He looked at the two cheery and friendly faces, he glanced into the study: and his face grew brighter and brighter. It was exactly what he would have chosen, if he had had the choice.

"Like the idea?" asked Bob.

"What-ho!" said Harry.

"Then I'll go down and speak to Roger!—and it's a go!"

And a 'go' it was! Vane-Carter, in No. 9, was prepared to put on his blackest scowl when the new junior blew in. But the Sportsman's scowl was not wanted—the new junior did not blow in. Bob Drake came to carry away his books—and that was all. Harry Compton, in the corner study, was feeling as merry and bright as any fellow at Carcroft—and any fellow who had looked into that study and seen him writing his lines there, might have fancied that there was something particularly cheery and exhilarating in the pages of P. Virgilius Maro!