

# THE BOYS' FRIEND 1D

EVERY TUESDAY.

The object of THE BOYS' FRIEND is to Amuse, to Instruct, and to Advise Boys.

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ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 20, 1906.]

## THE SCHOOL AGAINST HIM



A STIRRING SCHOOL STORY by HENRY ST JOHN.



BY A POPULAR AUTHOR.

Hard Lines.

"FAG! FAG!" Pat Neil looked up as the impatient voice came ringing along the corridor, and met the eyes of his chum Dick Wayne. The two Fourth-formers were in the study they shared, busy with evening preparation, when the interruption came. "Fag!" "It's that brute Hake," said Pat. "Let him yell till he's hoarse! I've said I won't fag for the Fifth, and I won't!" "There'll be a row," said Dick, with a grin. "Still, I'm game, if you are."

"I fancy Hake will think twice before he makes a row. Hammond is in his study, and you know he's swotting for the Walsingham prize. If he's fetched out, he'll make it as hot for Hake as for us."

And Pat went on with his work. Dick Wayne followed his example, not without an inward tremor.

The difficulty was an old one at St. Edith's. By the rules of the school the juniors could only be fagged by the Sixth, but many of the Upper Fifth boys assumed the privilege, and many were the lickings inflicted upon youngsters who were plucky enough to resist.

Hammond, the head prefect, ought to have kept better order; but Hammond was careless and remiss, and the big boys of the Fifth did very much as they liked.

"Fag!"

It was the fourth and last summons. No answer being forthcoming, Hake came along to investigate. The two juniors looked at him as he put his head into the study.

The Fifth-Former glared at them. "Didn't you hear me call?"

"Oh, yes," said Pat. "We aren't deaf. We heard you."

"And why didn't you come? It's your turn for duty," said Hake, coming into the study.

Pat reached his hand towards the inkpot in a careless sort of way, watching the Fifth-Former warily.

"You know you've no right to fag us," he said. "I've told you so before. Now clear out, Hake—your face worries me! I've got work to do."

Hake looked at Pat and at the inkpot, then at Dick Wayne and the cricket-stump he had picked up; then he walked out of the study without a word.

"Hurrah!" cried Pat. "Fancy his backing down like that! I s'pose the spalpeen is afraid of fetching Hammond out. Anyway, we can work in peace. Now, then—Success! huc, Nero—!" And he was quickly immersed in his work again.

But his jubilation was premature. Hake had simply retired for reinforcements. In a few minutes he was back, and Lawrence and Marshall of the Fifth were with him. They came into the study with a rush, and Hake closed the door.

Pat and Dick started up, and the inkpot and the cricket-stump came into prominence again.

"You'd better keep your distance," said Pat warningly. "There'll be a row if you begin your bullying, you beasts!"

"We are going to give you a lesson," said Hake grimly. "You two are the leaders of the Fourth in all their cheek to us seniors. I've thought for a long time of making an example of you. Go for the little brutes, chaps!"

The contest was hopeless, but the two juniors made a plucky resistance. Hake got the contents of the inkpot in his eyes, and Marshall's head ached for a couple of days from its contact with Dick's stump. But then the juniors were seized and held fast, helpless in the grip of the big boys.

"Hold 'em!" said Hake furiously, snatching the ink out of his eyes. "I'll

give 'em something for this! This stump will come in handy! Now, then!"

The grinning Lawrence twisted Pat down into a convenient posture, and Hake began to lay on the stump with hearty vigour.

Pat struggled and roared, but he could not escape. Hake thrashed him till his arm ached. Then he turned to Dick, who had waited in painful anticipation, held fast by Marshall.

Hake had just started on Dick, when the door of the study was flung violently open.

The two juniors had purposely made as much noise as they could, in the hope of bringing the prefect upon the scene, and they had succeeded.

Hammond burst into the study, crimson with rage. He had been swatting away, with a towel round his head, when the terrific uproar interrupted him.

"What's this row about!" he shouted. "What do you mean by it? What are you Fifth fellows doing here?"

"We came here to stop the row," said Hake. "These little beggars were fighting, and we thought they might disturb you, and so—"

"Oh, what a howling crammer!" exclaimed Pat. "Hammond, we—"

"Shut up, all of you!" said the great man. "I don't want to hear any explanations; but I warn you that if I hear a sound from this study again there will be ructions!"

"But look here, Hammond—"

"Didn't I tell you to shut up?"

And the prefect, who wanted to wreak his temper upon somebody, boxed Pat's ears, and then gave Dick a ringing cuff. "Now keep quiet, or, by Jove, I'll warn you next time!"

And Hammond went out.

The Fifth-Formers, grinning with glee, followed him, and the unlucky youngsters were left alone.

Pat rubbed his ears ruefully.

"Begorra," he said, "we had the worst of that little lot, Dick! Fancy Hammond cutting up so rough! He ought to have listened to us. Look here, Dick, we shall have to make those brutes sit up for this. And Hammond, too!"

"Oh, I say, you'd better let the Sixth alone!" grinned Dick.

"He should have let us alone. He'll never be down on those brutes until they worry him; and he doesn't care how we are bullied so long as he's left quiet. He's got to have a lesson, and we've got to give him one!"

Pat has an Idea.

"I've got it!"

Pat Neil had been sitting for some time with his elbows on the table, his chin resting on his hands, his brow wrinkled with deep thought. He jumped up suddenly—so suddenly that he made the table jump, too, and Dick Wayne distributed a beautiful assortment of blots over half a page.

"You giddy lunatic!" ejaculated Dick. "Look what you've done!"

"Pooh! What does that matter, when I've got an idea?"

"Well, I know you don't often have one," admitted Dick. "What is it? You've been looking like an owl for a quarter of an hour."

"I've solved the weighty problem," grinned Pat. "Look here, you know how pleasant Hammond feels when he's interrupted at his swatting?"

"Yes; we've just had a specimen."

"Exactly. You are also aware that he uses the house-master's typewriter when he wants to?"

Dick stared.

"What on earth has that got to do with it?"

"A good deal," said Pat, chuckling. "Having had the distinction of fagging for him, I know his manners and customs. When he is going to

invites fellows in the Sixth to tea in his study he generally types off the invites on Mr. Cordingley's machine. You know that. Well, that is where we come in."

"I don't see how."

"That's because you are dense. Suppose Hake & Co. received invitations to tea with the prefect—"

"Yes?"

"Well, suppose that two individuals about our size have ragged Hammond into a fiendish temper?"

"Ho, ho!"

"What do you think of the idea?"

"Ripping! But can you get at the machine?"

"Easily, if I watch my opportunity. What do you think will happen?"

"Well, I fancy there will be a surprise for our friends of the Fifth," said Dick, with a chuckle. "Luckily, we can see Hammond's door from ours, and we'll have some of the chaps in to see the fun. If it works, there will be ructions."

The Tea-Party.

"ALLO! What's that?"

Hake, of the Fifth, had just entered his study, when he saw a note lying on the table. He opened it, and a smile of satisfaction dawned upon his face when he read the contents.

Hammond gasped. To go in pursuit of the cheeky juniors would be to waste time, and he knew they would lead him a dance before he could catch them. He settled himself down again to work, but in a few minutes Pat's head was at the door again.

"Don't be wild, Hammy. I want to speak to you, really."

The prefect contained himself with an effort.

"What is it?"

"May I speak?"

"Yes, confound you!"

"You won't be angry?"

"No!" roared Hammond.

"Well, then, I should like to come in to tea with you if—"

Hammond made a bee-line for the door, and Pat skipped away. This time the enraged prefect pursued him down the corridor, but Pat darted into his study and locked the door.

Hammond kicked at it, and shouted threats through the keyhole, and finally retired in a state of simmering fury.

Back to his study he went and shut the door, and bent himself to his task again; but he found it very hard to collect his thoughts. Angry feelings are foes to study, which requires a quiet state of mind, and Hammond was not merely angry—he was simply wild. He longed for some too venturesome joker to come to his study again, so that he could relieve

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The note was typewritten, and very brief, but to the point.

"J. Hammond would be glad of G. Hake's company at a little feed this evening in his study. Half-past seven sharp. P.S.—Come alone."

There was a pleased anticipation in Hake's face as he put the note into his pocket.

"This is a bit of all right," he murmured. "Old Hammond gives jolly good feeds, though he doesn't often have a chap in our Form there. It's very decent of him to ask me. I'll go—rather!"

About the same time Lawrence and Marshall, who shared a study, were perusing a note—also typed, and to much the same effect. It was addressed to both of them, and the time specified was a quarter to eight.

"That's jolly decent of Hammond!" remarked Lawrence. "He doesn't often have Fifth fellows at his feeds. You'll come, Marshall?"

"What ho!" said Marshall. "You won't catch me missing it. He says we are to come alone, so there's no chance for Hake."

"Oh, I suppose he doesn't want a crowd! Well, we'll go; that's settled."

Soon after seven o'clock Hammond was slogging away in his study. He meant to get the Walsingham prize, and that was a commendable ambition; but his methods were not wholly commendable. A prefect has

duties to do, and Hammond neglected them wholesale. Moreover, extra hard work always made him bad-tempered, and more than one smarting junior suffered for the prefect's ambition. And, as Pat Neil said, it was all right to "swot" if a chap wanted to, but he had no business to allow "swotting" to turn him into an irritable beast.

There came a tap at the door of the prefect's study.

"Come in, can't you?" he rapped out.

Pat Neil came in. The prefect glared at him.

"Hang you! What do you want?"

"I thought I'd come to tea with you, Hammy, just to show there's no ill-feeling," said Pat pleasantly.

Hammond jumped up and reached for a ruler. Pat bolted out of the study, and vanished before the prefect could get near him.

Growlingly Hammond returned to his work. But before he had fairly got going again there came another tap, and the door opened. The prefect turned a stare positively basilisk-like upon Dick Wayne.

"Hallo, Hammy! Busy?" said the Fourth-Former cheerfully.

"That's a pity. I thought I'd come and have tea with you."

Whiz!

Dick dodged the flying ruler, and disappeared.

his feelings a little by administering a terrific hiding to him.

He was in this mood when half-past seven struck from the school clock. There came a tap at the prefect's door.

Hammond rose very quietly and stealthily from his chair, and picked up a belt.

"Come in!" he called out.

Hake came in.

"Hallo, Hammy!" he said genially. "None of the others here yet, I see? It was very kind of you to ask me to tea—"

Swish!

The belt, coming with terrific vim across his shoulders, interrupted Hake's speech.

"I say, what are you up to?" he roared.

Swish went the belt again. The way Hammond laid into the unfortunate Fifth-Former was really energetic. He didn't condescend a word of explanation. Explanation was superfluous. He naturally thought that Hake was carrying on the joke started by Pat and Dick, and he let the Fifth-Former have it hot.

Hake twisted out of the study, feeling extremely sore, but not so sore as he was amazed and enraged.

"You beast!" he shouted from the corridor. "What do you mean by that?"

"Clear off, or I'll give you some more!" said Hammond, flourishing the belt in the doorway. And Hake cleared off.

Feeling somewhat relieved in his mind, Hammond returned to his Greek. Hake went away in a towering rage, as was natural under the circumstances. He passed the open door of Pat's study, and a howl of laughter greeted him.

It wanted some minutes to a quarter to eight when Lawrence and Marshall came along the corridor. They meant to be punctual. They were rather puzzled to see Pat's doorway crowded with juniors, but they did not connect it with Hammond's invitation to tea. With lofty haughtiness they stalked past, wondering what those cheeky youngsters saw to chuckle about.

Lawrence tapped at the prefect's door. He was rather surprised when it was suddenly torn open from within. Hammond stood before the visitors, glowering with rage, and there were no signs of a tea-party in the study.

"Hallo!" said Lawrence, puzzled by the prefect's look. "I hope we haven't come too early?"

"It's just on a quarter to eight," added Marshall. "It was very decent of you to ask us to tea, Hammy."

Hammy seemed to choke, but he calmed himself.

"So you've come to tea?" he asked, stepping towards them.

"Yes," said Lawrence. "We—Oh, lor!"

"Oh, crumba!" yelled Marshall.

Hammond, grabbing them quickly before they could escape, had seized them by the collar, and was knocking their heads together with hearty goodwill.

"So you've come to tea, have you?" panted the prefect. "I'll give you tea! There, and there, and there! Take that, and that, and that! There!"

Dazed and bewildered, Lawrence and Hammond could only gasp as they received their punishment.

"There!" roared Hammond finally, sending them spinning along the corridor. "Let that be a lesson to you, you little beasts! Now, perhaps you'll leave me in peace."

Lawrence and Marshall went reeling and tumbling away and fell thumping to the floor. They sat up, looking at each other with an expression perfectly idiotic in its bewilderment.

"Be off with you!" roared Hammond, starting towards them.

"He's mad!" gasped Marshall—"mad as a hatter! Run for your life!"

And they jumped up and ran—verily for their lives. At full tilt they passed the door where the youngsters were watching, heeding not the yell of laughter from the juniors.

The joke was too rich to keep, and it was soon all over St. Edith's. Even Hammond grinned when he heard the truth of the matter.

And ever afterwards, to throw Hake, Lawrence, or Marshall into a homicidal frame of mind, it was only necessary to ask how they had enjoyed the prefect's tea-party.

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