

A GROUP OF SCHOOL-BOYS.

By K. E. COLEMAN, Author of "Little Leo," "The Red Topaz," etc.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOWNFALL OF DOBBIE.



SAY, you fellows, what do you think? Robin King is going to fight Dobbie."

"When?"

"Where?"

"What's the row about?"

shouted a chorus of excited voices.

"Dobbie was licking Spider—you know what a bully he is—and King came along and went for him like mad. Then Fergus Hume and some other big fellows came up and separated

them, and said they must fight it out; and they are just going to begin now in the corner by the chestnut tree."

"Come on," cried Harry Wilson excitedly, and the boys set off running at the top of their speed.

A crowd was collected at the lower end of the playground. Football was deserted, and the ball lay idly in the middle of the ground, for what English boy would not rather watch a fight than play football?

"I am afraid old Robin will get licked," observed Jimmy Short as they approached the group.

"I don't know that," retorted Wilson, taking up the cudgels for his chum.

"Dobbie's two years older and a good bit taller."

"Yes, but look how fat he is! He's spoilt his wind by eating tarts. Besides, he's a rank coward. He'll lick a little chap like Spider till he can't stand; but did you ever know him to stand up to a fellow his own size?"

"Granted; still weight and height do tell, you know."

"And so do pluck and muscle. Robin's as hard as nails, and every spare inch of him is good, honest muscle. Look at him now!"

They had pushed their way to the front, where the two combatants stood facing each other.

Dobbie's greater height and bulk showed to considerable advantage at first sight, but on closer inspection he was too fat and had a swollen puffy appearance, the result, as Wilson had said, of inordinate indulgence at the pastrycook's. He was pale and looked a trifle

uneasy. Robin was a more formidable antagonist than the little fellows he was wont to thrash. Wilson's remark was perfectly true that he had never been known to fight a boy his own size.

Robin King stood facing him sturdily. His brow was unusually thoughtful, and there was a certain anxiety in his frown as he measured Dobbie's inches; but there was also a look of dogged determination on his face to go in and win in spite of odds, and there was certainly no sign of the white feather in his bearing.

His eye lit up as the newcomers pushed their way to the front, and he called Wilson to his side.

"I want you to be my second," he said. "Old Fergus is acting umpire. Why, Spider, what's the matter?"

Little Arthur White was clinging to his arm, the tears in his eyes.

"Oh, Robin, I am so sorry, it's all my fault," he said. "Don't fight him; he's so much bigger than you, and I don't want you to get hurt for my sake."

"Shut up, you little donkey! I'm fighting him for my own pleasure, and what's more, I mean to lick him," replied Robin sturdily, smiling affectionately down on the little face upturned to him. Perhaps he remembered the time when he had seen that same face white and cold and apparently lifeless, and the anguish of remorse he had felt on that occasion. Thoughtless as he was, the memory of that night was never very far from the surface of his mind.

"Cheer up, Spider!" said Wilson, patting him encouragingly on the back. "Robin's going to pound old Fatty into the middle of next week. Aren't you, old chap?"

"I don't know, but I know I'll do my level best," said Robin through his teeth, and he pulled off coat and waistcoat, handed them to his second, and advanced slowly into the centre of the ring.

Stripped to their shirts, the disparity of size between the two boys looked even greater than before; but the muscles on Robin's bare arms stood out like cords, and his skin was glossy as silk, while that of his adversary was blotchy and pimply with over-feeding, and his fighting members themselves had the appearance of overgrown sausages.

"Time!" called Fergus Hume, who stood, watch in hand, at the edge of the ring, and at the word the two combatants began to walk slowly round each other with fists squared and watching eyes.

There was a breathless silence in the ranks of the spectators. Dobbie made the first attack, but it was Robin who got the first blow home. Skilfully dodging his opponent's fist, he sprang in like lightning before he had recovered his wind, and landed a good one on Dobbie's nose. The elder boy staggered; then, maddened by the pain, lost his temper

and rushed in on Robin with such a storm of blows that, for one anxious moment, his friends thought he would go down under them.

But springing lightly aside, our hero recovered himself and attacked Dobbie in turn in the pluckiest manner. Then the combat raged furiously. Dobbie's height and weight told crucially, but Robin had the proverbial pluck of the British boy who never knows when he is beaten, and when his blows did get home they left their mark.

"Time!" called Fergus, and the two boys subsided on to the knees of their seconds.

Robin's lower lip was cut, and he had a nasty bruise round his left eye; but Dobbie's nose was bleeding profusely, and our hero's hopes rose jubilant at the sight.

"Well done, old chap!" said his second; "you did uncommonly well. Couldn't you dodge a little more though, and then run in before he's recovered his balance? It's your best chance with a heavy chap like Dobbie."

"All right, I'll try. I'll not give in so long as I can stand."

"Give in! Stuff and nonsense! You'll lick him this round, you see if you don't! Dobbie's no staying power; he loses his wind and then he's done for. You mark my words."

"Time's up!" sang out Fergus, and Robin, starting up from Wilson's knee, flew at Dobbie with such fury that that courageous person quailed, and received the blow on his back instead of his front. A roar of derisive laughter assailed his ears, mingled with shouts of "Well done, Robin!" "Give him another, Robin!" "Finish him, old chap!"

But Dobbie was not finished yet. Like a baited bull he turned and attacked his foe, and Robin, mindful of Wilson's counsel, stood on the defensive, and dodged and parried till he saw his chance, when he dashed in and made the most of it. By the end of the round Dobbie was puffing and blowing "like a hippopotamus," as Jimmy Short expressed it, while Robin, with one eye shut up and an ox's lip was as game as ever.

The third round was conclusive. Dobbie never got a single blow home, while Robin pounded him to his heart's content, and repaid with interest many a little fellow's wrongs. The juniors threw up their caps and yelled with joy when Dobbie, beaten to his knees and actually blubbering with pain, made his submission, and Robin, "crowned with glory," retired to receive the congratulations of his friends.

So ended the great fight that was quoted for years afterwards in the Homeric annals of the grammar school. So was accomplished the downfall of Dobbie, who, after that salutary lesson, rarely, if ever, ventured to bully a little boy again.

(To be continued.)

VARIETIES.

WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY.—All girls who possess self-control will try to avoid word or action while anger is active. The advice, "When you are angry count ten; when very angry a hundred," is founded on a true knowledge of this emotion, for its instincts are to speedy and violent action. If this inclination is struggled against, the anger will gradually lose in power and at last come to an end. No one ever regretted delay of this kind.

JUDICIOUS SKIPPING.—"The art of reading is to skip judiciously. The art is to skip all that does not concern us, whilst missing nothing that we really need. No external guidance can teach this; for nobody but ourselves can guess what the needs of our intellect may be."—P. G. Hamerton.

WELL THOUGHT OF.—Would you have people think well of you? Then do not speak well of yourself.

CELEBRITY.—What is celebrity? The advantage of being known to people who don't know you.

THE ART OF SEEING.—"Look twice to see accurately. Look only once to see beautifully."—Ansel.

FAMILIARITY.—Familiarity brings about the closest friendships or the most violent hatreds.