

TWO COMPLETE NOVELS & ONE SERIAL

PLUCK

SENT TO COVENTRY,

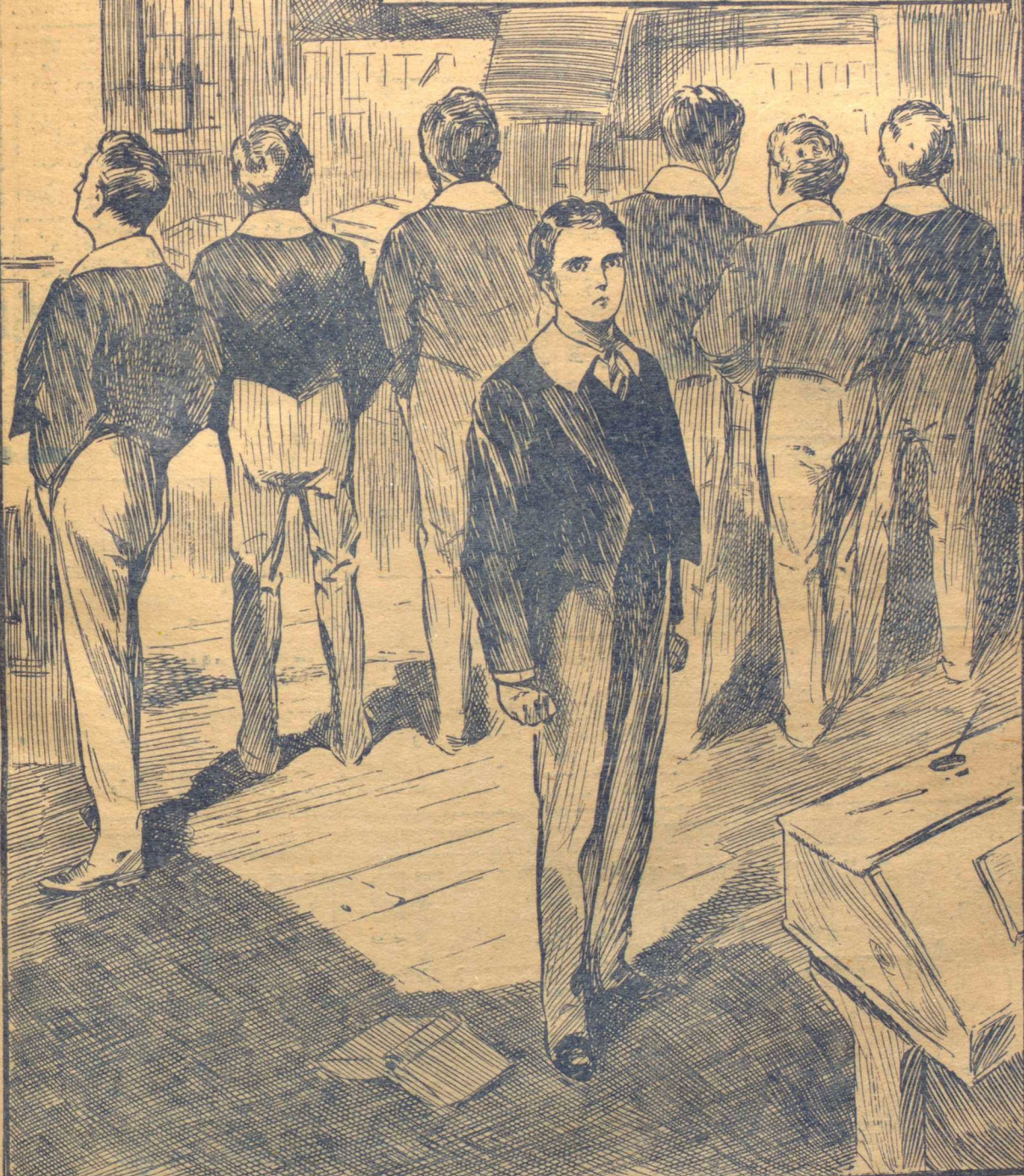
By CHARLES HAMILTON,

AND

THE QUEEN MAY.

By ALFRED BARNARD.

1^d



"I'M SENT TO COVENTRY BY THE WHOLE SCHOOL, AND NO DECENT FELLOW WILL EVER SPEAK TO ME AGAIN."
NO. 95. VOL. 4. NEW SERIES.

Library

Our Second Long, Complete Story.



SENT TO COVENTRY

A School Tale.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

CHAPTER I, The Captain's Fag

FAG!" Rupert Glyn, captain of Rookwood College, stood at the door of his study. There was a flush of anger in his face, and his voice was sharp and impatient as he called.

"Fa-ag!"

There was a patter of feet in the corridor. A diminutive, shock-headed fag, with a rather scared look on his face, came racing up.

The captain of Rookwood was usually a kind enough master to his fags, but he had a hasty temper, so hasty that the youngsters never really knew what to expect of him. But when his voice had a wrathful note they knew it was best to hurry, and Tommy Trimble came up panting.

"Yes, Glyn! Here I am, Glyn!"

"Come in here, you little rascal!"

Rupert Glyn stepped back into the study, and Trimble followed him in in fear and trembling. He gave a jump as he saw a fives bat lying ready on the table.

"Wh-wh-what have I done, Glyn?" he stammered.

"Don't pretend you don't know!" exclaimed the captain of Rookwood angrily. "Where's the banknote I left in my desk?"

"The— the banknote?"

"Yes, you young rascal! Give it to me instantly, or——"

"But I haven't seen it," gasped the fag. "I haven't, really, Glyn. I—I— Oh, oh!"

Rupert had seized him by the collar, and was shaking him violently.

"Now, listen to me," said the captain sternly. "Only you have been in the room besides myself. An hour ago I left the banknote inside my desk. Nobody could have seen it there but you. Nobody could have taken it but you. I don't want to be hard on you. Give it back to me, and I'll let you off with a thrashing. Where is it?"

"I haven't taken it, Glyn, I swear I haven't, and——"

"Very well, then," said the captain savagely—he had quite lost his temper by this time—"you shall have the thrashing first!"

"Oh, don't, Glyn!" yelled Trimble, squirming in anticipation. "I haven't— Oh, oh!"

The bat came down with a sounding thwack.

Thwack—thwack—thwack!

Trimble yelled and struggled and kicked out, and his boot caught the captain of Rookwood under the chin. Glyn gave a cry of pain. The concussion had jarred every tooth in his head and brought the water to his eyes. The pain gave the finishing touch to his fury. He thrashed the fag with a savage energy he would never have shown had he been cooler.

Tommy Trimble's yells changed to wails and sobs. But Glyn, blind with rage, continued to lay on the blows. Suddenly the door of the study opened and a face looked in.

"I say, Glyn, what on earth's the matter? Killing somebody?"

It was Wingate, of the Sixth. Glyn turned a flushed face towards him.

"The young rascal has stolen some money from my desk, and refuses to give it back to me!" he exclaimed heatedly.

"Trimble has? I should never have thought that of him. But, I say, old fellow!"—Wingate stepped into the study; he was a fine, athletic fellow, with a frank, handsome face, which was clouded a little now as he looked at the writhing fag—"you'd better draw it mild, you know. If he's a thief he ought to be punished, of course, but you don't want to half kill him."

It had already dawned upon Rupert Glyn that he had gone too far; but he was the last person in the world to admit himself in the wrong. Since he had become captain of the school he had suffered a little from swelled head, and he was not disposed to take criticism from anybody.

"I'm quite capable of looking after my own affairs, thank you, Wingate!" he snapped. "I can keep my fag in order without your assistance."

Wingate bit his lip.

"I don't want to interfere," he said. "I spoke more for your own sake than for Trimble's. You'll be sorry for this when you're cool."

"I'm the best judge of that; and the little rascal hasn't had half enough."

Rupert raised the bat.

"Hang it, Glyn, you're not going to hit him again?"

"I'm going to paste him until he gives up what he's stolen," replied the captain viciously; "and I don't want any meddling from you, Wingate!"

"I haven't stolen anything," wailed Tommy Trimble. "I never saw the banknote at all. I haven't——"

"Hold your tongue, and stop your lies!" said Glyn savagely.

"Now, are you going to tell me where it is, or shall I give you some more of the same medicine?"

"I can't tell you when I don't know."

"Obstinate little pig!"

Rupert Glyn threw up the bat, and, catching the contemptuous disapproval in Wingate's look, brought it down with extra force upon the unhappy fag. Tommy Trimble yelled and wriggled.

Up went the bat again, and the next moment it was twisted from Glyn's hand and tossed into a corner of the room. The captain of Rookwood stared at Wingate in speechless rage.

"You sha'n't ill-use the poor little wretch any more!" exclaimed Wingate determinedly. "Even if he's a thief you've no right to torture him, and you haven't proved it, anyway."

"You dare to interfere between me and my fag?" panted the captain.

"Yes, I do; and you'll be glad of it, when you're cool." Wingate jerked Trimble off the table. "Cut for it, young'un!"

Tommy needed no second bidding. He darted from the door, and fairly flew along the corridor.

Glyn hardly noticed him go; his rage was all directed against Wingate now. The latter's face was very serious; he knew that it was no light matter to interfere between the captain of the school and his fag. But he was not sorry for what he had done.

Rupert found his voice at last.

"You confounded meddling hound, how dare you interfere with me? By Jove, for two pins I'd chuck you headfirst out of the room!"

Wingate's eyes gleamed a little; but he answered with perfect calmness and good temper.

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Glyn. You were going too far. The young 'un was white as chalk. And the way he struck it out makes it look, to me, as if he was telling the truth. You may have mislaid your money somewhere; you can't deny that you're careless in money matters. You lost some of the football subscriptions once."

Rupert Glyn ground his teeth. He had certainly jumped hastily to the conclusion that Trimble was guilty, but he was not disposed to retract; and, in fact, all that Wingate said only made him the more angry and obstinate.

"I've had enough of your insolence," he hissed, "and I'll make you pay for your meddling! I'll teach you who's captain of this school!"

Then, as Wingate, with a disdainful smile, turned towards the door, the captain of Rookwood completely lost control of himself, and aimed a fierce blow full at his face. Wingate put aside the hasty blow with ease.

"If you want a row over this matter, Glyn, you won't find me shirking it," he said quietly. "But we'll leave it till you're cool."

And he strode from the study, leaving the captain scarlet with rage.

CHAPTER 2. Tommy's Champion.

"HALLO, George, old son, what are you looking so glum about, bedad?"

George Wingate was in his study. A fair-haired, merry-faced Irish lad had just entered, and Wingate looked up, with a nod and a smile. Tom Flynn and Wingate were great chums.

"Was I looking glum?" he queried. "I was thinking."

"Well, don't think, if it doesn't agree with you," advised Flynn, taking a seat on the corner of the table. "Anything the matter?"

"Well, yes, a little."

"You're coming down to the fields, I suppose? Come on, and get it off your chest as we go along."

"I can't come just yet, Tom; I'm waiting for somebody."

"Oh, are ye? Thin perhaps I'm in the way?"

"Not at all. It's only Trimble; and, in fact, you may as well hear what he's got to say."

Wingate related the scene in the captain's study, and the Irish boy whistled expressively.

"It was like you to take the little wretch's part, George," he remarked. "But it won't do, you know. Glyn is captain of Rookwood, and you had no right to interfere, according to the rules of the school. You'll hear more of this, I fancy."

"I fancy so, too. Rupert Glyn was wild. It's a beastly unpleasant business altogether. But I think there was bound to be a row sooner or later, for since Glyn got the captaincy he has put on no end of side, and a swelled head is one of the things I find it very difficult to stand."

Flynn nodded.

"You're right entirely, George. But what is Trimble coming here for?"

"The fact is, I believe that he is innocent. If he had had the banknote, I believe he would have given it up, rather than be pestered by Glyn as he was. Besides, he always seemed to me honest enough. I can't help thinking that Glyn has made a big mistake, and if so, somebody ought to stand up for that poor little chap and see that he gets justice."

"Behold the champion of the oppressed!" chuckled Flynn. "But you're right, old son—right all the way. I dare say you'll get the truth out of Trimble. Hallo! Here he is!"

There was a timid tap at the half-open door, and Trimble came in. The junior was walking rather painfully, and his face was still very white, and bore the stain of recent tears. He looked doubtfully at Flynn.

"You asked me to come here after prep., Wingate," he said.

"Right, kid! You can sit down."

"I—I'd rather stand, thank you, Wingate!" stammered Trimble.

Wingate smiled slightly.

"Very well, Tommy; please yourself. Now, I want to know the truth about this banknote business. Did you steal it?"

"No, Wingate, I didn't," said Trimble earnestly. "I didn't know anything about it till Glyn spoke. I never went to his desk."

"But the note's missing, right enough, or Glyn wouldn't say so," said Wingate, eyeing the fag keenly. "Have you any idea what could have become of it?"

"No."

"Think you might have flicked it away in dusting up, or anything of that sort?"

"No, I don't. Besides, Glyn says it was in his desk."

"You can't think of anybody who might have taken it?"

Trimble shook his head hopelessly.

"You're the only fag on duty in the captain's study today?"

"Yes."

"And you swear that you don't know anything about the banknote?"

"Yes, Wingate; I'm not a thief."

"I don't believe you are, young 'un, though until the note turns up it will be hard to prove that," said Wingate musingly. "Still, I believe you, and I'll do the best I can for you. You had better keep out of Glyn's way as much as possible for the present. You can go."

And the fag retired, a good deal comforted by the assurance of the powerful protection of a Sixth-Form senior.

"Well, what do you think, Tom?" asked Wingate, looking at his chum.

"Sure, I'm inclined to think as you do, that Trimble is innocent," replied Flynn; "but I don't see how it's to be proved. The banknote's missing, and Trimble had the run of the study, and the captain believes him guilty. It looks black."

Wingate nodded, and glanced towards the door. A member of his own form had just stopped, and was looking in. It was Kendal, a chum of the captain's.

"Come in, Kendal!"

"I've got a message for you, Wingate," said Kendal, rather awkwardly, coming into the room. "It's about the affair over Trimble."

"A message from Glyn?"

"Yes."

"Arrah! Thin get it off your chest!" said Tom Flynn.

"Glyn has talked it over with the prefects," said Kendal.

"It will be bad if two Sixth-Formers start slogging one another, especially if it gets out and becomes the talk of the juniors. So he intends to give you a chance to apologise."

"Really?" said Wingate.

"Yes. If you like to say you're sorry you interfered, and promise to keep off the grass in the future, the matter can end there. I hope you'll decide to do so, for the sake of the Form."

Wingate shook his head.

"I know it's bad form for two seniors to row," he replied, "but I can't give way on a point like this. I'm not sorry I interfered, and I'm not going to tell a lie about it. I'll say I'm sorry the whole thing occurred."

"That won't do."

"Well, I decline to apologise."

"Very well; then you'll have to meet Glyn."

"I'm ready to do so."

"As I shall be his second, I can make the arrangements now," said Kendal. "What time and place will suit you?"

"Anywhere you like, and the sooner the better."

"We shall have to keep it away from the juniors. Will you come down to Harrison's barn in half an hour from now, and bring your second?"

"Certainly."

"Then that's about all," said Kendal. "I'm sorry this has happened, Wingate, but it's best to get through with it at once. I'll tell Glyn."

And with a nod he quitted the study.

"Arrah!" exclaimed Flynn. "So the skipper's out for scalps, is he? Well, you can give him as good as he sends George, and knock some of the conceit out of him."

"I don't know whether I can do it," said Wingate frankly, "but I shall have a jolly good try."

CHAPTER 3. The Fight.

WINGATE was on the spot at the appointed time, with Flynn, who was to act as his second. They found Rupert Glyn already there, with Kendal, and three other Sixth-Formers who had come to see the thing through.

Rupert Glyn's face was hard and grim. His anger had not cooled. He admitted to himself that he had perhaps been a little too severe with the fag, but that, in his opinion, did not justify Wingate's interference.

That he, the captain of Rookwood, who was accustomed to regard himself as monarch of all he surveyed, should be interfered with and dictated to by his Form-fellow was intolerable. He intended to give the meddler, as he regarded Wingate, the soundest thrashing of his life.

He had not much doubt about being able to do it. He was older than Wingate, and a trifle taller and longer in the

reach. Added to that, he was one of the best athletes in the school, and fully Wingate's match in the science of boxing. The two had had the gloves on together more than once in the gym., and so far as skill went there seemed little to choose between them.

The captain gave Wingate and Flynn a curt nod, which was returned by one equally curt. Denver of the Sixth, who was there as timekeeper, made an attempt at peacemaking. He was a placable fellow himself, and liked to see cordial faces round him.

"I say, you fellows, must this thing go on?" he exclaimed. "You must admit that it's beastly bad form. Why not

"I'm perfectly willing to accept Wingate's apology," replied Glyn.

"I'm not willing to offer one, however!" exclaimed Wingate. "You used your fag brutally, and might have done him an injury had I not stopped you. You accused him of theft without the slightest proof, and I say out plainly that I believe in his innocence, and, as a matter of fact, you owe him an apology."

Rupert Glyn laughed. "Yes; I fancy I see myself apologising to a fag," he said. "The little rascal had the banknote right enough, and I'll make him disgorge it yet. But anyway you shoved yourself in where you were not wanted, and you've got to be set down. So let's get on without more talking."

So Denver's well-meant effort ended in nothing. The preparations for the contest were soon made. The two Sixth-Formers stripped and faced each other, and Denver took out his watch to keep time.

Wingate held out his hand in the time-honoured manner of the ring, and Glyn gave it a hasty touch. Then the fight commenced.

It was very unusual at Rookwood for two seniors to face each other in a contest without gloves, and as Wingate and Glyn were two of the best boxers at the school, the spectators looked on them with keen interest.

Both were cool, and steady, and determined. Both were cautious at the start, but they soon began to warm to the work.

Glyn's fist got home first with a sounding thump upon Wingate's jaw, and the latter staggered a little; but as the captain rushed in to improve his advantage, Wingate let out his left and caught him under the chin.

Glyn was fairly stopped, and they sparred harmlessly till the call of time.

The second round was hotter, both receiving heavy punishment; and when Denver called time again, Glyn's lip was bleeding, and Wingate's left eye was closing itself. Flynn made a knee for his principal, and sponged his bruised and heated face.

"You must get closer to him, my boy," he said. "The brute has a longer reach than you have, and he guards himself awfully well. I didn't think he had so much stuff in him before. You must get close to him, and hit him hard. He'll hit you, anyway."

Wingate grinned. "All right, Tom; I'll do my best."

And in the third round he followed his Irish chum's advice. Glyn attacked vigorously, and Wingate gave ground a little at first, then, countering a heavy drive, he rushed in and found his chance of doing some in-fighting.

He had got in some beautiful half-arm hits before Glyn could break away, and then the captain of Rookwood was looking and feeling decidedly groggy, and Wingate followed him up with a ceaseless attack.

Glyn's guard was now faulty, and most of Wingate's blows got home, and at last a tremendous right-hander on the jaw sent the captain flying into his second's arms.

But for the call of time it is probable that Glyn would have had to cry off in that round; but "Time!" saved him, and he sank, breathless and gasping, on his second's ready knee. Tom Flynn patted Wingate on the back.

"Keep that up, kiddo, and you'll do!" he exclaimed. "He won't give me another chance," replied Wingate, with a shake of the head.

Kendal had some advice to give his principal.

"Keep him off, Rupert," he said. "No more in-fighting, you know, or you're licked, and may as well throw up the sponge at once. If you can keep him at arm's-length you've got him."

"I know that," said Glyn. "He won't get at me like that again. I've had a lesson."

He was grimly determined as he faced Wingate again. He had had a terrible punishment, but it seemed only to spur him on.

At it they went again hammer and tongs, but through that round, and the next, it could be seen that Wingate was steadily getting the worst of it. He was unable to close, and the captain's longer reach told heavily.

"You'll go on, George?" asked Tom Flynn dubiously, after the fifth round.

Wingate had sunk upon his knee, almost dazed.

"Yes."

"You're not fit."

"I'm not licked yet!"

And Wingate toed the mark again with resolute courage. He was realising that his chance of victory was gone, but he was game to the last. He had not sought this fight, but now that he was in it he would fight on till he dropped.

The anticipation of triumph was gleaming in Rupert Glyn's eyes now.

In the third round he had been very near to defeat, but since then all had gone in his favour, and he was certain of victory now. And he pressed his attack, his heart beating with fierce joy as Wingate gave more and more ground. Just before the call of time Wingate went heavily to grass. Flynn picked him up.

With a grave and concerned face, the Irish lad sponged his chum's heated features.

"You can't go on," he whispered.

"I shall go on!"

When Wingate spoke in that tone Flynn knew that it was of no use to argue, and so he wisely held his peace. But he knew that his chum had no chance of success now, and could only add to the severity of his punishment. But, after all—as Flynn noted with satisfaction—the captain of Rookwood was getting almost as much punishment. Even if he won the victory, he would have cause to remember the fight.

The spectators looked on grimly as the seventh round commenced. It was only a question of time now, and it did not look as if Wingate could last out the round.

But he did. Twice he went to grass, and twice he jumped up again and went on.

As Denver was about to call "Time!" for the eighth round Rupert Glyn made a step forward.

"I'm quite willing to let this end here, without a finish, if Wingate cares to apologise," he said.

"I have said that I refuse to do so," replied Wingate.

"You acted like a beastly bully, and I did quite right to stop you. And I would do so again."

Rupert Glyn gritted his teeth.

"Very well, we'll finish, then."

"Time!"

The fighting was now in Rupert's hands. Wingate had made a gallant struggle, but he was defeated. Rupert's advantage in age and size was not great, but it was sufficient to weigh down the balance.

The round was the last. Rupert drove Wingate back with heavy, vicious blows, his opponent's guard failing, and hardly a tap being delivered in return.

Suddenly, with a swift upper-cut, the captain of Rookwood sent his adversary fairly flying. Wingate crashed down, and lay dazed, half stunned. Flynn knelt beside him, and raised his head and bathed his forehead in cool water. He did not rise at the call of "Time!" and Denver put away his watch.

Rupert Glyn, standing rather unsteadily on his feet, donned his vest and jacket with his second's assistance. He glanced at Wingate, who was beginning to recover from that last terrible knock-down blow. There was a struggle in the mind of the captain of Rookwood, but generous feelings conquered, and he crossed over to Wingate and held out his hand.

Wingate put his hands behind him.

There was a loud murmur of disapproval from all on the spot, mingled with surprise. It was not like Wingate to refuse his adversary's hand; he was usually the most generous of lads. But, as a matter of fact, the bitterness of defeat was very bitter indeed to Wingate just then. Added to that, he was dazed and confused, and hardly himself.

"You won't take my hand?" said Rupert. "Very well. I only wanted to show that there's no malice on my side, whatever there may be on yours."

"You've licked me," said Wingate, in a gasping voice. "But I'll take you on again as soon as I get over this. When I've licked you I'll take your hand, but not before."

Rupert smiled derisively, and put his hands in his pockets and walked away, followed by his friends. Tom Flynn and Denver remained to help the defeated champion back to the school.

Rupert paused to look at his face in a pocket-mirror, and he started at the sight he beheld.

"Scott!" he exclaimed. "I do look a picture! I shall have to take care that none of the masters see me like this. I'll have to dodge up to my bed-room somehow."

He succeeded in getting to his quarters unseen, and for a considerable time he and his chum laboured at removing the traces of the fight, with a good deal of success, though, of course, there were some marks that could not be removed.

When they had finished, Rupert presented a far more respectable appearance; but he was still anxious to keep out

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DOGGED AS DOES IT,"
A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by S. Clarke Hook;

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"
A School Story,
by Cecil Bullivant.

IN "PLUCK," 1P

of eight of the masters as long as possible. It was against all tradition for the captain of the school to fight, and if the story leaked out, unpleasant consequences might follow.

"How do you feel now?" asked Kendal, not able to restrain a grin as he surveyed the features of his chum.

"Rotten!" said Rupert frankly. "Wingate is a slogger, and no mistake!"

"He put up a good fight. I'm surprised at his refusing to shake hands over it. It isn't like him to bear malice," said Kendal thoughtfully. "I dare say he'll come round all right to-morrow, though."

"More likely he's planning how to get even with me," said Rupert carelessly. "I hate a chap who can't take a fair-and-square licking. He couldn't pretend that I was crowing over him. I didn't want to quarrel with him at all. It was all through his own meddling. I say, I don't want to be seen to-night if I can help it," he went on. "Come for a stroll in the Close. It'll freshen me up a bit, and keep me out of sight."

It had been dark some time now. The Two Sixth-Formers strolled out into the Close, cool and sweet in the September evening. It was deserted, and they strolled on, talking mainly of the coming football season, towards the cloisters.

The cloisters were the sole relic of the ancient religious establishment which had once occupied the site of Rookwood College. On summer days they afforded a deliciously cool retreat, but at this time of the night, of course, they were solitary.

Glyn and Kendal passed them more than once. The cool night air was refreshing to the captain's bruised face and aching head, and he was already feeling better.

"I say," remarked Kendal presently, "this row mustn't be allowed to interfere with the arrangements for the footer. We can't afford to weaken the school team because of any private differences between you and Wingate. He's the best winger in the school."

"Right," said Rupert. "I shall——"

He broke off abruptly. Kendal looked at him. "What's the matter?"

The captain was staring at the gloomy cloisters. "I thought I saw something move there. Hallo, hallo! Anybody there? Oh!"

There was a whiz in the air, and a great jagged stone, hurled from the dark cloisters, struck Rupert Glyn full on the forehead. He staggered, and fell full upon his face.

Kendal, with a cry of horror, threw himself down beside his chum, shouting for help. He lifted Rupert's head, and again cried out with horror. The captain's face was like chalk, and streaked with blood from a ragged cut on the forehead. For a moment Kendal thought he was dead, and his heart turned sick within him. But a second or two later Rupert's eyes opened, and he groaned.

CHAPTER 4. Trimble's Revenge.

WINGATE, as well as the captain of Rookwood, had spent some time in removing the traces of the fight, but with less success than Rupert. In the last two rounds his punishment had been terrible, and he was still dazed and shaky when he came into the school in the evening dusk, and Flynn helped him to his room. There the Irish lad did all he could for his chum; and it was a good deal. But Wingate's face was a mass of bruises and cuts, and his head was aching horribly.

He tried to smile as he looked in the glass. "It will be better to-morrow," said Tom consolingly. "Bedad, Wingate, I wish you hadn't stuck it out these last two rounds! There's no sense in following up a losing game, you know. Better get to bed now, and not show up downstairs again till morning."

Wingate shook his head. "I couldn't sleep," he said. "I've had a shaking-up, Tom, and my nerves are all in a jangle."

He threw up the window and looked out into the shadowy Close, and frowned slightly as he saw Glyn and Kendal pass in the light of a window below. Tom followed his glance, and he looked rather uneasily at Wingate.

"I say, old chap," he said hesitatingly, "I—I wish——"

He paused. "Say it out, Tom."

"Well, I'd like you not to have such bitter feelings towards Glyn. It wasn't your style to refuse to shake hands with him."

Wingate's brows contracted. "I stopped him in an act of beastly bullying!" he said between his teeth. "He was acting like a brute, and I stopped him, and he had the cheek to ask me to apologise. Now he's licked me—licked me fairly, I own. But, after all,

he had the advantage. I'm set down before all the Form. You're wrong if you think I bear him malice. It isn't that. But I shall tackle him again, and I will lick him, if I've got it in me. Then it will be time to talk about shaking hands over the matter."

Flynn was silent. He had not expected the defeat to rankle so deeply with one usually so frank and good-natured as Wingate. But it was clear that his chum had taken it very much to heart, and nothing he could say would be of any use.

"I think I'll go for a stroll in the cloisters," said Wingate restlessly. "My head aches fearfully, and seems as if it's on fire."

"You're not thinking of——" Tom hesitated.

"Thinking of what?"

"Nothing; only Glyn just went in that direction."

Wingate made an irritable gesture.

"You don't think I'm going to row with him again to-night, do you?" he exclaimed. "What rot, Tom! I think we've both had enough for one time."

"I suppose so; but you seem so queer to-night, so different from your usual self."

"It's all right, Tom. The cool air will do me good. I think I'll go alone."

Tom Flynn's face was sad and serious as he watched his chum go. He had never seen George Wingate in quite this mood before, and it seemed to him that ill would come of it.

Wingate breathed more easily in the dark, quiet cloisters. He was glad to be alone for a time. He had had, as he said, a terrible shaking-up, and he wanted to get calm again. He pressed his burning forehead against the cool stone of a column, and felt an indescribable relief.

The quiet cloisters, trodden centuries ago by generations of monks, had a calmness, a repose, all their own. Wingate felt its influence stealing over him; his heart and his head throbbed less wildly, the bitterness began to die in his breast, and his true, generous nature to assert itself. He had done wrong in refusing to take Glyn's hand; he realised that now that he was calm. Glyn had been in the wrong—flagrantly in the wrong; yet his action after the fight had not been tainted by any of his usual overbearing manner. It had been a generous act, and it was Wingate who had failed in generosity. Wingate felt his cheek colour now as he thought of it.

The sound of Glyn's voice broke upon his meditations. He was passing the cloisters with Kendal, and talking football. Moved by an impulse, Wingate made a step to leave the cloisters and meet his enemy, with a vague thought of reconciliation in his mind. And as he made that step he heard Rupert's voice call, and then the cry of agony, the heavy fall, and the crash of the stone upon the ground.

For a moment Wingate stood petrified, and Kendal's cry rang in his ears. He was about to rush out, when he caught sight of a dim figure slinking past him, and sprang forward and grasped it by the shoulder.

This, undoubtedly, was the form Glyn had caught a glimpse of before he called out; this was the one who had struck down the captain of Rookwood. There was a terrified gasp as Wingate seized the slinking form. The Sixth-Former uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"Trimble!"

"Is it you, Wingate?" The fag fell upon his knees, shuddering with fear. "Did you see—— Oh, don't tell—don't tell! For mercy's sake, don't tell!" He clutched the senior round the knees in an agony of fear.

Wingate glanced towards the spot where Rupert had fallen. There was already a crowd round the captain of Rookwood; he was not needed there. He gripped the shivering fag and dragged him up, and drew him away further into the shadows of the cloisters.

"Did you throw a stone, Trimble?"

"Yes. For mercy's sake——"

"Why did you do it?"

"You know how he beat me," quavered Trimble. "He accused me of thieving, and I never saw his banknote. The boys are all calling me a thief! Half the Fourth won't speak to me, and they lock up their desks now. And I never stole the banknote. He beat me like a dog. Why shouldn't I get my own back on him? You won't tell, Wingate?"

Wingate hesitated. The fag had suffered enough at Rupert's hands—too much; and, cruel as his act of revenge was, it was not fair to forget the provocation he had received. To betray him would be to expose him to fresh and more severe punishment, and he had already, in all conscience, been punished sufficiently. And, besides, he was so scared at Wingate's discovery of him, so overwhelmed with terror at the thought of being given up to Rupert Glyn, that Wingate was really afraid of what might happen if he betrayed the wretched boy. Trimble was on the verge of hysterics now, and Wingate had no desire to see him in a fit.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DODGED AS DOES IT,"
A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by S. Clarke Hook.

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"
A School Story
by Cecil Bulivant.

IN "PLUCK" IN

The British

"Let me go!" moaned the fag. "Promise you won't tell! never meant to hurt him much. Let me go, Wingate!"

There was a flashing of lights and a muttering of voices at the end of the cloisters. Wingate had little time to make up his mind. He released the fag.

"Cut it!" he said briefly.

"You won't give me away, Wingate?"

"N-no."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, yes! Clear!"

Trimble needed no further bidding. He darted away, and disappeared in an instant. Wingate remained in gloomy thought. It was the knowledge of the injuries Trimble had sustained at Glyn's hands which had led him to pardon the fag and promise to keep his secret. But he was very doubtful whether he had done quite right, and the doubt worried him.

Two or three fellows came running through the cloisters. One of them carried a bicycle lantern. They were evidently in search of the culprit. They stopped in stupefaction at the sight of Wingate.

"Wingate! So it was you?"

CHAPTER 5.

Wingate is Accused.

"SO it was you?" It was Kendal who uttered the words, in tones of amazement and contempt.

Wingate gave a start. For the first time it flashed into his mind that by allowing Trimble to escape he had run the risk of laying himself open to suspicion. But he had never dreamed that he could be suspected of such an action. Kendal's eyes were fixed upon him accusingly, and the other fellows all looked at him with the same expression. Wingate coloured with anger.

"What the dickens do you mean, Kendal?" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to accuse me of flinging that stone at Glyn? Are you mad?"

"No, I'm not mad," said Kendal grimly. "I think the thing's pretty clear. The stone was flung from the cloisters, and when we search we find you here, and nobody else. If you didn't fling the stone, who did?"

Wingate hesitated. He could have answered the question; he could have cleared himself with a word. He had only to mention Trimble's name. But his promise, his word of honour, passed to the trembling fag restrained him. He could have cleared himself with a word, but he could not speak. He realised that his compassion for the wretched junior had got him into an awkward scrape. But it was too late to think of that now. His word was passed. His hesitation did not escape the eyes of those who were looking at him. They exchanged glances, and each read the other's opinion in his looks. Not one there but believed Wingate to be guilty.

"You have no answer to make?" asked Kendal, after a pause. "Goodness knows, I don't like to believe one of our Form guilty of a beastly, cowardly thing like this; but if you didn't fling the stone, you must have seen who did. What have you to say to that?"

"Nothing; only that I did not fling it."

"And you expect us to believe that?"

Wingate bit his lip. "Can any fellow here say that he has ever known me to tell a lie?"

There was a pause. "No, I can't, for one," said Denver. "I hate to think you are telling one now, Wingate. But if you can't give any explanation—"

"You ought to be willing to take my word."

"That's all rot!" said Kendal quickly. "Somebody threw the stone from the cloisters. We find you here, and you won't say you saw anybody else here. The inference is plain enough, I imagine."

"Yes, it's plain enough!" said a weak, halting voice.

There was quite a crowd in the cloisters now, and all turned as the voice of the captain of Rookwood was heard.

Rupert Glyn was deadly pale, and there were smears of blood upon his colourless face. The cut in his forehead had been bound up with a handkerchief. He leaned heavily upon a Form-fellow's arm as he walked.

Wingate looked at Rupert. There were two or three lanterns going now, and plenty of light upon the scene. The captain of Rookwood returned Wingate's look, and his eyes were glittering beneath the stained bandage.

"So that was your revenge?" he said. "You refused to take my hand after the fight, and no wonder, when you had this in your mind. I don't think any decent fellow will ever offer you his hand again."

Wingate winced.

"So you believe I did it?" he asked, in a low voice.

Rupert gave a sneering laugh.

"Do you want me to believe that you didn't?"

"Yes."

"You must give me something a little less steep. I know you did it. You—you cur, you might have killed me! I shall bear this scar for months. But I'd rather be in my shoes than yours."

He turned on his heel and walked away. The other fellows followed. Only Denver lingered behind for a moment.

"I say, Wingate."

Wingate, whose eyes had been fixed moodily on the ground, looked up wearily.

"Yes. What is it?"

"I hate to think that you did this beastly thing—"

"I didn't do it."

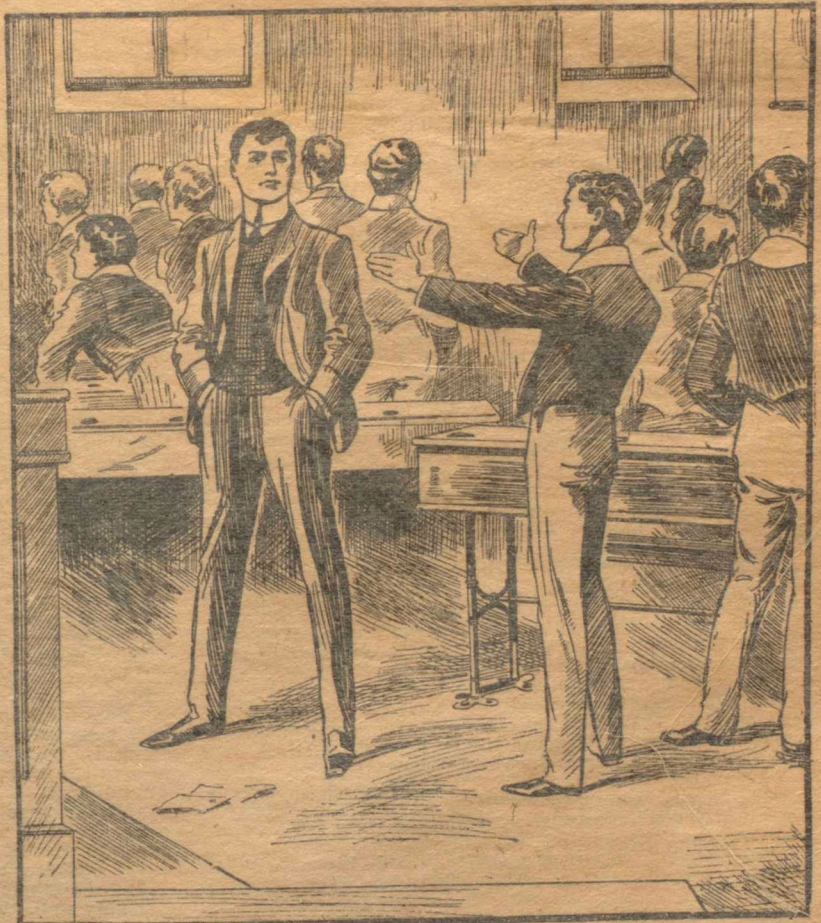
"But can't you give some explanation? You know that I, at least, will take your word, if only you explain—"

Wingate shook his head.

"I've nothing to say."

Denver gave a sigh, and walked away, without another word. Wingate drew a sharp breath. He saw that Denver, who had always been his friend, believed him guilty. What, then, must the rest of his Form-fellows think?

He remained alone in the dark cloisters. What was he to do? He tried to think. How could he clear himself of this terrible charge? Without betraying Trimble it was im-



"I can't help it. They call me a thief."

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DOGGED AS DOES IT,"

A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by R. Clarke Hook

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"

A School Story,
by Cecil Bullivant.

IN "PLUCK." ID.

CHAPTER 6.

The Sentence of the Sixth.

possible. He could not break his word. He must face it out. But what would that mean? The whole Form believed him guilty. They would certainly take some action. For the honour of the Form they would keep the matter, if possible, from the knowledge of the masters. But they would know how to punish him. If he were not "ragged" the least he could expect was that he would be sent to Coventry by the whole Form.

He quitted the cloisters and walked slowly to the school-house. He had hardly entered his own study and lighted the gas when Tom Flynn came in.

Flynn had been deep in a Latin imposition for the last hour, and so he had only just heard of the happening in the cloisters. His face was deeply concerned. Wingate had thrown himself into a chair in an attitude of the deepest dejection. He looked up gloomily enough at his chum.

"So you think me guilty, too, Tom," he said bitterly, as he caught the expression on Flynn's face. "You've joined all the rest against me?"

For the moment, indeed, Tom's belief in his chum had wavered. Wingate's strange mood that evening, his bitterness against the captain, and his going to the cloisters, after seeing Glyn go in that direction, had all recurred to Tom's mind with strong significance.

And Flynn's heart had sunk as he heard from Denver the account of how Wingate had been found alone in the cloisters after the flinging of the stone, and how he had refused to give any explanation. Was it possible, the Irish lad had wondered, that Wingate had allowed his bitterness against the captain to lead him to commit so dastardly a deed of vengeance?

But it was only for a moment that the doubt crept into his mind. He was too loyal to his chum to allow it to remain there, and he had gone straight to Wingate's study to see him. In spite of himself, however, the doubt had entered his breast again for a moment as he saw Wingate's look of utter dejection. He coloured at his chum's bitter words.

"No, I don't believe anything against you, George," he said quietly, and with evident sincerity. "I know that you couldn't do such a thing. I know that you didn't do it."

Wingate brightened a little. It was the first time he had ever known what it was like to feel like a pariah, and he realised what a boon the friendship of a true chum might be.

"You mean that, Tom?"

"Of course I mean it," said Flynn. "I don't even ask you to tell me that you were not guilty."

"I didn't fling the stone, Tom. I'd have cut off my right hand sooner than do such a beastly cowardly thing!"

"I know, old fellow. But who did fling it?"

Wingate was silent.

"You must have seen him, George; you were close upon the spot. At least, you must have seen or heard something. There's no reason for keeping it quiet, is there?"

"I have nothing to say, Tom."

"Not even to me?"

"Not even to you."

Tom Flynn was silent. It was a hard test to his belief in his chum—a very hard test, but his loyalty stood the strain.

"I don't understand you, Wingate," he said, after a pause.

"I believe in you, of course. But you can't expect the other fellows to do so. Glyn has been badly hurt. There will be some yarn to satisfy the masters, to prevent an inquiry, of course. But the Form will take the matter into their own hands. It's simply your word against a mass of evidence, and your refusal to explain anything casts doubt upon your word. Not with me, mind. But the other fellows naturally haven't the faith in you that I have. I don't want to press advice upon you, old chap, but I think you ought to speak out."

Wingate nodded. Tom's reasoning was perfectly logical, his advice sound; but he did not know the circumstances. Wingate could not speak out.

"Nobody was anxious to believe you guilty," went on Flynn. "Even the skipper would have taken your word. But they all know that if you were not the guilty party you must have seen him. Maybe you saw him, and didn't feel sure of him in the dark, and don't like to make an accusation on suspicion," he added, as a new thought struck him. "Is that it? If so, you've only got to say so."

Wingate shook his head.

Flynn was silent. He could not in the least understand his chum's reticence, but he foresaw what it would result in.

Wingate rose, with a gesture of weariness.

"It's no use, Tom. I've got a reason for not speaking out—a good reason. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. Whatever the Form choose to do I shall have to stand. But I don't want to drag you into it."

"You've no choice in the matter," said Flynn, with a smile. "I shall stand by you, whether you want me to or not."

"But if they send me to Coventry?"

"They can send me, too."

And the Irish lad meant what he said.

THE next morning Wingate noticed a change in the manner of his Form-fellows towards him. No one addressed a voluntary remark to him, and if he spoke he was answered shortly enough. He was not exactly sent to Coventry yet; the Sixth Form were waiting for something before they sentenced him; he did not quite know what. But it was clear that nobody wanted to have anything to do with him.

Rupert Glyn did not appear in class that day. The injury inflicted by the stone had been serious, far more serious than the revengeful fag had anticipated when he hurled it. A doctor had come to Rookwood to see to it, and he had recommended a few days' quiet. The captain's injury was, of course, the theme of some discussion amongst the masters. Rupert's explanation that he had knocked his head against a stone was true, but the headmaster was pretty certain that it was not the whole truth.

But Dr. Lane was a judicious master, and he knew when not to inquire too closely into things. It was pretty clear that he would get nothing out of Rupert, and he did not wish to drive the boy into prevarication by indiscreet questioning. So he dismissed the matter, excused Rupert from class work for that day, and left any further steps to be taken by the Sixth Form themselves.

That was satisfactory to all concerned. In this new atmosphere of chilliness Wingate passed the day, about the most miserable boy at Rookwood, but keeping up a brave face. He did not intend to let the others know how deeply their conduct wounded him.

After school there was a meeting of the prefects, and some other seniors, in the captain's study; but Wingate knew nothing about it, as he kept to his own quarters when he was not in class. He was trying to fix his attention upon a Greek exercise, when Tom Flynn came in, with a serious look.

"I'm afraid you're in for it, George," he remarked. "There's been a conference in Rupert Glyn's study, and they're coming here to interview you."

Wingate pushed his books away.

"Let them come," he said quietly.

They were not long in coming. There was a knock at the door, and Kendal came in, followed by Denver, Glyn, and three of the Sixth.

Wingate looked at them calmly.

"Hallo! What do you fellows want?"

"They want a bigger room than this, bedad!" exclaimed Flynn. "Faith, I'm glad there's no more of ye," he added, as the last member of the deputation filed in. "There's not enough chairs to go round; but two of you can sit on the table, and one on the window-sill, and, bedad, the rest of you will have to sit on each other's knees."

"Hang your jokes!" said Rupert savagely. "We've come here on business."

"Get it off your chest, then, darlint."

The captain of Rookwood turned to Wingate, who was silent, waiting composedly for what was coming. He had risen to his feet, his face a trifle pale, but quite calm.

"We've had a consultation, Wingate," said Rupert, "and we've come to a decision. We have come here representing the whole Form."

Wingate nodded.

"It's pretty clear," went on the captain, "that you threw the stone from the cloisters last night; but we're anxious to give you any chance we can to clear yourself. Last night you refused to explain yourself. Here's the case in a nutshell. If you didn't fling the stone, you must have seen who did. We've given you a whole day to think over the matter and make up your mind about it. Have you decided to speak out?"

"No."

"You have nothing to say?"

"Nothing, except that I did not fling the stone."

"Did you see anybody else in the cloisters?"

Wingate was silent.

"You refuse to answer that question?"

Still no reply.

"Very well," said Rupert, raising his voice a little. "The only possible conclusion we can draw from your refusal to speak is, that you didn't see anybody there. There was nobody else there, and you threw the stone."

"I did not."

"You've been given a chance to clear yourself, and you can't do it," Rupert looked round. "I think it's clear enough now that he is guilty."

"It was clear enough all along," said Kendal.

And the others nodded assent.

"Very well. The verdict of the Sixth is, that you be sent to Coventry by the whole Form, Wingate. It was a dirty, cowardly trick, and if it came to the doctor's ears you would be expelled, you know that jolly well. We are going to

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DOGGED AS DOES IT."
A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by S. Clarke Hook.

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"

A Book and
by Geel Jullit

IN "PLUCK" ID.

The British

keep the masters out of it for the honour of the Form. But no decent fellow at Rookwood will ever speak to you again as long as you stay here, and if you've got any decency left in you, you'll contrive to leave at the end of the term. That's all. You're sent to Coventry, and any fellow found speaking to you will be dealt with in the same manner."

"Begorra!" exclaimed Flynn. "You had better start dealing with me on the spot, then."

Rupert looked at him angrily.

"Do you mean to say that you're going to stick to Wingate, after what he's done?"

"He hasn't done anything that I know of, except spoil the beauty of some of your features, captain darlint!"

Rupert scowled.

"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed. "Anybody found keeping up any sort of communication with Wingate will be sent to Coventry along with him."

"There will be two of us, at any rate," said Flynn, "and I hope we shall be able to survive the loss of your illigant conversation. After all, captain darlint, I've sometimes found ye just a little bit of a bore, and maybe a rest will do us good."

Some of the deputation were grinning, and even over Wingate's worried face a smile crept. Rupert Glyn turned angrily to the door.

"Remember my warning!" he exclaimed. "Wingate's barred; but we'll give you the evening to think over your position, Flynn."

"Thank you for nothing!"

Rupert Glyn left the study, followed by the others. Flynn remained alone with his chum. Wingate's elbows dropped on the table, his face in his hands. He would not show weakness before those who had condemned him, but he felt his position keenly.

"Buck up, old fellow!" said Flynn consolingly. "I fancy the Sixth will come round in time. This will blow over, like everything else, if you wait long enough."

Wingate raised his head. His face was very pale.

"It won't, Tom. They believe me guilty, and if I were so they'd be right in sending me to Coventry. Do you think I'd speak to a fellow who was guilty of such a dirty trick? They're in the right; only they might have taken my word."

"Sure, you couldn't expect them to understand why you wouldn't speak out, George, when you wouldn't even tell them your reason!" said Flynn. "The only explanation is that you're shielding someone, and why you should do it is a mystery."

"But I don't want to drag you into this, Tom," said Wingate abruptly. "They meant what they said. I'm barred, and if you stick to me you will be barred, too. I don't want that. You'd better give me a wide berth. I'd rather."

Flynn shook his head.

"Rats!" he said concisely.

And that was the only answer he would give to Wingate's expostulations; and Wingate, though for Flynn's sake he urged his chum to leave him, was glad enough in his heart to feel that he had one friend left.

CHAPTER 7: A True Chum.

"SENT to Coventry!"

Wingate knew well enough what it meant, and yet at first he hardly realised how serious it was, and what terrible punishment it might be. It was difficult, too, to fall into the new state of things at the start. Quite unconsciously, forgetting his position for the moment, he would address some casual remark to someone, and would be recalled to a sense of his position by a cool stare or an insulting smile.

Fellows to whom he spoke would stare at him and turn away, or sit and look, unconscious of his very existence. At first the hot blood would leap to Wingate's face, and passionate anger would flame up in his heart, and he had hard work to keep his hands off his insulters.

But he could not fight the whole Form, and if he could have done so, that would only have made matters worse, and so he exercised continual self-restraint. Anger and resentment were useless, and he learned to take his punishment calmly.

The sentence of the Sixth was carried out relentlessly. No one spoke to Wingate, no one answered him if he spoke. Everybody seemed to be quite unaware of his presence in the school. He was absolutely ignored, and might have ceased to exist, so far as his Form-fellows were concerned.

It need not be said what a consolation Flynn's friendship was to him at this trying time. Flynn was his only companion, the only one with whom he could exchange a word. But the Sixth were not slow in visiting punishment upon the head of the one person who had defied and disregarded their decree.

The time of grace allowed by Rupert Glyn had expired, but it made no difference to the true-hearted Irish lad. He went on his way with perfect nonchalance and good-humour, and evidently had no intention of abandoning his chum.

Twice during the day he was warned, and each time he laughed lightly, apparently considering the matter as a joke, and the wrath of the Sixth rose to boiling-point.

After school the captain, with Kendal and a couple of other fellows, spotted him in the Close, and ran him down. Rupert's face was very grim. He intended this to be the last warning—the Irish lad's last chance. If he refused it, he would be sent to Coventry without further grace.

"Flynn!"

Flynn walked on, apparently not hearing.

"Flynn! Can't you hear me?"

Still Flynn did not look at the captain. He appeared to be quite unconscious of the proximity of the Sixth-Formers. Rupert Glyn caught him by the arm and stopped him. Flynn stared at him.

"I want a word with you, Flynn."

Tom still stared, but did not speak. Rupert was puzzled.

"What the dickens is the matter with you?" he exclaimed. "Are you deaf, or dumb? Speak, can't you, you silly cuckoo?"

Tom grinned, but made no reply.

"I warn you not to speak to Wingate again!" cried the captain. "Do you hear? This is your last chance. Do you intend to go on chumming with that fellow?"

Stony silence from Flynn.

"He's off his chump!" said Kendal.

Tom made a motion to depart, still not having opened his lips. The Sixth-Formers, thoroughly exasperated, seized him, and ran him up against a tree, and held him there. Tom wriggled, but he could not escape.

"Now explain yourself!" said Rupert. "What do you mean by playing the fool in this fashion, you howling lunatic?"

"Well, if you must know," said Flynn, breaking silence at last, "I've sent you to Coventry!"

"What?"

"I've sent the whole Form to Coventry," said Flynn coolly, "and I intend to keep you there until you do Wingate justice—see? Now sheer off! You're in Coventry, and I don't want to speak to any of you. You're barred."

He wriggled loose from the astonished Sixth-Formers, and walked away. The Sixth-Formers could not help grinning at the idea of one fellow sending the whole Form to Coventry; the idea was a bit novel to them. But they soon saw that Tom Flynn meant it. One or two more attempts were made to make him see reason, but he replied to expostulations only with a cool stare, without appearing to hear anything that was addressed to him.

And after that he was allowed to go his own way; but the sentence was enforced as rigorously in his case as in Wingate's; and the Irish lad, though he did not show it, was made to feel deeply the cost of his allegiance to his chum. Still, he did not regret the course he had chosen to follow.

As it happened, the inconvenience was not wholly upon the side of the two who were barred by the Form. It was early in the football season, and Glyn, who was football captain, was a good deal exercised in his mind about the team. Wingate was one of the finest forwards the college had ever produced, and Flynn played a splendid game at half. They were towers of strength to the First Eleven, but to play them while they were in Coventry was impossible.

It was a difficult position. Football had a great following at Rookwood, and the captain was expected to put a team into the field that would bring honour to the college colours; but how he was to face the various fixtures without Wingate or Flynn was a question he did not know how to answer.

To ask them to play, after sentencing them to Coventry, was simply impossible; and to put the First Eleven into the field without them was to invite defeat.

And defeat was the result of the first considerable match the college played. Rookwood were beaten on their own ground by three goals to one, and Wingate felt the defeat quite as keenly as Rupert Glyn. But there was no help for it. If he had offered to play, he would have been refused. He was "in Coventry," with no prospect of emerging from that unpleasant place.

CHAPTER 8.

Flynn on the Track.

A WEEK passed. The sentence of Coventry was still rigidly enforced, and the Sixth Form showed no sign of receding from the attitude they had taken up. And the rest of the school followed the example of the senior Form. The prefects saw to that, and any Lower Form boy who had been found disobeying orders would have been treated more roughly than Tom Flynn. The story was over

nearly all the school, however, and no one was inclined to dispute the justice of the sentence. So that even had Wingate felt inclined to put his pride in his pocket, and find friends in the Fifth, he would have found himself equally barred there. But he did not think of it. He had accepted his fate, and he accepted it with a quiet dignity that impressed his Form-fellows in spite of themselves.

His chief troubles were that Flynn shared his exclusion, and that the college suffered in the football-field. But the latter was inevitable; and as for the former, Flynn was obstinate, and Wingate had given up arguing with him. And, indeed, it was only with half a heart that he had urged his chum to fall into line with the rest of the Form, and leave him to go his own way alone. He hardly liked to think of how dreary the days would have been if Tom had deserted him like all the rest.

Meanwhile, Tom's brain was busy. He did not believe for a moment that Wingate was guilty of the outrage, and he tried to think out whom it could possibly have been. Someone had flung the stone—someone belonging to Rookwood. Who was it?

Flynn thought over every member of his own Form, and he could not think of one who could be supposed to have a strong spite against the captain besides Wingate. It was no member of the Sixth who had done the deed. But would one of a Lower Form have dared to raise his hand against the captain of the school? It did not seem likely.

Flynn puzzled over it, determined to find the solution of the mystery. Wingate was shielding someone, and Flynn meant to find out whom that someone was, and set his chum right before the school.

It was useless to question Wingate—useless, if he made a discovery, even to ask Wingate to confirm it. His chum evidently had some reason for not speaking, whatever it was. But the Irish lad resolved to find out the truth without his assistance.

And one day a sudden gleam of light came in the darkness. Flynn was coming out of the gym., when a junior bolted right into him, sending him staggering. Half a dozen others were racing at his heels, and shouting:

"Stop, thief!"

Flynn staggered against the door-post, gasping, most of the wind knocked out of him by the shock, but he managed to grasp the junior who had collided with him. The pursuers, seeing the mishap and fearing the senior's anger, melted away into thin air. The captive was wriggling in Flynn's grasp, but he did not let go.

"Ye little spalpeen!" said Flynn, recognising Trimble and shaking him. "Can't you look where you are going? What were you bolting like that for? What were the little omadhauns going to do to you?"

Trimble broke into tears.

"Why, what are you turning on the waterworks for?" exclaimed the good-natured Irish lad, in amazement. "There, I'm not going to hurt you, though you deserve a sound whacking with a fives bat for running into such an important personage as Thomas Flynn, Esquire! Here, back pedal, can't you, with those tears!"

"I can't help it," sobbed Trimble. "They call me a thief, and they haven't given me a minute's peace since Glyn accused me of stealing his banknote."

"Sure, and that's hard lines on you if you didn't steal it!" said Flynn, looking curiously at the sobbing fag.

"I didn't steal it, Flynn. I never saw it. Glyn must have lost it somewhere. He's always losing things. But he's given me the name of a thief, and the fellows call after me, and nobody in my Form will speak to me. I'll—I'll run away!" exclaimed Tommy, in sudden desperation. "I won't stand it. It's all Glyn's fault. I hate him! He's a beast! I wish——" He stopped suddenly.

Flynn gave vent to a low, expressive whistle. All the week he had been asking himself: Who could have had a motive strong enough to excite him to that outrage? Who at Rookwood hated the captain enough to do him such an injury in so cowardly a manner? He wondered now that he had not thought of Trimble. His grasp tightened upon the fag's collar.

"So you hate Glyn, do you, Tommy?" he said quietly.

Trimble gave him a frightened look.

"I—No, not exactly," he stammered.

"Was that why you flung the stone from the cloisters that night?"

Tommy Trimble shivered.

"I didn't!"

"You are lying, Tommy. You did!"

"I didn't! If Wingate says I did, he's telling lies," blurted out Trimble desperately; "and I'll say so before everybody!"

"Wingate hasn't said a word, Trimble. He's shielding you. I don't know why. But don't you think you're a mean little rascal to let him suffer instead of speaking out?"

Trimble had recovered some of his nerve. If Wingate had not spoken, Flynn could only be guessing, and whatever he guessed he could prove nothing.

"I don't know anything about it!" said Trimble. "You've no right to accuse me. I don't know anything at all about it. And—and, please, let me go, Flynn. You're in Coventry, and I mustn't speak to you!"

Flynn, with a grim laugh, released him.

"Sure you won't make a clean breast of it?" he asked. "Mind, I am going into the matter, and I'll find out the truth by hook or by crook. Now's your chance to do the decent thing before you're forced to."

"I don't know anything about it!"

"Trimble!"

It was Rupert Glyn's voice. Tommy started as if he had trodden on a snake, and darted away. Flynn strolled away in deep thought. He had not the least doubt that he had hit on the solution of the mystery. He thought he could understand Wingate's reason now for shielding the author of the outrage. He had probably given Tommy's hasty promise, and was bound by it. Flynn was sure that he was right, but how was he to prove it? There was the difficulty.

It was useless to appeal to the fag's better feelings. Trimble was too thoroughly afraid of Rupert Glyn ever to speak out. The fag was not of a dishonest nature; but bullying always brings out the worst points in a character, and a small and weak-natured boy was almost inevitably driven to lying by the fear of severe punishment. Tommy Trimble at the present moment was certainly not a pleasant object to contemplate. But what he was, bullying and in justice had made him. The fault lay really at the door of the captain of Rookwood.

Flynn was puzzled. He had thought at first that it was only necessary to discover the culprit; but now that he had, to his own satisfaction, at least, ascertained who was the guilty party, the task of clearing Wingate seemed as hard as ever.

"I'll speak to Glyn," was the Irish lad's final decision. "He can't refuse to listen, Coventry or no Coventry; and, besides, if he does I'll punch his head, and that will be some satisfaction at all events!"

And, having made up his mind, he waited until Rupert Glyn went to his study, and then followed him there. He tapped at the door and went in, and the captain of Rookwood fixed a glare upon him which did not abash him in the least.

"I want to speak to you, acushla," said Flynn cheerfully. "Sure, it's no good glaring at me, for I'm a hardened sinner, and impervious to it. You can keep your dignity to terrify your fags with. It won't have a bit of effect upon me, sorra a bit, my son! So sit down and listen, like a good boy!"

"You confounded, cheeky Irish beast!" roared Rupert, forgetting the "Coventry" in his anger. "Get out of my study before I chuck you out!"

Flynn coolly locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Rupert sprang forward, but Flynn laughed in his face.

"Now, captain darlint, I haven't come here simply for the pleasure of a talk wid you," he said, in his cheery way. "I want to talk business. I've found out who flung that stone!"

Rupert stared.

"What are you talking about?"

"Are you deaf?" asked Flynn pleasantly. "Sure, I spoke plain enough. I've found out who it was flung that stone at you from the cloisters a week ago!"

"It was Wingate."

"Not a bit of it! I told you so all along, but you were too fatheaded to believe me!"

Rupert gritted his teeth.

"If you've really got an accusation to make against anybody, I suppose I must listen to you," he said. "Get on!"

"Now we're coming to business. It was Trimble!"

The captain of Rookwood gave a start.

"My fag?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it! He'd never dare!"

"Well, of course, he never expected to be found out," grinned Flynn. "It was a mere chance that Wingate strolled in the cloisters and saw him."

"Did Wingate tell you this?"

"Not a word. I imagine the little rascal must have begged himself off, and cajoled Wingate into promising to keep it dark. You see, you had punished Trimble for what he hadn't done, so it was only fair that he shouldn't be punished for what he had done."

"If Wingate didn't say so, how do you know? Has Trimble confessed?"

"No; but he will, if he's judiciously treated. I suppose you want to have the truth out, don't you?"

"Of course I do."

"Then you must get it out of Trimble. No, I don't mean a five-bar—that's more likely to fetch out a fresh crop of lies."

"What do you want me to do, then?" asked the captain impatiently. "Mind, I don't believe for a moment that my fag would dare to do such a thing."

"Have him in and question him."

"A lot of good that would be! If he were really guilty he would be afraid to say so."

"Not if you promise him that he sha'n't be punished in any case."

"I'm likely to do that!" sneered Rupert.

"It's the only way to get at the truth. You can't expect him to confess, and have his hide tanned for his truthfulness, can you?"

The captain laughed.

"I suppose not. But I'd tan his hide till he couldn't squirm if I thought that he had really flung that stone at me! Look at the mark on my forehead! Do you think I'd let the little brute off after that? That is, if I thought he had done it. But I don't believe so. I've been very lenient with him. Most fellows would have had him up before the doctor for stealing a five-pound note, and got him kicked out of the school. I've given him a chance to bring the money back. He ought to be grateful."

Flynn laughed.

"I fancy it's little gratitude he feels towards you, captain darlint! You've made him an outcast in his Form, branded him as a thief, and thrashed him. And you didn't stop for proof before you did all that. I believe he was innocent."

Rupert yawned.

"Your beliefs don't interest me. And it occurs to me that you are in Coventry, Tom Flynn. Will you kindly unlock my study door and get on the other side of it? Otherwise I shall be under the painful necessity of dropping you out of the window."

"You refuse to do as I ask?"

"Yes, decidedly! If Trimble did what you accuse him of I'd never agree to let him off the punishment. But I don't believe it for one moment."

"It's an obstinate pig you are, Rupert Glyn!"

The captain shrugged his shoulders and pointed expressively to the door. Flynn unlocked and threw it open. His anger had been rising during the interview, and he was quite ready for an outburst; but he controlled himself.

It was Rupert, unluckily, who brought the vials of Flynn's wrath down upon himself by his next words. Had he remained silent Tom would have gone quietly away.

"You'll have to think of a bit better yarn than this if you want us to believe it," he said contemptuously. "I can quite understand that you're getting tired of being in Coventry, but you can't crawl out by accusing a junior. You had your chance given you, but you preferred to stick to a cad—"

Flynn's wrath boiled over. He swung back from the door, and caught the captain of Rookwood full across the mouth with his open hand.

Rupert Glyn staggered back.

"That's for your lies!" said Flynn savagely. "And I'll do the same to anybody who calls my chum a cad—yes, if I have to fight the whole Form!"

"By James, I'll make you sorry for that!"

The captain sprang forward, and the next moment the two were struggling.

CHAPTER 9.

An Unexpected Discovery.

TOM FLYNN was spoiling for a fight. The last week had tried his temper sorely. Now the captain's contemptuous disbelief in his assertion, and his refusal to put it to the only possible test of truth, had exasperated the Irish lad to the fighting pitch. His passionate Irish temper was bubbling over, and it was really a relief to him to come to blows.

Rupert was equally enraged, but he was not in equal condition for a conflict. Although a week had elapsed, the injury to his head was still painful; and that, added to the effects of his slogging match with Wingate, caused him to be a good deal run-down, and far less fit than usual. So that instead of hurling his obnoxious visitor forth into the corridor as he had intended, he found himself stopped and held fast, and the Irish lad forced him back heavily against the table.

"You—you hound!" gasped Rupert.

"Hallo, what's up here?"

Kendal and Denver had entered the study. Seeing the state of affairs, they seized Flynn and dragged him away.

Rupert stood leaning on the table, breathing hard.

"You hound!" he gasped. "If I was fit I'd give you the hiding of your life! As it is, it will keep! Chuck him out, you fellows!"

"Chuck me out, is it?" roared Flynn, now thoroughly roused. "Bedad, I'd like to see you do it, you spalpeens!"

"Then you shall have the pleasure of seeing it!" grinned Kendal.

With a jerk they got him to the door.

"Out with him!" cried Rupert.

Flynn was shoved roughly through the doorway. But the moment their hands were off him he returned to the charge, somewhat unexpectedly. He was quite wild now, and on the warpath.

A drive in the chest made Denver sit down suddenly, with a gasp, and a tap on the nose sent Kendal staggering against Rupert Glyn, who clutched at the table to save himself. The study table wasn't built to stand the weight of two sturdy seniors, and, as a natural result, it capsized, and Rupert fell, and Kendal sprawled over him.

There were books and papers on the table, which were scattered far and wide, and, unfortunately, an open inkpot,



This picture depicts an incident in the tale dealing with the adventures of Jack, Sam, and Pete, by S. Clarke Hook, in the issue of THE MARVEL now on sale. Get a copy now. Price 1d.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DOGGED AS DOES IT."
A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by S. Clarke Hook;

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"
A School Story,
by Cecil Bullivant.

IN "PLUCK." 1d.

which slid from the overturning table and alighted upon Kendal's nose.

Kendal gave a howl as the ink splashed out over his face, transforming him with startling suddenness into a very good imitation of a nigger minstrel.

Flynn, looking at the collapse from the door, burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sure, I hope you'll sort yourselves out all right, me darlins! By-by!"

And he walked out and banged the door behind him.

"Get off my feet, can't you, Kendal?" growled Rupert.

"What did you want to fall against me for, you duffer?"

Kendal was trying to wipe the ink out of his eyes.

"Who are you calling a duffer?" he exclaimed. "If this is the thanks I get for helping you, you won't find me in a hurry to do it again! What the dickens do you mean by having such a beastly gammy table in your study?"

"Oh, shut up, you two!" said Denver impatiently. "Don't you begin to row. I think we've had enough rows lately."

Then he grinned as he looked at Kendal. "Christopher Columbus, old fellow, you do look a giddy sight!"

"I'll break that Irish brute's neck for him!" said Kendal crossly.

"But it's all Glyn's fault. What did he want to pull the table over for?"

"Do you think I did it on purpose?" snapped Rupert.

"Look at my papers, smeared all over with ink! Oh, I'll massacre that Irishman when I get near him again! Go and get yourself clean, Kendal; and for goodness' sake don't talk rot!"

And Kendal, in a frightfully bad temper, quitted the study and made a bee-line for a bath-room to clean himself, sustaining a running fire of chaff from all he passed en route, and disdaining to reply to anxious inquiries as to whether he designed starting in business as a nigger minstrel.

Denver helped the captain to put his study to rights.

Things were in a fearful litter, for the drawer of the table had fallen out when it went over, and all sorts of nicknacks were scattered about the floor, along with the books and papers and spilled ink. Rupert and Denver sorted them out and gathered them up.

"What did Flynn come here for, Rupert?" asked Denver.

"He had no business to come, when he's in Coventry. What did he want?"

"He told a cock-and-bull story about having found out who chucked that stone at me!" said the captain snappishly.

"He's getting sick of Coventry, and wanted a row, I suppose—that's about the truth of it."

Denver looked up, interested.

"He accuses somebody of having done it?" he asked.

"Yes; my fag, Trimble."

"What's his reason?"

"He says Trimble did it because I was down on him for stealing the banknote out of my desk. I was really lenient to the young rascal."

"You were, if he was guilty. I suppose there's no doubt that he really did take the banknote?"

"Of course there isn't!" said the captain irritably. "He had it, right enough."

"Because, if he was innocent," said Denver slowly, "he's been ragged by the juniors as a thief, you know, and that would make him spiteful. If he was guilty, he might be glad to get off cheap; but if he was innocent—well, Glyn, if he was innocent, he would be wild, and he might brood over it, and get into a state of mind to do a thing like that."

"Well, he wasn't innocent!" growled Rupert. "And now let's let the subject drop, for I'm sick to death of it!"

Denver made no reply to this not-over-polite remark, but went on gathering up the things scattered on the carpet.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

"Well, you are a careless chap, Glyn," he said. "Do you always use banknotes for bookmarks?"

He picked up a little leather-bound account-book which had fallen from the drawer and lay half-open on the carpet. A folded banknote lay half out of it.

Rupert stared at him.

"What are you talking about, Denver?"

"Look here," said the other, holding up the book, with the crisp note sticking between the leaves. "I must say it's the beastly careless, Glyn; and if you're so careless with this note, you may have been with the other. I shouldn't wonder if you have shoved it somewhere and forgotten about it, and if Trimble never took it at all."

Rupert Glyn's face was wearing a decidedly worried look.

"Is that a banknote?" he faltered.

"Can't you see for yourself?"

"Yes. Is it a five?"

"Yes."

"The fact is, Denver, I—I had only one five. If that's it, it's the one I—I thought Trimble had taken. Oh, hang it, what a beastly mess!"

Denver whistled expressively.

"Well, you have put your foot in it this time, and no mistake, old man!" he said, by way of consolation.

Rupert took the book from his hand.

"I remember now," he said. "You know, I keep account of the football subscriptions in this book. I had the subscriptions in that day, and then the banknote came in a letter from my uncle. I meant to put it in my desk. I—I thought I had done so. I remember now I was called suddenly away."

Denver looked at him grimly.

"And, as a matter of fact," he said coldly, "you must have folded up the five in that account-book, and put it away without noticing it."

"I was in a hurry."

"Yes, and you were in a thundering hurry to brand a kid as a thief!" said Denver sternly. "Hang it all, Glyn, it was beastly!"

"You needn't rub it in," faltered Rupert. "I feel bad enough about it."

"But stay a minute," added Denver. "Let's make sure about it. It isn't possible, I suppose, for Trimble to have slipped the banknote into that account-book on the sly, is it?"

Rupert shook his head.

"No. I keep it in that drawer, and the drawer's always locked. I had just unlocked it to take something out when Flynn came in and started rowing."

"He had reason to row with you, as it turns out," said Denver. "To be plain, then, you put the banknote away yourself, and missed it afterwards, and didn't know what you had done with it, and jumped to the conclusion that Trimble had stolen it. And the poor little brute was telling the truth all the time when he said that he didn't know anything about it."

Rupert hung his head.

"I suppose he was," he confessed. "I'm awfully sorry about it, and I'll make it up to him somehow."

"The first thing to do is to tell the true story in public, and clear him of the suspicion of being a thief," said Denver.

"That for a start. It will make you look a fool and a hasty, hot-headed duffer, Glyn; but so you are, and there's no getting out of it!"

"Pile it on," said the captain of Rookwood, with unusual meekness. "I know I've made an ass of myself, Denver, and I deserve it all. Say what you like."

His evident contrition made Denver relent.

"Well, I dare say you feel pretty rotten about it, without my rubbing it in," he said. "I dare say I've said enough. But justice will have to be done. And there's that other matter. It seems to me likely enough that Flynn was quite right, as the matter turns out, and that it was Trimble who threw the stone from the cloisters."

Rupert nodded.

Since the discovery of his blunder, which had had such serious consequences, he was in a chastened mood, and more inclined than usual to take opinions from others. In fact, it was likely that the affair would be a lesson to him for his life.

"The question is, how to get the truth out of Trimble," said Denver thoughtfully.

"Flynn suggested a way," said Rupert. "He said Trimble would tell the truth if I promised him immunity from punishment in any case."

"You refused?"

"Well, yes; but the case is altered now. I own I did Tommy Trimble a wrong, and—and if he chucked the stone at me he was a little beast; but I have no right to complain. After what we've just found out it would be a bit thick to punish him for—for anything."

"That's true enough."

"So there's no harm in trying Flynn's plan, and putting the matter to the test," said Rupert, in conclusion. "What do you think?"

"I think you're quite right. And if we find that Wingate was innocent—"

Rupert coloured.

"It will be deuced awkward, after sending him to Coventry," he said. "But we want to get at the truth, anyway. If he's innocent, we shall have to beg his pardon all round, that's all, and I'll be the first to do it. I think we'd better have him in when we question Trimble," he added, after a pause. "I—I haven't much doubt now how it will turn out. Will you ask him to step over, Denver, while I call Trimble?"

Denver nodded, and left the study.

Rupert's face wore a far from gratified expression. He had always been masterful and overbearing, and it was not pleasant to him to have to own himself flagrantly in the wrong, and to eat humble pie. But at bottom his nature was generous. His faults lay mostly on the surface, with a good, sound British heart underneath; and, having made up his mind to do what was right, he did not hesitate for a moment to carry it through.

CHAPTER 10.
Set Right at Last.

WINGATE and Trimble arrived simultaneously at the door of the captain's study. Wingate was considerably astonished by the message from the captain of Rookwood. He had been in his study, listening to Flynn's graphic account of the late occurrence, when Denver came for him. Flynn accompanied his chum to the interview, wondering what on earth the message portended. Denver had not explained.

Rupert's brow contracted just a little at sight of Flynn, who was still grinning. But he remembered that he owed the discovery of the truth about the banknote to the scene the Irish lad had made in his quarters. He nodded to the two.

"Come in!" he said. "Come in, Trimble!"
The fag looked very nervously at the captain of Rookwood as he entered.

"What do you want with me, Glyn?" Wingate asked abruptly. "Have you forgotten that the Form has sent me to Coventry at your instigation?"

Rupert flushed.
"There's been a discovery made," he said awkwardly, "and there's got to be an explanation. I'll be glad if you'll sit down."

"Thank you, I'll stand," said Wingate formally.
The captain bit his lip and turned to the wondering fag.

"Tommy," he said, with an effort, "I've found the banknote."

Trimble started.
"You've found the banknote?"

"Yes."

"The one you said I had stolen?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Then you'd better tell the Fourth Form so, and perhaps they'll stop calling me a thief!" said Tommy savagely.

"I'll tell the whole school so, Tommy," said Rupert. He went on, with an obvious effort: "Tommy, I—I beg your pardon!"

Tommy Trimble could scarcely believe his ears. The captain of Rookwood College was apologising to him—to him, a junior fag! Tommy Trimble swelled visibly.

"Granted!" he said loftily. "Tell all the fellows, Glyn, and—and I'll overlook it!"

Glyn seemed to gulp something down, and Tom Flynn burst into an audible chuckle. But the captain took no notice of the junior's impertinence.

"I'll set you right with your Form, Tommy," he went on. "But don't go yet. There's another matter I want to speak to you about, before Wingate."

Trimble turned pale. His look at once sought Wingate's face, as if to ask whether the senior had betrayed him.

Wingate had given a start. He wondered what was coming. Flynn had told him of his talk with the captain, and Wingate wondered whether Rupert had come round to the Irish lad's way of thinking.

"Wh-what is it, Glyn?" stammered the fag.

"First of all, I assure you that I am not going to punish you."

Trimble brightened up considerably.
"Yes, Glyn."

"However you answer my questions, you have nothing to fear. I punished you for taking the note from my desk when you hadn't taken it. I was to blame, and I've owned up. If there's any reparation I can make, I'm ready to make it. Bear that in mind, Tommy, and tell me the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Do you know who flung the stone at me from the cloisters?"

Rupert's tone was grave and quiet.

Trimble looked helplessly from the captain to Wingate; but the latter kept his eyes steadily down, and would not meet Tommy's gaze. The fag's glance wandered back to the captain. Once he opened his lips, but no word came forth.

Rupert broke the painful silence.

"I have said that I shall not punish you, Tommy. I only want the truth. If you did it, and have kept silent for fear of the consequences, you can speak out. There's nothing to be afraid of. I give you my word."

"I was sorry afterwards that I did it," wailed Tommy, the ever-ready tears beginning to flow. "But—but you hurt me so much, and I was sore, and—and the chaps were calling me a thief. And—and I didn't mean to hurt you so much—I didn't, really. I just meant to—to get a bit of my own back, and—and I—I—"

His voice trailed off amid tears.

"So you did it?" said Rupert, drawing a deep breath. He turned to Wingate. "Will you tell us now why you kept silent about it, Wingate? You must have seen him."

Wingate nodded.

"He begged so hard that I promised to say nothing," he replied. "You had already thrashed him when he was guiltless. He had acted in a beastly way, but I didn't think it right to give him up to your tender mercies."

Rupert flushed.
"Of course, I didn't foresee that I should be suspected," said Wingate. "I don't know whether that would have made any difference, though."

"You can go, Tommy."

Gladly enough Trimble took himself off to tell the story of his established innocence to his Form-fellows, and to loftily refer them to the captain himself for confirmation. The fag had been through a hard time, but his ordeal was over, and by many an act of kindness afterwards the captain of Rookwood strove to make amends for his injustice.

After Trimble had gone there was a short silence in the study. It was broken by Rupert Glyn.

"I'm sorry I suspected you, Wingate," he said, frankly enough. "I'm sorry we sent you to Coventry. We were in the wrong, though, under the circumstances, I think you must admit that there was a certain amount of excuse for us. However, we were in the wrong, and that's all there is about it. It's all over now, and I beg your pardon. I can't do more. There's my fist, if you choose to take it."

And he held out his hand.

There was, for a moment, a struggle in Wingate's breast; but it was only for a moment. He took the proffered hand.

"I refused your hand once," he said. "I was wrong; and I may as well say that I had made up my mind to own to it, when that affair of the cloisters occurred. You've given me a pretty rotten time lately between you, but I don't bear any malice; and I hope we'll be better friends in future, and pull together, for the sake of the school."

"Hear, hear!" said Denver.

"Arrah, and thim's my sentiments intirely!" exclaimed Flynn. "Let bygones be bygones. I wouldn't have owned it before, but sure Coventry's a mighty cowl place to live in, and that's the truth. And now," he added, "perhaps we'll win the next footer match."

Flynn was right. With Wingate in the forward line the college team soon avenged the defeat they had sustained when he was "Sent to Coventry."

THE END.

(Next Saturday another grand school story, "The Catch of the Season," by a new author, who is making a bold bid for popularity in PLUCK.)

ALL OVER THE KINGDOM

ANSWERS' BONUS - TICKETS.

£50

OFFERED FOR TICKET - No Sd19103

£50

OFFERED FOR TICKET - No 62R0515

NEXT SATURDAY:

"IT'S DOCCED AS DOES IT,"
A Tale of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
by S. Clarke Hook;

AND

"THE CATCH OF THE SEASON,"
A School Story,
by Cecil Bullivant.

IN "PLUCK," ID.

Library