Haviland's Chum Vol.I

By

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Chapter One.

The New Boy.

“Hi! Blacky! Herehold hard. D’you hear, Snowball?”

The last peremptorily. He thus addressed, paused, turned, and eyed somewhat doubtfully, not without a tinge of apprehension, the group of boys who thus hailed him.

“What’s your name?” pursued the latter, “Caesar, Pompey, Snowballwhat?”

“Or Uncle Tom?” came another suggestion.

“Inew boy,” was the response.

“New boy! Ugh!” jeered one fellow. “Time I left if they are going to take niggers here. What’s your name, sirdidn’t you hear me ask?”

“Mpukuza.”

“Pookoohow much?”

For answer the other merely emitted a click, which might have conveyed contempt, disgust, defiance, or a little of all three. He was an African lad of about fifteen, straight and lithe and wellformed, and his skin was of a rich copper brown. But there was a cleancut look about the set of his head, and an almost entire absence of negro development of nose and lips, which seemed to point to the fact that it was with no inferior race aboriginal to the dark continent that he owned nationality.

Now a hoot was raised among the group, and there was a tendency to hustle this very unwonted specimen of a new boy. He, however, took it goodhumouredly, exhibiting a magnificent set of teeth in a tolerant grin. But the last speaker, a biggish, thickset fellow who was something of a bully, was not inclined to let him down so easily.

“Take off your hat, sir!” he cried, knocking it off the other’s head, to a distance of some yards. “Now, Mr Woollyhead, perhaps you’ll answer my question and tell us your name, or I shall have to see if some of this’ll come out.” And, suiting the action to the word, he reached forward and grabbed a handful of the other’s short, crisp, jetty curlsjerking his head backwards and forwards.

The African boy uttered a hoarse ejaculation in a strange tongue, and his features worked with impotent passion. He could not break loose, and his tormentor was taller and stronger than himself. He put up his hands to free himself, but the greater his struggles the more the bully jerked him by the wool, with a malignant laugh. The others laughed too, enjoying the fun of what they regarded as a perfectly wholesome and justifiable bout of nigger baiting.

But a laugh has an unpleasant knack of transferring itself to the other side, and in this instance an interruption occurredwholly unlookedfor, but sharp and decisive, not to say violent, and to the prime mover in the sport highly unpleasantfor it took the shape of a hearty, swinging cuff on the side of that worthy's head. He, with a howl that was half a curse, staggered a yard or two under the force of the blow, at the same time loosing his hold of his victim. Then the latter laughedbeing the descendant of generations of savageslaughed loud and maliciously.

"Confound it, Haviland, what's that for?" cried the smitten one, feeing round upon his smiter.

"D'you want some more, Jarnley?" came the quick reply. "As it is I've a great mind to have you up before the prefects' council for bullying a new boy."

"Prefects' council," repeated Jarnley with a sneer. "That's just it. If you weren't a prefect, Haviland, I'd fight you. And you know it."

"But I don't know it and I don't think it," was the reply. The while, something of a smothered hoot was audible among the now rapidly increasing group, for Haviland, for reasons which will hereinafter appear, was not exactly a popular prefect. It subsided however, as by magic, when he darted a glance into the quarter whence it arose.

"Come hereyou," he said, beckoning the cause of all the disturbance. "What's your name?"

"Mpukuza."

"What?"

The African boy repeated it unhesitatingly, willingly. He was quick to recognise the difference between constituted authority and the spurious and usurped articlebesides, here was one who had intervened to turn the tables on his oppressor.

“Rum name that!” said his new questioner, eyeing him with some curiosity, at the fullthroated native vowels. “Haven’t you got any other?”

“Other? Oh, yes, Anthony. Missionary name me Anthony.”

“Anthony? Well, that’s better. We can get our tongues round that. What are you, eh? Where d’you come from, I mean?”

“I’m a Zulu.”

A murmur of real interest ran through the listeners. Not so many years had passed since the dramatic episodes of 79 but that some of the bigger boys there, including Haviland, were old enough to remember the war news reaching English shores, while all were more or less familiar with it in story. And here was one of that famous nationality among them as a schoolfellow.

“Now look here, you fellows,” said the prefect, when he had put a few more questions to the newcomer. “This chap isn’t to be bullied, d’you see, because he doesn’t happen to be like everybody else. Give him a fair show and see what he’s made of, and he’ll come out all right I expect.”

“Please, Haviland, he cheeked Jarnley,” cut in a smaller boy who was one of the lastnamed’s admirers.

“Small wonder if he did,” was the uncompromising answer. “Now clear inside all of you, for you’re blocking the way, and it’s time for callover. Who’ll ring the bell for me?”

“I will!” shouted half a dozen voices; for Haviland was prefect of the week, and as such responsible for the due ringing of the callingover bell, an office almost invariably performed by deputy. There was no difficulty in finding such; incipient human nature being as willing to oblige a very real potentate as the developed and matured article.

It was half term at Saint Kirwin’swhich accounted for the arrival of a new boy in the middle of the term. Now, Saint Kirwin’s was not a firstrate public school, but it was run as nearly as possible upon the lines of one. We say as nearly as possible, because the material was so essentially different. There was no such thing as the putting down of names for the intending pupil, what time that interesting entity was in the red and squalling phase of existence. At Saint Kirwin’s they would take anybody’s son, provided the said anybody was respectable, and professed to belong to the Established Church; and whereas the terms were excessively moderate, wellthey got anybody’s son. There was, however, a fair sprinkling of those who but for the shallowness of the parental

purse would have been at Eton or Harrow or some kindred institutionamong whom was Haviland, but the majority was composed of those at whom the more venerable foundations would not have lookedamong whom was Jarnley. However, even these latter Saint Kirwin's managed to lick into very tidy sort of shape.

The situation of the place left nothing to be desired. The school buildings, long, highgabled, drawn round two quadrangles, were sufficiently picturesque to be in keeping with the beautiful pastoral English scenery amid which they stoodgreen field and waving woodland studded with hamlet and spire, undulating away to a higher range of bare down in the backgroundall of which looked at its best this fair spring afternoon, with the young leaves just budding, and the larks, soaring overhead, pouring forth their volume of song.

As the callingover bell jangled forth its loud, inexorable note, upwards of three hundred and fifty boys, of all sorts and sizes, came trooping towards the entrance from every directionhot and ruddy from the playing fieldshere and there, an athletic master, in cricket blazer, amid a group of bigger boys who had been bowling to him; others dusty and panting after a long round across country in search of birds' eggsperformed nearly all the time at a runothers again of a less energetic disposition, cool and lounging, perchance just gulping down some last morsels of "tuck"all crowded in at the gates, and the cool cloisters echoed with a very Babel of young voices as the restless stream poured along to fill up the big schoolroom. Then might be heard shouts of "Silence!" "Stop talking there!" "Don't let me have to tell you again!" and so onas the prefect in charge of each row of boys stood, notebook in hand, ready to begin the "callingover."

"I say, Haviland," said Laughton, the captain of the school, in a low voice, "you're to go to the Doctor after callover. I'm afraid you're in for it, old chap."

"Why? What on earth about? I haven't been doing anything," answered the other, in genuine surprise"at least" he added as a recollection of the smack on the head he had administered to Jarnley occurred to him. But no, it couldn't be that, for therein he had been strictly discharging his duty.

"I don't know myself," rejoined Laughton. "He stopped me as I passed him in the cloisters just now, and told me to tell you. He was looking jolly glum too."

Another halfsmothered shout or two of "Silence" interrupted them, and then you might have heard a pin drop as the master of the week entered, in this case the redoubtable "Head" himself, an imposing figure in his square cap and flowing gown as he swept up to the great central desk, and gave the signal for the callingover to begin.

Haviland, shouting out name after name on his list, did so mechanically, and his mind was very ill at ease. His conscience was absolutely clear of any specific offence, but that was no great consolation, for the Doctor's lynx eye had a knack of unearthing all sorts of unsuspected delinquencies, prefects especially being visited with vicarious penalties. That was it. He was going to suffer for the sins of somebody else, and it was with the gloomiest of anticipations that he closed his notebook and went up to make his report.

Chapter Two.

The Headmaster.

The Reverend Nicholas Bowen, D.D., headmaster of Saint Kirwin's, ruled that institution with a sway that was absolutely and entirely despotic. His aim was to model it on the lines of the greater public schools as much as possible, and to this end his assistant staff were nearly all university graduates, and more than half of them in Holy Orders. He was a great believer in the prefectorial system, and those of the school selected to carry it out were entrusted with large powers. On the other hand, they were held mercilessly responsible even for unconscious failures of duty, and on this ground alone the luckless Haviland had ample cause for his misgivings.

The outward aspect, too, of the Doctor was eminently calculated to command the respect of his juvenile kingdom. He was very tall and strongly built, and half a lifetime of pedagogic despotism had endowed him with a sternness of demeanour aweinspiring enough to his charges, though when turned towards the outside world, as represented by his clerical colleagues for instance, it smacked of a pomposity bordering on the absurd. He had his genial side, however, and was not averse to the cracking of pedagogic jokes, at which he expected the form to laugh. It is almost unnecessary to add that the form never by any chance disappointed him.

Today, however, no trace of such geniality was discernible, nothing but a magisterial severity in every movement of the massive iron grey head, a menace in the fierce brown eyes, as in a word, sounding like the warning bark of an angry mastiff, he ordered the whole school to keep their places. The whole school did so, and that with a thrill of pleasurable excitement. There was no end of a row on, it decided, and as it only concerned the one who was standing alone before the dread presence, the residue prepared to enjoy the situation.

It was the more enjoyable to the vast majority of the spectators because the delinquent was a prefect, and not a very popular one at that.

"Have you any further report to make, Haviland?" said the headmaster.

"No, sir," answered Haviland in genuine surprise, for he had made his reports, all in order, his own roll, and the general report as prefect of the week. Yet he didn't like the tone. It sounded ominous.

"Ah! Let Finch and Harris step forward."

Two quaking juniors slunk from their places, and stood in the awful presence. The crime charged against the luckless pair was that of trespass. The system of “bounds” did not exist at Saint Kirwin’s, though there were limits of time, such being constituted by frequent callingsover. Otherwise the school could wander as it listed, the longest stretch obtainable being about an hour and threequarters. There had, however, been a good many complaints of late with regard to boys overrunning the neighbouring pheasant coverts in search of birds’ nests, for eggcollecting had many enthusiastic votaries in the school, and now these two luckless ones, Finch and Harris, had been collared redhanded that very afternoon by a stalwart keeper, and hauled straight away to the Doctor.

But where did Haviland come in? Just this way. In the course of a severe crossexamination in private, the headmaster had elicited from the two frightened juniors that when emerging from some forbidden ground they had seen Haviland under circumstances which rendered it impossible that he should not have seen them. It is only fair to the two that they hardly knew themselves how the information had been surprised out of themcertain it was that no other master could have done itonly the terrible Doctor. It had been ruled of late, by reason of the frequency of such complaints, that all cases of trespass on preserved land should be reported, instead of being dealt with as ordinary misdemeanours by the prefects; and here was a most flagrant instance of breach of trust on the part of one of the latter. As for Haviland, the game was all up, he decided. He would be deprived of his official position, and its great and material privileges, and be reduced to the ranks. He expected nothing less.

“Now, Haviland,” said the Doctor, “how is it you did not report these boys?”

“I ought to have, sir,” was the answer.

“You ought to have,” echoed the Doctor, his voice assuming its most aweinspiring tones. “And, did you intend to report them?”

Here was a loophole. Here was a chance held out to him. Why not grasp it? At best he would get off with a severe wigging, at worst with an imposition. It would only be a white lie after all, and surely under the circumstances justifiable. The stern eyes of the headmaster seemed to penetrate his brain, and every head was craned forward openmouthed for his answer. It came.

“I’m afraid I did not, sir.”

“You are afraid you did not! Very well. Then there is no more to be said.” And the Doctor, bending down, was seen to be writing something on a slip of paperthe while the whole school was on tenterhooks, but the excitement was of a more thrilling nature than

ever now. What would be the upshot? was in every mind. A swishing of course. Not for Haviland though; he was too old, and a prefect. He would be reduced.

Then the headmaster looked up and proceeded to pass sentence.

“These continual complaints on the part of the neighbours,” he said, “are becoming very serious indeed, and are getting the school a very bad name. I am determined to put a stop to them, and indeed it is becoming a grave question with me whether I shall not gate the whole school during the remainder of the term. These two boys, who have been brought up to me, represent a number of cases, I am afraid, wherein the offenders escape undetected and unpunished: therefore I shall make a severe example of them, and of any others in like case. And now a word to the prefects.”

A long, acrid, and bitter homily for the benefit of those officials followedthe juniors listening with intense delight, not that the order was especially unpopular, but simply the outcome of the glee of juvenile human nature over those set in authority over it being rated and brought to book in their turn. Then, having descanted on authority and trust, and so forth, until every one of those officially endowed with such responsibility began almost to wish they were notwith the exception perhaps of the one who stood certain to be deprived of itthe headmaster proceeded:

“Harris and Finch, I shall flog you both tomorrow morning after divinity lesson, and I may add that any boy reported to me for the same offence will certainly receive the same treatment. As for you, Haviland,” handing him the slip of paper on which he had been writing, “you will post this upon the board. And I warn you that any further dereliction of duty on your part brought to my notice will entail very much more severe consequences.”

Mechanically Haviland took the paper, containing of course the notice of his suspension, and could hardly believe his eyes. This is what he read:

“Haviland. Prefect.

“Fifteen hundred lines (of Virgil). For gross neglect of duty. Gated till done.

“Nicholas Bowen, D.D., Headmaster.”

The great bound of relief evolved by the respite of the heavier penalty was succeeded in his mind by resentment and disgust as he realised the magnitude of this really formidable imposition. The Doctor had left the desk and the room, and now the whole gathering was pouring forth to the outer air again. Not a few curious glances were

turned on Haviland to see how he took it: the two condemned juniors, however, being surrounded by a far more boisterously sympathetic crowdthose who had been swished before undertaking, with a hundredfold wealth of exaggeration, to explain to these two, who had not, what it felt like, by way of consolation.

“What’s he given you, Hav?” said Medlicott, a fellow prefect, and rather a chum of the principal victim’s, looking over the notice. “That all! You’ve got off cheap, I can tell you. We reckoned it meant suspensionespecially as Nick has a down on you.”

“Nick,” be it observed, was the inevitable name by which the redoubtable headmaster was known among the boys. It had started as “Old Nick,” but the suggestion diabolical had been sacrificed to brevity.

“That all!” echoed Haviland wrathfully. “Fifteen hundred’s a howling stiff impos, Medlicott. And it really means two thou, for the old brute always swears about a third of your stuff is so badly written you’ve got to do it over again. It’s a regulation timehonoured swindle of his. Andjust as the eggseason is getting at its best! It’s too beastly altogether.”

Haviland was an enthusiastic egghunter, and had a really fine collection. In the season he lived for nothing else, every moment of his spare time being given up to adding to it. Of course he himself frequently transgressed the laws of trespass, but he was never known to bring a junior to book for doing soon the contrary, he was always careful to look the other way if he suspected the presence of any such.

Now, having fixed the hateful notice to the board nailed to the wall for such purposes, he got out a Virgil and sat down to begin his odious task. The big schoolroom was empty save for a few who were under like penalty with himself. What a lovely afternoon it was, and he would have had nearly an hour and a half, just time to go over and secure the two remaining eggs in that sparrowhawk’s nest in the copse at the foot of the downa programme he had mapped out for himself before this grievous misfortune had overtaken him. Now some other fellow would find them, or they would be “set” and useless before he could get out again. “Gated till done.” Half the sting of the penalty lay in those abominable wordsfor it meant that no foot could be set outside the school gates until the whole of it was completed.

“I say, Haviland. We’re no end sorry.”

The interruption proceeded from the two smaller culprits, predestined to the rod on the morrow. Haviland looked up wrathfully.

“Sorry, are you, you young sweeps? So am Isorry I didn’t ‘sock’ your heads off.”

“Please, Haviland, can’t we do your impos for youor at any rate some of it?”

“D’you think Old Nick’s such an ass as all that? Why, he’d spot the fraud a mile off! Besides, remember what he said about breach of trust and all that. He’d better keep that for chapel next Sunday,” he added sneeringly. “Look here, you youngsters, you’ll be well swished tomorrow, a round dozen at least, and you’d better toss for second innings, because then Nick’ll be getting tiredbut anyway you’re not gated and I am. Will you go and take a nest for me?”

“Rather. Where is it?” chorussed both boys eagerly.

“Smallest of the two tree patches, foot of Sidebury Down. Sparrowhawk’sin an ivyhung ash. It’s quite an easy climb. You can’t miss it, and there should be two eggs left in it. I collared two a couple of days back, and put in stones. You won’t get pickled for it any more either, because it isn’t on preserved ground. You’ll have to run all the way though.”

They promised, and were off like a shot, and it is only fair to say that they brought back the spoil, and duly and loyally handed it over to its legitimate claimant.

Left to himself, Haviland set to work with an effort. After a hundred of the lines he flung his pen down angrily.

“Hang it, I hate this beastly place,” he muttered to himself. “I don’t care how soon I leave.”

This was not strictly true. He liked the school and its life, in reality more than he was aware of himself. He was always glad to get back to it, for his home life was unattractive. He was the son of an extremely conscientious but very overworked and very underpaid parson, the vicar of a large and shabbygenteel suburban parish, and the fresh, healthy, beautiful surroundings of Saint Kirwin’s all unconsciously had their effect upon his impressionable young mind, after the glaring dustiness, or rainsodden mud according to the season of the yearof the said suburb. He was a goodlooking lad of seventeen, wellgrown for his age, and seeming older, yet thus early somewhat soured, by reason of the already felt narrowing effects of poverty, and an utter lack of anything definite in the way of prospects; for he had no more idea of what his future walk in life was to be than the man in the moon.

And so he sat, that lovely cloudless halfholiday afternoon, grinding out his treadmilllike imposition, angrily, rebelliously, his one and only thought to get that over as soon as possible.

Chapter Three.

The Bully.

Haviland's gloomy prediction proved in so far correct, in that when, after nearly a weary week of toil during his spare moments, he handed in his imposition, his insatiable taskmaster insisted on his rewriting two hundred of the lines. Then with lightened heart he found himself free to resume his allengrossing and gloriously healthy pursuit.

There is, or used to be, a superstition that a boy who didn't care for cricket or football must necessarily be an ass, a loafer, and to be regarded with some suspicion. Yet in point of fact such by no means follows, and our friend Haviland was a case in point. He could cover as many miles of ground in the limited time allowed as any one in the school, and more than most. He could climb anything, could pick his way delicately through the most forbidden ground, quartering it exhaustively every yard, what time his natural enemy the keeper, his suspicions roused, was on the watch in the very same covert, and return safe and sound with his pearly treasuresto excite the envy and admiration of the eggcollecting fraternity; yet though this represented his pet hobby, he was something of an allround naturalist, and his wanderings in field and wood were by no means confined to the nesting season.

He might have liked cricket could he have been always in, but fielding out he pronounced beastly slow. As for football he declared he couldn't see any fun in having his nose jammed an inch and a half deep into liquid mud, with ten or a dozen fellows on top of him trying to jam it in still deeper: and in the result he always wanted to hit some one when he got up again. Besides, a game you were obliged to play whether you wanted to or not, ceased to be a game at alland during its season football was compulsory on halfholidays, at any rate for the juniors. Now, as a prefect, he was exempt, and he appreciated his exemption. But, his distaste for the two great games notwithstanding, there was nothing of the loafer or the muff about Haviland. He was always in the pink of hard training, cleareyed, cleanskinned, thoroughly sound in wind and limb.

In the matter of his school work we regret to say that our friend cut a less creditable figure; for in it indeed he shone in no particular branch. His sole object was to get through his work as quickly and as easily as possible, thereby to have more time for his favourite pursuit, wherefore his ambition soared no higher than a respectable middle of the fifth form. The ethics of Saint Kirwin's held "cribs" to be perfectly justifiableneedless to say not from the masters' point of viewand a large proportion generously availed themselves of such dubious aid, being of course careful to avoid all the stock catches. Even a certain amount of cribbing in form was held not to be unlawful, although perilous; and when the Reverend Joseph Wilmotan absent and stargazing type of

mastergravely and impressively warned his Greek Testament form one Sunday, à propos of some suspiciously technical construing, that he should, detect in a moment if any one used the English version, the form was simply dying to roar; the point of the joke being that every fellow composing it had got his English version concealed beneath his locker, and was surreptitiously reading up the part where he would be put on, this having been the practice of the form from time immemorial, and, we grieve to say, destined to continue so indefinitely.

"Serve 'em right," pronounced Haviland, who was one of the offenders. "They've no business to make us work on Sundays. It's smashing up the fourth commandment. So if we take the English in to form with us it saves us from working, and we get out of smashing the fourth commandment. See?"

They did see, for a shout of acclamation hailed this young casuist's special pleading. "Besides," he added, "Old Joe is such an ass. Detect in a moment if any one used the English! Faugh! As if any one in this form had ever done anything else?"

It may be thought that by reason of his own delinquencies Haviland's authority as a prefect would have been partially if not entirely undermined, yet such was not the case, for under the school code they were justified, whereas the terrible crime of "sneaking" was as much the one unpardonable sin at Saint Kirwin's as elsewhere. And in the enforcement of that authority he was pitiless, hence his unpopularitybut it answeredand whether he presided over preparation, or in the dormitory, or elsewhere, order reigned. The spirits of misrule were laid.

Once indeed an offender thought to round on him. He had unearthed a smoking case, and the use of tobacco was of course a capital offence. One of the offendersthree biggish fellows by the wayhad said meaningly:

"If you do anything in this, Haviland, we can hand you up. We saw you in Needham's Copse only last week, and other places besides."

"All right, Starford. You must go before the next prefects' council, all three of you. This'll mean a licking I'm afraid, but you'll have an appeal to the Doctor. You can give me away then if you think it'll do yourselves any good, but I believe you know Nick better than that."

He was right, except that the headmaster took the matter out of the prefectorial hands and soundly flogged the culprits himself. But no word did these utter with regard to any delinquency on the part of him who was instrumental in bringing them to justice.

Meanwhile the Zulu boy, Anthony, otherwise Mpukuza, was not finding life at Saint Kirwin's exactly a bed of roses, the more so that Jarnley and a few other choice spirits were making it their especial business that he should not. Deprived of the protection of his first and accidental defender, he was very much at their mercy. Haviland was gated, and would so remain for some days to come, and so long as they could catch their victim outside, this rough element promised itself plenty of fun. There was no fear of the victim himself giving it away, for although complaining to a prefect was immeasurably less heinous than complaining to a master, still it was not held justifiable except in very extreme cases.

"Come down and have a bathe with us, Snowball," cried Jarnley, catching sight of his intended victim, while proceeding with a group of his followers to one of the school bathingplaces.

"Can you swim, Cetchy?" cried another of the groupthat being the Zulu boy's nickname as the nearest they could get to Cetywayo.

"Swimeh? Well, I dunno."

"Come along then, and we'll teach you," and grins of malignant delight went round the group. They anticipated no end of fun. They were going to duck this somewhat unusual specimen until they nearly drowned him. Jarnley, in particular, was radiant.

Mpukuza grinned too. There was no escape. They had hedged him about too completely for that. He might as well accept the situation goodhumouredly. Andhe did.

About half a mile from the school buildings there flowed an insignificant sluggish river, opening here and there into broad deep pools. One of these, screened off, and fitted with a diving board, constituted the bathingplace of those who had passed a certain swimming test, and thus were entitled to disport themselves aquatically when they listed. It was not a good bathingplace, far from it, for the bottom was coated thickly with slimy mud. Still, it was the best obtainable under the circumstances.

Jarnley and Co. unvested in a trice, nor did their intended victim take any longer.

"Come along, Cetchy," laughed Jarnley, grabbing the other by the scruff of the neck, and leaping out into deep water with him. "Now I'll teach you, you black beast," he snarled, between the panting and puffing extracted by the coldness of the water as they both rose to the surface. "I'm going to duck you till you're nearly dead. Take that first though," hitting him a smart smack on the side of the face. Those still on the bank yelled with delight, and hastened to spring into the water in order to get their share of the fun.

They got it. The African boy uttered an exclamation of dismay, broke away from his tormentors, and in a few swift strokes splashed across to the furthest and deepest side of the pool. This was what they wanted. With more yells of delight all hands swam in pursuit.

Mpukuza was holding on to a trailing bough, his coppercoloured face above water, showing every indication of alarm, as his assailants drew near.

“Now we’ll duck him!” yelled Jarnley. “It’s jolly deep here.”

But as they swooped towards him something strange happenedsomething strange and utterly unexpected. The round head and dark scared countenance had disappeared. So, too, at that moment did Jarnley, but not before he had found time to utter a yella loud yellindicative of surprise and scaredrowned the next second in bubble and splash.

What on earth did it mean? That Jarnley was playing the fool, was the first idea that occurred to the spectators as they swam around or trod waterthe next that he had been seized with cramp. But what about Cetchy? He too, was under water, and they hadn’t gone down together, for Jarnley hadn’t touched him yet.

Nohe hadn’t. But Mpukuza knew a trick worth two of waiting for that. These confiding youths had overlooked the possibility that this descendant of many generations of savage warriors might be far more at home in the water than they were themselves. But such in fact was the case. Watching his opportunity, as his wouldbe tormentors bore down upon him, the Zulu boy had simply dived, and grabbing Jarnley by both ankles dragged him under water. And there he held himand all the bully’s frantic attempts to escape were in vain. The grasp on his ankles was that of a vice; and when at last it did relax, Jarnley rose to the surface only to sink again, so exhausted was he. He was in fact drowning, and but for his intended victimwho rose unruffled, unwinded, even smiling, and at once seized him and towed him to the bankhe would actually have lost his life. For the African boy could remain under water a vast deal longer than they could, and that with the most perfect ease.

“What’s all this about?”

The voicesharp, clear, rather highpitchedhad the effect of a sort of electric shock on the streaming and now shivering group gathered round the gasping and prostrate Jarnley, as it started round, not a little guiltily, to confront a master.

The aspect of the latter was not reassuring, being decidedly hostile. With his head thrown back he gazed on the dumbfoundered group with a stony stare.

“Umph! Bathing before permission has been given?” he said.

“That black beast! I’ll kill him,” muttered the muddled and confused Jarnley.

“Eh? What’s the fellow saying?” cried the new arrival sharply, who, by the way, was dressed in clerical black himself, and was now inspired with the idea that the speaker was suffering from sunstroke, and was off his head. For all its apprehensiveness, a sickly grin ran round the group.

“He’s talking about CetchyerI mean Anthony, sir,” explained some one.

Now the Reverend Alfred Augustus Sefton was endowed with a vast fund of humour, but it was of the dry quality, and he was sharp withal. He had seen more than they knew, and now, looking from one to the other, the situation suddenly dawned upon him, and it amused him beyond words. But he was a rigid disciplinarian.

“What have you been doing to him?” he said, fixing the African boy with his straight glance.

“Doing? Nothing, sir. We play in the water. He try how long he keep me under. I try how long I keep him under. That all. That all, sir.” And a dazzling stripe of white leaped in a broad grin across the speaker’s facewhile all the other boys tittered. Mr Sefton gave a suspicious choke.

“That all!” he echoed. “But that isn’t all,” and extracting an envelope and a pencil from his pocket, he began to take down their names. “No, that isn’t all by any means. Each of you will do four hundred lines for bathing before permission has been given, except Anthony, who will do one hundred only because he’s a new boy. Now get into your clothes sharp and go straight back and begin, and if you’re not in the big schoolroom by the time I am, I’ll double it.”

There was a wholesome straightforwardness about Mr Sefton’s methods that admitted of no argument, and it was a very crestfallen group that overtook and hurried past that disciplinarian as he made his way along the fieldpath, swinging his stick, his head thrown back, and his soft felt hat very much on the back of it. And on the outskirts of the group at a respectful distance came Anthony, keeneyed and quick to dodge more than one vengeful smack on the head which had been aimed at himfor these fairplayloving young Britons must wreak their resentment on somethingand dire and deep were the

sinister promises thrown at the African boy, to be fulfilled when time and opportunity should serve.

Chapter Four.

Concerning an Adventure.

Mr Sefton did not immediately repair to the big schoolroom. When he did, however, the halfdozen delinquents were at work on their imposition. He strolled round apparently aimlessly, then peered into the fifth form room, where sat Haviland, writing his.

Haviland was not at first aware of the master's presence. An ugly frown was on his face, for he was in fact beginning the extra two hundred lines of which we have made mention. It was a halfholiday, and a lovely afternoon, and but for this he would have been out and away over field and down. He felt that he had been treated unfairly, and it was with no amiable expression of countenance that he looked up, and with something of a start became aware of the master's presence.

"Sit still, Haviland," said the latter kindly, strolling over to the desks. "Have you nearly done your imposition?"

"I've done it quite, sir, but you can always reckon on having to do a third of it over again when it's for the Doctor," he added with intense bitterness.

"Look here, you mustn't talk like that," rejoined Mr Sefton briskly, but there was a kindliness underlying his sharp tones which the other's ear was quick to perceive. They were great friends these two, and many an informal chat had they had together. It involved no favouritism either. Let Haviland break any rule, accidentally or not, within Mr Sefton's jurisdiction, and the imposition entailed was not one line shorter than that set to anybody else under like circumstances, as he had reason to know by experience. Yet that made no difference in his regard for this particular master.

"Well, it's hard luck all the same, sir," he now replied. "However, this time I've got off cheap with only a couple of hundred over again. But it has done me out of this afternoon."

Mr Sefton had hoisted himself on to one of the long desks and sat swinging his legs and his stick.

"What d'you think?" he said. "I've caught half a dozen fellows bathing just now. The new boy Anthony was among 'em. And he'd nearly drowned Jarnleythe beggar! What d'you think of that?"

"What, sir? Nearly drowned him?"

“I should think so,” pursued the master, chuckling with glee. “Jarnley lay there gasping like a newly caught fish. It seems he’d been trying to duck Cetchy, and Cetchy ducked him instead. Nearly drowned him too. Haha!”

Haviland roared too.

“That chap’ll be able to take care of himself, I believe, sir,” he said. “I need hardly have smacked Jarnley’s head for bullying him the other day.”

“I know you did,” said the other dryly, causing Haviland to stop short with a half grin, as he reflected how precious little went on in the school that Sefton didn’t know.

“Well, he’s got four hundred lines to get through now,” went on the latter. “I let Cetchy off with a hundred.”

“I expect the other fellows made him go with them, sir,” said Haviland. “And he’s hardly been here a week yet.”

“If I let him off them, the other fellows’ll take it out of him,” said Mr Sefton, who understood the drift of this remark.

“They’ll do that anyhow, sir. But I’ve a notion they’ll tire of it before long.”

So Anthony was called and made to give his version of the incident, which he did in such manner as to convulse both master and prefectand, to his great delight, the imposition was remitted altogether.

“He’s no end of an amusing chap that, sir,” said Haviland when the African boy had gone out. “He has all sorts of yarns about Zululandcan remember about the war too. He’s in my dormitory, you know, sir, and he yarns away by the hour”

The speaker broke off short and somewhat confusedlyas a certain comical twinkle in Mr Sefton’s eyes reminded him how guilelessly he was giving himself away: for talking in the dormitories after a certain time, and that rather brief, was strictly forbidden. Mr Sefton, secretly enjoying his confusion, coughed dryly, but made no remark. After all, he was not Haviland’s dormitory master.

“What a big fellow you’re getting, Haviland!” he said presently. “I suppose you’ll be leaving us soon?”

“I hope not, sir, at least not for another couple of terms. Then I expect I’ll have to.”

“You’re not eager to, then?” eyeing him curiously.

“Not in the least.”

“H’m! What are they going to make of you when you do leave?”

The young fellow’s face clouded.

“Goodness only knows, sir. I suppose I’ll have to go out and split rails in the bush, or something about as inviting, or as paying.”

“Well, I don’t know that you’ll be doing such a bad thing in that, Haviland,” rejoined Mr Sefton, “if by ‘splitting rails’ you mean launching out into some form of colonial life. But whatever it is you’ve got to throw yourself into it heart and soul, but I should think you’d do that from what I’ve seen of you here. At any rate, life and its chances are all in front of you instead of half behind you, and you’ve got to determine not to make a mess of it, as so many fellows do. Well, I didn’t come in here to preach you a sermon, so get along with your lines and start clear again.” And the kindhearted disciplinarian swung himself off the desk and departed, and with him nearly all the rankling bitterness which had been corroding Haviland’s mind. The latter scribbled away with a will, and at length threw down his pen with an ejaculation of relief.

Even then he could not go out until the lines had been shown up. The next best thing was to look out, and so he climbed up to sit in the open window. The fair English landscape stretched away green and golden in the afternoon sunlight. The shrill screech of swifts wheeling overhead mingled with the twittering of the many sparrows which rendered the creepers clinging to the wall of the school buildings untidy with their nests. Then the clear song of larks soaring above mead and fallow, and farther afield the glad note of the cuckoo from some adjoining copse. Boys were passing by twos and threes, and now and then a master going for his afternoon stroll. Haviland, gazing out from his perch in the window, found himself thinking over Mr Sefton’s words. He supposed he should soon be leaving all this, but didn’t want to. He liked the school: he liked the masters, except the Head perhaps, who seemed for no reason at all to have a “down” on him. He liked the freedom allowed by the rules outside school hours, and thoroughly appreciated his own post of authority, and the substantial privileges it carried with it. A voice from outside hailed him.

“HiHaviland! Done your impos yet?”

“Yes.”

“Come with me after callover. I’ve got a good thing. Owl’s nest. Must have two to get at it.”

The speaker was one Corbould major, a most enthusiastic egghunter, and, though not a prefect, a great friend of Haviland’s by reason of being a brother sportsman.

“Can’t. I’m gated. Won’t be able to take the lines up to Nick till tomorrow.”

“Why not try him in his study now? He’s there, for I saw him go inand he’s in a good humour, for he was grinning and cracking jokes with Laughton and Medlicott. Try him, any way.”

“All right,” said Haviland, feeling dubious but desperate, as he climbed down from the window.

It required some intrepidity to invade the redoubtable Head in his private quarters, instead of waiting until he appeared officially in public; however, as Corbould had divined, the great Panjandrum happened to be in high good humour, and was graciously pleased to accept the uttermost farthing, and release the prisoner then and there.

Half an hour later two enthusiastic collectors might have been seen, speeding along a narrow lane at a good swinging, staying trot. A quick glance all round, then over a stile and along a dry ditch skirting a long high hedge. Another quick look round, and both were in a small hazel copse. On the further side of this, in a field just outside it, stood a barn. This was their objective.

Now, before leaving cover, they reconnoitred carefully and exhaustively. The farmhouse to which the barn belonged stood but two fields off, and they could distinctly hear the cackling of the fowls around itand in another direction they could see men working in the fields at no great distance. Needless to say, the pair were engaged in an act of flagrant trespass.

“That’s all right so far,” whispered Corbould major, as they stood within the gloom of the interior, feebly illuminated by streaks of light through the chinks. “There’s the nest, up there, in that corner, and you’ll have to give me a hoist up to the beam from the other end. We can’t take it from this because there’s a hen squatting on a lot of eggs right underneath, and she’ll kick up such a beastly row if we disturb her.”

A warning “cluckcluck” proceeding from the fowl in question had already caused Haviland something of a start. However, they were careful not to alarm her, and she sat on. Meanwhile, Corbould had reached the beam, and with some difficulty had drawn himself up and was now creeping along it.

Haviland’s heart was pulsating with excitement as he stood there in the semigloom, watching his companion’s progress, for the adventure was a bold one, and the penalty of detection condign. Now a weird hissing arose from the dark corner overhead, as Corbould, worming his way along the beam, drew nearer and nearer to it, and then, and then, to him above and to him below, it seemed that there came a hissing as of a thousand serpents, a whirlwind of flapping wings, a gasp, a heavy fall, a crash, and he who had been aloft on yonder beam now lay sprawling beneath it, while the hen, which had saved itself as though by a miracle, was dashing round and round the barn, uttering raucous shrieks of terror.

“You ass! You’ve done it now!” exclaimed Haviland, horrorstricken, as he surveyed his chum, who, halfstupefied, was picking himself up gingerly. And he had. For what he had “done” was to lose his hold and tumble right slap on top of the sitting hen, or rather where that nimble fowl had been a moment before, namely on the nest of eggs; and these being in a state of semiincubation, it followed that the whole back of his jacket and trousers was in the most nauseous mess imaginable.

This was too much for Haviland, and, the peril of the situation notwithstanding, he laughed himself into a condition that was abjectly helpless.

“Shut up, Haviland, and don’t be an ass, for heaven’s sake! We must get out of this!” cried Corbould. “Scrag that beastly fowl. It’s giving away the whole show!” And indeed such was likely to be the result, for what with the owl hissing like a fury overhead, and the hen yelling below, it seemed that the din should be heard for miles.

A hedge stake, deftly shied, silenced the latter, and this first act of stern selfpreservation accomplished, the second followed, viz.: to slip cautiously forth, and make themselves remarkably scarce. This they succeeded in doing. Luck favoured them, miraculously as it seemed, and, having put a respectable distance between themselves and the scene of the adventure, they made for a safe hidingplace where they could decide on the next move, for it was manifestly impossible for Corbould to show up in that state.

Snugly ensconced in a dry ditch, well overhung with brambles, they soon regained wind after their exertions and excitement. But Haviland, lying on the ground, laughed till he cried.

“If you could only have seen yourself, Corbould,” he stuttered between each paroxysm, “rising like Phoenix from the ashes! And that infernal fowl waltzing round and round the barn squawking like mad, and the jolly owl flapping and hissing up top there! O Lord, you’d have died!”

“We didn’t get the eggs, though. Wouldn’t have minded if we’d got the eggs.”

“Well, we won’t get them now, for I don’t suppose either of us’ll be such asses as to go near the place again this season after the todo there’ll be when old Siggles discovers the smash up. It’s a pity to have done all that damage though, gets us a rottener name than ever.”

“It couldn’t. These beasts of farmers, it doesn’t hurt them if we hunt for nests. Yet they’re worse than the keepers. They have some excuse, the brutes.”

“How on earth were you such an ass as to come that cropper, Corbould?” said the other, going off into a paroxysm again.

“Oh, it’s all jolly fine, but what’d you have done with that beastly owl flapping around your ears and trying to peck your eyes out? But I say. What are we going to do about this?” showing the horrible mess his clothes were in.

Both looked blank for a few moments. Then Haviland brightened.

“Eureka!” he cried. “We’ll plaster you up with dry mud, and it you’re asked, you can swear you had a fall on your back. You did too, so that’ll be no lie.”

The idea was a good one. By dint of rubbing in handfuls of dry earth, every trace of the eggs, halfincubated as they were, was hidden. But as far as further disturbance at the hands of these two counted for anything the owl was allowed to hatch out its brood in peace. Not for any consideration would they have attempted further interference with it that season.

Chapter Five.

“Haviland’s chum.”

When Haviland expressed his belief, in conversation with Mr Sefton, that the Zulu boy would prove able to take care of himself, he uttered a prediction which events seemed likely to bear out.

When three or four of the fellows who sat next to him in chapel conceived the brilliant idea of putting a large conical rose thornpoint uppermost of courseon the exact spot where that darkskinned youth was destined to sit down on rising from his knees, they hardly foresaw the result, as three or four heads were quickly and furtively turned in anticipation of some fun. They were not disappointed eitherfor Simonds minor, the actual setter of the trap, shot up from his seat like a cork from a sodawater bottle, smothering an exclamation expressive of wild surprise and something else, while the descendant of generations of fighting savages sat tight in his, a rapt expression of innocence and unconcern upon his dark countenance. Nor did the fun end there, for the prefect in charge of that particular row, subsequently and at preparation time sent for Simonds minor, and cuffed him soundly for kicking up a disturbance in chapel, though this was a phase of the humour which, while appealing keenly to the spectators, failed to amuse Simonds minor in the very least. He vowed vengeance, not on his then executioner, but on Anthony.

Under a like vow, it will be remembered, was Jarnley. Not as before, however, did he propose to make things unpleasant for his destined victim. This time it should be on dry land, and when he got his opportunity he promised to make the very best of it, in which he was seconded by his followingwho connected somehow the magnitude of the impos, given them by “that beast Sefton,” with the presence of “Cetchy” in their midst. So the party, having completed their said impos, spent the next few days, each armed with a concealed and supple willow switch, stalking their quarry during his wanderings afield; but here again the primitive instincts of the scion of a barbarian line rendered it impossible for them to surprise him, and as to catching him in open pursuit, they might as well have tried to run down a bird in the air. He would simply waltz away without an effort, and laugh at them: wherein he was filling Jarnley and Co.’s cup of wrath very full. But an event was destined to occur which should cause it to brim over.

One afternoon, owing to the noxious exhalations arising from a presumably poisoned rat within the wainscoting common to the third and fourth form rooms, both those classes were ordered to the big schoolroom, and allotted desk work to fill in the time.

Now the rows of lockers were arranged in tiers all down one half of the long room, leaving the other half open, with its big desk in the centre dominating the whole. Ill chance indeed was it that located Anthony's form in the row beneath, and himself immediately in front of, his sworn foe.

Now Jarnley began to taste the sweets of revenge. More than one kick, hard and surreptitious, nearly sent the victim clean off the form, and the bright idea which occurred to Jarnley, of fixing a pin to the toe of his boot had to be abandoned, for the cogent reason that neither he nor any of his immediate neighbourhood could produce the pin. Meanwhile the master in charge lounged in the big desk, blissfully reading.

"Look here, Cetchy," whispered Jarnley, having varied the entertainment with a few tweaks of his victim's wool. "Turn round, d'you hear: put your finger on that."

"That" being a penholder held across the top of one of the inkwells let into the desk.

"Put it on, d'you hear. I'll let you off any more if you do. Nopress hard."

For Anthony had begun to obey orders, but gingerly. Once more was Jarnley digging his own grave, so to say. The black finger was now held down upon the round penholder, and of course what followed was a foregone conclusion. Its support suddenly withdrawn, knuckle deep went that unlucky digit into the well, but with such force that a very fountain of ink squirted upward, to splash down, a long running smudge, right across the sheet of foolscap which Jarnley had just covered, thereby rendering utterly useless the results of nearly half an hour's work. This was too much. Reaching forward, the bully gripped the perpetrator of this outrage by the wool where it ended over the nape of the neck, and literally plucked out a wisp thereof.

"I'll kill you for this, you black devil," he said, in a snarling whisper.

But the reply was as startling as it was unexpected. Maddened by the acute pain, all the savage within him aroused, and utterly regardless of consequences, the Zulu boy swung round his arm like a flail, hitting Jarnley full across the face with a smack that resounded through the room, producing a dead and pindropping silence, as every head came round to see what had happened.

"What's all this?" cried the furious voice of the master in charge, looking quickly up. "Come out, you two boys. Come out at once."

Then, as the two delinquents stood up to come out of their places, a titter rippled through the whole room, for Jarnley's red and half scared, half furious countenance was further ornamented by a great black smear where his smiter's inky hand had fallen.

Now the Reverend Richard Clay was hot of temper, and his method under such circumstances as these short and effectual, viz.: to chastise the offenders first and institute enquiry afterwards, or not at all. Even during the time taken by these two to leave their places and stand before him, he had flung open the lid of the great desk, and jerked forth the cane always kept there; a long supple, wellhardened cane, well burnt at the end.

"Fighting during school time, were you?" he said. "Hold up your coat."

"Please sir, he shied a lot of ink over my work," explained Jarnley in desperation. Anthony the while said nothing.

"I don't care if he did," was the uncompromising reply. "Stand up and hold up your coat."

This Jarnley had no alternative but to do, and as Mr Clay did nothing by halves the patient was soon dancing on one foot at a time.

"No, no, I haven't done yet," said the master, in response to a muttered and spasmodic appeal for quarter. "I'll teach you to make a disturbance in schooltime when I'm in charge. There! Stand still."

And he laid it onto the bitter end; and with such muscle and will that the bully could not repress one or two short howls as he received the final strokes. But the Zulu boy, whose turn now came, and who received the same unsparing allowance, took it without movement or sound.

"Go back to your seats, you two," commanded Mr Clay. "If any one else wants a dose of the same medicine, he knows how to get it," he added grimly, locking up the cane again.

"Oh, wait till I get you outside, you black beast," whispered the bully as they got back to their seats. "I'll only skin you alivethat's what I'll do."

"Come out again, Jarnley," rang out Mr Clay's clear, sharp voice. "Were you talking?" he queried, as the bully stood before him, having gone very pale over the prospect of a repetition of what he had just undergone.

“Yes, sir,” he faltered, simply not daring to lie.

“I know you were,” and again quickly the cane was drawn forth from its accustomed dwelling place. Then, as Jarnley was beginning to whine for mercy, the master as quickly replaced it.

“I’ll try another plan this time,” he said. “There’s nothing like variety.” The room grinned“You’ll do seven hundred and fifty lines for talking in school hours, and you’re gated till they’re done.” The room was disappointed, for it was looking forward to another execution, moreover the bulk of it hated Jarnley. It consoled itself, however, by looking forward to something else, viz.: what was going to happen after school, and the smaller boys did not in the least envy Anthony.

The latter, for his part, knew what a thrashing was in store for him should he fail to make good his escape; wherefore the moment the word to dismiss was uttered, he affected a strategic movement which should enable him to gain the door under convoy of the retiring master, while not seeming to do so by design. Even in this he would hardly have succeeded, but that a simultaneous rush for the door interposed a crowd between him and his pursuers, and again his luck was in the ascendant, and he escaped, leaving Jarnley and Co. to wreak their vengeance on some of the smaller boys for getting in their way.

Anthony had been put into Haviland’s dormitory, which contained ten other boys, and was a room at the end of a much larger one containing forty. This also was under Haviland’s jurisdiction, being kept in order by three other prefects. At night he was left entirely in peace, beyond a slight practical joke or two at first, for the others were not big enough to bully him, what time their ruler was perforce out of the room. Besides, they rather liked him, for, as we have heard so unguardedly divulged, he would tell them wonderful tales of his own countryfor he was old enough to just remember some of the incidents of the war, and could describe with all the verve and fire of the native gift of narrative, the appearance of the terrible impis, shield and speararmed as they went forth to battle, the thunder of the warsong, and the grim and imposing battle array. He could tell, too, of vengeful and bleeding warriors, returning sorely wounded, of sudden panic flights of women and childrenhimself among themand once indeed, albeit at some distance, he had seen the King. But on the subject of his parentage he was very reticent. His father was a valiant and skilled fighterso too, had been all his ancestorsbut he had fallen in the war. He himself had been educated by a missionary, and sent over to England to be further educated and eventually to be trained as a missionary himself, to aid in evangelising his own people; although with true native reticence he had refrained from owning that he had no taste for any such career. His forefathers had all been

warriors, and he only desired to follow in their steps. Later on he imparted this to Haviland, but with all the others he kept up a certain reserve.

To Haviland, indeed, the African boy had attached himself in doglike fashion, ever since that potentate had interfered to rescue him from Jarnley; yet his motive in so doing was not that of selfpreservation, for no word did he utter to his quondam protector that he was still a particular object of spite to Jarnley and his following. At first Haviland was bored thereby, then became interested, a change mainly brought about by a diffident entreaty to be allowed to see his collection of eggs, and also to be allowed to accompany him during the process of adding to it. This was granted, and Haviland was amazed at the extent of the Zulu boy's knowledge of everything to do with the bird and animal life of the fields and woods, although totally different from that of his own country. So he was graciously pleased to throw over him the wing of his patronage, and the beginning of this strange friendship was destined to lead to some very startling experiences indeed before it should end.

But the school regarded it with partly amused, partly contemptuous wonder, and in like spirit Anthony became known as "Haviland's chum."

Chapter Six.

The Haunted Wood.

“What a rum chap Haviland is!” said Laughton, the captain of the school, as from the window of the prefects’ room, he, with three or four others, stood watching the subject of the remark, rapidly receding into distance, for it was a halfholiday afternoon. “He and Cetchy have become quite thick.”

“I expect he finds him useful at egghunting,” said Medlicott.

“Yesand how about it being wrong form for us to go about with juniors?” struck in Langley, a small prefect who had attained to that dignity by reason of much “sapping,” but was physically too weak to sustain it adequately. “Haviland’s never tired of jamming that down our throats, but he doesn’t practise what he preaches. Eh?”

“Well, Corbould major’ll be a prefect himself next term,” said Medlicott.

“Yes, but how about the nigger, Medlicott? A nigger into the bargain. Haviland’s chum! I don’t know how Haviland can stick him,” rejoined the other spitefully, for he loved not Haviland.

“I wish he’d chuck that confounded egghunting, at any rate for this term,” said Laughton. “He’ll get himself reduced as sure as fate. Nick’s watching him like a cat does a mouse. He’s got a down on him for some reason or otherdon’t know what it can beand the very next row Haviland gets into he’ll reduce him. That’s an absolute cert.”

“Haviland did say he’d chuck it,” replied Medlicott. “But what’s he to do? He’s a fellow who doesn’t care for gamesswears cricket’s slow, and football always makes him want to hit somebody.”

“He’s a rum card,” rejoined Laughton. “Well, I’m going round to the East field to do some bowling. I expect Clay’ll be there. Coming, Medlicott?”

“No. I don’t care about bowling to Clay. He expects you to keep at it all the time just because he’s a master. Never will bowl to you. I bar.”

The two under discussion were speeding alongHaviland jubilant over having obtained leave from calloverthus being able to get very far afield. He fancied Mr Sefton, the master of the week, had eyed him rather curiously in granting it, but what did that matter? He had the whole afternoon before him.

As they proceeded, he was instructing the other in various landmarks, and other features of the country.

“Think you could find your way back all right, Cetchy?” he said, when they had proceeded some distance, “if you were left alone, I mean?”

“Find way? Left alone? What do you mean?”

“Why sometimes, if you get chevvied by a keeper it’s good strategy to separate, and get back round about. It boggles the enemy and at worst gives one of you a chance.”

“Find wayha!” chuckled Anthony. “Well, rather. All that treehill over thereplenty church steeple. Fellows who can’t find way here must be thundering big fools.”

“Quite right. I hope we shan’t be put to it today, but it has saved both of us before. Though as a rule, Cetchy, I never go out with another fellow, except Corbould now and then. Much rather be alonebesides, when there are two fellows together they get jawing at the wrong time. Remember that, Cetchy. Once you’re off the road don’t say a word more than you can helpand only that in a whisper.”

The other nodded.

“I know,” he said.

“One time I had an awful narrow squeak,” pursued Haviland. “It was in Needham’s Copse, the very place Finch and Harris were swished for going through. There’s a dry ditch just inside where you can nearly always find a nightingale’s nest. I’d just taken one, and was starting to get back, when I heard something and dropped down like a shot to listen. Would you believe it, Cetchy, there was a beast of a keeper with a brown retriever dog squatting against the hedge on the other side! It was higher than where I was lying, and I could see them against the sky, but they couldn’t see me, and fortunately the hedge was pretty thick. The wonder was the dog didn’t sniff me out, but he didn’t. It was lively, I can tell you, for nearly an hour I had to squat there hardly able to breathe for fear of being heard. At last they cleared out and so did I. I was late for callover of course, but Clayit was his weekonly gave me a hundred linessaid I looked so jolly dirty that I must have been running hard. He’s a good chap, Clay, and a bit of a sportsman, although he is such a peppery devil. Well, Cetchy, you see if there had been two of us, one would have been bound to make a row, and thenwhat with the dog we couldn’t have got clear. That would have meant a swishing, for I wasn’t a prefect then.”

With similar narratives did Haviland beguile the way and instruct his companion, therein however strictly practising what he preached, in that he kept them for such times as they should be upon the Queen's highway, or pursuing a legitimate path.

So far, they had found plenty of spoil, but mostly of the commoner sorts and not worth takingat least not from Haviland's point of viewall of whose instincts as a sportsman were against wanton destruction.

"Why don't you begin collecting, Cetchy?" he said, as, seated on a stile, they were taking a rest and a look round. "I should have thought it was just the sort of thing you'd take to kindly."

"Yes. I think I will."

"That's right. We'll start you with all we take today, except one or two of the better sorts, and those we'll halve. What have we got already? Five butcherbird's, four nightingale's, and five bullfinch's, but I believe those are too hardset to be any good. Hallo!" looking up, "I believe that was a drop of rain."

The sky, which was cloudy when they started, had now become overcast, and a few large drops fell around them. Little enough they minded that though.

"Are you afraid of ghosts, Cetchy?" said Haviland.

"Ghosts? Nowhy?"

"See that wood over there? Well, that's Hangman's Wood, and we're going through that. It's one of the very best nesting grounds in the whole countryit's too far away, you see, for our fellows to get at unless they get leave from callover, which they precious seldom can."

He pointed to a line of dark wood about threequarters of a mile away, of irregular shape and some fifty acres in extent. It seemed to have been laid out at different times, for about a third of it was a larch plantation, the lighter green of which presented a marked contrast to the dark firs which constituted the bulk of the larger portion.

"It's haunted," he went on. "Years and years ago they found a man hanging from a bough right in the middle of it. The chap was one of the keepers, but they never could make out exactly whether he had scragged himself, or whether it was done by some fellows he'd caught poaching. Anyway the yarn goes that they hung two or three on

suspicion, and it's quite likely, for in those days they managed things pretty much as they seem to do in your country, eh, Cetchyhang a chap first and try him afterwards?"

"That's what Nick does," said the Zulu boy with a grin.

Haviland laughed.

"By Jove, you're right, Cetchy. You've taken the length of Nick's foot and no mistake. Well, you see now why they call the place Hangman's Wood, but that isn't all. They say the chap walkshis ghost, you knowjust as they found him hangingall black in the face, with his eyes starting out of his head, and round his neck a bit of the rope that hung him. By the way, that would be a nice sort of thing for us to meet stalking down the sides of the wood when we were in there, eh, Cetchy?"

The other made no reply. Wideeyed, he was taking in every word of the story. Haviland went on.

"It sounds like a lot of humbug, but the fact remains that more than one of the keepers has met with a mortal scare in that very place, and I've even heard of one chucking up his billet rather than go into the wood anywhere near dusk even, and the rum thing about it too is that it never gets poached: and you'd think if there was a safe place to poach that'd be it. Yet it doesn't. Come on now. I got a lot out of it the season before last, and we ought to get something good today."

Keeping well under cover of the hedges the two moved quickly along. Then, as they neared the wood, with a "whirr" that made both start, away went a cockpheasant from the hedgerow they were followingspringing right from under their feet. Another and another, and yet another winging away in straight powerful flight, uttering a loud alarmed cackle, and below, the white scuts of rabbits scampering for the burrows in the dry ditch which skirted the covert.

"Confound those beastly birds! What a row they kick up!" whispered Haviland wrathfully as he watched the brilliantly plumaged cocks disappearing among the dark tree tops in front. "Come along, though. I expect it's all right."

"There you are," he went on disgustedly, as they stood in the ride formed by the enclosing hedge of the first line of trees. "'Trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law.' Nice free country this, eh, Cetchy?"

The notice board, nailed some seven or eight feet from the ground, stared them in the face. But Haviland was used to such.

Cautiously, noiselessly, they stole in and out among the trees, one eye and ear keenly alert for that which they sought, the other for indication of possible human, and therefore hostile, presence. The shower had ceased, but the odour of newly watered herbage hung moist upon the air, mingling with the scent of the firs, and the funguslike exhalations of rotten and mouldering wood. A semitwilight prevailed, the effect of the heavy foliage, and the cloudveiled and lowering skyand the ghostly silence was emphasised rather than disturbed every now and then by the sudden flapflap of a woodpigeon's wings, or the stealthy rustle in the undergrowth as a rabbit or pheasant scuttled away.

"Look, Cetchy," whispered Haviland. "This is the place where they found the chap hanging."

Right in the heart of the wood they were, and at this spot two ridges intersected each other. A great oak limb reached across this point like a huge natural gallows beam.

"The fellow who found him," went on Haviland, pointing at this, "did so by accident. He was coming along the ride here in the dark, and the chap's legsthe chap who was hanging, you knowsort of kicked him in the face as he walked underneath that bough. Then he looked up and saw what it was. Ugh! I say, Cetchy, supposing that sort of thing was to happen to you or me! Think we'd get in a funk, eh?"

The Zulu boy, coming of a race which is intensely susceptible to superstitious fears, shook his head, and muttered something in his own tongue. The drear and dismal aspect of the place and its gruesome legend impressed him. He did not like it at all, but would not own as much. If Haviland, to whom he looked up as something of a god, was not afraid, why should he be? Haviland, moved by some spirit of mischief, went on, sinking his voice to a still more impressive whisper:

"Supposing we were to see the ghost now, Cetchy, looking just as they say it walksblack in the face, and with its eyes and tongue all bulging out of its head, and the bit of rope dangling from its neck! Think we should get in a beastly funk, eh? There, just coming out from under those dark firscan't you imagine it?"

For answer the other started violently, and uttered a scared ejaculation. Even Haviland's nerves were not entirely proof against the interruption, coming when it did. Something had happened to startle them both.

Chapter Seven.

The Ghost.

The next moment Haviland burst into a fit of smothered laughter.

“It’s only a hen pheasant, Cetchy,” he whispered, “but she made such a row getting up right under our feet just as we were talking about the ghost. It quite gave me the jumps.”

“She’s got nest too,” said the other, who had been peering into the undergrowth. “Look, nine, ten eggs! That’s good?”

“Yes, but you can’t take them. Never meddle with game eggs.”

“How I make collection if I not take eggs?”

This was pertinent, and Haviland was nonplussed, but only for a moment.

“I’ve got some extra specimens I’ll give you,” he answered. “Come on, leave these, and let the bird come back.”

The other looked somewhat wistfully at the smooth olivehued eggs lying there temptingly in their shallow bowl of dry leaves and grass. Then he turned away.

“We’ll find plenty of others,” said Haviland. “Last time I was here I took a nest of blackcap’s, and the eggs were quite pink instead of brown. That’s awfully rare. We’ll see if there are any more in the same place.”

Round the cover they went, then across it, then back again, all with a regular system, and soon their collecting boxes were filledincluding some good sorts.

“There! Big bird go away up there,” whispered Anthony pointing upward.

They were standing under a clump of dark firs. Over their tops Haviland glimpsed the quick arrowy flight.

“A sparrowhawk, by Jingo!” he said. “Sure to have a nest here too.”

A keen and careful search revealed this, though it was hidden away so snugly in the firtop, that it might have been passed by a hundred times. The Zulu boy begged to be allowed to go up.

“I think not this time, Cetchy,” decided Haviland. “It’s an easy climb, but then you haven’t had enough practice in stowing the eggs, and these are too good to get smashed.”

It was not everything to get up the tree: half the point was to do so as noiselessly as possible, both of which feats were easy enough to so experienced a climber as Haviland. He was soon in the firtop, the loose untidy pile of sticks just over his head; another hoistand thenmost exciting moment of all, the smooth warm touch of the eggs. The while the parent bird, darting to and fro in the air, came nearer and nearer his head with each swoop. But for this he cared nothing.

“Look, Cetchy,” he whispered delightedly as he stood once more on terra firma and exhibited the bluishwhite treasures with their rich sepia blotches. “Three of them, and awfully good specimens. Couple days later there’d have been four or five, still three’s better than none. You shall have these two to start your collection with, and I’ll stick to this one with the markings at the wrong end. What’s the row?”

For the Zulu boy had made a sign for silence, and was standing in an attitude of intense listening.

“Somebody coming,” he whispered. “One man.”

Haviland’s nerves thrilled. But listen as he would his practised ear could hear nothing.

“Quick, hide,” breathed the other, pointing to a thick patch of bramble and fern about a dozen yards away, and not a moment too early was the warning uttered, for scarcely had they reached it and crouched flat to the earth, when a man appeared coming through the wood. Peering from their hidingplace, they made out that he was clad in the velveteen suit and leather leggings of a keeper, and, moreover, he carried a gun.

He was looking upward all the time, otherwise he could not have failed to see them, and to Haviland, at any rate, the reason of this was plain. He had sighted the sparrowhawk, and was warily stalking her, hence the noiselessness of his approach. The situation was becoming intensely exciting. The keeper was coming straight for their hidingplace, still, however, looking upward. If he discovered them, they must make a dash for it that moment, Haviland explained in a whisper scarcely above a breath. The gun didn’t count, he daren’t fire at them in any event.

Suddenly the man stopped. Up went the gun, then it was as quickly lowered. He had sighted the flight of the hawk above the tree tops, but the chance was not good enough.

And he had sighted something else, the nest to wit. The bird was sure to come back to it, and so give him a much better chance. Accordingly he squatted down among the undergrowth, his gun held ready, barely twenty yards from the concealed pair, but with his back to them.

That sparrowhawk, however, was no fool of a bird. She seemed possessed of a fine faculty for discrimination, and manifestly knew the difference between a brace of eggcollecting schoolboys, and a ruthless, deathdealing gamekeeper, and although at intervals she swooped overhead it was always out of range, but still the latter sat there with a patience that was admirable, save to the pair whom all unconsciously it menaced with grave consequences.

For, as time fled, these loomed nearer and nearer. As it was, they would need all their time to get back, and were they late for evening chapel, especially after being granted leave from callingover, it was a dead certainty that the Doctor himself would have something to say in the matter, at any rate in Haviland's case. And still that abominable keeper lurked there, showing no sign whatever of moving within the next halfhour, in which event it mattered little if he did not move at all. A thin, penetrating drizzle had begun to fall, which bade fair to wet them to the skin, but for this they cared nothing, neither apparently did their enemy, who furthermore was partly sheltered beneath a great fir. Haviland grew desperate.

"We shall have to make a run for it, Cetchy," he breathed. "Look," showing his watch. "If the beast doesn't make a move in five minutes, we must run and chance it. I'll give the word."

The hand of the watch moved slowly onone minutetwothreefour. Haviland replaced it in his pocket, and drew a long breath: but before he could give the word, his companion touched him and whispered.

"No run. He run. I make him."

"What?"

"I make him run. I flighten him. I ghost. You'll see."

For a great idea had occurred to Mpukuza, christened Anthony, named by Saint Kirwin's "Cetchy"and exactly one minute and as rapid a metamorphosis in his personal appearance was all he needed to put it into execution.

Darker and darker had grown the lowering skies, and now the wind began to moan dismally through the tree trunks. Anything more drear and depressing than the brooding gloom of the haunted wood could hardly be imagined. The keeper, however, was of the dogged order of rustic, and doubtless lacking in imagination, for he remained patiently at his selfappointed post. Then, suddenly, he started to his feet and faced quickly round.

A sight met his gaze, transfixing him with terror, seeming to turn him to stone. Reared above the undergrowth, an awful head, covered with dust, and bristling with bramblesa black face with lolling, swollen tongue, and huge eyeballs protruding from their sockets rolling their vivid whites in most hideous fashionyes, and there, round the neck, a strand of cord, while from the throat of this horrifying apparition there proceeded the most hollow, halfstrangled moan that ever curdled mortal blood. For a moment the appalled keeper stood with livid countenance, and his knees knocking togetherthen with a wild hoarse cry, and dropping his gunhe turned and fled away down the ride of the wood as fast as his legs could carry him.

“Come, Haviland, we’ll go now,” chuckled the ghost, dropping down into the undergrowth again. But Haviland made no reply, being powerless alike for speech or movement. He lay there gasping, choking back with superhuman effort the scarcely repressible roars of laughter that he dared not let out.

“Come quick. We be off,” urged the Zulu boy. “Praps he come back.”

“Not he,” gurgled Haviland faintly. “Oh Cetchy, that’s about the most deadly thing I ever saw in my life. Oh, it’ll be the death of me.” Then recovering himself with a mighty effort:

“Come along, Cetchy. You’re right, by Jingo! We’ll have to put our best leg forward as it is. Oh, but we mustn’t think about this or it’ll kill me again.”

Cautiously and in silence, and ever keeping a bright lookout lest mayhap their dupe should recover from his scare and return, they made their way out of the haunted wood, then across country at a hard swinging trot, and the faraway roofs of Saint Kirwin’s seemed painfully remote.

“I say, Cetchy,” said Haviland as they sat beneath a hedge for a brief but necessary breather. “Supposing the chap had let off his gun at you? Eh? We never thought of that.”

“He not shoothe too much funk.”

“So he was. I dare say, too, he thought it wasn’t any good firing at a ghost. No, I mustn’t start laughing again. Come along.”

And indeed they needed to make the most of their time, for the bell was already ringing during the last five minutes of their run. However, they got through by a narrow shave.

After chapel, as he was walking across the quadrangle, a scurry of feet and a rustle of long garments behind him caused Haviland to turn. He beheld Mr Sefton.

“Did you find lots of eggs this afternoon, Haviland?” said the master, who was still in his canonicals and square cap.

“Yes, sir. A grand lot. Thanks so much for giving us leave.”

“Are you teaching Cetchy birdnesting?”

“Yes, sir. He wants to collect. He’s a good hand at finding them too.”

“Ah! Don’t get him into mischief. Eh? And keep out of it yourself. D’you hear? Keep out of it yourself.”

There was a warning note underlying the quaint, dry quizzical tone which was not lost upon the hearer. He was wondering how much Sefton suspected, but at the same time was thinking how dearly he would have liked to tell Sefton the joke about the ghost, but that of course he dared not. Yet Sefton would have appreciated it so keenlyno one more so. But he only answered:

“I’ll try to, sir. Yes, we had a real ripping afternoonthanks to you.”

“Ha!” With which enigmatical ejaculation the master nodded and went his way.

That evening, in the dormitory, Haviland being in hall at supper with the other prefects off duty, Anthony was relating, in his quaint racy English, the exciting events of the afternoon, all except the ghost episode, which he had been strictly enjoined to keep to himself. Those who were collectors were thrilled with envy.

“You are a lucky beggar, Cetchy,” sighed Smithson minor. “I wish to goodness Haviland would take me with him once or twicethat’s all.”

“Ha! Take you!”

“Yes. Why not?” bristling up.

“You no good. You can’t run.”

“Look here, Cetchy. I’ll smack your head if you talk like that to me.”

“Smack my head! You can’t do it.”

“Oh, can’t I?” retorted Smithson minor jumping out of bed. The other said nothing. He simply followed suit, and stood waiting. This was not in the least what Smithson expected, and now he remembered, when too late, the Zulu boy’s summary retaliation on Jarnley, and how sturdily and unmovedly he had taken the caning it involved, what time Jarnley had howled. He remembered, too, the hard, wiry training the other was in andhesitated. But it was too late to draw back, and so he rushed on his enemy, hitting out right and left; and at first Anthony seemed to be getting the worst of it, for, in common with his race, he had no idea how to use his fists, nor had he been long enough at Saint Kirwin’s to have learnt, and the scuffle was enlivened by the encouraging though stifled adjurations of the spectators.

“Go it, Smithson! Now then, Cetchy! Ah! He’s got it! Shut up, you fellows. We’ll have Medlicott in directly if you kick up such a row,” and so forth. But just then, Anthony, who, if he hadn’t science, assuredly had all the fierce fighting valour of his race, woke up to a mighty effort, and dashing out with both hands and hurling himself forward at the same time, landed his adversary full in the face, and down went Smithson minor, and with him two other fellows who were pressing him too close behind. In the midst of which shindy the door opened, and in walked Haviland.

“What’s all this about?” he cried, turning the gas full up and revealing the whole scene of disorderthe panting combatants and the now sheepishlooking spectators, some of whom were making desperate efforts to appear as if they had never left their beds. “Come here, Smithson. What d’you mean by it, eh?”

Smithson, who recognised in this formula a certain preamble to condign punishment, thought he might as well try to say something for himself.

“Please, Haviland, he cheeked me,” he faltered.

“Cheeked you, did he? I wonder you haven’t had Sefton up here with his cane, and of course that wouldn’t have meant a thousand lines for me for not keeping order, would it?”

“He tell me he smack my head,” cut in Anthony. “I tell him he can’t do it. Then he try. Ha!”

The room tittered. Haviland was mollified.

“Did he do it?” he said.

“No fear. I knock him over. Then you come in.” And the speaker stood with his head in the air, and the light of battle in his eyes, albeit one of them was rather swollen, looking for all the world a youthful reproduction of one of his warrior sires.

“Well, I know jolly well that Cetchy didn’t begin the row,” pronounced Haviland, throwing down his square cap, and beginning to take off his coat and vest with a yawn. “Get into bed, Smithson. If I hear anything about this tomorrow from Sefton, I’ll sock your head off. If not, I’ll let you off this time. Now shut up, you fellows. No more talking.”

There was no need to repeat the order. Silence prevailed in that dormitory forthwith.

Chapter Eight.

Jarnley again.

If the practical joke played upon the keeper in Hangman's Wood ever transpired in the immediate neighbourhood of that illomened locality, the tidings thereof did not reach as far as Saint Kirwin'snor had its perpetrators any opportunity of revisiting the place, by reason of the distance, and the difficulty of so soon again obtaining leave from callover. But other coverts were levied upon in like fashion, all, or nearly all, we regret to say, under equally forbidden conditions.

The summer term proved exceptionally fine, and Haviland and other collectors revelled in the bright and glowing weather. If at times illicit, the long breezy rambles over field and down were fraught with all that was healthful and wholesome, in the splendid air, the beautiful surroundings of the fairest of English landscapes, the hardening of the young frame into the most perfect training, the excitement of a certain amount of ever present risk, and the absorbing pursuit of a favourite hobby. And then the cool plunge into the swimming pool at the close of the long summer's day. There was plenty of cricket too, and some exceptionally good matches in which Saint Kirwin's kept up its name quite well.

"Can't think why you don't go in for cricket, Haviland," observed Laughton, in the prefects room one whole holiday as he was getting ready for one of the matches aforesaid, and in which he figured in the school eleven as a bowler of no mean repute. "You ought to, you know. It's due to your position."

"No, thanks, Laughton. You don't catch me wasting a splendid day like this shying a ball at three silly sticks."

"Well, you could go in for batting. From what little I've seen you do in that line, with a little practice you'd make a very fair bat indeed."

"Oh, yes. Get bowled first ball, and spend the rest of the day fielding out. I'd as soon be doing an impos."

And the speaker finished some arrangement of cotton wool and cardboard boxes, and stowing the same into his side pockets tightened the strap wherewith he was girded, and nodding to Laughton started off there and then upon his favourite pursuitbut alone.

After him from the third form room windows gazed a pair of wistful eyes. Mpukuza, otherwise Anthony, had conceived a heroworship for the other, nearly akin to that felt

by some of the old indunas of his race for their king. To accompany Haviland on one of these rambles had become for him something to live for. He would have "broken his gates" and cheerfully welcomed the inevitable swishing thereby incurred, rather than forego one such, and of late the occasions on which Haviland had been graciously pleased to command his attendance had been growing more and more rarepartly due to the unwritten code which was against a prefect fraternising much with a junior unless the latter were about his own age and size. So he gazed wistfully after his hero, and in the expressive idiom of his race "his heart was sore."

"Hallo, Cetchy! Not gated, are you? Come out birdnesting." The voice was that of Smithson minor.

Since their little scrimmage in the dormitory the two had become very friendly, and had been out together several times.

"All right."

"Thought you were gated when I saw Haviland go out alone," went on Smithson as they started. "Hallo! There's Clay! Quick. We'll dodge him. I've got an impos to do for him. I'm not gated, but if he saw me he might want to know why I'm not doing it."

Having successfully dodged the master they struck across some fields. But alack and alas! in escaping one possible danger they were destined to run straight into the jaws of another and a more certain. At the crossing of a stile there was a rush of big fellows who had been lying in wait on the other side, and in a trice they were pounced upon and collared by Jarnley and his gang.

"Got you at last, have I, Cetchy?" snarled that worthy, fairly grinning with delight. "Oh, I've a long score to pay off on your black hide, haven't I? and I'm going to begin now," tweaking the other savagely by the ear with one hand though holding him firmly by the collar with the other. "You would get me tanned by Clay, would you?"

"I was tanned too," protested the victim.

"And now you'll be tanned again. What Clay gave yougave usis nothing to what we are going to give you now. And the seven hundred lines, and the lines Sefton gave us all but let you off."

"Shut up, Perkins, you beastly bully!" yelped Smithson minor, who was undergoing his share of trial in the little matter of a twisted arm and a fistic punch or two thereon. "I'll report you to Haviland if you don't leave us alone."

“Oh, you’d sneak, would you? Take thatand that”emphasising the expostulation with a couple of sounding smacks on the head.

“Come on, you fellows,” said Jarnley. “Don’t let him go, but we’ll deal with Cetchy first. Oh, yes, my black snowball, my woollypated beautyI told you I’d skin you alive, didn’t I? I told you I’d rip the black hide off you, and now I’m going to do it. Now then, spreadeagle him over the steps of that stile. Oh, yes. We’ve been keeping these for you many a long day, my noble snowball,” producing a thick but supple willow switch, and one of the others, of whom there were just half a dozen, producing one likewise.

It was then or never. The victim, well aware of what a savage thrashing would be inflicted upon him, should he fail, made one last effort. Before the others had time to seize him he struck his heel down sharply on to Jarnley’s toes, crushing them into the ground, at the same time sending his elbow back with all his force. It caught the bully fair in the pit of the stomach, and with a howl, promptly strangled in a gasp, Jarnley partially relaxed his hold. In a trice the Zulu boy had wrenched himself free, and, deftly ducking between two of the others who sprang at him, was off like a shot.

Jarnley was beside himself with rage.

“You asses!” he shouted gaspingly as he recovered his wind. “All this time we’ve been looking out for him, and now, just as we’ve got him, you let him get away.”

“It strikes me it was you who let him get away,” retorted Perkins. “Well, we’ll take it out of this little beast instead.”

Poor Smithson minor howled for mercy, but he howled in vain. They pulled him down over the stile step, the switches were uplifted and ready when

“Whack! Whack!” came a couple of stones. “Whackwhackwhack!” came three more, flung hard too, and with a terrible precision. One struck Perkins on the hand, causing him to dance and swear all his fingers were broken. Another hit Jarnley on the shoulder, while two more found their billet in violent contact with another of the bulliesand there, in a gap in the hedge some little distance off, stood the one who had escaped, grinning in mingled vindictiveness and glee. Other stones followed, hurled with the same unerring precision. To proceed with their congenial work under that terrible bombardment was impossibleand so, leaving one in charge of Smithson, the gang started in pursuit of the Zulu boy.

The latter chuckled, for he knew that not one of them could get any nearer to him than he chose, when it came to running. He sprang down into the road again, quickly shovelled up a double handful of stones, and loped on. Then he turned, just as the pursuers came within easy range, and opened fire again. It was too much. With dire threats they beat a retreat. They would get hold of him again sooner or later, they declared, and that time he would not get off at any price. At all of which the Zulu boy chuckled and laughed, hurling abusive epithets at them in his quaint English.

The while poor Smithson, in the grasp of the big fellow who custodied him, was having a bad time, in the shape of a slight forestalment of what he might expect when the others returned. But for him, too, came reliefrescue, and it came in the shape of a couple of prefects who appeared in sight, sauntering along the fieldpath towards them.

"You'd better let me go," he said, "or I'll call out to Street and Cluer."

The other saw the force of this, and, with a threat and a sly cuff, acted upon it, and slunk away to give the alarm to the rest. Half an hour later Smithson and Anthony were forgathering under a hedge, talking over their escape.

"Well, you are no end of a brick, Cetchy," said the former. "Why, they'll make you cock chief of your tribe one of these days, I should think."

"Hahaha!" chuckled the other. "Jarnley hurt more'n we hurt. All of 'em hurt. Hahaha!"

"Well, you got me out of it with those beasts. I say, Cetchy, old chap, I'm expecting a hamper next week, and won't we have a blow out then!" he added, in a burst of gratitude and admiration.

"Hamper? What's that?"

"Why, a basket of tuck. Grub, you know, from home. No end of good things."

"Ha! All right," said the other with a jolly laugh.

That day Haviland was making the most of his time and his solitary ramble. His collecting boxes were fairly well filled; among other specimens he had hit upon a grasshopper warbler's nest, whose existence he suspected, containing five eggs, beautifully fresh and thus easily blown, likewise a sedgewarbler's, hung cuplike, among the bulrushes of a reedy pond. The spoils of two wheatears, extracted with some difficulty from a deep burrow on the slope of Sidbury Down, had also fallen to his lot, and now, stretched on the springy turf on the summit of that eminence, he was enjoying

a wellearned rest, thoroughly contented with himself and all the world. And what a view lay outstretched beneath and arounda fair, rolling champaign, green meadow and darker woodhere and there the shining surface of a pond: farm buildings too, picturesque with their red roofs and yellow cornstacks, nestling among hanging elms noisy with the cawing of restless rooks, and the shrill whimsical chatter of jackdaws. The bark of a sheepdog, and the glad melodious shout of the cuckoo here and there, were borne upward on the still airand far away over this beautiful landscape the brown highpitched roofs of Saint Kirwin's, conveying a sort of monastic suggestion in its surroundings of field and wood.

Haviland had been making the most of his daytherefore this was his fourth expedition, and it was now late afternoon. His watch marked ten minutes past five, and chapel was at six. There was plenty of time, but he thought he would take it easy going back. So, having allowed himself another five minutes' rest, he took a final look around, and started to come down.

He had nearly reached the bottom of the slope when he stopped short, with an exclamation of unbounded amazement and unmistakable dismay. He stood listening, motionless, intent. Only the sound of a bell, pealing out with startling plainness through the sleepy afternoon air. Great heavens! It was the chapel bell at Saint Kirwin's.

No. It couldn't be! Why, it wasn't nearly time. Chapel was at sixnot halfpast five. Eagerly, almost convulsively, he jerked forth his watch. Still the hands marked ten minutes past five.

He groaned aloud. The game was up. Not by any possibility could he now be in time for chapel. The bell always rang for a quarter of an hour, and he knewnone betterthat exactly double that period of time was required to cover the distance between where he stood and the school gates, and that at a sharp run all the way. By a wellnigh superhuman effort it might possibly be done in twentyfive minutes, but not one second less, and here he was with something under a quarter of an hour to do it in. He was in despair.

For being late for chapel was one of the most heinous offences he could commit. The only chance for him was if for any reason the Doctor should happen to be absent himself. In that event the best he could expect was a stiff imposition from the master of the week. Should however the Head be there, as was nearly always the casewhy then it would mean certain suspension for him at any rate.

He glared at the offending watch, and shook it savagely. It ticked feebly for a few seconds, then hopelessly stopped once more. A pretty trick it had played him, and he felt

inclined to hurl it into the first pond he should pass, as he sped along at a hard steady run: for every minute he was late would, if possible, render his case worse.

Chapter Nine.

Disaster.

Saint Kirwin's boasted a really beautiful chapel, large, lofty, rich in stained glass and abundant sculpture of firstrate design and execution. The services, which were fully choral, were rendered by an excellent choir drawn from the school, and on Sundays and on certain saints' days its performance would have done credit even to the average cathedral. The structure was in shape a parallelogram, the seats running in long rows, tier upon tier the whole length, certain stalls, however, being returned against the west wall on either side of the entrance. The principal of these was that of the headmaster, who thus had the whole assemblage under his view. And his lynx gaze was quick to descry any irregularity, and woe indeed to the prefect in whose row such should occur, and still greater woe to the delinquent or delinquents.

We have said that Dr Bowen cut an imposing figure as he entered the big schoolroom in cap and gown amid an awed silence, but he looked, if possible, more imposing still in chapel, in his snowy voluminous surplice and great scarlet hood, as, preceded by a verger, he made his way along the aisle to read the Lessons from the great eagle lectern which stood in the middle of the choir; indeed, so majestic was his gait and bearing on these occasions as to be the source of a good deal of surreptitious fun on the part of the more satirically minded, among whom, needless to say, was our friend Haviland.

Now the latter, on this illfated afternoon, was standing outside the door, striving to recover breath after the length and severity of his run. If only he could enter and reach his place unseen by the Doctor, it would be all right. The master of the weekin this case Mr Williamshis own dormitory master, a goodnatured and genial athlete, would give him an imposition, as in duty bound, but would almost certainly not report him at headquarters, which he was not strictly bound to do. But how on earth could he accomplish any such entrance seeing that the Doctor's stall was next to the door, and commanded everything that went on, as we have said? And then there occurred to him a desperate scheme, one which spoke much for his readiness and resource, and on that account alone deserved to succeed. What if he were to seize the opportunity when the Doctor should descend from his stall, and, the moment his back was turned, slip in and walk close behind him all the way to the lectern. Arrived there, the attention of the Great Panjandrum would be momentarily diverted while turning to ascend the steps, and he could slip into his seat, which, luckily, stood there hard by. The chance was a desperate one indeed, but it was his only one. He would risk it.

Would the chanting never cease? Haviland's heart thumped, and a mist seemed to come before his gaze. Ah, now for it! The voices were tailing off into an Amen; the organ

stopped with a final snarl, then silence, only relieved by a rustling sound and that of footsteps on the stone floor. Now was his time.

The door, fortunately, was not quite closed, and so could be opened noiselessly. Now it was done, and Haviland was within the chapel, his rubbersoled shoes making no noise as he stole along, conscious of a confused sea of faces; and, indeed, that progress seemed to his excited brain like hours instead of minutes, and the great scarlet hood adorning the Doctor's back seemed like a huge redhot furnace before his eyes.

This strange procession had reached the lectern. Haviland felt safe. He had calculated his move to a nicety, and in a fraction of a second would have gained his place. But he had reckoned without the consummate shrewdness, which was the result of long experience, of the headmaster of Saint Kirwin's.

For the look of surprise, of interest, on the rows of faces on either side of him as he paced up the aisle had not escaped that potentate, but he was not going to impair the majestic dignity of his march by turning then. When he had gained his objective he did just half turn, and in the momentary compression of the lips and that one look on the Doctor's face Haviland knew that his fate was sealed. To many there who had witnessed the episode, and there were few who had not, it seemed that there was a menacing growl in the sonorous voice rolling out the splendid old Scriptural English.

"Well, Haviland, what have you got to say for yourself?" said Mr Williams, when our friend went to report himself afterwards.

"My watch stopped, sir. I thought I had plenty of time, and then heard the bell begin when I was just coming off Sidebury Down. Even then I tried to do it, but it was impossible."

"Well, I can't help that. You'll have to do four hundred lines," answered Mr Williams, fully intending to let him off half of them. "One of my prefects, too," he added, half quizzically, half with a mock aggrieved air.

"Very sorry, sir."

The imposition was really less than he had expected. If only the matter were to rest there, he thought.

"I say, Haviland," subsequently remarked Laughton in hall. "You're a cool customer, marching in behind Nick in that stately manner. Did you think he wouldn't see you?"

“Yes. It was the only chance, and I took it. He wouldn’t have, either, if all those asses hadn’t given, the show away by gaping like so many idiots, confound them.”

“What’s Williams given you?”

“Four hundred. I believe I’ll try and get him to let me off one. He hasn’t gated me either. He’s a good sort, is Williams. What do you think, Laughton? Think Nick’ll take the thing any further? The old brute looked vicious, and he perfectly hates me. I don’t know why.”

Laughton wouldn’t commit himself to an opinion, and the general feeling at the prefects’ table was about evenly divided as to whether the Doctor would take it up or not.

“If you could only have seen yourself, Haviland!” cut in Cluer, another prefect. “It was enough to kill a cat, I swear it was. It looked for all the world as if you and Nick were trying which could crowd on the most side.” And he spluttered over the recollection.

“Jolly good fun for you, Cluer, no doubt,” said Medlicott, “and for all of us, but it’s beastly rough on Haviland, remember.”

“Rather, if Nick’s in one of his rotten moods,” said Laughton. “But let’s hope he won’t be.”

Alas for any such hopes! On the way out of hall the fatal summons came: “Haviland to go to the Doctor’s study after prep, bell.”

“All up!” groaned the implicated one.

When, at the appointed time, Haviland entered the dread presence, there was no doubt but that the headmaster was “in one of his rotten moods,” as Laughton had so graphically put it. Seated there at his study table, his face wore a very thundercloud of sternness, as he curtly invited the other to make his explanation. This was exactly the same as that offered to Mr Williams, but here it was received with a wrathful gruntand then in his most magisterial manner the Doctor proceeded to deliver himself.

“You have been guilty of a double breach of rules, in that you were absent from callingoverfor a part of which, by virtue of your office, you were personally responsibleand you were late for chapel. It is no excuse to say that your watch stopped; if that were any valid reason, why then half the school might stay away from callingover, and, indeed, we might as well do away with callingover altogether, or any other rule. For a prefect to break the rules, which it is his bounden duty to help in enforcingto do which,

indeed, is the very reason of his official existencehas always been, in my eyes, a ten times greater offence than the same conduct on the part of a junior.

“Now, over and above this double breach of the rules you have been guilty of two further and very serious offences. You have disturbed the decorum and dignity of divine service by entering the chapel in the way you did, and you practised deceit in making that entrance in such manner that you hoped it would escape my observation. Let me tell you that nothing escapes my observation”

“No, by Jingo it doesn’t!” thought the delinquent, ruefully.

”and of late that observation has convinced me that you are unfit to hold the office you bear, for I have had you specially under my notice for some time past. As, therefore, you have proved yourself utterly unfit to hold office, I have made up my mind to deprive you of it, and you may now consider yourself no longer a prefect.”

Here Haviland broke in desperately:

“Sir, has there ever been any report against meI mean of any disorder arising where I was in charge?”

The unheardof audacity of this expostulation seemed to take away the Doctor’s breath, to render him utterly speechless. He to be answered, remonstrated with! Why, the thing was unprecedented!

“Silence, sir!” he thundered, rising in his seat, and Haviland thought he was going to strike him. However, he did not, and went on:

“And as you have abused the reasonable liberty which the rules of the school allowand that not once, but continuallythus setting a bad example where it was your duty to set a good one, you will be confined to the school grounds from now until the end of the term. You may go.”

Seen from the windows of the somewhat sombre room in which he stood, the fair open country seemed to Haviland’s gaze more alluring than ever in the summer twilight, as he heard his sentence of imprisonment. And now he might roam it no more.

Then, as he went forth from the dread sanctum, a feeling of desperation dashed with recklessness came upon him. They might just as well expel him now, he thought, and perhaps he would do something to deserve even that. Practically gated until the end of the terma matter of about seven weeks! Yes, he felt desperate.

At the breaking up of preparation that evening there was considerable excitement among the groups scuffling to get a glimpse of the notice board in the big schoolroom, in the brief time allowed between prep, and prayers, and the attraction was a brandnew notice which ran thus:

“Havilandprefect.

“Suspended from his office and confined to the school grounds for the remainder of the term for gross breach of rules and general misconduct.

“Nicholas Bowen, D.D., Headmaster.”

“It was a pretty stiff account to have to settle, all because a fellow’s watch happened to stop,” Haviland had remarked to Laughton and some others when giving an account as to how he had fared. “Suspended, gated for the rest of the term, and four hundred lines to do for Williams into the bargain.”

The latter, however, was not to be added to his already burdened shoulders, for at dormitory time, when he went to report to Mr Williams that he was no longer a prefect, the latter said:

“I’m sorry to hear that, Haviland. But now you must just lie quiet a bit and keep out of mischief. The Doctor’s sure to reinstate you. Oh, and look here. You needn’t do those lines I set you this afternoon. It doesn’t seem fair that a fellow should have two punishments for the same offence.”

“The Doctor doesn’t seem to think so, sir,” he could not restrain himself from saying. “But thank you very much, sir. Reinstate me? No. The Doctor has a regular spite against mewhy I can’t think.”

“Oh, nonsense, Haviland,” said the master very kindly. “At any rate you must try not to think so. Good night.”

But while uttering this protest officially, Mr Williams did so halfheartedly, for in his own mind he thought the young fellow had been very severely treated indeed, and that the punishment was out of all proportion to the offence.

Chapter Ten.

Brooding.

Haviland, fallen from his high estate, did not take his misfortunes well. He was of a proud and sensitive temperament, and now that he found himself humiliated, reduced to the level of the rank and file, deprived of the very material privileges he had formerly enjoyed, shorn of his powers, and now in a position to obey where for so long he had been accustomed to commandyes, the humiliation was intolerable, and for no greater crime than that his watch had unfortunately stopped. A mere accident.

Not that his former colleagues were in the least likely to add to his humiliation by word or act of theirs. Esprit de corps was strong among them, very largely fostered indeed by his own influence while in a position to exert it. Even the two or three among them who disliked him would have shrunk from such an act, as being one of unspeakable meanness. And his fall was great. In seniority he had stood next to Laughton, the captain of the school, and were he eventually reinstated, he would lose this, and have to start again at the bottom of the list.

As for the juniors, some were unfeignedly glad, though their instinct of selfpreservation made them remarkably careful not to obtrude that fact upon him, yet, though his strictness while in office had rendered him unpopular, now that he had fallen most of their sympathies were with him.

But from sympathy or condolence alike he himself shrank. His mind was bitter with thoughts of hatred and revengethe latter, if only it could be obtainedyet why not? He was utterly reckless now. They could but expel him, and for that he didn't careat least, so he told himself. It was in this dangerous mood the day after his suspension that he encountered JarnleyJarnley and his gang.

But Jarnley had seen him coming, and tried to shuffle away. So, too, did his gang.

"HereHi, Jarnley!" he cried. "Wait a bit. I want to speak to you."

There was no escape, short of taking to his heels, wherefore Jarnley stopped, with a very bad grace and faced round.

"Eh? What is it, Haviland?"

"Just this. That day I smacked your head for bullying Cetchy you said you'd fight me if I wasn't a prefect. Well, I'm not a prefect now, socome on."

“Oh, I was only humbugging, Haviland,” returned Jarnley, not in the least eager to make good his words.

“Then you’d rather not fight?”

“Of course I don’t want to,” said Jarnley, shrinkingly. “And, look here, Haviland, I’m beastly sorry you’ve been reduced.”

What was to be done with a cur like this? Haviland knew that the other was lying, and was the reverse of sorry for his misfortunes. He had intended to give Jarnley his choice between fighting and being thrashed, but how, in the name of common decency, could he punch a fellow’s head who expressed such effusive sympathy? He could not. Baulked, he glared round upon the group.

“Any one else like to take advantage of the opportunity?” he said. “You, Perkins?”

“I don’t want to fight, Haviland,” was the sullen answer.

“Very well, then. But don’t let me hear of any of you bullying Cetchy any more. He can tell me now, because I’m no longer a prefect; and any fellow who does will get the very best hammering he ever had in his life. That’s all.”

His former colleagues spared no pains to let him see that they still regarded him as one of themselves. Among other things they pressed him to use the prefects’ room as formerly, but this he refused to do. If he had been walking with any of them he would stop short at the door, and no amount of persuasion could prevail on him to enter.

“You needn’t be so beastly proud, Haviland,” Laughton had said, half annoyed by these persistent refusals. “Why, man, Nick’s bound to reinstate you before long. The notice, mind, says ‘suspended’ only.”

At which Haviland had shaken his head and laughed strangely.

The confinement to grounds told horribly upon his spirits. Three miserable cricket fieldsas a matter of fact they were remarkably open and spaciousto be the sole outlet of his energies during all these weeks! He hated every stick and stone of them, every twig and leaf. He saw others coming and going at will, but he himself was a prisoner. Not even to the swimming pool might he go.

In sheer desperation he had followed Laughton's advice, and gone in for cricket, but had proved so halfhearted over the game, then badtempered and almost quarrelsome, that no one was sorry when he declared his intention of giving it up. More and more he became given over to broodingseeking a quiet corner apart, and looking out on to the open country from which he was debarred. While thus occupied one day, a hand dropped on his shoulder. Turning angrilythinking some other fellow was playing the fool, and trying to startle himhe confronted Mr Sefton.

"What were you thinking about, Haviland?" said the latter in his quick, sharp, quizzical way.

"Oh, I don't know, sir. Nothing very particular, I suppose," forcing a laugh, for he was not going to whine to Sefton.

The latter looked at him with straight, penetrating gaze.

"They tell me you've given up cricket again. Why?"

"I don't care for it, sir, never did. Everybody seems to have a notion that nothing can be of any use, or even right, but that confoundedI beg your pardon, sircricket and football. A fellow is never to be allowed to take his own line."

"Yes, but it's a good wholesome rule that if a fellow can't take his own line he'd better adapt himself to the lines of others. Eh?"

Haviland did not reply. He merely smiled, cynically, disdainfully. Mr Sefton, watching his face, was interested, and more sorry for him than his official position allowed him to say. He went on:

"Don't mope. There's nothing to be gained by it. Throw yourself into something. If one has lost a position, it is always possible to regain it. I know, and some others know, your influence has always been used in the right direction. Do you think that counts for nothing? Eh?"

"It hasn't counted for much, sir, in a certain quarter," was the bitter reply. "It isn't the position I mindI don't care a hang about it, sir!" he burst forth passionately, "but to be stuck down in these three beastly fields, in the middle of a crowd all day and every dayI'd rather have been expelled at once."

"Don't be an ass, Haviland," said the master, stopping shortfor they had been walking up and downand peering at him in his quaint way. "Do you hear? Don't be an ass."

This commentary, uttered as it was, left no room for reply, wherefore Haviland said nothing.

“Why don’t you go to the Doctor and ask him to remove your ‘gates’?” went on Mr Sefton.

“I wouldn’t ask him anything, sir.”

The tone, the expression of hatred and vindictiveness in the young fellow’s face, almost startled the other. As a master, ought he not to administer a stern rebuke; as a clergyman, was it not his duty to reason with him? But Mr Sefton, no part of an ass himself, decided that this was not the time for doing anything of the sort.

“You talk about not caring if you were expelled, Haviland,” he went on. “How about looking at it from your father’s point of view? How would he feel, d’you think, if you ended up your school life with expulsion? Eh?”

He had struck the right chord there, for in the course of their conversations he had gathered that the young fellow was devotedly attached to his father, whom he regarded as about a hundred times too good for the barren, ungrateful, and illrequited service to which he had devoted his lifeat any rate, looking at it from the unregenerate and worldly point of view. And, with a consciousness of having said just the right thing at the right time, Mr Sefton wisely decided to say no more.

“Think it over, Haviland. Think it over. D’you hear?” and with a friendly nod of farewell, he went his way.

A few minutes later he was walking along a fieldpath, his hat on the back of his head as usual, and swinging his stick. With him was Mr Williams.

“I’ve just been talking to that fellow Haviland,” he was saying. “Of course, I didn’t tell him so, but Nick has made a blunder this time. He’s piled it on to him too thick.”

The Doctor’s sobriquet, you see, had got among the assistant masters. It was short and handy, and so among themselves they used itsome of them, at any rate.

“I think he’s been most infernally rough on him, if you ask me,” replied Mr Williams, who, by the way, was not in orders, but an athletic Oxford graduate of sporting tastes, and who was generally to be met when off the grounds surrounded by three or four dogs, and puffing at a briarroot pipe. This he was even now engaged in relighting. “One

would think it'd be enough to kick the poor devil out of his prefectship without gating him for the rest of the term into the bargain. I promptly let him off the lines I'd given him when I heard of it."

"That's just my opinion, Williams. And it's the gating that's making him desperate. And he is getting desperate, too. I shouldn't be surprised if he did something reckless."

"Then he'll get the chuck. That'll be the last straw. Why has Nick got such a down on him, eh, Sefton?"

"I don't know, mind, but perhaps I can guess," said the other, enigmatically. "But look here, Williams. Supposing we put in a word for him to Nick. Get him to take off the fellow's gates, at any rate? Eh? Clay would join, and so would Jackson, in feet we all would."

"That'd make it worse. Nick would think we were all in league against him. He isn't going back one jot or tittle on his infallible judgment, so don't you believe it. We'd get properly snubbed for our pains."

"Well, I'm going to tackle him, anyhow. I'm not afraid of Nick for all his absurd pomposity," rejoined Mr Sefton, with something like a snort of defiance, and his nose in the air. He meant it, too. Yet, although the above expression of opinion between these two masters very fairly represented the general estimate in which the whole body held the Head, they were fully alive to the latter's good points, and supported him loyally in upholding the discipline and traditions of the school.

Chapter Eleven.

A Midnight Foray.

There was one in whose eyes Haviland, fallen from his pedestal, was on a still higher plane even than he had been before; and that one was Mpukuza, otherwise Anthony, sneeringly known among the illdisposed as "Haviland's chum." With the entire and unswerving loyalty of his race towards the object of its heroworship, the Zulu boy looked upon his god's misfortune as his own misfortune, and was not slow to proclaim the fact in season and out of season. Any fellow within measurable dimensions of his own size who professed satisfaction within Cetchy's hearing had got to fight, while more than one thrashing came his way from bigger fellows, towards whom his championing of his hero's cause took, perforce, the form of cheek. As for the prime author of the said misfortune, it would have been astonishing to note the result upon the reverend but stern Doctor's mind, could he either have heard or understood the awful threats and imprecations muttered at him in the liquid Zulu language whenever he came within view of Anthony.

The latter, since he had been at Saint Kirwin's, had made his way very fairly well. Acting upon an earnest and wise warning from the missionary who had placed him there, the masters had refrained from taking undue notice of him, and so spoiling him, as perhaps might otherwise have been the case, and being thus left to make his own way, he had made it, as we have said. And he was growing taller and stronger, with all the fine physique of his race. Lithe, active, enduring, he was as hard as steel; nor would it be very long before he might be in a condition to turn the tables on Jarnley and Co., quite independently of his hero and protector.

To whom one day he sidled up, and opened conversation this way:

"You not sick of being always in?"

"You ass, Cetchy! What d'you mean by asking such an idiotic question?" was the excusably irritable retort.

"Au! Then why you not go out?"

"Look here, Cetchy. If you're trying to make a fool of me, you'll promptly find you've got the wrong pig by the ear. What are you driving at? Eh?"

The other looked quickly around. The two were alone.

“I not make fool. Ishinga ’nkulu not let you go out in day. Au! go out at night. Why not?”

We regret to say that by the above epithetwhich being interpreted means “big rascal”this descendant of generations of fighting savages was of late wont to refer to the Reverend the Headmaster of Saint Kirwin’s.

“No one see you,” he went on. “Quite easy. I go with you; we find lots of nests. We go to Hangman’s Wood again. Plenty of time. All night long.”

“Now, Cetchy, you young ass, how are you going to find nests in the dark?”

“Not dark. Plenty moon. Besides,” and here he looked round once more, and said something in a quick, hurried whisper. Haviland started, and his face flushed red with eagerness and excitement.

“The very thing,” he exclaimed. “By George, won’t we have fun? But I’m not so sure about the other fellows in the room. Some of them hated me while I was a prefect. What if they sneak?”

“They not sneak,” tranquilly replied the other. “No; they not sneak. I know.”

Then the two plotters put their heads together and talked a good while, but always cautiously. If any one came within earshot, why they were only talking about birdnesting.

We said that Haviland occupied a smaller room at the end of the big dormitory, the said room containing ten other fellows, and from this it had not been deemed necessary to shift him at the time of his suspension; indeed, the same order prevailed therein as before, so great the force of habit and his own prestige. Now, a night or two after the above conversation, just before “lights out” time, Haviland remarked meaningly:

“Any sneaks here?”

The boys stared, then tittered. What on earth was Haviland driving at? they were all thinking.

“Don’t stand grinning like a Cheshire cat, Smithson, you young ape,” said the exprefect. “Why don’t you answer, all of you? Are there any sneaks here?”

“No,” came the unanimous answer; while one or two added, “Of course not. Why?”

“Ha! Any fellow sneak, I kill him!” said Mpukuza, otherwise Anthony, in wouldbe bloodcurdling tones, and rolling the whites of his eyeballs hideously.

“There’s no need for that, Cetchy,” said Haviland, judiciously. “I know none of these fellows are sneaks.”

“Of course not,” they repeated. “But why, Haviland?”

“You’ll see, or, rather, you won’t see, for you’ll all be asleep. You’ll all be asleep, d’you hear?” he added significantly.

He turned out the gas. Not for another hour could he begin operations, and all he and his accomplice had to do was to sit and wait.

Ten of the occupants of the room were pretending to be asleep, except two or three who, wearied with waiting to see what was going to happen, actually were so. The others noiselessly arose. Both were dressed, but instead of their boots wore light running shoes. Then the other inmates of the dormitory thrilled with excitement and admiration as, peeping furtively from beneath the clothes, they beheld in the moonlight, which streamed into the room, their exprefect busily engaged in knotting a cord to the framework of the two iron bedsteads which stood right under the outside window.

This long wing of the school buildings ended here. Without, the chapel wall, buttressed and lofty, extended at right angles to it. Another convenient buttress on the other side of the window screened the corner thus formed, in most effective fashion.

Haviland and his dusky satellite proceeded to pay out the cord. The end just swung clear of the ground, and the height, from twentyfive to thirty feet, was a mere nothing to such practised climbers. Down they went, hand over hand, first one, then the other. Then, taking advantage of the shadows thrown out by the rose bushes that grew outside, they flitted along the chapel wall, then over the fence and into the field beyond.

How good it was to be out again, to move freely over this glorious open country spreading around so still and soft and mysterious in the moonlight! Half hundred fragrant scents seemed to blend and fuse, distilled from grass and bank and hedgerow, upon the pure night air, and mingled with the odour of kine asleep in the pasture meadows. A nightingale “jugjugged” in an adjacent copse, and was answered by another; a large hare, longeared and ghostly, sprang out of their way and loped off into misty dimnessbut, over all, that sense of freedom, of entire and complete liberty, which a sense of risk, and very real risk, did but add to.

For a keeper would likely be on his beat these moonlight nights, and to encounter one such would be almost fatal. And tonight they had higher game in view than birdnesting.

“Here it is,” said Mpukuza, diving into a bed of leaves at the bottom of a dry ditch and dragging forthan airgun. “Now we have fun. Au!”

Haviland’s hand shook with excitement as he took the weapon. Fun indeed! Wouldn’t they? He was not unpractised in the use of firearms, for on rare and happy occasions when he had visited at the country place of a distant relative he had been taught and encouraged to shoot, and he was passionately fond of the sport. But his opportunities, alas, had been few and far between.

The airgun was a good one of its kind, and up to a certain distance shot true and hard. The Zulu boy had seen it among the wares of a travelling pedlar during one of his solitary wanderings, and had purchased it for five shillings, it having probably been stolen in the first instance. He had hidden it craftily away, with an eye to just such an adventure as this.

Haviland put in a pellet and fired at nothing in particular. Even the slight twang as he pulled the trigger seemed quite loud in the midnight stillness; but he felt that it would hit hard.

They stole along in the shadow of a hedgerow, Haviland carrying the gun. A covert loomed darkly in front of them. As they entered it stealthily, the flapflap of startled woodpigeons set their nerves all tingling, for would not a tale be thereby conveyed in the event of keepers being abroad?

But alas for their reckoning! It was the wrong time of year for nightpoaching. The foliage was so thick that they could see nothing. Every tree might have been weighted with roosting pheasants for all the sport that fact would afford them. For some time they went round and round the copse, looking upward, and were just going to give it up whenthere in a young ash of scanty leafage, they made out two dark balls silhouetted against the moonlit sky. Controlling his excitement, Haviland took careful aim and pressed the trigger. There was a thud, a flapping of wings, and one of the dark balls fell to earth with a louder thud. There lay at their feet a splendid cockpheasant. The Zulu boy promptly ended its struggles by a tap on the head with his stick.

“Shoot again,” he whispered. “Shoot again.”

Now at ordinary times Haviland’s sporting instincts were far too true to allow him to find much satisfaction in shooting birds on the roost. But here the night adventure, the

secrecy and risk, and, further, the skill required to pick off a bird with a single pellet, and that in a very uncertain light, all went to render the situation intensely exciting. Again he raised the weapon and took careful aim, with the same result as before. Mpukuza capered with delight.

“That enough for tonight,” he whispered. “Now we go and eat him. Come.”

For the speaker had been carefully planning this adventure for some days past, consequently it was not surprising that when the two gained the congenial hidingplace formed by a deep dry ditch with clayey overhanging banks, the whole well concealed by brambles, the materials for a fire were laid and ready, and only wanted lighting. The fireplace was cunningly scooped out of the clay bank, and now, in deft manner known to himself, the Zulu boy managed to light and foster that fire in such wise that it soon consisted of a mass of ardent and glowing charcoal, giving forth little or no smoke. The while the birds had been hastily plucked and cut in pieces, and set on the embers to broil.

It was almost worth while undergoing his long imprisonment to have such glorious fun as this, thought Haviland, as he watched the hissing and sputtering flesh which, but half an hour ago, had been alive and totally unsuspicious of approaching fate. The dry ditch became a sort of cave of romance, an episode in a life of wild adventure. Perhaps some day, at no great distance of time either, such a life might be his. And as the roast went on, his dusky companion told him strange tales of his own countrytales of war, of stirring sights he himself had looked on with childish eyes, of grim legends fraught with mysterious horror; stories, too, of widespread slaughter, and ruthless, unsparing revenge. The listener’s blood was all on fire.

“I say, Cetchy, I would like to go to that country of yours,” he said, half breathlessly. “Perhaps I will one of these days.”

“Ha! you come. We have good fun then. But it’s no longer good country. The English have driven out the kingbroken up the people. Ha!”

The first instalment of the broil was ready, and they fell upon it with a will, the while Anthony had raked up the fire and put on as much more of the birds as it would hold.

“Cetchy, old chap, this is splendid,” said Haviland gleefully, as with their pocketknives they stripped the flesh from the bones, and devoured it with their healthy school appetites. “Why Nick himself can’t get roast pheasant now for love or money, because it’s out of season. Old brute! I’d like to give him a turn on that fire. Eh?”

“Oh yes, make him wriggle on it like Umbelini make the Tonga prisoners I was goin’ to tell about. They go work in diamond mines, come back through Umbelini’s country with plenty money. They no tell where it is, hide it away. He burn them till they tellmost of them never tell; Umbelini burn ’em till they dead. One man tell. Ha!”

The while Haviland had hardly noticed how the other had been allotting all the choicest bits to his share.

“I say,” he said at last, “I never thought you and I would be able to polish off a brace of cockpheasants to our own cheek. Yet we jolly well nearly have.”

They had. The night air and their natural growing appetites had rendered the feat one of no great difficulty. But it was time to go back. The nights were nearly at their shortest. By two o’clock it would be almost daylight. So they started from their alfresco kitchen and banquetingroom, and, concealing the airgun and its ammunition, made their way back once more, and neglecting no precaution, shinned up the rope which had been left dangling, and were safe and sound within the dormitory againthe rope being carefully coiled away in Haviland’s boxhe about five minutes thereafter being fast asleep, and dreaming that he was plugging a huge cockpheasant through and through with airgun pellets, the riddled bird finally taking shape as the Doctor, to his own great and vengeful satisfaction.

Chapter Twelve.

Tying Knots in Nick's Tail.

A change seemed now to have fallen upon Haviland. He was no longer to be met wandering alone, and the moody frown had left his brow, giving way to an expression of easy, lighthearted contentment. Yet there were days when he spent nearly the whole of his spare time lying in a corner of the playing fields, his cap over his face andfast asleep. There was no fear of him sleeping too long, or being late for anythingMpukuza, otherwise Anthony, took care of thatand was always at hand to awake him in time.

Not much together were they in the daytime, in feet, hardly at all, yet the Zulu boy was always at hand when his hero wanted him, actually or unconsciously. He could do without all this extra sleep, but the other, with his nervous, highstrung temperament, felt the reaction after these nights of adventurous excitement, to say nothing of the sheer physical fatigue following upon the hard exercise attendant on their nocturnal exploits.

For that first expedition was by no means the last. The appetite for such grew, and night after night the cord was let down, and these two amateur poachers would sally forth upon their lawless but entrancing errand. Not always so lucky were they, however, as on that first occasion, for it was generally impossible to see the roosting birds because of the abundant foliage, and then too, the moon began to wane, which added to the difficulty of bringing them down, even when they did see them. Moreover, they had at least two exceedingly narrow escapes at the hands of unduly vigilant keepers. They decided that the time had come to change their field of action. Things were getting too hot.

Not always, however, were they on poaching bent. Sometimes the airgun would be left reposing in its place of concealment and egghunting would be the order of the dayor rather of the nightand here Haviland's consummate knowledge of the life of the fields and woods brought success where another would have returned emptyhanded. But the season was getting late, and the nests mostly contained young birds, or eggs so hardset as to be useless.

Now this change in Haviland did not long escape the keen, observant eyes of Mr Sefton. True to his resolution, that kindhearted disciplinarian had taken an opportunity of putting in a word with the Doctor, in mitigation of his favourite's penalty, and had been incontinently snubbed for his pains. The headmaster saw no reason whatever for modifying his former judgment, nor did he recognise the right of his assistants to offer criticism upon his acts, had been the substance of his reply.

“Ha! Nick blew himself out like a bullfrog, by Jingo!” was Mr Sefton’s subsequent comment when he narrated the result to Mr Williams. “But I don’t mind his bounce, not I, ha ha! It’s like water off a duck’s back with me. Ha!” he added whimsically, with his head thrown back, as his way was.

Of course he said nothing to Haviland as to his kindly meant attempt, but this new attitude on the part of his favourite was sorely puzzling. He would engage him in conversation from time to timenot out of any motive of spying, but because he was really interested in the young fellow, and liked him genuinely, but even then he could arrive at no clue.

Haviland, for his part, was greatly enjoying that side of the situation. He knew they were all curious about him, those, that is, who were interested in him at all. Laughton and Medlicott and others had at times commented on his altered demeanour, but he had explained it away on the ground that the end of the term was not far off, and he expected to go and stay at an awfully jolly place for part of the holidays. If they only knew the fun he was having what time everybody else was in bed and asleep! The thought appealed to the humorous side of his nature. It is possible he might even have forgiven the Doctor, but that his sense of justice was outraged. Other masters had punished him, but never unfairly. He knew he had earned such. The extreme and doubleweighted penalty with which the Head had visited a not very grave offence he could not feel he had earned. Other masters had set him more than one swingeing imposition, but even when they had spoken sharply they had always behaved like gentlemen. The Doctor, on the other hand, had a bullying, overbearing way with him, which was quite unnecessary, and galling and ungentlemanly to the last degree, he considered. It might be all right when dealing with some of these cads, thought Haviland, but he ought to know when to discriminate. No, he could not forgive the Doctor. The sense of injustice rankled, and festered, and not the least side of the enjoyment of his new escapades was that he was “tying knots in Nick’s tail,” as he put it to himselfand Anthonyconsciously or unconsciously “lifting” from Ingoldsby.

The only misgivingand it was rather a serious onethat would strike him was how long the other fellows in the dormitory would manage to hold their tongues. He did not believe that any among them would willingly give them away, but the young asses might get chattering. With this in view, many and oft were the monitions addressed to them by himself and his accomplice. They were admonished, not only to make no confidences to those outside, but never even to talk about it among themselves, for fear of being overheardin fact, to regard their knowledge as the cherished secret of some privileged order, of which they had the honour to be members. This appealed to them more than any other argument, and it hardly needed Cetchy’s from time to time repeated threat: “Any fellow sneakI kill him.” This threat he would emphasise by the production of a

wickedlooking weapon, which he kept in his boxnamely, the half of an old sheepshear, with which, spliced on to a short, strong handle, he had manufactured a very creditable imitation of his native assegai. Nor did they regard the menace as an entirely futile one, for they had witnessed an outbreak or two of genuine, though not unprovoked, savagery on the part of the threatener, which, but for timely interference, might have entailed seriousif not fatalconsequences.

Yet the above misgiving grew by dwelling upon, and there were times when Haviland would feel exceedingly uncomfortable and almost make up his mind to give up these perilous expeditions. Were they worth the risk? The end of the term was drawing near, and his irksome restraint would, of course, end with it; whereas, were he detected, the result would be inevitable expulsion. Mr Sefton's words would strike uncomfortably home to his mind, and, after all, embittered and reckless as he might feel, he had no desire to be expelled. His accomplice would get off with a sound swishing, for which, of course, he himself was too old. He would certainly be expelled.

But such prudential moods were not destined to last. His close confinement galled him more and more, and, besides, there was one expedition the pair had promised themselves, and that was to extend their midnight marauding to Hangman's Wood. That would be a famous exploit. They would shoot two or three pheasants therethe place just grew pheasantsand at night they would be entirely safe, because no one dared go into it on account of the ghost. Yes, it would be the crowning exploit of all, and the sooner they undertook it the better, while there was some moonlight left.

They might have been less easy in their minds, however, could they have assisted unseen in a discussion then going on in the Doctor's study between that potentate and Laughton, with a couple of the senior prefects.

"It is really becoming a serious matter," the Headmaster was saying, "and I am considering what action I shall take. Again I have had complaints. Both Mr Worthington's and Lord Hebron's keepers have been to me again. There is no doubt as to the truth of their stories, I am afraid. Their woods are overrun and pheasants takenthey gave me ample proof of that. They have even found a place where the birds have been cooked and eaten, and a good many of them too."

"Surely, sir, that's no evidence whatever that it has been done by any of the school," said Laughton, as the Doctor paused, as though inviting opinion.

"I think it is, Laughton. The ordinary poacher, you see, would remove his game, not cook and eat it in a dry ditch. Furthermore, the footmarks observed by the keepers were

made by cricket shoes, and not large enough nor broad enough to be imprinted by the village ne'erdowell."

"But Lord Hebron's preserves are too far away, sir," urged Medlicott. "No fellow would have time to get there and back unless he got leave from callingover."

"That's true," rejoined the Doctor; "but the Question is, has anybody been getting such leave of late, and, if so, how many? I shall inquire into that. And now have any of you any other suggestions to offer?"

The prefects looked at each other rather blankly. It was, of course, very flattering, and all that sort of thing, to be taken thus into the counsels of the redoubtable Doctor; but then, unfortunately, they hadn't the ghost of a notion what to suggest. At last Laughton said:

"I should think, sir, the best plan would be for the owners of the shootings to increase their staff of keepers. It seems hard for them to lay the blame on the school when there's so little to justify the suspicion."

"On the contrary, I think there is a good deal to justify it," returned the Doctor. "I think they have made out a primâ facie case. The question now is what steps I shall be called upon to take. I am very loth to put in force so grave a measure as withdrawing the privilege of rambling over the country and confining the school strictly to grounds, merely on suspicion, even though a strong suspicion. I have always held, too, that that privilege, combined with the natural healthiness of our situation, has not a little to do with the high reputation for health we have always enjoyed. But, if this goes on, I shall be obliged to take some such step."

"Perhaps, sir, some of us might make it our business to go about a little and keep our eyes open," suggested Read, the other prefect.

"That is just what I was thinking, Read," replied the Doctor. "If we can discover the offenders, I shall make a grave example of them, and it will be to the interest of the whole school. Meanwhile, let me impress upon you that I particularly wish this meeting to be considered a confidential one. To the other prefects its burden must, of course, be imparted, but beyond them I desire no information to leak out, for that might be to defeat our object entirely, for it is better for the evildoers to be detected than to be only warned and to desist for a time. And at this we will leave it."

And so they were dismissed.

The while Haviland and his dusky accomplice, blissfully unconscious, were planning their great stroke, which had the additional attraction of tying yet another knot in Nick's tail.

Chapter Thirteen.

A Grim Tussle.

“I say, Cetchy, isn’t this splendid?” said Haviland, drawing in long breaths of the cool night air. He was simply revelling in the sense of absolute liberty as he gazed around upon the dim fields, then up at the stargemmed sky.

“Oh, yes. Splendid, rather! Hangman’s Wood long wayget morning very early,” replied the other.

The long, dark outline of the illomened covert loomed before them; and at sight of it Haviland could hardly restrain a wild paroxysm of laughter, as he remembered the last time they visited the place, and the awful scare they had put upon the unfortunate keeper. Just as they gained it, the moon in its last quarter arose above the tree tops.

“It’s awfully dark in here, Cetchy,” whispered Haviland, as they stood within the gloomy depths of the wood. “These trees are too thick. We can’t see a blessed bird.”

It was even as he had said. The light of the feeble moon hardly penetrated here, and the chill gloom and weird associations of the place began to take effect even upon their spirits. A fox barked in the further end of the covert, and ever and anon the doleful hooting of owls, both far and near, rang out upon the night, and now and again one of the ghostly birds would drop down almost into their faces, and skim along the ride on soft, noiseless pinions. The earthy moisture of the soil and undergrowth was as the odour of a charnelhouse. Every now and then some soundstrange, mysterious, unaccountablewould cause them to stop short, and, with beating hearts, stand intently listening. Then they went on again.

They had secured no spoil; the tree tops were too thick to see the roosting birds. At last, as luck would have itwhether for good or ill we say notthey managed to glimpse a single pheasant through a gap against the sky. All of a quiver with excitement, Haviland pressed the trigger, and missed. Still the dim black ball up aloft never moved. Again he took careful aim, and this time it did move, for it came down from its perch with a resounding flapping of wings, and hit the earth with a hard thud, still flapping. In a moment the Zulu boy was upon it and had wrung its neck, but not before it had uttered a couple of raucous croaks that seemed, to the overstrained sense of its slayers, loud enough to be heard for miles in the midnight stillness.

“I’m glad we’ve got something at last, Cetchy,” whispered Haviland, as he examined the dead bird. “We’ll have to be contented with it, though, for time’s up. Come along, we must get back now.”

Bearing off their spoil in triumph, they had gained the centre of the woodthe spot, in fact, where the old tragedy had occurred, and close to that whereon they had so badly frightened the keeper. Suddenly Haviland felt a hand on his arm, heard a brief whisper:

“Stop! Something moving.”

At first he could hear nothing; then his ears detected a sound, and his nerves thrilled. As the other had said, it was something moving, and instinctively he realised that it was something heavier, more formidable than any of the lightfooted denizens of an English wood. Somehow his mind reverted to the grim legend. What if it were true, and the strangled man actually did walk, with all the marks of his horrible and violent death upon him? In front, where the rides of the wood intersected each other, the moonlight streamed through in a broad patch, rendering blacker still the pitchy blackness beneath the trees beyond. The stillness and excitement, together with the gruesome associations of the place, had got upon their nerves even more than they knew. What if some awful apparitionappalling, horrible beyond wordswere to emerge from yonder blackness, to stand forth in the ghostly moonlight, and petrify them with the unimaginable terrors of a visitant from beyond the grave? Haviland’s pulses seemed to stand still as the sounds drew nearer and nearer. A keeper’s? No. They were too quick, too heavy, too blundering, somehow. Then Anthony breathed one word:

“Dog!”

A dog! Of course, that solved the mystery. But even then the jump from supernatural fears to the material hardly seemed to mend matters. A dog meant a keeper, of course, unless it were a midnight poacher like themselves, in which event it would give them a wide berth; but this was too much to hope. On the other hand, if it were accompanying a keeper on his midnight round, the brute would certainly attack them; and that it was a large and heavy animal they could determine by the sound of its quick, fierce rushes to and fro, and a sort of deeptoned grunt which it uttered now and then as it snuffed the ground.

Breathlessly they crouched. Ha! It was coming! The sound of its approaching rush in the pitchy blackness was almost upon themthen it passed. It had not discovered them yet, but evidently suspected their presence. When it winded them, as it might do any moment, then it would come straight for them. There was something terribly unnerving

in this feeling of being hunted, and that by an enemy whose strength they had no opportunity of estimating.

As the retreating sound grew fainter, Haviland suggested climbing a tree. There was no such thing as playing the ghost again. That was all very well with a keeper, but it wouldn't do for a moment with a dog. Besides, the brute could maul them horribly even before the keeper should arrive on the scene; but Anthony negatived the suggestion.

"No climb tree," he said. "I kill him. Look, he come again."

It was even as he had said. The rush of a heavy body through the undergrowth, this time on the other side of the ride, and then, from the darkness beyond, there sprang forth into the moonlit ride an enormous bullmastiff.

Terrible to a degree looked the formidable brute, his fangs exposed in a white line across the blackness of his huge bullet head: and the great muscular brindled body looked powerful enough to bring down a bullock with ease. Why, these two would simply be torn to pieces.

As the brute sprang into the light it paused a moment. Then, uttering one deep, cavernous "gowl" it came straight for them.

But at the moment it began its rush, there darted forth into the light a form, lithe and dark. Something flashed aloft, and at the same time descendedand then animal and human were mixed up together in a struggling mass upon the ground. The descendant of a long line of warriors knew better than to give his antagonist the choice of battle ground, and did not prefer to fight in the dark, wherefore he had hurled himself straight at the onrushing monsterstabbing furiously with his improvised sheepshear assegai.

Not ineffectually either, but the sheer weight of the heavy muscular brute had hurled him flat.

It had all been done with a rapidity that was almost lightninglike. Haviland, witnessing it, felt all in a maze for a moment, realising that he was unarmedfor the airgun of course would be about as effective against such an adversary as this as the common or school peashooter. Yet he bethought him of a weapon more useful still, and without hesitation he advanced upon the struggling pair, and his right fist was armed with a knuckleduster of the most formidable kind, each knuckle constituting a sharp pointa terrible implement, one moderately strong blow of which could kill a man easily.

The Zulu boy lay on the sward beneath the great doghis one object being to shield his throat. Fortunately he had previously rolled his jacket round his left arm, and this had received the powerful jaws, which hung on, with a dreadful worrying snarlwhile, with his right, he was stabbing furiously at the creature's body, but somehow without much effect. Haviland saw his chanceand the good moonlight befriended him. With the utmost coolness and ready promptitude he selected his opportunityletting out with all the force of his ironbound right hand. "Woof!" It caught the snarling, gnashing monster full and square on the side of the head, and without waiting to see the result he followed it up with another. One quick gasp, and the great brute rolled off, lying on its side, hardly movingstunned, if not dead. But the Zulu boy would leave nothing to chance. Springing to his feet he drove his sharp weapon through and through the body of the dog. There was no doubt about it then. The animal lay stillthe dark pool of its blood widening ever in the moonlight.

"Are you hurt, Cetchy? D'you hearare you hurt?" gasped Haviland, panting with the effort and excitement of his supreme exertion.

"Hurt? No. He bite me once. Ha! I, Mpukuza! I can kill! Ha!"

Thus spoke the savagethe descendant of a line of fighting savages, standing there, grasping his savage weapon, surveying the dead and bleeding body of his formidable enemy, not in his own native wilds, but in the peaceful glade of an English game preserve.

"Well, come along then, and quick. There's sure to be a keeper not far off."

Quickly they took their way to the edge of the wood. They were over the fence and away, but hardly had they gone some fifty yards when a voice behind them shouted:

"Hi! Stop there! Stop, do 'ee 'ear? I'll shoot 'ee if 'ee don't." And immediately the bang of a discharged gun crashed out upon the night, Haviland laughed.

"It's all right, Cetchy. He daren't fire at us, for his life. It's bluff. Come along."

And away they raced, but a glance over their shoulder showed them that the keeper was giving chase.

That in itself didn't afflict them much, but by and by when they had covered several long fields, they observed with concern that he was still on their heels. As a rule, a keeper was easy to distance, but this one seemed lightly built and in excellent training. Even a dark lane down which they dived, hoping to double on him, proved of no avail; rather did it

serve to make matters worse, for the keeper, knowing where they were bound to come out, had wasted neither time nor energy, but made straight for that point: a manoeuvre which brought him alarmingly close when he did emerge. And at all hazards he must not be suffered to head them off from their objective.

“Now, then’ee’d better stop, I tell ’ee!” he shouted, reckoning them done up. But the fugitives knew better than to waste wind, if he did not. They simply raced on, offering no reply. And by degrees their superior wind and training told, the more so that the race was a long one. They saw they were shaking their pursuer off, and it was all important they should do this, because it would never do for them to let him run them all the way back to the school. They might as well surrender at once as that.

“My clothes all over blood!” said Anthony at last, when they were safe beyond pursuit. “What I do?”

Haviland examined him critically in the moonlight.

“So they are,” he said. “Well, Cetchy, you must peel them off and stow them away in the ditch, and go in without them. You can think you’re back in Zululand again.”

“So I can. Yes,” answered the other, showing his white rows of splendid teeth.

Half an hour later, two wearied perspiring figures shinned up the cord under the angle of the chapel wall at Saint Kirwin’s, and so ended another night of excitement and adventureas they thought.

Chapter Fourteen.

The Bolt Falls.

"I say, you fellows, there's no end of a row on," pronounced Wood major, joining a group of others.

"No! Is there? What about? Who's in it?" were the eager inquiries which hailed the good news. For a row at Saint Kirwin's was, in its generation, akin to the Coliseum sports in theirs, inasmuch as it afforded pleasurable excitement to the multitude. To the small minority directly implicated it afforded excitement too, but the reverse of pleasurable. This particular group, however, being presumably clear of conscience, hailed the news with unfeigned satisfaction.

"Why, the small room at the end of Williams's dormitory are all in it, I believe," explained Wood major. "Cetchy's been caught getting out late at night."

"What, Cetchy? Haviland's chum?"

"Rather. We're going to see something, I can tell you."

"Then Haviland's in it too," said some one else.

"I expect so. I believe the whole room's in it."

"A case of Cetchy caught," remarked a puffyfaced fellow who set up for being a wag.

"Oh, shut up, Cross. We don't want Clay's secondhand wheezes," was all the appreciation he met with. "Why we've yelped at that in all its variations till I believe we'd sooner do his impos. than get off it by putting him in a good humour over that 'honk' any more. Go on, Wood. What have you heard about it?"

"Why, Smithson minor told me. He's rather a chum of Cetchy's, you know. The first he knew of it was seeing Cetchy come out of Nick's study looking precious puffy about the chops. Nick had been socking him all over the shop, he told Smithson; and then Nick came out himself, and maybe Smithson didn't slink off. Oh, no."

"Well, we shan't hear anything about it till tomorrow morning," said Cross. "Sure to come on at morning prep. Great Scott, but there'll be some swishing on!"

"Haviland won't take it, I expect."

“He’ll be jolly well expelled then.”

“He won’t care. I know he won’t take a swishing. I hated him when he was a prefect, but now I hope he’ll score off Nick.”

“P’raps he’s not in it.”

“Not in it? Why, the whole room’s in it.”

And so the discussion ran on; the while, however, the news had somehow leaked out, and the presage of a rowand a very big row at thathung over the school like a thundercloud.

It will be necessary to go back.

For a day or two after the exploit chronicled in the last chapter our two midnight marauders plumed themselves on their feat of arms, and delighted to meet and fight their battle over again in a secluded corner of the playing fields, the only thorn in the rose being that they had lost the airgun, abandoned during the precipitancy of their flight, and, of course, the pheasant. This, however, they decided was of small account compared with such a glorious experience as had been theirs, and they positively glowed over the recollection of their adventure. But they were a little premature in their elation. Retribution was at hand, and this is how the bolt fell.

To a group of boys strolling along a fieldpath not far from the school it was not strange that they should meet a keeper. What was strange to them was the gun in the hand of that worthy.

“That’s a rum sort of gun you’ve got there,” said one of them. “I say, let’s have a look at it.”

The keeper merely shook his head. Then an idea seemed to strike him, and he stopped.

“Yes, it be a rum gun, bean’t it, young genelmen?” he said, extending it to them, but not loosing his hold of it. “That be one o’ they newfangled airguns. They don’t make no bang when they goes off.”

The group gathered round interested. The keeper explained the working of the weapon, and from that got to talking on other mattersin fact, was extraordinarily chatty and

affable, which was remarkable, because between gamekeepers and the Saint Kirwin's boys a state of natural hostility existed.

"I've heard tell," he went on at last, "that there's a black African young genelman up at the school there. If that's so, I'd like to make so bold as to see he. I 'ad a brother servin' in the wars again they Africans over yonder, and 'e told me a lot about 'em. Yes, I'd like to see he."

Now, under ordinary circumstances, this request would have caused them, in their own phraseology, to "smell a rat." Perhaps in this case it had that effect all the same; but then, as illluck would have it, the group the keeper had struck in this instance happened to be Jarnley and his gang. Here was a chance to pay off old scores. Here was a noble opportunity for revenge, and it would in all probability comprehend Haviland too. Jarnley, Perkins, and Co. were simply jubilant.

"There's no difficulty about that, keeper," said the former, genially. "You go to the gate of the west field and ask any fellow to point you out Cetchy. I expect he'll be there now. Cetchymind, that's the name."

"I'll remember, sir, and thankee kindly. Mornin', young genelmen."

Threequarters of an hour later our friend Anthony, having, in obedience to an urgent summons, hastened, though not without misgivings, to present himself in the Doctor's study, found himself confronted by a tall redwhiskered keeper, while on the table, exposed on a sheet of newspaper, lay his lost airgun and the corpse of a fine cockpheasant. Then he knew that the game was up.

"Yes, sir. That be he, right enough," said the keeper. "I saw him several times as I was a chevyin' of him. There was a good moon, and I'd swear to him anywhere, sir. There was another with him, sir, a tall young chap, but I never got a chance of seeing his face. But this one, I can swear to he."

"Very well," said the Doctor. "You had better go down to the porter's lodge, and wait there in case I should require to see you again."

The keeper saluted and retired.

"And now," went on the Doctor, in his most aweinspiring tone, "what have you got to say? On the night of Tuesday, you and anotherwith whom I shall presently dealwere found by the man who has just gone out in one of Lord Hebron's coverts. That pheasant lying there was killed by you with that airgun. Now, who was with you?"

“I don’t know nothin’ about it, sir.”

“What?” thundered the Doctor, rising from his seat; and the next moment Anthony received a terrific box on the ear which sent him staggering against the table, followed up by another on the other side, the force of which wellnigh restored him to his original equilibrium. “So you would add lying to your other misconduct, would you? Now, answer my question. Who was with you?”

But the question was addressed seemingly to empty air. The Zulu boy, thinking to detect another hostile move, had incontinently dived under the table.

Here was a situation wholly outside the Doctor’s experience. He was a violenttempered man when roused, especially when his dignity had sustained, as he thought, any slight, but he had too much sense of that dignity to embark actively in the chase of a boy who had got under the table of his own study. Not for a moment, however, was he nonplussed.

“Come out and stand where you were before,” he said, “and that at once, or I shall send for two prefects to drag you out, and shall cane you now as I have never caned a boy before, and that in addition to whatever punishment I shall decide to inflict upon you for your other offence. Do you hear?”

Anthony did hear, and being, like most of his race, of a practical turn of mind, had rapidly decided that it was better to be thrashed once than twice; wherefore he emerged from under the table, and stood upright as before, but with a quick and watchful eye, ready to dodge any further hostile move on the part of the Doctor.

The latter, for his part, had had time to think; and in the result it occurred to him that it was scarcely fair to judge this raw young savage, for he was hardly more, with the same severity as the ordinary boy. So he would refrain from further violent measures for the present.

“Who was with you?” he repeated remorselessly, and in a tone which in all his experience he had never known any boy able to hold out against. But he reckoned without the staunch, inherent Zulu loyalty.

For now Anthony shifted his ground. No power on earth would have induced him to give his accomplice awaythey might flog him to death first. But by confessing his own criminality he might save Haviland.

“No one with me, sir. I all alone,” he answered volubly. “That man tell big lie. Or praps he seen a ghost. Ha!”

The Doctor looked at him with compressed lips. Then he rang the bell, and in the result, within a minute or two, the keeper reappeared.

“Now Anthony,” said the Doctor, “repeat to this man what you have just told me.” Anthony did.

“Why you tell one big lie? Ha! You saw me, yes, yes. No one with me. I alone. How you see other when other not there?”

“Come. That’s a good ’un,” said the man, half amused, half angry. “Why I see he as plain as I see you.”

“See he? Ha! You see a ghost, praps? You ever see a ghost in Hangman’s Wood, hey?” and rolling his eyes so that they seemed to protrude from his head, and lolling his tongue out, the Zulu boy stared into the face of the dazed keeper, uttering the while the same cavernous groan, which had sent that worthy fleeing from the haunted wood as though the demon were at his heels.

“Good Lord!” was all the keeper could ejaculate, staring with mouth and eyes wide open. Then, realising what a fool they had made of him, he grew furious.

“You see ghost, yes? Praps Hangman’s ghost, hey?” jeered the boy.

“You young rascal, you!” cried the infuriated keeper. “This ain’t the first time by a long chalk you’ve been in my coverts, you and the other young scamp. There was another, sir,” turning to the Doctor, “I’ll take my dying oath on itand I hopes you’ll flog ’em well, sirand if ever I catches ’em there again I’ll have first in at ’em, that I will.”

“You bring another big dog. I kill him too,” jeered the descendant of savage warriors, now clean forgetful of the dread presence of the headmaster, and the condign punishment hanging over himself. “Kill you, praps, Hau!” he added with a hideous curl of the lips, which exhibited his splendid white teeth.

“See that, Doctor, sir?” cried the exasperated man. “The owdacious, abandoned young blackamoor! But his lordship’ll want that dawg paid for, or he’ll know the reason why. And ’e’s a dawg that’s taken prizes.”

Now Dr Bowen, for all his unbending severity, was a thorough Englishman, and, as such, an admirer of pluck and grit. Here these two boys had been attacked by a brute every whit as savage and formidable as a wolf, and that under circumstances and amid surroundings which, acting on the imagination, should render the affair more terrorstrikingviz., at midnight, and in the heart of a wood; yet they had faced and fought the monster, hand to hand, and with very inadequate means of defence, and had overcome and slain it. In his heart of hearts the feat commanded his admiration, and moreover, he was devoutly thankful they had not sustained serious injuries, for the sake of his own responsibilities and the credit of the school. Yet none of these considerations would be suffered in any way to mitigate the penalties due to their very serious offence. He had further been secretly amused at the scene between Anthony and the keeper, though outwardly the grimness of his expression showed no trace of any relaxation.

“That will be a matter for future discussion,” he replied to the keeper. “Now I shall not require your further attendance. I have sufficient to go upon to put my hand on all concerned, and you can rest assured that they will be most severely punished.”

“I hopes you’ll flog ’em well, Doctor, sir,” was the keeper’s parting shot, “and especially that there young blackamoor rascal. Goodday, sir.”

Chapter Fifteen.

Sentence.

The big room was full. Every form room, always occupied at morning preparation, was emptied of its contents, for all had been convened, by special proclamation, to the large schoolroom, now to become, for the time being, a species of hall of justice. So, even as at prayer time, arranged in the rows of lockers according to dormitories, the whole three hundred and fifty or so of boys chattered in a continuous and undertoned buzzrestrained, but not silenced, by the prefectorial calls:

“Quiet there!”

“You, Jones. I’ve spoken to you before already.”

“Brown, come to me afterwards in the fourth form room.”

“Now, then, that bottom row. Stop that shoving about! D’you hear?”

And so on.

Yes, the excitement was intense. There had not been such a row on, said some one, since that in which Thurston’s gang had been caught smoking. They had set up a kind of divan in a dry ditch, which, being unexpectedly raided, they, and their pipes and tobacco, had been seized in close conjunction the one with the otherand Thurston and five other big fellows had been flogged. Or, said others, since a far worse case of another kind, wherein some fifteen fellows of all ages had been swished. And now all sorts of wild rumours began to go round. All the fellows in the small room at the end of Williams’s dormitory were going to be swishedso extensive was the order sent to the gardener for the manufacture of birch rods, declared some, who affected to be in the know. But the centre light of all the excitement and conjecture was Haviland. He was not a prefect now, and therefore could, constitutionally, be swished. Butwould he take it? That was the pointwould he take it? Some opined that he would notothers that he would have to.

“Silence! Sssilence there!” roared the prefects, with a force and unanimity that hushed the room in a minute. For it meant that the Doctor was coming in.

You might have heard a pin drop in that hitherto buzzing assemblage as the Headmaster ascended to the big desk in the middle and signed for the door to be shut. Then it was seen that there stood before him of culprits exactly one dozen, of whom all but two were in varying stages of funk.

The Doctor, you see, acting upon his usual thorough and wholehearted method, had wasted no time in elaborate investigations. He had simply sent for Haviland and taxed him with what was charged, and Haviland, disdaining to prevaricate or make excuses, had owned his whole share in the alleged misdoing, and rather more, for he had endeavoured to shield Anthony by declaring that the Zulu boy had been entirely influenced by him; nor would it have helped him any way to have denied the matter, for the Doctor meanwhile had ordered the search of every box in the dormitory, and there in Haviland's box was the coil of cord, and in that of Anthony the bloodstained weapon. Further, with the same thoroughness, he had chosen to consider the whole room as in a degree implicated.

Now, confronting the whole school, speaking in his most aweinspiring tones, the Doctor commenced his harangue. He dwelt on the complaints that had been coming in for some time past of serious depredations in the game preserves of the neighbouring landowners, and how such were entirely detrimental to the credit of the school, as also to its interests in another way, for the time had now arrived when it had become a grave question whether the reasonable liberty which had always been its privilege should not be withdrawn. Here a stir of sensation went through the listeners, who began to think that this rare excitement, even to those not the most active participants in it, had its unpleasant side.

Fortunately, though protracted, detection had overtaken the offenders, he declaredthe principal offendersas sooner or later it invariably and surely did, let them be certain of that, and, with detection, chastisement immediate and condign.

"It should be a matter of shame and grief to all of us," he went on, "that one who for so long has held a position of responsibility and trust should be the ringleader in these occasions of disorder and grave offenceleading astray not only his younger schoolfellows, but also one whom the humane and civilising spirit of a noble and selfsacrificing organisation has rescued from a life of barbarism and degradation, and sent here, where every opportunity is placed in his way to become a credit to that organisation, and a shining light in the noble endeavours to rescue from heathenism his barbarous fellow countrymen. I refer to Anthony, upon whom, I trust, the punishment I am about to inflict will act as a salutary warning and prove the turningpoint in his school life. The other boys in the room I hold in a lesser degree to be participants in the grave scandalI will not say breach of rules, because obviously such an offence as to get outside the school walls surreptitiously at night is one that no rule need be definitely formulated to cover."

Here two or three of the smaller boys implicated began to snivel. The whole lot would be swished, of course, they thought, and, indeed, such was the opinion of the whole school. It was precious hard lines, for they had no more hand in the affair than anybody else in the room; but such was the Doctor's way.

"As for you, Haviland," he continued, "it is simply lamentable how you have time after time betrayed your trust and shirked your responsibilitiesin short, gone from bad to worse. I had hoped you would have taken warning when I was obliged to suspend you from your office, and have behaved in such wise as to justify me in shortly reinstating you; but, so far from this, you seem to have become utterly reckless and abandoned. You are nearly grown up now, and should be setting an example; but, instead of that, you are using the influence which your age and strength give you in the eyes of your schoolfellows, to lead your juniors into mischief and wrongdoing. It is clear, therefore, that there is no further place for you among us. Yet I am reluctant, very reluctant, to proceed to such an extreme measure as your public expulsion"

Now the excitement had reached its height. Haviland was going to be swished, not expelled, decided the spectators, butwould he take it? Haviland standing there, his lips compressed, a set frown on his brow, was of the same opinion, except that he himself, and he only, held the answer to the question. He would not take itno, decidedly not. They might expel him and welcome, he did not care, he was past caring; but submit to the indignity of a flogging at his age he would not.

"Therefore," continued the Doctor, "I shall take time to consider so grave and painful a matter; and, meanwhile, you will be withdrawn from all intercourse or contact with the rest of the school. Anthony I shall, of course, soundly flog. I shall also flog Smithson minor and Mcmurdo; and, as for the other boys in the dormitory, on this occasion I shall confine myself to severely warning them."

There was a sort of audible sensation among the listeners, but it was nothing to what followed. For now Haviland lifted up his voice:

"Please, sir, Smithson and Mcmurdo had no more to do with it than the man in the moon."

The Doctor frowned as he gazed sternly at the speaker.

"Keep silence," he said, in a curt tone. Haviland obeyed. He had made his protest in the name of fair play. He was not concerned to take any further risks. But those who sawthose who heardwas ever such a thing witnessed before at Saint Kirwin's? The

Doctorthe awful, the dreaded Doctorexpostulated with, and that before the whole school! Why did not the very heavens fall?

The public floggings at Saint Kirwin's were public in the sense that they could be heard by all but seen by none, for they took place in a small room adjoining the big schoolroom, and the audience were able to estimate how each of the victims "took it." In the present instance, Smithson and Mcmurdo got off with a comparatively slight infliction, and, beyond a smothered yelp or two, "took it" well. But when it came to Anthony's turn, they wondered if it was going on for ever. He received, in fact, a most relentless swishing, but for all the sound that escaped himwhether of cry or groanhe might just as well not be undergoing chastisement at all. The school was lost in admiration of his pluck and endurance; and, afterwards, when he emerged, showing no sign of pain, but scowling savagely, and muttering in his own tonguethe word having been given to dismisshe broke forth:

"What they do to Haviland?"

"Well done, Cetchy! Well done, old chap! You did take it well. Biggest swishing Nick ever gave. He'd have stopped if you'd yelled out," were some of the congratulations showered upon him. But of them he took no notice whatever.

"Dn! What they do to Haviland?" he repeated, stamping his foot, and scowling savagely.

"I'm afraid he'll be expelled, Cetchy," said some one. The others thought so too.

"What's expelled? Sent away?"

"That'll be it."

The Zulu boy made no answer. He gazed from one to the other, and then his eyes began to nil, and great tears, which the most savage flogging ever administered within the walls of Saint Kirwin's had failed to wring from him, rolled down his cheeks. "Haviland sent away! perhaps not even allowed to bid him goodbye. No, that was too much."

"Never mind, Cetchy, old chap. Perhaps it won't come to that, after all," were some of the wellmeant attempts to console him. But he would have none of it, and turned away, sorrowful and speechless.

The while, in many a group, recent events were being volubly discussed.

“I always hated Haviland,” declared one youngster emphatically. “He was such a brute when he was a prefect. But I like him now, since he cheeked Nick. He is a plucky beggar.”

“Now then, get along to your placessharp, d’you hear?” commanded two or three prefects, breaking up such groupsfor it was preparation time.

Haviland, after a day and a half of solitary confinementretirement would perhaps be a better word, for he was not under lock and keyhad reached the stage of sullen resignation. Of course he would be expelled.

There was no hope, and now that it had come to this, and he had had time to think, he felt that he would give anything for another chance. Then his heart hardened. The Doctor had driven him into it, had simply persecuted him with an unrelenting spite: and his thoughts were bitter and black and revengeful. In the midst of which a sound of firm footsteps was heard outside, and the door opened, admittingthe Doctor. A hard resentful scowl came upon the young fellow’s face, and he gazed sullenly before him.

“Haviland, you are to go home immediately.”

“Of course,” thought Haviland to himself. “Now for it! I am to be shot out, and the old brute’s going to preach me a humbugging canting sermon first.”

But there was no sternness in the Doctor’s voice as he went on. It was solemn, almost affectionate.

“I am sorry to say I have received bad news, I fear very bad news, butwe must hope for the best.”

“What, sir?” shouted Haviland, springing to his feet. “Who is it? Who?”

“Your father.”

Haviland’s face went deadly white. He staggered forward, and in his agony of grief seized the headmasterthe terrible headmasterby the coat sleeve.

“Is heis he?”

“Alive, yes. But, my poor boy, you must go to him at once. Everything is arranged for you to catch the earliest train for London, and you have just a quarter of an hour to get ready in.”

“Tell me, sir, what have you heard?” besought Haviland piteously.

Dr Bowen, like many hottempered men, was at bottom softhearted, and now he could hardly control his voice to reply, so deeply was he affected. For the telegram which he had received was to the effect that Haviland’s father had met with a street accident, and was not expected to live till night. If his son arrived in time to see him again, it was all that could be hoped.

“Remember, Haviland,” he said, after conveying this as feelingly as possible, “that, after all, while there is life there is hope, however small. Go now and get ready. In view of this great grief which has been sent you I will say nothing of what is past, except that when you return to us next term, I am sure you will redeem what is past and start afresh.”

The latter was intended to convey that, under the great sorrow which had fallen upon him, Haviland might consider the past overlooked, and that although he was going home now, it was not under expulsion.

Chapter Sixteen.

Hunted.

On, through the steamy forest, heavy and damp with the tropical rain; on, over stodgy swamp land, whose miasmatic exhalations rise misty and foul in visible vapour, the fugitive is wending. Toiling for very life is he, dragging with infinite labour each spent footstep over the yielding and spongy ground, drawing breath in long gasps; and ever throughout his entire frame that sinking and yet sickening and agonising sensation of feeling utterly spent; wounded too, in more places than one, unarmed and without means of defencea solitary fugitive in the mighty heart of that vast stretch of African forest land. What chance has he?

He stumbles on, and a sigh of relief, of thankfulness, escapes him, as his feet once more tread firm ground, though, did he but know it, the soil of the washy swamp, by closing over his footsteps, has rendered him invaluable service in hiding his spoor from his enemies. That he has enemies, more than one furtive and anxious glance behindif nothing elsewould serve to show.

A pitiable spectacle, his clothing in rags and plentifully soaked with bloodhis own bloodstill welling from and clotting round his wounds, as he toils onwards, his heavy unkempt beard matted with it as it trickles from a gash in his head, his progress beset by a whole cloud of flies and voracious winged insects, yet the fugitive is a wellbuilt, strongframed man of medium height, and well below middle age; strong indeed he must be, for in this deplorable plight he has covered many a weary mile, nor before him is there any hope of succour or refuge. Yet the sheer dogged instinct of selfpreservation buoys him up, keeps him ever moving forward, anywhere so that it is only forward.

The lowlying ragged rain clouds roll back over the tree tops, and the dull blaze of the sun, watery through the tropical mist, but intensely piercing and penetrating as though focussed through the lens of a burningglass, envelops him in an overpowering fold of heat, His brain reels, his uneven steps are more staggering than ever. Why keep on? Why struggle further? The spears and hatchets of his enemies were more merciful. Yes, but the fire, the lingering death of torment by that or any other form, or at best the yoke and slave chain, and being weaponless, he has no means of selling his life dearly, or even of ending it with his own hand when the last hope had vanished.

Ah! the welcome shade of the trees is gained at length. The lay of the land is flat, with a scarcely perceptible undulation, and alternates in open spacesmostly swampyand forest, the latter, however, not thick with undergrowth. Once within the shade, cool by comparison, the fugitive sinks to the earth. With bursting heart and labouring lungs, his

strong frame weakened by continual loss of blood, he can go no further. A lurid mist is before his eyes, and a feeling of intense lassitude, of dissolution, overpowers him, and he lies unconscious.

Not for long, however. All creationhuman, animal, insect, even vegetable lifeseems leagued together against the hunted man. Great black ants, attracted by the blood from his wounds, are crawling over him, and soon their sharp bites have the effect of bringing him back to himself again. But on the whole the infliction is salutary, for it acts as a spur; and, staggering to his feet in quick loathing, the fugitive shakes off the horrible insects, and drags on his weary way.

The solitude is intense, but not so the silence. The call of bird voices echoes through the shade; some shrill and piping and not unmelodious, others harsh, half human, almost menacing; the screech of cicalas too, loud, vibrant, distressing to overwrought and weakened nerves. Green lizards of some size dart scramblingly through the scattered bark or lie motionless, with head erect, and rubylike eyes dilated, as they watch the intruder; and a great tree spider, huge, hairy, and hideous, shoggles up a trunk within a yard and a half of the wanderer's face.

And now hunger is gripping the unfortunate man; thirst, too, which the slimy swamp water he has drunkthough, in prudence, sparinglyhas not availed to stave off for long. The day is waning, moreover, and well he knows that another night spent in the forest spells death. And still no sign of human habitation or friendly succour; yet how should there be, seeing that the red scourge of the slavehunter, or of warring barbarian clans, equally ruthless, has swept this zone of terror and of blood, leaving it a howling waste of uninhabited wilderness. Or even were things otherwise, why should those he half hoped to meet prove any more desirable than those from whom he fled, here in the dark places of the earth, where anything in human shape, any fellow creature, was almost synonymous with a cruel and ruthless enemy? But the enduring courage, the bulldog tenacity of purpose, which characterise the true explorer or upcountry adventurer, whatever his nationality, is to this man an ever present force. The traditions of his order that no hardship, no peril, however great, however hopeless, is without abundant precedent, are with him now, to steady his staggering steps as he plunges forward, to uphold and cheer his despairing mind.

There is light ahead; a break in the skies. Only another tract of open swamp, is the first thought of the fugitive; and yet with it a sort of instincthardly more, although the creation of experiencewarns him, tells him, that human habitation lies at hand. With renewed strength and quickened steps he presses forward to the edge of the forest line and peers forth.

At the sight which meets his gaze his heart gives a great bound. His instinct has not been at fault. There, in the midst of the open space, are the thatched roofs of a native villageand a village of some size.

It is situated in the openin the midst of an amphitheatre of forest which engirdles it on three sides, the further being bounded by a line of jagged rocks of no great height. But around it there is no sign of life. No human forms are issuing from or entering its low stockade, no sound of human voices comes to him from within it. Perhaps they are sleeping throughout the heat of the day. And then he pauses.

What will be his reception? Hostile possibly. Yet here lies his only hope. To remain as he is means certain death. He will warn the inhabitants of yonder place of the proximity of his enemies and theirs, that it not strong enough for defence, which is more than likely, they may save their livesand hisin timely flight. And, having decided upon this line of conduct, he steps from his hidingplace, and proceeds to cross the intervening space.

But as he draws near the village, he is conscious of a renewed sinking of the heart; for now he perceives that the stockade is broken down in several places, and what he has hardly noticed before in his excitement and hunger as he snatched at the bunches of milleta field of which he is passing throughthat the crops are trampled and torn about, as though hurriedly foraged. And then, as he gains a wide breach in the stockade, and is about to step through, a sight meets his gaze which is not entirely unfamiliar, but which somehow or other never seems entirely to lose its horror and repulsion.

Strewn around in scattered profusion are hundreds of bones. Skulls, too, grinning up out of the long herbage which in some instances has sprouted right through the battered orifice which has let out the life, producing the most hideous and ghastly effect. Everywhere they lie, grouped in batches, mostly just within the stockade, though others are not wanting immediately around the lowroofed grass huts. Well enough does the fugitive know these signs. The fate of this village has been that of many another in the bloodstained heart of the Dark Continent. Its inhabitants have been surprised, and all who have shown resistance, or for any reason were not worth carrying away, ruthlessly massacred, regardless of age or sexas not a few skulls of diminutive size lying around eloquently proclaim. His supposed place of refuge is but a village inhabited by the dead.

Grim and gruesome as this thought is, a new hope springs within the hunted man's resourceful mind. His pursuers, even should they suspect the direction he has takenhe is satisfied that they have lost his spoor, or they would have been upon him long sincewill forbear to follow him here. The last asylum they will dream of him seeking will be this village of the dead. There is comfort in this, at any rate, and now, his next thought is to collect the ears, or rather bunches of milletthere is still plenty left which is not crushed

and trampledand as he devours great handfuls of the grain, he remembers that where there is a village there must be water. Fortified by even this sorry food, rough, indigestible, unwholesome as it is, he renews his search and is soon rewarded. He has no difficultysave for the exhaustion of dragging along his weary framein finding water, which, though slimy, and tepid and unpalatable, is still waterand having slaked his thirst, he crawls back to the village again.

The sun has sunk beneath the ridge of black rocks, and in the brief gloaming the miasmatic vapours seem to roll up thicker than before. One by one, the stars twinkle forth into the hot misty sky, and soon the reddening glow of a broad moon suffuses the tree tops, flooding with its spectral light the open space and whitened relics of those who erewhile tenanted these silent and primitive dwellings. Gigantic bats are flitting to and fro, uttering their strident squeaks, and the forest depths begin to resound with the howling of hyaenas, and the shrill baying of hunting jackals. To the fugitive the sounds are not without a certain sinister significance. Well he knows that the hyaena is the most cowardly of beasts, but he remembers too, how in these regions of constant massacre, even the most cowardly of beasts can hardly have failed to lose all respect for the dominant animal, Manseeing that he, at any rate dead, constitutes an easy and abundant form of prey. He realises his own enfeebled state, and knows that the otherwise cowardly carnivora will realise it too. Even now, he can descry grisly, bluntsnouted shapes, skulking about in the moonlight, allured by the scent of fresh bloodhis own blood to witnor does the occasional subdued shout he utters avail to alarm them overmuch, or cause them to retire very for. The stealthy patter of their footfalls seems ever to increaseto be drawing nearer and nearer.

Hitherto he has shrunk from entering any of the huts; now, however, the instinct of sheer selfpreservation prescribes that course. Selecting one, a large oblong structure, whose wide lowpitched roof forms a kind of verandah all round it, he crawls within. But it has no door, and his strength is not equal to questing about for a substitute for oneindeed, hardly is he within when he stumbles forward, and sinks to the ground. The pain of his wounds has become intolerable, a deadly faintness seizes himand before his final unconsciousness his hand closes with convulsive grip upon the skull belonging to a fleshless skeleton lying there within.

Huge spidershairy monsters, the size of a man’s handcrawl over the prostrate form, then, startled by the instinct that here is life, scurry back to the shelter of the thatch again. A wickedlooking centipede draws its shining rings in disgusting length along the ground in the stripe of moonlight, and flying beetles whirr and buzz in and out of the doorway; and there, among such surroundings, lies the dying explorerhis sands of life run outevery object which might meet his failing gaze, that of loathing and horror and repulsion.

But, outside, the whole place is alive with stealing, skulking shapes. Here and there a subdued snarl, or some snapping, is audible, but they are all converging on one pointthe structure which as their scent informs them contains fresh blood; and the pointed ears and bared fangs of the hideous, bluntsnouted brutes, show plain in the moonlight. And now the foremost is standing snuffing within the open doorway, while others are stealing up, by dozens, behind the first.