

"I'm afraid you're not in form, Cantling," said Wickham. "Next, please!" And amid the grins of the spectators, Christopher slunk forward and took Cantling's place. He made two points, and was left with a thousand lines less than Cantling. Smythe came next, but made a terrible hash of the thing and did not score at all. Roberts succeeded him, and came off with three thousand. I, determined not to fall below Roberts, played up a little better, and to my delight acquired four points when the enemy had scored six.

"Come," said Mr. Wickham, "we are really improving. If you were not quite so nervous, Hanley, you would do very well!"

Nervous! The wretch! We had good cause to be nervous. Talbot came forward to take my place. "Nevertheless," continued the master, "I do not think my supremacy is in danger. I fancy I have won the cup!"

The spectators laughed outright that time. They had seen a better tournament than they had ever expected to. Little did they guess that the best was yet to come.

Talbot, although more nervous than any of us in some respects, is a fellow with a good deal of spirit, and when occasion serves can be the boldest of the bold. This evening he was to have such an opportunity as would never come again, and I have to show what use he made of it.

He took his place, and started by serving. Mr. Wickham returned with a swift shot that was very difficult to play. Talbot not only failed to play it, but allowed it to pass him, and rebound from the farther wall of the corridor. He ran to recover it.

As he picked it up he glanced, quite accidentally, down the corridor to the end; and he saw someone come through the door in the distance, and start to walk up the corridor towards him. This someone was no other than the Doctor!

If some fellows had been in Talbot's place then they would have acted very differently from what Talbot did. Some would have slipped into the room and given the news in startled tones; some would have stood stockstill and stared until the Doctor reached them. In either case, no doubt, we would all have taken the alarm. Mr. Wickham would have thrown down his racquet and become, instead of a tormentor, a judge; and the Doctor, on his arrival, would have found him rating us soundly, and distributing punishments right and left.

But Talbot managed it differently. He turned cold at first, and would have done just as other fellows; then the great idea came to him, and he seized it like a flash. Picking up the ball, he returned to his place as if he had seen nothing. Then he served, keeping his ears for the footsteps behind and his eyes for the enemy before. That is the thing he sometimes dreams of still.

The result was very simple, and quite inevitable. A moment later Mr. Wickham, playing back to Talbot and, placing the ball with great care, found that a tall figure was standing in the doorway behind his opponent. Then he realized that the Doctor was watching his shot in mingled amazement and bewilderment.

He also realized, probably, that he was lost. In matters of punishment the Head of King Alfred's was very straight and plain. He could not see the beauty of tormenting fellows, and even if he could be brought to see it, it was most unlikely that he would appreciate it or approve of it. So Mr. Wickham looked, and as he looked his face changed. He quickly laid down his racquet, and tried to smile. Seeing that smile some of us pitied him.

And the Doctor? It was no wonder that he stood and stared in bewilderment. Here was one of his assistants, deeply and earnestly engaged in a forbidden game, in a Fifth form study, and with the majority of the Fifth as delighted witnesses! It was incomprehensible! He looked from one to another; and then he saw that a fellow named Scott, who happened to be