

# JEREMY AT CRALE

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

By Hugh Walpole

## PART VIII

DAIME, "the Camel", or in other words Crale's Headmaster, stood on a small piece of rising ground under a gaunt and writhen tree, like God surveying what he had made.

Only he was not like God, being dreamy, shy, and inconsequent. Yet he was like God because he was determined, ruthless, and gifted with humor.

He had not made Crale — he knew that well — but as he stood on that lovely October day of blue and amber near his House he could see, as though into a beehive, every nook and cranny and he knew that if he hadn't made that hive he had at least colored it a little with his own pet paints.

And he loved it: he loved it for its beauty, standing with its old cream colored ivory stone so strong and ancient above the sea; he loved it for the life in it because, without idealizing them, he cared deeply for his fellow men; he loved it for the youth in it because he was himself young and would always be young; he loved it for the strength and optimism of it, a strength that he was forever hindering from arrogance, an optimism that must never become self conceit; but most of all he loved it because it was for him England and, without any greedy imperialism (and that was an imperialistic time) or any pharisaic patriotism he adored England, her hills and fields, rivers and little ports, her poetry, humor, and common sense, her past,

her present, and her strange intriguing future, as he adored nothing and nobody on the face of this globe.

So he looked down upon Crale and found her good. He knew her faults better than any other could possibly know them. He was forever engaged in a battle with all the baser elements of ugliness, arrogance, impurity, convention, that must always attack any institution that is made from tradition and selection but he loved the battle, he scented it from afar like an old war horse, and he fought, never resting, untiring, but only escaping once and again as every dreamer does into the safe quiet land of his own fancy.

Standing there under a cumulus of ivory white cloud, looking over the russet colored land, he saw all the business and rhythm of the place, the little boxlike rooms, the networks of passages, the large open places, the Chapel cool and dark, the high gymnasium light and shining, smelling of ropes and leather and beeswax, the long dining rooms now bare and empty, the dormitories more bare and more empty, the classrooms just now humming with a restless, stirring, quivering life — ideas, thoughts, beauties, old sterilities, new thrusting discoveries, being dropped like bright winged flies into the waters to catch the gliding darting trout; all the thoughts of all the brains of the past circling and hovering there, but the fish for the most part reluctant,

scornful, impertinent. Only, at a rare while, when something just to their taste comes glittering down, they jump, they bite, they are caught, landed . . . yes, and then off the hook, slipping down the bank into the water again not to be caught next time so easily and yet with a taste, a savor in their gullets that will never again quite forsake them.

Oh, a great sport! Worthy of a man's lifetime energy and self discipline and courage. A work in the world that is a work and not a mere selfish lazy fantasy. He turned eagerly in the fresh sunshiny nipping air and saw Leeson approaching.

He liked Leeson increasingly. Of all the staff Leeson was the man who was in process of becoming his friend — making friends with Daime was a slow cautious business. He did not surrender himself easily but when at last he did his surrender was complete.

Leeson joined him, under the silver cloud, on the shiny knoll.

"Well," said the Camel, "and what of the runaway?"

Leeson sighed. "Oh, he's all right. Stuffing himself with grub and holding on tight to his code of honor — not to give anyone away. No one's been pressing him very hard. All the same he's a plucky kid. I'm afraid he's had a nasty time before he ran off and I'm to blame."

"No", said Daime. "Not if you leave things to the House Prefects. That's the best way even if they do occasionally let you down."

"They're not going to be a strong lot this year, I'm afraid. The worst of it is that the boys under them have got the personalities that they ought to have. Young Cole and Staire are the trouble. I'm not sure that one of them shouldn't be moved into another House."

"Won't that be rather admitting defeat?" said Daime. "And those are two remarkable boys who'll do credit to the House next year."

"Who knows", said Leeson despondently, "how they'll develop in the meantime? They are just at the 'awkward year', both of them. Last term I would have sworn to Cole anywhere — exactly the type of boy we want. But this term — whether having a Study has gone to his head or whether his hostility to Staire is twisting him —" Leeson broke off. "I don't trust him as I did."

Daime nodded his head.

"I've noticed it again and again. That move up from the Lower School is the ticklish time. But I would bet on young Cole. There's not a boy in the school I'm more sure of."

"How do you keep track of them all?" Leeson burst out admiringly. "It's all I can do to know the boys of my House. But *you* . . ."

Daime watched the silver cloud threading now into wisps of crystal thread.

"My job . . . my passion . . . my curiosity. And it grows with every year more absorbing, more intriguing, more touching. Leeson, to have the job you love to do, to have the physical strength to do it, to feel the beauty in it and the drama . . . Yes, I'm a lucky man. More than my deserts."

The two men, brought close together by a common vision, stood there for a while in silence. Then they turned to walk together toward the house.

"What I want to have", said Leeson at last, "is your advice in this. These two, Staire and Cole, am I to let them go for one another, because it's coming to that, or shall I put my foot down and separate them?"

"Let them fight it out", Daime answered. "There's less bad blood

that way. Keep your eye on them but if it comes to a fight don't interfere. And watch the Lower School ragging. Unless I'm very far out young Morgan is going to find himself a bit of a hero — and it will go to his head. If it doesn't he'll be a child worth watching." He put his hand on Leeson's shoulder. They stood there listening to the hurtling rumble of the sea.

"Beautiful place", Daime murmured. "It's good to be alive."

Young Jeremy Cole was unfortunately not finding life, at this moment, as beautiful as his Headmaster did. He was very unhappy indeed, more unhappy perhaps than he had ever been before.

The chief reason of this unhappiness was that it was, in its essence, unsubstantial. When in earlier days there had been troubles they had been easily defined. If he thought, he could bring them up from the very earliest days — the time when he had been forbidden to go to the Pantomime because he had lied about brushing his teeth, the day when he had fought the Dean's Ernest, the awful hour when his mother had nearly died, the night when the Sea Captain had entered their house and robbed it, the terrible occasion when he had been accused of stealing money to buy Christmas presents, the night when Hamlet had died. . . . Yes, these had been definite enough. And at school too, always before, rows, anxieties, pains and penalties — you had been able to see all round them, you got what you deserved or you didn't get what you deserved; the fact was definite enough.

But now for weeks trouble had been piling up around him; now it had reached its climax. Everyone knew that he was in trouble. Everyone behaved to him as though he *were* in

trouble; but what had he done? Why should he be in disgrace? It was almost as though he had committed some crime.

He had been from his very tenderest years a boy who liked jollity and friendliness and a fine open relationship with his fellows. And until this term that was what he had always had. He had taken such a relationship in truth for granted.

He was feeling now for the first time in his life what it was to be unpopular. He had behaved, in some way or another, badly over this affair of the Dormouse. Jumbo, with all the frankness of one whose best friend is in a mess, told him just what everyone was saying. Everyone was saying in the main three things:

1. That he was stuck up.
2. That he had bullied the Dormouse.
3. That he wasn't as good a football player as he thought he was.

Now the second of these accusations was quite obviously unfair. Far from bullying the Dormouse, he had scarcely ever spoken to him, and when he had spoken to him it had been, save on one hasty occasion, in kindness.

As to being stuck up, he could only say that he didn't *feel* stuck up. The crowd is fond of this accusation and makes it often on the slightest grounds. I knew a boy once who was for years charged with conceit, and this because his pince nez would tilt forward onto his nose and so force him to lift his chin into the air.

But with Jeremy it was always the last thing to be said. He had never thought very much of himself because he had never thought of himself at all. He had had, of course, his proper pride; he could stand up for himself when need be; but his bump of admiration for others was a large one. He had always a catalogue of heroes and

would always have, his life through.

Bewildered, he inquired of Jumbo whether *he* thought he was stuck up.

"No", said Jumbo, but added, "You don't rag around as you used to." No, he didn't. That was true. He thought about that. Mere rags with no reason about them were not so amusing as they used to be. For one thing, there seemed to be less time for them. What with football and reading books like "Dracula" and trying to "swot" up things for Parlow and listening to chaps like Marlowe, there wasn't so much time.

And with whom were you now to rag? He didn't want to return to the rough and scrabble of the Lower School. When you had a Study you had a Study. It was different. He knew, moreover, as Jumbo talked to him that the entry of Ridley into his life (quite unknown to Ridley) had made a difference. When he thought of Ridley, which was now very often, he didn't want to rag just about nothing. He wanted to talk to Ridley, he wanted it more than anything else in the world, save only of course his First Fifteen colors. There were so many things that he would like to ask Ridley. Things that somehow he wouldn't dream of asking Jumbo. And yet he had never exchanged one word with Ridley and, in all probability, never would.

Nevertheless, the main trouble was of course this affair of the Dormouse, and about that he must do something. But what?

The Dormouse no longer needed his defense. Since his return the Dormouse had become popular. In the first place he had run away, been brought back and not punished. That showed great cleverness on his part. In the second place he had refused to sneak. He hadn't mentioned a single name. He had laid no charge.

Fabulous stories were now told of him. His father was a millionaire, his mother the most beautiful woman in England, and himself, if only given the opportunity, would astonish the whole school with his athletic prowess. He did indeed develop amazingly in these new conditions. He was no longer frightened at every step, his brains (which were good ones) returned to him, he made friends on every side. Only he hated Baldock and Cresson. Baldock twisted his arm and pinched his legs no longer, but he shivered still at his approach, and the slimy, filthy minded Cresson he shuddered away from. No harm was to come to him any more from either of them — but at least he gave them no opportunity.

His worship of Jeremy was stronger than ever. When anyone abused his hero he reddened with anger. But he was shy. He was not going to risk another rebuff. Even in the dormitory he never spoke to Jeremy.

Meanwhile Crumb and Baldock, bullying being out of favor, busied themselves with the blacking of Jeremy's character. There was no crime of which they did not accuse him, and they found plenty of listeners. Everyone likes to see someone who has been popular degraded. It gives a pleasant savor to everyday monotony; it means promotion for the world in general; it just shows us all that we are not to be taken in by anyone; we can see as clearly as another, heaven be praised. And so Jeremy suffered, as many another has done, for the faults of others, his own obstinacy, and the careless progress of events.

But himself he attributed this suffering to one, and to one alone. Staire was his enemy and he was Staire's, and one day Staire should know it. . . .

And so he came to one of the darkest hours he was ever to know. For years

afterward this was to be the standard of unhappiness with him. "Is it as bad as that time Parlow was sick with me? Did I mind as much as that day when Parlow rated me?"

With this experience came so many other revelations that it may be said really to have meant the passing away forever from him of his babyhood. In the hurt and pain of it he discovered that for life a terrific stiffening and tightening of the reserve forces would be necessary. When a blow like this could descend on your head, without warning as it were from an empty and preoccupied heaven, you *could* make no preparation against it—so then you must be armed against everything, yes, *everything* and everybody; let no sentiment, warmth of feeling, loose emotion, betray you. You walk forward through jungle, the enemy lying in ambush.

With this received and accepted knowledge, childhood ends.

The shock that it was to him proves also the kind of boy that he was, because to many of his companions it would have been no sort of shock at all; Parlow would have been called a beast and there's an end. To some self seeking boys it would have been a shock of social ambition disappointed, to some sentimental ones a shock of wounded personal esteem, but Jeremy was neither self seeking nor sentimental.

He was a hero worshiper, staunch and utterly loyal; certain acts seemed to him base and mean beyond credit, and to be accused of these acts in public the most terrible affront; he was just at this moment lonely and sensitive without knowing why. He could not quite catch what the world was saying around him; to believe for a moment that it was saying what Parlow said would make life impossible. . . . Even

at the direst moment he did not believe that Parlow really meant it.

The hour began in mild and unambitious fashion. It was the English hour and the form had had for preparation the first twenty lines of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey". Parlow, in an earlier lesson, had read the whole poem through to them and read it well. Then he had given them his own picture of Wordsworth, escaping the "idiotic old dodderer", forgetting the egotism, self satisfaction, and complacent old age, saying nothing of the "controller of stamps" but creating for them the nobility and sincerity and humility before nature, describing Dove Cottage with the little hilly garden and the Grasmere Lake and the high rough clouds above Dunmial and the purple shadows of Helvellyn.

For Jeremy that had been the first slender vision of a man and a country afterward to be worshiped by him. And then when Parlow had read "Tintern Abbey", himself so deeply moved by it that, when he came to

Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
And let the misty mountain winds be free  
To blow against thee;

his voice trembled, taking a deeper note, Jeremy seemed to be moving with him, to be in unison with him and to feel what he was feeling.

He took then especial trouble with his lines, learning them very quickly, as he found to his surprise, because there was no story in them—they were, in a way, all about nothing. The last of them delighted him; he knew just what they meant him to know:

. . . these orchard tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe  
fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose them-  
selves  
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb  
The wild green landscape. Once again I  
see

These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little  
lines  
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral  
farms,  
Green to the very door: and wreaths of  
smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!

"In silence." Yes, that was exactly it. He would tell Uncle Samuel about that. The little old man with his little old sister and the crooked garden and the Lake under his window, he knew how things were!

So he went into the hour, excited with anticipatory pleasure.

He very quickly discovered that Parlow was in no good humor. You could tell by the way that Parlow sat hunched up behind his desk, his bulk overflowing it, his face set and resolved as though it had been cast in clay.

The excitement of the earlier lesson was not there today and the form at once knew it; a little wind of apprehension blew through them all.

"You're a lazy idle lot", Parlow began, "and want jumping on. If I find anyone here who hasn't learned this I'll jump!"

He had a preliminary skirmish or two with poor Standing, who was very swiftly reduced to tears and condemned to write out the whole of "Tintern Abbey" four times, which little incident gave Standing a healthy loathing for the works and personality of William Wordsworth until the day of his death. Then came Staire's turn and Staire, without hesitation or falter and also without feeling or intelligence, yielded up the first four lines gracefully and with a fine air of being kind to the poor old poet. He kept with admirable precision his social distance.

Parlow may have perceived this and been irritated by it but he said only, "Right. Cole, go on."

Jeremy stood up and at once, facing

Parlow, was staggered. He had been accustomed now for many weeks to look across the room at a friendly smiling Parlow, ready to help him over every stile, to excuse blunders, to joke and make merry.

Here was another Parlow, hostile, scornful, impatient. There was something in Parlow's anger that frightened older and wiser heads than Jeremy's, but its worst aspect now was that Jeremy had suddenly, in a moment of time, lost a friend, and that without cause or reason.

As a result of his thinking of this, the lines that he had known so perfectly only a moment before deserted him. He began:

Once again  
Do I behold . . .

then stopped. He listened to his own voice stopping. Parlow listened. The class listened. He started once more:

Once again  
Do I behold these steep . . .

There were no words in his head, only cobwebs, spiders, twisted skeins of wool.

"Well", said Parlow.

He could think of nothing.

". . . these steep and lofty cliffs", said Parlow.

". . . these steep and lofty cliffs", said Jeremy.

"That on a wild . . ."

"That on a wild . . ." said Jeremy.

"Yes", said Parlow. "Write out the poem four times." Then, raising his voice a little, he said:

"You have been too preoccupied knocking about boys smaller than yourself, I suppose. Takes up too much time to leave you any for work. Any other small boy run away because he's frightened of you, Cole? Fine way to spend your time. I congratulate you."



The class was delighted. One for Cole! Favorite no longer.

"Carry on, Bunning", said Parlow.

Jeremy sat there staring in front of him and seeing nothing.

He sat on there until the end of the hour. No one paid him any attention. Parlow did not ask him questions. His ill temper seemed to leave him as though, having jetted that little spurt of anger at Jeremy, he was satisfied; and during the last twenty minutes he lost himself eagerly in a comparison of great English poems, "Tintern Abbey", "The Ancient Mariner", "The Grecian Urn", "The Lotus Eaters". But Jeremy heard nothing. He sat there, staring before him, then when the bell rang got up and went quietly out.

The sun was shining, everyone was shouting around him. Someone came dancing up to him crying: "I say, Stocky, you are down for the Second on Saturday!" He did not know; if he had known he would not have cared.

He wanted to be by himself, to think this beastly thing out. Where should he go? The Study? There would be Gauntlet or Marlowe. He must walk away somewhere.

"Any other small boy run away . . . ?" And everyone had heard. Everyone. A fool like Standing. Staire.

He looked up and there, walking straight toward him, was Ridley. Ridley with that faraway preoccupied look, slim and straight, *decent* looking, different, somehow, from everyone else.

Why shouldn't Jeremy speak to him, say something like: "Can I speak to you a minute? There's a rotten thing happened. . . ." But Ridley didn't know him, didn't know his name probably. Ridley would stare, mutter something, pass on confused.

Jeremy's heart was hammering, his

face was crimson. Ridley came straight toward him as though he would run into him, saw him, for a moment their eyes met, then Ridley swerved, turning to the right, and vanished round a corner.

Ridley of course didn't know him. But suppose he did know him, suppose he had heard about him and thought: "Oh that's the fellow in Leeson's who bullies small kids", suppose that Jeremy had spoken to him and had seen Ridley's dislike of him jump into his face! Everyone in the School would know now — now that Parlow had spoken to him like that, and before them all!

He was walking furiously, he neither knew nor cared whither. His feet, obeying habit and custom, led him to the field beyond the School where you could see the sea. But he had no eyes for the trembling shadowy blue nor any ear for its murmur.

He came abruptly to a stop. Like a shot out of a gun he felt it strike him: "Everyone in the School thinks I did that. What Parlow said everyone is thinking!"

The injustice of it was like a madness. Before, in his babyhood, it had been the same when they had accused him of stealing money that had not belonged to him. The injustice of that had seared him like a burn. So did this now.

Why, he had never been near the Dormouse! He had not this term touched a single Lower School boy! Anyone who knew him at all must realize that he had never bullied anybody! Ragging, just for the fun of it — but bullying, doing the things that Crumb and Baldock did!

His spirit grew black and bitter. Well, if that was the way people thought of him they could jolly well think! He wasn't going to bother.

He wouldn't care. He'd show them that if they thought he was like that he *was* like that! He'd go his way, his hand against every man's! He didn't want friends. He'd rather have enemies. Enemies! Yes, Staire, Staire was his enemy. It was Staire who had made people think these things. He'd get back at Staire though, Staire would be sorry he'd ever made an enemy of him. If everyone thought him a cad he'd *be* a cad and Staire should feel the might of his caddishness.

But his thoughts, leaping and tossing now like the crest of an angry sea, swept on to Parlow. Parlow hated him. Parlow would never like him again. He would never see any more those books and those pictures, never hear Parlow talk about all the things that he liked, never feel again that warm friendliness that Parlow had given him so bountifully. He had liked Parlow awfully — oh awfully! Parlow had been of Uncle Samuel's world, knowing all those things that Uncle Samuel knew.

Jeremy had not known until now how deeply he had counted on Parlow's friendship for the future, seeing it grow and grow so that, as he, Jeremy, became older, he could understand better and better the things that Parlow wanted him to understand.

And now that was all finished, and finished in the unfairest way, so that the picture of Parlow was itself dimmed and spoiled. Parlow had been unfair, not asking about the truth or trying to discover it, not speaking to Jeremy first in private but charging him falsely with dirty actions in public before all the world. Yes, Parlow would never be the same again.

He turned back to the School, kicking the turf with his feet as he went. Everything was over and forever. All

his life he would be known as the bully, the coward. Always for years and years it would be told at Crale how a small boy had run away because he, Jeremy Cole, had bullied him. There was to be no more happiness anywhere, no fun, no football, no anything. Everything was over. . . .

Reaching the School, he felt what he had never in his life felt before, that he wanted to hide. Everyone was looking at him and talking about him. (Of course no one was either looking at or talking about him.) Leeson's was blazing with sunlight and life. It was quarter of an hour before dinner. The passages were filled with scurrying, shouting, hurrying tumult. He brushed like a ghost through that world. "Hullo Stocky!" "I say, Stocky!" . . . He might have known from the sound of those voices that he was not cast out, that they still needed him, that nothing was changed. But he did not hear the voices. He went on, his head up, glaring about him.

He went, some subconscious instinct driving him, up to his dormitory. It was forbidden to go into the dormitories during the day but no one saw him. The upstairs passages were deserted, his dormitory, when he entered it, flooded with sun and empty.

He went to his bed and sat down upon it. The white beds and the white washing basins smiled at him but he did not see them. The sea crept in and rumbled, rumbled at his feet.

He sat there, kicking his short legs. He had been publicly disgraced. The whole world thought him to be something that he was not.

Injustice. Injustice. Injustice. His spirit broke and, burying his face in his hands, he cried and cried like a small child lost.



He awoke next morning earlier than usual, before the clanging bell had broken his dreams and with a dim sense that something awful had occurred. Then gradually it came to him and, as he lay there thinking, his face set obstinately. He was an outlaw and everyone hated him. Well, then, he'd be an outlaw. If they didn't want him they needn't have him. As for Parlow — but he didn't want to think about Parlow.

Then at breakfast time there was a letter from Uncle Samuel with very surprising news in it:

For which reason [it began unexpectedly as his letters always did] I shall pay a call on you afternoon of Wednesday 16th. The *Reason* is that an old boy with a knobbly nose and two chins has decided that he would like me to make a picture of him. He saw "Cows" of mine in London and thinks that my pastoral style will exactly suit him.

Moreover he has the good sense to live not far from your place of education so that I can see you at three and leave you at five (as much as I can stand of you on end). Ask those in authority to free you for those hours. On Wednesday I believe you have a half holiday so all should be well. If you don't want to see me you've only got to say so. I know what it is to be stricken with relations in public.

Moreover I shall have green paint on both cheeks and be wearing my dirtiest overall so you'll be ashamed of me I warn you. It will be a good lesson for you however on how not to be a snob and I shall be very happy to watch you learn it. All here are well except that your sister Mary has spots which don't add to her beauty. Barbara is developing intelligence and a sloping chin. One will make up for the other. Now make ready for me — I'm no easy guest to entertain. I demand the best of everything and can be most unpleasant when I don't get it.

Your loving Uncle  
SAMUEL.

Jeremy's emotions when he read this letter were of a curiously mixed kind.

Once again Uncle Samuel had stepped in at the very moment when he was needed. The very thought of his funny screwed up face and common

sense was a comfort. On the other hand, did Jeremy want him to appear just now at the School? Hadn't Uncle Samuel put his stubby finger as usual on the point when he hinted at Jeremy's snobbery?

What *was* snobbery? Staire was a snob because it mattered to him where people were born and whether they dropped their h's or no. Jeremy wasn't like that, but what he *was* like was to be made uncomfortable when he was in the company of someone who looked funny or did funny things. Was *that* snobbery? Because if so then practically every fellow in the School was a snob. And naturally too. Because a fellow's relations could say or do or look something that other fellows would never forget. There was Cheepstow's mother, for instance, who came down last year wearing a hat like all the flowers of Paradise pressed together onto one small foundation of straw. Would Cheepstow ever be allowed to forget his mother's hat? Never! And hadn't it in some mysterious way led to Cheepstow himself being considered a bit of an ass? Awfully unfair of course, but then, as Jumbo had very sapiently remarked: "A chap ought to warn his mother . . ."

And then there had been Faithfull's father who was an archdeacon. Of course an archdeacon has to wear an apron and gaiters — it's in the church law — but when a man is as fat and as short as Faithfull's father it's a little unfortunate that *he* should be an archdeacon! And then Faithfull himself being so long and skinny — they made the oddest pair walking along Coulter's, especially from behind. . . .

These experiences and others like them were all in Jeremy's mind when he considered Uncle Samuel, as of course Uncle Samuel had known that they would be. Now if Uncle Samuel

arrived at the School in full view of everyone in his oldest clothes and with paint on his face (this was quite possible), then Jeremy would never hear the last of it. Did Jeremy love Uncle Samuel enough not to mind never hearing the last of it?

Yes, most surprisingly he did! The discovery was so unexpected and yet so certain that on making it he was amazed. He hadn't known that he loved Uncle Samuel so much. Perhaps his special circumstances just at this moment made him cling to his uncle more tightly than was normal. Perhaps not. It seemed improbable that his feelings about Uncle Samuel went up and down. They had always been so exactly the same.

So he wrote his uncle a letter:

DEAR UNCLE SAMUEL

It will be ripping your coming. I'll tell Leeson about it and when you arrive you have to go to the Camel's house it's got red creeper like mange all over it and ask for me and they'll put you in the study and I'll be sent for. I've been playing footer for the second which is sickening and I'll be jolly glad to see you give my love to father and mother and Helen and Mary and Barbara

from your loving nephew  
JEREMY.

When Wednesday 16th arrived it was a fine day, which was a good thing. What wasn't a good thing was that Jeremy was down for a House practice game and he had to go to Llewellyn the House Captain and ask to be excused.

This he hated to do.

Llewellyn was a little as Jeremy might be three years from now, broad in the back, thick and short in the leg. He'd had his nose broken boxing. He was known to be amiable except when roused; then he was a perfect devil. He had no influence in the House at all because he cared for nothing but football, boxing, his dogs at home, and his friend Corner who shared a Study with him. Corner was the exact opposite

of Llewellyn, being slender, wistful, and musical. Rather like a girl and known as Alice by his enemies. Llewellyn adored him and thought everything that he did wonderful.

When Jeremy went into his Study, Llewellyn was having his chest rubbed by a small and perspiring fag. He grunted at Jeremy. Jeremy made his request.

"Getting rather slack at footer, aren't you?" Llewellyn snorted.

"Just the opposite", said Jeremy.

Llewellyn brushed the fag aside like a fly and stood up, puffing out his chest and smacking it. "If you weren't so slack you'd be playing for the First."

Jeremy, very sensitive just now, saw an insult in everything. So he said nothing but stood and glared.

Llewellyn appeared to like this, because he suddenly laughed.

"All right", he said. "It ain't my fault. You're a darned good Scrum Half, as I'm always telling them. If I let you off today you've got to be there on Saturday. The House matches aren't so far off."

"Thanks", Jeremy said in an off-handed way. Then in spite of himself he laughed too. He didn't know why. Llewellyn looked so funny rubbing his chest with such care and preoccupation. He looked nicer with a broken nose somehow. That laugh was the beginning of rather an important friendship.

And of course he had to see Leeson. Leeson also had something to say. "Cole, Parlow tells me you're not working as well as you did. You're slacking off."

Jeremy, looking like a mule with his legs planted wide, answered nothing.

"Well?" asked Leeson, irritated.

"I'm not slacking", he said at last.

"Having this Study seems to do you no good", Leeson went on. "I can't

think what happens to you boys when you get a Study. It goes to your heads or something. You've got to pull up during the rest of the term, Cole, or steps will have to be taken."

Jeremy stood there scowling.

"I don't know whether I'm right to let you go out with your uncle. I'm not at all sure that you deserve it."

Jeremy's expression was: "Please yourself. I don't care."

"However, as your uncle is coming all this way and it's only for an hour or two —"

Jeremy went.

Yes, the world was his enemy and through no fault of his own. He hated everybody and everything. However, when he saw Uncle Samuel standing there on the middle of the Camel's purple carpet he was delighted. He couldn't help himself. That curious bond that there was between himself and his uncle was simply too much for him. He wouldn't have minded if his uncle had kissed him, which of course Uncle Samuel would never think of doing.

The Camel too was very decent. Jeremy encountered him so seldom that a meeting with him was rather like a meeting with God. But, Godlike or no, he knew all about boys. He unwound his strange serpentine legs and talked about football, sea bathing, skiing in Switzerland, and a ridiculous time he'd once had when he lost his way in the Underground — and all this as though he were himself deeply interested and was not merely making conversation. Moreover, he made you feel that it was you that he liked talking to, you, Jeremy Cole, and that he hadn't had such fun for weeks. It didn't last for very long, but Jeremy went away with his uncle ready to die for his Headmaster.

Moreover, the fates be praised, Uncle Samuel didn't look in the least bit odd. He hadn't paint on his face and his old grey suit was a perfectly sensible one. Of course he *was* a funny shape and his voice was different from any other voice, husky with a crack in it, but there was nothing in his outward appearance that any boy need mind.

They went away together.

*(To be continued)*

## ECLIPSE

By H. C. Barrowes-Donald

FROM seven hills to seven stars  
Went seven prayers against the bars  
That curved the world away from light  
As Earth swung down into the night.

The Magi spoke with words of fire  
That wreathed about the great Denier.  
He smiled and took his hand away  
And Earth spun clear into the day.