

# JEREMY AT CRALE

*His Friends, His Ambitions, and His One Great Enemy*

By Hugh Walpole

## PART IX

THE afternoon light was silver over sea and land. The sky was ribbed with clouds lying in pale saffron ridges on a surface that was almost white. Trees and buildings caught the color from an invisible sun and trembled on the verge of rosy splendor that was delaying for the sunset. It was one of those autumn afternoons yet early but preparing it seemed for some gorgeous display — as though at the striking of some hour the curtain would be rung up and then — what wouldn't you see? England is always preparing for such displays, but over and over again nature decides that the performance is not quite ready.

"It's your two hours", said Uncle Samuel. "You shall do whatever you please."

"Let's go down to the beach", said Jeremy, "and then have tea at Mrs. Grafton's."

"Who's Mrs. Grafton?" asked Uncle Samuel.

"She has a shop for teas in the village", said Jeremy. "She's out of bounds except you're with your people. Mulling Minor took me and Jumbo there when his aunt came."

"Was it a good tea?" asked Uncle Samuel.

"The tea was frightfully decent but Mulling's aunt was awful."

"Well, how are you?" asked Uncle Samuel after a while. "You seem pretty fair."

"Oh, I'm all right", said Jeremy.

"So there's something the matter?" Uncle Samuel asked, at once detecting trouble.

"I'm all right", said Jeremy again. The time was not yet. So Uncle Samuel, instantly perceiving this, began in his odd jumbled fashion to talk of his own affairs and, as always, he spoke to Jeremy as though he were of his own age and generation.

"You see it isn't right for me to go on living on your father any longer. Of course I pay him something and your mother finds it a help with the house-keeping, but I don't pay as much as I'd be paying somewhere else. Up to now I haven't had it, but lately I've been making some money."

"How much?" asked Jeremy, keenly interested.

"Oh, I don't know. A pound or two. And I'm going to make more. You see they're beginning to like my pictures."

"Who's they?" asked Jeremy.

"Oh, people in London and Paris."

"Aren't you surprised?" asked Jeremy.

"Not very. Tastes change. I was a little ahead of my time. Soon I'll be behind it."

"Chaps here", said Jeremy, "don't like that picture of yours I've got a bit. The one with the purple sheep."

"You hang on to it my boy. That'll be worth some money some day."

Jeremy did not reply. He didn't agree with his uncle but, young though he was, he knew that artists had their own ideas about their work and that it wasn't wise to disabuse them.

"It will be awful if you go away. I shall never see you."

"Yes you will."

"Where will you go?"

"Paris perhaps. You must come and stay with me there."

Here was excitement! Paris! As though one said the North Pole. "Oh, that would be ripping! People eat frogs there and snails. Staire says he knows it backwards. I bet he doesn't. He's an awful swankpot."

"The trouble is", went on Uncle Samuel, "I'm rather old to move and I'm frightfully lazy. Not about my work but moving anywhere. If I weren't I'd have moved years ago."

They were in complete harmony now, as though they had never been separated. Jeremy was not of course aware of it but Uncle Samuel was wondering, as he had so often wondered before, why it was that he was more completely at his ease with this small boy than with any other human being in the world.

They were approaching the sea. They went through a gate, then across a shelving field, past a ruined and deserted cottage, then over some dunes and so down onto a beach marbled by the retreating tide.

The sea was far out, a stretch of silver. On every side of them the sand, mother of pearl beneath the faint dim sky, wandered to gentle horizons.

"Let's sit here", said Uncle Samuel, suddenly sinking down onto the edge of the dune. He lay back, his stomach like a round cushion, his legs like bolsters. He looked up at the sky.

"Now then, how are things?" he asked.

Jeremy sat pressed up against him and dug in the sand with his heels.

"Everything's rotten", he said.

"How's that?"

"I don't know. It ought to have been all right. I expected I'd have a ripping term but it's all gone wrong."

"Who's fault?" asked Uncle Samuel.

"It isn't mine anyway. I haven't done anything that I can see. There's a chap I can't stick."

"What's his name?"

"Staire. We've always loathed each other. His father's something swell in the Diplomats."

"Oh, I see. Well, how's he made things rotten?"

"Oh, every way. He's good at cricket but he's no good at football so he hates me because there isn't any cricket this term, and chaps that are friends of his have been bullying kids in the Lower School and then one new kid ran away and when he was brought back they said I'd been bullying him."

"Well, had you?"

"Of course I hadn't. I'd hardly spoken to him ever. Anyway there've been rows all the term and they say it's my fault and Leeson's been jawing me and says he'll take my Study away if I'm not careful. And now Parlow's sick with me too."

"Who's Parlow?"

"He's my Form Master. He was frightfully decent to me all the first part of the term, so it makes it worse. And they're only playing me for the Second."

There was a suspicious gulp in Jeremy's voice. Uncle Samuel knew that things were in a very bad way indeed. He put his arm round the boy, but only as it were by chance and not as a demonstration. Jeremy did not draw away, as he would have done had it been anyone else.

"Who was this boy who ran away and where did he run to?"

"He's a boy called Morgan. I don't know where he ran to. He was away a whole night. He's popular now because he didn't split on anyone. It isn't fair, because I never touched him. It's only Staire who told lies to everyone."

Uncle Samuel thought a moment. Then he said: "Have you been showing off because you've got a Study?"

Jeremy turned onto him a puckered and disturbed face. "No, I don't think so. I'm just the same."

"When we get a step up people always think we're showing side whether we are or not. Then probably we do just to show them. If he's been telling lies, why don't you have it out with this boy Staire or whatever his name is?"

"So I would," said Jeremy eagerly, "only I didn't want to have a row this term just after getting my Study. That's why it's so rotten."

"Ever been unpopular before?" asked Uncle Samuel.

"What do you mean — unpopular?"

"Everyone disliking you, thinking you do everything for the worst reasons, wanting you to do them for the worst reasons."

"No," said Jeremy, "I suppose I haven't. I've never thought about it. I just used to rag about."

"I see", said Uncle Samuel, pulling his fat chin as was his custom when he was thinking. "What's the other fellow like, the fellow you hate?"

"Staire? Oh, I don't know. Awfully sidey. Thinks his skin's different from everyone else's. He's jolly good at cricket but he's no use at anything else."

"Well," said Uncle Samuel, "if you weren't yourself, if you were some third person and saw yourself and this Staire, which would you like best — without prejudice?"

Jeremy, who always took Uncle Samuel's points very quickly — they were the kind of points that he would like to make himself if he were clever enough — honestly tried to consider this, saw himself as Jimmy Smith benignly considering an impersonal Cole, an abstract Staire. Funny, when you looked at it this way, how differently you yourself appeared!

"I suppose", he said at last slowly, "that if I didn't know either of them well I'd like Staire best. He's better looking and knows more things. But honestly I think I'm better to be with *much*."

Uncle Samuel laughed and drew his knees up into his stomach.

"There you are. That settles it. All your life there will only be a few people who have time to know you *well*. The general view will be the one the crowd takes, the superficial one. You haven't got to pay any attention to that *ever*. Only two things for you to listen to. Your judgment of yourself, and you've got to make that as honest as you can. Don't be biased in your own favor if you can help it. Don't be too much down on yourself either. And otherwise listen to the two or three people who really love you. You'll be lucky if you have so many. If *they* think there's something wrong with you, then pay attention. It's serious. But the *crowd* — Lord, the crowd! They're *always* wrong. Or no", he corrected himself. "Not always. There's *something* in their idea of you but not enough for you to worry over as long as you've kept your self respect and the respect of two or three who know you." Then he lay back and, beating his hands on his stomach, murmured:

Hey diddle diddle  
The cat and the fiddle  
The cow jumped over  
The moon —

He looked out over the sand, over whose mysterious pools shadows of rose and amber were now softly stealing. "There's one glory of the sun and one of the moon. The stars blaze in their confident splendor and the sands of the sea shall be glorified. . . . Well, it won't do you any harm to be unpopular for a bit. But fight that chap if he's telling lies about you."

They were silent for a while, then Jeremy said:

"There's another thing, Uncle Samuel. You know Jumbo. I've told you about him before. He's always been my best friend. I can't talk to him any more."

"What do you mean — you can't talk to him?"

"I don't seem to want to tell him things like I used to. It was all right when we just ragged about, but now there are other things — all sorts — and he doesn't know what I mean. . . . He wants everything to be as it was — and it isn't."

"Oh, I see", said Uncle Samuel. "Is there anybody else?"

"Not exactly. At least there's a chap called Ridley. He's in the Sixth. I've never spoken to him in my life. I don't think he even knows my name. But I'd do anything for him, I would really. I know it sounds silly. I don't know why I feel like that. It's the way he looks or something. . . ."

Jeremy stopped, awkward and embarrassed. How was he ever to make anyone understand? Uncle Samuel sat up. He stared out to sea, frowning.

"This boy — he's in the Sixth, is he? Sure he hasn't spoken to you or looked at you or anything?"

"No. He doesn't know I'm there even."

"Because friendship with a boy so much older — do you think it's wise?"

"He isn't so much older", Jeremy

answered. He was looking into his uncle's face so honestly and with eyes so frank and clear sighted that there was nothing to fear. "He's much cleverer. That's all. He's quiet, you never see him about with anyone else. I'd like him to be my friend. I sort of feel one day he will be." The boy sighed.

"But it's rotten dropping Jumbo when we've been friends so long, isn't it? Only I've changed — I don't want the same things I did, I don't want always to be ragging around — and he hasn't."

"That's all right", Uncle Samuel answered. "Friendship's like that. You aren't friends with someone only because you want to be. You can't have a friend unless you can feed one another. Once or twice in your life you'll meet someone and you'll go on with him for the rest of your days. Finer and finer it is. But for the rest — those you meet on a journey — be grateful for the times you've had together, let it go when it's over, bear no grudges, above all don't prolong it falsely. No one knows at the start what a friendship's going to be. Don't hang on and be false. Life's all movement or ought to be. Don't be sentimental over reminiscences and don't charge others with falseness. On the whole you'll be treated as you deserve."

Uncle Samuel yawned. "I get perilously like your dear father at times. I suppose it's living with him so long. The sad sea waves are creeping into my bones. Now what about tea?"

Jeremy scratched himself like a little dog and jumped up. A great burden had fallen from him. Why? His uncle's lazy words, the sky now scattered with little crimson feathers, the long stretch of misted sands, the sleepy murmur of a friendly sea, the smell of the sea pinks, the stiff sand

grass, the flavor in his nostrils of sheep and wind and salt. Like a young goat he skipped away.

Having had their talk they were now, both of them, very happy and noticed everything that came their way: the gulls perched like white snowballs on the red-brown soil, the bare lift of the green hill against the rosy sky, the girl with two pigs who passed them as they struck into the path, and an old man standing in the dip of the green hill and calling something again and again. He'd lost his dog, maybe, but there was no dog in sight and no sound but the purring of the sea and the grunting of the two pigs.

"And it isn't", said Uncle Samuel, sitting in Mrs. Grafton's cottage, "difficult to live a life like this. I'd sleep late in the morning, have two brown eggs and a rasher of bacon for my breakfast, take my paints with me and go for a bathe, read a bit of a newspaper or the story in 'Home Chat', have a snooze, my head in the warm sand, and so come back when the lights are being lit and the woman of the house is ready for some talk. A fine life for a man my age!"

And it was a fine tea — Jeremy had never seen a finer. There were brown eggs and rashers of bacon, scones and a square of yellow butter with a cow stamped on it, blackberry jam and Cornish cream, a heavy cake thick with currants, saffron buns and water-cress — and a black teapot as big as a man's head.

Around the room there were pictures of ships, and there was a fine group of wax fruit under glass, a canary in a cage, and enormous photographs of Mrs. Grafton's father and mother, the fire leaping in the fireplace, and Mrs. Grafton herself with any amount to say.

But best, far best, was Uncle Samuel himself, all bunched up beside the

table like a wise old bird, his hair on end, his cheeks round and rosy, his eyes sparkling as they always did when he was happy, talking with his mouth full, banging the table with his fists.

What did he talk of? Shells and fireworks, leprachauns and daffodils, landladies' bills and the mistakes undertakers make over funerals, the Tower of London and Lady Jane Grey, pirates and their bloody ways, painting people upside down when they don't know you're looking at them, kings who keep their crowns in hat boxes, and the man who went to the North Pole and found a bag full of diamonds.

Time to catch his train. Jeremy walked with him along the dusky road to the little station. At the last, just before Uncle Samuel stepped up into the close stuffy little carriage, he took his hat off and sniffed the air, then — because the platform was dim and there was no one to see — he caught Jeremy and held him and kissed him. He had never kissed him in all their lives before. The train snorted away and Jeremy trudged up the hill to school.

Jeremy returned another man. He had not yet reached the status of self analysis, so he did not worry himself as to why he felt differently. He did not think about it at all. He was happy again.

But he was happy now with a strange mixture of aloofness in his happiness. He did not seem to mind any longer what other people thought of him. Uncle Samuel had, in some strange fashion, given him wider horizons. There was the world outside the School — not only the world of his home and Polchester but the world of London and even of Paris — Paris where they bought Uncle Samuel's strange pictures and ate frogs.

Nevertheless, this own immediate

world with Staire in the middle of it became, through the talk with Uncle Samuel, increasingly dramatic. Something was going to happen and that soon. Uncle Samuel had advised that the matter be settled and it was *going* to be settled!

The first sign of Jeremy's renewed vigor was his exceedingly abrupt treatment of Gauntlet.

Gauntlet, coming into the Study, smiling his polite smile, said:

"Well, where have you been all the afternoon?"

"With my uncle", Jeremy answered shortly.

"Oh well, you needn't be shirty about it. There was a House practice on."

"I know."

"Didn't they kick up a row about your not playing?"

"Llewellyn let me off."

"Oh . . . Staire and I went down specially to see you play."

"It was a loss for you, wasn't it? Where's my Frenchgrammar? You've boned it, Gauntlet. You're always pinching my books."

"No I haven't. I'll lend you mine if you like."

"I don't want your dirty book."

Gauntlet smiled — a maddening smile to Jeremy. It implied superiority in social status, wisdom, and self control. It also implied secret knowledge and the general opinion of an invisible world that Jeremy Cole was a blithering young ass.

Enraged by this smile, Jeremy advanced so close to Gauntlet that waistcoat buttons were touching.

He then declared himself as follows:

"Look here, Gauntlet, don't you flatter yourself that I don't know the dirty game you've been playing this term pretending to be my friend and talking against me all the time behind

my back with Staire and Baldock and the others. You're a dirty sneak, that's what you are, and at the end of the term either you move out of this Study or I do. I'm not afraid of you or of Staire either. I know all the dirty lies your lot have been spreading about me and the Dormouse, and you know jolly well I never touched the kid. I know you've tried to spoil me with everyone, but you haven't succeeded and you won't either. And if I have any more of your cheek you'll know it. And you can tell Staire from me that he'll hear from me one of these days and jolly soon too."

After this he sat down to his French grammar and Gauntlet, sniffing defiance, left the room.

The next thing that happened was the House practice on Saturday. The game, unimportant though it was in itself, had important consequences.

Jeremy, secure as he was, without possible rival for his place as Scrum Half in the House team, had been taking these practice games very lightly. But now, because he had been playing for the Second and because Llewellyn had been decent about letting him off the other day, he determined to play his very best. And he did.

It was a day on which there happened to be no other very important games. Therefore there were quite a number of spectators behind the ropes. Then Llewellyn had arranged that to balance the teams the best Forwards should play the best Backs. The result of this was that Jeremy had in front of him a set of Forwards who would have disgraced Falstaff's recruiting squad. A more miserable lot of screwy, mangy, knockkneed, backbent, and lily-livered warriors Jeremy had never in all his life seen. As a pack they would be driven all over the field! As every-



one knows, Halfbacks, however brilliant they may be, have little chance behind a hopelessly beaten pack. But this afternoon, strangely enough, the opposite of the apparently inevitable occurred.

Whether it was that sheer terror drove them to mighty deeds or that, having nothing to lose in reputation, they flung all caution to the sea breezes, or whether, as Jeremy himself (not as a rule conceited) felt, he fired them with a kind of divine frenzy, the fact is that they played as never in their little lives before, and gave Llewellyn twice the problem in choosing his House pack that he would normally have had.

It may be that Jeremy did indeed have something to do with this. In after days, looking back with all his later international glories thick upon him, he was inclined to wonder whether he ever again played such a game as this. The new self confidence that Uncle Samuel had given him, the sense that he had nothing to lose, the knowledge that Llewellyn, a member of the School First, was there watching him and would report, certain things that during the last weeks Stevens had taught him, all these factors contributed.

He played indeed that day a game that was, at any rate thirty years ago, a new game among schoolboys, a far more open game, not contenting himself merely with going down to the Scrums and getting the ball out to his fellow Half, but opening the game out for the Three Quarters by his own breaks through, and in fact in the last ten minutes of the game scoring himself two tries.

In any case, whether orthodox or no, it was a glorious afternoon. He was conscious of nothing save the rapture and ecstasy of the play. He seemed to know exactly where the ball would

be long before the ball itself knew. He was unaware of kicks or bruises, pains or penalties. His body seemed to be made of some divine ether, an immortal body such as only the Gods in Olympus knew. Excited though he was, his brain was cool and clear, his eyes everywhere at once, his short legs of iron and yet swift about the ground, his hands so safe that no ball was too difficult to take. Such divine days come but seldom in a lifetime, but when they are there how inevitable and right they seem! Why should it not be always like this? How simple and natural! What child's play! What heavenly ease and ecstatic natural rhythm! Alas, the Gods are jealous and allow us such joys only to snatch them abruptly from us and prove to us the mere mortals that we are!

So fell Ilium  
and the mystic towers  
of the immortal Gods!

At half time, as he sucked a lemon, there was more drama for him. Parlow was there behind the ropes watching the game! But just now even Parlow seemed unimportant — a stout, red faced man like other red faced men!

Those two tries at the end were worth a lifetime! The first was scarcely intended. He had snatched the ball from the feet of the scrambling Forwards, had looked for Ewart the other Half, failed to find him, and had dashed through on his own. Finding himself behind the goal line he had planted the ball there!

On the second occasion, only a minute before Time, seized by some kind of demon he had run three quarters of the field, easily eluded the stumbling Back and trotted behind the goal posts at his ease!

There was glory for you! But had it been right? Ought Scrum Halves to be doing the work of Three Quarters?

In such a game it scarcely mattered; he had nevertheless as, covered with mud (the field had in the last quarter been a morass), he left the ground, a secret blinding vision of the possibilities that opening the game might mean!

Climbing the hill, he almost ran into Parlow. He fancied that the Master wanted to speak to him but he swerved, pretended that there was mud in his eye and, his head up, went on his way. Silly, but it gave him pleasure!

Then as he crossed Coulter's he found Llewellyn at his side.

"When you've changed, like to come in and have some tea?"

"Thanks awfully!"

Yes, things were moving. . . .

As he was having his shower in the changing room and shrieking repartees, more or less brilliant, to various friends, Leeson walked through. He stopped by Jeremy, who was maidenly conscious of his nudity and then reassured: "It isn't anything funny to him seeing anyone stripped."

"Well Cole," said Leeson (and before everyone too), "that was like your old style again. Fine game."

Jeremy grinned and then choked because the water tumbled down his throat.

"Get any bruises?" Leeson asked, looking at his brown stocky body.

"No sir."

"Good. I see you're down for the First match against Odell's next Wednesday."

Oh, was he? Splendid! He could have hugged Leeson.

"Play as you did today and you'll keep your place."

"Thank you sir."

Leeson passed on and there was a shrill chorus of: "Good for you, Stocky." "Ripping game!" "You give Odell's socks!"

Then, to complete his happiness, Jumbo came in. He pretended to be looking for no one in particular, but Jeremy knew that he was, in reality, looking for him — and, suddenly, all the restraint that there had been between himself and Jumbo during the last weeks had vanished, they were just as they used to be, and Jeremy knew, as he looked at his chubby, ugly, rather stupid face that he liked him better than anyone else in the world — except of course Uncle Samuel and, well, Ridley . . . but could you be fond of a boy to whom you had never even spoken?

Jumbo had been present at the game and was, of course, bursting with pride about it; but was he going to say so? Not he.

"Not bad for a kid", he said. "But the Stripes were rotten. Anyone could have run through them."

"Bet you couldn't." Jeremy was struggling with his collar and his face was purple, his words strangled.

"Bet I could if they'd play me." There was a chorus of derisive laughter from the crowd upon whom Jeremy, hotly defending his friend, turned.

"All right. Jumbo plays better footer than any of you do."

They walked away together arm in arm.

"Come and have tea", said Jumbo.

"I've got a cake."

Jeremy felt a criminal.

"Oh, isn't it rot? I can't. Llewellyn's asked me."

Llewellyn! Jumbo, like many another humble friend of the rising great, had to check both soreness and jealousy. He succeeded manfully. "I say! Fancy Llewellyn asking you!"

"It's only because of the football", Jeremy explained airily. He was nicer then to Jumbo than he had ever been in all their days together before, trying



to explain, without saying anything about it, that all the Llewellyns in the world could be cast into the depths of the sea for one small whim of Jumbo's.

And Jumbo felt this and went away comforted.

Llewellyn's Study showed on every side evidences of the æsthetic Corner. Instead of the mess that most Studies offered you, everything here was of extreme tidiness. The walls were a pale cream, there were some etchings in dark frames (although Jeremy had not at that time the slightest idea of what an etching might be), there was a white bookcase that held books with gleaming bindings, and there was a rough white bowl filled with amber colored chrysanthemums.

In the midst of this refinement the large, clumsy, and broken nosed Llewellyn looked a little out of place, but everyone knew that what Corner wished was law. Of Corner Jeremy was frankly terrified. He looked so remote and superior and elegant — not with Staire's elegance. He was not, as Jeremy in spite of his tender years thoroughly recognized, trying to impress anybody. He was simply himself — and his aloofness was majestic.

A very small fag was making tea. Llewellyn greeted Jeremy with his accustomed lazy roar.

"Hullo there Cole! Come along in! Take a pew. Damned good game of yours today."

Jeremy sat down. He had never before been invited by a Prefect to tea; indeed it was but a short while since he had been even as that small fag making the tea, and making it badly at that.

"What did you think of the game?" Llewellyn magnificently asked him. Jeremy, endeavoring to meet Llewellyn on his own high ground, intimated that in his opinion the Forwards on

his side were better than might have been expected.

"They damned well were", Llewellyn answered, "I couldn't believe my eyes. Rabbits like Forster and Lewdo and Munnings and Frankau stuck it like anything. You got them all going. Oh yes you did. No doubt of it. . . . Have some jam. . . . Blast your eyes" (this to the fag) "do you call this tea? The water wasn't boiling."

The fag, who was some two feet in height, his face crimson with bending over the fire but no alarm in his soul because he knew his Llewellyn, blamed the kettle.

"You see," Llewellyn amiably continued, "you get a damned good pair of Halves and the game's half won. That's what I'm always telling them. If they'd stick to you and Stevens for the School Halves all the term instead of all this chopping and changing, then we'd know where we are. What the hell does it matter if a man has an off day? Everyone has an off day sometimes. They're playing you on Wednesday though."

Jeremy modestly acknowledged the honor.

"Well, you play your damndest. Odell's are no class. We ought to beat them easy."

"Yes", replied Jeremy as grown up as he could muster.

He was conscious, desperately, of Corner, who sat there taking it seemed no interest in the conversation, his long thin body lying back in the chair, eating bread and jam, his eyes on the ceiling.

Llewellyn was thoroughly accustomed to his friend's indifference so, sitting on the table that creaked beneath him and swinging his big legs, he held forth:

"You know I'm keener on the House team than the School this year. Don't

tell anyone I said so, but all the same we've got a good chance of winning the cup." He dropped his voice. "You know what it is, young Cole; the House wants bucking up and it would do it no end of good to win the Rugger Cup. Things haven't been going too well this term, what with that kid running away and all. We're a pretty slack lot at the top of the House. I'm as bad as any — and there's got to be a change. It's all very well lamming chaps' backsides for being late for games, but what's that compared with all the row going on in Lower School and chaps like you and Staire quarrelling? Mind you, I haven't asked you in to tea just to jaw you. That would be a rotten trick. But I reckon that in another year's time you and Staire are going to be two of the most important fellers in the House, and you ought to be thinking of that. What's all the row about anyway?"

Jeremy looked Llewellyn in the face. He liked him. He could tell him just how things were. He did. He explained that he and Staire "couldn't stick one another and never would", that he hadn't wanted a row and had done everything possible to keep out of one, that in all probability it wasn't so much Staire's responsibility as that of his followers, Crumb and Baldock, and that anyway he hadn't had anything to do with the flight of the Dormouse, whom he had never touched and had scarcely spoken to.

"Yes, that's all right", said Llewellyn rather awkwardly. "I don't want to preach and Lord knows I don't mean to, but you and Staire are just beginning to be important in the House and the House means more than your private feelings. Oh, I'm a fine one to talk I am, when I've just slacked around and played rugger and never done anything for the House to speak

of, but I've only got a year left now and I'm damned sorry I've mucked up my time so. I can look back and see the mistakes I've made. That's why I'm telling you. You'll be a swell at rugger next year and be having a first class time, and it will be damned easy to slack just as I've done. But you shouldn't. You'll be sorry if you do. See what I mean?"

"Yes", said Jeremy. He saw.

"Why don't you and Staire have a scrap? Chaps always feel better after a scrap."

Jeremy nodded his head eagerly. "It's a jolly good idea", he said.

"Staire's not a funk, is he?"

"Rather not."

"Well, you have a scrap and I'll see that Leeson doesn't interfere."

Into the middle of this bellicose conversation came the languid lazy voice of Corner.

"You've got an uncle who's a painter, haven't you?" he asked.

"Yes", said Jeremy.

"What does he paint?"

"Oh, sheep mostly — sheep and trees."

"I'd like to see one of his paintings."

"I've got one I could show you", said Jeremy.

"Bring it along some time."

It was time to go. An important thing had happened during this half hour, something of much greater importance than his talks with Leeson. Llewellyn had accepted him as a friend, had told him, brought him into his world and made him a citizen there. The House and her fortunes were something real to him as they had never been before. And then, coming out of Llewellyn's Study, he did a funny thing. He reacted in precisely the opposite direction. Obeying some impulse that he didn't at the time understand, he turned down the pas-

sage into the Lower Common Room.

He had scarcely been there during the term except to look for somebody, just to push his head inside and go away again.

But now he wanted to go back as one of themselves. He wanted to prove to himself perhaps that he didn't, as yet, belong to Llewellyn and his friends or, still further, to show, under the influence of Uncle Samuel's wider horizon, that he belonged to nobody, that he was a free citizen of all the world.

He felt embarrassment as he entered. The long room was filled with boys, even as he had always remembered it. It was like a camp of warriors in one of their off hours — boys reading, boys ragging, boys quarreling, boys writing letters, their chins dug into the paper, boys in a solid group round the fire discussing some matter with the grave faces of old men, boys standing on their heads, boys lying flat on their backs on the dusty floor for no apparent reason at all, boys shouting meaninglessly as though they must let the air out of their lungs, boys fat and thin and tall and short, and over them all and through them and under them a babel of noise, of shrieks and yells and screams . . . the infants of Leeson's Lower School disporting themselves.

No one at first paid Jeremy much attention. He had come in searching for somebody or something and would presently go away again. He didn't belong to them any longer. To the new boys of that term he was already like a visitant from another planet.

In his own heart he was loving the racket and rough-and-tumble. Only a short while back he had been a leader of it all, understanding its moods and sensations, pulling it, unconsciously, first this way and that, happy as a young animal, taking no thought for

the morrow, living entirely in the moment.

He would have liked to be back there again as only a few months ago he had been. But he knew that he could not. He had moved on.

He joined the crowd by the fireplace. "Hullo Saunders", he said. "Hullo McCanlis." To the boys of that period the immediate event was the thing, and the immediate event just then in regard to Stocky Cole was the game that he had played that afternoon in the House practise. Those that had not witnessed it had heard of it.

Way was made for him by the fire, and two minutes later he was talking away as though he had never left the Lower School. The atmosphere settled about him like a magic spell — the crackle of the fire, the old black beams of the fireplace with all the names scratched onto the wood, his own among the others, the noise on every side of him, the cosiness and warmth and happiness. He was happy as a king.

They very soon forgot that he was not one of themselves and continued their discussion, which was around the old old question as to whether the Lower School was treated with proper respect or no. And as had so often been the case before, the general conclusion was — that it wasn't.

Saunders, a long and lanky boy with red hair, was the principal rebel and he had a great deal to say. Where would the School be without its Lower School? Simply nowhere at all. Who supported all the games, turned out in force at the matches, cheered at the concerts? The Lower School. Without the industrious and active fagging of the Lower School where would the Prefects be? Why, nowhere at all. Moreover, where was the food for

future heroes, where the sportsmen and brilliant brains of the future? Where but in the Lower School?

Suppose the Lower School were to leave in a body and troop off into the sea never to be in evidence again — would not the School tumble utterly to pieces? Of course it would.

But was the School in general sufficiently aware of these undoubted facts? It was not. Did the School do anything for the Lower School, grant it special privileges or show it unexpected favors? Never! On the contrary the Lower School was crushed, inhibited, stamped upon, deprived of its energy and vigor (the noise at that moment in the room might to an unprejudiced observer seem to give the lie to this statement). What then was to be done about it? What steps should be taken? Who would try to raise up the Lower School to the place where it ought to be?

Saunders pausing for lack of breath, everyone joined in at once, and it was quickly evident that there were two parties here and that they were bitterly at war with one another.

These two parties were in fact the two old ones of the Sheep and the Goats; but, as with many another feud in history, the original cause of the quarrel was forgotten (the private struggle between Staire and Cole had quite sunk into the background).

Unfortunately, the dispute became almost instantly personal. Saunders, who inherited from his father, a member of Parliament, a gift of oratory, was considered by many present a little above himself and far too fond of the sound of his own voice, and of this he was at once informed. Who was he anyway to lay down laws for the Lower School and speak as though he owned the place? On which someone else retorted that he had as good a right as

any dirty Goat anyway. On this there followed a chorus of Baas, and then on that an outburst of groans intended to represent the familiar cry of the goat. . . .

Someone pushed someone else, someone caught someone round the neck. A movement became general.

It was now that Jeremy perceived that he was out of his element. A year ago, yes even six months back, he would have joined in the fray with a hearty happiness. Now it seemed to him foolish and all about nothing. He slipped away from the fireplace. The rest of the room, attracted by the noise of the dispute, was hurrying toward the fire, shouting, scrambling over tables, sprawling over forms, laughing with the lust of battle.

No one noticed Jeremy. He had almost reached the door when a small boy tumbled into him.

"Hullo!" said Jeremy. "Look out!" Then he saw that it was the Dormouse, but the Dormouse very different from a week or two before, the Dormouse vociferous, Dormouse *vociferans*, Dormouse joyfully militant.

The Dormouse saw him and stopped dead. "Hullo!" he said sheepishly, coloring to the very roots of his hair.

The boys were, both of them, embarrassed.

"How are you getting on?" said Jeremy gruffly.

The Dormouse muttered something. He was staring at Jeremy with all his eyes.

"Pretty decent?" Jeremy asked.

"All right, thanks", said the Dormouse.

"Like it here now?"

"Oh, it's all right."

"Playing footer?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

(The Lower School games were such

a scramble of minute boys tumbling hither and thither that to be clear as to which part of your job you represented was often a problem — more perhaps for the onlooker than the participant.)

The Dormouse was clear enough.

"Halfback", he said.

"Halfback! What, Scrum Half?"

"Yes."

"Oh Lord, I must come and see you play. I could give you some tips."

"Thanks awfully."

"Whose form are you in?" Jeremy painfully continued.

"Martin's."

"Is he decent?"

"Yes thanks."

"Will you get your move?"

"I don't know."

There was a pause. The Dormouse was gazing as though, did he remove his eyes for a moment, Jeremy would disappear.

"Everything's all right now, then", Jeremy said at last.

"Yes thanks."

He smiled. Decent kid. He'd like

to give him a few tips about playing Halfback. He . . .

He looked up and saw that Staire, Baldock at his side; was only a step away.

"Look at Stocky Cole making up to the small kids", Staire said, then moved on as though Jeremy were not there.

Wild furious hatred blazed in Jeremy's heart. It seemed to lift him off his feet with its sudden energy, carrying him, in midair.

He turned and hit Staire on the mouth.

"You beastly swine", he said. Staire turned.

"All right", Jeremy cried. "Will you fight?"

Staire, very white, nodded.

"Yes — you little cad."

Jeremy waited; then, as Staire made no further movement, nodded. He was breathless with a burning fiery rage.

"Behind Runners", he said, using the old traditional word.

Slowly he went out.

*(To be continued)*

## THE BLOW-DOWN

By Leo C. Turner

**S**OMETHING loved a stone, and grew a tree  
 With knuckled roots to hold it to the soil;  
 Something that knew how wind and water spoil  
 The set of things.

But earth cast out the stone, in slow degree;  
 A brook ox-bowed to tire the rooted hand,  
 And wind drew out the grip upon the land,  
 With whistling wings.