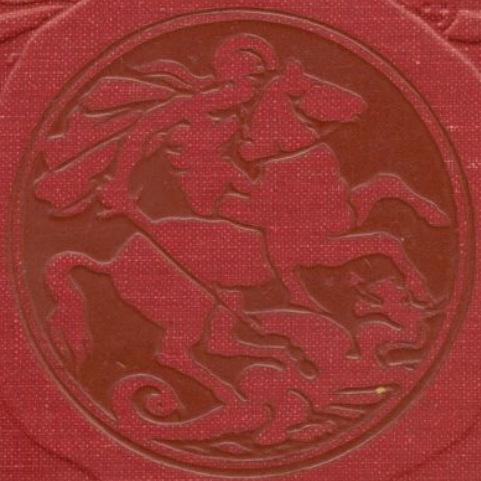
THE SCHOOL ACROSS THE ROAD

DESMOND COKE



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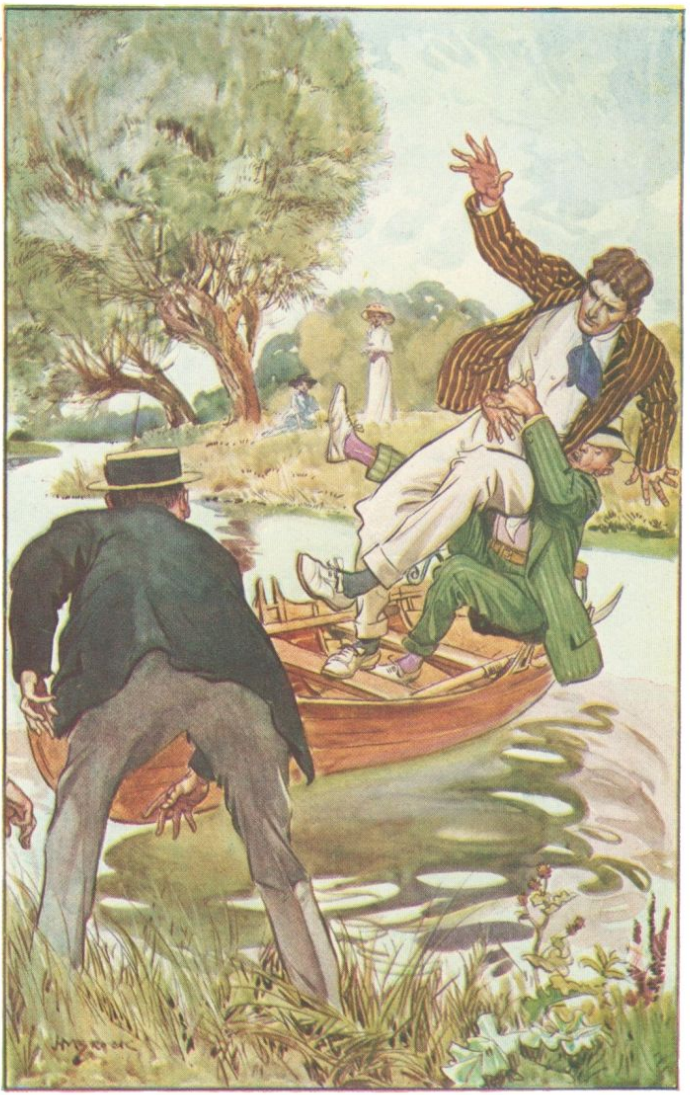

WITH A SPLENDID SPLASH THE TWO DISAPPEARED BENEATH THE WATER.

THE SCHOOL ACROSS THE ROAD

DESMOND·COKE

HUMPHREY·MILFORD
OXFORD·UNIVERSITY
·PRESS·
LONDON

IN GRATITUDE

TO

THE HEAD MASTER OF CLAYESMORE
AND ALL OTHERS—WHETHER BOYS OR MASTERS,
KNOWN FRIENDS OR UNKNOWN—WHO
HAVE WRITTEN KIND THINGS TO
ME ABOUT MY SCHOOL-STORIES

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PART ONE

THE FEUD

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The Rival Schools

HOWEVER much Head Masters might deplore the fact, there was no doubt that the two schools, far from living in that harmony which suits close neighbours, really existed in a state of warfare. They had been foes from time immemorial—which is, of course, to say for so many terms as any boy in either of them could remember.

About the feud itself there could be no doubt: about its origin, no certainty. Not even the masters themselves, who had watched it flourish through changing generations of boys, could put any more definite cause to it than that the two buildings were extremely close, their grounds separated merely by a narrow roadway. And that, too, was almost the only thing that brought the establishments together. Considering that each aimed at educating boys to be fit for his Majesty's army and navy, it would have been hard indeed to find two schools more altogether different.

You could make some guess at their nature, even from the names.

The Head Master of the vast, solemn buildings in white stone, liked to hear himself called "Dr." Anson, and his school "Corunna": whilst he of the less pretentious red-brick residence across the road, was well content to be plain "Mr." Warner, and did not trouble to find any more dignified title for his establishment than simply "Warner's."

Of course, the Doctor was much more commonly known as "Old Anson," or, quite simply, "Ass" (corrupted from the Latin *asinus*), and his school as "Anson's"; but the mere fact that he sighed for those more ambitious names will show what sort of man he was.

Here lay the real difference: he was a Cambridge Wrangler, and Warner was an Oxford Blue.

Dr. Anson conducted his academy along lines that might roughly be described as mathematical. He prided himself upon his System. His prospectus, for the use of parents, with a school crest upon it, laid great stress on the smoothness with which everything worked in this wonderful Corunna. There were prefects, one gathered, and there were, of course, the masters (each with M.A. following his name), but really the school needed

neither! Corporal punishment was "found superfluous, except in the most rare of circumstances." The boys were "encouraged to regard their masters more as friends and counsellors than as tyrants and taskmasters." A healthy interest in games was encouraged, but care was taken "not to sacrifice the healthy mind in perfecting the healthy body." The rule of boys by boys (the whole thing ended) had always been encouraged, as making for responsibility and self-reliance: so that, in short, "Corunna, whilst exceptionally equipped for those intending to enter his Majesty's services, possesses also the moral and social advantages of our great heritage, the Public Schools; with which, indeed, under Dr. Anson's enlightened charge, it has a close affinity."

All this was the work of Dr. Anson.

Warner, when parents applied for his prospectus, took that sort of thing for granted, and merely sent a four-side list of fees and regulations. He gave them the area of his playing-field, but said nothing about drains. His staff of masters was not rich, so far as M.A.'s went, but those who knew would recognize the name of more than one old Blue. There was nothing about Public Schools or punishment. He did not even comment on his system, which was, indeed, more practical than showy: to gain obedience from the mingled fear and admiration which his boys felt for him, and when anybody wanted thrashing, to give it him with all an athlete's strength, and so ensure that he did not apply for it again.

Naturally parents—and more especially mothers—when offered the choice, found Corunna's programme more attractive. As a result, against Dr. Anson's roll of one hundred and twenty boys, Warner could show not quite sixty: and his numbers dwindled. Thus it was that if the Warnerites scorned the Ansonites as horribly proper, and in one word "smugs," these last could despise their rivals as a failure. Each school regarded the other as undoubtedly inferior, and except for occasional brushes between little groups of rambling small boys, took good care to have no dealings whatsoever with it. Both spoke contemptuously of "the school across the road."

Only once a year did the two meet.

The annual cricket match, known variously as the Warnerite or the Ansonite match (according as to which school mentioned it), always proved a rather difficult affair. They took it in turns, of course, to be visiting eleven, but whichever crossed the narrow road, entered the other ground with a feeling of scorn and of hostility. There was not much of the spirit of a

friendly match about this fixture, and perhaps neither school displayed its sporting instinct to the best, when beaten. Fancy being licked by a place like that! It was jolly difficult to sit out the spread afterwards without saying what one really thought—which would, as it happens, have been very rude. . . .

Dr. Anson innocently welcomed this annual match and tea, as drawing the boys of the two schools together. He thought, himself, that Mr. Warner's methods were mistaken; were, indeed, a libel on the race of school-masters, and he felt no surprise or sorrow at his failure; but he tried to be polite, and was anxious also that his boys should be on friendly terms with their close neighbours. Sometimes he suspected a slight feeling of hostility between them, and this worried him. He looked round for some means of curing this by arranging, possibly, another inter-school fixture, to make them foregather more frequently than once a year. He thought, of course, of football, and was going to suggest a match, until he reflected that Mr. Warner's boys were very rough. Besides, they were also very good, he heard; and his own boys seemed, for some reason or other, to dislike being beaten by their neighbours more than by any other team whatever. So he said nothing, and began looking round again.

He was still doing this, in a vague sort of way, when circumstances themselves brought the required solution into view.

Both schools, as befitted their military nature, boasted a Rifle Corps, but in each it had, of late years, rather languished. There were many games to play, and other schools to beat at them, so that the martial ardour gradually died: for British boys are much like their elders in this way, that they would rather kick a ball about than learn how to defend their country. (The difference, of course, is that the elder cannot be bothered even with kicking the ball: he pays sixpence to watch.) Thus, both at Warner's and Corunna the Rifle Corps had become rather despised—a thing for smugs, who were no good at games—since the enthusiasm and alarms of the Boer War.

But now, suddenly, England awoke. Somebody produced a play in London; a play which showed the Briton's home invaded by a foreign soldiery, the British householder led out and shot, because, though a non-combatant, he raised a rifle in his own defence. Nobody had ever thought of that. The dweller in Tooting realized suddenly that even Tooting is not sacred to invading armies: that his small villa might well be demanded as a resting-place for foreign soldiers; that if he resisted, he might easily be shot. He had listened, unmoved, whilst great soldiers, Generals and Field-Marshals, begged him to defend the coast. The coast?—what did that

matter? Was there not a fleet for that? But 19 Myrtle Villas, Upper Tooting? That was different! He went and swelled the Territorial Force.

London was wild about Invasion: nervous old ladies looked beneath their bed, for foreign legions; and soon the patriotic wave spread right across the country.

Dr. Anson caught it full.

At once he began to worry, to wonder why Corunna, with its lofty spirit and fine tradition (see prospectus), had been so behindhand in this matter. The parents obviously would wish their sons to be adequate defenders of their home; and besides, was it not a military school? Distinctly, he must talk to Sergeant Gore about it. Their little battalion must be enlarged, made more efficient: a new interest must somehow be stimulated, to draw the boys away from their perpetual games, and make them realize their duties as citizens and Britons.

Then he had his inspiration. Mr. Warner's school! It, too, had a Rifle Corps, naturally smaller, but perhaps not too insignificant—he did not know its numbers—to be matched against their own battalion of seventy boys. A combined field-day: this was the very thing. Nothing, he reflected, roused interest like rivalry, and besides, here (he suddenly realized) was the very inter-school fixture for which he had been vainly seeking.

Thus it came about that, one day in the eighth week of the Easter term, he put on his top-hat and black overcoat and crossed the rustic lane to call on the master of the school, which he now regarded scarcely as a rival. Although the two were meant to be on friendly terms, they were too far apart in character for friendship, and their meetings usually concerned some friction between their respective pupils.

As he entered Warner's playing-field, two boys, strolling arm-in-arm, looked curiously at him and touched their caps in a mechanical way that did not try to be polite.

"Hullo!" said one of them. "I wonder what's up? Why's old Anson nosing around here?"

"Oh, I don't know. Some row or other," replied his friend, with the careless ease of one who knows that he at least, for once, is innocent.

"Beastly cheek his coming, anyhow. Why can't he stay in his own dirty hole?" with which they turned to a more pleasant topic.

Dr. Anson, meanwhile, with a gracious smile, had passed them and gone round to Warner's private door. ("Never you trouble to ring and be shown in," that genial soul had once remarked. "Just come in through my private entrance—round by the dining-hall, you know—and hammer at my study door.")

Probably he would be out, playing football or something with the boys; but it was worth while trying. Dr. Anson was boiling with his project. He tapped upon the study door.

"Well?" came from within.

Dr. Anson was a stickler for etiquette: he did not enter. Clearly that remark could not be meant for him! He tapped again, with more authority.

"Hullo, *hullo*, HULLO!" loud and impatient from within.

Really, it was quite ridiculous: what a curious fellow Warner was! Who did he imagine was knocking? Still, it was obviously useless to wait until he said "Come in." Dr. Anson entered.

Warner was sitting in an arm-chair by the fire. At least, his visitor deduced so much from what he saw—two legs, bare at the knee and clad in green stockings below, upon the mantelpiece, and smoke wreathing up from the chair-back which hid the rest of his anatomy.

As Dr. Anson closed the door, another comment came from the direction of the fire-place.

"Are you deaf, man? Can't you hear me call?"

The Head Master of Corunna stood in silent amazement, not knowing what to say, and presently Warner, with an angry movement, swung about. He did not suffer fools gladly.

"Why, it's Anson!" he cried in astonishment.

Dr. Anson always felt that, as nearly thirty years his junior, Warner ought to call him "Doctor." "Yes," he answered stiffly.

"I'm sorry," laughed his host. "I thought it was one of the fellows. They're so jolly shy about coming in; don't *you* find, too? They seem to think they're entering a lion's den."

"I always find" (he spoke with crushing dignity) "that when I say 'Come in,' they enter."

"Ah, that's it, then, probably," replied the other genially, "I never remember to say that. I just shout any old thing that comes into my head! But do sit down, now you *are* here, won't you?"

As he stood by the mantelpiece, smiling and smoothing down the thick black hair that had been ruffled by his lounging posture, he looked less thirty than eighteen; more of a boy than a Head Master. Enthusiasm and joy of life had left everlasting youth as heritage to his keen, clear-cut features. It was hard to believe that only thirty years stood between him and his visitor, who might have been his grandfather, at least.

Dr. Anson, still holding his stick and top-hat, pointed to the other's costume.

"But I shall perhaps be detaining you?" he said.

"Not a bit, not a bit! Let me put your hat down? That's it. I must apologize for my shorts: I was just going out to coach the eleven, as soon as I'd warmed up a bit. But that's nothing: there's heaps of time; and I am glad to see you."

He wished that his visitor would get to the point. His boasted gladness was qualified a little by the fact that these visits always heralded some complaint or other. His boys had been making a noise at night, or some of them had called an Ansonite a smug, or thrown a snowball, or done something not less terrible! . . . He paused for a few moments, puffing at his meerschaum silently. Usually, that brought old man Anson to the scratch!

To-day, however, there seemed to be no moaning in reserve. Dr. Anson set his hands upon his knees, and plunged at once into the general conversation, which did not generally begin until Warner had promised rigorous punishment for the offenders.

"Have you seen this morning's *Times*?" he started; then, not waiting for the answer, since he knew that Warner read only the *Sportsman* and the *Daily Mail*: "I really think that there are signs, at last, of England waking from her apathy about Home Defence. There seems no doubt that a very remarkable play——"

"Oh, yes," said Warner hurriedly. "I saw about that in the *Mail*." He had read the head-lines, and did not want to be delayed by hearing Anson's version of the plot: they would be kicking off already!

Dr. Anson embarked at once on his proposal. "I was wondering this morning, whether you and I could not do something——"

"You aren't suggesting that we should enlist?"

Dr. Anson strongly suspected a twinkle in his junior's dark eyes. "No," he said very seriously, "not that: our time for that is over. It is our task now to train *others* to serve."

"And a rotten task it is, too!" Warner broke in. "I often think of chucking it: I'd rather do the serving, sometimes. If I do, Anson, will you buy my buildings from me?"

The elder man waved the jest aside as quite unworthy. "It seemed to me," he went on, "that we could do our share by stimulating interest in our own Rifle Corps: and to do that, I thought—if you were willing—we might organize a combined field-day, with healthy rivalry."

"Splendid!" cried Warner keenly. "A battle of the schools."

"A sham fight? Yes, that would be admirable: my original idea: only—er —" (he hesitated for the tactful phrase) "er—now that your numbers are somewhat smaller, it has occurred to me, perhaps the two sides would be rather unequal?"

Warner smiled. "Don't you worry about *that*, Anson: we make up for smallness by being keen! Who won the match this year, eh?" Dr. Anson made no answer. "How large is your corps?"

"It has seventy members," answered Dr. Anson, with a certain pride. That might not be many; but it was nearly twenty more than the whole muster of his rival's school!

"Ours has fifty-two," said Warner quietly.

Dr. Anson was a little staggered. "I always find it hard to induce the boys to take up both games and the corps," he said, with a new note, almost of apology.

"They do both here, or take a whacking," answered Warner. "You're too kind!" He smiled secretly to see the other squirm: there was a certain fun in ragging this old Anson! He almost envied the Corunna fellows.

"I think we have discussed that point," replied the Doctor shortly. Then, in quite a different tone, "Then might we not arrange the sham fight for this term, always so destitute of interest for the boys?"

"Right you are! By all means—especially if we wait until the footer's over. What about the last week of term, a deadly time?"

“You forget,” said Dr. Anson, with gentle superiority, “*that* would be examination week.”

Warner smiled as he bent down to knock his pipe upon the bars. “Does it matter, really?” he inquired. The Doctor’s look was quite decisive. “Well, then,” he went on, “what of the week before?”

Even that appeared a little unconventional to the other, but he felt that he must give way in his turn, perhaps. The date was definitely fixed, and Dr. Anson, never comfortable in the presence of this young man, whom he suspected of secretly deriding him, made haste to take his leave.

Warner, relieved at his departure, laid his pipe aside, and seizing up a sweater, dashed out on to the football field; whilst Dr. Anson, very stately, looking curiously like a bishop (except that he did not wear gaiters), crossed the road into his own domain, and sought out Sergeant Gore, to make inquiries as to Corunna’s efficiency in case of an invasion, and—more directly—with a view to the sham fight.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The Sham (?) Fight

"I CALL the whole thing drivel," Wren remarked to an admiring circle of small boys.

"What do you call drivel?" was the cold inquiry of Henderson, who strolled past at that moment. All the bigger fellows at Warner's found a certain amusement in the views of Wren (popularly called "The Dove" by reason of their gentleness), though he gained few disciples. Corunna was the proper place for him: Dr. Anson would have praised his humane notions, whilst Warner merely told him not to be a little fool.

Henderson was Captain of Cricket and Head Boy (for that, too, went by athletic prowess in this sporting school), so that Wren decidedly qualified his views in his reply. He had been four years at Warner's; was in the top form; but remained nobody: and Henderson was some one very great.

"I was talking about the field-day," he said, going purple in the face, much to the entertainment of his audience. "I don't see any point in it, I mean."

"That doesn't mean there *isn't* one," retorted Henderson. "Perhaps you're not big enough to see it," and he strode away, contemptuous.

"Sarcastic devil!" murmured Wren, after a safe interval; but he had lost the sympathy of those around him. The poor Dove, small, peaceful, insignificant and clever, was quite amusing, just to listen to: but when it was a matter of influence, he made no show beside Jack Henderson, tall, popular, athletic, in this sport-loving school. Here was the idol of all Warner's; Captain both officially and by general consent. If Jack Henderson had said that the world was flat, probably the whole school would have deserted the geography and followed him, believing there must be some reason why this theory should be best for Warner's. That was the great interest of every boy at Warner's—his school, which he thought the best in the whole universe; and it was because the boys knew Jack's whole mind to be devoted to the welfare of the place he ruled, that they followed him without questioning, in blind devotion.

As a matter of fact, until this fatal moment Wren had more or less carried the junior boys with him in his opposition to the great Sham Fight. They did not understand much (and cared less) about Arbitration and Universal Brotherhood, favourite phrases of the Dove, and derived from his father, President of the Universal Peace League, the English Speaking Union, and other societies less widely known: (though all this was very magnificent:) what *they* found "drivel" was the constant succession of drills and parades, which the Sham Fight seemed to render necessary.

"Warner doesn't understand," Wren had been expounding, two minutes before. "England'll never be invaded. We don't need a Navy or Volunteers or any rot of that sort. What use should *we* be?" (He paused dramatically for an answer.) "It's Arbitration that'll keep us safe. The spirit of the age is set against Warfare." It was quite a good reproduction of his father.

"I don't mind about that," replied a squeaky voice. "What *I* object to is these beastly drills. Besides, even if we've got to 'get efficient,' why drag the beastly Ansonites into the business? That's what *I* call drivel."

"*I* call the whole thing drivel," Wren had said: the which it was that Jack had overheard, as he went past the little Indignation Meeting—and he had spoken.

So now popular opinion swung round. Henderson saw some point in the thing: therefore there *was* one—what argument could be more clear? Henderson was seventeen; with a good chance of passing direct into Sandhurst; Captain of the School; and a jolly good sort. So that was all there was to say about it! Dove had found yet one more subject on which no one wished to hear his fluent rhetoric. The juniors dispersed, leaving him alone, disconsolate; and from that hour everybody joined with a real zest in the necessary drills. If any one was slack or got hauled up for anything, he ran the risk of a kicking from his file, afterwards: for that was how things got well done at Warner's. It was painful to do badly what the whole school wanted good; and in a day or two, the place from top to bottom was mad on nothing except military training.

They would show Anson's the real meaning of efficiency!

Across the road, too, though of course in a much smoother and more ordered way, all was preparation and enthusiasm. No one at Corunna was in any doubt as to the result. In a very proper and Public-Schooly manner, the whole thing was working on a settled system, and the fighting force thus

produced must obviously strike the local Adjutant of the Depôt (who had promised to be Umpire), as much superior to the smaller contingent from Warner's, trained in a haphazard way! Besides, whilst their rivals must rely upon civilian masters, had not they at Corunna the priceless assistance of their sergeant, Gore?

The last-named suddenly gained a new importance, almost popularity.

Sergeant Gore, despite his military calling and bloodthirsty name, was in reality the mildest and most plump of men. His service had been mainly of the home variety, never of the active: and since retirement (as lance-corporal), his occupation had been what is classed as "sedentary." If he had not actually sat, he had merely stood and ordered others to be energetic. He was not of those sergeants who whirl around a horizontal bar, to show his boys the proper method, nor did he wear flannel trousers and a sweater; clad in a dark-blue uniform and wearing a peaked cap, he stood immovable and drilled the squad for punishment. In that alone did Dr. Anson see fit to let his establishment, as military, depart from Public School traditions: the penalty of idleness was in units, not of lines or of detention, but of drilling. Naturally the Sergeant, to whom this duty (among many others) fell, was not immensely popular. As he also filled the position of a sort of policeman on the school grounds, he was regarded with suspicion and hostility. Some of the bigger boys, almost ripe for Sandhurst, thought it "beastly undignified" that they should be subject to the fat old man's espionage. You would not hear much good spoken of poor Sergeant Gore.

Now, however, among at least the members of the Corps, he came to be accounted a person with a distinct importance in the place: for would he not help them to defeat the Warnerite corps, and so wipe out the memory (secretly a little bitter) of the cricket match? At no costs must they be beaten again by a school so much smaller, and (even if it *did* happen to beat them!) so absolutely rotten.

Certainly, every one from Dr. Anson himself downwards, showed the utmost keenness. Grimshaw, the Head of the School and *ex officio* chief officer of the School Corps, put every ounce of energy and influence that he possessed into working up the interest. This probably was not worth much, for Grimshaw, in spite of his many (*ex officio*) dignities and honours, was not really a person of much power or prestige at Anson's. The Doctor, of course, unlike Warner, did not consider this in choosing the school Captain. The best boy at work was Head Boy: *voilà tout*: and Grimshaw happened to be very good at work. That, unhappily, concluded the list of his abilities and even at a model school, based upon System, like Corunna, it will be found

that boys rate Muscle higher than Mind, and as a subject for skill, prefer Cricket to Cicero. Dr. Anson and his sort may mourn the fact: but yet the fact remains, and everybody knows its stubbornness.

Nobody thought much of Grimshaw.

This stern, pale boy, with clear-cut features and broad shoulders, went through his school life, different in some way from the others—seeming older—and not much caring what those others thought.

Of course, he was beastly clever: all the school knew that: why, he wrote Iambics, just like Sophocles: and it was very wonderful—but rather a mistake! Of course, too, he did quite well as Head of the School, but Sinclair or any of the Eleven could do that just as well, and it would be a great deal more useful, if he would do something for the school at footer or somewhere! It was after leaving Corunna that fellows, looking back, came to respect Grimshaw as a strong man, and possibly to think less of others, whose might had been only in their arms and legs.

Yes, for the present, every one was much more influenced by what Sinclair thought. Sinclair was Captain of the Football and the Cricket: many thought he should be Captain of the School. He *was*, too, in one sense at least—that he guided its sympathies. Grimshaw could scarcely hope to carry a measure or enforce a rule, if Sinclair were against it: but having the wisdom to join tact with strength, he had not so far ever cared to make the effort. And in this case, their thoughts leapt as one: Sinclair, too, was taken with Invasion fever.

Thus Dr. Anson, Sergeant Gore, Grimshaw, and Sinclair, all for once combining, simply swept Corunna off its feet. Football, always shaky in its hold on popular affection at the end of Easter term, perished miserably: drilling was the thing! Nearly all who had so far scorned the Corps now joined it, urged by Grimshaw or threatened by Sinclair; and only regretted that, as too raw recruits, they would not be allowed to take part in the sham fight against Warner's, and share the fruits of victory.

As to that victory, there could be no doubt.

It was the Great Day.

Up among the gorse-clumps of the hilly common-land, which the Umpire-Adjutant had chosen as appropriate, the rank and file of Corunna lay in a chill wind and waited for the enemy; waited, as it seemed, for hours.

No one altogether understood the scheme of operations, as drawn up by the Adjutant, but Sergeant Gore, at any rate, made some pretence. Mr. Warner's young genel'men were an attacking force (A): so much was plain: and his boys (B) had got to keep them from advancing. The only thing that, secretly, he could not quite discover from the typewritten instructions, was the direction from which the force A might be expected to attack!

He confided to Grimshaw that he did not think the scheme well thought out or well worded. "Colonel Vernon, 'im as you've 'eard me speak of, sir" (who had not?), " 'e would 'a made the thing clear, right enough. What's all this 'ere about covering the approaches to the town? *What* town? That's what *hi* should like to know;" with which he struck the paper scornfully.

"An imaginary town," said Grimshaw, "just as this is an imaginary fort."

"Well, where *is* it, then? That's what *hi* should like to know, sir."

But Grimshaw there was equally at sea: he could not tell, although he felt that he should certainly be able. But then he was only *ex officio* an officer. . . .

Meanwhile, they were on their fort: so much was definite, for the Adjutant had declared this hillock to be that: and Sergeant Gore, with a feeling of being a deep strategist, deployed his men at intervals around it, told them to lie flat and be very vigilant. When the enemy appeared, he would see their direction and could concentrate!

So there they lay in the long grass, knowing they were cold, and trying not to know that they were nervous.

"When the henemy appears, sir," were the dashing orders of the Sergeant to Grimshaw, his lieutenant, ere he left for his own post, "*hopen fire*. Then we shall know where we hare, you see."

For the present, nobody was sure.

Each of the seventy felt that his yards of hill-side were bound to be the spot selected for attack; the gorse-bushes kept shaking in the wind, as though concealing enemy; and it was miserably cold. Nobody confessed to it, but more than one felt chill shivers running down their backs, as these long minutes of anticipation passed. It was horrible to be all on edge, like this, waiting for something to happen. It would be right enough, when things began!

And presently they did begin, with startling suddenness.

It was Gibbs of the Upper Third who won eternal fame by being first to sight a lurking foeman. Excitedly he passed the word along. From mouth to mouth it flew until it reached the spot where Grimshaw lay.

Grimshaw was horrified. Sergeant Gore had thought that the attack would be upon the other side, and this was sickening, to have the full responsibility. However, "Open fire!" had been the order, and he must hand it on, so soon as he was certain that there was an actual force advancing. Feeling very cunning and more complacent, he crawled upon his stomach to the spot where young Gibbs lay, and followed a most shaky finger.

There could be no doubt: certainly a hat, and such a squash hat as the Warnerites were wearing, lurked behind a large-sized bush!

Grimshaw's nervousness and hesitation vanished, now that he was face to face with the Real Thing. It seemed to him that instant action was essential. A moment's delay might give the honours of this first encounter to the other side.

"Ready!" he shouted to the air at large; and then, excitedly: "Volleys—independent! Ready. At 200 yards. *Present.* FIRE!"

Some in volleys, and some independent—this was no time to quibble as to a command—Corunna marksmen belched forth fire at the offending hat. There was the clatter and uproar of Sergeant Gore and his force, keen to concentrate: and in that same moment the intrepid scout who owned the hat, rose from his hiding-place and dashed away, well content to have done his mission in finding the enemy; also a little relieved that its ammunition was mere blank, and the stern Umpire safely out of sight.

" 'M; retreating in bad horder!" diagnosed Sergeant, breathlessly arriving over the hill-top. He chuckled self-complacently. "And 'e's a goner, too: shot dead."

Grimshaw had a keener mind. "Yes, but he'll tell the main force where we are, all the same."

To Sergeant Gore's intellect, scarcely that of a Napoleon, this aspect of the matter came as quite a revelation. He had thought himself the hero of an initial victory: it was rather annoying to find that he had merely helped a skirmisher of the other side.

"Very true, sir," he said ungrudgingly. "Very true hindeed. . . ." He thought a moment, and then laughed somewhere deep within his frame. "So they thinks we are *'ere*, sir, do you see? Well, so we is: just three or four, to fire a bit o' powder! Meanwhile" (this he said magnificently) "the main

force takes hup a position on the right," and he waved towards a ruined mill which Grimshaw would have sworn was on the left.

To Grimshaw, innocent of military skill, this seemed very good, and it was done. In any case, the Sergeant was commanding, and thought his project reached the heights of strategy.

"It's supple as does it, sir," he said (meaning "subtle"). "That's what the Colonel—Colonel Vernon—used to say. 'It's supple as does it: not your 'ack and 'ew': many a time I've 'ad the Colonel say that to me, and it's the truth, sir, mark my word."

So twelve small Ansonites, thought useless for much else, were left to hold the hill as long as possible, and snipe freely, crawling about, to seem like a much larger force.

"When the last charge comes, sir," said Sergeant Gore to their commander, "you falls back on the main force, if possible."

"And if impossible?" the leader of this forlorn hope put in, nervously.

"If *him*possible," replied the ruthless generalissimo, "you surrenders at discretion." And as he turned away, "But not before."

He said this very sternly, and then with much taking of cover behind gorse and fences, he led his men up to the ruined mill. A stone wall ran around it, making quite a colony of little buildings, and as the Sergeant viewed the place, he knew it for a strong position. The hill up which they had just climbed ran down sheer, upon the other side, to the small river Ney. This side he felt that he could disregard, but round the others he distributed his men, and they awaited the arrival of the hostile force.

It proved to be rather a long wait.

There were, it is true, some sounds of firing upon what the Sergeant, to every one's bewilderment, now called "the left front": but not a great deal, scarcely enough to let the Warnerites imagine the hill-fort held by their enemy's main force. Sergeant Gore was far from satisfied, and said he should have thought a dozen men could make a better show than that, with almost unlimited ammunition in hand.

As the minutes grew into a half-hour and nothing happened, he became very humorous at the expense of the invaders, and was encouraged to take a part that should be more than passive. He began thinking with an extreme degree of "supplety."

The result certainly was striking, as explained to Grimshaw and a few favoured privates. The enemy, "being the force *hA*," were clearly occupied with the so-called fort, which they believed occupied by "the force B, being *hus*." Now, then, was the moment to attack them in the rear, or on the flank, or in one of the places so beloved by Cæsar.

In his means to this end, however, the Corunna sergeant totally surpassed the Roman general.

Down at the bottom of the hill, where the small stream Ney meanders through the valley, stands a little drawbridge, such as often spans these narrow waterways, for farmers' use: a thing to be pulled up and down by means of a wood counter-weight. Unhappily, just now, the bridge was up: only to be lowered from the other side. But what was this to one who had studied "supple" methods under the great Colonel Vernon? Clearly, if the force B could cross this stream here, and then recross it by a lower bridge, they would have got behind the enemy in a method altogether unexpected: for the force A would have regarded this water as a kind of touch-line to the field of operations. Even the most realistic sham fight, in one's school-days, does not include fording a river. The Matron would object to that!

Sergeant Gore, his plans already made, dashed down the hill-side, zigzag, from bush to bush; having just pointed out to his soldiers the importance of this example he was giving them in strategy, and exhorting them to watch him.

This they were willing to do. Was the fat Sergeant going to dive in and swim? Or would he take a flying leap? Either would be well worth watching: for the stream itself was some ten yards across, and even where erections jutted out from either side, to form a basis for the farmer's drawbridge, there was an open space, deep water, of certainly twelve feet. Jumping or swimming—it would be a sight worth seeing!

But they had undervalued the wit of their commander.

Sergeant Gore, still treading very delicately, made his way to where a rustic boat, a sort of small pontoon, lay moored among the rushes. That reached, he took out the rough oars, and cast them from him on the grass with a dramatic gesture, as though to say a strategist would not have dealings with anything so obvious as *that*. Then he unloosed the punt, stepped into it, waved his hand magnificently at his troops above—clearly remarking once again, "Watch *me*"—and then, giving a kick to the bank, lay prone upon his stomach in the boat.

A sluggish current carried its heavy burden slowly on its breast. The punt majestically moved down stream. Nothing could be seen in it except the broad blue back of the old Sergeant, just beginning to wish that he had thought of bailing out a little bilge-water, before he settled down. When the boys reflected that this empty-seeming boat, so free from all suspicion to any watcher of the other force, must surely strike the further bank at the curved stream's next bend, they were forced to admit that in his action he had carried out his great life-maxim, "It's supple as does it. . . ." He would lower that drawbridge.

Then a Strange Thing happened.

Even while those on the height watched the scarcely moving boat, the promontory to which it floated filled suddenly with figures; figures in the accoutrement of Warner's Corps. . . .

"By Jove!" muttered Sinclair, "*they've* crossed, by the other bridge!" And then—he laughed.

As to the others, nobody knew what to do. Grimshaw, left in command, had orders for almost every emergency but this. It was no use to shout and warn the Sergeant: he could not turn back, and it would only tell the Warnerites where the main force was. . . . Almost hypnotized with horror, they stood aloft and watched the punt, with that broad blue back protruding, drift inexorably towards the silent group of riflemen, who watched the curious phenomenon.

Somehow or other, it never occurred to any one within the mill to open fire upon the enemy. That was not part of this so subtle scheme!

And presently, with ever such a gentle bump, the punt beached itself upon the promontory of the river-bend. Sergeant Gore, well satisfied, if rather stiff and wet, got up and stood erect.

The first thing that met his gaze, as he did this, was the business end of probably a dozen rifles.

With one instantaneous consent his followers, up above, burst into a roar of laughter. They might be soldiers, whose commander had been captured: but above all else they were school-boys, whose hated Sergeant had been badly sold. This tragic end to all his "supplety" was altogether too delicious.

"Watch me!" mimicked one.

"No 'ack and 'ew!" exclaimed another.

"Silly old *ass*," murmured Sinclair, rather impatiently. But even he could see the creamy humour of it.

And then—while they still craned over the stone wall, rocking in their merriment—a stern order came upon them from behind.

"Surrender!"

Immediately their laughter died; they swung about, and found themselves, in turn, facing the barrels of two dozen rifles. A Warnerite detachment stood across the entrance to the mill enclosure!

The order had come from Henderson.

"You're our prisoners," he said.

Grimshaw, terribly ashamed, looked from his own men, all in no order and rifles unloaded, even laid aside, to the row of Warnerites who covered them relentlessly: and logic had to own the fact. They were more in number, but they were cornered badly.

"I suppose we are?" he said to Sinclair, whom he always half unconsciously consulted. "The Umpire'd say so."

"Umpire be blowed! Surrender to the Warnerites?" cried Dick: and then, to Henderson, "Come on and take us."

"Volleys!" came Jack's prompt order: and just as it was to be completed, Wren sprang towards him.

"Don't fire at them, Henderson," he shouted, excitable as ever. "You'll blow them all to pieces at this distance."

Jack smiled scornfully, yet saw the wisdom: this was too close a range, even for blank.

"Do you surrender?" he asked once again.

"*No*," yelled back Dick, before Grimshaw had time to answer. "Not to *you*!"

"Charge, then!" Jack cried in anger, and suited the order by rushing straight at Dick: the scornful note upon that "you" had made the battle rather more than sham.

Muses, who helped old Homer in his battle-scenes, aid me now to tell of the great fight that then befell! Show how the useless rifles were now laid aside, trampled as to their sights, both back and front, by eager feet, while fists were used as more commodious weapons! Hymn the undying fame of

Jenkins in the Fourth, who all alone held three Corunna men at bay, his back against the wall, and gave to each alike a beautiful black eye! Tell how the wall and force of numbers favoured Anson's, but how anger and the sense of right emboldened Warner's; so that the fight waxed long and hazardous! Up to the startled heavens rose the dust and roar of conflict, and who shall say what wondrous deeds were done within those hill-top walls?

Eminent above all others, as is fit, was the fierce conflict of the chiefs; the battle between Henderson and Sinclair. To and fro, this way and that, they reeled, locked body to body in a desperate struggle, caring nothing for the Umpire nor the subtleties of warfare; only resolved, each of them, Briton-like, to perish sooner than to own defeat. Henderson was certainly the stronger, and little by little, he bore Dick down towards the ground: but just as a wrestler, faced close by defeat, starts suddenly aside and up, so did Dick leap away, and seizing a rifle, stand upon the wall-top; threatening, at bay.

Jack, noting this new phase of the long battle, stooped, picked up a rifle at random, and rushed towards his foe.

"*Surrender*," he shouted wildly, suddenly remembering the object of the fight, and whirling his new weapon madly.

"Surrender be blowed!" Dick answered once again, in heavy gasps, and as the other dashed in on him, he brought his weapon down heavily upon his head.

Jack tried to parry it; failed to get his rifle up; took the blow full on his soft hat; and fell motionless upon the ground.

Dick, horrified, suddenly remembered that this was a sham fight.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

Casus Belli

GREAT was the anger of the Warnerites, when they saw their idol, Henderson, carried off, huddled and motionless, upon a hurdle; nor did it die down in the days that followed. If Warner's had formerly disliked its neighbours, it now hated them.

Dick, of course, had been the first to kneel beside the injured warrior and see what could be done, nor was he by any means least sorry of them all for what had happened: but Warner's fellows, hurrying up, had none too gently elbowed him aside.

"We don't want *your* help!" Wren had actually said, with bitterness: and Dick felt too anxious and miserable to retort.

One of the Ansonites, however, standing by, exclaimed: "Shut up, you silly little bounder," and that very nearly started the *mêlée* again.

Away upon the far side of the mill, indeed, it had not ceased, because its combatants had failed to note the accident. Still full of feeling, burning with the rivalry and scorn of years, the smaller fellows of each school were grappling and pummelling each other. What little of military ritual the fight had ever boasted (and that was not much, thanks to the Sergeant's and the Umpire's absence), was by now totally neglected: the thing had become one of taunts followed by duels; every Warnerite engaged, the surplus Ansonites as keen spectators, ready to take the place of a defeated unit.

It was on such a scene that the Head Masters entered; Warner and Dr. Anson, trying to reach topics of common interest, and searching vainly for some sign of the fighting.

Now, suddenly, they found it.

Their eyes, confronted with so much in one brief moment, missed the group bending, ominously silent, over a figure prone upon the ground, and lit first on the more assertive tableau to their right.

Could these be their gallant, highly-trained defenders? This dense mass of whirling arms and well-spiced insults? No wonder the two pedagogues

were horrified! Dr. Anson, in particular, felt this to be the conduct of a Board School rather than Corunna.

"No, no!" he fatuously shouted, with authority. "No, no!"

Warner, more practical, descended on the flock in warlike manner.

It is said that a walking-stick is the very worst means of stopping a dog-fight, since it encourages the injured hounds: but certainly it had quite an opposite effect upon these human combatants. Warner struck out at every one alike: any thigh that offered served him as a target; friend or enemy. Howls rent the air, suddenly: first one, then many, and hands—lately raised against a foeman's face—now sought in agony another portion of their owner's frame. Warner was a big man, armed with a big stick, and he found no need to hit twice. Indeed, when he had hit four or five victims once, the others, suddenly conscious of some new development, came to themselves; realized that they *were* themselves, and in presence of their Head; and felt altogether not a little foolish.

"Boys," said Dr. Anson, with much grandeur, "I am ashamed of you."

No one minded that immensely, but it seemed silly, somehow, to be dressed in military kit and yet to be without one's rifle, standing there, in order anything but martial, under the cold eye of Authority.

An awkward minute followed, broken by the arrival of the Umpire.

"Now buck up, you men, and get to look something *like* something," said Warner scornfully to his contingent. "Here's the Adjutant."

Captain Arundel was rather puzzled with the scene before him, which did not seem to fall into the same class, quite, as anything in all his years of service.

"What has been happening here?" he said helplessly, appealing to Warner for information on which to build a decision.

"I don't know the military name for it," came the grim reply, "but it is what I should call a common or garden street-row."

" 'M!" The Captain pulled at his moustache judicially. "Well," he said finally, "I think there is no need to give a decision here, as the main action has been settled elsewhere." The Corunna fellows, puzzled as to how that could be so, when they themselves formed the main body, closed around the Adjutant, to listen. This war business was a rummy game!

Captain Arundel cleared his throat once or twice; shook himself about a little, like a man preparing to drive off at golf; and was on the point of opening his remarks, when suddenly an interruption offered.

Wren, white and dishevelled, rushed up to Warner.

"Oh, sir," he cried dramatically, "they can't bring him round!"

"Bring *who* round? and *where*?" coldly replied Warner, who never sought to hide his scorn for Wren.

"Henderson, sir—on the ground. I think he must be dead."

"Dear, dear," exclaimed the Doctor, terribly perturbed.

But Warner knew the Dove. "Rubbish, man!" he answered. "Where is he? Buck up!"

Not waiting to hear any of the explanations that were jerked at him, he knelt by the boy's side, and in a very workmanlike way, learnt upon the football field, began to examine him, with the calm and tenderness of a skilled doctor. The boys, of whichever school, stood round in a tense silence.

"He's all right," said Warner presently: and one could almost hear the fellows start to breathe again. "A little concussion. Here, hurry up, some one, and fetch a hurdle. We must get him home, and then he'll be all right."

But though he spoke lightly, knowing how easily boys magnify an accident into a tragedy, he secretly felt nervous; and waiting neither to say good-bye to the Umpire nor to hear out the Doctor's regrets, he took one corner of the hurdle, and set out on the tramp home. Full of sympathy, and not caring to be left longer with the Ansonites, his boys were following, when he turned round upon them, almost angrily. *They* could not come, he said: they were soldiers, not nurses—though they did not seem to have remembered it! And so he left them, to end the work that they had got in hand. He was not one who would believe in shirking, even for the best of sentimental reasons.

Feeling a little crushed, more than a little angry, they stood in a group, shunning the Ansonites like something tainted with infection. Regarded as a means to friendship, the field-day was not vastly a success!

Captain Arundel, luckily, was too busy with his duties, and too used to casualties, to notice the strained position, which he just saved from developing into a new conflict by going on methodically with his business.

He was about to renew his synopsis of the day's fighting, when a sudden clatter at the gateway drew every one's eyes and attention to that spot. Sergeant Gore, plainly indignant, his head held scornfully erect, was being led in by his triumphant captors.

Captain Arundel smiled under his moustache.

"Ah, Sergeant," he said, affecting not to notice his captive estate, "I was just going to sum up the result of the day's operations."

Sergeant Gore, in great relief, stepped from among his warders and saluted. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," and he forced his way to the Captain's side, feeling a new dignity, and trying to regain his usual importance.

"The force A," resumed that last, "was given the task of pushing its way through an enemy's country, to join an imaginary army. The force B was in occupation of a hill" (he waved his hand towards it), "supposed to be a fort, a strong position commanding the valley. I have just left the force A which, while the—er—skirmish was taking place here" (and he tried not to smile), "succeeded in joining that imaginary army; curiously enough, without a shot being fired by the force B. It is therefore my plain duty, as Umpire, to say that the day lies with the force A—that is to say, with Mr. Warner's boys."

Great were the cheers that burst from the Warnerites at that, and glum the looks upon the faces of those who had fought for the glory of Corunna.

"Er—as to the reasons for this bloodless victory," Captain Arundel went on, more diffidently, "perhaps I may be allowed to say a word or two. The scheme of operations seems to have been a little—er, misunderstood by—er, the force B, which appears to have imagined that its duty was merely to be ready to *repel* attack, not actively to prevent the enemy's advance. The force A was therefore able to achieve its aim without opposition, and the sole firing and—er, fighting took place between the outposts; at any rate, so far as the force A was concerned. The skeleton force representing their main—er, force, reached its goal without coming into conflict with the enemy. The force B, no doubt, was handicapped by the early capture of its commanding officer, and I hope—in fact, no doubt, future field-days, with more practice, will lead to operations strategically more satisfactory: and I think there is no need to dwell further upon that."

"Hear, hear," said Dr. Anson, as the Captain paused.

"What it is very encouraging to be able to comment upon is the admirable pluck and—er, resource shown by the boys of either side. I hope, and in fact no doubt, in future years of this—er, friendly rivalry, these

qualities will be no more—that is, no *less* conspicuous, and combined also with more strategic skill." At this point he pulled down his collar, and speaking with more ease, concluded: "I have much pleasure in congratulating Mr. Warner's boys upon their victory, and in congratulating those of Mr.—that is, Dr. An—er, that is, *Corunna*—on their pluck and—er—resource." And his voice died away.

"Three cheers for the Umpire," shouted Grimshaw; and if the smaller Ansonites did not join in them quite so heartily as did the Warnerites, well, maybe it was only small-boy nature, after all. They felt it was a "beastly swiz," and they thought almost nothing of the Adjutant as Umpire.

Even Grimshaw and the bigger fellows felt they had not been fairly treated. They might possibly have blamed the Sergeant, had he not fluently explained, all the way home, that Captain Arundel as a soldier was no more good than a sick 'eadache; exclaimed frequently, "call *that* a scheme of hoperations!"; vowed force B was the moral victor; and set forth at some length how Colonel Vernon—"now, 'e *was* a soldier, if you like"—would have explained the whole thing in a line, and not made this ridiculous mistake. . . .

But he had rather a chill audience, at best. The Sergeant, as a fighting man, had lost some of his prestige (gained by his own stories of past heroism) in the moment that they saw him helpless before the rifles of the Warnerites!

Besides, what was victory to the one side or defeat to the other? Each had grievances of far more import.

How like the Ansonites, said Warner's boys angrily among themselves, to go and stun a fellow and give him concussion, all in a sham fight! Of course, it was like the beastly smugs to get sick at being captured by a smaller force: but they *should* have thought that was about the limit!

As to the Corunna fellows, they were equally indignant. Of course the thing had been an accident, and any one but bounders would have understood as much. Naturally Dick Sinclair would have apologized—did try to, and to bring the fellow round—but the beastly Warnerites shoved him aside, and that rotten little funk had actually dared to say they didn't want *his* help! Jolly rough luck on Dick, who was awfully cut up! Besides, it was beastly cheek expecting a fellow to surrender: naturally he fought. And that great hefty swine Warner (whom secretly they all respected), coming and laying about with that great stick of his! All right lamming the Warnerites, of

course, but what right had he to come licking *them*? Disgusting cheek! No wonder his fellows were such a set of swabs! . . .

In fact, only the end of term and a certain diplomacy upon the part of the Head Masters, who kept their boys well occupied, prevented the thing from ending in something more dangerous than words.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Rumours—and War

EPISODES at school are generally bounded by the end of term: that is to say, no incident, however thrilling, usually survives the holidays. Jones may be in a terribly tight place, but if he can stave the row off until breaking up, he knows that he is tolerably safe. Brown and Robinson have been rather chilly with each other during the last weeks of the long winter term, but unless there is some really serious ground of quarrel, the Easter term will see their friendship taken up again. The holidays wipe the slate clean, and every one starts with a fresh account.

Of course, the feud between the schools was of those serious things that persevere: no holiday, however long, would kill it—now, more than ever: but at least this break in the school year made a considerable change in the form that it assumed.

Smarting with their recent grievances; bored in the last weeks of a boring term; the Warnerites hearing exaggerated rumours as to Jack's injuries; the Ansonites furious at the reception of Dick's later apologies; they were foaming for each other's blood, in April. But when May came, it found them full of cricket and its prospects; busy with fresh interests; Jack in his place, as fit as ever; and the whole incident too stale to stand discussion. Each school was still furious with the other: but the actual longing to come to blows had passed. In fact, each really felt that it would be lowering itself by having any dealings whatsoever with the other! The former fierce anger had given place to a dull resentment, far more likely to be lasting.

Then came a startling bit of news. The annual cricket match was "off"!

At once rumour started on its round, and everybody had a different story. "The Ansonites have funked," said Warner's, "and darned sensible, too. They know they would have got another licking." Corunna naturally had another version, in which their rivals were held up to ridicule as fearing to be clubbed upon the head with cricket-bats, poor little darlings! Each school got quite a lot of fun from its peculiar theory.

This for a while: but presently—when neither Head Master gave an explanation, and Dick and Jack, respectively, said they knew nothing more

than that there would not be a match, this year—presently, another story began to be whispered in the studies of Corunna.

Gibbs of the Third, full of a longing to be superior, was first to start this story rolling.

"Nobody really believes that's it," he said magnificently, when one of his small-boy friends had repeated the stock explanation.

"Well, what *is* it, then?" came the triumphant answer: and the other was beaten, for a moment.

"*Ah!*" he said presently, with a great cunning, as one whose lips are sealed.

At once the news began to spread that Gibbs knew the real explanation about the Warnerite match, but wouldn't tell it: and for an hour or two he lived upon his reputation. Then, of course, the scoffers came and shattered it.

"I don't believe he knows, at all," said some one, more by way of finding out than anything.

"Oh, *don't* I?" Gibbs retorted weakly.

"Well, you simply mean that you think old Ass Anson funked there being a row? Because if so, that's all stale bunkum, because the match is supposed to make us pally, and every one knows that."

Gibbs replied with crushing slowness. "Well, as a matter of fact, I *don't* mean that: so you are rather sold!"

Now, this negative sort of attitude might satisfy his fellows of the Third, but Gibbs (bitten with detective fever and the desire for further fame, since he had been the first to sight that Warnerite scout behind the gorse-bush) had dabbled with a bigger matter than he knew. Every one was talking of this sudden end to an old annual fixture, every one longing for an explanation. Travelling up the forms, in the mystic way that news runs through a school, the rumour of young Gibbs' boasted private knowledge soon reached Dick, who, as cricket captain, was not a little interested.

After second school, he went along to number sixteen, Gibbs' study. Several of the little boys who shared this small room with the hero of the hour, were idling in it—reading, talking, or fighting on the floor. Sinclair's entrance caused quite a sensation. The Army and the Navy sides are separate at Corunna: and not often had number sixteen welcomed so superb a visitor.

"Here," he said, as he entered, "what are you all doing, fugging in the study on a day like this? Clear on out."

Sinclair was not a prefect, had no official power: but when one is twelve, it is ill arguing with an athlete of eighteen, and they duly "cleared on out."

"Not *you*, Gibbs," Dick cried, as they scuttled forth. "I want a word with you."

Gibbs, very proud but rather nervous, came back from the door. The others went out, wondering.

"Look here," Dick opened, when their noise had died away along the corridor, "what's all this about your knowing why the match is off?"

Now, indeed, poor Gibbs' pride was altogether flooded by his nervousness, for he was cornered. He looked up at the Cricket Captain, towering above him, one foot on a chair, and he knew that this was no time for such evasive answers as had served him until now. "Wouldn't you like to know?" or simply the old, learned-sounding "Ah!"—these were not things to say to the great Sinclair! And if he owned that it had all been nothing, he was sure of a pretty sound kicking for being a little ass, and talking about things that did not concern him. . . .

It is said that the brain works more rapidly, more clearly, in a crisis than at other times: and that though the next minute may bring a reaction lasting months, this instant's thought is often the most splendid of a life-time.

So it was with Gibbs. Even while Sinclair looked down on him, seeming to bulk larger every moment, he was given his great Inspiration. He remembered suddenly the several times of late when he had seen the Doctor cross the lane, and on that slender base he built a wonderful, convincing theory, for which—in periods of less peril—a month would probably have not sufficed.

"I don't *know*, Sinclair," he said timidly, in case of accident; "it's only what I guessed."

"Well, out with it! What is it?" Sinclair obviously would judge by results.

Gibbs took up an even humbler tone: already he could feel those big boots, menacing, behind him! "It's only that Anson—I mean Dr. Anson, and Mr. Warner are always together now, and they've only got forty-seven fellows there, now, because five have just left, and there used to be a hundred—usedn't there?—and so——"

"By gad!" cried Dick, not waiting for the stuttered argument's conclusion. "I never thought of that. You mean Warner's shutting down? The place is busting?"

"Yes," answered Gibbs hopefully, with a new confidence. The boots looked smaller now.

Dick was thinking. " 'M!" he said. "I shouldn't wonder. . . . Anyhow, don't go saying anything about it—see?" And without so much as "Thank you," or "Clever of you!" he had gone.

Of course, Gibbs was much too proud of his own cleverness, too pleased at being able (unexpectedly) to show that he really *did* know, to obey the Captain about silence. Dick, too, spread the rumour freely. Within a week, everybody at Corunna said quite definitely that Warner's was shutting at the end of term.

"And a jolly good thing, too," was the usual addition.

When the visits between the two Head Masters continued frequent, almost daily, every one agreed that the old Ass was keen to be decent to Warner, now that he was a failure, and to part in peace.

The Doctor, indeed, shortly afterwards announced, in one of his periodic speeches, that the annual match had been abandoned because he wished the two schools, henceforward, to regard each other not as rivals, but as friends. Every one, however, (to the vast relief of Gibbs,) agreed that this was merely bluff.

From this time on, Corunna began to regard the other school with the sentiment which Dr. Anson was supposed to feel for Warner—pity, contempt, and the noble generosity due to a fallen rival!

After all, what was the use of lamming into them when they were down? They were a failure! Wasn't that enough? And next term, the place would be healthier without them! (This was Gibbs' contribution.) . . .

Warner's, meanwhile, quite unaware of all these rumours (since nobody at either school would pass a word with anybody at the other), did not, for its part, worry to attack these contemptuous foes: for it was busy with others, of more active nature.

It need surprise no one that a school, open only to boys intended for the services, and conducted upon sporting lines, should be a little rough and pugnacious: what may be thought curious is that Winton, so small a village, should be chosen for no less than three seats of learning.

Yet so it was. Because of its climate, its low rents, or for whatever reason, there they were: Corunna, Warner's, and the Agricultural College: and being only three, they naturally fought. If there had been twenty, or even a dozen, things might have been different. As it was, the three were always clashing. Warner's and Corunna were naturally rivals, whilst Mr. Da Costa's Agricultural College for the Training of Gentleman Farmers (to give it its full title), struck each of them as a convenient butt.

Mr. Da Costa's pupils were not boys. There must be no error as to that! No greater insult could be offered to any one of them. They all had their allowances, and they might smoke and drink at will, nor were there any bounds set them in their excursions. They might have bicycles, horses, motor-cars, aeroplanes—anything they could afford—and most of them were over twenty.

In a word, they were magnificent, in their own opinion: in that of the boys, an "awfully good rag." Nothing, for pure fun, came up to baiting the Costers (as they were usually called), and its chief joy lay in the fact that, in the process, they became extremely angry. *They* were not going to be interfered with by a "pack of boys"!

Warner's fellows, during all this summer term, waged an especially unceasing war against these splendid people, and had succeeded with great joy in rousing them to a pitch of ferocity hitherto unknown. The college was for *Gentleman* Farmers, but that is a vague word, and they were rather a rough lot. Somewhat excessive was the vengeance meted out to any Warnerite stupid enough to fall into their clutches during one of these encounters. He was a "beastly boy," and boys "wanted thrashing, don't you know"! Such was the theory of the Costers, and on it they acted to a degree which might have caused inquiry, but that boys usually prefer to take the consequences of their own adventurings: and Warner never heard of these fierce vengeances upon some of his smaller fellows.

There were, however, others to avenge them.

Jack, in particular, happened to note the back of a boy in his dormitory, one night, while every one was washing, stripped to the waist, at the long row of basins. Great purple weals stood out across it.

"Hullo, Foster," he exclaimed. "Has Warner been laying in to you? What for?"

"Oh, no," answered Foster uneasily, trying to appear at ease.

"It was the Costers," one of the fellows said, coming to the rescue: for nobody likes sneaking about himself, even to another boy.

Jack was utterly astonished. "But that was a week ago, or jolly nearly! They must have almost murdered you?"

"They *did* make me sit up a bit. It was up the river, and I only had a vest on."

"The swine," Jack exclaimed angrily, for Foster was only a small kid. "Who was it?"

But now Foster obviously did not wish to speak.

"The usual gang?" said Jack. "The Lightweight?" (The Lightweight was known in his own circles by the name of Featherstone.)

"Yes, more or less," said Foster vaguely.

"Very well," Jack muttered ominously. "*I'll* make the little blighter pay for it."

Now this was capital! The bigger fellows, until now, had always held aloof from the feud with Da Costa's, regarding it as rather below their dignity, and as they would have called it, "kiddy," to bait men older than themselves. The Costers, of course, *were* cheeky beasts and touts and everything of that sort: but their harrying could be left quite safely to amuse the juniors. These last were certainly amused with it, but they were also nervous, for their foes were a big lot, and Foster was by no means the first to come off badly as the result of an excessive rashness.

But now Henderson, who was more their size—(more their size? Why, every one at Warner's believed that he could lick a dozen of the Costers!)—the great Henderson himself was going to join in the fray, and they had better jolly well look out!

The school settled down with pleasure to wait for their discomfiture.

Two or three weeks passed without the chance occurring, weeks too full of cricket, boating, and all the interests of a summer term; and then, like most things for which one has waited, it came quite unexpectedly.

It was a glorious July day, and—what seemed almost criminal—it was a Long Lesson: which is to say that there was work for every one from three o'clock till five. These days were rare at Warner's in the summer-time, so long as the sun shone, for the old Blue believed that winter was the time for work, and usually found some excuse for a half-holiday: perhaps not a very

good excuse, yet fully good enough to satisfy both himself and the boys. But if the sun persisted in shining on every Long Lesson day for a whole month, Principle demanded that work should be done now and then: and this was one of those occasions.

No cricket to-day! Every one was bored. Five o'clock, and lock-ups at six-thirty: what earthly use was that to any one? Some of the fellows played small game; others went for a short walk; and most of them did nothing except slack. (This last was Warner's reason for hatred of these afternoons.)

Suddenly two of those who had chosen to walk, came hurrying back and rushed up to a group of idlers.

"Such a rag!" they cried. "What do you think? Lightweight's got a picnic on the Ney! We saw him sweating up with a huge hamper in the stern."

Here, indeed, was nothing less than a godsend for a dull afternoon! Everybody realized at once that this was a prime opportunity to annoy the enemy, and quickly the news spread, until it reached Jack Henderson.

"Oh, a river picnic?" he said, bored with inaction, and still indignant at the ill-treatment of young Foster. "*We'll* river-picnic the bounders. Come along, you men!" and accompanied by O'Brien and three others of the First Eleven, he swung out through the school gates. The small boys, chattering and joyful, followed in a bunch behind this dashing leader, anxious not to miss a moment of his vengeance.

There is one traditional spot, leafy in shade, and with an easy landing-place, where picnickers upon the Ney do always congregate: and to Jack's delight, even as he and his satellites arrived upon the bank, Da Costa's men hove into sight along the bend. First came an oarsman, who strained heavily at a broad boat, the stern of which was almost submerged with the weight of a vast hamper. Great joy surged over the Warnerites as in the narrow back that bent to jerk those splashing oars, they did indeed recognize the hated Featherstone.

"Good! There's the 'Lightweight,' " said Jack ghoulishly: but almost immediately he added, with no less vehemence, "Oh, *hang*!"

Round the corner came, with more ease and less commotion of the water, a lighter boat wherein sculled Cursitor; his cargo two young ladies. It was not a picnic of Costers!

"They've got some girls with them," Jack said. "That rots up everything."

"Why?" queried Wren in disappointment. He had never felt so secure, in any raid against the doughty Costers.

"Why, we can't rag them now, you silly ass."

Henderson spoke so contemptuously that Wren hastened to say, "No, of course not," though really he did not see why, at all. So much the safer, if two of them were only girls!

Jack was just about to turn away, when O'Brien said, with his slight brogue, "I don't see why we wouldn't stop and watch? It's really darned amusing. Look at that silly ass the Lightweight doing all the work!"

"Yes," said Jack, laughing, "but it's rather rough luck to rag the swine, when they've got girls with them."

"Who's going to rag them?" replied the other. "I only want to see a little of the fun."

Meanwhile the leading boat (which must have had a generous start) drove its nose gently into the bank, almost opposite to where the Warnerites were standing, hidden by the luxuriant undergrowth that makes the Ney so beautiful a stream.

Featherstone stepped on to terra firma, very timidly, as though in hideous fear of overbalancing into the water. He was dressed in a green flannel of alarming brightness and the latest cut. His shirt was mauve, and the cream-hued tie showed to its full length, because he wore no waistcoat. White shoes and a large turn-up of the well-creased trousers served to display a generous peep of purple socks. In spite of this magnificence, he was not particularly imposing, for Nature had not shaped him quite in the mould of the River Man. His shoulders, broad (at first sight) for so short and weak a man, proved (on a second) to be due less to athletics than to the tailor's art. And when the summer breeze played with his trouserings, it almost seemed as though they flapped only against broomsticks. A moustache could be seen —by those of keener eyesight—distinctly beginning to hide some of his silly, self-conceited face.

Once safely upon shore, he did not worry about fastening the boat or starting to unload the cargo. With a quick glance at the rapidly approaching wherry, he set his legs slightly apart, removed his panama hat, and took out from his breast pocket a small mirror. This he held in his left hand, while with the right he smilingly smoothed the hairs of his head, and also the few of his upper lip.

The complacent way in which the little man gazed, almost sentimentally, at his own ugly image, was too much for the boys upon the other bank: and they made sounds of merriment, which reached him.

Hurriedly he put the mirror back into its resting-place, and peered across the water. A look of anger crossed his face, as he saw who had laughed.

"Go *away*, you boys!" he said, with an utterly absurd air of authority, and he waved his hand in the sort of gesture with which one frightens away flies.

He scored a great success, so far as laughter went. Even Jack was glad that he had stayed. And certainly he did not think of going, now that he was ordered—by the Lightweight!

But now the second boat arrived, in a less sluggish manner, and Cursitor leapt nimbly out, tied the painter to a bough, and steadied the boat while his passengers stepped on to the bank, each smiling at him as he took her hand. He was far less grand in his attire than Featherstone—white flannels, a cellular shirt and (once on shore) an old school blazer—but distinctly more impressive. He was a veritable giant, of the tall, athletic build, with long, straight limbs, and over them a face tanned and healthy, lighting up at times in a good-humoured and refreshing smile. He was certainly handsome, but let one fancy that he did not know it. Always roughly dressed, generally in old riding kit, he was the only Coster whom Warner's and Corunna, by tacit consent, left out of the feud. His good-natured face (he was half Irish) and tolerant ignoring of their existence, set him somehow apart: and besides, if they had realized the truth, they admired—or even feared—his strength, and no one had ever thought of shortening "Cursitor" to "Cur."

So his presence, combined with that of two very radiant young damsels in enormous hats, quieted the boys on the far bank. In a minute or so, doubtless, they would have gone away quietly, without letting any one but Featherstone know that they ever had been present at this private function.

But this indignant little person, who had been fussing aimlessly around while their guests landed, still had the sound of that derisive laughter in his ears: and it seemed to him that here was a good chance to show Edna and Fay Denton (the last of whom he thought rather admired him) what a strong man he was. After all, the beastly boys couldn't very well be such bounders as to say anything or stop and rag, when there were ladies present. . . .

"Here, you boys," he said, just as Jack was thinking it would really be more polite to go now; "didn't you hear me tell you to clear off?"

"Dry up, Lightweight!" piped a treble voice.

Jack turned towards the junior, to tell him to shut up—of course, a kid wouldn't understand how beastly rude this was, with women—when suddenly he saw one of the girls glance at the other; then both go off in an ecstasy of giggles. They had never thought of that grand name for Mr. Featherstone! "Tubby" they knew: but "Lightweight"——!

This changed Jack's whole attitude. It appeared that the women were amused, and as to Featherstone, it really was disgusting cheek. He did not very well see how they could "clear off," now!

"Clear off, yourself," he shouted. "Have you *bought* the place?"

"Do you mind us breathing?" Wren cried out, thus encouraged, and then tried to hide. He did not care about being recognized. After all, *he* did not want to fight the Costers!

The Misses Denton were now tremendously amused. They thought it quite an adventure, and the boys were rather fun: besides, it was killing to see that stuck-up little Mr. Featherstone annoyed like this.

The latter, of course, did not fail to notice their amusement, which was obvious even from the other bank, and he grew red with mingled shame and indignation. He always secretly suspected people of laughing at him, though he tried to think them filled with admiration: in fact, he swaggered that he might not cringe. But now there was no doubt: Edna—yes, and even Fay!—found this amusing. Cursitor, busily unloading the boat, hardly seemed to notice anything—but then, thought Featherstone, he was notoriously easy-going, and never seemed to try and keep these beastly kids in their right place.

Clearly, if he were to regain his prestige with Fay, he must take up a dignified position. He had tried commands: now he must fall back on threats. After all, one or two of these fellows had some cause to fear Da Costa's men.

"Look here," he cried out very sternly, when he was certain that the Denton girls were listening. "Do you want me to come across to you?"

"*Yes.* Good old Lightweight!" a voice came from the other bank.

"Lightweight floats on water," cried O'Brien, in terms of a well-known advertisement.

The elder of the sisters made a gallant effort, this time, not to giggle, but succumbed at last, and even Cursitor smiled, though in rather a grim, angry

way. He was wishing that Featherstone would not make an ass of himself by inviting repartees from school-boys, at a river picnic.

He went across to where Featherstone was standing. "*They'll* clear off all right, Tubby, if you leave them alone," he said. "They've only come because they know it makes you sick."

This did not console Featherstone a lot. "Yes, I know: that's why it's infernal cheek, the beastly little blighters. I say" (at which he dropped his voice, and looked nervously towards the ladies); "*you* tell them to go away!"

"Oh, all right," Cursitor said casually. He strolled along the bank, until he was exactly opposite the group of boys; Featherstone following, like a dog, behind.

"I say, you fellows," he shouted conversationally, "shift along a bit, like decent sorts? We've got a show on, here."

"Yes, and make pretty *quick* about it, too," added Featherstone fiercely, and loud enough to reach the Dentons.

Jack and the others, on the point at moving at Cursitor's rational request, were brought up sharp by Featherstone's tactless addition. To move now, Jack reflected, would be to give him a victory—a victory, too, in front of strangers.

"We shan't clear off for that sort of thing," he answered.

Now, indeed, there was no choice for the Lightweight between defeat or war: and reinforced by Cursitor, whose fame he knew, he felt the latter to be safe.

"Very well, then; we'll just make you." If Cursitor and he made signs of crossing, they'd run rapidly enough!

And, indeed, to a large extent, his hopes were justified, for so soon as his tall companion, unwilling at first, was induced to take the matter seriously—he thought the fellows *might* have shifted off—most of the Warnerites took to their heels with one consent, as the boat with the two Costers put out from the other side: the tall athlete had a great prestige, and if all Da Costa's men secretly were feared, none more than Cursitor. All that is unknown, says the Latin proverb, is held to be magnificent; and this was the first time that Cursitor had ever taken part in the old feud.

But Jack, at any rate, did not intend to run. He and O'Brien, with two other First Eleven fellows, stood their ground, and all the juniors, noting

this, halted a dozen yards away, poised for flight again in case—so to speak—their first line of defence should not withstand the strain.

Cursitor gave a pull or two at the oars, then shipped them, and stood up in the bows, ready to leap ashore.

Jack's military mind, already swift in strategy, realized that, let the Irish giant but land, not one of them could stand against him; and he gave his orders.

"Quick, shove the boat out!"

Immediately eight hands were stretched towards it, and before Cursitor could realize the scheme or use an oar to parry it, the boat, drifting with some impetus towards the shore, was jerked into mid-stream again.

Featherstone, ready to alight, and seeing nothing behind Cursitor's broad back, staggered at the sudden jar.

He reeled sideways and gripped the waist of his tall friend, already tottering.

With a splendid splash the two disappeared beneath the water.

The Ney runs deep and narrow here, like a canal, but in a moment Cursitor, an adept swimmer, rose and gripped the bank. Luckily the overhanging turf, worn by the current, broke beneath his weight and let him down. In that brief respite Jack, till now petrified by this surprise, was able once more to collect his wits, and formulate a plan. Cursitor, the versatile, was a good sprinter, and woe betide the fellow that he caught, for Irish anger blazed in his dark eyes, as he rose to the surface, muttering things not pleasant to the ear.

"The other side!" cried Jack, and dived into the river. In one moment the three others saw his scheme, and followed suit, whilst all the juniors set off on their long run home.

Cursitor, pulling and clutching at the treacherous bank, his ears half filled with water, set the splashing down to Featherstone (who was, indeed, responsible for not a little). With a last effort, he drew himself out, like some great seal, the water running from him; and as he stood erect, the first thing that he saw, was four heads bobbing rapidly towards the other bank.

He realized the chase was hopeless, and besides, Featherstone seemed in real distress, gibbering and pulling bits of loose turf down into his eyes. Cursitor gave him a helping hand, and then stood wringing the water from his face and pressing his hands along his sodden clothes.

Jack, at the other side, emerged by the more easy landing-place, and turned around.

"Oh, you *wicked* boys!" said Edna Denton feebly.

But Jack was not paying heed to her. He did not like Cursitor's grim silence, nor the savage look upon his face. For one moment, he wondered whether he should shout out "Sorry!"—Cursitor was quite a decent sort, the thing had been an accident—but then he thought that it would look like "funk." And, indeed, there was something a little alarming in the thought that one had roused this giant, whom every one had always feared: that he was now one's enemy!

And at that instant, Cursitor, who had been bending down to wring the water from his trousers, stood upright, looking utterly colossal. He saw Jack turned towards him, and in sudden passion shook his fist at him. His usual good humour made this wild rage more terrible. The boys failed to understand that no man likes to be humiliated in a woman's presence.

"All right!" he yelled savagely. "*I* shall remember you! *You* wait!"

Just what Jack—everything considered—was well enough content to do.

He was still waiting, without a vast amount of pleasure, when the end of the long term came.

Corunna, too, was waiting: with no certain news, though a vast crop of rumours, about the fate of the detested Warner's.

PART TWO

OIL AND WATER

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

‘Winton’

THE rule stands at Corunna that all boys must have reported themselves to the Head Master before seven o’clock upon the day of reassembling. Most, therefore, arrive by the train which reaches Winton Station at 6.42, and an immediate rush is made towards the school. A few, however, inexperienced or timid, prefer to be upon the safe side, and arrive at 5.58. One or two, who live in curious parts or like to manage things without risk or bustle, sometimes even reach Winton by 5.23.

Of these last was young Gibbs, one Thursday of September, very spotless in a new suit specially selected by a doting mother.

Nobody else seemed to be at Corunna yet, on this first day of the winter term, and having failed to find the matron, deposited his hat-box in his study, and vainly knocked twice at the door of Dr. Anson’s empty room, he wandered out, a little sad, upon the playing-field. All alone like this, he found that memories of home and its sociable delights, so lately left, had an unpleasing knack of thrusting themselves forward.

And yet, too, there was a certain fascination in wandering around the field, certain that nobody could order you to “take it off” or haul you away to fag behind a wicket or a goal-post: and quite unconsciously, he walked with a gait more swaggering than usual.

Suddenly his gaze caught yet another boyish figure, also strolling aimlessly about, with listless hands deep in his pockets, and head dejectedly downcast.

Who was it? Gibbs could not make out, at all.

No one very big, so much was certain, though rather too big and confident to be a “new kid” (so Gibbs of three terms’ standing). It was not any of the real big men, and therefore there could be no harm in going nearer to see who it was: a friend would be most welcome, now. Very tactfully, he drifted towards the other, close enough to recognize a friend, yet far enough apart to escape the charge of being cheeky, if it should turn out to be some one grand.

And when they were only twenty yards apart, he saw that it was—of all things in the world—a Warnerite!

Gibbs knew Wren well enough by sight—the smug who had been in such a funk at the sham fight—although of course he did not know his name.

Well, of all the beastly cheek! . . .

He did not hesitate a moment. Just now, he stood for Anson's—there was no one else—and if this swine of a Warnerite imagined he could walk about their field, he would just learn that he was jolly well mistaken. He did not feel very nervous, either, as he strode forward with a delicious air of authority; for though this other chap was taller and probably three years his senior, he knew his reputation as a milksop.

"I say," he therefore said, quite truculently; "you clear out of this."

Wren smiled amiably, with the security of one who knows himself backed up by justice.

"My dear boy," he said, with a fine condescension, "I've no intention of clearing out of this. I've got just as good a right to be here as yourself."

"What right have you got, you beastly Warnerite?" cried Gibbs, infuriated by this attitude.

Wren smiled yet more amiably. "I'm not a Warnerite any longer, you see: worse luck! I'm an Ansonite."

"What?" roared little Gibbs in unconcealed disgust. "Have you left Warner's and come here?" He thought for a moment. "Great Scott! You *will* have a rotten time," he said, with a more natural pity.

Wren was rather weary of this kid, whom he regarded as vastly his inferior: was he not a fourth-year fellow? "Don't you be too sure of *that*," he said. "I haven't 'left' Warner's, as it happens: Warner's has left me. Anson's bought the place, and we're all here: I should have thought you would have heard. I should listen more and speak less. Perhaps it's *you* who'll have a rotten time, if you go giving your seniors any of your cheek!"

And he turned away, leaving young Gibbs dumb and almost petrified with horror.

So overcome was he, that only five minutes later did he realize the one bright thing in this disgusting episode—not merely was he gloriously justified in his great theory as to the cancelling of the cricket match, but he

would also be the first, once more, to spread this even more astounding bit of news.

He hurried back, hugely excited, to meet the fellows coming by the second train.

It was certainly amusing to watch the reception of the news—incredulity, astonishment, and (always) indignation. Nobody could doubt its truth, for in the studies, corridors, and everywhere, one kept colliding with uneasy Warnerites.

To these last, naturally, Gibbs did not confide his gossip, nor was there any need: early in the holidays, so soon as the Head Masters finally had come to terms, the parents of Warner's boys had been informed of the sad tidings; told that Dr. Anson had bought the site and the good-will, with a view to amalgamation; and asked to keep their sons "still at the school." This, almost without exception, they had done; some a little gladly, for the old Blue's methods had proved rather rough and ready for their taste, of late.

Dr. Anson, anxious above everything to avoid friction and to remove the old rivalry between the schools, had thought it better to send no intimation of the change to his boys or their parents. It could in no way affect either: Corunna would be bigger, more like a Public School than ever: and such a course of action could only lead to the boys forming a prejudice beforehand and coming together mutually resolved on enmity.

As it was, his first act, this term, should be an address, to the pondering of which the last days of holiday had been devoted.

Just before the main bulk of arrivals, he left his study and pinned a notice on the board, so that both Ansonites and Warnerites, wandering around the building with a sense that everything was upside down—not knowing what to do to put it right—had just three lines of shaky handwriting on which to rest as certainty.

> "The Head Master will give a short address to the *whole* School, in the Speechroom, at 7.30. All boys must be present."

This was something definite, and it might answer a few of the questions with which the row of studies buzzed.

Automatically the boys had sorted themselves out.

Dr. Anson, with much toil, had contrived that the pupils who had lately been Mr. Warner's should in no case be put in a study by themselves, but

always mingled amicably with their new comrades. That, however, was not the arrangement, now! The fellows, about forty in number, who so recently had been at Warner's, were crushed into three of these little square apartments, whence every Ansonite had flown. But whether in these three or in all the rest, there was only one note—of dissatisfaction.

The new arrangement was generally voted "simply rotten." Nobody saw how it possibly could work. And no one, especially, was anxious that it should! Anson, at any rate (Corunna said), might have kept the beastly Warnerites in their own pigsty: whilst Warnerites thought it simply sickening that they should be expected to mix with these rotten smugs. . . . And who were going to be prefects? Henderson, of course, for one: but—fancy any one obeying Grimshaw!

It was lucky indeed that Dr. Anson had given much thought to his new constitution, for no casual adjustment of the two factions' claims would satisfy one or the other.

What was unlucky was that Dr. Anson, though an excellent and earnest man, lacked the two great essentials of a Head Master—tact and the knowledge of boys. Some of those already in his charge puzzled him extremely—very curious!—and he frankly dreaded having to break in these newcomers, who had been trained on so much rougher lines. But one thing was certain: they *must* be broken in, led from the haphazard system of Mr. Warner's to the gentler and greater traditions of Corunna!

All this, he thought, could be effected, if not in a moment, at any rate before mid-term. He forgot, in his praiseworthy keenness, all those sage old proverbs which warn one to be careful lest too abrupt a bending of a bar should make it snap, or point out how those who will on no account be driven, may by tact and patience be induced to follow.

The half-hour chimed from the school belfry.

Immediately the boys, only too anxious to learn what was to be, trooped out noisily into the corridors, and so to the big hall. In crowds they moved, as each of the studies gave forth its packed gathering; and when an Ansonite group, coming out, found itself mingling in the passage with Warnerites, it hurriedly drew back behind the door, to let them pass.

Dr. Anson, entering the hall, a figure of dignity in flowing gown, a sheaf of papers underneath his arm, was pained, but not totally surprised, to note that his boys sat severely apart from those who had been Mr. Warner's, and that the decorous applause which greeted him came altogether from the

former. Pained, yes, but not surprised, and not immensely anxious: all this would soon alter, when they understood the claims of loyalty and had the position properly explained to them. That was to be the work of his address.

More clapping of hands, from the same quarters of the room, welcomed him as he stood up to speak. The Warnerites sat awaiting his remarks in moody silence: they would judge him, afterwards, by what he said.

"I have taken," he began, "the unusual step of calling the school together, immediately upon arrival, because we are here in unusual conditions. We welcome, this term, a large number of 'new' boys, who yet are not new!"

Here he paused, and looked quizzically over the top of his glasses: he had hoped, whilst writing his remarks, that he would at this point relax the tension by a joke: but nobody appeared to see it. Certainly there was no laughter.

"I need not, I think, explain the circumstances to which I allude: every one no doubt has heard the facts. Mr. Warner's school, for so long our neighbour," (he said this almost sentimentally,) "has closed its doors, and I have made arrangements by which its buildings will be used for our junior—that is, Navy—side, so soon as they have been made suitable and brought entirely up to date."

"Up to date be blowed!" Jack murmured angrily, and met a sympathetic murmur. The dear old place was a jolly sight better than Anson's beastly white-stone hole!

"Meanwhile," the Doctor proceeded, quite unaware of having caused offence, "we shall all manage to fit into Corunna, which is indeed intended for two hundred—but we shall hope, soon, to have *that* number in the Army side alone, now that we have entered on this new and golden era of our school."

He said this, raising his voice in the manner of an actor who is working for applause: but once again he failed to grip his audience. The newcomers wanted facts, not flourishes; wished to know what their position was to be; whilst the old brigade cared for no era whose gold was to be earned only by importing Warnerites! The place was good enough, before.

Dr. Anson, met with a chill silence, hurriedly bent down towards his notes and went on in a less exalted manner.

"I am fully aware, and do not attempt to conceal the fact, that in past years there has been a certain—perhaps I may say—rivalry between the two

schools which are henceforth to be one: but of late this has died down" (how many were there, at that instant, who thought of the Sham Fight?): "so much so, indeed, that Mr. Warner and I mutually agreed, last term, that it would now be advisable to abandon the annual cricket match."

A slight snigger met his ears, and he hurried to elaborate this point.

"It seemed ridiculous that a competition, involving a certain display of partisanship, should be held between friendly bodies, so soon—we even then foresaw—to be united. However, our business, now, is with the future." (He began to speak with less uneasiness.) "Of that, I think, we may be confident, without earning the reproach of conceit. A few days of comradeship in studies and upon the field will cement new friendships, and our school, thus strengthened, will extend, I do not doubt, its sphere of usefulness."

This time, he made no attempt to win applause, for he could no longer doubt that the feeling of his whole audience was in some way against him; or, at least, that the room was full of the very spirit of animosity which he was seeking to prove non-existent. A sudden dread struck him, for the first time: a kind of foreboding that this task of uniting the two elements might not be so easy as he had supposed. So strong was this, in fact, that he omitted several sentences in his written address, which seemed of a sudden inappropriate.

"We shall, indeed," he allowed himself to say, "pass now, more than ever, from the class of Private Schools to that of the great Public Schools, with which we have always had a close affinity." (This was out of the prospectus; but every one was too intent to be amused.)

Even this sentence the Doctor, in his new uneasiness, pronounced in a bored manner quite unlike his usual, sententious style, and then he passed straight on to another stage of his oration; starting once again with more assurance, as though determined to find solid ground somewhere.

"A word, now, to the newcomers. I shall hope to greet them all singly, elsewhere: but I want now, in welcoming them as a whole, to point out that, though they are coming among friends, they are also coming to a school in many respects not a little different from their own."

"I should *think* so!" muttered Jack, who kept up, throughout the speech, a running fire of angry comments, more to relieve himself than for anybody else's hearing.

Be careful, Dr. Anson; for here is the spot where you are skating on thin ice! One word of abuse of the Warnerites' dear master; one hint of depreciating their beloved school; and you will have done irreparable harm!

But yes! "Mr. Warner," blundered the earnest man, too honest to conceal his views on education, or to hide the disapproval always felt for his late rival's methods, "Mr. Warner made athletics the pivot of his system. If a boy were useful to the school at cricket, that covered a multitude of deficiencies in the form-rooms and elsewhere. Absence from punishment-work was freely given to those put down for school games. Even authority—the position of prefect or Head Boy—rested on proficiency at games." He paused a moment. "That system," he said with emphasis, "I, and many with me, consider a mistake."

Now, indeed, it was not only Jack Henderson who muttered. An audible buzz of protest rose from the benches where the Warnerites were sitting. "Silly old blighter, running Warner down:" "Jolly sight better sportsman than *he*'ll ever be:" "Dirty old smug:"—so the murmurs ran.

The thin ice was dangerously broken!

But on this question of Athleticism the Doctor felt strongly, and nothing could stop him.

"Here," he went on, "authority is gained, and will always be gained—as in our great Public Schools—by intellectual achievement only. It is, of course, only fair that the new element should have its prefect, as a kind of representative: more than one, next term, should the levelling process of examination so determine. Meanwhile I have examined Mr. Warner's order for his last examination, and I have pleasure in announcing that the powers of a prefect will immediately be vested in Wren."

Even this concession to the Warnerites gained no applause. Wren! Who wanted Wren a prefect? Why, he was nobody at Warner's! Wasn't Henderson to be one? . . .

"The other boys," went on the Doctor, "will be placed in classes relative to their position while at Mr. Warner's, and this order will be found upon the board, to-night."

He rattled through this rather as an unimportant detail, and then drew himself up, rolling out the words that were to end this diplomatic speech; the words on which he especially relied.

"My aim at all times will be to treat Mr. Warner's boys with a justice no less impartial than that I mete out to my own, or rather to forget that they

were ever his—as I hope they, too, will soon forget, and come to feel at home." ("Likely!" from Jack Henderson.) "It has occurred to me that the change of name may seem a little unfair to the newcomers, and I have often thought that our school, like other great educational establishments, could not be better named than from the place which is its home. And so, as a symbol of new unity, I propose henceforth to abolish equally the names of 'Corunna' and of 'Warner's'; calling the new, and greater, school by the one name of Winton. And I know that I shall have every boy in this room with me in the loyal wish that the future may justify our new motto, expressing a hope for the prosperity of Winton—*Floreat Wintonia!*"

Somehow, this peroration did not win the cheers that it deserved. A few of the senior Ansonites felt bound to back up their Head Master, and clapped their hands in a mild manner: but the rest was silence, and the atmosphere of the hall remained no less full of ill-ease and animosity, when Dr. Anson rustled out, than at his entry, some minutes before.

Out in the studies, his suggestion of the new name, Winton, was labelled variously as "beastly greasing" and "a nasty oil."

This attempt to avoid antagonism by so sham a means was too transparent to hope for success. Warner's was not in the slightest flattered or appeased: who cared *what* the filthy place was called? And as to making Wren a prefect, that—if anything—annoyed them; except that it was so amusing. As though anybody would obey the Dove!

The old inhabitants equally found the Doctor's proposals a mere obvious attempt to appease both parties. Who wanted a new name? Why should the school be called something different, just because forty fellows, who weren't wanted, had come into it? . . . Dr. Anson's pupils were suddenly taken with an almost maudlin affection for the name "Corunna," which they had hitherto refused to use. "Winton," indeed! It sounded just as though they were trying to copy Winchester!

From almost every study there came the buzz of indignant debate, whether from Ansonites or Warnerites. There are over forty studies for two hundred boys in the magnificent stone building which is known as "House," but now that number of boys was crushed into some twenty of them, and the rest were empty.

Empty, except that in one of them there sat, alone and nervous, the new prefect—Wren.

Almost the one thing on which the two factions agreed was that they did not want Wren as a prefect. The Ansonites objected to him as an alien: the Warnerites as an unathletic smug.

No one wanted him, and he knew it quite well: wherever he went, he would gain no congratulation: so he sat alone, not puffed up overmuch by his new dignity. He had been always treated as a joke, and it was rather sudden to find himself a person of authority! More bitterly than any one did he revile the Doctor's system. . . .

Even their agreement as to Wren's appointment could not bring the two parties together. Each was full of grievances: each resolved to have no traffic with the other. "Union" be blowed!

If Dr. Anson could have been present, but invisible, in the long row of studies on this first night of term, he would have been encouraged in his hideous doubts, only now beginning to be born, as to the "flourishing" of Winton.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

The Methods of Peace

It was not a very comfortable night, this first, up in the dormitories, for the newcomers at Corunna—or, as the Doctor alone called it, Winton.

The same policy as with the studies had been adopted here, and the forty Warnerites found themselves impartially distributed among some twenty rooms. There were thus, roughly, two of them in each big dormitory: but even so, the provident Head Master, anxious to assist the mingling of the elements, had never let these two occupy beds at all near one another. The result was that each found himself with about eight strangers and one Warnerite, whom probably he did not know.

Jack, for instance, was in Inkerman—all the rooms had military titles—with Grimshaw as prefect; and the sole other Warnerite was young Foster, with whom he had naturally nothing in common.

He lay in silence, whilst the others talked; for Grimshaw, though as a decent fellow he was sorry for this alien, did not care to risk a snub by saying anything to him. The position was a little difficult, since he knew of this Henderson as Warner's best athlete and a great person at his former school, where he had held the Captaincy. Grimshaw, too, was not sorry, when the time came to stop talking and to sleep.

Most relieved of all was Wren.

The Dove had been put in a cruel position. If the Doctor's hopes of Unity and Comradeship had been justified in fact, it might of course have been all right: but as things were, he found himself, a stranger and unaccustomed to authority, set over a dormitory of seven resentful Ansonites and a First Eleven Warnerite who, in the old days, had hardly deigned to say a word to him!

When bed-time at length came (as he judged by the ringing of a bell and the arrival of his room-fellows, who hurried in, got books from their desks, and hurried out again, saying no word), he went up-stairs with lagging feet and walked along the corridor, until on a door he saw the name Bannockburn, which told him that this was his dormitory.

Then, with a sudden dread, he halted before entering.

A step sounded on the stairs. He must not be seen hesitating! Nervously, he turned the handle and went in.

All the room's occupants were there, and an awful silence fell upon them, as he walked its whole length to his bed.

He could almost feel their eyes upon him—so *this* was the prefect!—and he could quite feel the red blush course across his face.

Two of the small boys sniggered, but the larger fellows stood in a dignified silence, eloquent of scorn and protest.

"*Did* you see Dick's face, when the old Ass was speaking?" one of them said to another, presently, just as though nothing had happened: and conversation was soon general.

Wren, prefect though he was, could take no part in it. Luckily, nobody cared to lay himself open to the "beastly Warnerite's" rebuke—(they did not guess his nervousness)—and so there was no sign of disorder: and because they were boys of decent feeling, they did not touch largely on the horrors of the new arrangement.

None the less, Wren passed a wretched night.

With all his usual tendencies to Peace, he had the longing to break into the conversation, make friends with his dormitory, and so end a stupid situation; but he rightly suspected that a remark from him would have no such effect, and only meet a snub or silence. Equally, a certain sense of self-respect made him hate his position—prefect, yet unable to assert his authority—and common sense told him that if he did not make a stand to-night, it would be far more difficult in future. And yet—it was so difficult, already!

Besides, nobody did anything to which even the sternest prefect could object.

The sole way in which he could arrogate his position was by the "Well, good-night!" with which a prefect says, in effect, "Well, no more talking now." But he had no idea how late they usually went on talking here, at Anson's. Once or twice, in a convenient pause, he was very near to saying it: but then he could not help wondering what he should do, if nobody took any notice, and the dialogue went on: and each time, just as he had raised the courage, some one started a new topic.

At last it was not Wren, but one of Anson's cricket eleven, who said sleepily, yet with a distinct note of authority, "Good-night, now, every one."

There was a general reply of “Good-night, Banks”; and nobody spoke any more. A little pounding of pillows; the sound of bodies nestling down to comfort; a few grunts; and Bannockburn, weary with travelling, its juniors racked by the nerve-strain of parting, had lapsed into a sound slumber.

Its prefect, however, lay awake for long hours after this.

For him, even if he were not worrying, the day had been too full of excitement: turn how he might, he could not sleep, and presently he settled down to think.

The last hours had made him a prefect; yet the last minutes had shown that another’s power was recognized by Bannockburn, and he himself had been no less in the cold than if, instead, he had been—what he virtually was—a new boy. . . .

For a while he busied himself with his grievances, and then he began to think about their cure.

Cecil Wren, in spite of his reputation at Warner’s, was neither a coward nor a fool. It is by no means always the tallest and strongest boys or men who are the bravest and the most intelligent. Warner’s, however, was a school at which the Rule of Force held sway, and because Wren was not a good athlete, he won neither power nor popularity. His theories about Peace came, in his second year, to amuse the fellows, and so, sooner than be left out altogether, he crept into study teas and other functions of the sort as a kind of butt and a buffoon. After a little—as always happens, except with people of the strongest character—he began to be what people thought he was. It is because of this fact in human nature, that one should always try to think the best of others. The dog who is given a bad name, ends (as the proverb tells us) on the gallows; but the fellow of whom a friend says, “Oh, no, *you*’d never do a rotten thing like that!” takes care always to deserve the trust, which possibly at first was not quite merited. In the same way, if the Warnerites had taken Wren’s Peace theories seriously, he might have worked them up into something sensible and useful: but everybody took them as a joke, their owner as a funk and a buffoon—and that is what he slowly was becoming.

Now, however, he had been taken seriously; so seriously as to be set in authority over those by whom he had been formerly despised! Here at Corunna, Mind, not Muscle, was the criterion of merit, and under it he rose to the top, while Henderson sank curiously near the bottom.

Wren did not relish the change, and yet it had a splendid influence upon him.

The fact that he had been chosen for this high position, unwelcome as it was, made him desire to prove that he was worthy of Dr. Anson's confidence. The new responsibility lent him a new firmness. He would not sit down under defeat, like the coward that every one had always thought him, but would turn it into victory. He was prefect, and it was impossible to contemplate term after term of nights like this.

What partly gave him his new courage was the fact, just realized, that, to most of those set under him—the Ansonites proper—he was merely Wren, a prefect. They did not know him as the despised Dove—and only now did Cecil realize, with a shock of shame, what a poor part he had played at Warner's. He had been no one there: here he had to prove that he was worthy to be some one. . . .

Next morning, he came down-stairs full of a martial vigour that would have startled those who knew him as the Dove. And yet, because his Peace theories were sincere, not merely echoes of his father, with that resolve there mingled a desire, if possible, to put things straight, to unite the two factions, without actual warfare.

The morning of Friday was no less wretched for the forty newcomers than the previous night.

"Your new comrades," Dr. Anson had then said to each of them, "will initiate you into all our ways!" He was immensely genial to every one, without a vast deal of encouragement.

The new "comrades," however, showed no sign of doing anything at all like that. The Warnerites got up because they saw others so doing: they went to their form-rooms, found with difficulty, for the same reason: and so with everything. It was a kind of huge tournament at follow-my-leader. And the Warnerites soon wearied of it.

Universal indignation broke down barriers; and besides, Wren was in a sense to be their official representative. He was, therefore, with a little raillery as to his new eminence, readmitted into the gatherings of Warner's boys.

Jack, indeed, came up to him after morning school in quite a friendly way.

"Hullo, Dove. Congratters! I didn't see you last night. You're no end of a swell, now!"

"Oh, don't rag," said Wren uneasily.

"Well, you're a prefect all right, aren't you?"

Wren smiled nervously: somehow, all his spirit went, in front of Henderson, who thought that he knew him so well. "Yes, but all the fellows would much rather that *you* were."

"Oh, it's nothing to do with them," Jack answered lightly. "It's old Anson's job. *I*'m nobody at all—I'm in the Fourth!"

"Yes, but you'll soon get your Firsts for footer and everything."

"I don't know about that." It was Jack's turn now to be embarrassed. "But anyhow, you've got to run Warner's side of it till then, Dove! What are you going to do?" He looked at the new prefect with a smile of contemptuous amusement, as though really knowing that he could do nothing.

Certainly Wren's answer was not hopeful. "Well, I don't know: it's rather difficult. . . . Did any one speak to you, up in your dormie, last night?"

"No—thank goodness! *I* don't want the swine to speak to me."

So that was Henderson's standpoint! "But how's it going to end, then?" Wren asked helplessly.

Jack laughed. "That's what I was asking you! It's not got anything to do with me."

Cecil was silent for a few moments before bringing out his theory. "*I*'m not sure, Henderson," he said at length, with diffidence, "that really it's only both lots of us rather funk being the first to speak? I don't see why we shouldn't settle down all right. I dare say they are quite a decent lot of fellows, really."

"What? *Anson's?*" said Jack in real pity. "Well, you always *were* keen on your Peace and Arbitration, or whatever the thing was; but——!" At which, with what the grammars call an aposiopesis, Jack strolled off, vastly tickled by the Dove's ridiculous ideas.

The latter, none the less, was quite resolved to put them into action. This absurd partition of the school into two rival camps could not, of course, go on for ever, and the sooner some one made a move towards union, the pleasanter would it be for every one concerned. He would not risk saying anything to the dormitory at large, because no one in particular would feel called upon to answer; but if he asked a polite question, picking out a fellow

by himself, he was quite certain that it would be answered. So, little by little, a few casual words might gradually ripen into friendship.

To his delight, as he was aimlessly wandering around the field, a little later, in search of the Carpenter's Shop, he came face to face with Banks, alone.

Now Banks was the fellow in Bannockburn who had said "Good-night" in place of the official prefect, and everything seemed very simple, suddenly, to Wren. Once make friends with Banks, and every one in the dormitory would follow their leader's example. To-night, then, would be very different!

He went straight up to him, and spoke.

"I say," he opened conversationally, "do you mind telling me where the Carpenter's Shop is? I want to join, and Anson said any one would show it me. It's a bit difficult at first, finding your way about!"

He was annoyed to notice, while speaking, that one or two Ansonites were approaching, arm-in-arm, because it was likely enough that though Banks himself would be quite willing to be friendly, he might fear what the others would think of him for talking to a Warnerite; and so move away.

But Banks did not do that.

He seemed, indeed, to be slightly amused, in some way, at the fact of Wren speaking to him, for his deep eyes sparkled as he answered.

"Oh, yes," he said in a friendly manner, and he turned away to point. "You see that large building with the big doors?"

"Yes," said Cecil, following the hand that pointed. "But that's the Gym, isn't it?"

"Yes: the Carpenter's Shop doesn't open until Monday. But if you want to join, what you have to do is to go and tell the Sergeant in the Gym; and he'll enter your name."

"Thanks very much," said Cecil. "I should never have known that!"

"No, it's a bit complicated;" and with that Banks, quite friendly till now, turned away abruptly and linked himself on to the row of Ansonites, as if to show (thought Cecil) that though he would answer questions in mere politeness, he did not want to enter upon general conversation.

Still, this was something! To-night, up in the dormitory, he could surely just tell Banks that he had found the Gymnasium all right, or something of

that sort, and so break the ice a little more?

On his way across to the long, low building he met Jack, equally arm-in-arm with a few of his friends, for the field, this first morning of term, when there was nothing much to do, swarmed with such little groups of either faction, each utterly ignoring—though resenting—the presence of the other.

"Hullo, Dove!" called Henderson. "What luck?"

"What's the Dove been doing?" one of the others inquired.

Jack laughed. "Why, he's going to reconcile us with the Ansonites by Arbitration!"

Every one was duly pleased with the old joke except Cecil, who was rather angry. "Well, anyhow," he said triumphantly, "I've had a talk with Banks."

Now the fame of Banks as cricketer had travelled, long ago, across the road, and secretly all the Warnerites admired him: he was a sportsman after their own heart. Thus they were properly impressed.

"What did Banks say?" asked Jack, almost doubtingly.

"Oh, lots," replied Cecil, who in some ways was curiously young; "and he told me how to join the Carpenter's Shop."

This got another laugh, for the Dove had been about the only senior patron of that peaceful institution in the rough and sporting school across the way. He flushed angrily. "He's quite a decent sort," he went on imposingly, "and I don't see, for all your ragging, why we shouldn't all settle down all right."

"*You* must settle it for us," said some one feebly; and while the others set upon him, the object of their wit passed on towards the Gymnasium. He saw quite clearly that his school-fellows had no intention of trying to make friends with Banks or with anybody else; and it was at this moment, when he was politely treated by the new friend, made a joke by the old—a prefect here, and no one there—that he first wondered whether, after all, the way of most pleasure, as well as of duty, did not lie in throwing his lot in with the other prefects at Corunna; seeming to desert the Warnerites, yet really only serving their eventual good.

For the present, however, he had to busy himself with practical affairs.

Sergeant Gore was in the empty Gymnasium, rather at a loss on this first day, when there were neither classes nor punishment parades. Cecil Wren

walked up to him.

"I suppose you're the Sergeant?" he asked by way of introduction.

"You suppose c'rect, sir;" and that great person smiled in genial sarcasm. So this was one of the young gentlemen from across the way.

"I want to join the Carpenter's Shop."

The result of those simple words was instantaneous and surprising.

The stout Sergeant's friendliness vanished of a sudden: his face grew red: his very body seemed to swell with indignation.

"Now you look 'ere, young sir," he said, with blustering dignity, "we'd better hunderstand each hother, right away, and if you'll take a tip o' me, you'll keep your 'umour for some of the masters, see?"

"But I——" began the thunderstruck Cecil, about to explain that these were his directions.

The Sergeant held up a fat palm. "Never you mind what you said, nor *didn't* say," he said, more dignified than ever. "*Hi* know; and if you'll take a tip o' me, you'll right turn and hoff it, if you're not wanting a little *hextra* care, when you comes 'ere for drill? Now, hout you go!" and the podgy hand waved him away, policeman-like.

Too stupefied for battle, and naturally of peaceful nature, Cecil went. Only at the door did he remember that he was a prefect.

And two weeks later, he learnt that the Carpenter's Shop was like a bull's red rag to Sergeant Gore, always inveighing against it as a useless and slack rival of both the Corps and the Gymnasium. . . .

But long ere that, he had realized this to be no less than what is commonly known as "a green." For that, he did not even need the sight of Banks and his friends strolling very innocently away from the Gymnasium door.

It utterly upset his calculations. Gone, now, the hopes of peace up in his dormitory! Gone, so it seemed, the hopes of any peace by friendly methods! And how Henderson, with all his set, would laugh!

Spurred by these and similar reflections to a warlike state quite alien from his nature, the Dove strode fiercely after Banks and the others, sauntering away in keen enjoyment of the joke.

Before he overtook them, he had realized, in a keen flash of intuition, that if he once submitted to this, he would sink, at Corunna, to be what he had been at Warner's—a butt and a buffoon. Here they must think of him as prefect, and he must act at once.

"Look here," he said, coming up suddenly by Banks' side, "I thought you told me to go to the Sergeant about joining the Carpenter's Shop?"

The little row of fellows swung about, prepared for an amusing scene.

"Yes," said Banks coolly. "Why? Wasn't that right?"

There was a little smothered laugh at that, and Cecil was too wise to answer. "I suppose you know I'm a prefect?" he asked instead.

"Yes," answered Banks, getting a little red, for prefects' powers are wide at Corunna—and fancy being hauled by this beastly Warnerite!

Cecil, luckily for the other, knew nothing of his rights.

"Well, don't you forget it," he said, "unless you want a row."

He had shot his arrow rather at a venture; but had chanced upon a bull's-eye. The Doctor's boast that Corunna ranks among the Public Schools, is so far justified that merely to *be* a prefect gives a fellow huge authority. No one dares insult him, for to do so is to invite the anger of the whole set of prefects; to defy the System.

As Wren turned away, Banks made no retort, whilst the rest did not laugh for a moment, and then rather quietly: for though this Wren had been a Warnerite, he was now a prefect, and you could never tell what Grimshaw might decide to do, rum devil!

Besides, because all boys like pluck, they thought rather more of Wren. Banks, who had judged entirely by the Sham Fight episode, had set him down as not a fool only, but a real funk: and it had needed courage to come up and tackle the whole line of them. The joke, somehow, did not seem so successful as it had just now!

Still, it amused the Warnerites. Jack, in particular, was very humorous on Peace and Arbitration.

As to Cecil Wren, he was in one way disappointed: the visions of a friendly dormitory vanished, and for a while he rather dreaded night. Then, however, as he lived the scene over again, he got a certain pleasure from a look which he remembered on the face of Banks; and his own part in the

episode did not seem so unworthy. He had exercised his power as prefect; or at the least, made threats of it; and that fact lent him a fresh confidence.

Now it was War! and in the conflict he would use his powers to the full.

All his peaceful theories died, and giving up every effort to make other friends among the Ansonites, he fell back for the rest of the day on his own party, content—or, rather, forced—to be once more treated as a jest.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

Parleys

THE evening of Friday passed in a kind of chain of interviews, which would have delighted the soul of Cecil Wren in the days when he was a more ardent advocate of the methods of Peace and Arbitration.

Amongst the privileges, which he gradually found to be part of his new dignity, was that, especially valued, of a separate study. It was with a genuine relief that he moved his books and playbox out of number twenty, which he had so far shared with grim and silent Ansonites, to number five, a tiny, lozenge-shaped affair with scarcely room for chair and table, but infinitely precious because utterly his own. He was still at sea as to his future conduct: whether he should obey a kind of sentiment and cling to his old school, or listen to the call of duty, and do his best for this ideal "Winton," of which he had been made a prefect: but he foresaw that either course must lay him open to a lot of unpopularity. With a curiously calm mind, he realized that his was a difficult position. And because that was so, it would be very pleasant to have a spot where he would be safe from the clash of factions, and could wrestle with the problem by himself.

With all the pride of a householder, he settled down, after tea, to put out his few photographs, and to arrange what wondrous things he would do to his new home, so soon as he could get some fans, pictures, and curtains from his home. He sat down, at once, and wrote about it to his mother; so keen upon the business, that only at the end did he remember to say, as a postscript, that he had been made a prefect. But really he did not forget it: the situation was too difficult for that: and presently he set himself to think.

A knock sounded on the study door.

"Come in," he said, without much cordiality. He was just deep in his problem, taking his position very seriously, and he did not feel inclined to welcome Henderson or some one, who would laugh at him and treat him as a fool.

The door opened behind him, but he pored over his finished letter, pen in hand, hoping to succeed with the excuse of being busy.

"Oh, are you Wren?" asked a voice that he did not know.

He turned around; half started from his chair, nervously; and then sat down again.

"Yes," he said simply. He recognized this pale, sad-faced fellow as Grimshaw, the Head Boy of the school, but he knew nothing of him, and was suspicious of another joke.

"I'm Grimshaw," said the other, as he closed the door. "I thought that as you were a prefect, perhaps——"

He stopped, as though that expressed all which he meant to say. There was a certain sincerity and dignity, a reserve of strength, about him, as he said these few words: and Cecil suddenly forgot to be suspicious.

"Oh yes, do sit dow——" he began, awkward and blushing; then suddenly realized that he himself was sitting on the only chair in this wee study.

A smile lit up the stern, firm-chiselled face of Grimshaw. "I will, thanks —on the table! That's how we always manage, in the Praes' rooms:" and as though well used to it, he perched where he had said, his back against the wall.

Cecil, by this time, was far more at ease; but he could not think of exactly the right thing to say. He felt an idiot, sitting silent, and (he was sure) red all up his face. He found himself envying Grimshaw, so contained and in some way "grown-up."

"I came in," said the Head Boy presently, beginning very slowly, so that it was clear he, at least, had not been worrying what to say—"I came in, because it seems so absurd that you should sit at the Praes' table, and so forth, and yet we shouldn't speak to you."

"Yes, it was rather rotten," said Wren in a friendly way: then suddenly felt that "rotten" was a terribly childish word to use when speaking with this grave, collected Grimshaw. *He* had said "absurd"!

But Grimshaw scarcely seemed to hear. "Besides," he went on slowly, and in such a tone that his words, in some way, seemed an unconscious part of the thoughts that drew his forehead into a deep furrow, "we shall have to unite, if we're going to make anything of 'Winton,' as Anson wants to call it now!" (He spoke with scorn.) "We Praes have got a pretty stiff job before us, so far as I can see."

"Yes," said Wren, feeling hideously young. Grimshaw must be thinking him an awful ass!

"I hope you didn't think us horribly unfriendly? You see, those things are a bit difficult, when every one's about, and then, if you're the first to speak ____"

Once again he made one of his curious, expressive pauses: and Cecil, feeling that he must say something, broke in with, "Yes, I know. As a matter of fact, I had a try, myself, this morning!"

Grimshaw had heard of that adventure, clearly; and he spoke now with more emphasis. "I was awfully sorry about that: a silly sort of thing to do, but Banks is an odd devil. You mustn't think we're all like that; and in any case" (here he fell back into his old manner), "that's just what we've got to fight against."

There was certainly a sort of magnetism, the mysterious attraction that is owned by a Napoleon or any born leader of men, about this earnest Grimshaw: and Wren, of a far weaker nature, easily succumbed to it. The question that he had been starting to debate, when Grimshaw entered, had been answered by his entry. That reaction towards the Warnerites (however much they might despise him) which Banks had caused, now vanished absolutely. All idea of clinging to his old, disbanded school, and so ruining the greater which might grow from it, was swept away. Cecil Wren—to use expressive slang—was Grimshaw's man.

And he had been won in exactly the same manner as before. Just as Anson had made Wren resolve to be serious, and not a buffoon, merely by taking him seriously; so now Grimshaw had brought him, wavering, to do his duty, simply by taking it for granted that he would. "We Praes . . .:" it was impossible to hear that "we" from Grimshaw, and then join oneself with the other party!

"Have you thought of any way?" he asked, in blind reliance, of his leader.

Grimshaw waited a few seconds before answering. "No," he said finally, with some decision. "We can't make any plans until we see what happens."

"Things *may* settle down all right," said Cecil, with a bit of the old Dove-like spirit.

"I don't think *that's* likely," was all the encouragement that he received. "No, we've just got to fight it out." Grimshaw was silent for about a minute. "Of course," he went on abruptly, "you know where all the feeling is? . . . We Praes, and all the sort of ordinary run of fellows, 'll settle down all right, but the Elevens and all that set won't."

"No; you see, there was that Sham Fight row—Henderson and Sinclair."

"I don't think any one's ass enough to remember *that*," said Grimshaw, who was uncomfortably direct at times, "but it's always been the right thing for the athletic set to keep the feud going, and Banks doing that this morning shows they don't mean to drop it now, rather."

As if in actual illustration of his words, the door opened at this instant, to admit Jack Henderson, who stopped dead at sight of Grimshaw; stared at him as though at some curious and contemptible animal; then went out silently, sniffing quite audibly.

Grimshaw seemed neither angry nor upset at this studied insult.

"Perhaps the best way," he went on, as though nothing had happened, "will be for you to go and see if anything can be done in the way of persuading Henderson, who I suppose more or less influences all your men, and I'll be tackling Sinclair."

"What had I better say?" asked Cecil rather weakly: for this was a job that he did not immensely relish.

"Oh, well, the only thing there *is* to say: what he must really see for himself: that if this sort of feud goes on, it's bound to rot the whole school up. He'll surely see that? And if not——"

There was a good deal in that unfinished sentence and the little shrug.

"Yes," said Cecil comprehensively.

"All right, then; we'll try that first," said Grimshaw, getting off the table. "My study's the last one on the right, if you want to find me ever." He turned round, at the door: "By the way, you might let Henderson understand pretty clearly that even if he doesn't want to settle down, there's not going to be any cheeking of the Praes. I don't know how Warner ran his show, but Henderson's in the Fourth here, and the Sixth are prefects, and you might just tell him so. He's nobody."

"No," answered Cecil: Grimshaw's dashing tactics left him just a trifle breathless. To tell Henderson that he was nobody, and that the Praes did not want any of his cheek!

In fact, once removed from the stimulating influence of Grimshaw's iron nature, he found his courage ebbing sadly—Henderson was a fellow for whom he had always felt admiration, almost dread—but reflecting on the Head Boy's scorn if he failed in this first mission, he went along the corridors before his resolution was totally exhausted.

Henderson was luckily alone. His Ansonite room-mates took care to leave him so, and he had not troubled to seek out any of his friends: since returning from number five, he too had settled down to write a letter home. He looked up at Wren's entry.

"Were you wanting to see me?" asked the latter. The memory of their old relative positions lingered in such a way that, coming as an official envoy, he felt bound to apologize for his arrival! At Warner's, he had never dared to call on Henderson.

"No, not specially," Jack answered. "I just came along, to see if any of the men were there. If you go into one of the bigger studies, you generally find it rammed up with Ansonites, and then you feel a ghastly fool."

"I thought perhaps you wanted to discuss things?" This was a subtle effort to drag the conversation round to the topic desired!

Jack laughed scornfully, and hit his inkpot with a ruler, so that a little splash of ink came out. "What's the use of discussing? There's nothing to be done. Here we are, and here we've jolly well got to stick it out." He mopped the ink up with some blotting-paper. This little accident seemed of much more interest to him than Wren's ideas.

"Yes, but we can make things better."

"Heads, Dove!" cried Jack gaily, holding up the ink-soaked ball of blotting-paper and, as the other ducked, aiming it deliberately so as just to miss him.

Cecil laughed uneasily. He was feeling it very hard to act the prefect's part in this! He was quite sure that Grimshaw would have done it differently. As for himself, he really hardly knew what to say next.

Jack saved him the trouble. "*How* can we 'make things better'?" he asked, with not much interest and a clear note of irony.

"Well, I mean, we can't go on like this for ever, and it'd be much jollier to stop it at once. Last night was rotten, in the dormitories."

"And how, exactly, are you going to 'stop' it?"

Cecil settled down to his hard task. "Well, you know quite well, Henderson, that you can make the fellows do almost anything you like. They think an awful lot of you, and——"

"I say, Dove," cried Jack, in sham alarm. "Are you wanting to borrow something?"

But the official envoy refused to be turned aside like this. “What I mean is,” he went on quite seriously, “if you took the first step towards being a bit decent towards the Ansonites——”

“Oh lord!” laughed Henderson, with scorn. “More ‘Peace and Arbitration’? *Do* get something new. Wren!”

Now was the moment for Cecil to regret most bitterly his idiocy in letting those theories of his become a laughing-stock, and himself a mere jester. He suffered the constant penalty of the buffoon: he was in earnest, and none who knew him would take him seriously.

In despair, he fell back on his strong ally. “Well, Grimshaw and I——”

“Oh, ‘Grimshaw and you’!” replied Jack, seeming for the first time to feel interested in the interview: “so you’re bracketed with him now? I *saw* you palling up with him, and wondered what it was! A sort of prefect’s meeting, I suppose? No wonder you’re suddenly so keen on the Ansonites!” By an abrupt change he dropped this sarcastic manner, and said, angrily: “You don’t *really* mean you’ve chucked Warner’s just because old Anson greased to you by making you a prefect?”

“It isn’t that,” answered Cecil, keen on justifying himself. “I’ve not chucked any one: we’re all part of the same school now.”

“Part of Corunna!” sneered the other. “How jolly for us! No, thank you!”

“It’s not Corunna, and it isn’t Warner’s. What’s the use of sticking to a school that’s smashed? I don’t see why, if we all stick together, Winton shouldn’t——”

This was the last straw. “Winton! Winton, indeed! That’s only old Ass Anson’s drivel. I like you and your Winton! I don’t think much of you and pal Grimshaw” (this with scorn), “if that’s all you can do, to talk of Winton!”

“Grimshaw means business,” said Cecil, suddenly infected with some of his hero’s coolness, “and I advise you to look out. He told me to tell you he was a Prae, and wasn’t going to stand any cheek.”

“Then I should advise him to sit it,” answered Jack: but the retort was so old and unworthy, that Cecil felt the blow had not fallen altogether wide.

“I’ll tell him so,” he said.

“Thanks!” replied Jack coolly.

That was clearly the end of these negotiations, and Cecil, at a loss for more to say, went out, as Jack stared at his letter in silence.

Now he must take Henderson's advice; drop "Peace and Arbitration"; and find—something new!

The obvious place for that seemed Grimshaw's study.

He entered in response to a "Come in"; and then he wished that he had stayed away. Leaning against the table, with a sullen face, was Sinclair, whilst at his desk, calm as ever, there sat Grimshaw. The former looked furious, when he saw who had entered.

Clearly Grimshaw was just "tackling" Sinclair, as arranged!

Cecil immediately drew back, but the Head Boy cried, "No, come in, Wren!"

Then he turned to Sinclair and said: "All right—as you like: but I think it's a pity to have a real row. And I warn you, that's what it'll be: we can't have this rot going on for the whole term."

"I don't see any other way!" Sinclair answered, trying to speak lightly, but Cecil could tell that he was careful what he said; and as the Cricket Captain went out, sulkily answering Grimshaw's genial "Good-night," almost like a boy dismissed from a Head Master's study, there arose in Cecil Wren's mind a companion picture, scarcely flattering to himself, of his very different interview with Henderson.

"Well?" said Grimshaw, so soon as the other had gone, "what luck?"

"None," Cecil answered. "He doesn't care a bit about what's good or bad for the school, and he means to keep the feud up, I can see."

"I suppose you told him it would mean a row; that we meant to stop it?"

"Oh, yes:" but as he gave his answer, only half the truth, he wished that he had been a little firmer in his threats.

"I think I made Sinclair grasp the situation pretty clearly," went on Grimshaw. "So now we've only got to wait and see what *they* do. Perhaps, even now—— Hullo? Come in!" Somebody had knocked upon the door.

A small boy entered.

"Oh, Grimshaw, the Head wants to see Wren. He said he might be in number five or here."

Grimshaw fixed him with a chilly eye. “Then why don’t you tell Wren, instead of me?”

But the small boy fled, unanswering. These were questions too great for him: he could not attain unto them. He had no special opinions, himself: but he knew that one did not speak to Warnerites. “One” included Sinclair, Banks, and all the great people.

Grimshaw smiled at Cecil, and his face lost all its sternness. “Perhaps *Anson’s* got some cure for that sort of thing!”

But as Wren went, the Head Boy’s smile died away, for he had no great faith in Anson’s tact, and his heart was heavy, because he had a great love for his school and saw it come upon troublous times.

“Come in, Wren,” said Dr. Anson gloomily, “and sit down: I want to talk to you.”

He sat in silence for a few moments, as though getting his materials together, before speaking.

“I’m very much upset,” he began presently, “about what has happened. I shall talk quite frankly to you, Wren, as I do to all my prefects, and I tell you at once that this scheme of bringing our numbers up to 200, and so making the school more suitable for Public School conditions, has been the great dream of my life. Mr. Warner’s proposal, last term, seemed to make its rapid realization a possibility. And now—I told you that I should speak frankly—I am greatly afraid that the union, so far from proving a blessing, may lead to endless disturbances, and trouble of a magnitude hardly to be foreseen.”

His phrases were pompous, but he was obviously sincere in his anxiety and his love for the school: so that Cecil found himself feeling a new sympathy towards him. Certainly, it was rather rough luck! At the same time, he could think of nothing appropriate to say.

“I had no idea,” the Doctor went on, after a while, “that this ridiculous ‘feud’ was so deep-seated and so universal. I had hoped that my concessions in changing the name of our school, and in electing you as prefect, would make Mr. Warner’s boys feel that they were not at a strange school, but merely at a larger expansion of their own. But from what I can hear of the events of this day and a half, there has been no word spoken between the two sets of boys? I am surprised to learn that even the prefects——”

“Grimshaw and I——” began Cecil.

“I am glad to hear it,” said the master, not waiting to hear. “I hoped that would be so: Grimshaw is a sterling fellow. He will no doubt introduce you to the other prefects. Then I understand that the ill-feeling is chiefly among the more athletic boys?”

“I suppose so, sir,” answered Cecil, with a vague sense of sneaking. He was not used to being consulted as a prefect.

Dr. Anson took up a persuasive line. “Now, do you not think, Wren, that you and Grimshaw could perhaps use your influence among these boys or their acknowledged leaders; say the Captains of Elevens——?”

“We’ve tried that, sir.”

Dr. Anson sank back wearily into his chair. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him. “Who was the boy that you approached, among your old school-fellows?”

Cecil hesitated for a little, with the old reluctance to give information to a master. “Henderson, sir,” he said finally.

“ ’M! . . . And he saw no way of coming to terms in this ridiculous vendetta?”

“He didn’t seem to, sir.”

“I will talk to him,” said Dr. Anson suddenly; as though this would cure everything.

To Cecil it brought very little comfort, partly because, judging from the address of last night, he had reached already much the same opinion as Grimshaw of the Head Master’s tact; partly because he dreaded Henderson thinking that he had sneaked about the unsuccessful interview.

“I hope, sir,” he stuttered, “you won’t let Henderson suspect——”

Dr. Anson spoke with a good deal of emphasis and dignity. “Please understand at once, Wren, that anything which my prefects may say to me is, of course, regarded as strictly confidential.”

Cecil Wren, as he left the study, felt that, once again, he had perhaps not acquitted himself perfectly in his new *rôle* of prefect.

And Dr. Anson, wondering whether he would find much profit in this nervous Wren, waited until the next boy arrived to see him, and then said, “Send Henderson to me.”

This was the chain of interviews, upon the second night of term, which led to the most momentous of them all; one destined to have a great influence, not only on Jack Henderson, but on the school of which he was so unwilling a new member.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

Defiance

"Come in, Henderson," the Doctor said, a little curtly: he was determined to be firm with Henderson. "I want to speak to you." He did not ask him to sit down.

Jack, looking very big and feeling like a small boy, stood in front of the Head Master's desk. For the last two years at Warner's, he had always sat, on these occasions. He stood, now, with a sulky look upon his face, and he did not, like the average small boy suffering a lecture, fold his hands behind his back: he put them casually in his pockets.

Something warned Dr. Anson suddenly that this would be a more stubborn fight than he had fancied. On the verge of telling this great fellow, who towered over him, to take his hands out of his pockets, he hesitated: it would be awkward, should he disobey!

He pretended not to notice: and Jack counted that a victory.

"They tell me, Henderson," was the vague opening, "that you possess a good deal of influence among your school-fellows who were lately at Mr. Warner's?"

"I dare say," answered Jack, not worrying much to be polite or even to put in a "sir." He had always felt the greatest dislike for Dr. Anson; a dislike magnified by resentment, so soon as Wren was given his former position; and in not asking him to sit down, he considered that the old beast—as he mentally put it—had given up all right to be treated as a gentleman!

The Head Master looked up at him keenly. "I hope you intend to use that influence in the right direction?"

"That depends, I suppose, on what you call the right direction?" Jack retorted coolly.

Dr. Anson was anxious, if possible, to avoid the actual unpleasantness of calling him to order for incivility, but he found the pretence of not observing very difficult. "I mean, naturally, the direction which most benefits the school."

"Which school?" asked Jack, and then, under the chill scrutiny of a stern gaze, he added a late and hurried "sir," which was none the less a victory, in turn, for Dr. Anson.

The master was encouraged to be firm. "You know as well as I do, Henderson," he said impatiently, "that there is only *one* school—Winton: the other two have been merged into it, and it is impossible to make any distinction between what suits one and what suits the other. And I want you to understand, once and for ever, that I shall deal very severely indeed with any action or word that aims at making any feud or faction in the school. May I take it for granted that you will use the influence, which you admit you possess, to help me in consolidating Winton and in making it a greater school than either of the two that it combines?"

Jack was too honest to give a promise that he did not intend to carry into action. He stood silent.

"Well, Henderson?"

"I don't see how I can say that, sir," he said, quietly and with more politeness. He felt that he had reached a crisis.

The Head Master leant forward, grasping the two edges of his desk. "And why not, pray, if I may ask?"

"Because—as you ask me, sir—I don't see why I should."

Dr. Anson spoke more sternly. "You know quite well that that is *no* answer to my question. What is your grievance? Why have you taken up this extraordinary attitude? Explain to me what it is that you boys of Mr. Warner's want?"

"We don't want to be here"—and it would have been ridiculous to have added a "sir" to that.

"You don't want to be here?" repeated the Doctor, very slowly, and with much sarcasm, leaning back again. "Tell me, then, where *do* you want to be? Mr. Warner's school is closed. But perhaps you don't want to be at school at *all*? Perhaps you would like to have a steam yacht and cruise in the Mediterranean?"

"Yes," said Jack, quite serious, "that would be splendid:" and the other realized that he had made a mistake. He did not often grasp the perilously two-edged sword of Irony, and now he dropped it suddenly.

"I am still waiting to hear," he said with dignity, as though that dialogue was closed, "what it is, exactly, that you want: or what it is to which,

precisely, you object. Mr. Warner, as you know, was forced to abandon his school, and you should be glad to enter a school, which will be not only half, but in a sense *all*, yours, no less than the other. We are very glad to welcome you here, and we hope that Winton—but you have still not told me what you want. I am not unreasonable, you will find: I think that I have already satisfied your prefect, Wren: and if you will tell me, Henderson, what it is that you athletes want, I think I can promise to give a fair hearing to your requests."

He almost smiled at the boy before him, having just come to realize that bullying and irony were not the way by which to win him over. He almost wished, now, that he had asked him to sit down.

Jack responded to the kindlier treatment. "I'm afraid I've never thought of any definite thing, sir," he answered, feeling just a little foolish.

"Couldn't you think, now?" asked the Doctor; and this time he did actually smile.

Jack had gained time to think more clearly. "It's the whole thing our fellows object to, sir," he said, taking up a less personal position. "I can't very well explain, but there have always been rows—I mean, a rivalry between the schools, and so it is very uncomfortable for us in the dormitories or studies——"

"But that," broke in the Doctor suavely, "will soon end, and the whole object of your mixing in the studies is to make that certain."

While he was speaking, Jack's mind had been working on the words which the master had interrupted. A glorious idea, that would solve everything—an inspiration!—suddenly occurred to him.

"There *is* one thing, sir," he began eagerly, "if you were really willing ——"

"Why, of course, if it is at all possible," said Dr. Anson genially. This was splendid: they were getting along famously! It was only a matter of taking Henderson the proper way! "Tell me what it is."

"I was wondering, sir, if, instead of making Mr. Warner's school a junior side, you could let *us* go back there? That would be immensely popular, and, of course——"

Dr. Anson waved the notion aside with his hand. "I'm sorry, Henderson, but that is *quite* impossible. We should be two schools, then, not one; and an inevitable difficulty would arise, when some of you left and new boys

arrived. Besides," he went on, anxious to justify his refusal, "it would be almost impossible to introduce my educational ideals—I may say *our*, for they are those of Winton—into the old surroundings: the old tone and system would cling to the old buildings, and the old errors would be bound to persevere." He was on his hobby once again.

"What errors?" Jack asked angrily and keenly, forgetting for the moment who was speaking, in hearing what he thought a slur on his beloved Warner's.

"The errors of *system*," said Dr. Anson, glad to point a moral. "I wish you to understand at once, Henderson, that Winton will be conducted along very different lines from those to which you have been accustomed." (He was working himself up, on his pet subject.) "There will be none of the supremacy of mere muscle; none of the consequent bullying of the weak; no half-holidays because the cricket-pitch happens to be in good condition. Mr. Warner may have been an excellent sportsman; I know nothing of that; but as a guardian and moral trainer of other people's sons, he was of a carelessness that was very nearly criminal. I——"

"You've no right to say that," flashed Jack, and automatically his hands came out of his pockets.

Dr. Anson was astounded.

Certainly he had half forgotten, for the moment, that he was speaking to a pupil of the man whom he had so frequently denounced, and maybe he had spoken rather strongly: but that any boy should dare to answer him like that!

"Remember, sir," he said, most sternly, "that you are talking to your Head Master."

"I don't care who I'm talking to," retorted Jack. "That doesn't give you the right to call Mr. Warner criminal." His voice was trembling with an anger that he sought vainly to control. Warner, for him, as for all Warnerites, was set among the demigods.

"You will please apologize to me for your loss of temper, Henderson," said Dr. Anson. He spoke very deliberately, but his voice also was not so level as at other times. They had both been through a rather trying day.

"Then you'll apologize for what *you* said," cried Jack.

It was all rather ridiculous.

Dr. Anson got up from his chair.

“I shall not insist on an apology at this moment, Henderson, because you are clearly not yourself. But I should like you to remember one thing: that though you held a great position at your last school, you are no one here. So far as I remember, you are in the second Fourth, and your age is seventeen. Our methods here do not include the corporal punishment to which you have been accustomed, but there are other ways of insisting on obedience and punishing insubordination; and these you will learn, sir, if there is any repetition of your conduct, this evening. You will now leave this study, and you will please not re-enter it until you are ready to apologize.”

Jack shrugged his shoulders, trying to say nothing, and turned his back to go.

But at the door he paused. His anger was too strong for him.

“I shan’t apologize till *you* do,” he said brokenly, gasping for breath, “and I don’t *want* to enter your study again.”

With which, he slammed the door, and strode angrily away.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

A Matter of Minutes

Dr. Anson's dashing intervention, with an idea of uniting the two rival factions, had in some curious way met a certain measure of success.

The Ansonites, really, were not half so bitter as the newcomers. They saw, at the back of their minds, that things were bound to settle down eventually; they had no such grievance as the others, for the presence of a silent stranger in the dormitory did not harm them much; and they realized, too, that the advent of this new blood would be immensely good for Corunna—no one called it Winton!—and especially its Footer. Perhaps in the end, they were coming to see, it might not be so rotten, after all.

No, it was the Warnerites who murmured most. They had no idea of settling down; their silence was not a mere awkward prelude to a later intimacy, but the first part of a set policy. And they had more excuse: condemned to be new boys again, some in their fifth year; their leader, Henderson, dethroned, and Wren set in his place; boiling with anger at their ignominious position in study and dormitory; feeling that Anson's crowed over the failure of its hated rival. . . . Naturally, they were full of complaints, and now, when the Ansonites were beginning to settle down, more or less as usual, to the routine of term, the Warnerites, to whom everything was strange and horrible, still spent their leisure in abuse and scorn of the "beastly smugs"—for that was the tradition—among whom they had to live; in schemes for their eventual discomfiture.

When Jack returned to a study packed with them, after his interview with the Head Master, everything was changed. They turned the current of their anger on to Dr. Anson.

Jack came in, pallid and more excited than any one had ever seen him. "The dirty old devil!" was all that he could say for a long time.

"What's up?" asked every one. "What's he been saying, Jack?"

"Foul-mouthed old swine!" was Jack's quite inappropriate answer.

"He hasn't *sacked* you, has he?" inquired O'Brien, hoping to get at it like that.

The ruse was partly a success. “As though Warner wasn’t worth a hundred of him!” Henderson said passionately.

They all agreed; thoroughly sincere, but also hoping to lead him on from that to something more coherent.

“ ‘Criminal,’ indeed!” said Jack, seizing up a book, and flinging it back on to the desk with violence. “*I*’d like to give him criminal!”

“He didn’t call him that?” O’Brien said indignantly.

“Didn’t he?” Jack said, and out poured the whole story, last part first, and just a bit discoloured in the process. Dr. Anson’s *rôle* was not improved.

The study simply buzzed with indignation. Loud were the congratulations to Jack on having stood firm for an apology: louder the denunciations of the Doctor. Of Mr. Warner’s merits as a master no opinion need be given, but at least he had the one great gift, that all his boys were enrolled as lifelong defenders of his system, and admirers of himself. Dr. Anson could not have found a way more suited to alienate the loyalty and sympathy of his new pupils.

The worst point, of course, in fighting a Head Master, is that he holds all the weapons. You can hate, despise, and secretly revile him: but open warfare finds him invariably winner. Lines, drill, gating, the birch-rod and expulsion—such were the Doctor’s arms, if he should care to use them: whilst they, when they got past mere words and sought revenge—what had they?

“Well, I know *one* thing,” Jack cried wildly, in the absurd heroism of these heated moments, “*I*’m not going to do any prep for him or any of his beastly staff, till he apologizes.”

That seemed very fine to all of them, and Jack prepared to act on it at once.

Regular work-hours began on the first Saturday of term, when the latter half of Second School was set apart, in the Fourth Form, for the study of Xenophon; and on this Friday night, as on all after it, an hour, from eight to nine o’clock, was spent in preparation for the morrow’s construe.

Jack could not avoid attendance (here was a case where Dr. Anson held the weapons), but he did not attempt to work, and sat making what was obviously a pretence, to all who knew; thus winning their admiration, and thinking, in some subtle way, that he was inflicting on the Head Master an injury that would be keenly felt.

First School, and the earlier half of Second, were spent by the Fourth Form, it so happened, in map-drawing and other more or less martial studies, that do not need preliminary work: and it was only when eleven o'clock struck that Mr. Ponsonby, the form master, shut his books and said, "We will now take the Xenophon."

There was a general shuffling.

"F. *Jones*, will you come up, please?"

F. Jones went up, rather nervous as the first victim of term; read a few lines of Greek; translated them; parsed two words; and sat down, relieved to feel that now he need not worry about anything for the rest of the lesson. It is quite pleasant to be the first up in an hour—when you have sat down!

Mr. Ponsonby was forced to take the lesson rather slowly, in order to spread some twenty-five lines of Xenophon across an hour; so that each translator had to face a few questions; others were then passed along the benches; and finally some notes read out. And then, arrived at the last line so far translated, he would draw the list of boys nearer to him, take up his pencil and poise it expectantly, as though aware that he was making twenty hearts beat faster than was healthy. Then the word would come, "R. *Brown*": and all the rest would breathe more freely for five minutes.

Henderson alone was calm. It was not that he knew the lesson perfectly; he was no ideal exception on this first, slack day; but merely that he did not care. Anger still fortified him in his fine bravado, and whilst others trembled and looked hideously industrious, so soon as Mr. Ponsonby upraised his pencil, he alone sat calm, unterrified and undismayed.

So far, however, the master, perhaps out of consideration, had kept entirely to boys who had been in his form, or in the form below, last term. Quarter to twelve had chimed from the great tower, there were only fifteen minutes more, and he had not yet called upon a Warnerite.

"Now, then," he said, suddenly leaving his set formula, "I think we will have *Foster*." He spoke most politely, almost appealingly; for like all the masters, he wished to do everything that he could to make things pleasant for the newcomers, and so realize the Doctor's fondest hopes for Winton.

Young Foster, very red and clearly nervous, shuffled up to the desk, beside Mr. Ponsonby; read the Greek in a hushed whisper, till the master said, "Thank you, Foster: now translate that, please;" and then gasped, rather like a trout out of its native water.

" 'ὁ δὲ Ξενοφῶν——' " he said in a tentative way. "But Xenophon——" and there he stopped.

"Well?" encouraged Mr. Ponsonby.

"But Xenophon——" said the persevering Foster, now of a redness that seemed, to the observant master, rather to threaten tears.

Mr. Ponsonby began to wish that he had not called up one of Mr. Warner's boys, or had taken the big one, Henderson: that would have been fairer. He was of a kind nature, young enough to remember his own boyhood, and felt sorry for this kid, who was nervous—something to do, no doubt, with this eternal feud!

"Yes, go *on*, Foster," he said gently. "Don't be nervous of it;" at which one or two of the fellows laughed. "What's stopping you, then?" he asked with interest.

"Please, sir, I don't know what the next word means."

" 'Considering.' 'But Xenophon, considering——' Now then!"

" 'But Xenophon, considering——' "

"Do you know it at *all*, Foster?" Mr. Ponsonby was forced to ask.

"No, sir," came the plain reply.

Mr. Ponsonby desired to be considerate. "Well," he said, "perhaps you found it rather a longer bit than what you've been accustomed to? . . . Let us hear you do the first sentence of this paragraph again." Yes, certainly he wished that he had called up Henderson.

Foster, of course, had heard this translated, a few minutes since, and he only hoped that he remembered it. He started with new confidence.

" 'ὁ δὲ Ξενοφῶν——' " (for nearly every paragraph in Xenophon begins like that!). " 'But Xenophon——' " and then he seemed to come to a full stop.

"Surely you know *this*, Foster?" from the persuasive Mr. Ponsonby.

"No, sir," again, from the frank Foster.

Mr. Ponsonby was sorry. "I'm afraid," he said, not too sternly, "you haven't even been attending! But why didn't you prepare the lesson?"

"I don't know, sir." He had done it, after a fashion, but his mind had been occupied, last night, with novel surroundings, and grievances, and the

need frequently to admire the courage with which Henderson gazed at the cover of his closed Xenophon.

"I don't want to punish you so soon, Foster," said the master. "I think what you'd better do is to go to the Head Master afterwards, and explain what has happened."

"Yes, sir," said Foster; and resumed his seat, red as an Indian, but not dishonouring Warner's by any sign of tears. And he took no notice of the Ansonite who put his toe under him, as he sat down.

Mr. Ponsonby, relieved that the episode was ended, scanned the list of names once more, and raised his pencil, hesitating.

And now Jack was by no means exempt from the general alarm.

Report himself to Anson? Go to his study (as he had said he would not), and practically ask him for a punishment? A hideous thought! . . . Nor did he want, especially, to bracket himself with young Foster, in the eyes of all these Ansonites.

Nobody, in this moment, made a better show of industry than the rebellious Henderson!

"*Giles*," said Mr. Ponsonby at length.

Jack, of long practice, managed to wriggle his watch out of his waistcoat pocket and glance down at it, without being detected.

Good! It was eleven minutes to the hour. There were only six lines more, and Giles would surely be allowed to finish them?

But no, at the fourth line there came a horrible full stop, and Mr. Ponsonby said briskly, "Yes, Giles. Now then, translate that, please." Sickening! Still, those four lines might easily last out the time, if there were lots of questions and notes—and if Giles knew them.

Yes, Giles knew them, more or less; sufficiently; and Jack felt quite a maudlin love for him, suddenly!

Still, there were those two lines: better to be on the safe side. Hastily, keeping one ear open in case of a sudden question, he began to try and make out what those two lines were about.

But this was just exactly what he could not do. Xenophon, in twelve—no, twenty—days, had marched some number or other of parasangs, and then done something else: so much was clear: but what the number and the something else were, very dubious! Perhaps he had gone into winter

quarters: that was quite a trick of his: but how many parasangs had he marched first?

Not for centuries, probably, has any one taken so much keen interest in the doings of Xenophon: but it was vain, and soon, when the time for notes and questions came, Jack had to give up the problem in despair.

His one hope was the clock. Why didn't it strike?

He longed to look once more at his watch, but if Ponsonby nabbed him, he reflected, that would mean going up, for certain. Still, it must be jolly near the hour?

And surely there was something final in the way that Ponsonby said, "Thank you, Giles"?

Yes, he was looking at his watch. Good biz!

No!

Once more was the fatal pencil held above the list. Jack's studious pose, by now, was quite phenomenal.

"And now," said Mr. Ponsonby suavely, "for these last two lines, we'll just see what *Henderson* can do, please."

As slowly as possible, Jack rose from his place, with the mingled calm and terror of a man going to his execution. He felt that everybody's eyes were on him; and the fact that this form consisted of small, unimportant kids made him feel all the more humiliated.

He would have given five pounds, now, to know his construe. A great moral lesson—except that, equally, he would have given that for one glance at a crib!

Almost wishing that it were longer—to waste more time!—he read the short Greek passage in a halting, puzzled manner.

"That's it," said the master, with brutal cheeriness. "Now, let's hear that."

Jack opened his mouth. "Xenophon," he said—word of ill omen!—and at that moment came a distant whirr and—the first stroke of twelve.

Mr. Ponsonby drew out his watch. " 'M! I'd no idea—*sorry*, Henderson! We'll take those lines next time. Thank you;" and he smiled amiably at Jack.

Outside, in the quadrangle, Jack ran into one of his First Eleven friends.

"Whew!" he exclaimed (or something similar). "I'm dead off that no-prep game!"

"Off it? Why?"

"Had the very deuce of a poor time, these last ten minutes. Why, I feel quite ten years older! I only just escaped, by a ghastly fluke, from being sent up to that swine Anson, if you please!"

"No?" exclaimed the other, horrified.

"Yes. Ponsonby—the master—apologized to me for not letting me 'strue. He needn't have, I don't mind telling you!"

"What's he *like*?" came the scornful question, hardly needing a reply. What was everything like, in this filthy hole?

"Rather a good sort," replied the unexpected Henderson.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

On the Football Field

If Dr. Anson came gradually to monopolize the ill-will of the Warnerites, he was at any rate more happily placed than his new prefect: for whilst he could rely on the support of his own boys, poor Wren found himself in bad favour with both parties.

True, all was now harmony—outwardly, at any rate—among the prefects, who usually followed Grimshaw blindly in all matters. Cecil, sitting at High Table for meals, or idling in the Sixth Form library, was sure to be received by his colleagues with at least some show of friendliness, and with rather more by Grimshaw: but only in those circles did he find himself so situated. Since his little bout with Banks, the other Ansonites—the athletes and their followers—had treated him with a silent scorn, which had the advantage at any rate, thanks to his prefect's power, of being expressed in nothing more definite than looks. As to the Warnerites, they had cast him off entirely, as a renegade and traitor. Fancy throwing in your lot with the Ansonites against your own fellows!—such was the comment of his former school-fellows, who would not allow that he could try to serve both, or rather the one school which had formerly been two and now was Winton.

Thus the common scorn of Wren, and other circumstances already set forth, little by little relieved the tension between what was both the influential element and the most warlike in either faction—the athletic set.

And other things conspired to the same end.

Jack, coming back to the studies after his uncomfortable attempt to punish Dr. Anson, and just about to put his books away before strolling out with a few friends, suddenly heard, "Oh, Henderson!" behind him. He was usually called "Jack," except by small boys, and this was not a small-boy's voice. Nor was it a voice that he knew.

He turned round in surprise, to see who had called him.

It was Sinclair, with a sheet of paper in his hand.

"Oh, would you be willing to play in a game, this afternoon?" Dick asked, speaking in a very formal and official tone.

"Yes, certainly."

Jack answered in the same distant way, but as he spoke, he happened to look up, and his gaze met that of Sinclair, eye to eye. And because they were both boys, both sportsmen, and because both felt that it was "rotten" to speak in this stiff way, each of them felt a sudden longing to give up the whole feud: but neither dared to be the first to own it, and in a moment the natural impulse died, the pose of enmity remained supreme.

They both looked down again.

"And your other men, too?" asked Dick in the same tones.

"Yes, any one you want." Jack nearly said, "of course," but then his tongue was stayed by the old dread of being the first to make advances, of seeming to fear war and ask for peace.

"I just wanted to be sure;" and Dick abruptly turned aside.

Quite clearly, the interview was one, not of boy and boy, but of Captain and ex-Captain.

None the less, when they had parted, each of them, for the first time, saw an element of humour in the thing. Dick summed it all up as "darned silly," and Jack suddenly realized what fools they must have looked; two fellows talking in that stilted, grown-up way! He decided that his grievance—or the worst of it—was really against Dr. Anson. . . .

But, of course, neither of them mentioned these ideas to anybody else. Each decided inwardly that it would be a jolly good thing if the other suggested dropping the whole thing. And both added a mental vow not to be the one who offered the suggestion!

Thus things, outwardly, remained much how they were.

The one visible result was that, when the Senior School game was put up on the boards, among the twenty-two names were eight that fitted Warnerites. All the last year's colour-men were to be tried to-day, for Saturday, of course, is everywhere the day for games.

In the changing-room, the Warnerites left the places allotted to them by gummed labels, and gathered in a corner, talking and laughing, out of mere bravado, more noisily than they would have, if alone. Separated in the dormitories, each had to be silent: but here, in a mass, they would show that they had no intention of keeping in the background, like a lot of new boys! In fact, they rather overdid it, and made a bad impression on the Ansonites.

The general interest in this unimportant game, such as is played on every half-holiday when there is no school match, was shown by the fact that, so soon as the players took the field, spectators gathered, as by magic, from all quarters. No one, usually, is so foolish as to watch "Senior School," and in fact to do so would be thought more slack than patriotic: but to-day every one, who was not actually up for a set game, seemed to have appeared duly fitted with the thick coats and store of sweets, that herald a school match.

Anson's had come in force, to see the form of Warner's.

The skill of their rivals had spread afar, but Dr. Anson had never arranged a football match to balance the cricket—they were rough players, he thought secretly!—and thus the Ansonites had never seen them play, except in the far distance, on their own ground across the road.

It was, for the most part, curiosity that had drawn them together, and in some cases even the faint hope that there might be a scene of some sort. Nobody worried much about their virtue as players, for though it was every one's ambition to write "Won: Won: Won:" all down his fixture card, the idea of a united Winton had not flourished—and besides, there were only four places to be filled in the Eleven, and who wanted beastly Warnerites, however good, to keep out their own fellows? (It was these details, unforeseen by that optimist, the Doctor, which kept the feud alive and stood against the smooth working of his splendid scheme.)

Nevertheless, it was impossible not to be struck by the play of some of the new fellows; especially the big man, Henderson.

The Ansonites—despite their reputation, quite unjust, as "smugs," across the way—were good sportsmen, like all British boys, and when Jack, at centre-half, made his way lightly up half the field, seeming more to overpersuade the rival players than to force them, and then put in a shot, so that the ball fairly whizzed an inch below the crossbar, they applauded manfully, and were forced to admit "that chap Henderson is jolly good."

"Well shot, Henderson," said Sinclair: but naturally, he only spoke as Captain of the School Eleven, whose part it was, in such a game, to praise good play, upon whichever side.

These two leaders of the Sham Fight *mêlée* did, however, meet once in a way more personal. As players, they had frequent tussles; for Jack, a dashing centre-half, found himself often in conflict with the opposing backs; and on one of these occasions Sinclair, thrusting his leg forward to stop the ball, gathered quite clearly that he had stopped the half-back's boot instead.

It was no one's fault, but it was very painful! The shin is a soft thing: a football boot exactly the reverse, and many older players, especially professionals, would have collapsed dramatically on the ground and expected the reward of clapping when they rose once more. Dick, however, discouraged "galleries," as he called these displays, in others, and lived up now to his own doctrines. He limped on with the game.

But the impact of the charge, and Sinclair's little gasp of pain, told Jack what he had done. It was nearly Time, and when the whistle blew, he left the Warnerites, with whom he was walking off the field, and went across to Sinclair, who chanced to be alone, about to retrieve his sweater from a paling. Jack noticed that he was still slightly lame.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm afraid I gave you a most awful hack?" It was the mere polite amenity of Sport.

"Well, you owed me a whack!" Dick answered. This, meant as an apology, clumsy enough, for the field-day episode, certainly brought the dialogue on to a plane more personal.

"Oh, it wasn't *meant*!" Jack said, with a nervous laugh.

"Nor was mine:" and that completed the apology.

It also seemed to end the conversation, so far as a sportsman's *amende honorable* was in the question.

Now, with two men of ordinary teams, one would have remarked, "Quite a good game, wasn't it?" or something similar, and they would have strolled back to the changing-room together; starting as strangers, but arriving as friends in the good comradeship of Sport.

Here, however, was the difficulty: they were not two men of ordinary teams! They were two boys of rival factions; and they were out together in the centre of the playing-field; and for either to walk away would look unsporting, after a sort of apology; and it was all immensely difficult!

Jack suddenly realized that, in his wish to do the right thing, he had put himself in an awkward place. Would Sinclair think that he was trying to scrape up a friendship?

Of course, each of them was altogether willing to have the other as a friend; indeed, it seemed natural for members of the same school, after a good game; but if your grown men and women shape their actions by what "people will think," fearful of the great god Convention, it is a thousand times more so with school-boys. Jack and Dick had blustered freely about

the “beastly” Ansonites or Warnerites (as each was speaking): and now what would every one think if he were the first—except Wren and Grimshaw, who didn’t count!—to break the immemorial feud? Why, only an hour or two ago, both of them had been abusing the prefects as traitors to their cause!

And so, feeling rather fools, and perhaps not actually less foolish in reality, they stood there for moments that seemed minutes; both realizing what a hideously long way it was across the field; Jack not quite liking to turn away and walk that distance alone, a few feet in front of Sinclair; and Dick pretending that his sweater was entangled with the wire. . . .

How it might have ended—in friendship or in worse offence—nobody may tell, for at that moment, very silent on the turf, Mr. Ponsonby came up behind them.

If he had noticed who they were, nothing would have induced him to do so, risking the failure of first negotiations between these rival chiefs: but not till he was close beside them, and Jack turned round, did he notice who was with the Football Captain. He knew, then, that he had intruded on a ticklish business; and in the shock of that discovery, he could think of nothing to say except that on which, as games-master, he had approached the Captain.

“Oh, Sinclair,” he said, “what have you decided about the Junior ground?”

He nodded in a friendly way to Jack: but none the less, he had given him, mightily relieved, the much-desired chance of a dignified retirement. Clearly, he could not stay, whoever he was, while they discussed official business.

Mr. Ponsonby, as he saw Henderson walk off, wondered whether he had set Peace back, unwittingly, by weary weeks!

But this first game, apart from any meeting of the Captains, went some way towards making better relations between the two opposing sets in the dignified stone buildings, which Dr. Anson—and he only!—knew as Winton.

His may have been, as he delighted to remark, a school based on Mind, not Muscle, but the hero-worship of sport is, for better or for worse, a thing beyond the control of any Head Master; so that nobody among the Ansonites would readily believe that a fellow who played Footer like that hefty beggar, Henderson, could really be anything but a good sort! There was much talk, this Saturday evening, not only among the members of the First Eleven,

about the prospects for the season's matches. Seldom had they seemed rosier. Henderson was a spot man! And somehow or other, every one among the Ansonites spoke of this gem as quite peculiarly the school's own. They did not speak of him as alien, at all. Why, there was quite a good chance, almost a certainty, of licking Sefton, this year!

Sefton was the only Public School that Anson's played at any game; and in the annual match Sefton, let it be added, usually won. It had won, indeed, for seven years now in succession, and Anson's had been losing hope. But with Henderson, O'Brien, and one or two of these new men——! They really began almost to see points in the Doctor's scheme, if only he would drop the silly notion of calling the place Winton. . . .

Among the newcomers, too, anger and indignation came more and more to pour themselves upon two heads, those of Wren, the traitor, and of Dr. Anson, the traducer of their loved Head Master. Their attitude towards the Ansonites themselves was one neither of friendliness nor of active hostility —a neutral state, bound to develop presently into one or the other.

Outwardly, in the days that followed, there was a mutual ignoring of the other, as by consent: but groups of the one faction passed members of the other without the scornful glances, even comments, of the term's beginning: and among the bigger boys (except among the prefects, who were friendly), there reigned a sort of dignified indifference.

Those who have known any school's Lower Third, will be quite certain that such an attitude could not endure for long, down there.

Sunday is a lengthy day, with no games and little work. Before the end of it, small Ansonites had found distraction in "drawing" their Warnerite study-mates by hints, more and more open, of the rottenness of the late school across the way. There followed, finally, retorts: "Better go bust than be smugs, anyhow!" was Foster's opening contribution: and then fights.

Gibbs, in the passage, was busily avenging the honour of Anson's, smirched by Foster, after tea, when Sinclair came along.

Now Sinclair was not a prefect, but Gibbs usually would have hushed the uproar, to let this great man pass, for fear of being set down as "cheeky." To-day, however, he felt that he would have the Captain's sympathies with him; even appear a little of a hero.

"Dirty Warnerite!" he howled at Foster, as Sinclair came closer.

"Smug! Smug!" chanted Foster, harping on the magic word.

“Look here, we don’t want any of that rot,” said Dick. “Jolly well drop it:” and to emphasize the hint, he got Gibbs a smack upon the ear that sent him almost reeling.

Gibbs was injured, in more ways than one.

“Well,” he said, later, to a sympathetic circle, “if he wanted to smite *any one*, he might have picked the beastly Warnerite.”

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

Dr. Anson's Ultimatum

THINGS, in fact, were slowly settling down. A month passed, and everything began to work quite smoothly: either party tolerating the existence of the other, and with a growing geniality. It was a mere matter of waiting, and they would be friends.

Dr. Anson, however, could not afford to wait, and was, indeed, almost in despair. He had never quite understood boys, and to him the prospect seemed entirely hopeless, whatever Mr. Ponsonby and others of the younger masters might declare. How could Winton ever be a great school, if it were divided against itself? And that the two parties in it never mixed in any way, he learnt from Wren and Grimshaw, as well as from his own observation.

Despair was not a mood likely to endure in a man of his energy and ambition: it soon gave way to anger.

What right had a lot of stubborn boys, clinging to a silly quarrel, of which the origin was half forgotten, to ruin in this way the far-seeing schemes of their Head Master; schemes that would raise their school to an eminence of which their narrow minds could never dream?

Once more, he resolved on action.

That decision made, there did not seem to him much need to waste time in seeking the fountainhead of the disunion. The prefects were united (so he argued), and the bad feeling must therefore spring from the athletic set, of which Henderson himself had admitted that he was the leader. He would stop this foolishness at once.

Dr. Anson opened his door, and watched until a small boy passed the passage-end.

"Send Henderson to me," he said, rather grimly, and went in again.

Jack had not spoken to the Head Master since their heated interview of some three weeks ago. His schemes for revenge had rather died since he came to see that he could inflict no injury on Dr. Anson, without at the same time handing him a weapon that would let him pay it back: but none the less, or even more, the resentment was still vivid and alive.

He came, with a distinct scowl, into the room of the man who had insulted his late master.

Dr. Anson, intending to ask him to sit down, this time, suddenly realized that it might be read as a concession, and thought that firmness was the one way with this sulky Henderson. Jack once more stood, hands in pockets, before the desk and waited, with a set face, for the master's words. Dr. Anson gazed at him a while, in silence.

"I have sent for you, Henderson," he said at length, "because I have resolved that this state of affairs cannot be tolerated any longer."

Jack gave him no assistance by any question as to the state meant or the remedy proposed: and presently the other spoke again.

"At our last interview, you remember, I asked you, as having influence among my new pupils, to use it on the side of peace. I understand that you have made no attempt to do so."

Silence, once again, from Jack.

"I also demanded the nature of your grievances, and you were quite unable to put them into words. That request I shall not repeat, as it merely led to impudence on your part, and——"

"I said nothing," Jack broke in, "till you——"

Dr. Anson held up a flat hand. "We will not open that question again, Henderson," he said firmly. "I am going, to-day, to say something quite different. Where, last time, I asked, I am now going to order. We are now entering on the fifth week of term, and this ridiculous vendetta, that might have been tolerated for a day or two, until you had time to mix with your new comrades, can now be no longer endured. I have sent for you, because on your own admission, you possess more influence among Mr. Warner's late pupils than anybody except Wren." (Jack smiled ironically: he could not restrain himself.) "Wren and Grimshaw are already on the side of union, so that the continuance of ill-feeling can only be set down to you. I have made every concession possible to you boys from Mr. Warner's, and I have given you a chance of settling down, without coercion. That chance you have ignored, and I shall now be compelled to exert my authority, unwillingly, with that good end in view. Do you understand, Henderson?"

"I hear what you say," retorted Jack coolly.

Dr. Anson brought his fist down heavily upon the desk. "Understand, sir, once and for all, that I will not permit any boy to speak to me like that. Take

your hands out of your pockets, sir, at once, and say 'sir' when addressing me in future. Do you hear me?"

The old difficulty about fighting a Head Master! Jack did not wish to be expelled—even from "Winton"!

"Yes, sir," he said: but perhaps, if one had heard him say it, the surrender was not so abject as it looks in print.

Dr. Anson was content with the mere words, however spoken. The torrent of his rage died down, and the next words came in the usual pedantic, level tones.

"Please bear in mind, Henderson, that I am not acting without having given thought to what is best for Winton and for all of us. In terms to come, when you have settled down happily to the ampler life here, you will look back on this adherence to a school which is closed, as something very narrow and ridiculous indeed. I am therefore acting in your own best interests also, when I compel you to end the episode at once. And that is what I intend to do: the present condition of things is quite impossible. When you leave this study, I shall ask you to send Grimshaw to me, and I shall ask him definitely—what I have hesitated to ask, as yet—to end this preposterous division in the school ranks by the rather unusual act of calling upon you, immensely junior as you are to him both in school order and in residence at Winton. Please understand that I take this, as I say, unusual step, only because I know that Mr. Warner's boys will follow your example, and because I can always rely upon Grimshaw to carry out my wishes. If after this, the dissension still continues, I shall know with some accuracy where to locate its source. I therefore strongly advise you, Henderson, to accept this honourable method of ending a feud that has always been preposterous."

He stemmed this flood of eloquence for a moment, and Jack, whose distaste was growing for a suggestion that struck him as more than unusual, almost unconsciously put his protest into words.

"I don't see why I shouldn't choose my own friends, sir."

"Because the good of Winton demands that you should set an example of friendliness with your new school-fellows." He pulled himself up sharply, cleared his throat, and spoke with more authority. "But I decline to argue: it is enough for you to know that this is my wish, without my having to defend it. You have displayed throughout a serious spirit of insubordination, and I give you this chance of retrieving your past conduct. If after two or three days elapse, I find that you are still not on friendly terms with Grimshaw—

and when I say friendly, I do not mean more than that your attitude to him should show clearly that the feud is ended: others of my boys are doubtless more congenial to you—if (I say) by the day after to-morrow I do not find a marked difference in the situation, I shall hold you directly responsible. So I advise you to think very seriously, before you continue in your present policy."

Jack set his under-lip stubbornly: he never was a boy to be bullied. "No amount of thought would alter my decision, sir," he said quietly.

His calmness roused Dr. Anson into another of those sudden outbursts, so inappropriate to him as to seem only assumed for purposes of terrorizing.

"Understand, sir, once and for all," he started once again, "that I will *not* be defied by you. I am resolved that I will put an end to this tom-foolery, and it shall cease. I have had enough" (he went on, growing less pompous in his overpowering wrath) "of your impertinence and disobedience. Upon my word, sir, if you were a year or two younger, I should seriously reconsider my lifelong determination never to inflict corporal punishment. It is the only thing for boys like you, who have been used to it. You are not open to any other argument."

"I was never flogged by Mr. Warner," Jack said calmly.

"Then he failed in his duty," said the inconsistent Doctor. "And I would have you remember that though you may have been Captain there, you are here a Fourth Form boy, with no position in the school at all. That I should ask my Head Boy to take notice of you, must not encourage you to think yourself anybody of importance——"

"It *won't*, sir," put in Jack. He was beginning almost to enjoy the scene. People who have lost their temper are always entertaining.

Dr. Anson swallowed his wrath, with a sudden suspicion that Henderson was laughing at him.

"You may go," he said, with chill authority.

Jack shrugged his shoulders casually, and turned away.

"One moment!" cried the Doctor, who felt, somehow, that he had not come off very well in this affair.

Jack swung round silently, close by the door, with a superb look of tolerant surprise.

"Please understand quite clearly," said the Doctor, trying to speak calmly, but goaded almost to frenzy by his stubborn pupil, "that I give you this opportunity of ending the absurd feud, as a final chance. You can choose for yourself, before Wednesday, between that and leaving Winton. Do you see?"

"*Yes*, sir," answered Jack; but there was irony in the indulgent tones with which he spoke the words, as to a baby, and he closed the door with an exaggerated gentleness.

Now, indeed, the die was cast, or in a more domestic metaphor, the fat was in the fire.

If the studies where Warnerites were gathered, formerly had buzzed with indignation against Dr. Anson, now they literally rocked. He had not been content to abuse their late Head Master: he had now threatened to expel their former Captain!

Truly, the Head Master's well-meant efforts to hasten that spirit of good-will, which in the end must unify his school of Winton, were not especially successful. In the first he had made himself yet more detested by his new subjects: in the second he had made Jack more than ever their idol, to whom no soul of them would ever fail in loyalty. Sack Henderson? Well, he would see! . . .

So they talked, at first, very big indeed, and full of honest indignation; but after a while the more timid and more sensible of them began to ask what, exactly, they would do, in that case, and though many were the wild schemes broached, all seemed a trifle desperate—for who desires to be expelled?—and finally, they all began to hope, in private, that Jack would see his way to give in just enough to satisfy old Anson. "Otherwise, of course——" and they all looked extremely fierce. But it would be better, much, to see Grimshaw and just keep on decent terms for a bit (every one would understand), and then see what would happen!

Jack, however, the person most concerned, was not of those who held this view.

Dr. Anson had tackled him in the wrong manner. To become a boy's enemy and then to threaten him, is a poor way to win obedience, unless the boy is quite a feeble creature: and Jack Henderson was far from feeble. Two weeks ago, he had heard Warner, whom he almost worshipped, abused by Dr. Anson, whom he thoroughly despised: there had been no apology: and

now he was asked by Dr. Anson to do a thing very distasteful, not as a favour, but under threat of immediate expulsion! His self-respect, apart from anger, absolutely vetoed the suggestion. Whatever anybody else might think, he knew that nothing on earth would induce him even to make a pretence of doing Dr. Anson's orders—through fear of consequences!

Everybody thought this attitude extremely fine, and very rash.

"What about Grimshaw?" some one asked.

"Oh, Grimshaw isn't in it," answered Jack. "I've nothing against Grimshaw: I don't know anything about him. If he came on his own, it'd be quite a different matter. As it is, no business will be done!"

In that light way he took it, as he took most things, and they could not manage to persuade him.

None the less, they winked at one another, whispering "Bluff!"—for surely nobody would give himself the sack, like that?—and by dint of kicks and glances, gradually managed to leave Jack alone in his study. There would be more chance for Grimshaw, if none of them were there! So one by one they pleaded work, and went elsewhere, to thresh the whole serious affair out once again. Every one expressed a hope that Grimshaw, who seemed "an awful solid sort of chap," would manage to win Jack over, somehow, and so avert the crisis. But if old Anson *should* try sacking him ——! And once again, plots of wild derring-do were hatched by those who rather hoped that they would never have to put them into action.

Meanwhile, Grimshaw had arrived.

"Oh, Anson told me to come along," he said, much in the same self-assured way as on his first entry into Cecil's study.

"Yes," answered Jack, making no effort to get up or offer the envoy a seat, "he said he was going to send you."

Grimshaw, as in number five, sat on the table. He was feeling rather awkward. It was so like Anson, to ask one to do curious things like this!

"Well?" he said, presently. "You know what it's all about."

"Yes: but it isn't any use."

"How no use?"

"Why, what you've come for."

Grimshaw raised one foot and gazed in contemplation at his slipper. “Yes, but Anson says it’s that or the sack.”

“Then it’ll have to be the sack.”

“Oh, no,” said Grimshaw, quite sincerely. “It can’t be that.”

Jack liked the way in which the Head Boy had managed this business, and it suddenly occurred to him that his own attitude was liable to be misunderstood.

“By the way,” he said, “I hope you understand? It’s only Anson—I don’t quite know how to explain, but I mean, if—— No, that sounds rather rotten, but it isn’t anything except that I couldn’t give in, just because Anson threatened to give me the sack.” He found himself quite friendly with this Grimshaw, whom he had pictured as a smug, arriving full of Anson-like precepts about Union and Winton.

“I quite see,” answered Grimshaw, who was rather puzzled. “That’s all right; but Anson’s serious, and you can’t want to be sacked? Besides,” he said, with tact beyond his years, “we can’t spare you at Footer!”

“That’s Anson’s look-out,” said Jack; and then, as though to strengthen himself, he added stubbornly, “He owes me an apology for what he said about Warner, and I’m not going to give in to a funk.”

That struck Grimshaw as curiously youthful. “Still,” he said, in his elderly way, “it’s not worth ruining your career for a grievance like that, is it?”

Jack could not afford, nor did he care, to argue. “It was very decent of you to come in,” he said, with some finality; “and I hope you understand that it’s no use? The thing’s got to go on, now: I’m not going to give in to Anson.”

Grimshaw got up from the table: his host had practically said “Good-bye!” “But it seems so absurd,” he said; “we don’t get on so badly as it is, and I dare say, a little later on——”

Jack disliked this personal note intensely. “It isn’t that,” he said. “I was trying to explain.”

Grimshaw still did not quite understand, but he was wise enough to see that argument was wasted.

“Well,” he said, “perhaps by Wednesday——” and broke off at that.

“I shall be sacked by then,” said Jack complacently.

Grimshaw, about to close the door, suddenly came back into the study. He felt ten years older (though really only one year stood between them) than this headstrong Warnerite, who was risking the lifelong stigma of expulsion for some absurd difference with his Head Master.

"I say, Henderson," he said, dropping for a moment the iron reserve that seemed to make him different from other boys, "don't be a silly ass. You'll be sorry for this, all your life, if it ends in the sack, and I can see it will. Anson only wants you to be decently polite, just a word or two to us others; and after all——"

"You won't see," said Jack almost angrily, for he was all on edge. "It's not that. It isn't you. It's Anson——"

The argument was in a circle! Grimshaw, in despair, opened the door again. "Well," he said, "I'm in the end-study on the right, if by any chance ——"

"Thanks," Jack answered, actually smiling at the other's earnest face, "but there's no chance of it."

When the door was closed, he felt that he had not behaved quite nicely to Grimshaw, who—in ordinary circumstances!—was probably quite a good sort, though rather an odd devil. And after all, it had been most *his* fault, for not seeing that it wasn't because Jack didn't want to know him, but because that beast Anson had tried to force him to, by threats!

The other Warnerites did not, in any case, give him much time to worry about things like that, for so soon as a watchman had seen Grimshaw safely vanish into his end-study, out they trooped from their new meeting-place and swarmed again into Jack's study.

"Well?" asked every one, in breathless interest.

"What I told you," answered Jack, magnificently calm.

They could hardly believe him.

"You didn't snub him?" some one asked.

"No, not exactly that; he's rather a good sort, in his own way, I shouldn't wonder; but I made it pretty clear to him that, if Anson wanted it, I wasn't taking any."

Even then, nobody thought that it could be quite final, and when, on Tuesday evening, Dr. Anson sent for Jack, every one was full of hope.

“Don’t be an ass, Jack,” was the last counsel that he heard. “It’s not worth getting sacked for.”

“That’s *my* affair,” said this most stubborn of all Jacks.

And presently he came back, with the mark of indifference which he now always wore.

“Well?” came the query once more.

“Oh, the old thing,” said Jack, with an affected lightness. “He asked if I was going to take my last chance of slobbering over the Ansonites, and reminded me that to-morrow was Wednesday, and I told him I knew that already—or something of the sort: and that was all.”

“Lord!” said O’Brien; and it fairly summed up the feelings of them all.

“We won’t stick it,” cried a voice of Rebellion.

“How’ll you prevent it?” asked Jack, who had not heard the recent planning of campaigns. “He’s the Head, and if he sacks me—well, he does: that’s all.”

“Oh, is it? We’ll soon show him. We’ll——”

O’Brien put a large hand across the speaker’s mouth. “We will that,” he said.

“You will what?” laughed Jack, who was always mocking Irish idioms.

But nobody would tell him.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

Mutiny on the—Roof-top

WEDNESDAY dawned, and it found Dr. Anson anxious.

The game of threats is no less dangerous than that of bluff, to which it bears a very close resemblance. The peril of it lies in the sequel to failure: what is one to do, if the person threatened refuses to be terrorized? "I'll *murder* you if you don't do it," is a fine sort of thing to say—if it succeeds: if it fails, it lays the speaker open either to the capital charge or to that of being a mere windbag!

So it was with the Head Master. "I'll expel you, if you don't end the feud," he had remarked. Well, the feud was not ended: now, clearly, all that remained was for Henderson to be expelled. . . .

Frankly, he had not expected any boy to be so obstinate. He did not wish to start the new order at Winton by expelling any one; least of all, a boy who seemingly would be most useful on the football field. (To beat Sefton would clearly rank them as members of a Public School!) Yet, to draw back, having once threatened, would be to lessen the value of his words henceforth, to lose much of his authority as a Head Master.

So Wednesday morning found him, full of care and bitterly regretting wild threats, like many a good man before him.

Even now he could not quite believe that Henderson would persevere: for Dr. Anson suffered from two things—he did not know Jack's curiously stubborn nature, and he did not realize the hatred towards himself inspired by his remarks on Mr. Warner; a hatred which made obedience to the new master seem, in a boy's code of conduct, almost disloyalty towards the old.

Feeling a trifle humiliated, he resolved to send for Henderson again. The last resource of the man whose extreme threat has failed, is to allow his victim a little more grace.

"Ah, Henderson," he said, looking with a secret fury at the set face of this obstinate young fool before him, "I have sent for you, because, you may remember, to-day was the day fixed——"

“I know, sir,” interrupted Jack, in serious tones. Only at this moment did he realize what expulsion would mean for him and for his parents. Anger, excitement, the wonder of his friends, had kept him in a sort of fool’s paradise, till now.

Dr. Anson looked up almost hopefully, at this more earnest note. “I cannot believe,” he said, almost pleadingly, “that you really intend to persevere in your obstinacy: and therefore, although this morning ends the time of grace that I allowed you, I am willing to give you until Third School to-day, to consider once more your decision and the lifelong results to which it must inevitably lead.” He braced himself up to a more dominating manner. “If you persist in defying me—and it is a most natural thing that I ask, merely that you should set the example of mixing with your new school-fellows—the interests of Winton demand that you should be removed, as an element making for disunion. Please understand that it will be not I, but you, by whom your expulsion is decreed. Your boxes will be packed, your cab ordered, and unless you see your way to change your ideas, you will leave Winton for ever, at three o’clock. If, however, before then I hear from my Head Boy that you have made overtures of peace, I shall be delighted, for my own part, and shall hope to make you a very contented and very influential member of the great, united school of Winton.”

The man of threats had sunk very near to blandishment!

“I’d rather go at once,” said Jack dully. “I’m afraid my mind’s made up.”

For a few moments the Head Master could not speak: he had no patience with the astounding obstinacy of this boy.

“I refuse to believe it,” he said at length. “For your own sake, against your worse self, I give you this further interval. You need not attend Second School, and I implore you to make good use of the time in putting aside your foolish old antipathies and in considering how small a thing it is I ask you. Three o’clock, remember! You may go now.”

Without a word Jack left the room.

Boys and masters each see more than the other side believes: and Jack, in this case, had not failed to realize that the Doctor’s threats had faded in their hue, and that he was vainly seeking some way to avoid the last step of expulsion. And, so thinking, he did not, being of an easy nature, allow himself to be disturbed: old Anson did not mean to do it!

The other Warnerites, however, thought the situation serious, and when they went down to Second School at ten o’clock, hoped that two hours of

solitary thought would bring Jack to a saner state of mind.

But twelve o'clock came, and he was equally resolved. The fact was that he, like Dr. Anson, had gone too far for honourable withdrawal. He could not give in, now! Certainly, he did not want to be expelled: and there was no real objection to saying a word or two to Grimshaw and the others, now and then (except that Anson wanted it!): but he preferred that the Head Master should be the one to draw back, and thought that he saw every sign of his so doing. To the others, who did not know this chain of reasoning, his calmness seemed phenomenal. They spent the morning in more or less tactful attempts to show him that they would not think it at all cowardly, or anything of that sort, if he submitted now, to save himself from leaving.

But lunch-time passed, and he was still as firm as a rock.

One of the fellows made a daring trip up-stairs, and scouting after the new scientific methods, declared that the Matron *was* actually packing a box, on the landing. Anson obviously meant it: the thing was serious!

Even Jack was a little upset by this fresh bit of news: that detail seemed too elaborate for a new game of bluff. His attitude changed suddenly. He saw that he had been a fool. And yet——!

One by one, beckoned or signalled, they had crept away elsewhere, and Jack was left to think, for the first time, that if Anson were serious, he would be home in a few hours, telling his father that he had been expelled: and for what? For what Colonel Henderson, keen disciplinarian, would call abominable insubordination! Whatever he got here, he need expect no sympathy at home. . . .

But even while he sat brooding, wondering dully whether it was still too late, and whether he could bring himself now to surrender, the conspirators, O'Brien at their head, came surging in again.

"We're thinking," said their leader, in his musical, full brogue, "that you must have a send-off, Jack!"

"Oh, no," answered Jack, whose new mood had plunged him into a deep gloom, so that he seemed, by an abrupt change, the most serious of them all. The rest, like their spokesman, looked full of devilry. To see them, one would never have supposed that they were going to say farewell to a comrade in disgrace. They had the air of mutineers, not mourners.

"Ah yes, now?" said O'Brien, with the rare persuasion of an Irishman.

“Come along, Jack!” cried a more blatant Englishman, “or the Ansonites’ll think you funk them seeing you.”

Really, that proved more effective!

“What do you want to do?” asked Jack, with rather listless interest.

Every one nudged everybody, and finally it fell on one of them to speak. “Oh, just a last stroll round before the hour strikes,” he said, casually. (Third School starts at three, and now the three-quarters was just chiming.)

“Right you are, then,” and he got up from his desk.

Even now, it was impossible for him to feel that he was really spending his last quarter of an hour with all these trusted friends; that he was really going to be, in fact had been, expelled. Like one in a dream, he sauntered along the corridor among them, and out into the grounds.

“Good old Jack!” cried O’Brien, as soon as they were in the open, and in one moment, just as though it were a signal—which, in fact, it was—a dozen arms seized hold of Henderson and he was set, held tight, on half-a-dozen shoulders. Others of the small crowd supported his back with their hands; and so, pushed, carried, bumped, he found himself travelling at a swift pace down the avenue that leads to the large block of form-rooms.

“What *are* you playing at?” he asked. He knew it was meant as a compliment, a form of silent sympathy, but he was in no mood for such a ceremony.

No one answered him, but at a fast trot the shapeless cavalcade approached the building. The school grounds were empty, for this is the half-hour in which translation for Third School is tardily prepared by most. The Warnerites, curiously quiet if their aim were to display enthusiasm for the boy they carried, reached the great stone pile unobserved, except by a few small Ansonites, who looked upon this exhibition scornfully, as only what you might expect of rotten Warnerites, and did not trouble to go after it.

The large doors were open, and Jack, expecting to find himself set down before them, for a speech, was soon being transported, rather painfully, from flight to flight, until he reached the very top.

“You old rotters!” “Let me go!” and other protests of that sort he kept repeating: this was too strenuous a farewell for his mood: but utterly without effect.

At the top of the staircase, however, they set him down, O'Brien and another linking their arms firmly within his, almost as though fearing an effort to escape.

"Up with the ladder," said O'Brien, who was clearly leader.

In the ceiling, here, exactly over the well of the staircase, is a small trap-door that leads on to the roof, useful for plumbers and their kind, and even possibly in case of fire. Two iron rings are fixed at either side. Upon the wall, close by, there hangs a ladder, one end fitted with two hooks.

This ladder two of the fellows took down, and after one or two attempts, dropped the hooks into their sockets. The way-up, now, was fairly, though by no means extremely, safe. At the first touch of a climber, the ladder shook alarmingly, but after that his downward weight served to press it down firmly in the iron rings, and kept it steady.

Rather nervously the first boy slowly clambered up, and disappeared, head forward, through the opening.

"It's all right," he said, looking down. "Come on!"

Jack, left more or less in peace again, had sunk once more into a reverie, scarcely observing what was happening around him: but now he suddenly resumed his old command.

"I say," he exclaimed, "what *are* you fellows doing?"

It was rather a hard question.

"It's the send-off that's up there," said O'Brien. "Will you be going up?"

Even now, Jack could smile at O'Brien. "I won't be!" he said. "What *is* the point? Besides, it's nearly three o'clock." He did not feel at all like climbing ladders!

"Oh, go on, Jack!" "Don't spoil it all!" "Be a sportsman!" "Just to please us?"——until at length, listlessly, he started climbing. It seemed impossible to be disobliging, when urged thus! And after all what did anything at all matter, now?

They were all radiant, when they saw him safely on the top.

But Jack's first impulse was to glance at the clock, which towered, curiously large, beside them.

"I say, you fellows, look out, or you'll get into a row! It's nearly five to;" then, glancing over the parapet to the avenue, "and there's everybody

coming down already."

No one seemed at all disturbed. There were some fifteen boys there, all the best athletes of Warner's, but not one of them showed any anxiety about getting into rows or any haste to go down for Third School, like those others far below.

Nobody said anything, until O'Brien spoke.

"They're coming down, are they?" said he, with more of a brogue than usual, in his excitement. "Then here's the time to start." He waved his cap aloft, and cried in bull-like tones—

"*Three cheers for Henderson!*"

Very splendidly they took it up, producing a colossal volume of noise for about a dozen throats. Jack tried to hush them, but he could do nothing: they only yelled the more, and threw another cheer in for good luck.

"Don't be asses," he said finally, when they stopped and stood smiling at each other, breathlessly. "There's no point in your getting sacked as well."

"*Three hisses for old Anson!*" shouted O'Brien, and his voice echoed in the chimneys.

Down below, little groups of boys, who had started early for Third School, could be seen; very small, with white faces upturned. More came hurrying from all directions, some just in time to catch distant sounds of such a storm of hissing, as would have put to flight a dozen of the boldest actors.

But there was more to do than this.

O'Brien rushed towards the flagstaff where always, except upon the wettest days, the Union Jack waved proudly, to please the Doctor's patriotism and encourage that of those under his care. With fingers trembling from excitement he loosened the ropes and let the flag down, amid cheers, until it floated at half-mast, appropriate mourning for the passing of Jack Henderson.

Then other things occurred to him.

"Stop the clock, some one," he cried out, and at his words a rush was made towards the tower.

Jack made one more effort to control this reckless outburst. "Pat," he said, using O'Brien's old nickname, "do for heaven's sake stop this and get them down, or I shall feel that it was me who got them the sack."

“Sacked, man?” cried O’Brien. “Who’s going to be sacked? Why isn’t that exactly what we’re after preventing?”

Jack was too upset to parody his language. “You’ll *all* get it,” he said. “You’re bound to. Why, it’s rank mutiny.”

“I’ve heard often of mutiny on the high seas,” said O’Brien, with twinkling eyes, “but I’m thinking it’s something new, is mutiny on the school-top?”

“Oh, don’t rot!” cried Jack, earnest yet not angry: for who could be angry with this great fellow who was nothing but a baby?

“The fact is,” answered O’Brien, half serious and half laughing, “we’d none of us want to be staying, once yourself was gone!”

And then something seemed to strike him, for he rushed towards the north end of the building. Everybody followed, wondering what his new plan was: and soon enough they saw.

It is here that the school-bell hangs, high aloft, sheltered beneath a little canopy of boards, and rather naturally rung from below, by means of a long cord. There are some four feet from the wall-top to the clapper whence the cord begins.

What are such trifles to an Irishman, when he is in his element; a rebel? O’Brien gave his orders quickly. Half-a-minute later he was hanging, much as his compatriots hang to kiss the Blarney stone; held by the ankles, dangling head-first in the air.

Jack, dreading a disaster—for all of this seemed due to him—leaned over the parapet, watching anxiously. O’Brien, redder and redder in the face, groped under the wooden canopy, to catch the bell-rope.

“I have it!” he said suddenly.

But the extra inch that he had reached unloosed his coat; he felt his watch slowly slipping from his pocket; loosed the rope to catch it; missed the watch; clutched after it; and very nearly pulled his feet out of the hands that held them. The watch fell and was smashed to splinters on the stone yard below. The sound was somehow terrible.

“For heaven’s sake be careful,” said Jack, nervously.

But all of this was nothing to O’Brien. “I *have* it,” he said, once more: and this time, he had. He was drawn up by a dozen hands, that clutched him anywhere, and in his own hand, swollen with great veins, he held the rope.

He lost no time in gaining breath, getting paler, or anything of that sort. Once upon his feet again, he gave the rope a savage tug, which sent the bell smashing ungratefully against its sheltering canopy. Again and again tugged O'Brien: again and again the curious sound, a bell that was no bell, broke in great waves around the decorous school-site of Winton.

"That'll bring 'em out," said an appreciative voice.

It did!

Only the smaller boys come out, in winter-time, so early as five minutes before the hour for work. Masters and the bigger fellows may be expected about two minutes before the hour chimes forth; and it was still a minute from that time.

But now they all appeared, as if by magic, from every direction, and in all kinds of attire, urged by that strange tolling; many with the dread of fire.

The mutineers leaned over and enjoyed the spectacle. Even Jack could see the humour, almost, of these startled groups.

And suddenly the Head Master appeared.

Out of the Private Wing he came, almost running—yes, *he*, Dr. Anson—and without a hat! Fire, no doubt, had been his first idea.

One of the masters went to him, and pointed at the roof.

The great man shaded his eye with a hand, and gazed aloft.

O'Brien, for the first time, rang a double peal.

Immediately, the Doctor vanished, back into his house.

Up on the roof there was a roar of laughter, and the Irish ringleader resumed his solemn tolling: but in the next moment, perhaps as a reaction from their merriment, each of them suddenly realized in what a serious position they had placed themselves. They had absolutely declared war, publicly, with the Head Master!

"What's the old beast going to do?" asked some one, and it voiced the general doubt.

There was no long waiting for the answer. Dr. Anson came out, in his cap and gown!

Even in their new anxiety and secret terror, they could not help laughing at this idea—so like the System!—that he could not do anything without those symbols of authority.

But he was talking to them: hands before his mouth, to make a trumpet, he was bellowing at them fierce words, which came as a thin, hollow, whisper.

"Come down at once, sirs, or I shall deal with you with the utmost severity."

"You'd much *better*," said Jack to O'Brien. "Do, for my sake, like decent sorts? You've protested, now, and it's jolly decent of you, but——"

"Go on with you!" replied O'Brien. "It's only his talk, don't you see? He wants to get us down. We're done for, anyhow. Let's be having our full bit of fun!" He copied the Doctor's idea of a mouth-trumpet and howled out—

"Three cheers for Henderson, and down with Anson!"

Whether his logic or his devilry persuaded them, his followers deserted the wise counsel of Henderson, and joined with a will in cheers and hoots that rolled down on the staggered crowds below.

"I must say," remarked Dick Sinclair, almost admiringly, "these Warnerites are rather sportsmen."

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

Grimshaw to the Front!

Dr. Anson, so far as could be judged from that distance, was a little staggered. He turned back to consult with a group of masters, close behind him. No action seemed to result from the deliberations, so that possibly they too found themselves rather at a loss. Corunna, before it became Winton, was not used to scenes like this, and the all-potent System had no method, tied up in red tape, ready for their treatment!

"Hullo! Here's Grimshaw," said Jack.

There could be no mistaking him. He had apparently been seeing one of the masters who live outside the grounds, for he entered by the school-gate, and walked straight down the long path to the scene of action. He did not run, like Dr. Anson: but he did not give one the idea of trying to hang back, in the hope that things might settle before his arrival. No, he came at a good pace, but he came calmly, very dignified. His gait, even noticed from afar, gave one the impression that he knew just exactly what to do, and was about to do it. Jack, watching him, was somehow reminded of a policeman.

Grimshaw did not quicken his pace, as he came nearer and took in the full details of the position.

There was something horrible about this deliberation.

Unconsciously, as they watched him coming nearer, all of them lost hope.

Perhaps the Head Master called him, for when almost past the group of masters, he turned aside abruptly; went up to them, touching his cap; and then, after only a few moments, moved on again down the main avenue, in that same unexcited way, as though this were a business that he often had to tackle.

Presently he came too near the building for those above to see him any more.

"I believe he's coming up," cried Jack, who in the excitement of this scene had almost forgotten that he was practically no longer a "Wintonian": he weighed his fate as equal to that of the others.

"He is *not*," answered O'Brien, firmly.

Suggestions were not lacking. "Let's chuck the ladder down the stairs," was one: "Or haul it up?" another.

O'Brien, keen strategist, had thought it out. The ladder would not come up, unhappily; and if they threw it down, they had cut off their retreat, and might be starved out! No, they must stay up there; hang on to the ladder, let no one else mount: and if they made noise enough they could dictate terms, which old Anson would accept, sooner than have all the neighbourhood arriving! And the great clause in the treaty was, of course, that Henderson should not be sent away.

That sounded splendid, and quite simple. They all thought O'Brien was a genius.

But they did not know Grimshaw.

Grimshaw's firm step—still slow, deliberate, official—was heard on the stone staircase, and presently he came in view. Somehow or other, no one thought of booing. They knelt and waited silently, peering down through the trap-door, and one could almost hear the beating of those fifteen hearts, for everybody felt the crisis was at hand.

"Come along down," said Grimshaw. There was an odd note of contemptuous pity in his voice, and he spoke rather as a man might speak to a child who had chosen a poor refuge, and been found easily, at Hide and Seek.

Nobody made any answer. Nobody made any movement.

"Buck up!" he said, impatiently. "What do you imagine that you're *doing* there? Buck up and come down."

For some of them, the tones of his voice made their position seem less glorious than it had seemed, a minute since. O'Brien, however, was merely made more fierce. "Come down be d——d!" he shouted, savagely.

The Head Boy said nothing: he merely put his right foot on the ladder, testing its stability, as any one might do, about to climb it.

O'Brien, who was holding its top rung, rapidly raised it an inch or two, and dropped it so that it was held no longer by the hooks. A slight tilt backwards, now; then right or left; and it would crash down into the deep well of the great staircase. In vigorous words he pointed this fact out to Grimshaw.

Grimshaw met the wild threat with that quiet smile which men reserve for Melodrama. He looked upon it as an attempt to frighten, and he felt no terror. He grasped the ladder, and put his whole weight on its bottom rungs.

No Englishman, however, fully realizes what the Irishman can do, when he is roused. O'Brien's fighting blood was stirred, and he was capable of anything. Afterwards, reflection: for the present, victory! He meant the threat, and as it failed to keep Grimshaw back, he did not hesitate to put it into action. Using his full strength he pushed the ladder-top outwards; a feat not difficult, while Grimshaw's weight was on the bottom.

One moment more; a push sideways; and everything would have been over: but in that moment Jack seized O'Brien by the shoulders, and tugged him violently backwards. Unprepared, the latter yielded easily, but as he fell back with an oath, he let go of the ladder. For an instant it balanced on its base, and then fell forward into its position.

O'Brien, mad with rage, struggled fiercely to get at it.

"Let me go," he shrieked.

"Look out, man," Jack cried, as they wrestled. "Why, you'd kill him."

And while they staggered to and fro, the others astounded at this near escape, tackling O'Brien, or aimlessly debating plans without their leader, the Head Boy came up through the trap-door, out on to the roof, quite unopposed.

He was still calm. If he could only have been excited, only have lived up to O'Brien's level, the thing would have been easy! It would have been a fight.

As things were, it was very much like a fiasco.

O'Brien, finally subdued by half-a-dozen of his followers, suddenly stopped fighting; realized what he had nearly done; remembered, then, that he had dropped the ladder; and——saw Grimshaw standing on the roof beside him! All the fight in him had died, for Ireland is the home of brief emotions. His feeling was of infinite relief. If the ladder had fallen backwards or a little sideways——!

Grimshaw made no reference to the episode.

"I suppose the Head'll deal with you," he said to them in general, coldly, with a voice almost of boredom. "Go on down. You'd better fix the ladder in the hooks, first."

He noticed who they were, as they went down.

And that was the end of the Great Mutiny.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

For the Sake of the School

EVERYTHING was quiet: the System working once again. Through the windows of the great school building came a drone of voices; masters dictating notes, or boys grappling with translation.

There was no sign of the mutiny that had seemed so serious, ten brief minutes ago. Only in two places did it still show its tracks: in the whirling minds of these boys who bent over their books, outwardly so studious, and in the suite of rooms that belongs to the Head Master. The episode was over: but in the last-named spot were the three people most interested in its sequel.

The Matron had dismissed Jack's cab, as the long minutes passed without a sign of his appearance, and now he sat in Dr. Anson's ante-room, waiting for something to happen, with the dull calm of one who has touched bottom, and finds comfort in the thought that he can sink no lower. He was expelled already: and in a kind of thoughtless stupor he sat gazing with unseeing eyes out of the window, listening to the buzz of subdued conversation that came from the larger room, next door.

There, in the study, Dr. Anson was closeted with his Head Boy.

Grimshaw had never seen him look so old or helpless. It seemed as though, in this crisis, the experienced master wished to rest upon the boy's assistance.

"I am very grateful to you, Grimshaw," he began, weakly, after a long silence.

"Oh, I did nothing, sir," Grimshaw replied, with rather less than his usual assurance; nervously.

"You got the boys down from the roof; and I must admit that, for the moment, I was at a loss." Gratitude expressed, he made a brave effort to show some of the firmness, on which he prided himself most; but his weary voice and hopeless tones robbed the attempt of any value. "Now, we must consider how we are to deal with the disorder. It must be punished with a strong hand."

He spoke as though trying to spur himself into action, and Grimshaw instinctively prepared himself for argument. Anson, he felt certain, would not know how to deal with this! And for once, a boy's superior pity for his master was almost justified: Dr. Anson felt altogether in despair, quite hopeless. He saw clearly enough what the strong line of action was: but these last weeks had robbed him of his strength. All his fine dreams of a united Winton, a great Public School, Corunna reinforced in number and athletic skill, its rival dead, seemed destined to fade into nothingness: and worse than that, a scandal for the public prints. How could he hope to quell these boys, so wild and reckless; what do with them except expel them? And if he expelled them, of what use all the money, all the care, that he had spent on taking over his rival's connection? . . .

Seeing no way out, he fell back, with a fine pretence of strength, upon the action that had been already taken.

"Henderson, at least, must go," he said, quite firmly.

Grimshaw did not seem to be impressed. "Excuse me, sir," he said, respectful in words, though with a suggestion that he did not mean to yield, "but do you think that would be wise?"

Dr. Anson raised his eyebrows. "Wise, Grimshaw? Why not? In what way? He was already expelled; and after this, it is more than ever impossible to have him here. If I had been firmer in removing him earlier, this would not have happened. He should have gone yesterday."

"Then *this* would have happened yesterday," the other answered calmly.

The Doctor grew less listless, in the face of opposition, and he spoke with far more animation. "Do you mean to imply, Grimshaw, that because this disgraceful disorder was directly due to Henderson, I should therefore refrain from expelling him?"

"Not exactly that, sir. I mean that if you expel him, you will have to expel the others, too. They will never settle down: Henderson has always been their leader, and they don't think that he was justly punished."

"That is for *me* to judge, Grimshaw," said the master, with all of his old dignity.

"Certainly, sir: I was only telling you their point of view. And perhaps after all, sir——" He hesitated for a moment.

"Perhaps, after all——?"

"Perhaps you could hardly expect Henderson to make friends."

Dr. Anson interrupted him. “It was not a matter of that, Grimshaw. I decided, after deep thought, to get rid of the boy for a much wider reason: he was the centre of disunion, I thought that his removal would put an end to it.” Once again the weak note of despair was heard.

“Don’t you think, sir, it might have just the opposite effect? I’m afraid the others will never forget, unless of course you sack—I mean, expel them all?”

“I know, I know,” said Dr. Anson, almost to himself. “That is what makes it all so difficult. . . . How can I possibly expel them all?”

Grimshaw did not offer him advice upon that point, and both sat silent for a little.

“The whole question of punishing them, apart from Henderson, is very difficult,” the Doctor said once, and then sank back into his troubled reverie. It seemed to Grimshaw, after a while, as though he had forgotten what it was that he was meant to be considering—so dreamy did he look—until a sound of coughing came from the next room: and that reminded him. He sat more upright in his chair, and generally pulled himself together.

The interval, whether of coma or of thought, apparently had led him to some sort of conclusion, for he spoke much more decisively.

“So far as Henderson is concerned, there is no way out of the case except expulsion. Flogging, as you know, is against my lifelong principles, and I have already learnt that persuasion and threats are equally of no avail with this miserable boy. Any such punishment as drill or gating would be hopelessly inadequate. About the others we must consider carefully, but Henderson must go.”

Grimshaw knew those tones. Dr. Anson was not a man of special strength, but many weak men are very firm in clinging to their own opinions. It was clear that the doom of Henderson was sealed.

“You will expel him for general disobedience, sir?” he asked, more to gain time than for any other purpose.

Dr. Anson hesitated. “I should be sorry to expel a boy for anything so intangible as that, Grimshaw. I was hoping that when the moment came to leave Winton, he might repent of his stubbornness and accept my very reasonable conditions: but then this more serious affair occurred. No, I shall inform his parents that he is expelled for open mutiny.”

“But then there are fourteen others who are just as guilty, sir!”

The Head Master set himself to justify this removal of the boy whom he regarded as source of all the ill-feeling between these rival parties in his school. Henderson had openly defied his wishes. That opposition once removed, the two sets of boys must surely settle down in peace?

And yet—there was something in what Grimshaw said: if the threat of expulsion had these terrible effects, what would happen when it was carried into action? These fourteen boys would still remain, these boys who thought the thing unjust. . . .

Unjust! That word started Dr. Anson off upon another line of thought, and at its end he came to see, in spite of his desires, that possibly he had been (as he had half owned to his Head Boy) expelling Henderson for rather an indefinite offence. And now—now he was guilty of Mutiny! Only, unhappily, so were a full dozen more: and to remove them all would be to ruin Winton.

Winton—that seemed the sufferer, whether it was one or fifteen that was the number of the victims: and it was Winton for which Dr. Anson lived.

Yet if he sunk his pride, and let Henderson stay on, what sign was there that he would be more willing to submit? Why should he, when he would naturally claim to be the victor?

No, he could not do that. . . .

Grimshaw, meanwhile, was no less busy with his thoughts.

For him, too, this school of which he was Head Boy (although he did not call it Winton), was everything; the end for which he worked; and he saw clearly that if Henderson left, peace would be set back quite indefinitely. That would be bad for the school. The footer team would suffer too: if this brilliant centre-half were absent, Sefton could be certain of a win. There had not been a man like this for years! And Henderson, he knew, was a good fellow: almost any one but Anson would have seen that, and tackled him in quite a different way.

But it was just Anson, and no one else, who had the job in hand: and he had settled that Henderson must have the sack!

Suddenly, whilst Grimshaw reasoned thus in a despairing manner, there came into his head a scheme of such a sort that for one moment he thought it so grand as to be an inspiration; in the next, so terrible as to make him wish that he had never thought of it.

This Mutiny up on the school-top was not a matter either of the House or of the Form Rooms: it fell beneath the jurisdiction, then, not of the masters, but of the school prefects. It was he who had gone up and noted the names of the parties to it. *He* could claim to punish them!

"Could," but——!

There was a second thought, that made him shudder. It was not a light thing, even for a boy of Grimshaw's strength, to take over, by his own suggestion, the punishing of fourteen fellows; all big; all athletes; all certain to be popular when once the school had settled down in peace.

But that was what decided him: the school!

If Anson did the job (he reasoned), Henderson was doomed, and that, he knew, meant such a feud between Warnerites and the Head Master as would not die till every one of them was weeded out: and then what came of this ideal of a new, larger, school?

No, he must take it up, for the school's sake; and suddenly, while Dr. Anson saw less and less of light among the clouds that gathered round his darling Winton, he broke in on the long silence with a startling question.

"Would you object, sir, if the prefects took the matter over?"

Far from objecting, the Head Master welcomed with unspeakable relief this proposal, which put the whole burden of the business on another's shoulders: but it would not do for him to own it. He hummed and hawed a little, secretly finding it hard to restrain his joy and gratitude.

"Well, Grimshaw," he said, "I can't see—keen supporter as I have always been of the rule of boys by boys, I am afraid that this is a case for the Head Master, rather than the prefects." But he was careful not to speak with too much decision.

Grimshaw noted this, and knew—almost with dread—that the day was his. "Don't you think, sir, that as I was the one to—catch them" (he could not think of the right word), "perhaps it might solve the difficulty, if——" He broke off, as was his habit, and began again: "I mean, sir, I think the prefects might deal with these fellows, in such a way as not to make any worse feeling, and not to lose them for Winton." (Diplomat, he forced himself to use the hated name!) "I'm sure, sir, you wouldn't be sorry, in the end, for having given Henderson a second chance."

Dr. Anson did not care for his Head Boy's tone; did not wish to seem over-persuaded. He hastily made a favour of yielding.

“I have been thinking the matter over, Grimshaw,” he said, pompously, “while you were speaking, and I have come to the conclusion that it will be best, in the interests of Winton, if the prefects take the matter into their own hands.” He spoke as though this were a brilliant and a sudden inspiration. “I may rely on you, Grimshaw?”

“Yes, sir.”

Dr. Anson spoke quite briskly now. “Very well, then: that is settled. I hope that your plea for Henderson will be justified by its results.” He paused for a few moments, as though reflecting whether there was more to say; perhaps even debating whether he should express gratitude to Grimshaw; then he said, “Thank you, then: I am quite content to rely on your discretion, Grimshaw. If you will send Henderson to me, I will say a word or two to him. And if you should want advice at any time, do not hesitate to come to me.”

“No, sir. Thank you,” answered Grimshaw, inscrutable as ever, and passed out through the ante-room.

A moment later, Jack entered; miserable inwardly, outwardly full of swagger and bravado. He had been expelled for defiance of old Anson: now, then, he was at liberty to go on defying! Afterwards, on the long journey home, he could worry as to the future, think out explanations for his father: at present, his task was to show the old beast that his spirit was not broken, that Warner’s fellows were not made like that!

But the Head Master did not seem in any mood for fighting. He was sitting at his desk, calm, benevolent, reproachful.

“I am sorry, Henderson,” he started, “that this affair upon the roof has taken place. At the moment when the uproar began, I had definitely decided not to carry out my threat of expulsion.” (Jack set his chin stubbornly: this story of the Would Have Been was very old.) “I am confident that, in spite of yourself, you have many good qualities.” (Jack, luckily, just kept himself from a sarcastic comment.) “So convinced am I of this, that I am willing to give you, even now, another chance.”

And now Jack, dizzy with conflicting impulses, waited anxiously for the conditions of the pardon. He almost had it in him, for the moment, to regret this belated mercy. The last hours had made him realize the horrors of expulsion: yet how could he now, after all that he had said and vowed, be feeble and agree to the Doctor’s conditions? He waited for them, nervously; guessing their nature, and doubtful how to treat them.

But the need did not arise. Dr. Anson asked for nothing in the way of promises.

"I shall not expel you, after all, Henderson," he said. "I hope my action will be justified. And please understand one thing quite clearly: the fact that I have seen fit to pardon you is in no way whatsoever connected with your disgraceful exhibition of this afternoon, for which of course you will be punished in due time. You may go, now. You need not attend the remainder of Third School."

"Thank you, sir," Jack said, quite humbly, and went out.

The thing was so astounding, so altogether beyond comprehension, that it staggered him. If he had been expelled at three, why was he pardoned at half-past, after inciting (as the Doctor must have thought) a mutiny? Had Anson funked? Jack did not think it could be that, for the master had seemed to him firm enough, before; and he was less expert than Grimshaw at seeing what lay hid behind the pedagogic mask.

Well, he reflected in the first delirious relief, it was quite decent of the old fellow, anyhow. He couldn't be such a swine as they had fancied, after all, even if he *had* said beastly things about Warner!

But presently, while he waited for the end of Third School, during what had seemed hours of solitude, the thought occurred to him that his hands were rather tied, now: he couldn't very well go on defying old Anson, after he had been so unnecessarily decent to him.

Then he suddenly saw, or thought he saw: *that* was why the beast had let him off!

By a boyish train of reasoning, he set it down as a low trick.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

In the Prefects' Room

"I SAY, you fellows! What *do* you think?" excitedly piped Foster, dashing up to a little group of junior Warnerites, deep in discussion, on the playing-field.

"What?" echoed every one, agog for news.

Foster made an impressive pause, as one who knows that he has a real tit-bit in reserve. All of them surged round to hear it.

"The Lightweight's got a *motor-car*!" said Foster, and he laughed.

No one followed his example. He was not old enough, as a gossip, to know his audience properly, and he had brought it the wrong sort of fodder. Who wanted to hear about Featherstone's motor, or anything at all of his? They turned away in chilly disappointment.

"Is *that* all?" some one said, voicing everybody's thought.

In ordinary times, it would have been amusing, certainly, to hear that any of Da Costa's bounders—especially the Lightweight!—had sported a motor-car: but these were by no means ordinary times!

In fact, during all this term, the Warnerites had been so busy with their own concerns, that they had never thought of their feud with the "College" men. They had never worried to mention Featherstone, or even to remember his existence. Why, they had almost forgotten what had once seemed a big thing, the wild threats of the colossal Cursitor. The holidays had come, since that great happening at the river picnic, and then the bustle of their move across the road. Cursitor (busy, as it happened, with social and more interesting engagements) had shown no sign of warlike intentions, and if any one had ever found the time to recall his bellowed threats of vengeance, they would doubtless, by now, have been set down as the mere momentary passion of a "mad Irishman." They all knew O'Brien and his tempers, that meant murder—for five minutes!

But on this day, more than ever, the questions that interested them were altogether different. Only one night had passed since their great mutiny, and all, involved in it or not, were busily debating what was going to happen.

Why hadn't Henderson been sacked? What was Anson giving him instead? And what would all the others get?

These last discussed the problem in quite as calm and abstract a way as those clear of the whole business, for obviously they were not going to be sacked, and no boy worries much about any punishment short of expulsion: lines or gatings are mere episodes—boring, but quite unimportant! And Anson could do nothing else: even if they had not been too big, part of his boasted superiority over Warner was that he never had recourse to flogging.

So with an interest almost impersonal, they stood about in groups; said what a rag the thing had been; wondered what old A. could do; and were quite keen for him to make a start. There was no doubt of their success: they had got Jack off (so they thought), and old Anson, now, could jolly well do what he liked!

Just at the end of lock-ups, a fresh interest was lent to the discussion, by the news that a prefects' meeting was being held in the Sixth Form Library, or prefects' room. At once tongues wagged, and Rumour stalked through all the studies in a hundred shapes. The fiercer Ansonites quite hoped the Warnerites were going to be hauled before the Praes: that would just show them who were masters, here! And the Warnerites, on their part, agreed in saying that it would be beastly rotten, if that happened, and they didn't see what it had got to do with that interfering ass, Grimshaw—and in a word they were all blowed, singly and collectively, if they would stand it.

The hour of preparation came, finding the prefects still in conclave and the rest no wiser. The juniors, who had to do their work in form-rooms under a stern master's eye, trooped off unwillingly, with Jack among them: and the others, who were meant to work in their studies, continued, sad to say, to pay attention to nothing whatever but the topic of the hour.

The Third and Fourth Forms, making a pretence of work in the great room known as Junior School, drew consolation only from the fact that Henderson, chief figure of the drama, was among them: so that nothing very critical could happen in this hour of toil!

But presently a little buzz, growing in strength, spread along the benches from the end nearest the door. Heads were raised, cautiously at first and then more boldly, until every one was staring raptly at a boy, very red of face, who strode self-consciously along the room.

It was Wren.

He made his way straight to the presiding master, and the two held a whispered conversation. Then the master looked along the rows of faces. Every one knew whom he was seeking.

"Wren's come for Henderson," the murmur ran from mouth to mouth.

"Attend to your *work*, there!" said the master, with vague fierceness, to no one in particular. He directed Wren's attention, with his pencil, to the spot where Jack was sitting.

Redder than ever, the prefect walked to him, and said, in a low whisper, "You're wanted in the Sixth Form Library, Henderson."

"Oh?" drawled Jack, as though to say, "*In*deed?" then admirably deliberate, and calm, he closed his books, before making his way out.

Cecil was grateful for a few moments' start; he had dreaded having to walk down the room by the side of this prisoner, so much bigger than himself, whom he was sent to fetch. As the most recently elected prefect, he found himself with the unpleasant duty of informing all the fifteen mutineers that they were wanted by the Sixth: a task made no more tempting by the fact that all were Warnerites like himself, that all regarded him as traitor. Grimshaw, indeed, remembering this, had almost chosen some one else as messenger, till he reflected that Wren was already hated by his late school-fellows: and that if he could not be liked, he might at least be respected—not, as now, despised. And the Head Boy was Spartan enough to think, deliberately, that the doing of this awkward duty would strengthen the new prefect's rather flabby nature, give him the self-confidence that would let him dare stand out against public opinion, when he believed it in the wrong.

It is, of course, well known that mortals do not always like most the things that are the best for them—the principle spreads far beyond mere medicines—and as Cecil reached the study, in which he knew most of the fourteen others to be gathered, he would willingly have sacrificed the moral benefit, if only some one else would have knocked and gone in for him!

As he hesitated for one moment, he could hear from within the mutterings of indignation; voices, no doubt, of those who said that they would not be hauled by beastly Ansonites! How could he, a Warnerite, go in and tell them that they must? . . .

In the wild instant of revolt, the short interval in which his old, timid, peace-loving nature urged him to give up the task; to go back and say that he resigned his post of prefect; it was the memory of Grimshaw that strengthened him, of Grimshaw who had taken his courage for granted, who

by assuming merit had made him anxious to live up to the opinion. How could he go back to Grimshaw? "The Dove" in Cecil Wren died, at that moment: as prefect of Winton, he knocked, not timidly, upon the door and entered.

No one, probably, has ever had so icy a reception, anywhere.

All the fellows there looked up, and they continued looking. They looked long and silently at Wren with a contemptuous surprise, obviously wondering how he—always a worm, and now a traitor!—dared to come amongst them.

Cecil could feel that hated blush beginning once again, and not giving it the time, he hastened to embark upon his mission. A rapid glance round those cold faces told him that here were all the fourteen not in preparation. That came as a relief: there would not be another room like this to enter!

"You're all wanted in the Sixth Form Library," he said, surprised to find that his voice did not tremble.

"Oh, are we?" asked O'Brien. "Then they'll have to want, just tell them, *Dove*."

Everybody laughed at that, and Cecil felt the blush more than ever imminent, as he heard the scorn with which O'Brien said his nickname. But once again, it was the thought of how Grimshaw would behave, that saved the situation: Cecil, groping for the dignity befitting his new office, a dignity he did not feel, could find no better model than the stern Head Boy. So now he did not make a cheap retort, or go out in a shamefaced silence: two courses equally bound to send him off with mocking laughter in his ears: he looked straight at O'Brien, and spoke very firmly.

"I shouldn't advise you to be more than two minutes, O'Brien," he said, with a distinct threat in his voice, and managed to close the door, from outside, before any of them had recovered from this extraordinary conduct on the part of the mild Dove.

As he went along the passage he heard no merriment; only a yet louder medley of excited conversation. He rightly guessed that they were debating whether they should go, or not.

This was a new anxiety. Suppose that they did not obey him? What an ass he would look, going back and saying "They refuse to come"! He could fancy Grimshaw saying, "I suppose I must go for them *myself*?" and he knew well, if the Head Boy went, there would be no more talk about refusal.

When he was half-way to the main block, where the Sixth Form Library is situated, he turned and looked back, rather anxiously. This gave him no encouragement: the wintry moon shone on an empty road.

Half consciously, he slackened his pace, hoping that, even now, they might decide to come, and so save him the indignity of having to confess, before all his fellow-prefects, that his authority had not been sufficient. But soon, even so, he found himself before the building. Almost without hope, he turned again, and what he saw caused him a mad exultation: a group of boys was coming down the central walk, and the joy of this Dove, so long despised and crushed, turned into something very much like self-conceit, when he perceived those boys were hurrying!

Really, of course, their fear was not of Wren, but of the body of prefects, and not of them even as individuals, but as the official power of the place. Dr. Anson's glorious dream of Winton's future appeared not quite so wild in this moment when fourteen athletes hurried obediently after a weedy prefect, whom they all despised: for that is the spirit of the Public School. There are philosophers to say that the whole world is governed by a Rule of Might, the weakest going to the wall: but even they must grant exceptions, and of these is the prefect at a Public School. Such as the Dove, whilst in the lower forms, are victims, truly: but set them in the Sixth, and the whole tradition of their school is at their back—not even Hercules himself would dare assail them! And so the great O'Brien tramped hastily to obey the summons of Wren, regarded as a joke at Warner's, but—a prefect here.

Cecil did not wait for them. Feeling like one who walks on air, he entered the school building, and made his way along to the Sixth Form Library. As he turned into the corridor which leads to it, he found himself face to face with Henderson.

Jack, told to wait outside until the others came, glanced at the "traitor" with scorn unutterable, but thought it wiser to say nothing. He knew that, in this game, Wren held all the cards.

But that mere look somehow had the power of spoiling all the other's self-complacency. Cecil had been brought up to admire Henderson. He still admired him, and now, feeling his contempt somehow deserved, he walked very self-consciously, with uneven strides, and hurriedly vanished, with relief, into the prefects' room.

They were all there, his colleagues, obviously waiting for him.

The great long table, that fills the centre of the room, had been drawn back against the wall. Grimshaw sat, very official, at one end of it; his chair put sideways, his right elbow on the table, with pen, ink, and paper set before him. The others were grouped mainly on the table itself, their legs across it and their backs against the wall: but some few had managed to secure a seat. One chair, however, was unoccupied and stood, solitary, in the middle of the room. It looked a little purposeless, out there; but most of those who entered the Library, to stand their trial, did not leave it before learning thoroughly that lone chair's object.

At Cecil's entry, every one looked up.

"Have they all turned up?" asked Grimshaw, and Cecil noticed the anxiety in both his tones and the expression of his face. He guessed, not wrongly, that the Head Boy privately regarded him as rather feeble, and had been nervous as to the success of his late mission.

"Yes, they're just coming," answered Cecil, in a voice that almost seemed to add, "of course"; but with a secret satisfaction.

Even while he spoke, the tramp of their feet could be heard on the bare boards, along the passage.

"Who do you think we had better take first?" asked Grimshaw, addressing the company at large. His mind was settled, on this point as on most, but he thought it his duty to make some show of consulting his fellow-prefects: and luckily the general opinion was the same as his. Henderson had been the source and fount of all the evil, probably its ringleader. Henderson therefore was the man to tackle first.

"Send in Henderson, will you, Wren?" said the Head Boy. The junior prefect has a monopoly of all the nasty jobs.

Cecil went to the door, opened it about eighteen inches, put his head through, and said simply, "Henderson!" Jack was thrust forward by a dozen friendly hands, with no fewer comments, all of a jovial nature but none loud enough to reach the prefect, who drew back into the room and found a precarious perch, Dove-like, upon the extreme edge of the long table.

Every one looked up once more, as Henderson came in.

He entered very slowly, calm and dignified, shutting the door in quite a casual way, as though making his way into a chum's study. There was not, however, any hint of insolence about his manner, except that as he saw the single chair set out, and guessed its object—made plain, indeed, by the canes laid upon it—his lower lip shook a little, as though moved, against his

will, by something rather humorous. The Sixth Form need not try to awe the Warnerite eleven-men by this symbol of what they did to little Ansonites!

"That'll do, stop there," said Grimshaw, brusquely, when Jack had advanced a few paces from the door.

"Here?" he echoed, simply as a protest against being addressed in such a manner: but as the Head Boy gave no answer, he stood still, with no emotion except curiosity visible upon his face, and with one hand in the pocket of his trousers. His attitude made it clear that he was one big fellow talking to about a dozen others.

Grimshaw, however, did not take that point of view. Whilst the others were thinking that this fellow Henderson was carrying the thing off rather well—dignified, and yet not sulky—the Head Boy spoke to him, and in the tones by no means of an equal.

"You know why you're here, Henderson?" he asked, much in the same manner as before.

"Oh, yes," answered Jack, brightly. "Wren came along for me:" and once more there was just the suspicion of amusement round his lips.

"I don't mean that," said Grimshaw, sternly; "I mean, for what offence?"

"For being up on the roof, yesterday?" he asked quite doubtfully, as though ready to be not at all surprised, if his first guess were wrong.

"Partly, but there's much more than that, and you know quite well what it is. For the whole of this term it's been you, and one or two more of your fellows, who have been at the bottom of all the disunion in the school. You can't deny that you refused the friendly overtures I made, and we ought really to have taken steps of quite another sort, before. In any case, we mean to, now."

"I don't see where the 'offence' comes in?"

Grimshaw ignored the sarcastic accent on the word quoted from his own remark. "Don't you?" he asked, dryly. "I suppose you think you're free to amuse yourself just how you like, without considering the interests of the school? There's no such thing as loyalty?"

"I've been loyal to *my* school," Jack answered, doggedly. "I don't see I'm pledged to think about the interests of Corunna."

This time, the scorn upon a word, "Corunna," stung the Head Boy to a hasty answer. "I'm not talking about Corunna," he said. "I'm talking about

Winton." It was rather a sacrifice, even with a view to "scoring" off a prisoner, to use that hated name!

A moment later, he wished that he had never used it. "Winton?" echoed Jack. "There isn't such a place as Winton!"

Grimshaw could feel, in some odd way, that here he had lost the sympathy of those silent prefects for whom he was speaking; and made angry by this knowledge, he blurted out, "You'll soon find if there is such a thing as the Sixth Form of Winton."

Jack failed to be alarmed. "Why not of Corunna?" he said calmly.

Grimshaw had him, now! "Because Wren is in it," he said, with convincing logic.

But Jack, unhappily, was not convinced. His contempt of long years for the Dove had been intensified by what he read as treachery, and now, heated in the argument, he brought out what he, what every Warnerite, held true.

"Oh, *Wren* doesn't count!" he said, with something very near a snort. Wren counted as a Warnerite no longer!

What Jack had forgotten, but Grimshaw not, was that he counted as a prefect. Grimshaw was annoyed to hear one or two actual sniggers from those on the table, and resolved at all costs to defend the dignity of their new prefect; in fact, the dignity of his and their office, as a whole. His attitude changed suddenly. He no longer seemed to regard Henderson as a person with whom argument was possible, but fixed him with a stern eye, and spoke with that calm indignation which is mostly used by white-haired pedagogues in dealing with bad little boys.

"You'd better understand at once, Henderson," he started, with icy deliberation, "that you won't make things any better by that sort of thing: we don't want any cheek from you. Of course, we know that your position at your last school was very different, but I advise you to remember that you're not there any longer, and that here you're not anybody in particular. If you imagine that the Fourth Form fellows here can ring the school bell and cheek prefects at will, you're making a mistake."

This cold scorn was something new for Jack, and frankly he did not enjoy it. No boy likes irony, and Jack, always popular, had suffered less from it than most. He felt a furious hatred and anger growing in him against this calm, judicial, Grimshaw—the sarcastic devil! In the study, that day when he called, he had thought him rather a good sort: now he thought him a real swine. Judges are often the most charming and most mild of men, in

private life; but Jack, not troubling to distinguish between the office and its holder, hated Grimshaw and stood there, not trusting himself to speak, while the Head Boy went on, coldly—

"I suppose you're able to see that this sort of thing isn't especially good for a school. Parents prefer a place where Third School starts without a dozen or so fellows getting on the roof and hissing the Head Master. And even if they didn't, the prefects have a word to say about it. I don't know how your last school was run, but that's the system here, and even First Eleven men don't get the privilege of breaking up school rules like that. So that altogether I advise you, for your own sake, to make up your mind that Wren *does* count, and to remember that if you forget it, you will be reminded. You might remember, too, that as I said, you're no one here, at all, and that if we cared to put you across that chair for mutiny and cheek, you could do absolutely nothing."

Grimshaw, intent on crushing Henderson, had carried the process too far, and produced an exactly opposite effect. Jack's fighting blood was roused once more. Just as he had formerly defied the Doctor, threatening expulsion, so would he now stand up to this big-talking Grimshaw. Lick *him*, indeed!

He had not learnt the value of contemptuous silence.

"*I*'d show you what I could do!" he flashed out, in a warlike manner.

But these tactics, successful with that man of words, the Doctor, were being tried now on a man of action.

Grimshaw had never thought of caning Henderson or any of these mutineers: they were too big, and it would only lend new strength to the ill-feeling. The punishment must be that other which lay in the prefects' power —lines of Virgil—much as he disliked the system. Those canes across the chair were there only by tradition; the outward signs of a "Sixth-Forming."

Now, however, the Sixth had been defied. His threat was taken as an empty thing, a piece of bluff, and met the answer, "*I*'d show you what I could do!" Not to give Henderson, now, the chance of showing what he'd do, would obviously be to risk a charge of having funked, and so to lose authority.

Grimshaw, always inclined to be despotic with his colleagues, whom he knew to be weaker than himself, did not linger to consult them.

"Very well, then," he retorted. "You can show us, afterwards. Just now—bend over!"

For the first time, Henderson lost his composure, for every one to see. His face flushed, and he stood speechless, not knowing what to say.

Jack, indeed, hardly could believe his ears. Grimshaw must be joking? They couldn't think of licking him? Why, it was three years, since——

But Grimshaw clearly meant it. He had walked down the room in that deliberate way of yesterday, and now stood close by Jack. Very nonchalantly, he took up the canes, chose one, and laid the rest upon the table. Then he turned towards the prisoner.

"Come along," he said, firmly, tapping the chair-back with the cane. "Buck up."

Jack's every instinct was for disobedience, and yet he knew the consequence, at any school, of standing out against the prefects. And there was something about Grimshaw's attitude that threatened danger.

"What if I refuse?" Jack asked, still hesitating.

"You'll be forced," came the calm answer, "unless, of course, you care to appeal to the Head Master: but I don't recommend that." Grimshaw suddenly realized that this equally would mean expulsion, and he added, in far gentler tones, much more like the Grimshaw of that study visit, "I should take it, Henderson. It's your own fault: you dared us." Then, firmer again: "Come along. Bend over."

Once again, he tapped the chair invitingly.

For one moment, Jack had an insane idea of calling for rescue to those outside the door; but in the next, he knew that this would mean expulsion for them all. He realized that he was cornered, and through his own folly.

He looked Grimshaw in the eye, unflinchingly, for one brief instant; then he moved forward, and bent across the high back of the chair.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

Odium

EVERY one agreed that Grimshaw had "done a rotten thing," in licking Henderson. Even the Ansonites said that.

A very indefinite account of what had passed inside the Library went round the school, for neither the prefects nor Jack cared to linger upon details: but quite enough was known. Henderson, a fellow nearly eighteen and the best footballer for years, had been licked by the prefects, like an ordinary junior, a common fag! No wonder that he would not speak about it much. It certainly was quite a rotten thing to do, and Grimshaw must have known it, too, or why didn't he treat the other fourteen in the same way, instead of giving each of them a book of Virgil?

The Warnerites suddenly found a new target for their anger.

Dr. Anson, who till now had been the villain of the piece, appeared in a more favourable light: it was certainly quite decent of him to have let Jack off (even though every one put it down largely to "funk"!). No, Grimshaw was the swine. One might put up with Anson—a weak old fool, but he meant well—and Sinclair, with his set, was probably quite a good sort, if you knew him: but as though anybody would settle down at "Winton," to obey this beast Grimshaw and his plucky prefects, with the Dove among them!

It really seemed almost as though there were a sort of Demon of Ill-Will let loose among these fine white buildings; a spirit of disunion which did not mind much who its victim was, so long as somebody was hated. At first the Warnerites had loathed Corunna as a whole; then, after the Sham Fight, Sinclair; then the poor Doctor; next Wren; and as a last object of resentment, Grimshaw. Meanwhile, Peace, Union, and Prosperity, were just as far away as ever: rival factions still seethed in crowded studies, Warnerites were still condemned to silence in the dormitories, and Dr. Anson ruled in despondency over a school divided fatally against itself. "Leave well alone," was a motto often in his mind, during these weeks, and bitterly he came to rue the ambition which had made him dream of a union that now seemed impossible, threatening to bring, not more prosperity, but absolute disaster to the place he loved.

The ironical part of the affair was this: each of these new and narrower feuds made it look, for a moment, as though the larger war might cease. Dr. Anson had diverted the Warnerites' anger on to himself, and Grimshaw now relieved the Head Master, in turn. Upon the football field, where the eleven against Sefton was being slowly picked, the athletic sections of the two schools were finding it increasingly difficult and absurd to remain on terms of mere sportsman's politeness. In the practice games, each side was naturally made up of boys from either school, mingling at random, and if Dick had, as captain, to say something to Jack, he took care to speak in an official voice, almost impersonal: whilst at the game's end, all the Warnerites drifted together, and walked back arm-in-arm to the changing-room, where they had, so to speak, staked out their claim in a corner by the door.

It was this fact, their being always in a body, which made improbable the overtures that both sides, secretly, were coming to desire. Nobody cared, by excess of geniality towards a player of the rival faction, to risk sharing the Dove's exile and name of traitor! Of course, if Jack and Dick had led the way, the others would have followed blindly: but each of these still had the absurd dread of being the one to seek peace, as though defeated, and also perhaps of meeting with a snub. Thus "Well played, Henderson," or "Sorry, Sinclair," formed the bulk of their conversation, and since those awkward minutes, when Mr. Ponsonby had luckily made the duet into a trio, they were very careful to avoid being left in the company of one another.

"I wish Grimshaw hadn't done this," said Dick, in one of the studies, on the night of the Sixth-Forming.

"Why?" coolly asked Banks, who was one of those who rather clung to the feud against Warner's as a good tradition; largely owing to his skirmish, early in the term, with Wren, and the consequent strained relations in their dormitory, Bannockburn.

"Well, I don't think it'll much make for peace any sooner!"

Banks appeared surprised. "Do you think we want it, specially?"

"I don't know whether *we* want it," answered Dick, rather impatiently, "though personally I think Henderson and his lot quite decent sorts, and think the whole thing rather drivel: but anyhow, I'm sure the *School* wants it, and that's rather more important."

"*Why* does the school want it?" Banks asked, languidly: he rather fancied himself in the *rôle* of cynic.

Dick had no patience with that sort of pose, and he spoke almost angrily. "Why, because this kind of thing, if it goes on, is bound to smash the whole place up—surely you see that? We can't always go on cutting First Eleven men dead; think what rot the Sefton journey'll be, if we can't talk to four of our eleven! Besides, this roof business is bound to get about, and though it was rather sporting, it's jolly bad for the school's name."

"And that's why you object to Grimshaw sitting on the ringleader?" said Banks, trying to sound intelligent.

Dick scorned a retort. "Of course," he said, "it was rough luck, Anson shoving the business on to Grimshaw, and I can't imagine why he did, but ____"

"Yes, he ought to have sacked Henderson," said Banks, like one agreeing with another's statement.

This was too much for the other: in strong terms he begged Banks not to be a certain sort of ass. "Do you imagine," he went on, "that that's the way to make things straight, when they're all deadly keen on him? Besides, he's our best man for Sefton." Suddenly he saw the smile that lurked on Banks' face, and half suspected that he had been "drawn." "Don't be a rotter, B.," he said, more genially. "I know you bar that little blighter, Wren, and I don't wonder, but you *must* see what a lot of harm the whole thing's doing, and they're not all like that. Besides, we're bound to shake down some day, so what's the use of spoiling a whole term? I wish to the devil we could do something."

"I know what you *mean*," said Banks, in a grudging way, "and I suppose they're probably all right, except for Wren; but I don't see what can be done, exactly."

"I don't know," Dick answered, helpfully, "but something ought to be managed, somehow."

Every one thought that, by now: but nobody did anything. The extreme conservatism of school society is probably explained by this very fact: every one is nervous of being the first to try a novelty: and so the old things naturally survive!

Meanwhile, the smaller fellows, not very clever at reading the inner feelings of their seniors, hastened to make a public demonstration of what they thought the general sentiment.

At nine o'clock, each evening, the whole school gathers in the big Hall, for prayers. First come the rank and file of boys; then the prefects, one of

whom takes roll-call; and finally the Head Master, who of course reads the short service.

Everything went in its due sequence, on this night of the trial and sentences, until the moment in which Wren and Grimshaw entered.

Cecil, privately, had felt a trifle nervous. Knowing the feeling of the school to be against the prefects and especially himself, he rather dreaded entering the crowded Hall, but drew courage from the calmness of Grimshaw, who seemed his ordinary self, as though he had never stood out against two hundred boys, and nothing exceptional had happened for a year. There was something inspiring in such coolness, and Cecil, who bolstered his own poor stock of resolution with the Head Boy's surplus, manœuvred so that they should enter the room together, and he not have to face the solitary walk along the aisle.

Thus neither of them will ever know for which, especially, the boos and hisses that greeted them were meant.

For Grimshaw, almost certainly, since Wren was no more hated now than yesterday, whilst the Head Boy had just offended; and there were fellows from each school, (though the leaders of neither,) who joined in the demonstration. Thus far had common indignation drawn them towards unity!

Cecil, of course, could feel his cheeks burn instantly with that blush which he loathed so much, and once again self-consciousness seemed to shake his legs beneath him. Red in face and miserable at heart, he walked nervously towards the prefects' table.

Grimshaw, the proper victim, hardly seemed to notice anything. He walked exactly as before, neither quickening his pace nor stopping; talked without interruption on the topic which he was discussing; and gave no sign of hearing the mild sounds of execration, beyond a cool and contemptuous smile. His bearing was that of an Aristocrat, haughtily ignoring the insults of a rabble, easily suppressed but not worth the flattery of his attention. If anything, he seemed amused.

So intent were all on watching the demeanour of this odd fellow, whose courage and firmness they were coming to admire, that no one noticed Dr. Anson's entry.

The master was just in time to learn that it was his Head Boy who was the object of these hisses: then, one by one, boys saw him and the sound had stopped before he reached the table. But as he walked, his mind was full of

questions and of fears. He had thought, when Grimshaw took over the punishment of the mutineers and so saved Henderson from expulsion, that things were looking brighter, that everything would settle down. And it had only ended in what was, after all, not much less than another mutiny! What hope was there for a school in which the Head Boy could be hissed in public?

Above all, what to do?

That was the chief question, and when he reached his chair, he had not found an answer. Instead, a chill despair gripped him and deadened all his power of thought. He felt, of a sudden, that he was too old; that here, in this turmoil of absurd hatred and feuds, he had attempted a task too big for him; that he could never pull Winton round to peace and unity. Every step that he took seemed to result in making more ill-feeling: Grimshaw, now, in whom especially he trusted, had lost all his authority: and he himself—he did not know what he could do! If he turned round and told the boys to stop, would Mr. Warner's pupils only boo the more? And if so, what?

So that while he still doubted, the sounds died away: and acting on his new, hopeless, doctrine of "Let well alone," he sat down, in a tense silence, and with that calm voice, ever the same, which Old Boys loved to hear on their return, read out the peaceful-sounding evening prayers.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

A Change of Tactics

"LET well alone," the proverb which had guided Dr. Anson to his rather inactive policy in the Hall, might serve its purpose for such a definite occasion, but was quite useless as a general principle, because, most decidedly, things were not well with Winton, and he could not at all afford, as Head Master, to let them alone.

Back in his study, he sat down to seek for some way out.

The last weeks had been spent mainly in that rather unproductive search, but now he went about it in a different spirit. That despair breeds boldness, is a saying both stale and true. Dr. Anson, whose mild nature was liable to sudden fits of dashing activity, often disastrous, was now moved to take action once again. He realized, with a sudden shame, that his policy had been weak in the extreme: he had feebly shelved the responsibility of punishing Henderson, and put a job, that he dreaded himself, on to the shoulders of one forty years his junior. Grimshaw's unpopularity was the result, and was of course to be expected. He should have carried the thing through, himself.

Now he would—well, he would do—something!

Just now, in the Hall, it had seemed hard to act, and he had chosen the easy, fatal, way of feigning not to have observed. It was so difficult, with these wild boys of Mr. Warner's, used to rough discipline: one did not know how they would take rebuke! Yet he saw clearly, now, that it was not only unfair, but disastrous, to leave the responsibility on Grimshaw's shoulders. Already that course of action had robbed his Head Boy of the school's support, so utterly essential, and laid him open to a public insult. No, he must be strong, and take the weight of his own acts himself. He had relied too much on Grimshaw, until now; expecting him, a mere boy, to bear a grown man's burden.

Now he would—do something!

It always ended up with that. When he tried to go further, to decide what that "something" should be, he found himself face to face with the hopelessness of this mass of conflicting elements, that was his school; a

mass in which any movement, intended to promote unity, seemed only to make one more victim for unpopularity, one more disturbance.

And in the end, the actual thing that he did was—to send for Grimshaw.

Really, that seemed the natural course. He had great faith in him, and after all, what was the use of a Head Boy, if one did not consult him? *He* might understand better, mixing with the boys, why it was that this absurd feud seemed to persevere through everything. And in a way, too, Grimshaw was responsible for the present position, since he had dissuaded him from the firm course of expelling Henderson!

"I am afraid, Grimshaw," he therefore said, so soon as the Head Boy was seated, "that I made a mistake in allowing myself to be over-persuaded as to Henderson's expulsion."

"Why, sir?"

"I am afraid," resumed the Doctor, in exactly the same tones, "that by so doing I merely diverted the inevitable odium from myself to the Sixth Form: and this, of course, is equally harmful to school discipline."

Grimshaw found no comment to make: after what had just happened, he could scarcely say that he was not unpopular. Dr. Anson, too, remained silent for a little, tapping the desk lightly with his fingers: then, as though having just made a decision, he put his hands upon the chair-arms, raised himself a little, and spoke far more briskly.

"I have now resolved, Grimshaw, quite finally that this preposterous state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue, or it certainly will end in wrecking the whole school. As I hope you know, I have the utmost faith in you; I think that I showed as much, by listening to you with regard to Henderson; and I am more than willing to hear your opinion, if you have any plan by which the ordinary conditions of school life can be resumed without drastic measures. Otherwise, I say at once that I shall revert to my original idea, and send Henderson away to-morrow: I am resolved that Winton shall not be the scene of any more episodes, such as have disgraced this term, till now."

Here, clearly, was the Doctor in what the Sergeant would call an " 'ack and 'ew" mood: he was for no subtlety of operation! Grimshaw knew him well, like this: and the mood was dangerous. He braced himself once more for conflict.

"As I said then, sir, I'm quite certain, from what I've seen, that by expelling Henderson, you would only make the split between us and them

absolutely permanent. None of them would ever settle down again."

"That is all very well," said the Head Master, with a rare impatience, "but perhaps you will tell me what I am to do, then? Am I to allow this kind of anarchy to continue? Ordinary punishments are quite inadequate for such a boy as Henderson, who openly defies authority, and I have already threatened expulsion to such a degree that, unless he is to despise me as a mere windbag, there is nothing left except to carry out my threat. What have you to say to that, Grimshaw?"

Grimshaw spoke respectfully. "I think, sir, if I'm allowed to say so, that threats aren't any use with Henderson. *I* tried them, in the Sixth Form; and as you say, the only thing left was to carry them out." He smiled, as though he really thought Henderson a little of a sportsman.

Dr. Anson failed to see the humour. "Well, then?" he said, coldly.

Grimshaw, luckily, was too firm, too much convinced that he was doing the best thing for his school, to be easily discouraged. "Well," he said, still respectfully, "I think, sir, he's the sort of fellow who could easily be won over by another sort of treatment."

"*What* sort, Grimshaw?" His attitude was not encouraging.

"I can't explain, sir, quite: but what I mean is, that I found him quite all right, when I called, that evening, in a friendly way. We got on very well together. It was only when I began threatening him that I found I couldn't do anything: he just defied me. One of us had to give in, or I had to carry out my threats."

"And so——?" inquired the Doctor.

"So I carried them out."

"And the moral of that, Grimshaw?" He was in one of his ironic moods, and to patronize his Head Boy helped a lot towards restoring his own self-complacency.

Grimshaw began to find him rather irritating: he ignored the question. "So far as I could make out, that night, sir," he said, "Henderson has only taken up this line because you said something about Mr. Warner. I didn't quite understand, sir, but he said something about an apology."

Dr. Anson frowned at the memory. "That was part of his impertinence. I merely criticized his late master's methods."

"We shouldn't have liked Mr. Warner to criticize *yours*, sir," said Grimshaw, softly, with a tact beyond his years.

To the master this seemed curiously like a criticism of himself, and besides, he had no answer to the argument. "You suggest, then, Grimshaw ——?" he asked, declining to embark on a discussion.

"I don't suggest anything, sir," said the wily Grimshaw, who had long since learnt how to lead the Doctor without seeming to have done so. "I merely wondered whether——"

"Yes, Grimshaw?" There was more encouragement, now: he did not wish to miss the useful part, however little he might have relished what had gone before.

"I can't help feeling, sir, more and more, the more I see of Henderson, that he might be a very useful man to Corun—to Winton—not only in football, if you could somehow——" And then the task became too difficult: he stopped.

Dr. Anson was distinctly disappointed at this break, just when the cream was coming! "If——?" he prompted once again.

"Well, the mere fact that he's so loyal to Warner's shows there's good stuff in him, doesn't it, sir?"

"I suppose it does: yes," doubtfully remarked the Doctor, who had not seen the matter in that light till now. "But what do you propose that I should do?"

"Do you think, sir," started Grimshaw, cautiously, "that if you treated him more as you treat all of us, and asked, perhaps, for his help, and—and ——"

"And——?" very kindly.

"I was going to say, sir, perhaps—I think he fancies you meant something against Mr. Warner himself, and perhaps if you told him you had only meant his *theories*——"

Dr. Anson had got at his Head Boy's proposal now, and he hastened to set an end to this dialogue, in which he had played a part as distasteful to him as it was novel; the part less of the lecturer than of the lectured!

"I am grateful for your ideas, Grimshaw," he said, with a pomposity intended to retrieve his dignity. "They need some thought. I am afraid that I cannot see my way towards adopting them quite as they stand, but I will

give them my careful consideration, to-night, and see whether any modification of them appeals to me as expedient and practicable."

With which magnificent oration he dismissed his Head Boy, secretly triumphant, and set himself to considering "modifications," as already promised.

The result of this mysterious process was seen next morning, after Second School, when he sent a small boy to tell Henderson that he was wanted.

Jack entered in his usual way, with something very like a scowl of defiance on his face, ready for battle; but everybody knows that it takes two to make a fight, and the Doctor's mood was the reverse of warlike. He sat at his desk, fingers joined before him, and looked far less stern and worried than was the custom at these interviews.

Jack did not notice this: he carefully did not look at the master, as he went towards the desk, to stand there as usual, with one defiant hand stuck in his pocket.

"Ah, sit down, Henderson: I want a word or two with you," the Doctor said, and waved genially towards the big arm-chair.

It was so unexpected and, as Jack inwardly put it, so decent of the old boy, that automatically, when he sat down, he took that hand out of his pocket, and said, "Yes, sir?" in polite inquiry.

"It has occurred to me, Henderson," began Dr. Anson, slowly, "that in the whole matter of this regrettable incident, there has been a good deal of what I may call acting at cross-purposes."

"Yes, sir?" said Jack, and there was still a large note of inquiry in the words. He could not think what else to say.

Dr. Anson seemed to start afresh. "I asked you once, Henderson, the exact nature of your grievance, and so far as I remember, it was largely that you 'did not want to be here.' So far as that goes, I think we may assume that your attitude will change, as terms go by. I can—er—quite understand your loyalty to your late school, but it exists no longer, and I see no reason why Winton, which incorporates much of its spirit and most of its members, should not gradually win that same place in your affection."

At this point, the Head Master tapped his fingers together nervously, hesitating, and was obviously unwilling to embark on a distasteful topic.

"As to that last," he said presently, in a forced tone, "I should like to make it clear at once (as I gather that you slightly—er—misunderstood a former remark of mine), that anything which I may have said in that connection referred only to your late master's system, which I frankly consider to have been mistaken. As to Mr. Warner's personal character, you and I, Henderson, agree, of course, in our admiration of it." Certainly, he had gone nobly through with his unpleasant task.

And now Jack was no more comfortable than the other. The last thing that he had ever expected or hoped, when demanding an apology, was that Dr. Anson should offer one: yet this was curiously like it. His quick temper had flashed out, seized on this insult to a man whom he admired, and found something to rest on in the preposterous claim: but now that his Head Master had actually given way to it, he felt that there was something quite wrong in the situation. He had not realized the absurdity of his demand, till it was granted.

He could not bear to see this old man, whom inwardly he knew to be far wiser than himself, trying to climb down with dignity. Jack did not realize the fact: but what really hurt him was that the ordinary relations between master and pupil should be thus upset, for boys, even as rebels, are bond slaves to Convention.

"I know, sir: yes," he put in, nervously, hoping to stop this awkward explanation.

But Dr. Anson was determined to set the matter straight once and for all: he had tasted his fill, lately, of half-measures. "I understand, Henderson," he said, "that Mr. Warner consulted you upon school matters, and I, in turn, am going to take you into my confidence a little. The system by which we give power here—intellectual achievement, not athletic skill—does not allow me to put you in a position of authority, but I am going to appeal to you, to ask you to help me by using your influence towards an end which is very dear to me; the prosperity of Winton. I know, Henderson" (and he smiled wistfully), "that you boys at Mr. Warner's have always had a prejudice against us here: but believe me, none of us, not even myself, deserves to be painted quite so black as you have fancied! If you would be willing to meet us half-way, for the good of our common school, I think you will find that we shall not object to coming possibly even a little further. . . . So this is what I want to ask of you, Henderson: whether you will not help me, with the influence that you possess, to make things more comfortable for all of us alike, and try to imagine that we are a little better than you may have imagined in the past? I honestly believe that you may even find it to be the case! I assure you, at

any rate, that I am very far from feeling the hostility towards you, which I am afraid you have suspected, until now."

He ceased, and left Jack shifting uneasily upon his chair. This was terrible! It had been quite easy while old Anson blustered and showed fight, but now that he was broken and appealing, it was very awkward. And oddly enough, Jack felt none of a victor's elation, did not feel that he had won in a long conflict against odds: instead, there surged over him a curious shame, and a sudden, quite new, idea that there was something not a little pathetic in this Dr. Anson on whose lips the hated word "Winton" clearly came as a thing beyond value, standing for the great dream of his life.

Jack, of a soldier stock, was full of fight, but it was not bred in him to trample on a fallen foe, or to refuse the outstretched hand. Grimshaw had been right: here was a boy to lead anywhere, as Warner had led, but a boy whom not a thousand Dr. Ansons could succeed in driving. A little tact, at first; the rational request for help; reasoning, not threats; and he would not have grudged his labour for the school.

Now, hearing the appeal of this man, whom he had hated and despised, his first instinct was to set him at his ease by a vain denial of his former enmity.

"It wasn't that, sir," he said, "not *you*:" and in truth, he was bringing out the greater grievance, when he added: "It was Grimshaw. He hadn't any right to lick a man of my age."

Dr. Anson said nothing for a little: he was thinking.

He had done a weak thing, and a foolish, when he handed the punishing of the mutineers, with all its responsibility and rancour, over to poor Grimshaw: but inasmuch as all men sway between moments of wisdom and folly, weakness and strength, he now did something that was strong and wise. He took the dreaded burden back on his own shoulders.

"I think," he began very slowly, "it is only right for me to tell you, Henderson, that Grimshaw, and Grimshaw alone, was responsible for the fact that you did not leave Winton on Wednesday."

Jack could not understand. "*Grimshaw*, sir!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "But—how?"

Dr. Anson spoke with deliberation. "Grimshaw," he began, "is a very fine fellow, one of the finest that I remember in a long experience as Head Master. His devotion to the school is very wonderful, and it was his conviction that your expulsion would be a very bad thing for Winton, which

made him persuade me—I admit, against my will, at that time—to let you stay on. I hope, Henderson, that you will justify his confidence. And above all, I should be very sorry if you felt any enmity against the boy who took over a most distasteful task, *because* of that confidence, as the sole alternative to my punishment, expulsion."

Jack sat in silence, thinking confusedly of this new development, and Dr. Anson, rightly guessing that his pride still brooded over the thrashing of a "man" of his age, touched upon that point, as well.

"As to the—er, the form that his punishment took, Henderson," he said gently, but with the slightest twinkle in his eye, "I do not of course know anything about the details, but I rather gathered that you had *defied* Grimshaw to employ it?"

"I think perhaps I *did*, sir!" and for the first time, Dr. Anson saw, on his new boy's face, that open, joyous smile, which had been so familiar to Warner.

He felt now that the barriers were broken; his end won. There was more warmth, more confidence, in his appeal. "I may rely on you, then, Henderson?"

"I'll do my *best*, sir," answered Jack, doubtfully, "but I don't think you realize, perhaps, how many things there are."

"I do, Henderson; I do," replied the Doctor (who did not realize at all), "but—I have every confidence in you." How much trouble would have been saved, if that had been said on the first day of term!

"Thank you, sir," Jack made reply. "I'll do my best."

Ten minutes of the new policy had brought about a change, almost incredible, in his view of Dr. Anson, and something not far less miraculous concerning Grimshaw.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

At a Standstill

War had died down, but somehow peace declined to follow.

As Jack had rather vaguely said, there were so many things, that no one felt especially inclined to grapple with them. So far as he was concerned, his various resentments—against Sinclair, Anson, Grimshaw—had all faded into nothingness; and as to Wren, well, he was not exactly dying to fall upon his neck, but he slowly came to see that the despised Dove had needed a certain strength to sever himself from the Warnerites, and take the course that, after all, every one would finally adopt.

"Finally," yes! Meanwhile, he "did his best," as he had promised. That is to say, more definitely, he ceased to wrangle or to look around for causes of ill-feeling, and in all conversations, gave it as his view that Grimshaw had been rather a brick to get him off, and that it was rough luck on old Anson, having all these rows, when he was so keen on the place; and probably he wasn't half a bad sort, when you got to know him. . . . All which, coming from Henderson, did not fail, of course, to have a big effect. Everybody among the Warnerites gradually came to find other topics than their feud with the Ansonites.

In short, every one was rather bored with the affair. There was nothing, really, left to fight about! All the juniors had shouted "Dirty Warnerite!" or "Smug!" according to their faction, as often as amused them; whilst the seniors began to find the position quite uncomfortable.

True, things had settled down into a sort of groove. With the end of all real rivalry, the two parties ignored each other in a way quite friendly, and indeed almost polite. Certain studies were tacitly set down as Warnerite, and into these (upsetting all the Doctor's plans, as put upon the notice-board) no Ansonite would venture. So everywhere, in changing-room or Hall there was a place for each, beyond possibility of trespass. Only in the dormitories did Warnerites still suffer from isolation, but even here the Ansonites took care, by this time, that conversation should avoid the awkward topics, and of course, a word or two exchanged at the long wash-stand would not be now considered treachery. As to Dick and the other members of the team, they were resolved that the long train journey up to Sefton must somehow see the

end of all this, if it did not come before in a more easy manner: they could not possibly arrive at Sefton, an eleven divided against itself! What rotters they would be considered!

Secretly, too, that was just what they felt themselves to be. It ought to be so easy to break the ice, quite casually, but somehow—it wasn't! A fellow didn't expect to have to do these things. . . . So just at the last moment, when everything seemed going well, one of them would get a sudden funk that the other might turn away, and snub him; which, of course, would be an awful score! Besides, it was not often that two, of opposite factions, found themselves together.

"Winton," in fact, was still Warner's and Corunna. The fine white buildings housed two schools now, no less than on the opening day of term; and each kept separate, except for just the hours of work or of school games.

The difference was this: both, now, were roughly loyal to the same Head Master, and both certainly deferred to the same Head Boy.

The reaction as to Grimshaw had been rapid. Those who, so lately, had helped in hissing him, now could not sing his praise enough. Never before had he been half so popular, for every one had always looked on him as a curious animal apart: no one would ever think of "rotting" him, but somehow nobody had ever known him, or thought much of him. He was a stern devil, certainly—"Grim" they had called him, sometimes—and inwardly, they all were just a little bit afraid of him: but when it came to popularity, what had he ever done for Corunna? He was only Head Boy, because he came out top in work!

Now all that was altered. There had been one day in which he had seemed to have lost even that distant respect: but, says the French proverb, "one must draw back, to leap the better," and now he had won a position, deserved but never gained before. It was by no means only the Warnerites who thought that he had done a fine thing in saving Henderson from being expelled, nor was it the mere gratitude of fellows who had been spared the loss of a good footballer, that made them appreciate the action of Grimshaw. They had seen a little of his iron will and courage, when he calmly mounted the ladder in face of O'Brien's excited threats; and they had set him down a sportsman—even if no great player of games!—when he made no later reference to those threats, of which the Doctor, even now, knew nothing. But they were amazed, these boys who thought so much of Public Opinion, that any fellow should be able to take over Henderson's punishment like that, against his will; scornfully endure hissing for it; and never let a single

person know that he deserved applause. Yet that was a small part of Grimshaw's action, and they knew that it was due to keenness for the school. He suddenly became a hero.

After long terms of unpopularity, he had won for himself, by loyalty and force of character, a respect and admiration far more lasting than any gained by athletes, because built on qualities which men admire and respect until their dying day. And it was this same place in the school's opinion that Cecil Wren, by the same qualities, must win before his day came to act as Head Boy, unless he were still, as at Warner's, to be a despised buffoon. But already, fired by Grimshaw's example, he was daily gaining in dignity and strength of will, whilst the general enthusiasm for Grimshaw produced quite a new attitude towards the non-sporting prefects. They might be quite good sorts, in spite of all!

Jack, of course, was especially warm in his appreciation of Grimshaw. He knew, like every one, that the Head Boy's appeal to Anson had been due, not to any friendship for himself, but a belief that his removal would be bad for the school: yet even that was flattering, and with whatever motive, Grimshaw had saved him from lifelong disgrace.

Naturally, he longed to thank him, and that seemed the obvious course: with Henderson and Grimshaw on good terms, everything would quickly settle down.

But no one not familiar with the helplessness of school-boys, when face to face with anything outside the usual daily routine, would ever believe how difficult this was! There were innumerable complications: but roughly, Jack hesitated because Grimshaw had told him plainly enough that he was "no one here"—a new kid!—and so he did not see how he could start a conversation with the Head Boy; and Grimshaw hesitated, because he felt that, after Anson had threatened to expel Henderson unless he made friends, it would be rather mean, rather like blackmail, to call now, when "out of mere decency" the Warnerite might feel that he must be friendly with the fellow who had saved him. . . .

In short, everybody hesitated, and everybody grew a little bored.

In either camp there were many to say that this beastly feud was rotting the term up, and that things generally were beastly slow.

Then came the snowstorm: and there were heard no more complaints of slowness.

PART THREE

FLOREAT WINTONIA!

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

A Lesson in Scouting

At first, of course, everybody thought it rather fun.

It was a Long School day, and the hours of afternoon work were made rather less dull by occasional sly glances at the upper panes of the form-room windows, which were not opaque like the lower ones, but gave a view, if it could so be called, of flakes that fell thickly enough to seem almost continuous; a sort of heavy curtain always slipping downwards and making the electric light essential in all except the top-floor rooms.

Some of the juniors even felt that there was something grand in such a heavy fall, and longed for six o'clock when they would see how deep it was; whilst the seniors, remembering how young the winter was, reflected in a prosaic manner fitted to their greater age, that so early a storm was not likely to last long enough to interfere with the school games. It would be all gone by to-morrow morning!

Morning came, however, and many, awakened early by an unusual brilliancy of light, lay abed and wondered, far too lazy or too cold to leap out and make certain. When the hour for rising came (and passed, by just the safe amount of time), the first to rise cried out in his astonishment.

"I *say*!" he said. "The snow's about twenty feet deep."

When the others rose, they found that it was not quite thus, but it was certainly some inches; thick enough to blur all outlines, and before Second School was over it began to fall again, slowly at first, as though timid, from a leaden sky, but then in its old, solid, manner. The mass of falling flakes obscured the sky, and now instead of an unwonted brightness, there was once more gloom in all the rooms of the great white school building.

The Lower Third, peering up nervously, saw its hopes of snow-fights and snow-men growing: the seniors, more shameless in their gaze, saw their chance of practice-games, much needed for the Sefton match, decreasing visibly each moment.

And certainly, when the morrow brought round a half-holiday, no games were possible. The snow had stopped, a thaw even begun, but the whole field was still a virgin plain of white, except where a few juniors, with the

keenness of their youth, bound clammy snow together into shapeless masses, meant presumably for men, or rammed it with delirious delight inside each other's down-turned collars.

The bigger fellows, angry with the snow that stopped their practice, eyed these amusements with a pitying scorn: and like all people who want what they have not, and spurn that which they have, were generously bored.

This last state, however, most grievously afflicted the inmates of Da Costa's College.

Snow-men or snowballs? Pouf! Why, even cricket and football were below them. They were much too old for games: they went in for Sport! What Featherstone called fishin' and huntin'; such were the chief hobbies of these superior young men: and it is well-known that fish and foxes are not at their best (from the standpoint of those who seek to slay them), during heavy snowstorms.

They lolled about, these sportsmen, with their feet upon the mantelshelf, and cursed the beastly weather, as they smoked their pipes. Hang it all, there was nothing for a man to do!

"Tell you what!" suddenly remarked the Lightweight, always of resentful nature.

"Well what, then?" some one languidly inquired.

Featherstone addressed himself to Cursitor. "Did you ever score off those beastly little bounders up at Warner's?"

"Score them off? No? Why? What for?" demanded the forgetful giant.

"Why, those young swabs who overturned our boat, that day we had the picnic up the river!"

"Oh, Henderson and *that* lot?" Cursitor said, angrily. He remembered now: there was not much chance of his forgetting. Edna Denton, as her wet cavaliers rowed the boat down stream, had smiled and giggled, all the way, clearly thinking the episode rather amusing; and she had laughed at their next meeting, when she asked him if he had a cold! Oh yes, Cursitor remembered: a man of his age does not easily forget these things.

Featherstone guessed so much, from his tones, and in his search for vengeance, used the big man's anger as his safest way. He proceeded to add fuel to the fire of his wrath.

"Fay giggles, now, whenever she sees me," he said, indignantly.

Cursitor laughed deeply, in a better humour. “You *were* rather funny, Tubby, hanging to the bank!” and there was real appreciation in his tones.

This was not what Featherstone desired, and he adopted methods more direct. “I expect that little outsider, Henderson, thinks he’s rather scored,” reflectively said the Lightweight, who was quite three inches shorter than the “little” outsider.

“How *scored*?” asked Cursitor: he seemed a trifle aroused by that.

“Why,” said the wily Featherstone, “you said he’d pay for it, or something of the sort, and nothing’s ever happened.”

Cursitor spoke warmly now. “It *was* infernal cheek, and rotten form, with women there: he wants a darned good hiding for a thing like that. He would have got it, too, but Warner’s rotten hole went bust.”

“He’s over at Corunna, though,” replied the tempter. “What on earth difference does it make *where* he is?”

Cursitor laughed, with a little contempt. “You’re very dashing, Tubby, all of a sudden, but it doesn’t seem to occur to you that it’s rather a big thing to take on about two hundred fellows. They’re only kids, I know, but still——”

Now, it was the other’s turn for scorn. “You don’t suppose the Anson crowd cares twopence what we do to any Warnerite? Why, if we took the whole lot out and hung them upon trees, they’d only think it a good clearance. They simply bar each other, everybody says.”

“What’s your idea, then?” asked Cursitor, almost persuaded.

Featherstone at last saw hopes of his revenge. “I don’t know,” he said, “exactly: but I thought perhaps, now there’s nothing else to do, we might just score the insolent young devil off, or he’ll be always doing that sort of thing, now.”

“The difficulty *is*,” began Cursitor, in tones which made it clear that he had quite decided upon action, “I don’t see how we’re going to find him, or what we’re going to do with him.”

“Oh, *easily* find him,” came the vague solution; “and then you can give him a good hiding.” (The “we” had somehow altered into “you.”)

“I don’t know it’s so easy! They hardly ever come out on the roads, these days—why should they?—and as to ‘finding’ him, I’ve never been inside Corunna. It’s not like Warner’s hole: it’s a huge place. If we go wandering in

there, it's *we* who'll get scored off, more likely: they'll get us in a blind alley, or something, and snowball us, and we shall look nice fools!"

This snowy prospect, quite apart from looks, did not tempt the timid Featherstone. "*I* tell you what!" he said, with yet another inspiration. "They're in school, aren't they, till one o'clock, to-day? It's only half-past twelve. Let's get on to the motor and buzz down there in no time. Then we can find out the lie of the land."

And this seemed good to Cursitor.

The buzzing was of rather a slow nature, for the roads were deep in rather slushy snow: but long before the hour of one, the car was drawn up close by the school-gate, and its two occupants prepared to enter the Corunna grounds.

"We're all right," said the scientific Cursitor, whose boldness was beginning to terrify the Lightweight, "so long as we know the way out, once we've settled with young Henderson. We can't fight the whole school, you know!"

"N—no," echoed Featherstone, with enthusiasm. "Of *course* not." He was coming to repent of having stirred this fearless warrior to action. He insisted, before entry, on making sure that the fellows were really still in form. "You see," he explained, "it would give the thing away, if they saw us prospecting."

"It's all right," answered Cursitor. "There's nobody about;" and he proceeded boldly up the path that leads direct to the Fives Courts and the Swimming Bath.

But even as he spoke, a figure loomed up near them, round a corner. It was not a boy. No, it was something infinitely more tremendous. It was Sergeant Gore.

He glanced at the two strangers with a quick, martial eye; knew them for what they were, Da Costa's men; and being above everything a patriot, resented their invasion. "What call," he asked himself, "had they to come a-sniffing round the place?"

But having learnt prudence in a longish life, he first disposed of any possibility of error. "Was you wanting to see Dr. Anson, young gen'lmen?" he asked, almost genially.

"No, thanks," Cursitor answered, in admirably casual tones, as though he were quite grateful for the offer, all the same.

Sergeant Gore's manner changed most abruptly. "*Hout* you gets, then!" he said, with an imperious wave of his official arm. "No road: trespassers is persecooted;" and he waved his arm still more decisively, as he ended the formula.

"Oh? Sorry!" said Cursitor, who saw that their schemes were defeated. He turned to go, with what dignity he might.

But Featherstone was not made like that: he was always very fierce with his inferiors by birth. Servants (who hardly ever fall back upon force) had reason to fear the tongue of *little* Mr. Featherstone. As he put it, he believed in keeping "those people" in their place.

He now tried these methods upon Sergeant Gore, on whom he turned a red face, flushed with indignation.

"Look here, my good man," he opened, in a heckling manner, "just you mind——"

"Oh, come on, Tubby!" interrupted Cursitor, with tolerant amusement.

"Yes, *go* on, Tubby," said the fat Sergeant, equally amused.

Featherstone was furious. He took two steps forward. "Look here, fellow," he began. That was his method with servants.

Sergeant Gore, unluckily, was not a servant, but more like a slave-master, at Corunna. " 'Oo's a fellow?" he asked truculently. "Are *you* going houtside?"

The Lightweight was too angry to be nervous: a low fellow to speak to him like that! "I'm *not*," he bellowed back, "and if you don't——"

He never ended his negative condition. Gore, in his long and various career, had once been chucker-out at a cheap Music Hall. The knack came easy to him, in this moment; and before the Lightweight well knew what was happening, a firm hand gripped his collar, another twisted his arm round behind his waist, and he found himself travelling along the path, with the minimum of exertion, at a pace far greater than that at which he had passed over it so brief a time before.

Once at the gate, he travelled yet more swiftly, impelled by something curiously hard that struck him in the lower half of his Norfolk jacket, from behind. (This is the last part of the chuck-out process.)

He staggered forward, and when he turned round again, he saw the Sergeant strolling, like a bored policeman, back towards the Fives Courts.

Cursitor, smiling at the episode, was coming down the path, and when the Sergeant noticed his amusement, a kindred feeling made him wondrous kind, so that he touched his cap, as he went by, and said quite genially, “Friend’s hout hon the road, sir.”

Cursitor came on him there, dancing with anger and abusing Gore’s infernal insolence in a safe undertone. Not till they were in the motor and half-way to Da Costa’s did he begin, even, to recover his accustomed dignity. Then he ceased from reviling, and sat silent, obviously thinking.

“Well,” he said, presently, as a result, “*that* does for the Henderson idea!” Under the circumstances, he spoke with a curious cheerfulness.

“Why?” answered Cursitor. “I don’t see it affects it anyhow.” He was rather stupid, sometimes!

Featherstone spoke with a fit impatience. “Why, they’ve seen us reconnoitring, now, and they’ll be ready for attack; and as you say, we can’t fight them all.”

“No, but I’ve got a new idea: I got it suddenly, while you were going to the gate.” (Featherstone looked angry.) “We’re not going to *attempt* to fight.”

Certainly, this sounded far more sensible! “What are we going to do, then?”

“Why, don’t you see how we score in having the motor? We can watch our chance, descend on them, carry off Henderson—he’s the only one we want—bring him back here, and darned well let him see that he’s got to apologize. I’m blowed if he doesn’t do that.”

Cursitor clearly was in earnest: his friend had awakened the memory of this insult to good purpose. Featherstone realized that here was a programme which the other intended to fulfil, and that to hang back would be to gain nothing except the name of coward. He therefore made a virtue of compulsion, and said that the idea was excellent.

“And I can drive the car,” he ended.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

Captive!

JACK yawned dismally.

"What's the good of a half on a day like this?" he asked, gazing out across the white sheet that hid the Football ground from view. "It's absolutely wasted."

O'Brien always saw some good in everything. "Ah, well," he said (the long-drawn "Ah," that Irish gentlemen use for the peasant's "Sure"), "it's better than to be stuck working, annyway!"

But Jack was thinking of the match, as usual. "I know," he said, "but how's a fellow to keep fit, like this? It isn't only that we get no practice: if this goes on, we shall all be as fat as elephants, when we meet Sefton."

"And so will *they*, then!" replied the optimist.

Jack refused to find comfort in this picture of two teams equally elephantine: his mania for efficiency saw no excuse in the fact that their rivals would probably be not less inefficient. "If *I* were captain," he said, "I'd have the eleven out for a good run, to get them in condition. This frowsting in the studies is no good at all."

He was not captain, any longer, nor could he suggest the plan to Sinclair, but his keen energy would not stop short at words. "*I* know," he cried suddenly. "We'll go a run, quite unofficially: it's something to do at any rate —we can't sit in, all the afternoon, and one's bags get so beastly, walking. We'll make all *our* men in the eleven come, and I expect lots of others will, as well. There's nothing else to do."

"They're going to have a snow-fight later on," O'Brien said.

Jack waxed quite scornful. "Snow-fight! That's a kid's game. Come along, man, and we'll see who'll go."

He had been right. The juniors clung to their idea of a snow-fight, and nobody was pressed to come, but many of the bigger Warnerites welcomed the plan as a diversion, and soon a dozen of them were hurrying into football clothes in a cold changing-room. The Ansonites who passed found themselves forced to admit that Henderson and those other Warnerites were

jolly keen. Banks went so far as to say, in tones almost of complaint, when he saw them set off, “I wonder Sinclair doesn’t get *our* fellows out;” and he added, not with much conviction, “But I suppose he knows best.”

Jack started off at a wild pace, and every one at first kept up with him: it was something, in any case, to get one’s blood warm, in this icy weather. But this was the pace for a half-mile, not for a long run, and soon great clouds of breath, that came out in unequal gasps, announced that it was telling on the sprinters.

“I say; steady *on*, Jack!” cried some one. “You know, it’s not a hundred! I’m half dead.”

“Come on, and finish it, then,” Jack laughed, in reply. “This is the way to get fit.”

“The way to *have* one, you mean,” said O’Brien, weakly.

But he was far less blown than anybody except Jack, and when the latter, who was really indulging his odd sense of humour, whispered to him, “I say, let’s quicken even more, and pretend we’re simply creeping,” he was ready for the little joke.

“I say, boys, *this* is no use,” their leader cried, with a mock sternness. “We might as well walk, so far as training goes.” He gathered his energies, and set off at a killing pace.

The others, knowing his keenness, took him seriously, at first, and made an effort to go faster. It was not totally successful. Their wind was spent, the road was thick with snow, and slowly Jack and O’Brien, runners both, forged clear away from them.

Jack turned his head round. “I say, you fellows,” he shouted back, in what sounded very angry tones, “don’t slack. What’s the use of coming out at all, if you’re going to crawl along, like this?”

“Crawl?” gasped the only fellow rash enough to waste his breath. “We’re going at a hideous pace.”

“You must be ill!” O’Brien said with sympathy, and trying vainly not to show that he was panting. “Why, we’re only going six miles an hour, at the most.”

“We must quicken,” Jack said, firmly, and shot off once more.

But this, together with O’Brien’s remark, broke the illusion: they realized that they had been “taken in,” and instantly they slackened pace.

Jack and O'Brien, not noticing, went on for a little, and some wag saw a way of getting even with them. "I say," he said. "Stop dead, and let them sprint themselves sick!"

When Jack next looked round, still prepared to feign official sternness, he saw his followers, in the far snowy distance, grouped upon the road in free and easy attitudes of conversation.

"Oh, you rotters!" he shouted back to them, amused, and so far off was he, that his voice came small and hollow to their ears.

"So long!" was the reply that reached him. "We're having an all-up. See you presently. Don't fag to wait!"

O'Brien laughed. They stood and consulted for a few moments, and even they were not sorry to take breath.

"What shall we do, now?" said Jack. "Wait for them, or jog to meet them, or just carry on? But I expect you're a bit blown?"

O'Brien was obviously hurt. "I *am* not," he said, in his odd Irish way. "I'd race you a five miles, my son."

Jack, luckily, did not accept the challenge. "But I'll take you on," he said, "as far as the canal bridge."

"You *will*?" cried O'Brien, trying to sound pleased.

And to the mingled pity and astonishment of those behind, who were just ready to trot on again, these two shot off at a rate far more suicidal than any till now, and in a moment were out of sight around a distant corner.

Laughing and gasping, they ran neck to neck in friendly rivalry, splashing each other with the slushy snow. Once O'Brien slipped, and as the race was neither serious nor under any special rules, he made things equal and defeated Luck by clutching at his rival and bringing him down too.

"By *gad*, O'B.!" was all that Jack said, with genial fierceness, as they started off again along the narrow road.

They were almost at the bridge, and getting ready for the final sprint (if possible), when suddenly, around a corner, they came on a motor. Both were too blown to be wildly thrilled by so trivial a meeting.

Not so the car's occupants.

A general shifting of the four men in it, a quick whispering; the jar of brakes abruptly used; and the car, with a skid and a whizz of slush, stopped

close beside the wearied runners.

Jack and O'Brien, whose first thought was of an accident, drew up, and hardly had they time to see that those inside the car were "Costers," before the car, with only Featherstone inside, was moving once again, and Cursitor with two other big men, were close upon them, with a threatening mien.

Surprise and lack of breath were handicaps, and two boys fought with men who worked on a concerted plan.

Before Jack well knew what was happening, one of the three had thrown himself upon him, and seized his arm with a firm hand. Jack, fighting wildly, found himself gripped by the other arm, with not less strength, and raised until his feet kicked only air.

"*Now*, then!" one of his captors said, fiercely, and while he wondered what his fate would be, he was drawn forward violently, helpless though not unresisting.

O'Brien dashed onward to the rescue, howling "Warner's!" at his highest pitch, but Cursitor, an expert boxer, met him with a blow beneath the ear, so nicely calculated that he sank quite peacefully into the snow; doubtful where he was, and taking little interest in that problem, or, indeed, in anything at all.

The whole business took only a few seconds.

Featherstone, safe in the car, had somehow turned, miraculously, in the narrow road, and even as O'Brien sat down, Jack was lifted (with damage to the red enamel) into the tonneau and, held securely by hands none too gentle, was whirled away towards Da Costa's.

When the lagging runners, attracted by that cry of "Warner's," dashed around the final corner, all that they saw was the red back of a distant swiftly travelling car, and O'Brien, with a comical look on his dazed face, sitting up limply, but with apparent comfort, in snow that was both cold and wet.

They raised him to his feet. "They've got him," he said, waving wildly at the retreating Costers. Cursitor, who had no special grudge against O'Brien, had merely hit to put him out of action for a while; and now, revived by his chill resting-place, he was quite fit again, and ready, like the actual boxer, for a dozen rounds.

"Ah, I'm all right," he said, as they buzzed round him. "It's Jack we've got to care about," and with no further waste of breath, he led them all at top speed along the road towards Da Costa's.

And this time, there was none to grumble at the pace.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

Rough Justice

THE COSTERS were naturally pleased, for Fate had played into their hands. Cursitor's scheme, to abduct Henderson out of the school ground itself, was more dashing than practical: even if found alone, he must be very near the road, or there would be a rescue ere the car were reached. And now he had been met on the very road!

Now, too, he would see whether he could come and rag men, when they had women at a river picnic!

As the car buzzed homeward, Cursitor did his best to frighten the captive with threats and with anticipation's agony. "*We'll* teach you——" were the first words in most of his sentences. Jack, who had found struggles useless, lay quiet on his captors' knees, in sullen silence. Every now and then he smiled contemptuously, and once he said, "It's like you—four to one!" He asked them scornfully what they thought they were playing at. Cursitor, conscious of superior strength, paid no attention to all this: but it annoyed him not a little to find that Henderson was not alarmed.

Cursitor was not so rough as the great mass of Da Costa's men, whose brutal revenges on their prisoners made the Warnerites now pound breathlessly but uncomplainingly along the road, in fear for Henderson. He had no intention of dragging this chap off and licking him until he couldn't stand, "for cheek." What he *did* intend, was to have an apology, and to see that it did not occur again. That done, he would feel less of a fool, when with the Denton girls! . . . And so now, he did not cease to curse this Henderson, and give dark hints of all the horrors still in store for him. He meant to start frightening him, at once.

But Jack was not frightened—not to the outer eye, that is. Inwardly, he realized that he was in a very awkward position. He knew this giant's strength, and he was old enough to understand a little the anger of a man made to look a fool before a woman. At the time, he had felt—even said—it was rough luck: and now, asked properly, would have apologized. Cursitor, he knew, was a far more decent fellow than the other Costers, and nobody had ever ragged him. But how could any one climb down and say that he was sorry, like this, under threats? It would be simple funk!

Cursitor, like Anson and Grimshaw before him, had set himself the hard task of bluffing Jack into submission!

"Slow up, Tubby," he said, so soon as they were in the College drive. "Stop at the Gym."

The car drew up beside the small outhouse built in latticed wood, and Cursitor said to his two lieutenants, fiercely, "Hoick him into here, and *we*'ll soon let him see what's what."

They carried out the first part of this programme. Jack was jerked, thrust, carried—and in one word, hoicked—into the cheerless shed that served as the College gymnasium. In the middle of this he was set down, and stood defiantly, eyeing his captors with an ironic look of inquiry. It was as though he said, "Very humorous! And now—what next?"

Cursitor turned from the locked door, and put the key into his pocket. "I suppose you know," he said, "why we've brought you here?"

"No," Jack answered, calmly. "Why?"

"You're not going out till you've apologized."

Jack laughed, out of mere bravado. "I shall be here a long time, then!"

"If you haven't the decency to apologize," went on Cursitor, pretending not to notice, "you'll jolly well be forced to."

"Why 'decency'?" asked Jack, warmly. That word stung him, especially from Cursitor, whom all the Warnerites secretly admired. "Where does that come in?"

Cursitor answered with a crushing scorn. "I suppose *you* think it rather fine to come and smash up a picnic where women are present?"

Jack flushed. "We're not talking about that," he said. "I'd apologize decently, perhaps, if I was asked decently."

" 'M!" sniffed Featherstone. "Do you imagine *we're* going to ask *you*?" But he kept well behind the others, near the wall.

"Well, are you going to?" asked Cursitor, grimly.

Jack set his chin stubbornly, in the way known to Dr. Anson. "If you ask me decently. I won't be forced."

"*Won't* you?" said Cursitor. "We'll soon see about that." There is nothing so irritating as rank obstinacy. "Tubby, cut off like a decent sort and get my riding-whip: it's in my study, on the table. Here's the key."

Featherstone could be heard trotting heavily to the main building.

Jack smiled disdainfully, as if to show that he could not be terrified by preparations.

"I'll give you till it comes," said Cursitor, "to think it over. I should advise you just to say that you are sorry."

He turned away nonchalantly, lit a cigarette, and began chatting easily to his two friends, about the prospects of a thaw.

Jack was thinking, but not of an apology: he was not made like that. He was thinking whether it would be possible to make a dash for the door, and so escape towards O'Brien and the others who, he knew, would be hastening to rescue him?

An unsuccessful effort would be worse than none, and Jack decided that it could not possibly succeed. The door, though not locked now, was not actually open, and the three big fellows stood very nearly between him and it. Cursitor, besides, was far-famed as a sprinter (at what sport did he not excel?), and though he made a pretence of forgetting all about their prisoner, Jack was conscious that the corner of his eye was watchfully upon him.

Yet even so, he felt a fool, standing there in this way, making no resistance! What right had these cads to bring him here?

He was just about to make his dash, if only as a sporting effort, when once again the fussy little rapid steps of the Lightweight were heard upon the slush outside.

Featherstone appeared, bearing with ghoulish pride the leather riding-whip, a nasty tapering instrument; thick enough to bruise, but also thin enough to sting.

Was it the sight of this messenger's joy, or was it the prospect of that open door? In any case, a rapid impulse added fuel to Jack's impatience with his passive *rôle*.

He rushed at a mad pace towards the opening.

The little man, turning to close the door (a very proper action, prescribed in every book of Etiquette), got both Jack's knees full in his back, and tottered forward, headlong, into a large heap of dirty snow, collected by the foresight of a gardener.

The impact with this heavy mass, that closed the way to freedom, broke the force of Jack's mad rush. He landed on his feet, outside, but with no

impetus, and while he staggered, gathering the energy to run, Cursitor was on him. Jack, a titan at the school, was like a child in the strong giant's hands. Silently, but none too gently, Cursitor drew him back into the little shed.

"Give Tubby a hand, Alec," he said calmly, as he jerked his prisoner up the one step, "and bring the riding-whip along."

He pushed Jack away from him, and puffed at the cigarette, that he had never dropped. "You can't get away," he said, without any trace of anger, "so you'd better make up your mind to apologize at once."

"I'm not going to," Jack answered, doggedly, "unless you ask me decently. You don't suppose I'm frightened, do you?"

Cursitor did not discuss his suppositions. "We've had enough of this," he said, instead. Featherstone, for one, looked as though he *had*! He stood dripping snow from every part of him; picking it from his hair; shaking his legs; bending double, to let it drop out of his neck; until he looked like some one doing Swedish exercises. But Cursitor was not referring to this sort of thing. He was getting impatient. This fellow Henderson had behaved rottenly, coming and letting his chaps rag them, while the Dentons were there: and he was jolly well going to apologize, the obstinate young devil! In that sense, he had had enough of it. Besides, he half suspected that the Warnerites would soon arrive, on rescue bent, and at all costs he must have his apology before that happened.

He held his hand out towards the one whom he called Alec, and took the riding-whip. He swished it ominously through the air, until it whistled.

"Look here," he said, with grim calmness, "once and for all—are *you* going to apologize?"

His business with the whip served only to make Jack more resolute. "Once and for all," he answered, "*no!*"

This was quite definite.

Cursitor found himself in the dilemma of all who used wild threats against this Henderson with the square chin: he must carry them out, or he must own defeat. He had not intended to touch the Warnerite: to frighten him and get apologies, was all that he had planned: but he was not of those who own defeat before attempting victory.

"Very well, then," he said, in tones of indifference. "Just as you like! It's all your own fault. . . . We'll give the stubborn beggar half-a-dozen, Alec,

and then see how he feels about it."

Featherstone stood upright: even during his gymnastics he had been listening, it seemed. "What's the use of half-a-dozen?" he asked, peevishly.

Cursitor paid no attention to his protests, but looked rapidly around the room. "We'll have him on the horse," he said. "Give me a hand, there, with his legs."

The hand seemed scarcely necessary. If Cursitor's aim in this demonstration were to show young Henderson how inferior a thing he was, he had succeeded well enough already. Jack could have died of shame, as despite all struggles he found his arms pinioned in a grip like that of some machine, felt himself raised once more from the ground; his back on Cursitor's broad chest, and his legs kicking helplessly against the air. He could not tell where "Alec" or the other was, for in his present attitude he could see nothing but the wood beams of the low roof, and in a moment he felt either ankle grasped by a firm hand.

Furious with undignified resentment, only resisting by an effort the small boy's outcry of "You beastly cads!" he was carried, helpless as a drunkard, to the place of execution.

This was a leather-covered "horse," the shapeless thing that stands upon four wooden legs in every school gymnasium. Many a time had Jack vaulted over one like unto it, at Warner's. Now in less graceful fashion he was flung across it.

"Hang on to his wrists, Alec," said Cursitor.

"*I*'ll hang on to his feet," the Lightweight keenly volunteered—and rashly: for Jack, hearing that, kicked out, and Featherstone, with an oath, hung on to his own jaw, instead.

But, indeed, nobody was needed for the other task. "Alec" held Jack's wrists firmly, and his unnamed companion laid a steadying hand upon the victim's waist. Held like that, he could go neither back nor forwards. Kick he might, but Cursitor, with a long reach, stood well to one side, and soon the waving legs must fall. There was not really any hurry!

But first he got another chance. "Look here, we don't want to have to lick you. Why won't you just say you're sorry?"

"I'm not," replied the angry prisoner, with futile struggles.

"Very well, then," Cursitor said once again, and standing with legs well apart, he drew the switch back, and brought it down with a long swing upon

Jack's tight-drawn flannels.

The many thrashings of a not eventless career at a rough school—even the recent attentions of the angry prefects—faded to nothingness beside this half-dozen that Featherstone had so despised. In spite of himself, Jack writhed and struggled at each blow, raising his legs, even, when he thought that the next threatened: but always Cursitor waited till a clear road offered, and then brought it down with a quick sweep. But not a sound did Jack make, even at the final, hardest, cut.

"Now then," asked Cursitor, still fairly calm, but with a symptom of impatience; "now will you apologize?"

"Never," Jack answered, in his fury. "Not to a bounder like you!"

"Oh, *won't* you?" Cursitor asked, and now his tones were not so calm. "We'll soon see about that!"

This boy's defiant obstinacy, linked with the prospect of failure, had roused the Irish side of him: at all costs he would triumph, now. He did not stop, especially, to think about the magnitude or littleness of the offence: he felt the instinct of the duel, and heard the savage encouragement of those in the small room with him. "Don't be scored off!"—well, he wouldn't! He set his feet yet more apart; he drew the switch up through his left fingers, till it curved high over his right shoulder; then raising himself upon his toes, he brought it down with every ounce of strength that he possessed. Where, till now, he had merely hit hard, now he hit with all his might. Where, before, he had just hit, now he held the blow upon the quivering flesh.

Jack, try as he might, could not keep back a little cry of pain.

"*That's* it!" piped the Lightweight, joyfully.

Cursitor, too, mad by now with lust of conquest, furious with defiance, read the sound as an encouragement. He raised the leather switch once more.

Again and again he brought it down in the same manner—and on the same place. Jack tugged and struggled to get free; his feet kicked wildly in the air; he groaned and yelled; he fixed his teeth in a loose bit of leather. "Will you apologize, you obstinate young fool?" Cursitor kept crying: and at all costs, he must *not*. But more and more difficult the task became.

Cursitor, by now, made no attempt to wait until his kicks subsided, or choose that same old place, but struck blindly; anywhere. The pain was unendurable—but Jack's one thought was silence.

And suddenly, as Cursitor by chance lit once more on the favoured spot, the victim gave a curious groan, different from all the others; longer; and his legs fell limply down towards the ground.

The executioner saw victory within his grasp.

"*Now* will you say it?" he asked again, in triumph, and brought the whip down savagely once more on the thin flannels. But no word came, nor any answering quiver.

"I say, look out!" "Alec" cried, "I *do* believe he's fainted."

Cursitor dropped the whip, with a sudden sense of physical sickness. "Good lord!" he said, in tones of horror, and realized what he had done. He had not thought how strong he was: he had not really been himself. Now he was, and he felt full of shame.

Very tenderly he lifted Jack down from the horse, and loosened the collar of his football shirt.

"Buck up!" he shouted, angrily, to his three friends. "Water—brandy—anything. . . ."

As they turned to go, the door was flung open. They had not locked it, since Featherstone's return. And in the opening, all together, stood O'Brien and the other runners. Seeing the motor-car, they had tracked the Costers to the gymnasium, and waited silently till all were there. Now they dashed in, keen for rescue and revenge.

The first glimpse told them what had happened.

They saw the anxious Costers; saw Jack white and motionless in Cursitor's arms; saw the whip upon the ground.

O'Brien's first ideas were, rather typically, of revenge. He gave a rapid, anxious glance at Jack, and saw that he was being tended carefully by the big Coster. He did not feel that he could help, or do any better, even if there were not other work on hand. These three beastly bullies must not get off free: that was what Henderson himself would wish!

In his plans for reprisal, he gave no thought to Cursitor: everybody knew him for a good sort, and he was helping Jack! No, it was these other three who had to pay for this, and straightway he started settling the account.

"Bring them outside," he yelled, and long before Cursitor needed the doorway, to carry Jack into the cool air, it was free. The three Costers, fighting fiercely (except Featherstone, who mostly murmured, "*Don't!*"),

were rolled upon the snow, pelted, and kicked. The uproar, and their cries of "College!" brought more Costers pouring out of the main block.

And now the Warnerites found themselves pressed. Justice was on their side, but weight and numbers on the other. It is discouraging to moralists, but weight and numbers proved of greater value: the three who were down rose up, and soon it was the Warnerites who were upon defence.

More and more enemy still kept arriving. O'Brien saw that a retreat was necessary, and now his Rifle Corps experience proved useful: whilst Da Costa's men fought singly, he organized his forces, drew them back in averagely good order to the gate, where they made a last stand, and then he gave a command not to be found in any of the drill-books, "Scoot back for the school."

Immediately it was obeyed. The run, so unexpectedly eventful, was resumed. O'Brien could not hope to rescue Jack, but with ironic faith, not knowing what had happened, he was well content to leave him in charge of the "decent" Cursitor!

"They're off!" exclaimed the Costers, and dashed forward to pursue them. But not only were they older, and in less strict training, than these boys who had gained a good start: they were also in gaiters, or in wintry clothes of any sort except the sort that makes for rapid running. The notion of pursuit was soon abandoned.

"We'll get all our men together," somebody suggested, "and go across to their place: they've got a half, to-day."

"*Then* they'll see!" cried Featherstone, with a fine fierceness.

Secretly, he was wondering whether he could possibly excuse himself from taking part in any further conflict, on the ground of a by no means imaginary headache.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

The Great Snow-fight

At once the whole College resounded with the banging of doors, as the indignant Costers went from study to study, seeking volunteers for this great attack upon the Warnerites. There were rooms where broken panes, with snow scattered over books and papers, were left as souvenirs of the recent engagement, and here the occupants were not least keen among a crowd where every one was thirsting for revenge. The cheek of these beastly school kids, daring to invade Da Costa's!

Featherstone, however, did not join this recruiting band in its round of the College building. He went straight to a certain study, where, as he expected, he found Cursitor with his late victim, now his patient. Henderson, still rather dazed, was lying on the sofa, and on many cushions set there by his thoughtful nurse.

"Can I help anyhow?" asked Featherstone. He was not exactly bursting with desire to help this cheeky Warnerite, who jolly well deserved all he had got: but fighting seemed the sole alternative, and he had got his fill of that.

"No, I can manage." Cursitor spoke coldly: he felt somehow that this spiteful little Tubby had deliberately spurred him on to his brutal revenge. "They'll want you outside. What's happening?"

"They're going to attack the school," replied the other, using the third person.

"Well, don't you miss the fun," said Cursitor, dryly, and even Jack gave a wry smile. "I can look after this fellow all right."

"I thought you might like me to drive him back to——"

"No," replied the cruel Cursitor, "I can do that. *You* go off and fight. Don't worry about me, thanks very much."

As the Lightweight went out dejectedly to battle, Cursitor glanced down at Henderson and was relieved to note that he was smiling.

"He doesn't want to fight," said Jack.

"No," gravely answered Cursitor, " 'but by Jingo, if he *does*'——!" and was yet more relieved to note how the other could laugh. "How are you feeling now?" he asked, with real concern.

"Oh, I'm all right. I'll get back to the school;" but when he moved, he winced and fell back again, for he was stiff and sore beyond belief.

"Lie quiet for a bit," said Cursitor. "We'll take the motor, presently. I expect you're still feeling a bit rotten."

He paused for a moment, as though not knowing quite how to begin again: and then he said, "It's nothing to what *I*'m feeling, though: I feel an utter worm."

"Oh, I don't know," said Jack, uncomfortably, and with a certain vagueness. "I don't see why you should. It's nothing, really." But none the less, his agony was such that he was glad to close his eyes, and not speak for awhile.

"I behaved like an infernal cad," said Cursitor, and then, because Jack made no answer and he did not know how to go on, said no more, but sat in silent sympathy. Outside, distant sounds of the Costers setting out for battle could be heard: then they died away, and everything was stillness in the little room. Jack lay, now, in a medley of pain and faintness, that was almost pleasant. Cursitor sat by the table, brooding over his moments of madness; and with a fierce resentment against Featherstone there mingled a no less genuine scorn of himself.

After a while Jack opened his eyes once again. For the moment, he scarcely knew where he was, and when he realized, his first idea was to get away back to the school.

"I'm *really* all right, now," he said, trying to speak naturally.

Cursitor got up, and stood beside him. "Do you think, if I helped you," he asked, "you could manage to get to the motor?"

"Rather, yes!" Jack answered, cheerily.

It was not quite so simple as he thought, for when he rose, he found that, apart from any pain of motion, he was still a little dizzy: but with Cursitor's right arm around him (the left grasping those essential cushions), he made his way out, and soon the two were in the car, and speeding towards the school buildings.

Fresh air revived Jack rapidly, and he felt somehow bound to stutter out his thanks for Cursitor's frequent inquiries and attentions.

"It's awfully decent of you," he said, "to take all this trouble over me. I'm sorry to be such a nuisance."

Here were veritable coals of fire! Cursitor, in turn, did not know what to say. Apologies are hard to make: but much more trying to receive.

"Why, it was all my fault," he said, presently: and then once more, "I feel an utter worm."

"I don't see why," Jack answered, nobly; "you gave me lots of chances, and I didn't take them. I ought to have, really: only it seemed a bit like climbing down. But it wasn't *your* fault: it was a rotten thing of me to rag your picnic, when you'd women there." It was rather like Jack, to stutter out apologies, now, when Cursitor did not demand them!

"Drivel, man!" said Cursitor.

And after that they talked about the car.

The school drive was curiously empty, for every one was out upon the battle-field, and no one saw this odd arrival of the invalid.

Only, as they reached the actual door that leads to the boys' studies, there emerged Grimshaw: the Head Boy must pretend not to know that Warner's were engaged in warfare with Da Costa's! He was astounded at this ill-assorted couple, for he had heard the very roughest rumours, and knew nothing of Jack's injuries.

Cursitor leant out of the car. "I say, you might look after this man, will you?"

"What's up?" asked Grimshaw.

"Nothing, thanks," Jack answered, quickly: but his method of alighting did not back the answer up too strongly.

"He'll tell you," said Cursitor, in a low voice: and as Jack stood at length upon the door-step, added, "I shan't stay: I'm not wanted here—and I don't wonder."

"Rot, man!" answered Jack. "You know it was as much my fault as yours:" and he held out his hand.

Cursitor grasped it warmly: then, as he got into the car, he said to Grimshaw, "*You*'ll look after him all right?"

"Of course," replied the Head Boy, and he put his arm round Jack, to steady him. It seemed the last-named's fate, to-day, to be nursed by his

“enemies”! Only that, in each case, the enemy became a friend. . . .

Cursitor went straight back to Da Costa’s, though by the other road. As he passed along the lane that skirts the football field, he caught a glimpse of the beginning of the fray, but he was in no mood for it, and not even troubling to slow down, went straight back to Da Costa’s, where he picked up the switch and savagely bent it into uselessness across his knee.

The other Costers, proud of Cursitor’s achievement, and thoroughly resolved to take their vengeance on these cheeky Warnerites, had swarmed on to the field, and there found the enemy, under O’Brien’s generalship, drawn up in full force to receive them. They had not, in their anger, specially thought out what they would do to these kids, when they found them. They would roll them in the snow and kick them; black their beastly eyes; and anything of that sort! They had not planned a special sort of battle.

But here were the Warnerites, about an equal number with themselves, drawn up in a firm line, at intervals, and either wing a little bit advanced. Besides, at each boy’s feet there lay a solid pile of snowballs.

In this duel the Warnerites had chosen weapons!

Of course the others might rush in and do what they wished, man to man, at closer quarters: but they must obviously rush through a volley of snowballs.

So, indeed, it happened. On they dashed, anyhow, one man before another, in no order; and when he judged the range was possible, O’Brien cried out “Fire!” It was not fire, of course: but it was snow, and hard snow in great quantities. Their wait, while the Costers gathered, had been spent in collecting ammunition: now they used it freely. Like clockwork worked these forty fellows: fire—reload—and fire! They threw those snowballs like men throwing cocoanuts.

The Persian arrows which, tradition vows, concealed the sun, were nothing to the snowballs of the Warnerites!

In the eye—the mouth—upon the nose—or down the neck, as they stooped down—the Costers got them; and the snow was hard. But nothing stopped them. Blind and angry they dashed on, into the jaws of death, madly attempting to fling snowballs only half congealed: and soon, by a mere triumph of endurance, they were through the zone of fire and grappled with their foemen at close quarters.

Away towards the right, the Ansonites stood watching, silently. They thought it rather cool of the Warnerites, bringing their beastly fights on to

the school field, and more than cool for the Costers to come—but it was a good fight to watch.

"I swear, the Costers are better sportsmen than I gave them credit for," said Banks. "They've fairly charged the snowballs!"

"Yes," answered Dick, "and the Warnerites have had their day's fun, now: they'll have to make a run for it, or they'll get simply smashed."

He spoke the words of wisdom. Once at close quarters, the Warnerites were utterly outclassed by their big adversaries. The one who had the luck to close with Featherstone was having a good time, for even an opponent bigger than oneself is fairly harmless, if he shuts his eyes. O'Brien, too, was quitting himself well with "Alec," whom he had singled as his victim, and "Alec" obviously would not see well out of his right eye, until the morrow's swelling had subsided.

But for the rest, the burly College men did almost what they liked with their boyish opponents. Loud rose the cries of "Beastly cad!" from pummelled juniors; many the heads that lay in chancery; and the field was far less one of battle than of punishment.

The quick-eyed O'Brien saw that his men were doomed unless he took some desperate course.

He took it.

"Rescue!" he shouted. "Rescue, Corunna! Outside with the Costers!"

For some moments the Ansonites hung back: the thing was rather unexpected. But then—O'Brien was in the Eleven; everybody loathed the Costers; every one was itching for a fight. . . . "Shall we?" they said, eagerly to one another.

Dick settled the question. He saw in this chance moment the solution of a heap of difficulties.

"Corunna!" he shouted, like some ancient knight, and dashed forward, picking up snow as he started, towards the much-afflicted Warnerites.

"Corunna!" yelled every one, and followed him.

The Costers dropped their victims, and fell back a little, daunted by this sudden storm of snowballs on their flank.

It was at such a critical point of the conflict that Sergeant Gore appeared.

In this moment he proved himself almost worthy of his martial calling. Splendidly contemptuous of the fact that he was one against two hundred—for what are these things to your hero?—he puffed up gallantly, against the wind, and cried out to the boys, "Now then, stop that, there!" but to the Costers, "Now, you there—*hout*side!"

Who has not heard the fate of the peace-maker?

Those upon the far side of the opposing lines did not observe him, but those nearest, when he resented disobedience by rushing in and tearing foes apart, took his good offices in the accustomed manner. Every one, by now, desired to fight. A minute since, the Warnerites would quite have welcomed Sergeant Gore: now, with their new allies bringing a sure victory, they had no use for him. And the Costers, having sipped revenge, thirsted for more of the same brand, at whatsoever cost. Sergeant Gore was quite superfluous.

The rival forces united in this belief, and they united in making it entirely clear. The peace-maker (whose care, really, was more for Discipline than Peace), found himself deluged in snow from every quarter, as both sides for the moment ceased their warfare, to rout him who would stop it altogether.

For some seconds he stood braving it, like a rather red and solid Ajax defying thunder-bolts; then he put up his hands before his face in quite an unheroic manner; retreated a bit further from the fusillade; and finally, turning his broad back, stalked in slightly hurried majesty to the main building.

It was not often that Sergeant Gore appealed to the Head Master, for whom, indeed, he felt something very near contempt, the man of action's scorn for the mere tame civilian. Usually he found that threats and a big voice sufficed for keeping up his dignity: whilst victims of his wrath found drill especially distressing. But here was a case in which he had openly been flouted, and Discipline, that sacred thing, had been defied.

He strode tempestuously into the Head Master's study, and as he swept off his military cap, a clot of snow dropped heavily upon the Doctor's carpet.

"Come to report serious disorder, sir," he opened, brusquely.

A dread, of which he was ashamed, swept over Dr. Anson, as these words brought up the vision of another mutiny, beginning all his worries once again. Frankly, he had not got the strength for it: this term had broken him. Till now, till the arrival of these rough boys of Mr. Warner's, the school

had run quite smoothly, almost by itself, upon the System. But now it seemed that nothing ever could bring back the state of order, that nothing, no concession and no threats, could make peace between these sets of irreconcilables; his old boys and his new. An absolute despair, a sense of his own incapacity, of Winton's failure, reflected itself in the dull tones of his voice.

"What, Sergeant?" he asked wearily.

The Sergeant told his hideous tale of insubordination, its details by no means losing in colour, as the warm room sent a melting lump of snow upon a slow and jerky course along his backbone.

Dr. Anson realized his duty. His boys were engaged in a serious fight, which possibly would end in some one getting dangerously injured, and had defied the Sergeant, whom he had appointed to keep order. Clearly, he was bound to go out and insist on the fight ceasing.

Equally clearly, his resolution failed.

Everything seemed so absolutely hopeless. His interference, up to now, had never made things any better, and—here was the real point—he was by no means sure that, so far as Mr. Warner's boys went, he would meet with more respect than Sergeant Gore. And if he were once snowballed by his own boys——!

"Ah, Sergeant," he said, with the feeblest imitation of a smile, "you take a snowball fight too seriously! You know, their games are stopped, and boys *will* be boys. I've no doubt it has stopped by now."

But the Sergeant's wrath was not to be appeased by any ancient truism as to a boy's nature: nor was he deceived. He knew that Dr. Anson was afraid, and as he left his study, that contempt which had always been budding, burst out into its full bloom. He went disconsolately into his Gymnasium, and found some comfort in the thought of what would happen, when some of them young gen'lmen were put on drill.

Out upon the field, meanwhile, the battle had raged furiously. O'Brien's prowess on that day is still a matter talked about at Winton. "Alec" defeated and laid prostrate on the snow, he scorned the Lightweight (who was giving pleasure to the juniors), and singled out the other Coster who had been in the Gym with Jack. On him he charged with words of fire, begging the rest to leave the swine to him, with more on that high epic plane: and then he set himself to take revenge. The story of that fight is fine, but not quite

beautiful, and it were better to say of it what the Coster usually says—which is, just nothing.

In other parts, the battle was less sanguinary. Few of the Ansonites knew what the conflict was about, and they were content to use snowballs instead of a clenched fist. But even so, the Costers were soon satisfied. Little by little they drew back towards the lane. Most of them, at some time, had been rolled upon the snow, with generous supplies of it thrust down their necks, and none felt altogether comfortable. College, whisky, and hot baths, seemed suddenly a prospect far more tempting than revenge—and more attainable. They passed the word along, one to another, and when they all were close upon the hedge, dashed for it and the road which led to safety.

With a wild cheer the combined forces of the school charged forward, and helped the flying Costers over the hedge with a volley of hard snowballs at near range. None of them, not even Featherstone, lingered in his going: thorns and brambles were inferior terrors. When the victors reached that hedge, their foes were in full, ignominious flight along the road.

There was no talk of a pursuit. Honour was satisfied, and every one had fought enough.

A parting jeer, with many varied insults, and some snowballs that fell short, made up the farewell offered to these glorious people who had come for vengeance and went home for hot baths. As they turned the first corner and were lost to sight, every one, with a derisive cheer, got down from the hedge-bank.

Dick, as he did so, turned with a smile to his neighbour, and found it to be O'Brien.

"Thanks," said the last-named, in a natural manner. "You just saved us!"

"Yes," answered Dick: "but what about the Sergeant?"

O'Brien laughed. "Does he matter much?"

"There'll be a row," replied Dick, seriously.

"Ah, well," O'Brien said, with his familiar nonchalance. "There'll be that, anyhow: we broke a dozen windows at the College!"

Dick was amused. "That doesn't help about pelting the Sergeant! There's bound to be a hideous row."

"True for you," O'Brien said, more gravely. "And what do you intend to tell the Doctor?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. . . . We’ll have to think about it. . . . Why don’t you come and brew some tea, and talk it over in my study?”

He spoke in rather a forced tone, trying to seem casual, but he made no pretence of holding out, at last, the olive branch of peace: nor did O’Brien show that he took it as such.

“All right,” he answered, awkwardly. “I don’t mind if I do.”

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD

Floreat Wintonia

Two hundred boys tramped in a shapeless mass back to the studies.

Now, when all was over, the Ansonites and those of the Warnerites who had not started for the run, began to ask what it was all about. Swiftly rumour went upon its round. Henderson had been licked by Da Costa's. Henderson was bad. Henderson was jolly bad. Henderson was almost dead. Henderson had got concussion. The junior Ansonites, wildly excited, forgot their feud and clustered round those Warnerites, near whom they found themselves on the way back. What was all this about Henderson?

And while they were still gossiping, feeling like those involved in a dramatic business, and almost certain, by now, that Henderson was altogether dead, the first of them reached the House door; and just as he was going to enter, there appeared in it none other than Henderson himself. Henderson a little pale, but certainly not dead and probably not with concussion: Henderson, too, supported on the arm of—Grimshaw! He had insisted upon coming out: he was all right, now, he said; only a little sore; and he must see the snow-fight! But when he started moving, the pain was terrible, and he felt glad of the Head Boy's assistance.

The surprise of his appearance was tremendous. Even O'Brien, who knew the facts, was glad to see him fit and on his feet again. Creature of quick impulses, he voiced his pleasure and relief in a great cry, "*Three cheers for Henderson!*"

Everybody took it up, or nearly everybody. Some of the Ansonites kept silent, and as the cheering died away, every one felt rather awkward. O'Brien saved the situation by shouting out, "*Three boos for the Costers!*" All joined in that, with laughter, and the crowd began to filter in towards the study-passage.

But while the booing still continued, a bright inspiration had struck Cecil Wren. This apostle of Peace (who had fought with the best, so soon as the Ansonites joined in), now hurried up to Grimshaw's side and whispered something in his ear.

As the hissing died away, the Head Boy took O'Brien's place as the toast-master.

"THREE CHEERS FOR *WINTON*!" he cried, loudly.

It was a bold experiment, for nobody of either side had ever used the hated name. But Cecil had chosen the right moment, the right person to propose the cheer. Everybody was excited: Ansonite and Warnerite had just fought side by side: here was Henderson with Grimshaw, there Sinclair with O'Brien: and all were weary of the stale old feud, with all its awkwardness. They only wanted an easy way out, and Grimshaw, whom every one respected just now, had provided it.

Out the cheers rolled; a cry of victory, a pledge of union; and were still rolling when Grimshaw said to Jack, "You'd better come *in* again, don't you think?"

As they reached the door, Dick joined them, with O'Brien.

"Come and brew with us?" he said to both of them.

"Thanks," answered Grimshaw, and Jack said, "Right you are: I'd *like* to."

The four went in, together.

And inside his study, the Doctor, hearing cheers and hisses, came to his window, wondering what new trouble these portended.

Grimshaw's clear cry reached him, and then the overpowering cheers; and as he listened, the despair went from the face of this old man, leaving him younger by a score of years. For in that shout he recognized the death of all factions, the true birth of his great school, Winton; and with the happy smile of one who finds a life-dream unexpectedly within his grasp, he murmured gently, "*Floreat Wintonia!*"

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The School Across the Road* by Desmond Francis Talbot Coke]