

blood. The Head said we were to tell you. We were coming to report ourselves in a minute, sir. (Sotto voce.) That's a score for Heffy!"

"Well, he deserves to score something, poor devil," said McTurk, putting on his shirt. "We've sweated a stone and a half off him since we began."

"But look here, why aren't we wrathful with the Head? He said it was a flagrant injustice. So it is!" said Beetle.

"Dear man," said McTurk, and vouchsafed no further answer.

It was Stalky who laughed till he had to hold on by the edge of a basin.

"You are a funny ass! What's that for?" said Beetle.

"I'm--I'm thinking of the flagrant injustice of it!"

#### THE MORAL REFORMERS.

There was no disguising the defeat. The victory was to Prout, but they grudged it not. If he had broken the rules of the game by calling in the Head, they had had a good run for their money.

The Reverend John sought the earliest opportunity of talking things over. Members of a bachelor Common-room, of a school where masters' studies are designedly dotted among studies and form-rooms, can, if they choose, see a great deal of their charges. Number Five had spent some cautious years in testing the Reverend John. He was emphatically a gentleman. He knocked at a study door before entering; he comported himself as a visitor and not a strayed lictor; he never prosed, and he never carried over into official life the confidences of idle hours. Prout was ever an unmitigated nuisance; King came solely as an avenger of blood; even little Hartopp, talking natural history, seldom forgot his office; but the Reverend John was a guest desired and beloved by Number Five.

Behold him, then, in their only arm-chair, a bent briar between his teeth, chin down in three folds on his clerical collar, and blowing like an amiable whale, while Number Five discoursed of life as it appeared to them, and specially of that last interview with the Head--in the matter of usury.

"One licking once a week would do you an immense amount of good," he said, twinkling and shaking all over; "and, as you say, you were entirely in the right."

"Ra-ather, Padre! We could have proved it if he'd let us talk," said Stalky; "but he didn't. The Head's a downy bird."

"He understands you perfectly. Ho! ho! Well, you worked hard enough for it."

"But he's awfully fair. He doesn't lick a chap in the morning an' preach at him in the afternoon," said Beetle.

"He can't; he ain't in Orders, thank goodness," said McTurk. Number Five held the very strongest views on clerical head-masters, and were ever ready to meet their pastor in argument.

"Almost all other schools have clerical Heads," said the Reverend John gently.

"It isn't fair on the chaps," Stalky replied. "Makes 'em sulky. Of course it's different with you, sir. You belong to the school--same as we do. I mean ordinary clergymen."

"Well, I am a most ordinary clergyman; and Mr. Hartopp's in Orders, too."

"Ye--es, but he took 'em after he came to the Coll. We saw him go up for his exam. That's all right," said Beetle. "But just think if the Head went and got ordained!"

"What would happen, Beetle?"

"Oh, the Coll. 'ud go to pieces in a year, sir. There's no doubt o' that."

"How d'you know?" The Reverend John was smiling.

"We've been here nearly six years now. There are precious few things about the Coll. we don't know," Stalky replied. "Why, even you came the term after I did, sir. I remember your asking our names in form your first lesson. Mr. King, Mr. Prout, and the Head, of course, are the only masters senior to us--in that way."

"Yes, we've changed a good deal--in Common-room."

"Huh!" said Beetle with a grunt. "They came here, an' they went away to get married. Jolly good riddance, too!"

"Doesn't our Beetle hold with matrimony?"

"No, Padre; don't make fun of me. I've met chaps in the holidays who've got married house-masters. It's perfectly awful! They have babies and teething and measles and all that sort of thing right bung in the school; and the masters' wives give tea-parties--tea-parties, Padre!--and ask the chaps to breakfast."

"That don't matter so much," said Stalky. "But the house-masters let

their houses alone, and they leave everything to the prefects. Why, in one school, a chap told me, there were big baize doors and a passage about a mile long between the house and the master's house. They could do just what they pleased."

"Satan rebuking sin with a vengeance."

"Oh, larks are right enough; but you know what we mean, Padre. After a bit it gets worse an' worse. Then there's a big bust-up and a row that gets into the papers, and a lot of chaps are expelled, you know."

"Always the wrong un's; don't forget that. Have a cup of cocoa, Padre?" said McTurk with the kettle.

"No, thanks; I'm smoking. Always the wrong 'uns? Pro-ceed, my Stalky."

"And then"--Stalky warmed to the work--"everybody says, 'Who'd ha' thought it? Shockin' boys! Wicked little kids!' It all comes of havin' married house-masters, I think."

"A Daniel come to judgment."

"But it does," McTurk interrupted. "I've met chaps in the holidays, an' they've told me the same thing. It looks awfully pretty for one's people to see--a nice separate house with a nice lady in charge, an' all that. But it isn't. It takes the house-masters off their work, and it gives

the prefects a heap too much power, an'--an'--it rots up everything. You see, it isn't as if we were just an ordinary school. We take crammers' rejections as well as good little boys like Stalky. We've got to do that to make our name, of course, and we get 'em into Sandhurst somehow or other, don't we?"

"True, O Turk. Like a book thou talkest, Turkey."

"And so we want rather different masters, don't you think so, to other places? We aren't like the rest of the schools."

"It leads to all sorts of bullyin', too, a chap told me," said Beetle.

"Well, you do need most of a single man's time, I must say." The Reverend John considered his hosts critically. "But do you never feel that the world--the Common-room--is too much with you sometimes?"

"Not exactly--in summer, anyhow." Stalky's eye roved contentedly to the window. "Our bounds are pretty big, too, and they leave us to ourselves a good deal."

"For example, here am I sitting in your study, very much in your way, eh?"

"Indeed you aren't, Padre. Sit down. Don't go, sir. You know we're glad whenever you come."

There was no doubting the sincerity of the voices. The Reverend John flushed a little with pleasure and refilled his briar.

"And we generally know where the Common-room are," said Beetle triumphantly. "Didn't you come through our lower dormitories last night after ten, sir?"

"I went to smoke a pipe with your house-master. No, I didn't give him any impressions. I took a short cut through your dormitories."

"I sniffed a whiff of 'baccy, this mornin'. Yours is stronger than Mr. Prout's. I knew," said Beetle, wagging his head.

"Good heavens!" said the Reverend John absently. It was some years before Beetle perceived that this was rather a tribute to innocence than observation. The long, light, blindless dormitories, devoid of inner doors, were crossed at all hours of the night by masters visiting one another; for bachelors sit up later than married folk. Beetle had never dreamed that there might be a purpose in this steady policing.

"Talking about bullying," the Reverend John resumed, "you all caught it pretty hot when you were fags, didn't you?"

"Well, we must have been rather awful little beasts," said Beetle, looking serenely over the gulf between eleven and sixteen. "My Hat, what

bullies they were then--Fairburn, 'Gobby' Maunsell, and all that gang!"

"Member when 'Gobby' called us the Three Blind Mice, and we had to get up on the lockers and sing while he buzzed ink-pots at us?" said Stalky.

"They were bullies if you like!"

"But there isn't any of it now," said McTurk soothingly.

"That's where you make a mistake. We're all inclined to say that everything is all right as long we aren't ourselves hurt. I sometimes wonder if it is extinct--bullying."

"Fags bully each other horrid; but the upper forms are supposed to be swottin' for exams. They've got something else to think about," said Beetle.

"Why? What do you think?" Stalky was watching the chaplain's face.

"I have my doubts." Then, explosively, "On my word, for three moderately intelligent boys you aren't very observant. I suppose you were too busy making things warm for your house-master to see what lay under your noses when you were in the form-rooms last week?"

"What, sir? I--I swear we didn't see anything," said Beetle.

"Then I'd advise you to look. When a little chap is whimpering in a



corner and wears his clothes like rags, and never does any work, and is notoriously the dirtiest little 'corridor-caution' in the Coll., something's wrong somewhere."

"That's Clewer," said McTurk under his breath.

"Yes, Clewer. He comes to me for his French. It's his first term, and he's almost as complete a wreck as you were, Beetle. He's not naturally clever, but he has been hammered till he's nearly an idiot."

"Oh, no. They sham silly to get off more tickings," said Beetle. "I know that."

"I've never actually seen him knocked about," said the Reverend John.

"The genuine article don't do that in public," said Beetle. "Fairburn never touched me when any one was looking on."

"You needn't swagger about it, Beetle," said McTurk. "We all caught it in our time."

"But I got it worse than any one," said Beetle. "If you want an authority on bullyin', Padre, come to me. Corkscrews--brush-drill keys--head-knucklin'--arm-twistin'--rockin'--Ag Ags--and all the rest of it."

"Yes. I do want you as an authority, or rather I want your authority to stop it--all of you."

"What about Abana and Pharpar, Padre--Harrison and Craye? They are Mr. Prout's pets," said McTurk a little bitterly. "We aren't even sub-prefects."

"I've considered that, but on the other hand, since most bullying is mere thoughtlessness--"

"Not one little bit of it, Padre," said McTurk. "Bullies like bullyin'. They mean it. They think it up in lesson and practise it in the quarters."

"Never mind. If the thing goes up to the prefects it may make another house-row. You've had one already. Don't laugh. Listen to me. I ask you--my own Tenth Legion--to take the thing up quietly. I want little Clewer made to look fairly clean and decent--"

"Blowed if I wash him!" whispered Stalky.

"Decent and self-respecting. As for the other boy, whoever he is, you can use your influence"--a purely secular light flickered in the chaplain's eye--"in any way you please to--to dissuade him. That's all. I'll leave it to you. Good-night, mes enfants."

"Well, what are we goin' to do?" Number Five stared at each other.

"Young Clewer would give his eyes for a place to be quiet in. I know that," said Beetle. "If we made him a study-fag, eh?"

"No!" said McTurk firmly. "He's a dirty little brute, and he'd mess up everything. Besides, we ain't goin' to have any beastly Erickin'. D'you want to walk about with your arm round his neck?"

"He'd clean out the jam-pots, anyhow; an' the burnt-porridge saucepan--it's filthy now."

"Not good enough," said Stalky, bringing up both heels with a crash on the table. "If we find the merry jester who's been bullyin' him an' make him happy, that'll be all right. Why didn't we spot him when we were in the form-rooms, though?"

"Maybe a lot of fags have made a dead set at Clewer. They do that sometimes."

"Then we'll have to kick the whole of the lower school in our house--on spec. Come on," said McTurk.

"Keep your hair on! We mustn't make a fuss about the biznai. Whoever it is he's kept quiet or we'd have seen him," said Stalky. "We'll walk round and sniff about till we're sure."

They drew the house form-rooms, accounting for every junior and senior against whom they had suspicions; investigated, at Beetle's suggestion, the lavatories and box-rooms, but without result. Everybody seemed to be present save Clewer.

"Rum!" said Stalky, pausing outside a study door. "Golly!"

A thin piping mixed with tears came muffled through the panels.

"As beautiful Kitty one morning was tripping--"

"Louder, you young devil, or I'll buzz a book at you!"

"With a pitcher of milk--"

Oh, Campbell, please don't!

'To the fair of--"

A book crashed on something soft, and squeals arose.

"Well, I never thought it was a study-chap, anyhow. That accounts for our not spotting him," said Beetle. "Sefton and Campbell are rather hefty chaps to tackle. Besides, one can't go into their study like a form-room."

"What swine!" McTurk listened. "Where's the fun of it? I suppose

Clewer's faggin' for them."

"They aren't prefects. That's one good job," said Stalky, with his war-grin. "Sefton and Campbell! Um! Campbell and Sefton! Ah! One of 'em's a crammer's pup."

The two were precocious hairy youths between seventeen and eighteen, sent to the school in despair by parents who hoped that six months' steady cram might, perhaps, jockey them into Sandhurst. Nominally they were in Mr. Prout's house; actually they were under the Head's eye; and since he was very careful never to promote strange new boys to prefectships, they considered they had a grievance against the school. Sefton had spent three months with a London crammer, and the tale of his adventures there lost nothing in the telling. Campbell, who had a fine taste in clothes and a fluent vocabulary, followed his lead in looking down loftily on the rest of the world. This was only their second term, and the school, used to what it profanely called "crammers' pups," had treated them with rather galling reserve. But their whiskers--Sefton owned a real razor--and their mustaches were beyond question impressive.

"Shall we go in an' dissuade 'em?" McTurk asked. "I've never had much to do with 'em, but I'll bet my hat Campbell's a funk."

"No--o! That's oratio directa," said Stalky, shaking his head. "I like oratio obliqua. 'Sides, where'd our moral influence be then? Think o' that!"

"Rot! What are you goin' to do?" Beetle turned into Lower Number Nine form-room, next door to the study.

"Me?" The lights of war flickered over Stalky's face. "Oh, I want to jape with 'em. Shut up a bit!"

He drove his hands into his pockets and stared out of window at the sea, whistling between his teeth. Then a foot tapped the floor; one shoulder lifted; he wheeled, and began the short quick double-shuffle--the war-dance of Stalky in meditation. Thrice he crossed the empty form-room, with compressed lips and expanded nostrils, swaying to the quick-step. Then he halted before the dumb Beetle and softly knuckled his bead, Beetle bowing to the strokes. McTurk nursed one knee and rocked to and fro. They could hear Clewer howling as though his heart would break.

"Beetle is the sacrifice," Stalky said at last, "I'm sorry for you, Beetle. 'Member Galton's 'Art of Travel' [one of the forms had been studying that pleasant work] an' the kid whose bleatin' excited the tiger?"

"Oh, curse!" said Beetle uneasily. It was not his first season as a sacrifice. "Can't you get on without me?"

"'Fraid not, Beetle, dear. You've got to be bullied by Turkey an' me.

The more you howl, o' course, the better it'll be. Turkey, go an' covet a stump and a box-rope from somewhere. We'll tie him up for a kill--a' la Galton. 'Member when 'Molly' Fairburn made us cock-fight with our shoes off, an' tied up our knees?"

"But that hurt like sin."

"Course it did. What a clever chap you are, Beetle! Turkey'll knock you all over the place. 'Member we've had a big row all round, an' I've trapped you into doin' this. Lend us your wipe." Beetle was trussed for cock-fighting; but, in addition to the transverse stump between elbow and knee, His knees were bound with a box-rope. In this posture, at a push from Stalky he rolled over sideways, covering himself with dust.

"Ruffle his hair, Turkey. Now you get down, too. 'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' You two are in such a sweatin' wax with me that you only curse. 'Member that. I'll tickle you up with a stump. You'll have to blub, Beetle."

"Right O! I'll work up to it in half a shake," said Beetle.

"Now begin--and remember the bleatin' o' the kid."

"Shut up, you brutes! Let me up! You've nearly cut my knees off. Oh, you are beastly cads! Do shut up. 'Tisn't a joke!" Beetle's protest was, in tone, a work of art.

"Give it to him, Turkey! Kick him! Roll him over! Kill him! Don't funk, Beetle, you brute. Kick him again, Turkey."

"He's not blubbin' really. Roll up, Beetle, or I'll kick you into the fender," roared McTurk. They made a hideous noise among them, and the bait allured their quarry.

"Hullo! What's the giddy jest?" Sefton and Campbell entered to find Beetle on his side, his head against the fender, weeping copiously, while McTurk prodded him in the back with his toes.

"It's only Beetle," Stalky explained. "He's shammin' hurt. I can't get Turkey to go for him properly." Sefton promptly kicked both boys, and his face lighted. "All right, I'll attend to 'em. Get up an' cock-fight, you two. Give me the stump. I'll tickle 'em. Here's a giddy jest! Come on, Campbell. Let's cook 'em."

Then McTurk turned on Stalky and called him very evil names.

"You said you were goin' to cock-fight too, Stalky. Come on!"

"More ass you for believin' me, then!" shrieked Stalky.

"Have you chaps had a row?" said Campbell. "Row?" said Stalky. "Huh! I'm only educatin' them. D'you know anythin' about cock-fighting, Seffy?"



"Do I know? Why, at Maclagan's, where I was crammin' in town, we used to cock-fight in his drawing-room, and little Maclagan daren't say anything. But we were just the same as men there, of course. Do I know? I'll show you."

"Can't I get up?" moaned Beetle, as Stalky sat on his shoulder.

"Don't jaw, you fat piffler. You're going to fight Seffy."

"He'll slay me!"

"Oh, lug 'em into our study," said Campbell. "It's nice an' quiet in there. I'll cock-fight Turkey. This is an improvement on young Clewer."

"Right O! I move it's shoes-off for them an' shoes-on for us," said Sefton joyously, and the two were flung down on the study floor. Stalky rolled them behind an arm-chair. "Now I'll tie you two up an' direct the bull-fight. Golly, what wrists you have, Seffy. They're too thick for a wipe; got a box-rope?" said he.

"Lots in the corner," Sefton replied. "Hurry up! Stop blubbin', you brute, Beetle. We're goin' to have a giddy campaign. Losers have to sing for the winners--sing odes in honor of the conqueror. You call yourself a beastly poet, don't you, Beetle? I'll poet you."

He wriggled into position by Campbell's side. Swiftly and scientifically the stumps were thrust through the natural crooks, and the wrists tied with well-stretched box-ropes to an accompaniment of insults from McTurk, bound, betrayed, and voluble behind the chair. Stalky set away Campbell and Sefton, and strode over to his allies, locking the door on the way.

"And that's all right," said he in a changed voice.

"What the devil--?" Sefton began. Beetle's false tears had ceased; McTurk, smiling, was on his feet. Together they bound the knees and ankles of the enemy even more straitly.

Stalky took the arm-chair and contemplated the scene with his blandest smile. A man trussed for cock-fighting is, perhaps, the most helpless thing in the world.

"The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' Oh, you frabjous asses!"

He lay back and laughed till he could no more. The victims took in the situation but slowly. "We'll give you the finest lickin' you ever had in your young lives when we get up!" thundered Sefton from the floor.

"You'll laugh the other side of your mouth before you've done. What the deuce d'you mean by this?"

"You'll see in two shakes," said McTurk. "Don't swear like that. What we want to know is, why you two hulkin' swine have been bullyin' Clewer?"

"It's none of your business."

"What did you bully Clewer for?" The question was repeated with maddening iteration by each in turn. They knew their work.

"Because we jolly well chose!" was the answer at last. "Let's get up." Even then they could not realize the game.

"Well, now we're goin' to bully you because we jolly well choose. We're goin' to be just as fair to you as you were to Clewer. He couldn't do anything against you. You can't do anything to us. Odd, ain't it?"

"Can't we? You wait an' see."

"Ah," said Beetle reflectively, "that shows you've never been properly jested with. A public lickin' ain't in it with a gentle jape. Bet a bob you'll weep an' promise anything."

"Look here, young Beetle, we'll half kill you when we get up. I'll promise you that, at any rate."

"You're going to be half killed first, though. Did you give Clewer Head-knuckles?"

"Did you give Clewer Head-knuckles?" McTurk echoed. At the twentieth

repetition--no boy can stand the torture of one unvarying query, which is the essence of bullying--came confession.

"We did, confound you!"

"Then you'll be knuckled;" and knuckled they were, according to ancient experience. Head-knuckling is no trifle; "Molly" Fairburn of the old days could not have done better.

"Did you give Clewer Brush-drill?" This time the question was answered sooner, and Brush-drill was dealt out for the space of five minutes by Stalky's watch. They could not even writhe in their bonds. No brush is employed in Brush-drill.

"Did you give Clewer the Key?"

"No; we didn't. I swear we didn't!" from Campbell, rolling in agony.

"Then we'll give it to you, so you can see what it would be like if you had."

The torture of the Key--which has no key at all--hurts excessively. They endured several minutes of it, and their language necessitated the gag.

"Did you give Clewer Corkscrews?"

"Yes. Oh, curse your silly souls! Let us alone, you cads."

They were corkscrewed, and the torture of the Corkscrew--this has nothing to do with corkscrews--is keener than the torture of the Key.

The method and silence of the attacks was breaking their nerves. Between each new torture came the pitiless, dazing rain of questions, and when they did not answer to the point, Isabella-colored handkerchiefs were thrust into their mouths.

"Now are those all the things you did to Clewer? Take out the gag, Turkey, and let 'em answer."

"Yes, I swear that was all. Oh, you're killing us, Stalky!" cried Campbell.

"Pre-cisely what Clewer said to you. I heard him. Now we're goin' to show you what real bullyin' is. 'What I don't like about you, Sefton, is, you come to the Coll. with your stick-up collars an' patent-leather boots, an' you think you can teach us something about bullying. Do you think you can teach us anything about bullying? Take out the gag and let him answer."

"No!"--ferociously.

"He says no. Rock him to sleep. Campbell can watch."

It needs three boys and two boxing-gloves to rock a boy to sleep. Again the operation has nothing to do with its name. Sefton was "rocked" till his eyes set in his head and he gasped and crowed for breath, sick and dizzy.

"My Aunt!" said Campbell, appalled, from his corner, and turned white.

"Put him away," said Stalky. "Bring on Campbell. Now this is bullyin'. Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for? Take out his gag and let him answer."

"I--I don't know. Oh, let me off! I swear I'll make it pax. Don't 'rock' me!"

"'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' He says he don't know. Set him up, Beetle. Give me the glove an' put in the gag."

In silence Campbell was "rocked" sixty-four times.

"I believe I'm goin' to die!" he gasped. "He says he is goin' to die. Put him away. Now, Sefton! Oh, I forgot! Sefton, what did you bully Clewer for?"

The answer is unprintable; but it brought not the faintest flush to Stalky's downy cheek.

"Make him an Ag Ag, Turkey!"

And an Ag Ag was he made, forthwith. The hard-bought experience of nearly eighteen years was at his disposal, but he did not seem to appreciate it.

"He says we are sweeps. Put him away! Now, Campbell! Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for?"

Then came the tears--scalding tears; appeals for mercy and abject promises of peace. Let them cease the tortures and Campbell would never lift hand against them. The questions began again--to an accompaniment of small persuasions.

"You seem hurt, Campbell. Are you hurt?"

"Yes. Awfully!"

"He says he is hurt. Are you broke?"

"Yes, yes! I swear I am. Oh, stop!"

"He says he is broke. Are you humble?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is humble. Are you devilish humble?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is devilish humble. Will you bully Clewer any more?"

"No. No--ooh!"

"He says he won't bully Clewer. Or any one else?"

"No. I swear I won't."

"Or any one else. What about that lickin' you and Sefton were goin' to give us?"

"I won't! I won't! I swear I won't!"

"He says he won't lick us. Do you esteem yourself to know anything about bullyin'?"

"No, I don't!"

"He says he doesn't know anything about bullyin'. Haven't we taught you a lot?"



"Yes--yes!"

"He says we've taught him a lot. Aren't you grateful?"

"Yes!"

"He says he is grateful. Put him away. Oh, I forgot! I say, Campbell, what did you bully Clewer for?"

He wept anew; his nerves being raw. "Because I was a bully. I suppose that's what you want me to say?"

"He says he is a bully. Right he is. Put him in the corner. No more japes for Campbell. Now, Sefton!"

"You devils! You young devils!" This and much more as Sefton was punted across the carpet by skilful knees.

"'The bleatin' of the kid excites the tiger.' We're goin' to make you beautiful. Where does he keep his shaving things? [Campbell told.] Beetle, get some water. Turkey, make the lather. We're goin' to shave you, Seffy, so you'd better lie jolly still, or you'll get cut. I've never shaved any one before."

"Don't! Oh, don't! Please don't!"

"Gettin' polite, eh? I'm only goin' to take off one ducky little whisker--"

"I'll--I'll make it pax, if you don't. I swear I'll let you off your lickin' when I get up!"

"And half that mustache we're so proud of. He says he'll let us off our lickin'. Isn't he kind?"

McTurk laughed into the nickel-plated shaving-cup, and settled Sefton's head between Stalky's vise-like knees.

"Hold on a shake," said Beetle, "you can't shave long hairs. You've got to cut all that mustache short first, an' then scrape him."

"Well, I'm not goin' to hunt about for scissors. Won't a match do? Chuck us the match-box. He is a hog, you know; we might as well singe him. Lie still!" He lit a vesta, but checked his hand. "I only want to take off half, though."

"That's all right." Beetle waved the brush. "I'll lather up to the middle--see? and you can burn off the rest."

The thin-haired first mustache of youth fluffed off in flame to the lather-line in the centre of the lip, and Stalky rubbed away the burnt stumpage with his thumb. It was not a very gentle shave, but it

abundantly accomplished its purpose.

"Now the whisker on the other side. Turn him over!" Between match and razor this, too, was removed. "Give him his shaving-glass. Take the gag out. I want to hear what he'll say."

But there were no words. Sefton gazed at the lop-sided wreck in horror and despair. Two fat tears rolled down his cheek.

"Oh, I forgot! I say, Sefton, what did you bully Clewer for?"

"Leave me alone! Oh, you infernal bullies, leave me alone! Haven't I had enough?"

"He says we must leave him alone," said McTurk.

"He says we are bullies, an' we haven't even begun yet," said Beetle.

"You're ungrateful, Seffy. Golly! You do look an atrocity and a half!"

"He says he has had enough," said Stalky. "He errs!"

"Well, to work, to work!" chanted McTurk, waving a stump. "Come on, my giddy Narcissus. Don't fall in love with your own reflection!"

"Oh, let him off," said Campbell from his corner; "he's blubbing, too."

Sefton cried like a twelve-year-old with pain, shame, wounded vanity, and utter helplessness.

"You'll make it pax, Sefton, won't you? You can't stand up to those young devils--"

"Don't be rude, Campbell, de-ah," said McTurk, "or you'll catch it again!"

"You are devils, you know," said Campbell.

"What? for a little bullyin'--same as you've been givin' Clewer! How long have you been jestin' with him?" said Stalky. "All this term?"

"We didn't always knock him about, though!"

"You did when you could catch him," said Beetle, cross-legged on the floor, dropping a stump from time to time across Sefton's instep. "Don't I know it!"

"I--perhaps we did."

"And you went out of your way to catch him? Don't I know it! Because he was an awful little beast, eh? Don't I know it! Now, you see, you're awful beasts, and you're gettin' what he got--for bein' a beast. Just because we choose."

"We never really bullied him--like you've done us."

"Yah!" said Beetle. "They never really bully--'Molly' Fairburn didn't. Only knock 'em about a little bit. That's what they say. Only kick their souls out of 'em, and they go and blub in the box-rooms. Shove their heads into the ulsters an' blub. Write home three times a day--yes, you brute, I've done that--askin' to be taken away. You've never been bullied properly, Campbell I'm sorry you made pax."

"I'm not!" said Campbell, who was a humorist in a way. "Look out, you're slaying Sefton!"

In his excitement Beetle had used the stump unreflectingly, and Sefton was now shouting for mercy.

"An' you!" he cried, wheeling where he sat. "You've never been bullied, either. Where were you before you came here?"

"I--I had a tutor."

"Yah! You would. You never blubbed in your life. But you're blubbin' now, by gum. Aren't you blubbin'?"

"Can't you see, you blind beast?" Sefton fell over sideways, tear-tracks furrowing the dried lather. Crack came the cricket-stump on the curved

latter-end of him.

"Blind, am I," said Beetle, "and a beast? Shut up, Stalky. I'm goin' to jape a bit with our friend, a' la 'Molly' Fairburn. I think I can see. Can't I see, Sefton?"

"The point is well taken," said McTurk, watching the strap at work.

"You'd better say that he sees, Seffy."

"You do--you can! I swear you do!" yelled Sefton, for strong arguments were coercing him.

"Aren't my eyes lovely?" The stump rose and fell steadily throughout this catechism.

"Yes."

"A gentle hazel, aren't they?"

"Yes--oh, yes!"

"What a liar you are! They're sky-blue. Ain't they sky-blue?"

"Yes--oh, yes!"

"You don't know your mind from one minute to another. You must

learn--you must learn."

"What a bait you're in!" said Stalky. "Keep your hair on, Beetle."

"I've had it done to me," said Beetle. "Now--about my being a beast."

"Pax--oh, pax!" cried Sefton; "make it pax. I'll give up! Let me off! I'm broke! I can't stand it!"

"Ugh! Just when we were gettin' our hand in!" grunted McTurk.

"They didn't let Clewer off, I'll swear."

"Confess--apologize--quick!" said Stalky.

From the floor Sefton made unconditional surrender, more abjectly even than Campbell. He would never touch any one again. He would go softly all the days of his life.

"We've got to take it, I suppose?" said Stalky. "All right, Sefton. You're broke? Very good. Shut up, Beetle! But before we let you up, you an' Campbell will kindly oblige us with 'Kitty of Coleraine'--a' la Clewer."

"That's not fair," said Campbell; "we've surrendered."

"Course you have. Now you're goin' to do what we tell you--same as Clewer would. If you hadn't surrendered you'd ha' been really bullied. Havin' surrendered--do you follow, Seffy?--you sing odes in honor of the conquerors. Hurry up!"

They dropped into chairs luxuriously. Campbell and Sefton looked at each other, and, neither taking comfort from that view, struck up "Kitty of Coleraine."

"Vile bad," said Stalky, as the miserable wailing ended. "If you hadn't surrendered it would have been our painful duty to buzz books at you for singin' out o' tune. Now then."

He freed them from their bonds, but for several minutes they could not rise. Campbell was first on his feet, smiling uneasily. Sefton staggered to the table, buried his head in his arms, and shook with sobs. There was no shadow of fight in either--only amazement, distress, and shame.

"Ca--can't he shave clean before tea, please?" said Campbell. "It's ten minutes to bell."

Stalky shook his head. He meant to escort the half-shaved one to the meal.

McTurk yawned in his chair and Beetle mopped his face. They were all dripping with excitement and exertion.



"If I knew anything about it, I swear I'd give you a moral lecture," said Stalky severely.

"Don't jaw; they've surrendered," said McTurk. "This moral suasion biznai takes it out of a chap."

"Don't you see how gentle we've been? We might have called Clewer in to look at you," said Stalky. "'The bleatin' of the tiger excites the kid.' But we didn't. We've only got to tell a few chaps in Coll. about this and you'd be hooted all over the shop. Your life wouldn't be worth havin'. But we aren't goin' to do that, either. We're strictly moral suasers, Campbell; so, unless you or Seffy split about this, no one will."

"I swear you're a brick," said Campbell. "I suppose I was rather a brute to Clewer."

"It looked like it," said Stalky. "But I don't think Seffy need come into hall with cock-eye whiskers. Horrid bad for the fags if they saw him. He can shave. Ain't you grateful, Sefton?"

The head did not lift. Sefton was deeply asleep.

"That's rummy," said McTurk, as a snore mixed with a sob. "'Cheek, I think; or else he's shammin'."

"No, 't isn't," said Beetle. "'When 'Molly' Fairburn had attended to me for an hour or so I used to go bung off to sleep on a form sometimes. Poor devil! But he called me a beastly poet, though."

"Well, come on." Stalky lowered his voice. "Good-by, Campbell. 'Member, if you don't talk, nobody will."

There should have been a war-dance, but that all three were so utterly tired that they almost went to sleep above the tea-cups in their study, and slept till prep.

"A most extraordinary letter. Are all parents incurably mad? What do you make of it?" said the Head, handing a closely written eight pages to the Reverend John.

"'The only son of his mother, and she a widow.' That is the least reasonable sort." The chaplain read with pursed lips. "If half those charges are true he should be in the sick-house; whereas he is disgustingly well. Certainly he has shaved. I noticed that."

"Under compulsion, as his mother points out. How delicious! How salutary!"

"You haven't to answer her. It isn't often I don't know what has

happened in the school; but this is beyond me."

"If you asked me I should say seek not to propitiate. When one is forced to take crammers' pups--"

"He was perfectly well at extra-tuition--with me--this morning," said the Head, absently. "Unusually well behaved, too."

--they either educate the school, or the school, as in this case, educates them. I prefer our own methods," the chaplain concluded.

"You think it was that?" A lift of the Head's eye-brow.

"I'm sure of it! And nothing excuses his trying to give the College a bad name."

"That's the line I mean to take with him," the Head answered.

The Augurs winked.

A few days later the Reverend John called on Number Five. "Why haven't we seen you before, Padre?" said they.

"I've been watching times and seasons and events and men--and boys," he replied. "I am pleased with my Tenth Legion. I make them my compliments.

Clewer was throwing ink-balls in form this morning, instead of doing his work. He is now doing fifty lines for--unheard-of audacity."

"You can't blame us, sir," said Beetle. "You told us to remove the--er--pressure. That's the worst of a fag."

"I've known boys five years his senior throw ink-balls, Beetle. To such an one have I given two hundred lines--not so long ago. And now I come to think of it, were those lines ever shown up?"

"Were they, Turkey?" said Beetle unblushingly.

"Don't you think Clewer looks a little cleaner, Padre?" Stalky interrupted.

"We're no end of moral reformers," said McTurk.

"It was all Stalky, but it was a lark," said Beetle.

"I have noticed the moral reform in several quarters. Didn't I tell you you had more influence than any boys in the Coll. if you cared to use it?"

"It's a trifle exhaustin' to use frequent--our kind of moral suasion. Besides, you see, it only makes Clewer cheeky."

"I wasn't thinking of Clewer; I was thinking of--the other people, Stalky."

"Oh, we didn't bother much about the other people," said McTurk. "Did we?"

"But I did--from the beginning."

"Then you knew, sir?"

A downward puff of smoke. "Boys educate each other, they say, more than we can or dare. If I had used one half of the moral suasion you may or may not have employed--"

"With the best motives in the world. Don't forget our pious motives, Padre," said McTurk.

"I suppose I should be now languishing in Bideford jail, shouldn't I? Well, to quote the Head, in a little business which we have agreed to forget, that strikes me as flagrant injustice... What are you laughing at, you young sinners? Isn't it true? I will not stay to be shouted at. What I looked into this den of iniquity for was to find out if any one cared to come down for a bathe off the Ridge. But I see you won't."

"Won't we, though! Half a shake, Padre Sahib, till we get our towels, and nous sommes avec vous!"