

New Stories by Henry St. John and Allan Blair.

THE Boys' Herald 1d

A Healthy Paper for Manly Boys.

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EVERY THURSDAY—ONE PENNY.

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 23, 1905.

(The Opening Chapters will be found at the foot of the next page.)

Ned Starts Work—The Transformation—The Procession—Wickers Throws Out a Suggestion.

FOR a moment the two lay in a breathless heap, then the young man on whom Ned had alighted struggled free, and, pulling himself together, drew a deep breath.

"I guess you came down suddenly," he said.

"Yes, I—I believe I did," said Ned, who had expected a violent outburst of abuse. It was the same odd-looking young man who had sent him to fetch the pony, but, for some reason or other, he had changed his tie. Ned distinctly remembered how vivid a green it was—its brightness had attracted his attention, but now it was just as brilliant a scarlet!

"I did my best," said Ned, "but I——"

"CIRCUS NED."

A TALE OF LIFE IN AND OUT OF THE RING.

By Popular HENRY ST. JOHN.

"Oh, that's all right! I guess you did pretty nicely. If you'd come a bit harder, you'd 'a' gone clean through me. I opine that you fell some pretty considerable distance, eh? I've heard that Mars was inhabited, but I never reckoned to be fell on by any tripper from that there country."

"Mars!" gasped Ned. "Mars! Why——"

"Yes. It must be a long way to fall," the

young man went on, looking up at the sky. "I guess, now, you didn't count the miles as you came down, did you?"

"I didn't come down," said Ned indignantly. Either this fellow was mad, or he was amusing himself at Ned's expense. What on earth did he mean by talking about Mars? And why on earth had he found it necessary to change his tie?

"I went to get the pony as you told me, and—well, I did my best—that's all," said Ned. "It wanted a lot of managing. Of course, I didn't mean to fall on you, and I'm sorry, and hope I didn't hurt you."

"Not more'n a hod of bricks falling off a house-top," said the young man.

"Here, boy, come here!" Ned looked round in the direction of the voice, and saw a short, stout man, with a jolly red face. He was dressed in a garment that might have been a dressing-gown, or might have been an overcoat, but whichever it was, it was most disreputably shabby. A battered hat that would have disgraced an ordinary scarecrow was perched on his head, and between his teeth, which were ragged and uneven, and situated far apart, was an old black short clay pipe.

"So you're the boy," said this personage. "Porthos' boy, eh?"

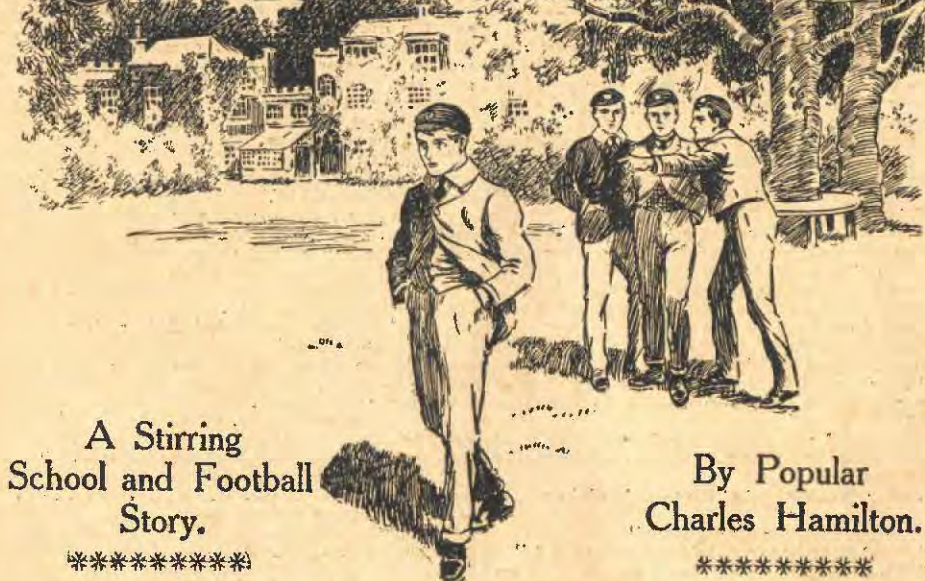
"Ye-es, sir," said Ned.

(Continued on the next page.)



Wickers aimed a savage blow at the boy which Ned neatly dodged. Wickers went sprawling, while Dickory danced round with delight.

Champions of the Fourth



A Stirring School and Football Story.

By Popular
Charles Hamilton.

The 1st Chapter. Sent to School.

"I WON'T go to school!"

Master Frank made that announcement in a tone of finality, and then devoted his whole attention to a large slice of cake.

Dr. Forrester murmured something under his breath, and Mrs. Lawrence turned to him with an appealing look.

"There, you see, doctor! He really feels very strongly upon that subject."

"But you must consider, my dear madam, his future welfare. You would not have your son grow up an ignoramus?"

"Oh, there is no danger of that," said Mrs. Lawrence, with confidence. "Frank is really quite advanced for his age. His knowledge of English history is quite amazing. You might ask him almost anything."

The doctor looked at Master Frank, who was busy with his cake.

"Ahem! Frank, my boy, give me a specimen of your powers."

Master Frank looked up a little doubtfully.

"Now, how many Georges were there?" said the doctor encouragingly.

"Seven," said Frank.

"H'm. And in whose reign was the Battle of Waterloo fought?"

"Henry the Eighth's," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

"And who was it had Mary Queen of Scots' head cut off?"

Master Frank reflected again.

"Queen Anne."

The doctor coughed.

"My dear madam, his knowledge of English history is, as you say, amazing. Yet I still think that a few terms at St. Timothy's might do him good. I was there myself, and I can answer for the excellence of the system pursued there. Firmness combined with gentleness—h'm—obedience inculcated without severity."

"Obedience, doctor? There is not a sweeter, more obedient child—"

"I want some more cake," said Master Frank, who had now finished his slice.

"My pet, you have had three slices, and you must really not have any more; you will be ill," said his mother.

"I want some more cake."

"No, no, my dear, you must not have any more."

"I want some more cake!" roared Master Frank.

"Well, just a small slice, then," said poor Mrs. Lawrence.

"I want a big slice."

And Mrs. Lawrence cut a big slice, as the doctor knew she would, and passed it to her hopeful son.

"Ahem! As I was saying," the doctor went on blandly, "I can answer for St. Timothy's from my own experience; and I need not remind you, my dear madam, that it was the wish of Frank's father that he should go to St. Tim's."

The widow looked inclined to cry, and Dr. Forrester went on hastily:

"As for Master Frank's objections, I allow them, of course, the weight they merit; but I think he has formed a wrong impression of what school-life is like. If he knew what a splendid time he would have at St. Tim's, I think he would be eager to go."

Master Frank pricked up his ears.

"If he knew the freedom—the unlimited freedom and fun of a public school, the kindness and proper respect with which he would be treated," continued the veracious doctor, keeping the corner of his eye upon Master Frank—"if he knew the attention that would be paid to his well-being, and the justice that would be done to his mental attainments, and the position he would soon occupy in the estimation of his schoolfellows—why, I think, my dear Mrs. Lawrence, that it would be harder to keep him away from St. Tim's than to send him there. And if you knew, madam, the unceasing care,

the unwearied patience of the masters, the inexhaustible kindness and indulgence of the elder boys, you would not have any fears for his comfort there."

"I—I will think about it, doctor."

"You see," continued the doctor, still with the corner of his eye on Master Frank, "if the dear boy did not really like the school, what could be easier than for you to fetch him away again? He would only have to write to you."

"Yes, that is true," said Mrs. Lawrence, brightening up. "Yet how can I part with my dear, dear boy, even for a few days? And—I'm sure it would break his heart to leave—"

"I think I shall go," said Master Frank, interrupting his mother. "I'll give the place a trial."

The doctor's glowing description had not been lost upon him.

"If any of the masters come any nonsense I'll soon put them in their place," continued Master Frank. "And if I don't like the school I'll come home again. If I like it I'll stay. Yes, I think I'll go."

And Master Frank went.

Whether he found St. Tim's the Elysium painted by the doctor will be seen in the following chapters.

"H'm!" said the principal, adjusting his gold pince-nez and looking at the new boy.

"Master Frank Lawrence?"

"Yes," said Frank.

Dr. Forrester, who was an old schoolfellow of the principal of St. Timothy's, had brought the boy to St. Tim's, and after a long talk with Dr. Leslie had taken his departure, leaving Frank alone in his new surroundings.

Frank was then called into the headmaster's study, and found himself in the presence of

one who was an awful

personage to the boys

of St. Tim's, but who

did not then make any

great impression upon

Frank, who was ac-

customed to thinking

a great deal of himself.

His nonchalant re-

ply brought a frown

to the principal's brow.

"Yes!" repeated

Dr. Leslie. "That is

not the way to address

me, Lawrence."

"Yes, sir," amended

Frank, after a moment

of hesitation, during

which he measured

the doctor with his

eye.

"That is better.

Now, Dr. Forrester

tells me that you are

somewhat backward

in your education—"

"I ain't," said

Frank.

"How dare you

interrupt me, sir?"

exclaimed the doctor.

Frank looked sulky.

"But that your

natural ability is con-

siderable," continued

the doctor. "I shall

place you in the

Lower Fourth Form.

You will feel, at first,

very ignorant and

stupid among your

companions; but

that, I hope, will not

be for long. Ring

that bell, please."

It was on the tip of

Frank's tongue to re-

fuse. He had never

been ordered about

like that in his life

before. But he caught

a glint in the doctor's stern grey eyes, and the refusal remained unuttered. He rang the bell.

The servant who answered it was requested to send Master Patrick Kildare to the headmaster's study.

In a few minutes Patrick Kildare arrived—a sturdy, healthy-looking Irish lad, with a fine, frank face and dancing blue eyes. Few could have looked at Pat Kildare without taking a liking to him.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Pat, looking out of the corner of his eye upon the new boy, and wondering how he dared to look so sulky in the awful presence of the principal.

"Yes, Kildare. This is Master Frank Lawrence, a new boy, who is going into your Form. I should like you to show him about a little, and introduce him to his Form-fellows."

Certainly, sir.
"You may go, Lawrence."

And Frank accompanied Pat Kildare from the headmaster's study, glad enough to get out of that apartment.

"I say, is anything up, you new chap?" said Pat, as they went down the corridor together. "You look as if you had fallen foul of the doctor already."

"I think he's very impertinent!" said Frank, with some heat.

Pat stared.
"You think—what?"

"I think he's impertinent. I've never been spoken to like that before!" exclaimed Frank. "If the other masters are not more civil, I jolly well sha'n't stay here."

"Oh, crums! You are a scorcher! You've never been to a school before!"

"I've had a tutor!" said Frank haughtily.

"And he let you have pretty much your own way, I suppose?" said Pat, quick to understand how matters stood.

"Of course he did. I'd like to see the tutor that wouldn't!"

"H'm!" grinned Pat. "You won't find the masters here so awfully obliging, I assure you. They are regular Tartars to a shirker. If you'll let me give you a word of advice—"

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," said Frank, greatly offended.

Pat's blue eyes flashed, and for a moment Master Frank was in danger of receiving a severe lesson on the spot, which would have taken some of the nonsense out of him. But Pat was one of the best-natured boys in existence, and, foreseeing that Frank would have a high old time if he kept on at St. Tim's as he had begun, he controlled his anger.

"Very well," he said quietly. "Come on, and I'll show you round."

"St. Tim's is a jolly old place," he continued. "These are the Fourth Form studies, rather small but jolly cosy. You'll have to share one with two or three other fellows."

"Poky little holes!" said Frank, evidently not much impressed. "Surely, they don't stick more than one fellow in each of those little dens?"

"I assure you they do. This is mine. I share it with Lacy now. There have been only two of us here since Denham left, so they'll probably put you in here. You'll find it comfy enough when you get used to it."

From the studies they proceeded to the dormitory.

"That's where you'll sleep," said Pat. "They're sure to give you Denham's bed—Hallo! what's the matter now?"

For Frank was looking up and down the long room, with its row of white beds, with a very discontented and disdainful look.

"You don't mean to say that I've got to sleep here!" growled Frank. "I want a bedroom to myself."

"Then you'll have to wait until you're in the Sixth Form!" grinned Pat. "You'll get used to this, you know."

Frank sniffed.

"Come and have a look at the gym, before the tea-bell rings," said Pat. "We shall find most of the fellows there. You mustn't mind if they are a bit rough and ready, you know, as they're always a bit larkish with new boys, and they won't mean any harm."

"I shall not stand any beastly familiarity," replied Frank.

And Pat, who would willingly have made things a little easier for the new boy, gave it up in despair.

Frank followed his school-fellow downstairs and across the quadrangle to the gymnasium, a fine building, of which the St. Tim's fellows were justly proud.

There was a crowd of all sorts and conditions of boys there, and Pat and his companion were quickly spotted and surrounded.

"Hallo, Paddy! What have you got there intirely?" said a big, loose-jointed Fourth-former, staring at Frank. "A new kid under your wing?"

"I'm showing him round, Lacy," said Pat.

"I suppose they'll be sticking him into our study," said Lacy discontentedly. "Just when we were getting used to having enough room to swing a cat."

"Well, he can't help that, can he?" said Pat pacifically.

"It won't be for long, anyway!" exclaimed Frank. "If Dr. Leslie does not give me a bedroom and a study to myself I shall not stay at St. Timothy's."

For a moment there was the silence of astonishment; then a roar of laughter went up. The Fourth-formers stared at Frank as if he had been some curious animal.

"Oh, I say, this is too rich!" roared Lacy. "Pack it up in a bandbox, Pat, and send it home to its mammy—this side up with care!"

"It's clear enough that his mammy don't know he's out," said Jimson.

"Dear me," continued Lacy, "how did she come to let her own boy be sent to a nasty wuff public school?"

"She wouldn't have sent me here if she had known what a set of silly bounders I should meet here!" exclaimed Frank wrathfully. And he turned, to stalk away with great dignity.

But dignity, like pride, sometimes goeth before a fall.

For Frank had not taken two steps when the Fourth-formers were upon him with a rush, and his cap was knocked over his eyes, his legs were tripped up, a foot was planted heavily in his rear, and he went sprawling along the floor of the gym.

"Silly bounders, eh?" exclaimed a dozen voices. "Collar the cad!"

Frank scrambled to his feet, dazed and blind with rage. Lacy was reaching out at him, and Frank struck out and sent the big Fourth-former reeling. Then, as the others rushed at him again, he turned, and bolted out of the gym.

"After him!" yelled Lacy, pressing his hand to his nose, from which a stream of red was flowing. "Oh, I'll pulverise the bounder!"

And with a whoop the juniors pursued the fugitive.

(Continued on the next page.)



A frantic cheer told that another goal had been shot for the Fourth and that Frank Lawrence had shot it. The great match had been won for the Fourth by the new boy of St. Tim's.

Champions of the Fourth.

(Continued from the previous page.)

Frank gasped as he heard the yell behind him, and rushed on madly across the quad and up the steps of the school-house.

And on the top step he rushed full into the white waistcoat of a stout gentleman who was about to descend.

"Mein Gott!" gasped the stout gentleman, as he reeled and lost his footing, and rolled down the steps. And "Mein Gott!" he gasped again, as the foremost of the pursuers fell over him, and jammed all the breadth out of his body.

Lacy—for it was he—was up again in a twinkling, but the German master of St. Tim's had hold of him with an iron grip. The rest of the juniors melted away like snow in the sun. And Frank, looking down from the hall to see what damage he had done, deemed it advisable to continue his flight, and leave Lacy to explain matters to the Herr.

"Mein Gott! You—you pad boy!" gasped Herr Hummel, holding Lacy fast while his breath came slowly back. "You blay ein drick on your master, ain't it? You tink tat it vunny to make a master take vat you call tumble, ain't it? Not a vord, not a vord! Dere is no egsouse for vat you have done. Take tat, and tat, and tat also!"

And the angry German boxed Lacy's ears right and left, paying not the slightest heed to his frantic explanations that he was not to blame.

"Tat a lesson for you, ain't it?" panted Herr Hummel, releasing Lacy at last. "Perhaps it nod seem so vunny now? He, he! Be off mit you!"

And as he looked inclined to recommence the punishment, Lacy thought it best to escape, and he darted away, inwardly vowing all sorts of vengeance upon the new boy.

The 2nd Chapter. Jimson's Little Joke.

THE looks which were cast upon Frank by his Form-fellows during tea were quite alarming. But for the presence of the masters he would not have been suffered to take that meal in peace. He had made a decidedly bad beginning, and the Lower Fourth were all against him, and he could not help thinking with uneasiness of what might happen at bedtime, when he would be shut up in the great dormitory at the mercy of the boys of St. Tim's.

He thought of boldly marching into the doctor's study and demanding a separate bedroom, but the thought of the stern, grey eyes daunted him. He was, in fact, already unconsciously beginning to learn the lesson of discipline.

But the nearer bedtime came the less pleasant the prospect seemed, and his frame of mind was gleefully noted by Jimson. Jimson was the practical joker of the Lower Fourth; but Frank, of course, was unaware of his reputation in this line.

"I say, Lawrence, I'm sorry for you," he said confidentially, joining Frank where he sat quite alone in the common room. "Lacy and the others are going to make you sit up after lights out to-night. Lacy's awfully wild; the German master patted him a treat, and he means to pay you out for it. They're awfully rough with new fellows, too. Last term they broke a new boy's collar-bone, tossing him in a blanket, and there was another chap who was given the frog-march, and died from concatenation of the pericardium."

Jimson said this with a preternaturally grave face, and the new boy was duly impressed.

"They're a—set of brutes," he gasped.

"I won't go up to bed to-night."

"That's what I was going to speak about," said Jimson, gravely. "I've taken a liking to you, Lawrence, and I don't want to see you ill-used. Now, you know that Herr Hummel will be away to-night?"

"I didn't know it," said Frank.

"Ahem! Well, you know it now. Now, there's no reason why you shouldn't sleep in his room instead of coming to the dormitory. He's a good old sort, the Herr is, and he'd be quite pleased if he knew the circumstances," continued the veracious Jimson. "If you like, I'll point out the room when we go up to bed, and you can nip into it. I'll stick the bolster in your bed in the dormitory to satisfy the Sixth fellow who comes to see lights out."

The suggestion was like a plank to a drowning man.

"Thanks," said Frank; "I'll do it. And I'll take jolly good care not to stop here after to-morrow."

Jimson closed one eye, the eye that was turned away from Frank.

"I don't blame you," he assented. "Don't stay unless they treat you with proper respect. I wouldn't stand any nonsense from the masters if I were you."

"I don't mean to," said Frank, glad to have found at last an intelligent youth who could understand and sympathise with him. "I think this place is a beastly hole, and the boys a low lot. Don't you?"

Jimson was on the point of spoiling his planned joke by punching the new boy's nose, but he restrained himself.

"Quite so," he said, gulping down something with difficulty. "They ain't worthy for you to mix with 'em, they ain't really."

And he strolled away and joined Lacy, to whom he detailed the little joke he had planned on the new fellow. Lacy grinned as he listened.

"Scott, I should like to be there when the Herr goes up to bed," he exclaimed.

"There will be ructions," grinned Jimson. "Serve the little beast right. He says St. Tim's is a beastly hole, and we are a low lot. I could hardly keep my hands off him."

Frank was a good deal relieved in his mind when the Form started in procession for the dormitory. On the first landing Jimson pointed out the door to him, and he slipped into the Herr's bed-room, while the rest of the boys went on. They were all in the joke by this time, and there were howls of laughter in the dormitory as they speculated what would happen when the choleric German master found the new boy in his bed.

Wilkinson, of the Sixth, put his head in at the door.

"Now then, how long are you going to be?"

He looked up and down the dormitory carelessly as he stepped to the gas. The bed that should have been occupied by Frank looked as if it had a sleeper in it, owing to an artistic arrangement of the bolster and pillow by Jimson.

Wilkinson turned out the light.

"Good-night, kids!"

And the door closed.

The next minute the boys were all sitting up in bed grinning. There was no thought of sleep till it was seen how the new boy fared.

"Think the Herr's back yet, Jimson?" said Lacy.

Herr Hummel was "away" that evening, as Jimson had told Frank; but the joker had omitted to mention that he was to return later.

"No; I heard him say to Mr. Carton that he would be back about half-past ten," replied Jimson. "Plenty of time for mammy's boy to go to sleep." And the juniors waited with gleeful anticipation for the denouement.

Meanwhile, Frank, in the innocence of his heart, had undressed and gone to bed; and, as the new and strange experiences of the day had tired him out, he soon fell into a sound slumber.

He did not wake when the door was opened and the German master came in with a candlestick in his hand.

Herr Hummel set down the candlestick and closed the door.

As he did so the sound of breathing fell upon his ears.

He gave a start and listened intently, his ruddy face turning pale. Big and lusty as he was, the Herr was not one of the bravest of men, and the thought of burglars that immediately rushed into his mind made his heart palpitate.

"Tere is ein purglar in der room!" the German murmured, listening. "He is under to ped."

Mein Gott! I shall be murdered, ain't it?"

The sound of breathing certainly came from the bed, and the German master glanced apprehensively towards it.

What was his amazement to see, in the dim light of the candle, the outlines of a sleeper's form under the bedclothes!

Herr Hummel stared at the figure, his pale face resuming its wonted hue and growing redder with anger as his wrath slowly rose.

There was a boy asleep in his bed—his bed! It was not only the presumption of it, but the fright he had just had which made the Herr wrathful.

He advanced to the bed, took a strong grip on the clothes, and jerked them off with a single movement of his arm.

Frank started, and, shivering out of his sleep, stared dazedly round him, not realising exactly what was happening.

"Poy," thundered the German, "vat you do here? Get out! Make you scarce mit yourself!"

And, as Frank did not obey him promptly enough, the angry German seized him by the ankle to jerk him out of the bed.

"I say, let me alone, can't you?" yelled Frank.

"What the dickens do you mean by disturbing me, I'd like to know?"

"Vat? Der poy is mad!" gasped Herr Hummel.

"Take tat, you pad—"

Frank yelled, as he got a sounding spank, and landed out with his free foot and caught Herr upon the nose with it.

Herr Hummel staggered back, clapping his hands to the injured organ and uttering a gasp of agony. The kick had been no gentle one, and he felt as if his nose had been flattened, and a stream of red ran over his fingers as he clasped it.

"Oh, mein Gott! Mein nose!" he ejaculated.

"Mein nose! Mein Gott!"

Frank slipped out of the bed on the other side. He realised that there was some mistake about the master's willingness to let him have that bed, and that the sooner he got out of Herr Hummel's quarters the better it would be for his health. He grabbed up the clothes with one hand and prepared to bolt.

But the Herr was not at all inclined to let him escape so easily. He rushed round the bed to seize him, and Frank made a dive over it to get away. But the master was too quick, and Frank was clutched and plumped down on the bed, and spanked till he yelled again. He struggled and kicked with all his might, and Herr Hummel got another drive in the face; but Frank tore himself loose, rolled off the bed, picked himself up, and darted from the room.

"Hullo! What's the blithering row here?"

Frank, as he darted away from the German master's room, found himself in a strong grip, and Winwood, the captain of St. Tim's, held him fast and looked at him.

"Ah, you're the new boy," he said, grinning.

"Where have you been?"

"In the German master's room," gasped Frank.

"Jimson told me I might sleep there, and—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Winwood. "Get along! Cut into the dormitory before the Herr catches you."

"Vere is tat boy?" shouted Herr Hummel, bursting into the corridor.

The dormitory, in spite of its drawbacks, was a haven of refuge to the new boy now, and he took Winwood's advice and bolted into it, leaving the captain of the school trying to pacify the enraged Teuton.

When Frank rushed into the dormitory, and slammed the door behind him, he found that it was not in the dark. A dozen candle-ends were lighted, and the boys were sitting up in bed. They had heard the disturbance, and were ready for him.

A howl of laughter greeted him as he rushed in. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimson. "Did you leave the Herr's room in a hurry, spoony?"

Poor Frank was already in a well-nigh frantic state of mind, and this query was the last straw. He rushed up to Jimson and smote him, and the practical joker rolled off his bed under the sudden attack.

"The new kid's showing fight, by Jupiter!"

exclaimed Lacy. "Go it, Jimmy!"

Jimson was on his feet in a moment.

He went for Frank with a howl. In a moment the two were locked in a close embrace, pom-melling and wriggling and panting.

With excited shouts the juniors urged them on, and in the midst of the clamour the door suddenly opened.

Winwood put his head into the dormitory.

"Now then, what's the matter here? I give you youngsters just one second to get into bed!"

The second was enough for Jimson. He tore himself away from Frank, and was in bed in the twinkling of an eye.

Master Frank stared at the captain of the school savagely.

"Do you hear me, Lawrence?"

"What right have you to order me about?"

"What—right—have—I—got—to—order—you—about?" repeated the captain of St. Tim's, with terrifying distinctness.

"Yes," said Frank undauntedly. "Who are you?"

"I am the captain of the school," said Winwood, with ominous calmness.

"Well, that's got nothing to do with me. I'm not going to stay in this beastly school. I wish I had never come here. I— Let me alone!"

Winwood had taken a firm, persuasive grip on his ear.

"Are you going to get into bed?"

It was on Frank's tongue to say "No." But somehow, quite unintentionally, he said "Yes" instead, and got into bed.

The captain smiled.

"Good-night, boys!"

And he made a collection of the candle-ends and left the dormitory.

Lacy sat up in bed.

"I say, it's time to put that little beast through a course of sprouts," he said.

But Pat Kildare answered:

"He's had enough for to-night, Lacy. Let him alone!"

"Rats!"

"You'll let him alone, Lacy, or there will be ructions," said Pat quietly.

And, as Lacy had no desire to feel the weight of Pat's arm, he growled and gave up the idea, and Frank was left in peace for the remainder of that night.

The 3rd Chapter. Learning His Lesson.

AFTER prayers the next morning, Frank was called into the doctor's study.

He was not sorry for it, for he had made up his mind to have a plain talk with the principal.

"Lawrence, I am sorry to hear that you have made a very bad beginning with your Form. I have received serious complaints, too, from Herr Hummel. The latter, however, I shall let pass, as you appear to have been the victim of a practical joke. But I must tell you that you are likely to find yourself in trouble if you do not restrain your provoking and quarrelsome disposition. If any other boy had caused so much disturbance in so short a time I should have caned him. As you are new here, I pardon you. But I caution you to take more care in the future. That is all. You may go."

But Frank did not go.

"I want to go home," he said. "Mother said I need not stay here unless I liked, and I don't like. This place isn't anything like Dr. Forrester said. I don't like it."

"St. Timothy's is unfortunate in not meeting with your approbation," said the doctor. "But I daresay you will like it better later on. For your own sake, I hope so. You will stay here for a whole term now that you are entered. Whether Mrs. Lawrence sends you back after the holidays is for her to decide. But for the present term the matter is already decided."

"A whole term!" gasped Frank. "I don't want to!"

"That, my boy, does not affect the matter in any way whatever."

"I shall write to my mother."

"You will do nothing of the kind."

"You—you won't allow me?" said Frank, hardly believing his ears.

"Certainly not."

"You'll keep me here against my will?"

The doctor could not help smiling at the tragic astonishment of his look and voice.

"Yes, certainly, until the end of the term."

"I won't stay!"

The doctor's brow grew hard and grim.

"Do you know whom you are addressing?"

he thundered.

"The very next time I go out I'll wire to my mother!" panted Frank recklessly.

"Then you will not be allowed to go out."

"I—I—"

"It is in consideration of your very peculiar training, Lawrence, that I do not flog you for

your remarks," said the doctor. "Any other boy I should have severely punished for speaking thus in my presence."

"Flog me!" almost shouted Frank. "Flog me!"

"Certainly. Flog you."

"You—you wouldn't dare!"

The doctor's eyes glittered. His old friend Forrester had explained to him how Frank had been utterly spoiled by the indulgent widow, and the doctor was prepared to treat the boy with the greatest possible consideration. But it was necessary to maintain his authority, and there was only one way of doing it.

He rose and took a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Lawrence."

Frank glared at him.

"Shan't!"

His blood was up now, and he was in a thoroughly defiant mood.

The doctor, however, was prepared for obstinacy. He took a quick step forward and grasped the boy by the collar. Holding him in a grip of iron, he proceeded to cane him upon a portion of his anatomy more susceptible to pain than the palm of the hand.

Frank struggled and wriggled and yelled, but the doctor, who knew how necessary a really severe lesson was at that juncture, caned him mercilessly, and did not cease until the boy's struggles stopped.

Then he released him. Frank, with all the devil taken out of him, stood twisting with pain, his breast heaving, his knuckles in his eyes.

"Now hold out your hand, sir."

Frank gave the doctor one look, and held out his hand. He got a stinging out.

"Now you may go. I hope I shall not have to punish you again. If I do, it will be more severely."

And Frank went slowly and miserably out of the room.

A good many of his Form had seen him called in, and his looks when he emerged showed how the interview had gone. But no sympathy was wasted upon him. When the Form was dismissed after morning school there was a general inclination to chip him. But Pat Kildare put his foot down upon that.

"Look here, Paddy," exclaimed Lacy resentfully, "have you taken the little cad under your wing? Are you filling his mammy's place?"

"Don't you be a beastly bully, Lacy," replied Pat quietly. "The poor brute's been licked, and so you can let him alone."

And Frank, who was in no condition to take his own part, heard the altercation, and felt something of gratitude towards the Irish lad.

The thrashing in the doctor's study had opened Frank's eyes to a good many things. The thought that he was irrevocably committed for a whole term at St. Tim's frightened him; but the reflection soon came that as it was the case it would be wisest to make the best of it. The thought of another such caning made him shudder all over. And the prospect of passing so many long weeks on fighting terms with the whole of his Form was a dreary one. He began to wish that he had started differently.

How different this was from home, he told himself, with quivering lips! There, a fond mother and an obsequious tutor; here, a stern master and grim discipline. It was really by no fault of his own that he had grown up to be wilful, disobedient, supercilious, and cocky. But the process of being cured of those little failings was a painful one.

After school that day Pat Kildare told him that the captain wished to see him in his study.

"What for?" said Frank, rather apprehensively.

Pat smiled.

"Oh, don't be afraid! Winwood won't take any more notice of your cheek last night if you are civil. He wants to see you about the football. You know, we're strong on sports here. Come along, I'll show you the way," added Pat.

And he led Frank into the captain's study.

"Stay here, Kildare," said Winwood. "Now, Lawrence, what can you do in the football line? I suppose you know that you'll have to do regular practice here."

"I—What's that got to do with it?" asked Winwood pleasantly. "I wasn't asking you what you wanted to do, but telling you what you've got to do."

"Oh!" said Frank.

"I suppose you've played before?"

"Yes," said Frank sulkily.

"You will take him in hand, Kildare," said the captain. "See that he doesn't shirk. As captain of your Form, I hold you responsible for him."

"All right, Winwood," said Pat, "I'll look after him."

And the two juniors left the study. If this interview had taken place the day before Frank would not have had so little to say for himself. But he was learning his lesson.

"I say, have I really got to practice whether I want to or not?" he asked, after they were out of hearing of the captain of St. Tim's.

"Of course you have," replied Pat. "As for not wanting to, better not say anything about that; a fellow who doesn't like football won't have an easy time at St. Tim's, I promise you. Why, every fellow in our Form would give one of his ears to get into the Form eleven! And I tell you what—we are not particularly strong just now, and if you show any decent form I might put you in. I'm captain of the Lower Fourth, you know. We play the Fifth Form later on; and, as they're an older team, it would be a big feather in our cap if we could beat them. I hope we shall. If you could help, it would be a good deal better than sticking yourself in a corner and sulking, wouldn't it?"

Frank coloured.

"I suppose so," he admitted.

"Then just let us see what you can do. I've got some prep. to finish, and then when it's done I'll join you in the field. You can look on till then; only buck up when you are passing the Fifth ground; those rotters like to collar us and make us lag for them when we should be at practice."

"That's not fair," said Frank, "when our Form has to play theirs later."

"Not exactly fair, but it's one of the things we have to put up with."

"I wouldn't!"

Pat gave him a droll look.

"They've such persuasive ways," he said. "It's hard to say no to a chap who twists your ear!"

But Frank, when he left the Irish boy, made up his mind that he wouldn't lag for the Fifth, at all events. His resolution was soon put to the test, for as he passed the ground devoted to the Fifth Form a lot of big fellows were at practice there, among them Hake, who was captain of the Fifth eleven, and Frank was spotted and called to by Hake at once.

"Hallo, there, youngster!"

"Hallo!" responded Frank.

"I want you to run up to the school for me."

"Thanks; I've got something else to do."

And Frank walked on towards the Fourth ground with his hands in his pockets.

"Ha, ha!" roared Hogg, Hake's chum. "That's the new kid—Lawrence. I've heard about him."

"I'll soon teach him a lesson!" growled Hake.

And he ran after Frank and took him by the collar.

"Now, are you going to the school for me?"

"No!"

"I'm Hake, the captain of the Fifth."

"I don't care if you're Hake, or lamprey, or herring, or any other kind of fish!" retorted Frank.

"Well, you cheeky brat!" ejaculated Hake in astonishment. "Give me your belt, Hogg."

Hogg handed him a belt. Then, at a sign from Hake, he seized Frank and forced him into a stooping posture.

"Now, will you go to the school for me?"

"No!" roared Frank.

Thwack! came down the belt, and poor Frank yelled with pain. He was still fearfully sore from his recent caning. Hake gave him half a dozen, and then politely inquired whether he would oblige by fagging.

To which Frank responded by kicking out desperately and catching Hake a terrible kick on the shin.

Hake dropped the belt and clasped his shin in both hands, roaring with pain, hopping about on one leg in the most ridiculous manner. Frank twisted himself loose from Hogg.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared, as he saw Hake's antics. "You do look funny!"

"I'll make you look funny!" panted Hake.

And he hurled himself upon the junior. It was fortunate for Frank that at that moment Winwood arrived upon the scene.

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed the captain of St. Tim's. "What's wrong here?"

"I'm going to half murder this little mongrel; that's what's the matter," roared Hake.

"Rats! You're going to do nothing of the kind. What's he done?"

"He's kicked my shins!"

"Well, you were larruping him; I saw you. I suppose it's the old question of fagging the little uns? I've told you it's not fair on the Fourth to take up the time they ought to be practising. Let him alone."

"Mind your own business," growled Hake.

Winwood made a step towards the Fifth Former, with a glint in his eye, and Hake let go Frank as if he had suddenly become red-hot.

"Be off, kid," said the captain.

And Frank nodded and decamped.

The captain's kindness had touched the right chord in the new boy's breast.

He had been feeling, like Ishmael, that everyone's hand was against him at St. Tim's, and he had expected to be bullied by Winwood for his resistance to an elder.

He began to understand now that school life was not so black as he had painted it to himself in his first hasty judgment.

A good many Fourth Formers had seen the dispute, and as Frank came among them he was greeted, somewhat to his astonishment, with some shouts of "Bravo, Spooney!"

"I say, Lawrence, it was awfully plucky of you to stick up to that brute Hake," said Jimson. "I reckon you'd be a decent sort if you weren't such a howling ass!"

"Thank you!" said Frank, not exactly knowing how to take this doubtful compliment.

When Pat Kildare came down to the field he grinned when they told him of the occurrence, and thumped Frank on the back.

"Bravo!" he said. "Now let's see how you can play."

Frank, with all his faults, had at least one redeeming point—he was fond of the grand old game. His performances were not particularly brilliant on this occasion, but Pat Kildare thought he showed signs of promise.

"You're taking a lot of trouble over that cub," said Lacy, with a sniff.

"He's got the makings of a good footballer in him, Lacy."

"Rats!"

"He only wants practice."

"He wants a thundering good hiding!" growled Lacy. "And I've a jolly good mind to give him one!"

"I don't see what you want to bear him malice for. It wasn't really his fault that the Herr licked you."

"Yes, it was. And I tell you I'm going to make him sit up for it."

"Oh, rats! Come along, Lawrence, we'll do some more to-morrow."

The 4th Chapter. Frank On His Mettle.

It cannot be said that Master Frank's term at St. Tim's had opened auspiciously. Yet, strange to say, the hatred with which he had at first regarded the school wore off with a rapidity that surprised himself, and ere long he was astonished to find that he actually liked the place.

He missed the petting and indulgence of home. But as the days passed he missed it less and less. So long as he was cocky he was tormented by the rest of the Form. But his superciliousness was getting knocked out of him, and as he improved in manners and spirit he found most of the fellows willing to extend the olive-branch.

Lacy, however, had not forgiven him. He was annoyed at the new boy being put into his study, and he did his best to make him uncomfortable there.

Lacy was older and bigger than Frank, but the new boy did not care for that. After defying Hake of the Upper Fifth, he was not likely to submit to be bullied by a boy of his own Form. Pat Kildare tried to keep the peace, but a conflict was inevitable sooner or later.

It was Pat's good nature more than anything else that helped to reconcile Frank to St. Tim's. The Irish lad helped him in a good many ways, both in sports and in the pursuit of knowledge; for Frank, in spite of his excellent opinion of himself, was woefully behind the lowest boy of his Form in his attainments. That had been the inevitable result of his home training, and the masters made allowance for it; but he was expected to show speedy improvement, and Pat helped him to do so.

"Coddling again!" sneered Lacy, coming into the study one evening and finding Pat and Frank deep in "De Bello Gallico." "I hope

"Good for you. I shouldn't wonder if you did it, as you've improved so much lately with your boxing. Come on."

Pat had given Frank a good deal of instruction in the manly art of late, and the new boy was not a bad boxer. They followed on Lacy's track to the favourite battle-ground of the Lower Form boys—a secluded spot behind the fives court—and found a good many of their Form-fellows already assembling there.

Lacy had told them of his intention to teach the new kid manners, and the Fourth Formers were eager to see the fun. The bad impression Frank had made in his Form still lingered, and as he glanced round he could see by the expression of the faces that most of the onlookers were anxious to see him licked. That, however, only roused his obstinacy, and made him the more determined to conquer.

Pat Kildare was the only one friendly enough to offer to be his second, and Jimson acted for Lacy. The two boys removed their jackets, and as Lacy stepped forward to shake hands, it was seen how much bigger and more muscular he was than the new boy, and there was very little doubt in the minds of the onlookers as to how it would end.

"Don't let him get too close," Pat admonished Frank, in a whisper. "Try to wear him down. His wind is his weakest point. He smokes too many cigarettes to have much staying-power, and you must try to fag him out."

"Righto," said Frank.

"Now, go it, ye cripples!"

And the fight commenced.

Frank had every intention of following Pat's excellent advice, but early in the round he received a punch on the nose which made him lose his temper, and he went for Lacy fiercely, and received a severe punishment, finally being laid flat on his back by a heavy right-hander. He was a little white when Pat picked him up, and gasping for breath.



Frank had not taken two steps before he was tripped up and sent sprawling to the floor.

you like being Spooney's dry-nurse, Kildare, intirely!"

"Oh, rats! You shut up!" said Pat cheerfully.

"I want you to help me with Cicero."

"All right. Wait till I've finished with Lawrence."

"Oh, blow Lawrence!" said Lacy. "I'm sick of him!"

"And I'm sick of you, as far as that goes," said Frank, looking up. "The fact is, you are a beastly sort of a pig, Lacy."

Lacy turned red with anger.

"Oh, am I? Do you want me to knock your teeth down your throat, Spooney, and paste your ickle face till mammy won't know her darling?"

"Yes; if you can do it!" said Frank, jumping up.

"Oh, chuck it!" said the pacific Pat. "What will ye be quarrelling for?"

"I don't want to quarrel with mammy's little duck," said Lacy; "but I won't stand his cheek. If he likes to beg my pardon—"

"I'll see you hanged first!" said Frank hotly.

"Then I shall have to lick you to teach you manners."

And Lacy made a rush at Frank. Pat caught him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Let go, you ass!"

"Sure, if you want to fight, you can come out and do it, and not make a row here and bring a prefect down upon us," said Pat.

"All right," said Lacy. "Bring that whelp out to the corner behind the fives court, and we'll settle the matter there."

And he strode out of the study.

"You're in for it now, Lawrence," said Pat.

"Do you feel funky?"

"No," said Frank resolutely. "He's bigger than I am, but I've had enough of his bullying, and I shall do my best to lick him."

"What did I tell you?" growled Pat. "If you're going to fight like that you may as well throw up the sponge at once."

"I'll be more careful next round!" gasped Frank.

"Well, if you are not, there won't be a third round, that's certain."

Lacy was grinning with anticipated triumph when they toed the mark for the second round. But this time Frank was more cautious. He had had a severe lesson, and it had done him good. Lacy's over-confidence, too, gave him some advantage.

The bigger boy, to his astonishment, went staggering under a drive on the chest from Frank's left, and, as he strove to recover his balance, Frank's right put in a sharp upper-cut, which caught him on the point of the chin. He went to the ground with a thump.

"Bravo!" cried Pat, slapping his principal on the back. "That's better."

Lacy looked decidedly groggy when he faced Frank for the third round. The one on the chin had fairly shaken him up.

Frank followed cautious tactics, avoiding the rushes of the enemy, and keeping him on the go. And very soon Lacy had "bellows to mend," and was breathing hard and gaspingly.

And when he showed unmistakable symptoms of fag, Frank rushed in with a dashing attack, and Lacy gave ground rapidly before him, resisting feebly, and blow followed blow till the bigger boy went down in a heap.

"Bravo!" shouted Pat again, and many other voices took up the cry.

Jimson helped Lacy to his feet. His plight was severe. One of his eyes was quite closed, and the other similarly inclined. His nose was red and raw, his lips cut, his face bruised. To Jimson's question as to whether he would go on he replied with an emphatic shake of the head.

"All over, Paddy," said Jimson. "Your man wins!"

"Shake hands with him, Lawrence," whispered Pat.

Frank walked towards the exhausted Lacy.

"I don't bear any malice," he said, holding out his hand, "I hope you don't. There's no need for us to be enemies."

Lacy scowled.

"Keep your paw to yourself, mammy's darling!" he said savagely. "This doesn't end the matter by any means. I wasn't fit to-day. I'll take you on next week and lick you, you cocky little whelp!"

"Shame!" said Pat. "Leave him to stew in his own juice, Lawrence!" he added. "Come along, and get yourself cleaned up before some beastly prefect spots you."

And Frank accompanied him to the nearest bath-room. The cleaning-up process made a great improvement in his appearance; but he could not hide the bruises about his face, nor the dark hue round his left eye.

But Lacy was in an even worse state, and he had the additional mortification of having fallen from his high estate of cock of the walk in the Lower Fourth. He had never had a superior there except Pat, who was too good-natured to quarrel with anybody if he could help it; so that the licking was a new and decidedly painful experience to Lacy. At that time he felt that he hated Frank.

When he looked into the glass and saw his disfigured visage, he ground his teeth, and dark thoughts of revenge passed through his mind.

His threat to try the new boy again next week was merely "gas." He had no intention of putting it into execution. He felt that it would be futile—and painful. But he was resolved to be even with the new boy somehow. And after a time a plan occurred to his brooding mind. That evening he tapped at the door of Hake's study. Hake, who was indulging in the luxury of a forbidden cigarette, in company with Hogg, started up at the tap, nearly swallowing the cigarette in his terror that it might be a master at the door. He hastily stuck it into a book, and Hogg flung his under the table, and Hake called out, "Come in!" in a shaky voice.

When Lacy entered, and the Fifth Formers saw that it was a false alarm, they both looked at the Lower Fourth boy as if they could eat him.

"What the dickens do you want?" growled Hake.

Lacy closed the door and came towards them. Hake caught sight of his discoloured face and grinned.

"Been putting your head under the garden-roller, Lacy?"

Lacy scowled blackly.

"Do you want to make the new spooney mongrel sit up?" he said. "If you do, I will show you a way; only, of course, you must keep it dark."

"Glad of the chance," said Hake. "Since he started the ball rolling, none of your precious Form will lag for the Fifth, and I've long intended to make an example of him; but that meddlesome beast Winwood is always so interfering in things of that kind. How can you give us a chance?"

"He's just gone down to the box-room to fetch something. If you like to buck up you'll just catch him," said Lacy.

"Righto!"

"Only keep it dark that I mentioned it to you."

"Oh, of course. Your Form would make it pretty hot for you," grinned Hake. "Come on, Hogg!"

And staying only to pick up a cane, he hurried out of the study, with Hogg at his heels. Lacy cleared out quickly, grinning to himself.

Frank was alone in the box-room when the two bullies entered. He looked at them quickly, and set down his candlestick, prepared for war at once.

"We've come to see you, mammy's duck," said Hake. "We've got a nice ickle cane for oo ickle back, dear child."

Frank made a rush for the door. Hogg seized him by the collar and swung him back. Frank struggled and kicked fiercely, and Hogg howled with pain.

"Give it to him, Hake!" he yelled. "Cut the little beast to pieces!"

And Hake laid on with a will. Frank roared and wriggled, but he could not get out of Hogg's clutches, and the cane continued to lash and sting. Suddenly a thought flashed into his mind; he drew a long pin from his jacket, and fairly drove it into Hogg's leg. The Fifth Former gave an agonised yell, and let him go. Before Hake could seize him Frank had bolted out of the room.

It took him about two seconds to get back to the study where he had left Pat. Lacy was there, too, pretending to be construing. He looked up with a grin as Frank burst in.

"Hallo, what's the matter? In a row again?" he exclaimed.

"Those beasts Hogg and Hake cornered me in the box-room!" gasped Frank. "Oh, I'm hurt all over! I've a good mind to go to the doctor—"

"Sneak!" exclaimed Lacy.

"Well, how would you like it?" growled Frank.

"Wouldn't do, Lawrence," exclaimed Pat, with a shake of the head. "If you sneaked, you wouldn't find life worth living at St. Tim's."

"Oh, that's all right; I don't mean to say anything," said Frank, who had been long enough now at St. Tim's to be fairly well up in schoolboy ethics. "But I shall manage to get even with those rotten hounds somehow. I wonder how they knew I was there?"

"Lick 'em at footer," said Pat. "That's a good British way of getting level. We'll make 'em feel small when the inter-Form match comes off!"

And that prospect comforted Frank a little.

Champions of the Fourth.

(Continued from the previous page.)

The 5th Chapter.

Fourth Against Fifth.

GR^{EAT} indeed was the change that had come over Master Frank during the progress of that term at St. Tim's. As the time drew nearer for the inter-Form match, Fourth against Fifth, he looked forward to it as eagerly as any, and his satisfaction knew no bounds when it was finally decided that he was to play in the Fourth eleven.

His football had improved wonderfully, constant practice being aided by his fondness for the game and Pat Kildare's skilled instruction. He was great chums now with Pat, and they pulled together famously. Public school-life had knocked off most of his little unpleasantnesses which had made him so obnoxious at first to the boys of St. Tim's. He frankly confessed now that he liked the school, and any thought of asking to be taken away at the end of the term had entirely left his mind.

The great day dawned at last, when the Lower Fourth Form of St. Tim's was to face the Fifth in conflict.

"It will be a tough fight, chaps," Pat said. "They're all older and bigger than we are, and in ordinary circumstances they ought to lick us. But we are in specially good form now, owing to my keeping you omdhauns up to the mark, and I think we shall pull it off if we put our hearts into it."

There was plenty of vim in the charge of the Fourth Formers, but Hake and his men met them gallantly, and after a tough struggle came away fast for the Fourth goal.

It looked as if the heavier weight of the Fifth Formers would carry all before them, and the lower Form boys round the match-ground stared anxiously at the scene of the struggle. And suddenly they burst into a roar.

Frank Lawrence had got away with the ball, and as Hake charged at him, passed with great skill to Pat, who tore away, and shot a goal for the Fourth in fine style, and in spite of all the efforts of Hogg at the posts.

It was first blood to the Fourth, and more credit due to Frank than to anybody else, and his Form-fellows cheered him and Pat heartily.

At half-time the Fifth had not succeeded in equalising, though Hake certainly made a good fight, and came near getting a goal once, but Jimson at the posts saved it, and he never had another chance.

In the second half the Fifth lined up with grim, determined faces. Hake had impressed upon his men the dire necessity of licking those cheeky youngsters, and the Fifth Formers were determined to do or die.

And as the champions of the Fourth were equally resolute the struggle became intensely exciting.

At last luck befriended the Fifth. Both Pat and Frank went rolling over under a desperate charge, and the Fifth forwards swept the ball goalward, breaking fiercely through the defence of the Fourth backs, and this time Jimson in goal was not able to save.

Hake shot the goal amidst a roar from his Form-fellows round the field, and now the score was equal.

The excitement was intensified when they faced each other again, and the Fourth kicked off.

It was getting near time for the whistle to blow, and both sides were determined that the game should not end in a draw, if they could help it.

But a yell breaks from the Lower Form on-lookers—a yell of enthusiasm and expectation, as Lacy comes with the ball racing towards the Fifth goal.

Hake heads him off, but he passes to Pat, who is off like a shot. But there is a determined rush of the Fifth to baffle him, and he passes to Frank, who escaped with the ball, and, baffling every attempt to stop him, gets away with it. And that frantic cheer, ringing far and wide over the fields, announces that another goal has been taken for the Fourth, and that Frank Lawrence has taken it.

And Hake realises that all is over. And so it is, for the score is still two goals to one when the whistle blows, and the Fourth have won the game—won it fairly and squarely by splendid play.

And a little later, when Frank had escaped from his admirers, Lacy came up to him, and with a face as red as fire blurted out:

"I say, Lawrence, I—I want to beg your pardon!"

"What's up?" said Frank.

"I—it was I sent Hogg and Hake to wallop you in the box-room the other night!" faltered Lacy. "It was a cad's trick. I was wild at your having licked me. I wouldn't take your hand then. But if you'll take mine now—"

And Frank's conduct at that moment showed how much good a term at St. Tim's had done him. He gripped Lacy's hand cordially.

"That's all right, old fellow! I'm glad to be friends, and we'll let bygones be bygones."

Frank's first term at St. Tim's came to an end—regrettably for him. You may be sure, when he went home for the holidays, he did not say much which would tend to cut short his life among The Champions of the Fourth.

THE END.

(Boys, don't forget to tell your chums about the grand new serial by Your Editor and Allan Blair, starting in this paper in two weeks' time.)

The Secret of the Thames.

A TALE OF SECRET SERVICE ROUND THE THAMES MOUTH.

By JOHN TREGELLIS.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—There is no need to see back numbers of this serial. The preceding chapters have been carefully re-written in order to make what has already been told quite clear to new readers.

For His Country's Sake.

THE central character in this wonderfully stirring story of a great peril menacing Britain is Hervey Milton, a clerk in the War Office. Now, Hervey is a very keen amateur yachtsman, and this fact comes to the notice of his chief, Sir William Hardacre, who commissions the young fellow to start on a mission—in his yacht the Javelin—which is to find out how it is that Government secrets, particularly those dealing with the East-coast fortifications, and the manner in which the Thames estuary is guarded, are continually leaking out.

It is apparent that some great European nation is secretly at work preparing to deal a great blow to the power and prestige of Britain. So, carrying his life in his hands, Hervey Milton, taking with him only Jim Goldhanger, a trusty boat hand, starts cruising about the East coast.

Here he goes through a number of exciting adventures, which prove to him that the power Britain has to fear is Germany, that her spies are at work fathoming our nation's most precious secrets, and that unless something can be done to check her, Britain will probably be at the mercy of her foe.

Controlling these German spies in British waters is a man named Staniland, who has built himself a house overlooking the Thames estuary. In his yacht, the Matador, Staniland is continually cruising around, locating the position of mines and forts.

Hervey's mission takes him across to the Dutch coast, where he falls in with a German gunboat, which he attempts to board. An officer, however, catches sight of him, and warns a sentry that a stranger is prowling around the ship.)

(This brings us to this week's instalment.)

How Hervey Rammed the Coal-hulk.

AS he heard the order from the lower deck Hervey thought it was all up with his scheme. He dived silently, and, coming up again close against the side a little farther along, sheltered by an iron chock, he clung there with no more than his eyes and nostrils showing, like a water-hen hiding from a dog.

"Here, over the side, fool!" repeated the harsh voice in German.

The marine sentry came hurrying forward, his rifle at the ready, and three or four other men, called up, peered keenly over the rails. But the chock hid Hervey from any downward glance.

"I don't see anybody, sir," said the sentry.

"Search, I tell you—search! I most distinctly saw a man's head in the water, and heard the stroke as he swam. It's one of those cursed Dutchmen, who are always prowling around us! If I catch him I'll put to sea and hang him for a spy!"

The three or four petty and warrant officers, privately winking among themselves, for they knew their commander was a nervous man, had a good look round the sides, and Hervey, who could neither see nor be seen, clung to the under-part of the chock, hardly daring to breathe.

"There's no one in the water," said a sub-lieutenant. "I think, sir, it must have been a seal you saw—the river's full of them. One came up alongside me when I was out in the boat last night, and I thought it was a man, too."

"Humph!" grunted the commander. "Yes, I suppose that's what I saw. Even a Dutchman would hardly swim off in this tide. Carry on the watch! Here comes that infernal fog again!"

The mist was indeed rolling up again, though not so thick as before. It made the gunboat look like a great blurred mass, and Hervey, who was beginning to feel the chill of the water, waited a few minutes, and then worked his way back till he was below the casemate again.

"I'll try it, all the same," he thought, "the alarm's passed away. A seal! Yes, it's a seal that's going to cook your bacon, and this gunboat's, too, my giddy commander!"

Some might have thought the risk increased by the alarm that had been raised, but Hervey reckoned himself the safer. Mad as the scheme had seemed from a distance, now that he was here Hervey saw how well the Dutchman had arranged it.

There was no watch near the casemate, and by the construction of the vessel it was easy on a dark night, and especially in a fog, to climb up unseen at that point and reach the quarter-boat where it hung in davits.

There was nothing to be gained by waiting. Hervey began to climb cautiously up the chocks. He halted as his head came level with the deck, and took a good look round. The marine sentry was approaching. Hervey ducked, and as soon as the man had turned back again he mounted the rail, drew himself swiftly up on to the upper deck, and crouched by the quarter-boat davits.

No one could see him—that was plain at a glance. Hervey put his hand over the gunwale of the hanging boat. The canvas cover was not on her, just as Jan had told him before he started on his perilous swim. Rapidly Hervey hoisted himself into her, and crouched flat on the floor-boards just as the commander came up the port ladder, with the quartermaster behind him.

"Tide's slack, sir," said the latter.

"Yes. Up anchor at once!" was the reply. And as the whistle sounded the wet mist came rolling across the gunboat in clouds. The commander and several of his subordinates were clad in oilskins, and the first thing Hervey's hand lit on when he crouched in the quarter-boat was a long boat-cloak of the same material.

"Here's luck!" he thought. "Now I can cover my clothes with something that fits in with the surrounding scenery, if I have to show myself. Very slack ship this! They seem to leave things where they like."

He cautiously drew the oilskin about him and slipped his arms into the sleeves. A German service sou'-wester lay by the oilskin. He put it on likewise. Then he felt the revolver in his hip-pocket, and thanked his stars the cartridges were waterproof. Forward the rattle of the steam winches cut through the fog as the cable was wound in.

"Just in time!" thought Hervey. "It's now or never! If they don't go alongside the hulk, as Jan said they would, I'll get hold of that wheel as we pass, and either they shall shoot me or I'll cut the hulk down, and take my chance of getting Sir William out of it in the mess! It's a cat's chance, but the only one. Time's flying, and unless I get him out quickly to make the danger known, it'll be too late for Britain! They've got him fast, and though I'm risking his life as well as mine, it's the only way, and he'd wish me to do it. There she goes!"

The bell rang sharply in the engine-room, and the twin-propellers began to churn the water astern. The silent quartermaster motioned to the single seaman, who was on the upper deck, to take the wheel, and the man obeyed. Hervey took good note of this.

"Will you go alongside the hulk, sir?" said the quartermaster to the commander, saluting.

"No, not to-night," replied the commander gruffly. "Full speed ahead!"

"Ah," muttered Hervey, "then there's no choice! It must be done. If I sink both vessels and their crews, it must be done!"

He felt a momentary qualm. It was a big responsibility, he was about to undertake. But just then the commander passed almost within arm's length of the quarter-boat, and as Hervey saw the heavy, protruding jaw and fierce eyes of the man he thrust all scruples from him.

"That's the sweep who tried to murder me on the high seas!" thought Hervey, with clenched teeth. "It was he who had the guns turned on the Javelin—a helpless yacht and unarmed—at the signal of the smack's crew. But for the fog the crabs would be supping on Jim and me at this moment. But that isn't the point. It's my country's safety, and not mine, that I've got to consider. The crews must take their chance—he opened the war between us!"

Peering cautiously over the quarter-boat's side, Hervey saw that the hulk was just becoming visible ahead. The fog was less thick than it had been at sea. The gunboat leaped into an increased stride.

The commander said something to the quartermaster, who saluted and went down to the lower deck, while the former walked to the other side to peer out towards the shore of the island. The man at the wheel was evidently a river pilot, and knew his way between the buoys.

He was holding on a course that would pass a length wide of the coal-hulk, that loomed black and forbidding ahead. Probably they meant to speak her as they passed, Hervey thought. Mentally he began to sum up the chances of getting Sir William out unhurt, but he stopped—they were too slender to bear thinking of. He was a desperate fugitive, with all the odds against him, bound to take the only chance that luck sent, remembering that fortune favours the bold.

The gunboat was now tearing up the river, she was rapidly nearing the hulk. As the commander passed to the other side of the deck Hervey slipped out of his boat, and, stepping up behind the man at the wheel, touched him on the shoulder as he had seen the silent quartermaster do. The steersman looked up. Hervey motioned him towards the lower deck. The man saluted, and went without a word.

Hervey's heart leaped within him as his hands gripped the spokes of the wheel. For ten seconds the gunboat ploughed on. Then, spinning the spokes round, he put the helm hard over as far as it would go; and the gunboat, swooping round in a half-circle, rushed straight upon the coal-hulk.

A startled cry came from the commander, and he came running forward to the oil-skinned figure at the wheel.

"Fool! What are you doing?" he shouted, trying to seize the spokes.

One sweep of Hervey's powerful arm sent him staggering backwards, out of the way, and a shout of alarm rose from the watch on the hulk. The gunboat's commander caught sight of Hervey's face, and, with a scream of rage

and dismay, pulled out his service revolver just as Hervey's was slipped from his hip-pocket.

The two shots rang out as one. Hervey's oilskin cap leaped from his head, and the bullet stirred his hair; the commander went down with a choking cry. Two more rapid shots Hervey fired at the men who, with fierce oaths, were rushing upon him from the deck-ladder.

Then, with a crash that seemed to split the very fog itself, the gunboat struck the coal-hulk full amidships, cutting half way through, and crumpling her own steel bows like paper. An uproar of shouts and yells arose, the gunboat heeled sideways, the black hulk began to lurch and settle, and Hervey, tearing off his oilskin, leaped into the water among a dozen struggling forms, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Hardacre! Hardacre!"

The Fatal Wound.

AS Hervey rose to the surface after his plunge he heard the answer to his cry—a clear-cut British voice, that rang above the guttural shouts and oaths of those in the water. The cry came from above, on the forward half of the reeling hulk.

"Jump!" shouted Hervey.

In the panic that followed the collision those on the hulk were throwing themselves into the water wildly. Which it was that he sought Hervey could not see; but he shouted again, and Sir William's voice answered him.

"Is it you, Hervey? Here, quick! I'm in the water, but my hands are tied!"

With all his strength Hervey struck out towards the voice, avoiding those who tried to clutch at him. The men in the water were clad heavily, and poor swimmers. They tried to grab at anyone they saw afloat, and thought of nothing else. Hervey caught sight of the dim face of Sir William, who was treading water with his legs to keep himself up, when another man, a strong swimmer, suddenly struck out towards Hardacre with a menacing snarl.

The moment Sir William caught sight of the man he tried to turn and face him; but his hands were bound, and he was helpless. Hervey, straining every nerve to reach him, saw a knife gleam in the swimmer's hand, and heard a thick gasp from Sir William as the blow was struck.

The knife was raised for a second blow when Hervey's revolver spoke, within two feet of the striker's face, and the man threw up his arms with a cry and sank. Hervey caught Sir William eagerly under the shoulder to hold him up, for his face was white as china.

"Has he hurt you? Are you wounded?"

"Free my hands," said Sir William faintly. And Hervey, rapidly stowing his revolver, and pulling out his clasp knife, felt for the rope-bound wrists and cut them loose. At the same moment a hoarse, commanding German voice roared through the fog:

"The Britisher! Make sure of him, at any rate! Don't let Hardacre go, you panic-stricken fools!"

"Can you strike out?" hissed Hervey, in Sir William's ear. "Cling to me, then, and we'll drive along with the tide. Don't speak again, or they'll spot us."

The friendly fog served them well at that moment for all sounds seemed to come from all points of the compass.

With a few strong strokes Hervey guided them out of the hurly-burly, where every man was yelling for aid, and the dim mass of the gunboat and the hulk faded out of sight. Immediately afterwards there was the sound of a great rush of air, a gurgle that might have come from the throat of a dying giant, and a mighty swirl in the tide.

"That's the hulk going down," muttered Hervey. "The gunboat will pick up the men, and then she'll have to go full speed for the shore and beach herself. Her bows are stove in."

"They'll soon be after us," said Sir William, his breath coming quick and short.

"They can't," said Hervey grimly, as he heard the squeal of the gunboat's davit-blocks. "There goes the quarter-boat into the water, the only one they've got. I drew the plugs out of her floor, and slung them overboard. They won't chase us far in her. You can hear them scuttling out of her already. Who was that who shouted to stop us?"

"Admiral Von Ritwald."

"My holy aunt!" muttered Hervey.

"But how did you come here, Hervey? What does it mean? How did the gunboat—"

"Don't waste your strength talking, sir. I'll tell you when we get ashore. You're hurt, aren't you? Badly, is it?"

"I think I can keep up till we get ashore, if it isn't long," said Sir William weakly. "The man touched me up with that knife. He was my warder on the hulk. They were going to take me up country for some purpose. They—"

He broke off, and Hervey saw, with anxiety, how drawn and exhausted his face looked.

"If only I'd got there in time to stop the hound!" he groaned. "Get one arm over my shoulders, sir: I can keep you up. We're out of hearing of the gunboat, I think. We must hope to find Jan—a man who's waiting for me."

He called several times across the water, but no answer came through the mist. The troubles on the gunboat were now a confused noise in the distance. The current swirled the pair along swiftly.

"I thought they said it was slack water, but the flood's still running up hard," muttered Hervey.

The fog had saved them, of that there was no doubt, but now it bade fair to be their undoing. Hervey could not tell which way to strike out for the nearest shore, and the estuary was fully two miles wide at that point, though much of its space was choked with sands and shallows, now covered by the tide.