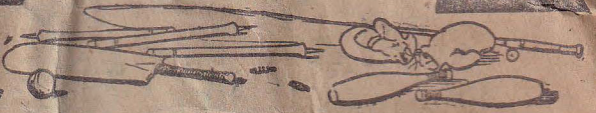
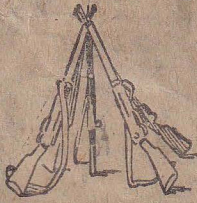


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No. 19.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY.

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The Fourth Form at Northcote: A REALISTIC SCHOOL STORY.

BY CHARLES HAMILTON.

Author of "Plucky Jack Stanhope," etc., etc.



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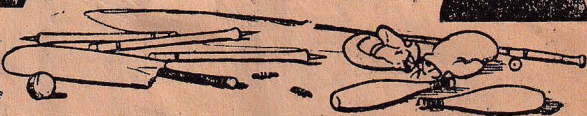
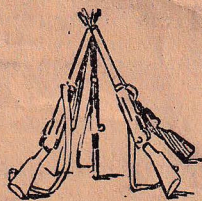
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By CHARLES HAMILTON, Author of "Plucky Jack Stanhope," Etc., Etc.

"Fag!"

George Mulberry looked out of his study and called along the passage, with a far from amiable expression upon his face.

"Fag!"

The fags at Northcote were not noted for prompt obedience to the masters, and in fact they avoided their duties as much as they possibly could, and in this respect Albert Phipps of the Fourth Form was one of the most prominent offenders.

He fagged for Mulberry of the Sixth, and when he heard his master's voice, he usually made himself as scarce as possible, in the hope that some other fag would have to undertake whatever Mulberry happened to require.

"Fag! F-a-a-g!"

Mulberry shouted the word along the passage, but no Phipps appeared.

"Here, youngster!"

A handsome, curly-headed Fourth-former was coming along the passage, with his cricket bat under his arm.

Mulberry called to him.

"Here, I say, Russell."

Clive Russell, the new boy at Northcote, stopped and looked at the senior, but he kept a safe distance. He knew Mulberry of old.

"Hullo, Mulberry! What do you want?"

"Come into my study."

"Sorry, but I've got to get down to the cricket."

Mulberry scowled savagely.

"Do you want me to wring your neck?" he demanded, coming out into the passage.

"Because if you do, you're going just the right way to work, Russell."

"I can't say that I do, particularly," said Clive, eyeing the angry senior warily. "My neck will do very well as it is, thanks all the same, Mulberry."

"Have you seen my fag, Phipps?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"This morning, when we got up," said Clive.

Mulberry made a rush at him. "I'll teach you to be funny, when I'm in a hurry," he snarled.

Clive scuttled along the passage.

"Stop, you little rascal!" shouted Mulberry. "As Phipps isn't here, I want you to fag for me, Russell."

"Sorry that it can't be did," called back the junior, cheerfully. "You see, I've got to go down to the cricket, Georgey."

Clive was at a safe distance, or he would certainly never have ventured to call the bully of the Sixth by that variation of his Christian name.

Mulberry panted with rage.

"Will you come back?" he yelled.

"Not just now."

"I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Oh, Georgey!"

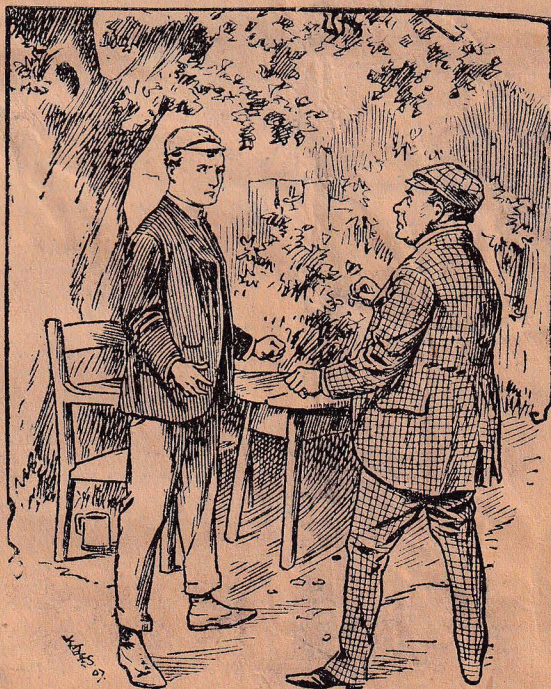
And with that last remark, the junior fled, with the senior in hot pursuit.

There was a sudden concussion and a yell.

A fellow came out of one of the Sixth-form studies as Mulberry raced past the door, and there was a collision at once.

Mulberry staggered back, and brought up against the opposite wall, while Arthur Courtney sat down on the little mat outside the door.

"You silly ass," he gasped. "What do you mean by bolt-



"Now I'm going," he said. "If you see me again, don't speak to me. If you do, I shall probably knock you down. Good afternoon!"

You Know Your Friends Would Be Pleased With This Paper If They Saw It.

ing along the passage like a howling maniac. Eh? You silly ass."

"Sorry," gasped Mulberry.

"I should think you were."

"It's all the fault of that young fiend of a cousin of yours," said Mulberry, viciously. "I'll break his neck."

"Hallo! what has young Clive been doing, then?" said Courtney, as he rose to his feet. "You have been down on him ever since he came to Northcote, Mulberry."

"Haven't I had reason, confound you?"

"No, you haven't," said Arthur Courtney, quietly. "Clive Russell got me out of that scrape with Joliffe at the Blue Lion, and out of your clutches too, for the matter of that, and you have never forgiven him for it."

"That's an old story now."

"Yes, but you haven't forgotten it, and that's why your down on him, Mulberry."

"Rot."

"And I may as well say out plainly, Mulberry, that if you don't let him alone you'll have a quarrel with me on your hands," said Arthur Courtney.

And with that he walked away.

Mulberry scowled after him savagely.

"You carry your head pretty high, now," he snarled. "Wait a little, my friend, and perhaps I may bring it down a little lower."

And Mulberry, limping a little, for the collision had hurt him, returned to his study. Arthur Courtney left the building, and overtook Clive Russell in the quadrangle.

The cousins had not pulled very well together when Clive first came to Northcote.

But now they were very good friends.

Clive had been the means of extricating Courtney of the Sixth from the clutches of a gang of rascals in the village of Northbank, a set of betting and gambling blackguards into whose delightful society Mulberry had introduced him.

Courtney had made a pretty good start on the road to ruin, and he owed it to Clive that he had been able to retrace his steps.

He had never forgotten it.

Clive fagged for his cousin now, and he had an easier time of it than probably any other fag at Northcote.

Courtney's hand dropped on his shoulder, and the junior looked up at him with a smile.

"More trouble with Mulberry, I see," Courtney said.

"Can't be helped," said Clive. "He's lost his fag, and wanted me to fag for him, just as I was going down to cricket practice."

"And you wouldn't?"

"Rather not."

"Well, I don't know that I can back you up in sticking out against a member of the Sixth," said Courtney.

"Still, Mulberry had no right to fag you. But I should give him a wide berth in future if I could Clivey. You'll get a bad name among the seniors by defying one of the Sixth, even if you are quite within your rights."

"I'll be careful."

Courtney strode on, and passed out of the gates of Northcote.

Clive Russell went down to the junior cricket ground, where most of the Fourth Form cricketers were at practice.

Albert Phipps, the missing fag, was there.

Phipps was in the Fourth Form, and he was a big fellow for his age, and as a matter of fact ought to have been in the Fifth Form long ago.

Laziness more than anything else kept him back, and perhaps he shared the view of the gentleman of ancient times, who would rather have been first in a village than second in Rome.

In the Fifth Form Phipps would have been a nobody.

In the Fourth he was monarch of all he surveyed.

Or, to be more strictly accurate, he had been monarch of all he surveyed until the arrival of the new boy at Northcote.

There was only one other boy, till Clive came, in the Fourth, who could have put up anything like a fight against the lanky, over-grown Phipps, and that was Frank Melton. But Frank was too careless to think of taking the trouble to oppose Phipps. So long as the bully of the Fourth let him alone, Frank was content: and Phipps was careful to do that.

Phipps ruled in the Fourth by his size and strength, and he

had even gone to the length of fagging some of the smaller Lower Fourth boys, just as if he were a senior.

They had writhed and submitted; till Clive appeared.

Then there came a change.

In a fight in the dormitory Clive had licked Phipps, and compelled him to take up a rather less lordly position.

And, with Clive at their head, the Lower Fourth for the first time ventured to stand on their rights against the Upper, and a split in the form was the result.

Clive was captain of the Lower Fourth, and he was very scrupulous to resist every encroachment from Phipps and his set, and the result was a series of rows which added to the liveliness of life at Northcote.

The latest development of Fourth Form politics was a challenge issued by Clive to the Upper Fourth, to meet the Lower Fourth eleven on the cricket field, a challenge Phipps had eagerly accepted.

Phipps had not the slightest doubt of his ability to beat the lower form hollow on the cricket field, and if he could do that there could not be a more decided way of putting the youngsters in their place.

Northcote was a cricketing college, and they played the grand old game well there, and the interest they took in it was not merely a passing one, but serious and solemn.

If Phipps' eleven beat Clive at the good old game, the prestige of the Upper Fourth would be re-established, and it had been rather tottering of late.

And a certain Saturday having been fixed for the match, the juniors were hard at practice in all their leisure time to fit themselves for the match.

That was one reason why Clive had been determined not to miss his practice that sunny afternoon, which happened to be a half-holiday at Northcote.

Phipps and the Upper Fourth eleven were just going out to practice. Phipps looked at Clive with a superior smile.

"Hallo! you kids going to the nets?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You think you've got a chance in the match, I suppose?"

"Yes, we think so," said Clive, cheerfully. "We're going to give you a licking, you know. You want one, to take some of the side out of you. In fact, you've been asking for a licking for a long time."

"We'll take all you can give us," said Phipps, disdainfully, and he turned his back on Clive, to follow his companions on the field.

Clive made a movement and shoved against him.

Phipps turned round and pushed him off.

"You clumsy ass!"

"Sorry, Phippy."

Phippy scowled, and went on. A yell of laughter followed him. Clive had, in shoving against him, stuck a hook into his flannel shirt, and to the hook was attached a small square of cardboard, which bore the familiar inscription, "Please kick me."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Fat Stephens, generally known as the Porpoise, "what's that? Why, certainly."

Phipps gave a yell as Stevens planted a kick behind him.

He turned like lightning.

"Stevens! What did you do that for?"

"Well, you asked for it."

"I—oh!"

Another lad had caught sight of the placard, and he promptly obeyed the wish it expressed.

Phipps staggered forward.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Frank Melton, of the Lower Fourth "Well, I always knew you deserved kicking Phippy, but I never expected you to ask for it. But here you are."

And his boot clumped on poor Phipps.

The astounded junior gave a yell.

He had not the faintest idea of the placard Clive had affixed to the back of his cricketing shirt, and he could only imagine that the boys round him had suddenly gone demented.

"I say—I—"

He whirled round towards Frank.

Green, the prefect, was passing, and he saw the placard and grinned.

"Why certainly," he exclaimed.

He gave a drive with his boot that sent Phipps staggering into Frank Melton's arms.

"Hallo!" said Frank, "this is very sudden, Phippy. I didn't know you were so fond of me."

Phipps had caught him round the neck for support, and it really looked like a most affectionate embrace.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Green.
 Phipps tore himself away from Frank.
 "What did you do that for, Green?"
 "You shouldn't wear a placard asking for it if you don't want it," said Green, walking away.
 Then Phipps understood.
 His hand went up behind his back to find the offending placard, and he seized it and dragged it off.
 "Who put that there?" he yelled.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Who stuck that thing on my back?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Phipps looked strongly inclined to run "amok" among the grinning juniors.
 "Who was it?"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Never mind who it was; come down to the nets."

Clive Russell was already on the Lower Fourth pitch, and the other Lower Fourth boys were following him.

Phipps had a strong suspicion as to who was the guilty party, but the moment was not propitious for vengeance, and so he sullenly went to the cricket practice.

But this was one more item in the account he owed Clive Russell, an account he meant to pay off at in full at the first opportunity.

MR. JOLIFFE TRIES IT ON.

"Master Courtney!"
 Arthur Courtney stopped.
 He was striding along the shady lane from the school to the village of Northbank, when a fat, oily-faced man stepped from the hedge, and saluted him.

Arthur Courtney had to stop, for the fat gentleman was directly in his path, and it was impossible to pass on without pushing him aside.

But Arthur's expression was not a pleasant one.
 "Well, Mr. Joliffe," he said, coldly. "What do you want with me?"

The landlord of the Blue Lion looked pathetic.
 "I only want to speak to you, Master Courtney."
 "Well, go on, there's no law against that that I know of," said the Sixth-former of Northcote. "Only buck up; I'm in rather a hurry."

"You haven't been down to see me for a long time, Master Courtney."

"Didn't Mulberry tell you what I told him?"
 "I don't know. What was it?"
 "That I was going to cut all that sort of thing," said Courtney, steadily. "Breaking bounds of a night, smoking and gambling, and betting on races, and all that kind of no class rot."

"You don't mean it, Master Courtney."
 "Yes, I do."
 "What have I done——?"

"You've nearly got me expelled from Northcote, as a matter of fact," said Courtney. "That sort of thing was bound to come out in the long run. I'm glad I've done with it for good. And now good afternoon, Mr. Joliffe."

"Just a minute, Master Courtney," said Mr. Joliffe, with a rather ugly look in his little round eyes. "Just a minute. I've got something more to say to you."

"Oh! go on, then."
 "There is a little note of yours—an I.O.U.——"

"What do you mean?" said Courtney, hotly. "I settled up with you to the last penny."

Mr. Joliffe shook his head.
 "There was that little paper overlooked, Master Courtney."

"I don't believe it."
 "It's only a small matter; just thirty shillings, and——"

"Look here, Joliffe, there isn't anything of the kind. I settled right up, and you know it as well as I do."
 "I suppose you're not going to deny you're own writing," said Joliffe, sullenly.

"No, but——"
 "I'll show the paper to you, if that's what you want."
 "Have you got it with you?"

"No, but it won't take a minute to step into the Blue Lion." Mr. Joliffe indicated the path through the field behind him. "It won't take a minute, Master Courtney, and you can wait in the garden if you like while I get the paper, if you won't enter my 'ouse. I don't know what I've done to offend you, but I ain't a man to force my acquaintance where its not wanted."

Courtney was a little touched.
 "It isn't that," he said, hastily. "I realised that I was playing the giddy ox, that was all, and I pulled up short."

"Ah! I thought there was something else in it."
 "What else could there be?"

"That young cousin of yours; he didn't approve of your coming to see me.——"

The cunning Mr. Joliffe had followed the right tack.
 Courtney flushed angrily.
 "What do you mean? Do you think I care a jot for the approval of a kid in the Fourth Form?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no, no, Master Courtney, I know you're too independent a young gentleman for that," said Mr. Joliffe, "only I know he had made up his mind to stop you coming, and——"

"What rot!"
 "I shouldn't like to make any trouble between you, as I daresay he might cause you some trouble at home if you went against him.——"

"Don't be an ass, Joliffe. Do you think that kid is my father-confessor?" said Courtney, hotly. "I should do just as I like without consulting a junior, I assure you."

Mr. Joliffe nodded, but his face expressed a kind of incredulity that got Courtney's back up at once.

"Well, about that I.O.U.," he said. "It's all rot, you know Joliffe, but if the paper's mine I'll pay the money, of course."
 "Well, just let me get it and show it to you."
 "All right!"

Mr. Joliffe turned and strode along the path across the field which led to the garden of the Blue Lion. Courtney, after a moment's hesitation, followed him. There could be no harm, he thought, in just waiting in the shady inn garden while the landlord fetched the paper, and besides the imputation that he allowed his young cousin to dictate to him had made him angry and annoyed.

Mr. Joliffe opened the gate by the river, which many a time—and not so long ago—Arthur Courtney had himself used—and they passed into the shady old garden, which was very cool and pleasant that warm summer afternoon.

"Just sit down a minute," said Mr. Joliffe, with eager hospitality. "Will you have something to drink?"

"No, thanks," said Courtney, shortly.
 "It's very warm," hinted Mr. Joliffe.
 "That's all right."

"Just a ginger pop, Master Courtney, to show there's no ill-feeling," urged Mr. Joliffe.

"Oh! very well, then."
 And a ginger pop was brought to Courtney, and he consumed it under the shady trees, while the landlord went into the inn.

"Hallo, Master Arthur!"
 Courtney looked up.

A little man dressed in rusty black, with a very red nose, had come through the trees. He dropped into the seat near Courtney. He was one of the set which made the Blue Lion their headquarters, and Courtney had known him well. He seemed destined to renew all his old acquaintances this day.

"Well, this do seem like old times," said Mr. Gunn. "I thought we wasn't never going to see you again, Master Courtney. I'm glad to see you in the old spot."

"I've not come here," said Courtney, awkwardly, "that is—I've only just dropped in for a moment to say to Mr. Joliffe, and I'm just going."

Mr. Gunn winked.
 "Oh! yes, I understand."
 "I'm telling you the truth, confound you!" exclaimed Courtney, half-rising. "By Jove, I'll go now, without waiting for Joliffe."

"Don't be in a hurry, Master Courtney. I didn't mean to offend you," said Mr. Gunn, pacifically. "Of course, I believe you. I know you mustn't come here now, now I think of it."

"What do you mean by mustn't come?"
 "Oh, I know all about it, and I don't blame you, either, if young Russell has got a pull over you in any way. He——"

"What has Russell got to do with it?"
 "Oh! nothing, nothing."
 "Look here, Gunn——"

"Never mind. I say, I've got some good news if you care to hear it, Master Courtney."

Mr. Gunn had a sporting paper in his hand, and a telegraph form. Courtney looked at them curiously.

"Good news?" he repeated.

"Yes. You remember Black John, who won the Guineas?"

"Yes," said Courtney, with growing interest.

"Well, Black John has been entered for the Wessex Plate," said Mr. Gunn, in a low voice, as of one importing a deep secret, "and no one knows it."

"How's that?"

"The owner has changed his name. You see, he was bought up after the Guineas, and he went out of racing for a time. He was ill, you see. Then his owner re-christened him, and ran him under his new name in some little race-meetings in a corner of the world nobody ever gets any news from. Then he entered him for the Wessex as bold as brass, and nobody knows that Dandy Jim is in reality Black John, the winner."

"And what's the game?"

"Why, the favourite for the Wessex is Indian Prince, and people are plumping heavy on him, because he's not supposed to have an equal, or anything like it, among the entries for the race."

"I see."

"You can get five or six to one against Dandy Jim, otherwise Black John," said Mr. Gunn, with a smile of satisfaction. "I'm in the know, through a fellow in the owner's stable bein' a friend of mine. I've put on a tidy little sum, and I expect to make four hundred pounds over it, Master Courtney, and without an atom of risk. What do you think of that for a bit of news?"

Courtney's eyes glistened.

"If you liked," went on Mr. Gunn. "I would—but of course, you don't do that kind of thing now. I'm sorry."

And he dropped the subject, and opened the sporting paper.

"What were you going to say?" said Courtney.

"Eh?" said Mr. Gunn, looking up from his paper.

"You were saying something."

"Oh! about Black John. Only it's a dead cert for him."

"You were saying, if I liked—"

Mr. Gunn laid down the paper again.

There was a twinkle in his eyes: he knew that he had his victim now.

"If you liked, I could win a bit for you," he said. "Only you don't bet, I've heard, owing to that young cousin of yours preaching to you. I'm—"

"Leave my cousin out of it," said Courtney, sharply.

"Willin', but he won't leave himself out."

"I suppose I am not under the thumb of a kid like that."

"Oh, of course not, of course not."

"Look here, Gunn, is this a fact about Black John?"

"A dead cert."

"Then he's absolutely certain to romp home.?"

"Quite."

"It ought to be easy to get a good thing out of that."

"Four hundred is my figure," said Mr. Gunn, confidently.

"Why don't you plump more on even than that, if it's so certain?"

"Because I've got to the end of my tether," said Mr. Gunn, with a sigh. "I've had to strain my credit to raise the cash for that."

"I see. Wouldn't Joliffe lend you some?"

"Joliffe doesn't know the wheeze."

"Aren't you going to put him on it?"

"Not much. I've told you in confidence. Not a word, mind."

"Certainly not, but—"

"Joliffe would start shoving too much on the boss, and make people suspicious," said Mr. Gunn. "He'd tell his friends, too. No, this is a nice little thing I am keeping for myself, but I could put in a few pounds for you, if you liked."

Mr. Gunn spoke very lightly of a few pounds.

Courtney hardly like to confess that he had only a few shillings in his possession.

"It seems a certain thing," he remarked.

"Dead certain."

"It's a pity to let it pass."

"Well, don't let it pass. Shove a few quid on it. I'll see to it for you."

"I—I haven't the money," said Courtney, shamefacedly.

"Well, a single sov would bring you back five the day after the race," said Mr. Gunn.

"I—I haven't more than five bob at present."

Mr. Gunn smiled.

"I'm afraid we couldn't do anything with that," he said.

"Isn't there anybody you could borrow a quid or two off, till the day after the race?"

"I—I don't know—only—only Joliffe."

Mr. Gunn looked alarmed.

"Look here, you can borrow off Joliffe if you like, but don't tell him the wheeze. That's a dead secret between you and me."

"Oh! of course, that's understood."

"I dessay Joliffe would lend you the money. He seems to have a fondness for you, Master Courtney."

"I think I'll ask him."

"Here he comes. Mind, not a word about the boss."

"Righto!"

Mr. Joliffe came through the trees. He was looking worried.

"I can't find that there paper," he said. "I daresay you was right, Master Courtney, and I made a mistake. If I come on it I'll let you know. I'm sorry I gave you the trouble of coming here for nothing, especially as it might get you into trouble if your cousin knew."

"Oh, hang my cousin!"

"Well, good afternoon, Master Courtney; I won't keep you," said Mr. Joliffe.

He did not appear at all anxious to detain his visitor.

Perhaps he had been listening, behind the trees, to Courtney's conversation with Mr. Gunn.

Courtney hesitated.

"I say, Joliffe—"

"Anything I can do for you?" asked Mr. Joliffe.

"Yes, I—I—"

"Out with it, Master Courtney; you know you've got a friend in Tom Joliffe, if he can do anything to help you."

"Could you lend me a fiver?"

Courtney's face was very red.

His good resolutions were all gone now; his whole anxiety was as to whether Mr. Joliffe would comply with his request or not. Mr. Gunn was reading the paper and did not seem to pay any heed to them.

Joliffe looked at Courtney.

"Arter the way I've been treated," he said, "some people would say no. Some people would say no, and be hanged to you. Tom Joliffe ain't that sort. He can be a true pal, even if he's forgotten and despised sometimes."

"I say, Joliffe—I really—"

"Not a word," said the generous Mr. Joliffe, with a wave of the hand. "I say I don't bear no malice, and besides, I knows you want your own master. Here's the fiver, and the heart of Tom Joliffe with it."

And with this touching speech Mr. Joliffe drew a crisp banknote from his waistcoat pocket and passed it to Courtney.

The Sixth-former of Northcote received it eagerly.

"Thanks, Joliffe. You're a jolly good fellow."

"Always willin' to oblige a pal," said Mr. Joliffe, generously.

"Don't mention it."

"But I say, I'm awfully grateful—"

"Not at all. Just give me your I.O.U. for the amount, that's all, and not a penny of interest, mind. Not a penny. Not a farthing."

"Oh! I don't see that, Joliffe. I ought to make the I.O.U. for five pound ten."

"I won't have it. This is a friendly transaction between us as pals. You want a fiver, I dessay just to get some things for your cricket playing." Courtney coloured a little, but he did not correct the misapprehension of Mr. Joliffe. "Well, I'm the pal to stand by you. Not a farthing interest."

"Well, that's very generous of you, Joliffe."

Paper and ink were procured, and Courtney wrote out the I.O.U.

Mr. Joliffe blotted it, and placed it in his pocket book.

"That's all right," he said. "Hallo, drat that bell! I'm wanted." He shook hands with Courtney. "Goodbye, Master Courtney, and I hope you'll give me a look in sometimes, for old time's sake."

And he went into the inn.

Courtney had not heard the bell, but he was glad to see the last of his effusive friend. It left him free to finish his negotiations with Mr. Gunn.

Gunn looked up with a grin.

"You did that well?" he said. "How much do you want to put on Dandy Jim, *alias* Black John."

"The fiver."

"Hand it over, then, and I'll put it on for you, and give you a receipt for it."

The five-pound note changed hands.

"I say, there's no mistake about the horse, is there?" said Courtney, nervously, "I'm depending on the winnings to pay Joliffe back next week."

"I've got my information direct from the stable. The only doubt is whether I can get you four or five against the boss. That will mean either twenty or twenty-five pounds the day after the race. If I can get five to one, shall I put it on at four?"

"Yes, yes, certainly."
"Good!"

Courtney thanked Mr. Gunn, and shook hands with him, and left the garden. He went down the lane with mingled feelings in his breast.

He had broken his resolutions.

He had resumed something like his old footing at the Blue Lion.

But the hint that he was under the thumb of his young cousin made him feel this less than he would otherwise have done; instead of feeling remorseful he felt defiant.

And the prospect of possessing such a sum of twenty or twenty-five pounds was enticing.

He never had so much money at once in his life before. He thought of what he could do with it.

He would give a couple of pounds to Gunn for his invaluable tip, and he would have a completely new cricket rig-out. He would contribute a couple of pounds over and above his regular contribution to the Sixth Form Cricket Club, which was in need of funds. He would give a feed in his study to his friends, with the best that money could buy.

It would be awfully jolly to have a twenty-pound note to "blue."

While these rosy anticipations filled the mind of Arthur Courtney, Mr. Joliffe and his friend were talking in the inn garden.

"You may as well 'and over that fiver to me, Gunn," said Mr. Joliffe, and Mr. Gunn parted with it with a reluctant look. "He swallowed the yarn whole, didn't he?"

"He did, rather," grinned Mr. Gunn.

And honest Tom Joliffe chuckled.

"There's five bob for you, Gunn, for your trouble, and a good drink if you'll come into the bar," said Mr. Joliffe. Gunn rose with alacrity. "I may get the money from the kid next week, and I may not. Anyway five bob is good pay for half-an-hour's talking."

"Oh! I'm satisfied," said Mr. Gunn, slipping the five shillings into his pocket. "It was a funny joke to me, and I've enjoyed it."

"I guessed as how his new attitood wouldn't last long if he saw a chance of making a scoop," said Mr. Joliffe. "I know these good resolutions. I've been there myself, I have, in my young days. They won't wash. Why, as soon as he saw a chance of getting hold of some money without earning it, wasn't he eager?"

"Like a bird," said Mr. Gunn.

"And that wheeze you told him about has been worked on the racecourse afore now," said Mr. Joliffe. "But I never heard anybody call it honest. But that hasn't occurred to our high-principled young gentleman, Gunn."

"Not a bit of it."

"He only thought of making hay while the sun shines."

"That's it."

"Well," said Mr. Joliffe. "We'll make the hay instead, that's the only difference. There's a bit of a surprise in store for that young gentleman."

By which it will be seen that Arthur Courtney's speculation was not likely to turn out a very profitable one, and that he wasn't likely to gain much by throwing his good resolutions to the winds: an act which might have occurred to himself had he been a little less eager to profit by that wonderful "dead cert."

CLIVE CATCHES IT—HOT!

Clive Russell came up the stairs whistling, with his bat under his arm. As he passed the door of George Mulberry's study, it opened, and the latter came out.

Clive quickened his pace, but it was too late.

The grip of the senior was upon his shoulder.

"Stop a minute, Russell."

"Certainly, Mulberry," said Clive, quite meek now that escape was cut off. "Can I do anything for you? Always willing to oblige you know."

Mulberry grinned.

"Yes, I daresay you are, when I've got hold of you, you whelp."

"I say, I want to go to tea——"

"You can go on wanting," said Mulberry. "Come into my study."

"But——"

"Come in, you young brute."

Mulberry jerked the junior into his study.

He slammed the door, and then stood between it and Clive. The Fourth-former watched him warily, trying to conceal his uneasiness. He had an idea that he was going to have a rough time of it, before he left that study again.

"Now, you whelp, what did you mean by bolting when I called you this afternoon?" demanded Mulberry, threateningly.

"I meant to go to the cricket practice," said Clive, innocently.

"Look here——"

"Can't."

"Can't! What do you mean? Why can't you?"

"Your face worries me."

Mulberry snapped his teeth.

"I've been getting fed up with your cheek lately," he said.

"I think I've had enough of it to last me for some time, Clive Russell. There's too much of you."

"Sorry," said Clive, cheerfully, "I should say the same about you, only it wouldn't be polite, and I've been well brought up."

"You rat! I'm going to give you the hiding of your life."

"Now, don't do that, Mulberry. I shan't like it a bit."

"I don't suppose you will." Mulberry took down a little dog-whip. "Now, look out for squalls, you rat. I'll teach you to cheek the Sixth."

"I don't want teaching," said Clive. "I can do it all right."

Mulberry grunted.

He was no match for Clive at a war of words, but he was more than a match for him in other ways, and he had the youngster all to himself now.

He made a dash at the junior, slashing with the whip.

Clive dodged round the table.

Mulberry sprang back to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. The escape of the junior being thus cut off, he chased him round the room.

He ran him down in a corner.

"Now, you rat—oh! oh! oh!"

He had forgotten that Clive, fresh in from the cricket field, had his bat with him, and had the pluck to use that most effective weapon.

Mulberry had got in one slash that made Clive wriggle, and then the bat clumped against his shins, and he gave a roar of pain.

"Sorry," said Clive, "I hope that didn't hurt you, Mulberry. I hope that won't hurt you either, my dear old chap."

And he gave Mulberry a drive in the chest with the bat that sent him reeling against the study table.

The table was not built to stand a shock like that.

It collapsed, and Mulberry collapsed with it, and the senior sat down in the midst of books and papers and pens and spilt ink, looking somewhat dazed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Clive.

He made a rush for the door.

It was locked, but he knew that if Mulberry got hold of him after what he had done, there would be a terrific thrashing for him, and so he was not inclined to stand upon ceremony.

His bat crashed against the lock.

It was a terrific swipe, and the bat was deeply dented, and the lock smashed to fragments.

The door flew open.

Mulberry had just staggered to his feet.

"Stop, you young demon!"

"Can't! I'm in a hurry."

And Clive bolted.

Mulberry dashed after him.

And as ill-luck would have it, another Sixth-former was coming down the passage and he happened to be Croft, a crony of Mulberry's.

"Stop him!" yelled Mulberry.

Croft stood in the middle of the passage and extended his arm to cut off Clive's escape.

He never thought that a junior would have the nerve to charge a Sixth-former.

But he did not know Clive Russell,

Clive was desperate.

He rushed, on, and butted the senior full in the chest, and Croft went flying.

He plumped down with his back on the hard linoleum with what novelists call a sickening thud, and lay there dazed.

Clive scrambled over him, with Mulberry in hot pursuit.

He had lost time in butting Croft, and he was feeling somewhat dizzy from the concussion.

A moment or two more, and the Sixth-former had overtaken him.

His grasp fell upon the junior's shoulder.

Clive swung the bat round desperately, and caught Mulberry a fearful whack, and the senior yelled, but he did not let go.

He wrenched the bat from the junior's hand, and hurled it away, and then he began to give the junior a thrashing that was a record-breaker in Clive's experience.

Clive struggled desperately, but he was a child in the hands of the senior.

"Hallo, hallo! what's the row?"

It was Arthur Courtney's voice.

The Sixth-former was coming along the passage.

"Arthur! Arthur!"

Clive shouted his cousin's name.

Courtney came quickly to the spot.

"Hallo! Clive!"

Mulberry glared at him. He ceased to thrash Clive as the junior's cousin came up. Clive tore himself free, and stood looking very red and dishevelled.

In spite of his courage, the tears had started to his eyes.

"What's all this about?" said Courtney.

"The bullying brute!" gasped Clive. "It's all because I would not fag for him this afternoon."

"Well, you ought to do what you're told," said Courtney.

Clive stared at him.

This cutting tone was a new thing from his cousin, and it reminded him of his first days at Northcote, when he had been on ill terms with Arthur.

"Arthur!"

"It's no good complaining to me. I'm not going to back you up in cheeking the Sixth," said Courtney, coldly. "Your too cheeky by half."

"Look at the mess he's put my study into," said Mulberry. "He's wrecked it."

"Yes, he's cheeky, and wants a lesson."

"Arthur! I——"

"You've been about telling people that I'm under your thumb," said Courtney. "I'm getting chipped about having a grandmother in the Fourth Form."

"I've never said——"

"Well, you put on too much side for a kid. Cut along!"

Clive, his feelings deeply hurt, too deeply for words, turned and went up the passage.

His eyes were blinded with tears; less on account of the thrashing Mulberry had given him, than the cruelty of his cousin.

For in spite of the flaws in Arthur Courtney's character, which he had discovered since he had been at Northcote, he still admired and respected the big, handsome Sixth-former, and looked up to him as his ideal of British boyhood.

He went to his study, which he shared with Frank Melton.

Frank was doing some imposition, but he left it as soon as Clive came into the study, and he saw the look on his face.

"What's the matter, old chap?"

"N-a-nothing."

"That brute Mulberry been ragging you?"

"Ye-es."

"There's more than that. Out with it."

There were few secrets between the chums of the Fourth.

Clive was silent for a few moments, while he controlled the emotion in his breast, and then he told his tale.

Frank listened attentively.

"I suppose you know what that means," he said.

"Courtney didn't want me to come to Northcote," said Clive. "But I thought he had grown to like me pretty well. Now he seems to have turned against me."

"Yes, and the reason's plain enough."

"Is it?"

"Certainly. You helped him out of a rotten scrape, and then he threw over Mulberry and his lot. Of course they've been at it ever since to get him back again. Courtney's got money, and they want it, you see; and there's other reasons. They've been filling him up that he's under your thumb, and of course that's an awful dig at the dignity of a

lordly Sixth-former, to be supposed to be under the influence of a junior."

Clive nodded.

"I see."

"Of course, Courtney's a silly ass——"

"He's nothing of the kind," said Clive, indignantly. "I——"

"Yes, he is, you're another, to care two straws about him," said Frank, unceremoniously.

"He's my cousin."

"Well, you're his, but he doesn't seem to prize you much."

"Look here——"

"Rats! I'm not going to argue with you. You're a loyal fool, Clive."

Clive laughed.

"You can say what you like about me."

"Why don't you mind your own business and let Arthur Courtney go to the devil in his own way?" demanded Frank. "He's determined to go there."

"I'd get him out of the hands of those cads if I could."

"Small thanks you'll get."

"I don't want any thanks."

"Oh, you're an obstinate mule," said Frank.

"Besides," said Clive, eagerly. "Mulberry's a rotten cad, and it would be one up against him if we could spoil his little game, wouldn't it?"

"Yes my hat! there's something in that."

"Let's see what we can do, Frank. I'd like to show up Mulberry."

"It's a go! Courtney isn't worth saving——"

"Look here——"

"And it's no good trying to save a chap who's determined to go to the dogs——"

"I——"

"But we'll put a spoke in Mulberry's wheel if we can" agreed Frank, "and that's a compact."

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!

Clive Russell had ample opportunity of observing the change in his cousin during the next few days.

Arthur Courtney was indeed altered.

Freed from the influence of his evil associates, he had become once more a bright, healthy, hearty schoolboy.

But now the curse of the gambler was upon him again.

Reflection brought the knowledge that, in spite of Mr. Gunn's assurances, there was at least a possibility of Dandy Jim, alias Black John, losing the Wessex race.

And if he lost, Courtney was indebted to Mr. Joliffe to the tune of five pounds, without the slightest prospect of being able to pay the debt.

And the worry on his mind changed him.

Even if the winning of Dandy Jim had been absolutely certain, still the fever of excitement inseparable from racing would have disturbed and worried Courtney.

But there was a doubt.

It was a doubt that grew stronger with the passing days.

For Courtney watched the sporting papers closely, and he found that Indian Prince was still the favourite for the race, and that nobody had the slightest suspicion that there was a "dark horse" among the entries.

In fact, Dandy Jim was more than once referred to as a rank outsider, and doubts were expressed as to whether he would run at all.

And the thought came into Courtney's mind that Mr. Gunn might have made a ghastly mistake.

If Dandy Jim was Black John under another name, certainly he would romp home and beat all his competitors.

But if he were not?

If Gunn was mistaken, and Dandy Jim was simply Dandy Jim, a rank outsider with hardly the remotest chance of winning the race?

There was a terrible possibility.

For it not only put an end to the rosy anticipations of Courtney, as to what he would do with his winnings, but it left him to wonder where the five pounds was to come from to repay Mr. Joliffe for the loan.

He paid several more visits to the Blue Lion in his anxiety.

He met Mr. Gunn there once, and that gentleman assured him that his information was perfectly correct, and that the money had been put on at five to one.

"On Friday next," said Mr. Gunn, confidently. "You'll have twenty-five quid of your own, and you can give me what you like for putting you up to the tip."

But after that interview, Mr. Gunn was not seen again. Courtney asked Joliffe about him, and learned that he was down on the Wessex racecourse, doing a little business there, and wasn't expected back in Northbank for some time.

"What do you want with him, Master Courtney?" asked Joliffe. "If you want a little money put on a horse, I can manage it for you."

"Oh! no, thanks," said Courtney. "It wouldn't be any trouble."
"No, no. By the way, you know all about the Wessex Plate, Mr. Joliffe."

"Well, rather," said Mr. Joliffe. "What's going to win?"
"Indian Prince."
"The favourite?"
"That's it."
"What about Dandy Jim?"
"No good."
"I've heard that he has a chance."
"Don't know where you could have heard it, then," said Mr. Joliffe. "He hasn't an earthly. I shouldn't be surprised if he don't run at all."

Courtney's heart sank. But then he reflected that Mr. Joliffe wasn't in the secret, and so, of course, would not know what a chance Dandy Jim had.

He could say no more without giving away his secret, and he little dreamed that the astute Mr. Joliffe already knew as much about it as he could have told him.

The visits to the Blue Lion, paid on account of the race in which Courtney was so deeply interested, were not without result.

It was easy—only too fatally easy—for Courtney to fall into all his old habits there.

He easily dropped into the way of taking something stronger than ginger pop, and then he would take a hand at cards.

Indeed, the latter downward step was the result of a brilliant idea that occurred to him.

If he could win the five pounds before Friday, he would have the money all ready to pay to Mr. Joliffe, in case the race was lost.

And so he started to play nap with men who had been experienced cheats before he was born, in the hope of winning their money.

The result it was very easy to foresee, though Courtney did not foresee it.

He lost all the money he had, as well as a sovereign he borrowed from Mulberry; by that loan getting perforce on quite the old terms with his former evil genius.

And the fast-approaching day for settling found him worse off than ever.

In his doubt and dismay, he confided to Mulberry the circumstances of the case, and asked his advice.

"Oh! I daresay it will be all right," said Mulberry. "Gunn's information is usually correct."

Courtney was relieved.

"Then you think the horse is bound to win?"
"Oh! I don't know."

"But if Gunn is right, and Dandy Jim is really Black John—"

"I fancy the geegee is off his form. He was ill, you know, and if he runs, he may not put up the kind of race you expect of him on his old form."

"I—I never thought of that."
"Still, it may turn out all right. I hope it will."

"If it doesn't—"
"Really, you'll lose your fiver, but you're too good a sportsman to worry about a bit of a loss every now and then, I suppose."

"What's bothering you, then?"
"I borrowed the tin off Joliffe."

"Jolly cool of you, I must say, considering the way you've treated him lately."

Courtney coloured.

"He's very good-natured."
"He must be," said Mulberry, drily.

"But I've promised the fiver back on Saturday."
"And can't you stump up?"

"Not unless the race is won."
"That's bad. Joliffe will want his money."

"Do you think you could raise it, Mulberry, and I'd let you have it back next term?"

Mulberry laughed.

"You know I'm always stony," he said. "I would if I could, of course, but it's impossible. I'm as poor as a church mouse, and it's a bit of a twist letting you have that sovereign. You promised that for Saturday, you know."

Courtney winced.

"I was thinking Black John would be sure to win."
Mulberry laughed again.

"Well, I hope he will, for I'm devilish short of money, and I was depending upon your keeping your word."

"What a confounded fool I've been!"
"How so?"

"To start this rotten betting again."
"Oh! I don't know. It makes things exciting."

"A little bit too exciting for me."
"Life's short. It ought to be jolly."

"Can't see where the jollity comes in. It's all beastly worry."

"You'll be jolly enough if you win."
"Yes, but shall I win?"

"Well, you can't expect it every time; if everybody won, where would the money come from, and how would the book-makers live?"

And with that conundrum, Mulberry put his hands in his pockets and walked away whistling. Courtney went gloomily to his own quarters.

He found Clive tidying up his study. Courtney was never very tidy, and Clive had enough to do.

Courtney scowled at him.

The knowledge that he had fallen, so far as not to deserve this lad's respect, irritated him against his cousin.

"You can go," he said.

"I haven't quite finished yet, Arthur."
"Oh! get out."

Clive went out quietly, and closed the door.

Courtney flung himself into a chair and tried to think of the bright side of the wretched business, but somehow he could only get the dark side of it into his mind.

If he won, that would be ripping.
But if he lost!

Once more, as upon a previous occasion, Arthur Courtney was making the discovery that the way of the transgressor is hard.

A CAPTURE FROM THE ENEMY!

"Phipps!"

George Mulberry called out the name of the captain of the Upper Fourth as he passed along the passage, and Phipps had no choice but to come into the study.

"Yes, Mulberry?"

"I want you to go down to the village for me."
"Oh! I say, Mulberry, I'm just going out to cricket practice, and—"

Mulberry seized him by the ear.

"Eh! What's that you say?"
"I'm just going down to the cricket."

Mulberry twisted the junior's ear.

"Now, then, don't you want to go to Northbank for me?"
"I—no—yes—yes."

Mulberry gave him another twist.

"Sure?"
"Oh, yes. Yes! Yes!"

The bully of the Sixth released him.

"Very well, then; come in here; I want you to take a note."
Phipps sullenly obeyed.

"Is it to the Blue Lion again?" he said. "You know I've no business to go there, Mulberry."

"Do you want your other ear twisted?"
"N—no!"

"Then shut up."
Mulberry uttered an oath the next moment.

A shadow had fallen in at the door, and he knew that someone had just passed, and had in all probability heard the fag's incautious words.

He sprang to the door.

A boot was vanishing round a corner, showing that the passer, whoever he was, had broken into a rapid run.

Mulberry ground his teeth.

It was certainly not a master; he had that grain of comfort. But it was not comforting to know that someone, apparently a junior, knew that he was sending his fag with a note to the Blue Lion.

He turned back into the study in a fury.

"You little fool," he snarled. "You see what you've done?"

"I didn't know there was anybody there," said Phipps.

"Didn't you see anybody in the passage as you came along?"

Phipps thought for a moment.

"Yes, Frank Melton was strolling along a minute ago."

"Then it's very likely Melton who heard what you said."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Phipps.

"You little ass! Nice thing it will be if he starts chattering it all over the school."

"Oh! Frank Melton isn't the chap to chatter," said Phipps, "and besides, anyway, you know you ought not to send me to the Blue Lion."

Mulberry made a furious movement towards him.

The fag dodged back.

"Keep your hands off!" he cried, "or I swear I'll go at once to Hilton and tell him that you send me to the Blue Lion."

Mulberry's hand dropped to his side.

Hilton was the captain of Northcote, and heavily down upon any such practices as those favoured by George Mulberry.

A word from the fag to the captain of the school, and Mulberry would have been in the most serious fix of his career.

He glared at the fag.

"You young hound! If you betrayed me——"

"Well, hands off, then."

Mulberry's expression changed.

"Look here, Phipps, there's no need for us to row. You have a pretty good time as my fag, and I back you up in the lower forms."

"I know you do, and I'm willing to do anything for you," said Phipps. "Only just you let my ears alone, that's all. I'm not going to be bullied."

"Oh! bother your ears. You're to take this note to the landlord of the Blue Lion, and wait for an answer."

"Righto!"

Phipps took the note, and left the study. He put on his cap and walked out of the school.

Two pairs of eyes from Study B watched him cross the quadrangle.

"I heard him as plain as possible," said Frank Melton.

"He's taking a note to that cad Joliffe, at the Blue Lion."

"From Mulberry?" said Clive Russell, thoughtfully.

"Yes, from Mulberry."

"I wonder——"

"There he goes, the young rotter."

"I wonder——"

Frank Melton stared at his chum.

"Well, what do you wonder?" he asked.

"I wonder if we should be justified in lifting that note."

said Clive. "I can't help thinking there's something about my cousin in it."

"What a thundering lot you think of your blessed cousin."

"Look here, Frank, it's serious."

"Serious for him, I daresay."

"I saw him going across the field to the Blue Lion the other day."

Frank whistled.

"Lucky for him Hilton or a master didn't see him."

"It proves he's taken up all his old ways again."

"I daresay."

"It's got to be stopped."

"Considering how grateful he's been for your previous efforts, I should think you had had enough of trying to save the brute," said Frank.

"They've put his back up against me," said Clive, "by making out that he's under my dictation. That's all rot."

"Just the sort of rot to go down with a weak-minded booby like Courtney," agreed Frank.

"Look here, Frank, you'll get a thick ear if you call my cousin names."

"Rats! Go on."

"Mulberry and that lot at the Blue Lion are in league to get my cousin into their toils again, aren't they?"

"Yes, that's plain enough to anybody except the silly ass concerned, Courtney himself," Frank assented.

"Well, our game is to get even with Mulberry by spoiling his plans."

"I'm with you there, tooth and toenail."

"Mulberry is the enemy——"

"The deadly foe," agreed Frank.

"When you're at war with the enemy, you waylay their messengers and open their giddy despatches, don't you?" demanded Clive.

"Of course; that's the law of war."

"Then, as declared foes, we're entitled to collar Phipps and pinch that note."

"Righto."

"It may give the rascals away, and perhaps place them in our hands."

"Possibly."

"I don't know how it is they've got hold of Courtney again, for he was very firm for a time, and for a long time he wouldn't even speak to Mulberry."

"Oh! they know how to manage the silly goat."

"They have done it somehow," said Clive, "and I'm going to undo it. You can help me if you like, Frank. We've got to find out how they're doing it first."

"Oh! I'll help you. I don't consider it worth the fag, but I'll do it."

"That's right, then. Come along."

"Where are you going?"

"After Phipps."

"What for?"

"To collar that paper."

"You mean it?"

"You'll see that I do."

"Ha, ha! I'm game! Trot along."

The two juniors hurried from the house. It did not take them long to get out of the precincts of the school and they caught sight of Phipps in the lane.

Mulberry's fag was not hurrying himself.

It was a couple of hours yet to locking-up time, and so he was not in haste, and he was strolling along with his hands in his pockets, taking things easy.

"There he is," said Frank.

"I see the brute. We'll cut along inside the hedge, and come on him from the gap, and have him in our clutches before he knows what's happening."

"Good. But I say——"

"What are you thinking of?"

"Suppose we mask ourselves, and make a regular highway-man business of it," said Frank, with a chuckle. "It's just as well not to let Phipps know just who it is that collars him. I don't want Mulberry on my track, and you don't want to let your cousin know that you're grandmothering him again."

Clive Russell nodded.

"Jolly good wheeze."

"All my wheezes are jolly good, my son."

"But what about the masks? Shall we use our handkerchiefs?"

"Handkerchiefs wouldn't be much good."

"Our caps, then."

"Difficult to fix 'em on, and we want to see, you know."

"Well, what do you suggest, then?"

"Masks would be best."

"Of course they would," said Clive, impatiently. "But masks don't grow on trees."

"I know they don't; if they did, I should be fourpence in pocket this blessed minute," said Frank, producing a couple of Guy Fawkes masks from inside his jacket. "I picked them up as we came out of the study. I had this wheeze in my head, you see. I bought 'em off a pedlar this morning, and nobody's seen 'em yet, and we'll chuck 'em away when this little game is over, so we can't be identified."

"Good."

Clive donned one mask, and Frank Melton the other.

The effect was hideous.

The masks were of the usual kind, of cardboard with openings for sight and respiration, and the coloured front were of an unusually ferocious design.

"Ha, ha, ha!" giggled Frank, as he looked at Clive. "You looked like Charles Peace and Sweeney Todd and Jack the Ripper all rolled in one."

"And you look like an Anarchist or an Italian patriot," retorted Clive. "Let's get along."

They ran swiftly along the inside of the hedge.

In five minutes they were abreast of the leisurely Phipps.

They passed him, and halted in a gap of the hedge, and there waited for him to come up.

Phipps came strolling unsuspectingly by.

With a sudden bound the two juniors were upon him, and Phipps went down on his back in the dust, with the two terrible-looking ruffians sprawling over him.

"Your lunny or your wife," said Clive. "I mean, your money or your wife—that is, your money or your life."
 "Stand and deliver!" roared Frank.
 "How can he stand, fathead, when he's lying down and we're stitting on him."
 "Look here——"
 "Shan't! You dry up. I'm captain of this band."
 "You're not. Who's idea was it?"
 "Lemme gerrup," gasped Phipps.
 "Your money or your gore," shouted Clive. "Hand it over, base caitiff, ere I embrue my dagger in your claret."
 "You silly ass."
 Thus Phipps.
 "Who are you calling a silly ass, caitiff?"
 "You; you're not a highwayman."
 "He smells a rat," chuckled Frank. "We must have given ourselves away somehow, bless if I know how."
 "Lemme gerrup!"

"Why can't you?"
 "He hasn't any."
 "Then knock his head off."
 "Righto!"
 And Frank bumped Phipps' head on the ground. Phipps roared like a bull.
 "Leave off! Give over! Lemme gerrup!"
 "Hand over the document."
 "What document?"
 "The giddy despatches—I mean Mulberry's note."
 "Ah! I know you now; you're Frank Melton."
 "Rats! Chuck out the note."
 "Shan't!"
 Frank bumped his head on the ground again.
 "Leave off! yelled the hapless Phipps. "I'll give you the note."
 "Hand it over, then."



The cane bent and twisted, and was of little use to parry with.

Denver up the note, you miscreant, and you may retain your vile cash."
 "What note?"
 "The note you are taking to the Blue Lion."
 Phipps looked startled.
 "Who the dickens are you?" he exclaimed.
 Although the masks did not make him think the juniors were highwaymen, they effectually disguised the features of the assailants.
 And he could not recognise their voices, for the chums were talking in deep melodramatic voices which made it impossible to guess what their real tones were like.
 "I am Dick Turpin," growled Clive.
 "And I am Jack Sheppard of that ilk," snorted Frank.
 "Liar!"
 "Base, caitiff! You shall die! Dash his brains out against the 'ard igh road," said Clive.
 "Can't."

Phipps felt in his pocket for the note, and handed it over, It was sealed.
 "We can't break the seal," he said. "Its illegal, to say nothing of not playing the game."
 "Soon get out of that difficulty," said Frank. "Phipps shall open it."
 "I shan't," said Phipps.
 "Won't you? We'll see. Drag him through the hedge in case somebody comes along, and then we'll argue with him," said Frank.
 "Righto!"
 Phipps struggled desperately, but he was helpless in the hands of the two, and they yanked him through the hedge in a twinkling.
 He was bumped down into the long grass on the inner side of the hedge, out of sight of anyone who should pass in the lane, and Frank sat on his chest.
 The first yell Phipps gave for help was followed by the

cramming of a handful of earth and grass-roots into his mouth, and after that he spluttered and was silent.

"Will you open the note, Phippy?"

"No, I won't."

"Have you a pin, kid?"

"Yes," said Clive, producing one.

"Stick it into his leg, then."

"Don't," roared Phipps. "I'll open the note."

"Buck up, then."

Phipps tore open the envelope. He had no choice in the matter. Clive picked up the letter, and then he laid it down again.

"I'm blessed if I can do it?" he said.

"Blessed if you can do what?"

"Read a chap's letter."

"Perhaps you're right; but we must know what's in it."

The chums looked at one another seriously.

"There's only one way," said Frank, with perfect gravity.

"Phipps must read it out to us."

"Ripping!"

"I won't," yelled Phipps.

"You'll get perforated with that pin till you do."

"I—I—I—gimme the beastly thing, then."

"Here you are. Every word, mind."

"All right, you beast. I know you're Frank Melton."

"You know too much. I think I shall drown you in that ditch to keep the giddy guilty secret from the madding crowd," said Frank, darkly.

"Oh! shut up rotting, and I'll read the letter."

"Go it, then."

Phipps read the letter aloud. As a matter of fact, he was curious himself to know what Mulberry had said to Joliffe, and this part of the duty imposed upon him by his captors was not really repugnant.

The chums looked at each other expressively as they listened.

The letter ran as follows.

"DEAR JOLIFFE,—I am fearfully hard up. Can you let me have that sovereign per bearer that I asked you for yesterday? If you can't, I am afraid that I shall have to give you away.

"I must have the sov. You know very well that you will make heaps out of C. now that he is in your hands again, and a word from me would spoil it all. It won't pay you to be mean in this matter, Lassure you.

"To be quite plain, I shall tell C. the whole game you and Gunn played between you the other day, unless you stump up that sov. If C. knew that the fiver went straight back into your pocket after he had left, and that there's no relationship between Dandy Jim and Black John, I fancy that your little game would be up in that direction.

"Yours expectantly,

"G. MULBERRY."

"The infernal scoundrels," said Frank.

Clive was white.

"The cads! They ought to be in prison," he said.

"Prison is too good for 'em."

"I shall get into a fearful row over this," growled Phipps.

"Mulberry will be as mad as a hatter."

"Oh! he can't hurt you. Tell him you'll tell Hilton all you've just read," said Frank, cheerfully. "That's sure to keep him off the grass."

Phipps grinned.

"Yes, I may work it that way, Melton."

"Who are you calling Melton? I am Dick Turpin—I mean Jack Sheppard. Silence, catiff. You can take that note to Joliffe if you like, and say nothing about the matter."

"No he can't," said Clive.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm going to keep the note."

"What do you want with it now?"

"I'll tell you afterwards."

"Righto! Phippy, you can take the empty envelope to Joliffe, if you like, or you can go and eat coke. Please yourself."

"Come on, kid."

Clive put the note into an inner pocket.

The chums left Phipps, and went into the lane. Phipps, who was feeling considerably shaken up, followed more slowly. He had an interview with Mulberry before him that was certain to be a painful one.

Frank and Clive raced along the lane towards the school, and out of sight of Phipps took off the masks, and tore them into halves and pitched them into a field.

Then they returned to Northcote.

Frank glanced curiously at Clive as they went in.

"What are you going to do with that note, Clivey?"

"Put it into Courtney's hands."

"He won't like you interfering."

"I shan't see him myself."

"How will you work it?"

"Send it by post."

"Your hand—"

"I'll disguise that."

"Good!"

And ten minutes later the letter was posted in the college pillar-box; and results were to follow the posting of that letter.

ARTHUR COURTNEY MAKES UP HIS MIND.

"My Heaven!"

Arthur Courtney muttered the words with a white face.

He was looking at a list of horses in an evening paper.

It was not easy for a boy at a public school to get the latest information from the racecourse, of course, and Courtney had had to wait till he could get an evening paper to find out the results of the races run that morning.

The Wessex Plate was one of the races in question.

The school porter had obtained the paper for him, and Courtney had hurried off to his study with it, eager to learn the worst—or the best.

He opened the paper at the well-known sporting column; that column so often scanned by eager eyes of foolish readers.

There was the heading.

"Wessex Plate of 200 sovs.

"Indian Prince.

"Green Bough.

"Minstrel Boy."

"My heaven!"

Courtney's brain seemed to reel.

The favourite had won.

And where was Dandy Jim, *alias* Black John, the horse that, according to the veracious Mr. Gunn, was to have romped home and so easily beaten the favourite?"

Where indeed?

He read down the list of "also rans."

There, right at the bottom, was the name he sought.

"Dandy Jim."

The horse had run. His exact place was not defined, but it was about eleventh or twelfth. Gunn's tip was about as good as the tips of most sporting prophets, but Courtney had relied upon his pretended "inside information" with almost childlike faith.

The Sixth-former dropped the paper, and staggered to a chair and sat down.

The race was lost for him!

The winnings were not to come; and he had to pay Mr. Joliffe five pounds on the morrow. Or even if Joliffe were willing to wait, where was the money to come from at any time? His whole term's pocket-money did not amount to so much, and he had spent most of that.

What was he to do?

To ask time—to plead for mercy—to commence over again that old sickening experience. What a fool, what an utter fool, he had been.

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," said Courtney, hoarsely.

The page entered, and placed a letter on the table.

"Letter for you, sir."

He retired, and the Sixth-former glanced at it idly. It was addressed to Arthur Courtney, Esq., Northcote College, and bore the village postmark.

But it was not from Joliffe, for the handwriting on the envelope was strange to him.

He did not trouble to open it.

He was too deeply worried about his present position.

But presently he picked it up, and carelessly slit the envelope and glanced at the contents.

Then his face seemed to turn to stone.

He sat staring at the letter in bewilderment.

A savage gleam leaped to his eyes.

"The hound! Swindled! And Mulberry was in it!"

He sprang to his feet, the letter in his hand, and rushed from the study. Right along the passage he went to Mulberry's study, and kicked the door open.

Mulberry was there. He looked up in a startled way as Courtney burst into the room like a hurricane.

Mulberry was in a worried mood himself.

He had received Phipps' report of the lifting of the letter,

and Phipps had had to confess that it had been taken away by one of his captors.

Mulberry was a cunning rascal, and he was usually prepared for any emergency, but he had never suspected or expected anything like this.

He was quite at a loss.

The letter was gone ; into whose hands he did not know.

If it came to light again in the school it might cause him serious trouble. But it had not yet crossed his mind that it might be in Courtney's hands.

But when Courtney burst into his room, with a crumpled sheet of paper in his hand, Mulberry guessed at once what it was.

He turned pale in spite of his nerve.

"Hullo, Courtney!" he said, with an attempt at casual friendliness. "You quite startled me. What's the hurry?"

"I want to speak to you, George Mulberry."

"Well, here I am. Fire away!"

"I've just learned that Dandy Jim has lost the Wessex Race."

"I'm sorry."

"And I've just had a letter."

"Nothing unusual in that, I suppose."

"There is something a little unusual in the letter."

"Really! You are speaking in enigmas, Courtney."

"I'll read the letter out, and then you'll understand."

"Oh! don't trouble. I——"

"You will listen to me, George Mulberry!"

"I shan't listen if I don't choose," said Mulberry, defiantly, rising from his chair. "You're not going to come into my study and dictate to me, Arthur Courtney."

"You're going to listen to this letter, Mulberry. Take care how you provoke me; my temper isn't any too well under control as it is. You may get hurt."

Mulberry shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you can read the letter if you like."

"I intend to do so."

And Courtney read the letter aloud.

It was, of course, the epistle the chums had taken from Phipps, and which Clive Russell had posted to his cousin. "Dear Joliffe," read Courtney, "I am fearfully hard up. Can you let me have that sovereign per bearer that I asked you for yesterday? If you can't, I'm afraid that I shall have to give you away."

"I must have the sov. You know very well that you will make heaps out of C, now that he is in your hands again, and a word from me would spoil it all. It won't pay you to be mean in this matter, I assure you."

"To be quite plain, I shall tell C. the whole game you and Gunn played between you the other day, unless you stump up that sov. If C. knew that the fiver went straight back into your pocket after he had left, and that there's no relationship between Dandy Jim and Black John, I fancy that your little game would be up in that direction."

"Yours expectantly,

"G. MULBERRY."

"What do you say to that?" asked Courtney, when he had finished.

Mulberry was very pale.

But he was defiant. He knew that what hold he had regained over Courtney was gone now, and it was useless to seek to keep it.

"Nothing," he said.

"I want you to explain a little."

"I don't see why I should. I——"

"I can see why you should, and I will tell you. I am in two minds about taking this letter to Hilton and asking his advice."

Mulberry started.

"You would get yourself into a fearful row."

"I know it, but as for you, you would be kicked out of the college."

Mulberry ground his teeth.

"So you are going to round on me?"

"What right have you to expect any consideration at my hands? You have plotted with these scoundrels behind my back, while you were pretending to be my friend. Now, you have got to answer my questions."

Mulberry was sullenly silent.

"In the first place, Gunn was lying when he said that Dandy Jim was Black John under a new name?"

"I believe so."

"And he was in league with Joliffe over the affair?"

"Of course he was. Anybody but a simple gull would have seen that it was a put-up job."

Courtney winced.

"I suppose I have been a fool. And, of course, it wasn't by chance, as I thought, that Joliffe met me in the lane that afternoon and spoke to me. He was waiting for me. I suppose you had told him that I was going down to the village that afternoon."

"Well, I had mentioned it."

"You cad! And then he lied and got me into his place, and Gunn was there all ready to palm off this lie on me."

Mulberry grinned.

"That's about the size of it."

"And the five pounds I borrowed of Joliffe was never put on the horse at all?"

"Put on the horse! Catch Gunn putting good money on such a rank outsider as Dandy Jim!"

"So the bet was not made?"

"No, of course it wasn't."

"And the banknote was given back to Joliffe."

"Yes. It was all a game. He gave Gunn five bob and a drink for his trouble, and of course he had his banknote back."

Courtney's brows contracted.

"Then, as the bet wasn't made, and he had his banknote back, I don't owe him the money?"

Mulberry laughed.

"Of course you don't."

"Then I shan't pay him."

"He's got your I.O.U."

"He won't get any money out of me that I don't owe."

"Well, he may show you up to the Head if you don't pay. I expect that will be his little game," said Mulberry.

"Will it?" said Courtney, grimly. "We'll see."

The expression on his face alarmed Mulberry.

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to see Joliffe to-morrow morning."

"And then?"

"I shall give him my opinion of him, and tell him I won't pay him a penny, and defy him to speak to the Head," said Courtney, resolutely. "If he does, I'll stick it out. But if I had the money in my hand now I wouldn't pay him; I wouldn't give him a shilling."

"If he makes trouble——"

"I shall stand it."

"The whole story may come out, and we shall both be expelled."

"I'll risk it rather than knuckle under to that scoundrel."

"Look here, Courtney——"

"Enough said."

"You're a fool."

"And you're a rascal. That sovereign I owe you I'll return as soon as I possibly can, and then I'm done with you. I'll thank you not to speak to me again."

And Courtney walked out of the study and slammed the door.

George Mulberry ground his teeth with rage.

It was a knock-down blow to all his scheming, and Courtney was evidently in deadly earnest in his determination to defy the landlord of the Blue Lion.

What would come of that was a question Mulberry could not answer.

But it would quite possibly be exposure and ruin, and expulsion from the school for the rascally Sixth-former who had been the swindler's cat's-paw among the boys of Northcote.

The prospect was not a pleasant one.

"The game's up," Mulberry muttered savagely. "All through Phipps losing that note—and those whelps taking it from him! It must have been Frank Melton and Clive Russell. It stands to reason it was. My hat! I'll make them smart for it."

The bully was in a mood for any brutal deed. He looked round the study, picked up a cane, and made his way towards the quarters occupied by the chums of the Lower Form.

MULBERRY LOOKS FOR TROUBLE—AND FINDS IT!

"Finished your prep, Clive?"

"Just done."

"Then let's have a go with the foils before bedtime."

"Right you are."

The chums of the Lower Fourth speedily shoved the table and chairs aside, and Clive fetched the basket-hilted wooden foils out of the cupboard, and the cane masks.

"There you are, Frank."

They donned the masks, which completely protected the face and head, and were about to commence the fencing-match, when the door was flung violently open.

Mulberry strode into the study, slammed the door behind him, and locked it. Then he turned with the key in his hand, and scowled at the juniors.

Frank and Clive exchanged glances.

They had expected sooner or later to hear from the senior on the subject of the missing letter, and they were ready for it.

As it happened, Mulberry could not have caught them at a more opportune moment.

They were armed and armoured for the fray, as it were.

"Hallo, Blackberry," said Clive. "Excuse me, I mean Huckleberry, how do you do?"

Mulberry snarled.

"I've come to give you a lesson, you whelp."

"Don't trouble! We've had our lesson for to-day, and done our prep. If you want to be agreeable, you can write out an imposition old Lamb has given me."

Mulberry breathed hard.

It was certain that nothing he could ever say or do would make any impression upon Clive Russell's coolness.

"Otherwise, Whortleberry, you had better clear out," continued Clive. "We're going to do a little fencing, Gooseberry, and you might get hurt, you know, Elderberry."

Mulberry made a dash at him.

"I'll wring your neck."

"Line up," roared Clive.

Tae chums sprang side to side.

Two long foils faced Mulberry, and looked considerably more than a match for his cane.

But the senior was in too great a rage to hold back.

He had come there in a savage mood, and Clive's chaff had driven him to something like frenzy. He came on furiously.

The cane slashed upon the foils and the cane head-masks, without hurting the juniors much, and they lost no time in returning the blows.

The wooden foils played like lightning on Mulberry's arms and legs.

He soon realised that his cane was no match for the weapons of the youngsters, and he ceased to attack, and receded from the dangerous-looking foils.

But he had caught a Tartar: or rather, a couple of Tartars.

For the juniors had not the slightest intention of allowing him to escape, now that he had started upon them.

They had the advantage for once, and they intended to use it to the full.

As the senior retreated, the chums of the Lower Fourth advanced, and they drove him fairly into a corner with cut and thrust.

"How do you like this, Gooseberry?" asked Clive, giving him a dig in the ribs that left a big ache behind it. "Are you happy?"

"You young whelp!"

"Oh, Georgey!"

"I'll break your necks for this."

"Well, you may, Georgey, but it looks to me as if your neck is in more danger than ours," said Clive, giving the senior a rap across the neck in question. "Did that hurt?"

"You little fiend."

"Ha, ha! Perhaps you'll think twice before you come into our study again, Whortleberry."

"Wait till I get hold of you."

"I'm waiting. Why don't you come on?"

The unhappy bully tried to come on, but the long wooden foils were too much for him, and he could not get through the defence of the juniors.

If he caught one of the foils in his hand, he was lunged and rapped at by the other till he had to let go.

The cane bent and twisted and was of little use to parry with.

He had to guard himself with his arms.

And the feeling in his arms may be imagined.

He felt as if he had a separate ache in every separate bone from his wrists to his shoulders, and as bruises on every other part of his body.

"Getting warmed up, Gooseberry?" asked Clive. "You look excited."

"You young fiend!"

"Ha, ha! Prod him, Franky."

"Righto," said Frank. "To prod, verb active—I prod, thou proddest, he prods. We prod, you prod, they prod. I have prodded, thou hast prodded, he has prodded—"

Frank conjugated the verb to prod, and with every variation gave the unhappy senior a fresh dig somewhere with his foil.

"You're wrong," said Clive, severely. "We are active, and he is passive. I prod, thou proddest: he is prodded."

"Ha, ha! I stand corrected! He is certainly prodded."

"You young demons!"

"We prod, you prod, he growls," said Clive. "Ha, ha! Have some more, Mulberry—I mean Raspberry—that is to say, Strawberry."

Mulberry, in despair, made a furious break for the door.

He reached it, but he had to unlock it, and as he strove to insert the key in the lock, the juniors thrashed him across the back with hearty vigour.

The maddened senior unlocked the door, but he was not to escape.

A fearful stinger behind made him turn and charge at the juniors, and Frank tripped him up, and he went down in a heap.

It was a chance too good to be lost.

In a moment the two juniors were on top of him.

Clive sat on his chest, and Frank seized his wrists.

He dragged them over the senior's head, and held them fast, and Mulberry writhed and struggled in vain.

"Let me get up, you young hounds."

"Shall we let him get up, Franky?"

"Yes, when he's apologised."

"Ha, ha! You hear that, Raspberry."

Mulberry gasped for breath. Clive was no light weight sitting on his chest.

"I'll kill you for this. Let me get up."

"You must apologise handsomely for coming into our quarters, you know."

"I'll break your necks."

"I—hang you—help!"

The door of the study was opened from without. Arthur Courtney looked in in amazement.

"What on earth's the matter here? What are you making such a thundering row about. Great pip, Mulberry, what are you doing? Is that a new kind of jui-jitsu?"

"Make these young demons let me up."

"Make 'em yourself."

Clive looked dubiously at his cousin.

From Courtney's manner of late, he expected a decided and angry interference, but at a glance it was evident that Courtney was not in the slightest degree inclined to help the bully.

On the contrary, he seemed amused.

Clive, greatly relieved, stuck fast to his prisoner.

"But what does all this mean, anyway?" demanded Courtney, laughing.

"Blessed if I know," said Clive. "He came rushing into our study with a cane and started slashing at us like a giddy lunatic. Fortunately we had our masks and foils, so we were able to give as good as we got. Or even a little better. What do you think, Whortleberry? Did we give a little better than we got?"

"I'll half murder you."

"He seems to be angry," said Clive. "We thought it very rude of him to come in without knocking, and to make a display of nasty bad temper to innocent kids like us, so we're trying to persuade him to apologise."

"Ha, ha!"

"I think he will do it if we keep on persuading him, but if you like, Courtney, we'll let him go to oblige you."

"Oblige me? Not at all."

"You don't mind?"

"Certainly not."

"Make them get off!" roared Mulberry.

"Rats! You're a beastly bully, Mulberry, and you've no right in their study anyway. If you come sticking yourself in where you're not invited, you must naturally expect to get a little hardly used. I'm not going to interfere."

"You're a cad, Courtney."

"My dear chap, that's a compliment from you. You deserve all you get, and a little more. I hope the kids will give you a good dressing-down."

The juniors needed no more encouragement than that.

"Are you going to apologise, Gooseberry?"

"No, confound you."

"Get the bottle of red ink, Frank. Pour it over his physiognomy, and stop when he says he's ready to apologise."

"Ha, ha! Righto!"

"Don't you dare to!" roared the Sixth-former, wriggling in alarm.

"Are you going to apologise, then?"

"No—yes—I won't—yes—hang you."

"Can you make head or tail of that statement, Frank?"

"Ha, ha! No. It seems rather complicated."

"I think you had better start with the red ink, and maybe he will become a little more lucid in time. The ink will cool his baby brow."

"I'll apologise!" yelled Mulberry.

"That's more lucid already. Go ahead."

"I—I—I—I—"

"That's a peculiar sort of apology," said Clive, shaking his head. "Have you ever heard an apology like that before, Frank?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Have you, Courtney?"

"No. Certainly not."

"I'm afraid it won't do, Mulberry. You must be a little more explicit."

"I—I—I—I—"

"There he's at it again! What do you mean by a constant repetition of the first personal pronoun singular number?" demanded Clive. "I shall begin to think that you are an idiot."

"I—I—I—"

"Oh, he's dotty! Get the ink, Frank."

"Stop! I apologise. I—I am sorry I came here."

"He, ha, ha!" roared Courtney. "I haven't the slightest doubt of the truth of that statement."

"I won't come again."

"You are sorry?"

"Yes."

"Extremely sorry?"

"Yes."

"Awfully fearfully extremely sorry?"

"Yes."

"And you won't never do anything of the kind no more for ever and ever?"

"No—yes."

"You're contradicting yourself again."

"I—I—I—I'll say what you like."

"You'll be a good boy in the future?"

"I—I—yes."

"Then I think we can let you go. Do you think we can let him go, Frank?"

"Ha, ha, yes."

"Do you think we can let him go, Courtney?"

"Yes, I should say so."

"Do you think we can let you go, Whortleberry?"

"Yes. Hang you! Yes."

"Then off you go."

The two juniors released their prisoner. Mulberry staggered to his feet, and cast a look of deadly hatred at them.

"I'll remember this," he muttered

"I daresay you will," said Clive, with a nod. "You've got something to remember, old chap. I expect you'll have a toothache in all your bones for a long time to come."

"And I'll remember that you wouldn't lend me a hand, Courtney."

"Do," said Courtney, with a yawn.

The much-suffering bully went out of the study, and limped away to his own quarters. He certainly had ample to remember; he was not likely to get rid of his bruises for some weeks to come.

Courtney turned to Clive, the smile dying off his face.

His look was very grave, but kindly.

"Clive! I have just had a letter—do you know anything about it?"

"That's according," said Clive.

"According to what letter it is, you mean?"

"No, according to how you're going to take it."

Courtney laughed.

"If that letter was sent by you, Clive, I am very grateful.

It was a letter that was sent by Mulberry to—someone in Northbank, and must have been intercepted, and sent on to me, by someone who had my interests at heart."

"Better own up," said Frank Melton. "We did the trick, Courtney. We worked the wheeze."

"I thank you both," said Courtney, quietly. "I have been

taken in in a rascally way, but I owe it to my own folly. I had a lesson before, but it did not last. This one will last, Clive. I have been a brute to you lately——"

"Oh! no, no, no."

"But that's all over. I thank you both, kids, and you've both got a friend in me."

And Arthur Courtney left the study.

Frank stared at Clive, and then seized him and began a wild dance round the study.

"Hurrah!"

And Clive shouted too.

"Hurrah!"

The juniors little game had been a success all along the line, and they had cause to feel elated.

"It's jolly," said Frank, "Simply jolly, old kid."

"Rather! Now we only want to beat the Upper Fourth at cricket to-morrow, to make us happy."

THE TRIUMPH OF THE LOWER FOURTH!

"Ah! you've come to settle up, Master Courtney."

Honest Tom Joliffe rubbed his fat hands.

It was Saturday afternoon. While the Fourth Form were on the cricket field, Arthur Courtney had walked down to the Blue Lion to see Joliffe.

He was very cool and very determined.

"Yes, I've come to settle up," he said.

Joliffe stared a little.

He wondered where Courtney had obtained the five pounds from; and he was not wholly pleased; he had had other objects in view beside that fiver.

"So you've the tin, Master Courtney."

"No," said Courtney, coolly. "I haven't got the tin."

"Then how are you going to settle up?"

"I'll explain. I made a discovery yesterday."

"Did you," said the landlord of the Blue Lion, uneasily.

"What's that got to do with me?"

"And Mulberry confirmed it," went on Arthur Courtney.

"What are you talking about?"

"I learned that Gunn was lying to me about the Wessex Race, and that you were his partner in that lie."

"Master Courtney——"

"That Gunn gave you the fiver back after I had gone, and that you gave the scoundrel five shillings for helping you to swindle me, and that the bet was never laid at all."

Joliffe's jaw dropped.

"I—I——"

"Let me finish. It was a put-up game, a sheer swindle from beginning to end, and I don't owe you any money."

Joliffe looked dangerous.

"Do you mean that you are not going to pay me the five pounds?"

"I am not going to pay you a farthing."

"I've got your paper."

"You know it is worth nothing."

"I know it's worth nothing in a law-court, but its enough to get you expelled from Northcote College, Master Clever Courtney."

"Perhaps."

"I reckon there's no much doubt about it."

"You can put it to the test if you like."

"What do you mean?"

"You can take the I.O.U. to the Head."

"You dare not let me do it."

"You shall see."

"You would be ruined."

"Perhaps. But I believe if I made a clean breast of the matter to the Head, and promised never to speak to a scoundrel like you again, he would overlook my faults."

"You young 'ound——"

"Better language, please. I've hard enough work to keep my hands off you as it is. You are a scoundrel and a bare-faced swindler. For two pins I'd give you a hiding here and now."

Courtney was pale with rage, and Tom Joliffe, grown man as he was, shrank from his flashing eyes and doubled fists.

"Old off," he said. "I don't want to quarrel with you."

"Give me my I.O.U., then."

"You can have it when you pay up."

"I'm not going to pay you a shilling."

"Then you won't 'ave the paper."

"You mean that you will send it to the Head."

"Mebbe. I'll suit myself."

"You won't," said Courtney, between his teeth. "I'm

not going to leave myself anything to fear from a cad like you. You're going to give me the paper."

Mr. Joliffe sneered.

"How are you going to make me?"

"In the first place, I'll give you a hiding if you don't. You're a man, and I'm a lad, but you're a drunken brute, and you know I could knock you all to pieces if I chose."

Mr. Joliffe shrank back.

"Lay a 'and on me and I'll call the police," he snarled.

"Good; for if you don't, I will," said Courtney.

"You will? What do you mean?"

"I've got something they'll like to hear. The magistrates are looking for an excuse to be down on this place of yours, as you well know. And when I inform the police that bets are made and booked here on your premises, I think you'll find yourself in Queer Street."

Mr. Joliffe gave quite a jump.

He knew that the police of Northbank would be only too glad to catch him stripping, and it was certainly in Courtney's power to give him completely away.

"You—you young villain!" he gasped. "Who put you up to that dodge? I'll swear you never thought of it yourself."

Courtney laughed.

"If you want to know, I confided to Hilton the whole affair," he replied. "He's our captain, and he advised me, and he's offered to speak for me to the Head if it all comes out. He believes I mean to turn over a new leaf. He advised me to take this step. I hadn't thought of it myself."

"You—you—"

"Are you going to give up the I.O.U.?"

"So you'll round on an old pal and give him away to the police?"

"I don't want to give you away. I only want to have done with you for good and all."

"Go your way, then, and let me alone," said Mr. Joliffe. "I've done with yer. I wash my 'ands of yer for good."

"Well, they could do with a wash," said Courtney; "but I'm not going without that paper."

"I won't give it yer, and that's flat."

"Very good. Take off your coat."

"My coat! What for?"

"Unless you prefer to fight with it on."

"I aint goin' to fight with yer, I tell yer."

"Quite a mistake, you are."

"I aint."

"You're going to take a licking, then. Then I shall go straight to the police station and lay an information against you."

Mr. Joliffe weakened.

He looked at Courtney's face, and saw that the Sixth-former was in deadly earnest.

"Look 'ere, I'll let you 'ave the paper for 'arf the price."

"No."

"Wot do you say to a quid, then?" said Mr. Joliffe, desperately.

"Not a shilling."

"Say, the five bob, then, that I gave to Gunn. You wouldn't want me to be out of pocket over it, would you, now, Master Courtney?"

"I don't care a rap how much you are out of pocket over any of your rascally schemes."

"You are 'ard, Master Courtney, very 'ard on an honest man."

"Are you going to give me the paper?"

"I don't like to refuse a chap I like so much as I likes you," said Mr. Joliffe. "'Ere you are, Master Courtney, and I 'ope you'll always think kindly of old Tom Joliffe."

"I don't suppose I shall think of you at all," said Courtney. "But if I do it will be as a thief and a swindler. Give me the paper."

Mr. Joliffe unwillingly parted with it.

Courtney took it and examined it carefully, and then tore it into tiny fragments and scattered them upon the wind.

His whole face seemed to brighten as he scattered the traces of his dealings with Honest Tom Joliffe of the Blue Lion.

"Now I'm going," he said. "If you see me again, don't speak to me. If you do, I shall probably knock you down. Good afternoon!"

And Courtney strode away.

He left Mr. Joliffe staring after him, and feeling, as he after-

wards pathetically described it to Mr. Gunn, fairly flabbergasted.

Arthur Courtney's step was light and elastic as he strode back towards Northcote College.

He had finished for ever with that episode of his life.

Once had he fallen back, after taking the right path, but he had learned a severer lesson this time, and one he was not likely to forget.

Henceforward that episode was closed.

He was done with Tom Joliffe, done with George Mulberry, done with the whole low, gambling set of rascals.

And he felt immensely relieved in consequence.

He whistled cheerily as he passed in at the gates of Northcote. A shout greeted his ears.

"Bravo, Russell!"

There was a great crowd round the Fourth-Form cricket pitch.

The form match was going on merrily.

Courtney strode to the pitch and took up his stand to watch the game. Round the pitch the Fourth Form was in great force, Upper and Lower, as well as a goodly crowd of boys belonging to the other forms at Northcote.

The Lower Fourth had won the toss, and batted first.

Clive was at the wicket now, with Frank Melton at the other end.

It was a single-innings match, as it had to be played in a single afternoon, and both sides wanted it to be finished.

Courtney glanced at the board.

The figures were nine down for 70 runs.

Clive had placed himself on the list as last man in, and with Frank Melton as his partner at the wickets, he was knocking up a fine score.

He had just hit a boundray as Courtney came on the scene.

The Sixth-former clapped and cheered along with the clapping and cheering crowd in recognition of the feat.

Hilton, captain of Northcote, tapped him on the shoulder.

"All gone well, Courtney?"

"Right as rain," said the Sixth-former.

"I'm glad! I say, how your young cousin bats?"

"Good, isn't it?"

"I should say so," said Hilton, emphatically. "There's a future batsman of the First Eleven there, Courtney."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Look! there goes the ball again."

Clack went the bat.

The ball sailed away, and the fieldsman were running, and the batsmen were running too.

Once, twice, thrice.

The ball came in from Phipps to the wicket-keeper, but the batsmen were safe at their ends.

And now Frank Melton had the bowling.

He seemed quite as well able to deal with it as Clive Russell.

He cut the last ball of the over to the boundary for four.

Then Phipps bowled to Clive Russell's wicket.

Phipps was the champion bowler of the Upper Fourth, and he was responsible for four of the wickets that had been already captured.

But he could not touch Clive Russell's wicket.

Clive cut the bowling all over the field.

The hapless Upper-Fourthers had all the leather-hunting they wanted for a long time to come, while Clive was batting.

Now a pull to leg, now a smart stroke to the off, now a regular swipe.

The ball went everywhere, except where the fieldsmen wanted it.

Cheers from the Lower Fourth greeted every splendid hit.

The score of the Lower Fourth eleven jumped to 100 at the end of that over.

And of that hundred, 60 belonged to Clive Russell.

Courtney's look was proud as he watched his cousin batting.

It was something to be proud of, to see a junior playing so splendidly at the grand old game.

"He'll make a century yet!" exclaimed the Sixth-former.

He was right.

The Upper Fourth bowlers exerted themselves against Clive's wicket in vain.

Hit after hit was wildly cheered by the juniors crowded round the field.

90—96—100!

It was the century!

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

100—and the batsman still batting!

But the end was at hand.

Phipps bowled to Frank Melton, and there was a clatter of a falling wicket.

"Out!"

The Lower Fourth innings was at an end, Clive not out for 100.

The total for the Lower Fourth was 150.

Courtney gripped his cousin by the hand as he came off the field, surrounded by his shouting and cheering form-fellows.

"Bravo, Clive! You'll win."

"Thanks, old chap, I hope we shall," said Clive, cheerily.

There was a short interval for rest, and then the Upper Fourth opened their innings.

Phipps had commenced that match with the disdainful determination to wipe up the ground with the Lower Fourthers.

But the figure reached by Clive Russell's team in their innings had opened his eyes a little as to their true quality.

And he was not half so cocky as he went on the bat.

He opened the innings himself with Crew.

Clive Russell went on to bowl the first over, against the wicket of the lanky captain of the Upper Fourth.

Phipps sniffed and was ready.

Clive took a little run, and swung his arm up and over, and down came the ball!

There was a click!

Phipps stared at his wicket.

The middle stump was out of the ground, and the bails were reposing on the earth.

"How's that?" yelled Frank Melton from point.

And the Sixth-Form umpire replied tersely:

"Out!"

Phipps glared at his wrecked wicket, and glared at Clive, but there was no gainsaying the umpire's decision, and he carried out his bat.

And the derisive yells from the Lower Fourth greeted him.

"What price duck's eggs?"

Phipps had been so cocky over the match that the juniors were not inclined to spare him now.

The taunting question followed him until he hid his blushes in the shades of the dressing-tent—What price duck's eggs?

The Porpoise came in to take his place at the wicket.

But Stevens was no match for Clive.

The next ball whipped his leg stump out of the ground, and the Porpoise went back to the tent with a shade upon his plump face.

The next wicket fared the same!

A frantic yell from the juniors greeted the performance of the "hat trick" by Clive Russell in the very first over.

The hopes of the Upper Fourth sank almost to zero.

After that terrible over, they looked up a little, and runs began to come, but it was clear that they were on the whole outclassed by the Lower Fourth.

Steady and keen practice had told their tale, and the Lower Fourth were more fit than their opponents, and they had their reward.

The innings lasted barely an hour, and then the last wicket went down for the Upper Fourth to a ball from Frank Melton.

The total was ninety!

The Lower Fourth had beaten the Upper Fourth by sixty runs!

A rush was made on to the pitch for Clive and Frank.

They were carried off the field on the shoulders of their comrades.

Bravely had they upheld the honour of their Form, and well had they beaten the enemy, and after that match it was certain that Phipps and his set would have to hide their diminished heads.

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

Right round the quadrangle of Northcote the exultant Lower Fourth lads bore their champions in triumph.

And in the cheers which greeted them as they passed, many of the seniors heartily joined, and Arthur Courtney's voice was the loudest of all.

* * * * *

And so, with Clive Russell's triumph at the glorious old game, we end our tale; soon, however, we hope, to write again of the FOURTH FORM AT NORTHCOTE!

THE END.

THE CHUMS OF NORMANHEIGHT.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

HERR BOHN PLAYS CRICKET.

It was Saturday afternoon and Herr Bohn had just lighted his pipe for although the day was tempting his easy chair was more so.

"Tat is just vat I expect. Come in! Come in! Have I no minutes to myself?"

"It's a fine afternoon sir" observed Tom Lorn entering the room with his chum Bob.

"Have you disturbed me to tell me tat?"

"No sir. We've challenged the first eleven and that old Kipper Smithers is going to play for them."

"Boy! Tat is not te way to speak of your master. He may be a disagreeable man, but you must treat him mit respect. Vell—is tere any chance of Mr. Smithers getting hurt?"

"It's not impossible sir."

"Vell I come and watch you play."

"Oh we don't want you to watch us sir. We are a man short and we want you to play."

"Ach Himmel! It is years and years since I played cricket."

"Then you are just the right age to take it up again. I'll guarantee you will play a jolly sight better than old Smithers, sir. I told him we were going to ask you, and the bottle-nosed scarecrow started guffawing."

"You must not speak of your master like tat."

"It's only a familiar sorter way we've got, sir."

"Ten don't let it happen again. I have no cricket clothes."

"Never mind, sir. Play as you are. I'd lend you a pair of my bags only they would be a bit skimpy round the waist.

Do come, sir. It will serve Mr. Smithers right for making fun of you. There's no reason why you shouldn't play better than him. It's true you're a bit beefy, but—"

"You be careful vat you say. I am inclined to play."

"That's right, sir. Come on! We'll show old Dachshund that you can play."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Herr Bohn, "Vat Teufil of names you get for tat man."

"We call him Dachshund because he's got such a mighty long body. Now we call— But no matter. Come along, sir, or else we shall be late."

Mr. Smithers was on the ground, and he smiled sarcastically as he saw Herr Bohn approaching.

"Surely you are not going to play!" he exclaimed.

"And why for not, sair?"

"Well, I did not know that you could play."

"In vich case you will learn differently."

"I hope so, but—ha, ha! We will toss for choice of innings."

Mr. Smithers tossed a penny in the air and let it fall on the grass.

"Why didn't you call?" he snarled.

"Call wat?"

"Pshaw! Say whether it was a head or tail. I will toss again."

He did. Herr Bohn waited till it dropped on the grass, then looking at it said—

"Dot is a head."

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"Ridiculous! You must call when it's in the air."

"But how can I see vich it is?"

"I don't want you to see. You must guess. Shall I let one of these little boys call?"

"You can please yourself," retorted Herr Bohn, turning his back on him.

Tom called and lost. Mr. Smithers and Snaggs went in, and Tom who was captain, and wanted some fun, put Herr Bohn on at bowling.

"Try him round arm, sir. It's easy. All you've got to do is to take a run, then let it go as hard as you can."

"But suppose I hit tat man?"

"That won't matter abit."

Tom went to his place, and Herr Bohn took a waddley sort of run and hit Freddy Barnes, who was at cover-point, in the stomach.

"Yooroooh—wow! Oh, I say!" howled Freddy. "I ain't the wickets."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Smithers. "You must pardon me for laughing at you, Herr Bohn, but your bowling is really too funny."

This made the German angry. He got the ball again, took another run and let it go with all his strength. It caught Mr. Smithers a frightful crack on the side of the head.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Herr Bohn. "Tis is too funny!"

Mr. Smithers did not appear to think so. He dropped his bat and clasped his aching head, while he stamped his feet. Herr Bohn pulled out his pipe and commenced to smoke.

"Ven you are ready for the next ball just say so," he shouted.

"You had better bowl, Lord," said Mr. Smithers.

"He must finish his over, sir, and I don't think I shall take him off yet. He has not done badly, so far."

"Not done badly! He can't bowl at all."

"Well, sir, if he's not exactly dead on the wicket, he is swift. I think he will get along all right presently when—ha, ha! he's had a little more practice."

Mr. Smithers made a few sarcastic remarks at the great bowler's expense, and this annoyed him very much. His intention was to hurt the batsman again. Fixing his eyes upon him he took a run, then sent down a scorcher. He had intended it to hit Mr. Smithers, but to the astonishment of all it took his middle stump, then nearly brained the wicket-keeper.

"Well bowled, indeed!" shouted Tom. "That was a capital ball, was it not, sir?"

"I don't call this cricket," snarled Mr. Smithers.

"Well, sir, you have made rather a poor show, but p'rhaps you will do better some other day."

"Have I hurt tat boy?" shouted Herr Bohn.

"I would say so, sir," answered Tom. "His head is pretty thick though, so it will soon get all right. The fact of having sent Mr. Smithers out with a duck is the great thing."

"I tink I had better bowl straight arm."

"Not a bit of it, sir. Leave well alone."

"But I shall damage someone."

"That doesn't matter, especially if it's one of the other side. You see, if you crack their erumpets, they won't play so well."

"But I may dash ter brains out!"

"You couldn't, sir. They haven't got any. Here comes old Giles. He's a slogger, but I don't think he will slog many of your balls."

Giles got no runs that over, then Tom went on at the other end, and the pair began to score. Herr Bohn was placed at mid-off and Snaggs sent a ball over his head.

"Run after it, sir!" roared Tom.

"*Donner und Blitzen!* Have I got to run all tat vay?"

"Yes. Hurry up! They are getting runs."

"Tis is a Teufil of a game," he growled, walking leisurely after the ball.

"Run!" howled Tom. "You won't get there till mid-night! Great Scott! Look at the pace he's going at."

He got the ball at last, then began walking back with it, until Tom yelled to him to throw it up; but ten runs were scored.

Tom did not dare to put him on again, but flung the ball to Bob, who, although rather an erratic bowler, was a very awkward one when he got on the wicket. Snaggs was caught from the last ball, and this gave the youngsters some hope; but before all were out ninety-three runs were knocked up.

"Tell you what it is, Herr Bohn," exclaimed Tom, "you

and I will go in first. Snaggs bowls swiftly, but he's not very straight. All you've got to do is to slog at them for all you're worth."

And this is exactly what Herr Bohn did. He had got plenty of strength, and when he happened to hit a ball, made it travel. One of them he sent to the boundary, and on swiping at another one let his bat slip out of his hands.

Mr. Smithers was at point. It caught him on the shins and made him dance, while Tom was nearly convulsed with laughter. He knew that the angry man would make it hot for him, but the way he went hopping about struck Tom as so funny that he simply roared.

"I hope I have not hurt you, sir," said Herr Bohn.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's nothing to speak of," roared Tom. "These little accidents will occur."

"Ten seeing tat you are not hurt I vill trouble you to hand me my bat, sir."

Mr. Smithers looked as though he would like to brain him with it, but he flung it towards him with an angry snarl.

Tom now tried to work matters so that he took the bowling, but this was not easy to do, because Herr Bohn positively refused to go at anything more than a jog-trot when he had to run.

Mr. Smithers went on the next over, and it looked remarkably as though he were trying to get some of his own back. He caught Herr Bohn one on the elbow that made him dance and say things in German, while he fairly ran away from the next ball.

Then Mr. Smithers sent down a slow, and followed it up with a view to a catch. Herr Bohn did not mind slow balls. It was dead for his middle stump, but, grasping his bat tightly, he slogged at it with all his strength.

It went back far quicker than it came, and it caught Mr. Smithers on the nose. "Do you tink I have hurt tat man now, my lad?" inquired Herr Bohn of Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hold me up," roared Tom. "I couldn't say for certain, sir, but it looked as though it hurt."

"You dare to laugh at me, boy," cried Mr. Smithers, mopping his nose, which was bleeding badly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"But, sir, it was an accident."

"Herr Bohn! You are not competent to play. You do not understand the game."

"Tat may be, but I have made more runs tan you."

"It is scandalous!"

"Ven you saw te ball coming you should have got out of the way, not stop it mit your nose. Tere is sure to be pain if you do tat."

"I am quite aware how to play cricket, sir."

"Tat I am glad to hear, but te vay you played mit tat ball is not te vay I shall follow."

It was some time before Mr. Smithers induced his nose to stop bleeding, and he looked very vindictive as he sent the next ball down.

It was a wide. Herr Bohn swiped at it and missed it, then as he swung round with the impetus of his mighty stroke, he lost his balance and sat on his stumps.

"Does tat count any?" he inquired, picking himself up.

"Ha, ha! No, sir. You are out."

"Ten I have at least something to be tankful for. It vill be some time to come before I play tis Teufil of a game again."

Tom was quite satisfied with their start, and now he played a splendid game. In vain the bowlers were changed; they could not get rid of him. When Bob came in he slogged at every ball, but he knocked up eighteen runs before he was disposed of.

The end was exciting. Freddy Barnes was Tom's last man, and he was fearfully weak. The fast balls frightened him, and the straight ones invariably took his wicket.

Tom was still in, and it was with a feeling of relief that he saw the last ball of the over narrowly miss Freddy's bails.

"Last over!" cried the umpire.

The youngsters needed five to tie. Tom felt it would be a hopeless task. Mr. Smithers was bowling to him and he sent down three dead on the wicket; but the fourth Tom cut for two.

Three to tie, and this was the last ball. Down it came dead for the middle stump. Tom stepped out and slogged it, then a mighty cheer burst forth as it went clear over the pavilion.

The youngsters had won the match.

THE END.

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