

CHAPTER II

I WAS at breakfast on the morning after my arrival in London, w'en Dale Kynnersley rushed in and seized me violently by the hand.

"By Jove, here you are at last!"

I smoothed my crushed fingers. "You have such a vehement manner of proclaiming the obvious, my dear Dale."

"Oh, rot!" he said. "Here, Rogers, give me some tea—and I think I'll have some toast and marmalade."

"Haven't you breakfasted?"

A cloud overspread his ingenuous countenance.

"I came down late, and everything was cold and mother was on edge. The girls are always doing the wrong things and I never do the right ones—you know the mater—so I swallowed a tepid kidney and rushed off."

"Save for her worries over you urchins," said I, "I hope Lady Kynnersley is well?"

He filled his mouth with toast and marmalade, and nodded. He is a good-looking boy, four-and-twenty—idyllic age! He has sleek black hair brushed back from his forehead over his head, an olive complexion, and a keen, open, clean-shaven face. He wore a dark-brown lounge suit and a wine-coloured tie, and looked immaculate. I remember him as the grubbiest little wretch that ever disgraced Harrow.

He swallowed his mouthful and drank some tea.

"Recovered your sanity?" he asked.

"The dangerous symptoms have passed over," I replied. "I undertake not to bite."