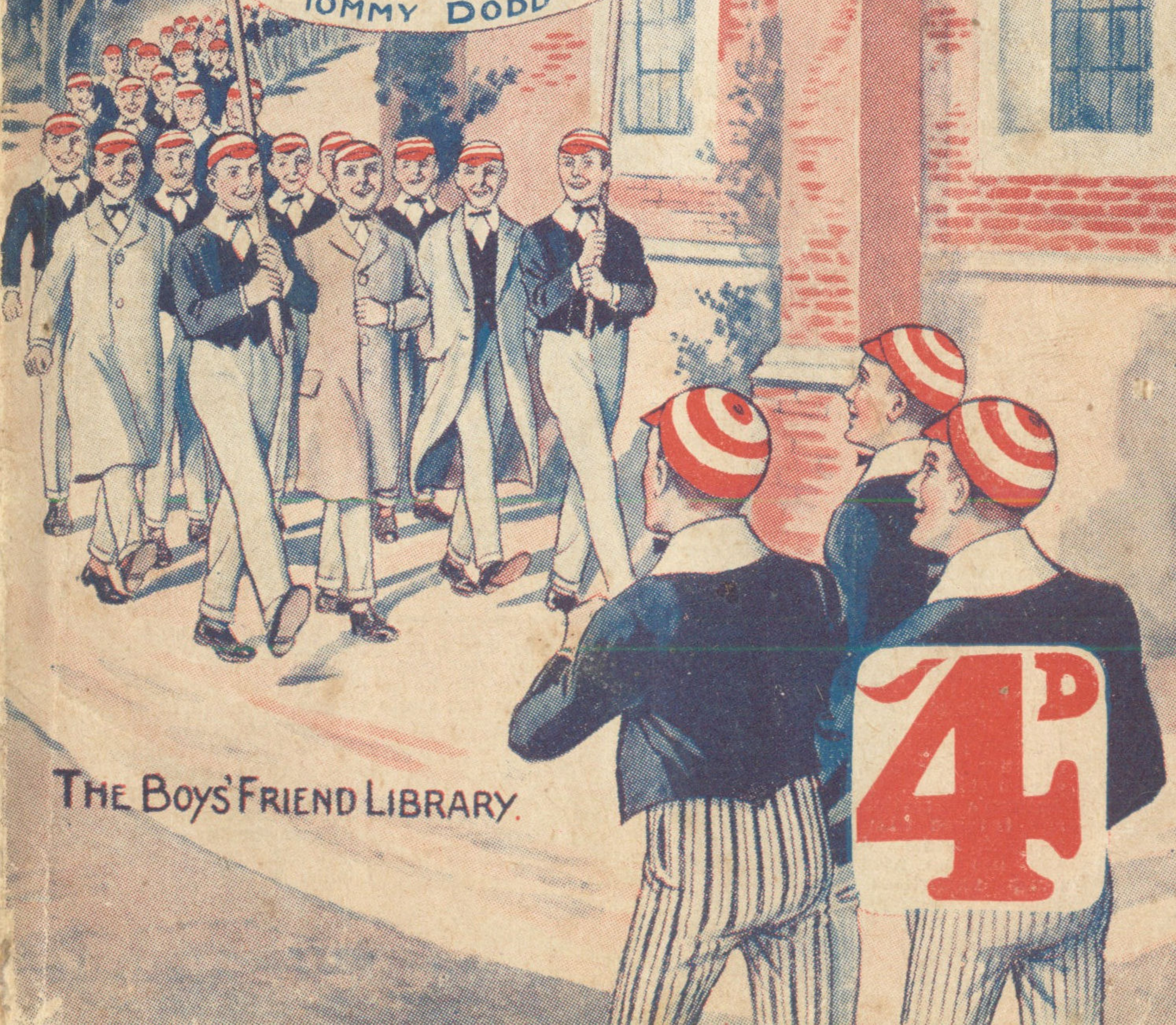


# The FEUD AT ROOKWOOD

A *SPLENDID*  
*COMPLETE STORY*  
OF *JIMMY SILVER & CO*  
by *OWEN CONQUEST.*

SNEAK! SNEAK! SNEAK!  
WHO GETS LICKED BY CLASSICS?  
TOMMY DODD  
WHO SNEAKS TO A PERFECT?  
TOMMY DODD



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# Antipon

REGD TRADE MARK

# THE FEUD AT ROOKWOOD

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of  
Jimmy Silver & Co.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Classical and Modern!

“SILVER!”

“Jimmy Silver!”

Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, apparently did not hear. At all events, he did not heed.

Jimmy was standing under the beeches in the quadrangle, with a newspaper open in his hands, scanning its columns with an intent gaze.

The great chief and leader of the Classical juniors at Rookwood seemed intensely interested in what he was reading. Which was rather remarkable, for the newspaper was the “Coombe Times,” the local paper, and certainly not a very enthralling periodical as a rule.

Beyond the reports of footer matches, and notices of local heroes at the front, there was little of interest in the “Coombe Times” to a Rookwood junior.

Yet the captain of the Fourth seemed to have his eyes glued to it.

Three juniors who came from the direction of Mr. Manders’ house stopped and stared at Jimmy Silver. They were Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle—the three Tommies of the Modern side.

“Jimmy Silver!” repeated Tommy Dodd.

And still the Classical junior did not reply, or even look up.

Then the three Tommies raised their voices in unison, and roared:

“JIMMY SILVER!”

“Oh, rats!” exclaimed Jimmy, becoming aware of their presence at last. “Don’t worry! Buzz off! Scoot! Run away and play.”

“What on earth’s in the paper?” demanded Tommy Dodd. “It’s only the local rag, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Travel off!”

“We’ve been looking for you, ass!” said Tommy Dodd warmly. “It’s about

the St. Jim’s match. We don’t think there are enough Moderns in the Rookwood junior team.”

“Not by half!” said Tommy Cook emphatically.

“Too many Classics!” said Tommy Doyle.

Jimmy Silver waved an impatient hand at the three Moderns. He still had one eye on the newspaper.

“Buzz off!” he said. “I’ve heard all that before. Lots of times! Run away and play marbles! Give a chap a rest! Can’t you see I’m busy?”

“Oh, blow that rot!” said Tommy Dodd; and he jerked the newspaper out of Jimmy’s hand. “Never mind that—Hullo!”

Jimmy Silver jumped at the paper excitedly.

“Fathead! Hand over my paper!” he exclaimed, as Tommy Dodd, grinning, held the “Coombe Times” behind him.

“Oh, that can wait—Yaroooh!” roared Tommy Dodd, as the Classical junior seized him. “Lend a hand, you chaps.”

Cook and Doyle lent a ready hand at once.

Jimmy Silver was dragged off, and sat down in the quad with a heavy bump.

“Ow!” gasped Jimmy.

“Sit on him!” said Tommy Dodd.

“What is the Classical ass so anxious about his silly paper for? What’s in it, Jimmy Silver?”

“Give it to me,” gasped Jimmy, as Cook and Doyle pinned him to the ground, and held him there, in spite of all his efforts. “Leggo!”

“Don’t you want me to see it?” grinned Tommy Dodd.

“No, ass! Leggo! Gimme my paper!” roared Jimmy Silver, making frantic efforts to throw off the two juniors who were holding him. “Rescue, Classics! Rescue!”

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, in astonishment. "I'm jolly well going to see what's so jolly important in that paper. Sit on his head!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Jimmy. "Rescue!"

Tommy Dodd, astonished, and very curious, opened the newspaper.

As he did so, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, of the Classical Fourth, came racing up.

They had heard their leader's call. The Fistical Four of Rookwood were never very far away from one another.

"Classical cads!" exclaimed Cook. "Look out!"

"Yooop!" spluttered Tommy Dodd, as he was seized and rolled over, the newspaper flying from his hand. "Yah! Oh, my hat!"

Cook and Doyle jumped up to defend themselves, perforce releasing Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy scrambled to his feet.

"Sock in to them!" roared Lovell.

"Down with the Moderns!"

"Give 'em socks!"

The three Classics closed in strife with the three Tommies. But Jimmy Silver, generally in the forefront of the battle, was not thinking of scrapping. He made a dive for the newspaper on the ground, and fielded it.

"Rescue, Moderns!" Tommy Dodd was bawling.

Towle and a crowd of the Modern Fourth came speeding up. But Classics were gathering too.

Oswald and Rawson, Flynn and Erroll, Mornington and Peele, of the Classical Fourth, came up with a rush.

There was a terrific scrimmage under the beeches.

Scrimmages between Classics and Moderns at Rookwood were frequent enough. The rivalry between the two sides dated from the foundation of the Modern side at the old school.

But there had seldom been a scrimmage like this.

A crowd of juniors on both sides swarmed up, and the tussle became fast and furious.

Jimmy Silver, with his precious newspaper—for whatever reason it was precious—tucked under his waistcoat, joined his comrades with great energy and vigour. There was a wild trampling and scuffling, and a roar of voices.

"Give 'em socks!"

"Down with the Moderns!"

"Yah! Classical cads!"

"Modern worms! Yah!"

"Yaroooh! Oh, my eye!"

"Oh, my nose! Yah! Come on!"

Knowles, of the Sixth, the head prefect

of the Modern side at Rookwood, came striding up with a frowning brow. He shouted angrily at the combatants.

"Stop that row! Do you hear! Stop it at once!"

Nobody heeded Knowles, not even the Moderns. Excitement was too keen.

"Stop it!" roared Knowles.

He rushed in among the juniors, cuffing right and left.

The next moment Knowles was over and rolling among myriad feet. Knowles' yells, as he rolled, would have done credit to a wild Hun.

But from the direction of the school-house, Bulkeley came striding. Bulkeley, head of the Classics and captain of Rookwood, was a more formidable personage than Knowles. Moreover, he carried his ashplant, the symbol of authority, under his arm, and he let it slide into his hand as he came up.

"Stop this row, you young rascals!" he shouted. "Do you want to bring the Head out!"

And to back up his words, Bulkeley commenced operations with the stout ashplant.

Whack! whack! whack!

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh!"

"Yooop!"

"Yah! Ah! ah! Oh!"

Bulkeley's whacks fell with great impartiality on all sides, upon Moderns and Classics alike.

There was no arguing with an ashplant wielded by a powerful arm, and by a person too respected to be bowled over as Knowles had been.

The juniors dodged on all sides, and the combat was over.

In a few minutes Classics and Moderns had scattered, and fled in all directions. Bulkeley remaining on the stricken field, amid a sea of lost caps and neckties, laughing.

He stooped and gave Knowles a hand, and helped the breathless Modern prefect to his feet.

Knowles gasped for breath, his eyes glittering with rage.

"The young villains!" he stuttered.

"Not hurt, I hope?" said Bulkeley. "The young scamps were too excited to notice that they were biffing into a prefect, I should think."

"I believe Silver hooked my leg, knowing who it was well enough!" snarled Knowles. "The Classics started the row, I believe."

"Six of one and half a dozen of the other, I expect," said Bulkeley soothingly. "They're always going it, more or less."

"I'll jolly well see them licked for it!" growled Knowles. "The fags on my side, at least. I suppose you'll see the same for those on your side, Bulkeley?"

The captain of Rookwood hesitated.

"They've been licked," he said. "I've been laying into the lot of them with my stick. After all, it was only a junior row. Fags will be fags, you know."

"You haven't been bumped over," sneered Knowles. "I shall cane all the Moderns mixed up in this row."

"Well, you can do as you like on your own side, of course," said Bulkeley, though he frowned.

"You're not going to do the same?"

"I think I've done enough."

"I don't think so!" snapped Knowles viciously.

"Sorry for that," said Bulkeley politely.

And he walked away towards the schoolhouse to cut short the discussion, which was growing extremely acid on Knowles's side.

The Modern prefect cast a bitter look after him, and limped away towards Mr. Manders' house. Knowles of the Sixth was not of a forgiving nature, and he had been bumped.

He intended to solace himself by "taking it out" of Tommy Dodd and Co., who had the misfortune to be under his authority, and he was extremely exasperated by the fact that Jimmy Silver and the rest of the Classicals were not in his power

## CHAPTER 2.

### Jimmy Silver's Great Wheeze.

"MY hat! What a merry scrap!"

"Ow! My eye!"

"Look at my nose!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Keep smiling, my infants," said Jimmy Silver. "We licked the Moderns; at least, we should have licked them if Bulkeley hadn't chipped in."

"Hear, hear!"

The Fistical Four had gathered in the end study after the scrap. All four had damages to show.

But they were quite satisfied that victory would have rested with them but for the intervention of George Bulkeley.

That was a consolation.

"Did you see Knowles?" chuckled Lovell, as he dabbed at his nose before the glass. "Fairly under our feet—and a prefect! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Knowles!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Always shoving his long nose in where it's not wanted. Yow-oh! I wish

Bulkeley wasn't quite so handy with that ashplant. I've got nine or ten pains."

"But what was the row about?" asked Lovell. "What were you scrapping with the Tommies for when we came up? Argument about the St. Jim's match?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Oh, no! Tommy Dodd wanted to look at my paper." Jimmy Silver drew the crumpled newspaper from under his waistcoat. "Here it is, safe and sound. Lucky you came up in time, or the Modern bouncer would have seen it."

"Eh? Seen what?"

"What's in the paper," said Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle.

Lovell stared at the crumpled sheet.

"Why shouldn't he see it?" he demanded. "It's only the local rag, and three or four days' old at that."

"Anything special in it?" asked Raby.

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy Silver, with emphasis. "Something extra special—very extra special."

"Something you didn't want the Moderns to see?" asked Lovell, mystified. "Blessed if I see——"

"You never do see anything, old scout, till I point it out," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, you cheeky ass——"

"Let's see the paper," said Newcome. "I don't see what can be in it to interest us."

Jimmy Silver unfolded the paper and laid it on the table. He indicated a paragraph with his forefinger, and his chums—ceasing the dabbing of noses and eyes for the moment—looked to it.

The paragraph ran:

"A hearty welcome will be extended to the Contadini football team during their stay in our neighbourhood. We understand that after the khaki match at Latcham the Contadini may play a public school side before proceeding on their tour. It would be extremely interesting to see the Italian team meet a side from Rookwood or Bagshot. We hope that Signor Carlo Frulo will see his way to arranging such a match, which should be well attended."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome read through that paragraph, and then stared at Jimmy Silver.

"Well?" said three voices in unison.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, "don't you see?"

"I see that an Italian footer team is playing at Latcham from this," said Lovell. "I don't see what it's got to do with us. Not worth while going over to see the game. Rot, I expect."

"Foreigners can't play footer!" remarked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"That's where you're off-side," he said. "Soccer was catching on no end in France and Italy before the war. There were lots of French and Italian teams playing soccer."

"Never heard of 'em!" yawned Lovell.

"Who are these chaps, anyway?" asked Newcome. "I never heard of an Italian footer team touring here."

Another sniff from Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you've never heard of anything!" he said. "The Contadini are a famous team. It's a club of Italian footballers in England, got up to play matches for the benefit of the Italian Red Cross. They're jolly good players, too; they've booked a tour up and down the country, and they win as many matches as they lose. The gate goes to the Red Cross. Jolly good idea, too. They're playing the Loamshire Rifles at Latcham on Wednesday."

Lovell nodded.

"I heard Bulkeley speaking of it, now I come to think of it," he remarked. "Well, there's nothing doing on Wednesday; we'll bike over to Latcham and see 'em, if you like."

"Might be worth seeing," agreed Raby. "I've never seen Italians play footer before, certainly. But why couldn't you let Tommy Dodd see that? The Moderns might like to see 'em, too."

"Oh, you don't catch on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Don't you see what the paper says about the Contadini perhaps playing a public-school side? A fixture like that would mean no end of kudos. Why shouldn't Rookwood bag that fixture?"

"I fancy our first eleven would walk all over them," remarked Lovell. "Are you going to suggest it to Bulkeley?"

"Bother Bulkeley! What price us?"

"Us!" ejaculated the three together.

"Us!" said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"The junior eleven challenge the Contadini!" exclaimed Lovell, opening his eyes wide.

"Bother the junior eleven! Us!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "Us, the Classicals! That's the idea!"

"Oh!"

"Just imagine," said Jimmy, his eyes glistening. "Suppose the Classical junior team bagged a match with a team like that, wouldn't the Moderns be green and yellow with envy?"

"You ass!" roared Lovell. "It's not possible! A team that plays the Loamshire Rifles wouldn't play a school junior eleven."

"I don't see why not," said Jimmy Silver. "We're a good team, ain't we?"

"Ha, ha! None better."

"We've got a ripping Classical eleven—us four——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Erroll and Mornington, and Rawson and Conroy—that's eight; and Pons and Van Ryn—that's ten; and Oswald—that's eleven! Isn't that a topping team?"

"Tip-top!"

"I don't see why the Contadini shouldn't play us," continued Jimmy Silver. "I daresay we could beat them."

"But if they play a school side they're bound to play the first eleven—a senior team."

"I don't see it. If we get our challenge in first, this chap Frulo may accept it, and—and there you are!" said Jimmy Silver.

Lovell whistled. Raby and Newcome looked extremely doubtful.

But Jimmy Silver was evidently very much taken with his idea.

"If Tommy Dodd had spotted that bit of news, you can bet he'd have thought of challenging them to meet a Modern eleven," said Jimmy. "Tommy would jump at a chance of taking the wind out of our sails like that."

"I suppose he would. But——"

"Well, Tommy Dodd hasn't seen it—I don't know whether he knows the Italian team is at Latcham at all, and he can't know that they're staying on after the khaki match, and may fix up a game with a school side. That's why I was keeping the paper away from him. I came on it by chance, and it came into my head at once to challenge the Contadini."

"Ahem!"

"Don't you think it's a good idea?" demanded Jimmy Silver warmly. "Why, if we could fix up a match like that, our own first eleven would be jealous of us. As for the Moderns, they would simply weep with envy."

"They would. But——"

"But what, fathead?"

"It's too big a team for us to tackle. They wouldn't accept our challenge."

"We can give them the chance, anyway. They might."

"Well, there's nothing like cheek!" said Lovell with a grin. "No harm in asking them. Are you going to write?"

"No; my idea is to go over and see the match to-morrow, and manage to see Mr. Frulo somehow afterwards," said Jimmy. "They're staying in Latcham, so they must be at the Latcham Hotel—"

that's the only place of any size there. We'll call on Frulo after the match."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Don't you like the idea?"

"Ahem!"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

"You fellows haven't any enterprise. Here's a chance of giving the Modern rotters the kybosh, and putting them in their place and keeping them there, and all you can do is to hem and haw. Rats!"

"Oh, we'll try it," said Lovell, laughing.

"Better take a cushion with you when you call on Mr. Frulo."

"A cushion? What for?"

"To lay outside his door, to fall on when he kicks you out for your cheek."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

And with that the discussion ended, and the Fistical Four proceeded to attend to their damaged noses, but Jimmy Silver had his way, as he usually had. Challenging the Italian touring team was a "big order" for a junior eleven, but, as Jimmy's chums remarked, Jimmy had cheek enough for anything.

If the Contadini accepted the challenge, and played the Classical juniors, they would be the envy of all Rookwood. It would be a feather in their cap which they would wear with great pride.

If the Contadini refused, there would be no harm done. And so it was settled; but at least three out of the four had very strong doubts as to success.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Scheming a Scheme!

"YOW-OW-OW!"

Thus Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth.

The fat Classical seemed to be in a state of great anguish.

It was the following day, Wednesday, a half-holiday at Rookwood. Jimmy Silver and Co. were chatting in the quadrangle while they waited for the dinner-bell, when Tubby came along, uttering sounds of woe.

"Hullo! what's the row?" asked Jimmy.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded Lovell. "Has Knowles been pulling your fat ears? I daresay it served you right."

"Yow! No! Ow!" mumbled Tubby.

"It was that beast Dodd! Yow-ow!"

The beast said I was listening! Yow-ow!" Jimmy Silver frowned.

"Serve you right," he said unsympathetically. "You'd better learn to keep away from keyholes, Tubby."

"Yow! It wasn't a keyhole. I was behind the tree," groaned Tubby. "I—I mean, of course, I wasn't listening at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tain't a laughing matter," mumbled Tubby Muffin. "Dodd kicked me, the beast, and Cook kicked me, and Doyle kicked me, one after another, you know. I simply stepped behind the tree to—to blow my nose, you know. I happened to hear what they were saying. Yow-ow."

Tubby Muffin twisted uncomfortably. Apparently the Modern boots had been applied forcibly to his plump person.

"Yow-ow! I was going to offer to go with them in the trap, you know, when they spotted me, and kicked me, the beasts! Ow! I'd like to see the Italians, you know, and there would be room for four in Lavery's trap, wouldn't there? Ow! I would not go now if Tommy Dodd asked me on his bended knees. Yow!"

"The Italians!" repeated Jimmy Silver with a start. "What's that about Italians?"

"Yow-ow!"

"Explain, you fat ass!"

"The beasts are going over this afternoon to see a match at Latcham," said Tubby, with a groan. "Tommy Dodd's engaged Lavery's trap—it's picking them up in Coombe at half-past one. I'd have offered to drive for them, you know—and they kicked me for listening, and I wasn't listening. Ow!"

"You seem to have heard a good deal for a chap who wasn't listening," grinned Raby.

"Well, you see, I happened——"

"Bow-wow!" growled Jimmy Silver. "You're an eavesdropping little beast, Muffin. Cut off, or I'll give you a kick, too!"

Tubby Muffin promptly cut off. He had had enough of boot-leather.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked at their leader, suppressing their grins.

"So these Modern rotters have heard of the Italian team, after all," said Jimmy Silver at last. "I mean, they know they're at Latcham."

"Looks like it!" chuckled Lovell.

"But they don't know Frulo's men are staying on after the match, as they haven't seen the paper," said Jimmy. "I don't suppose Tommy Dodd's thought

of challenging them to play here. But  
—but—

“He’s not such an ass, perhaps,” said Newsome, rather unfortunately.

“What?”

“I—I mean ideas like that are only thought of in our study,” said Newcome hastily.

“I’ve got another idea,” said Jimmy.

“My hat! You’re sprouting ideas lately,” said Lovell admiringly. “Are you thinking of challenging Tottenham Hotspur or Manchester United next?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oh, don’t be a funny ass!” said the captain of the Fourth. “We were going to bike it over to Latcham this afternoon. Suppose we go in a trap instead?”

“Jolly expensive!”

“Not if the Moderns stand the trap?”

“Eh?”

“You remember last term they raided our boat and the picnic on the island?” said Jimmy. “Well, this time we’ll raid their trap—what?”

“Hear, hear!”

“Under the circs. it’s better for the dear boys not to go to Latcham,” said Jimmy. “I don’t want them to come into contact with the Italian team at all. Not till we’ve challenged them, anyway. What price laying for that trap on the road and bagging it—what?”

“Topping!”

“We’ll take the Colonial chaps along, in case the Modern rotters want to argue about it.”

“Ha, ha!”

“Lavery’s trap will hold seven, at a pinch. There’s always a good horse to it. We shall have to start early, and get ahead of the bounders. Bootles will let us cut dinner, if we tell him we’ve got an excursion on.”

“I don’t want to cut dinner!”

“No fear!”

“Draw it mild!”

“Fatheads!” roared Jimmy Silver.

“We can get some sandwiches from the housekeepers instead, and munch them on the way.”

“Oh, all right!”

“And for goodness sake don’t argue!” said Jimmy. “It’s enough to turn a fellow’s hair grey to be leader, with silly asses like you to lead.”

“Rats!”

Jimmy Silver hurried at once in search of Conroy, Van Ryn, and Pons, the three Colonial juniors.

Those three cheery youths were extremely useful in a “scrap,” and it was

only too probable that the raiding of the Modern trap would be resisted.

Conroy and Co. entered into the scheme with great heartiness.

The required permission was obtained from Mr. Bootles to “cut” dinner on account of an excursion, and the equally required sandwiches were obtained from the housekeeper.

While the rest of Rookwood were at dinner, seven Classical juniors were tramping cheerily away to Coombe, with the prospect of a most enjoyable afternoon before them.

Whether Jimmy Silver’s scheme of challenging a grown-up team to a football match at Rookwood would be a success his chums had the very strongest doubts.

But there was no doubt that the capture of the Modern trap would be a signal victory over Tommy Dodd and Co., and the Classics started on that excursion with the keenest zest.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Caught In The Trap!

“TIME!” said Tommy Dodd.

Dinner was over in Mr. Manders’ house, and the three Tommies were the first out of doors. Towle of the Modern Fourth came with them. The party for Latcham numbered four.

Tommy Dodd cast a sharp glance around as the party crossed to the gates.

There was endless warfare between the two sides at Rookwood—at least as far as the juniors were concerned—and as Tubby Muffin had heard about the trap, Tommy would not have been surprised to see Jimmy Silver and Co. on the war-path. But there was no sign of the Fistical Four in the quadrangle.

The four Moderns walked down to Coombe, and found the trap ready at Lavery’s stable in the village.

Tommy Dodd took the reins, and drove out of Coombe, on the Latcham road, in great style.

The trap bowled merrily along the lane, the four Moderns chatting cheerily on the subject of the khaki match. They had heard of the Contadini, and were curious to see an Italian team play soccer.

But certainly it had not occurred to Tommy Dodd to challenge the Italians to a junior match at Rookwood. Tommy had plenty of nerve, but not quite enough for that. That tremendous idea was Jimmy Silver’s very own.



“Hallo!” exclaimed Tommy suddenly.  
“What’s up?”

Ahead of the trap, a junior had suddenly run out into the road, and was holding up his hand.

It was Pons, the Canadian junior in the Classical Fourth.

“Stop!” he shouted.

Tommy Dodd drew in the horse, in surprise. The trap came to a halt.

“What’s the matter?” he demanded.

Pons did not reply. He promptly seized the horse’s head, so that the trap could not drive on.

As he did so there was a sudden rush from behind the hedge.

Six more Classical juniors came suddenly into sight, surrounding the halted trap with grinning faces.

“My hat!” ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

“What on earth are you up to, Jimmy Silver? Let go that geegee, Pong!”

“Hold on, Pong!”

“You bet!” grinned the Canadian junior.

“You silly Classical chumps!” shouted Tommy Dodd. “Let us pass! We’ve got to get to Latcham by three!”

“Do you think you could walk it in the time?” inquired Jimmy Silver.

“Eh! Of course not.”

“Then you won’t get to Latcham by three,” said Jimmy, with a shake of the head. “You see, we want to borrow your trap.”

“You cheeky ass!”

“Rush them!” roared Lovell.

“Down with the Moderns!”

Tommy Dodd made a desperate effort to drive on. But Pons’ grip was like iron on the bit, and the horse did not stir.

The Classics were swarming into the trap on both sides and behind.

“Knock ’em down!” roared Tommy Dodd.

“Give ’em socks!”

“Back up, Classics!” shouted Jimmy Silver.

There was a terrific combat in and around the trap. Jimmy was in, but he was pitched out, dragging Cook with him, and they resumed the combat on the dusty road.

Lovell tumbled headlong into the vehicle and remained there, struggling furiously with Doyle on the floor.

Towle was hauled out by his shoulders and ears, resisting manfully.

Tommy Dodd let go whip and reins to join in the affray; but he had no chance against the two Colonials, who fastened on him at once.

Pons had plenty to do to hold in the startled horse; but Conroy and Van Ryn handled Tommy in a masterly manner.

In a few minutes the three Tommies and Towle were on their backs in the dust, with four Classics sitting triumphant on their chests.

“Our win!” chortled Jimmy Silver.

“Yah! Oh! Gerroff!”

“Oh, my hat!”

“Can we borrow the trap now, Tommy?”

“No!” yelled Tommy Dodd.

“Won’t you lend it to us, like a nice boy?”

“Yah! No!”

“Will you lend it to us if we bump you?”

“Oh, you rotters!”

Bump! bump! bump!

“Can we have the trap now, dear boy?”

“Yaro-o-oh!”

Bump! bump!

“Yow-ow-ow!” spluttered Tommy Dodd. “Leggo! Stoppit! You—you can have the trap! Yow-ow-wo-o-o-op!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Thanks awfully, old chap. Pile in, you fellows!”

The chortling Classics piled into the trap. Pons had already taken Dodd’s seat, and gathered up the reins.

The four Moderns, dusty and breathless, staggered up, eager to renew the conflict. But the trap was in motion, with the Classics in it, or clambering in behind as it went.

“Come back, you rotters!” howled Cook. “That’s our trap!”

“Ours now!” grinned Conroy.

“Good-bye, Bluebell!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The Moderns, panting, made a desperate rush after the trap, Tommy Doyle caught on behind, and held on manfully, his boots dragging along and kicking up clouds of dust.

Van Ryn extracted an orange from his pocket, split it, and squeezed it down Doyle’s collar as he clung on.

“Oh, you spalpeen!” shrieked Doyle. “Stoppit! Groogh! Ow, me neck! Yurrrggg!”

Tommy Doyle gave it up.

He let go, and dropped back into the road, and sat there gasping, while the trap rushed on, the Classics waving their hands to him.

“Oh, begorra!”

“Oh, the rotters!”

“Dished!” groaned Tommy Dodd.

“Oh, my hat! We’ll scalp them for this! We’ll—we’ll——” Words failed the Modern leader.

In a cloud of dust, the trap vanished down the long white road, in the direction of distant Latcham. Four Modern juniors were left dusty and disconsolate. The remarks they made were more emphatic than elegant. But "slanging" the victorious Classics was not much use.

"Well, what are we going to do?" said Towle, at last.

"Go home, I suppose," snorted Tommy Dodd. "We can't walk it, fathead!"

"What about a train from Coombe?"

"That's gone."

"Might go back for the bikes," suggested Cook.

"We've got three miles to walk back, ass. We should get to Latcham about an hour after they've finished."

"Oh, rotten!"

It was evident that the afternoon's excursion was "off." In glum spirits the Modern party turned back towards Rookwood School.

"Never mind," said Tommy Dodd at last, with an attempt at philosophical resignation. "It's all in the game. You remember how we raided their boat last term, and bagged their picnic on the island?"

"Sure me collar's stickin' to me neck."

"Oh, blow your neck!"

"Look at my nose!" mumbled Towle.

"Blow your nose!"

The Moderns tramped on, dusty, dishevelled, and not in the best of humours. Tommy Dodd came to a sudden halt as two seniors of Rookwood appeared on the road ahead, coming towards them.

They were Knowles and Catesby, of the Modern Sixth.

They sighted the draggled party of juniors at the same time and stared at them as they came on.

Tommy Dodd groaned.

"Just our luck to drop on two prefects while we're in this state," he said. "Knowles is going to rag us. I can see it in his eye."

"Beast!" mumbled Cook.

The two Modern prefects came up. Tommy Dodd hoped that they would pass without speaking. But Knowles, the bully of the Sixth, was not likely to let such an opportunity pass.

He stopped at once, frowning.

"That's a precious state for Rookwood fellows to go about in!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean by it?"

"Only a—a little scrap, Knowles," stammered Tommy Dodd.

"You've been ragging with the Bagshot fellows, I suppose," said Catesby.

"No, Classical chaps."

"The bastes collared our trap," said Tommy Doyle dismally. "It wasn't our fault, Knowles, we didn't want to be pitched out on our necks."

"An accident, in fact," ventured Cook. "A—a little argument about a trap, and—and—and that's all, Knowles, really."

Knowles's greenish eyes glinted.

"I think I understand. I saw you start out of Coombe in a trap," he said. "The Classics have collared your trap, is that it?"

"That's it," said Tommy. "Only fun, you know."

Knowles smiled sarcastically.

"I don't regard that as fun," he said. "Had you paid for the hire of the trap?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then it's a serious matter."

"I—I say, Knowles, Jimmy Silver never thought anything about that. It's all in the game, you know. We collared their boat last term."

"Never mind what you did last term. You paid money for the hire of the trap and Silver and his friends have taken it away by force. You can depend on me, as your prefect, to see justice done," said Knowles grimly.

The Modern juniors looked utterly dismayed.

Knowles had a very heavy "down" on Jimmy Silver of the Fourth, and he evidently intended to use this adventure as a "handle" against the junior he disliked.

Tommy Dodd & Co. always "played the game" in their incessant alarms and excursions against the Classical side and had no thought whatever of making any complaints when they got the worst of it. Knowles coolly put the complaint into their unwilling mouths.

"You can clear off," said Knowles. "I'll see into this matter and mention it to Mr. Manders when I get back."

"I say, Knowles, we don't want to make a fuss about it," said the dismayed Tommy Dodd. "It's only a lark, you know."

"I don't consider it a lark."

"We're not complaining——"

"Cut off!" said Knowles.

"Look here, Knowles," exclaimed Tommy Dodd, his eyes flashing. "We've got no complaint to make against Silver and we don't want you to take it up."

"That's for me to decide," said Knowles coolly. "I shall certainly take it up. As a prefect, I cannot allow lawlessness of this kind. That's enough; cut off!"

"But look here——"

Knowles and Catesby walked on.

Tommy Dodd & Co. looked at one another.

"The thafe of the world," muttered Doyle. "The utter baste is going to use this against Jimmy Silver, an' put it down to us. The Classicals will say we've sneaked to a prefect."

Tommy Dodd gritted his teeth.

It was in a dismal humour that the four Moderns tramped on to Rookwood. But their wrath was not directed against Jimmy Silver & Co., but against Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth. And their unanimous opinion was that what Knowles wanted was something lingering, with boiling oil in it.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Khaki Match.

"BETTER let me drive," remarked Lovell.

"I was thinking," began Raby. Pons laughed.

"My dear chaps, we've got only one neck each," he remarked. "I'll drive."

"Why, you cheeky ass?" said Lowell wrathfully.

The Canadian junior drove on cheerfully. He had the reins, and he kept them. Every fellow in the crowded trap was under the impression that he had better drive, but possession was nine points of the law, and Charles Pons had possession of the ribbons.

The trap bowled along in great style. Full as the vehicle was, with seven sturdy juniors in it, the horse was a good one and kept up a rattling pace. The racing wheels seemed to eat up the miles.

"Latcham!" said Jimmy Silver at last.

The trap bowled on into the country town.

Outside the town lay the military camp, and the old-fashioned streets of Latcham were alive with men in khaki.

As the Loamshire Rifles football team was playing the tourists it was natural that a good many soldiers should make use of their leave to attend the match, and the way to the ground of the Latcham Ramblers' Club was crowded with them. The match was taking place on the Ramblers' ground.

A good many vehicles were going in the same direction, as well as crowds of pedestrians.

The trap stopped in its turn, and Jimmy Silver and Co. poured out.

"What are we going to do with the trap?" asked Pons.

Lovell indulged in a chuckle.

"That's for the driver to settle," he replied. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, I say, hold on——"

"No fear!"

The Fistical Four, chuckling, joined the crowd pouring in at the gates.

As Pons had driven, against all other claimants, it was up to him, and it was left to him. Conroy and Van Ryn stuck to him, however.

It was some time before the Colonial Co. bestowed the trap at an inn, to be taken care of during the match, and made their way on foot to the ground. It was close on time for the game when they got in.

They spotted the Fistical Four, well to the front, close to the ropes. Jimmy Silver looked round and sighted the three Colonials a good way back, and grinned. Lovell waved his hand to him, chortling.

"Perhaps Pons will let me drive next time," chuckled Lovell. "Hullo, here come the boys!"

There was a loud cheer as the khaki footballers came into the arena. They looked a splendid set of players.

"My hat!" murmured Raby, "if you're thinking of challenging a team that can play that lot, Jimmy, you're off your rocker."

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Hullo, here come the Italians," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver and Co. eyed the Italians curiously as they trooped in.

They had never seen an Italian football team before, naturally, and so the sight was interesting.

The dusky foreigners were a smaller team, physically, than the Loamshire men, but they looked very active and fit. Their colours were red and yellow, and decidedly conspicuous.

The novelty of an Italian football team on the Ramblers' ground had drawn a big crowd, all of whom were well disposed to the red-and-yellow footballers, as was evinced by a loud cheer of welcome.

"Look a decent lot," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"I don't suppose they can play footer," said Lovell. "What the dickens do Italians know about Soccer?"

"I tell you the game was being taken up in Italy before the war," said Jimmy. "Do you think they'd have booked up a tour through England if they couldn't play?"

"Well, we shall see what we shall see," said Lovell.

Which was undoubtedly the case.

"Not much bigger than our first eleven, so far as size goes," said Raby. "I don't see how we could play that lot, though, Jimmy, even if they accepted."

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver was evidently not to be argued with.

The kick-off fell to Loamshire, and the ball rolled. The khaki team brought the leather well up to the visitors' goal, with a rush. But the dusky goalkeeper was all there and the ball was twice fisted out and then cleared.

There was a tussle in midfield and then an attack upon the khaki goal.

The defence was good, but the attack never slacked, and even Lovell had to admit that the Italians knew what they were about.

"Goal!" gasped Lovell, suddenly.

"My hat!"

"Bravo!"

"Well kicked, darkey!"

"Hurray!"

"Goal! Goal!"

It was first blood to the Contadini. Carlo Frulo, the Italian skipper, bowed and smiled to the cheers of the Latcham crowd. Frulo was a short, lithe man, as active as a cat, and as quick as lightning upon his feet, and he had fairly walked round a Loamshire back to put the leather in.

The Rookwood juniors cheered loudly with the crowd. They knew good footer when they saw it, and this was first-class.

"Can they play—what?" grinned Jimmy Silver, digging Lovell in the ribs, when the teams lined up after the goal.

"My hat, yes," admitted Lovell. "Fancy blessed foreigners playing our game like that! Who'd have thought it?"

Loamshire equalised just before the interval and the whistle went with the score one to one.

In the second half the Loamshire men attacked hotly, and by sheer weight, for some time kept the Contadini penned up their own half. But the Italian goalie was unbeatable. A dozen narrow escapes were loudly cheered, but not once did the leather get home.

It was close on time when the tussle was transferred to the Loamshire half, and Carlo Frulo, with a quick rush, beat the backs and sent in the leather with a shot that the khaki goalkeeper could not save.

"Two to one!" said Jimmy. "Can they play—what?"

"Bravo!"

The Loamshire men fought hard to equalise as the last minutes of the ninety ticked away. But they fought in vain.

The Italians were forced to pack their goal for defence, but the defence was made good, and the final whistle went with the score unaltered—two to one!

The victory of the visitors was loudly cheered, though it somewhat disappointed the Latcham crowd.

"Good men, what?" said Jimmy Silver, as the Fistical Four joined the crowd pouring out at the gates. "Ripping if we can get them to play us at Rookwood."

"They wouldn't play a junior team, ass. They might play our first eleven, if Bulkeley sent them a challenge."

"We'll see," said Jimmy.

"Where's the trap?" grinned Lovell, as the four joined the Colonial Co. in the crowd outside.

"In the yard at the Latcham Hotel," grunted Pons.

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's where we're going."

"Jimmy's going to interview Mr. Frulo," chuckled Lovell. "We're going to pick him up when he's chucked out on his neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To which Jimmy Silver replied only with a snort.

## CHAPTER 6.

### N.G.

"PLEASE follow me, sir!"

Jimmy Silver's heart beat a little faster as he followed the waiter up the staircase.

With a nerve which his comrades regarded as sublime, Jimmy Silver had sent in his name, at the Latcham Hotel, to Mr. Frulo, and asked the favour of an interview.

The Italian footballers had returned to the hotel after the match, some time before the juniors arrived there.

Jimmy, in spite of the confidence he assumed for the benefit of his chums, had waited with some uneasiness for the reply to his message.

Lovell's opinion was that Mr. Frulo would decline to see him. But Jimmy felt that the well-known politeness of the Italian race could be relied upon to that extent, at any rate, and he was evidently right, for the waiter returned to conduct him to Mr. Frulo's apartments.

His chums waited for him below, wondering what kind of a reception he would get.

Jimmy Silver had spent so much time in convincing his chums that his scheme was feasible that he had not really considered very deeply whether it really was feasible or not. As he followed the waiter

upstairs, it was borne in upon his mind that what he had undertaken was, as a matter of fact, a "big order."

But he was booked for the interview now, and, after all, Mr. Frulo could only decline, if he didn't choose to accept. At all events, Jimmy would have had a personal interview with the football skipper who had beaten Loamshire, and there was distinction in that.

Jimmy was shown into a room in which two dusky-complexioned gentlemen were chatting in their own language, of which Jimmy understood hardly a word.

One of them was Carlo Frulo, whom Jimmy recognised at once, though he was now very differently attired.

The Italian came towards him with a graceful bow and a smile, though he was looking a little puzzled.

"Buon giorno, signorino," he said, in a musical voice.

"Ahem! Good-afternoon," said Jimmy, wondering whether Mr. Frulo spoke English. If not, there were some difficulties in the way of conversation. He remembered that he had heard football expressions fall from Mr. Frulo's lips during the match, in quite plain English. "I—I—you speak English, sir?"

"Si, si!" said Mr. Frulo, with a smile. "E vero! I have some small English. You shall wish to see me, isn't it? The cameriere he say, zat is so."

"That's it," said Jimmy Silver. "We—I saw you play Loamshire this afternoon, Mr. Frulo."

"Si?"

"It was a ripping game," said Jimmy.

"Grazie tanto."

Jimmy wondered what that meant, but he went on.

"I understand that you are staying in Latcham a few days, Mr. Frulo, before you go on with your tour?"

"Vero! Due—tre giorni. Two, three day," said Mr. Frulo.

"Could you find a vacant day for a match?"

"Come?"

That word, pronounced "com-ay," was Greek to Jimmy Silver, but he understood that it was interrogative.

"We'd like to play your team at Rookwood," explained Jimmy Silver.

"Rook—wood!" repeated Mr. Frulo. "Che cosa e? What is zat?"

"Our school, you know."

"Ah, una scuola!" said Mr. Frulo politely. "Si, si. Vat zen?"

"If you care to bring your team over to Rookwood, we'd give you a jolly good welcome," said Jimmy, faltering a little

as he observed the smile playing round Mr. Frulo's mouth. It was borne in upon Jimmy's mind that it was a tremendous cheek to make that request; he had not quite realised it before. "We'd play you with pleasure. Any date you like. We'd postpone any other fixture to give you a date."

"Ah! You shall give me challenge to football match, isn't it?" smiled Mr. Frulo.

"That's it."

"Tante grazie," murmured Mr. Frulo. "You are too good! It is an honour zat is much to appreciate. How are you old?"

"Eh! Oh, how old! Average age, fifteen," said Jimmy.

"Quindici anni!" smiled the Italian skipper. "And I, vente-cinque. Zat honour, he is great, ma temo. I fear it is not to be done. I speak to signor il segretario to ask if a date he shall be open."

He turned to the other man, and spoke in Italian.

Jimmy Silver understood that "il segretario" was the secretary. "Il segretario" was grinning.

After a few rapid sentences in Italian, Signor Frulo turned back to Jimmy Silver with an expression of polite regret upon his handsome, dusky face.

"Non é possibile!" he said. "It is not possible, signorino—tutti giorni—all days are booked up. But from ze heart I zank you for zat honour zat you have do me and ze Contadini undici."

Jimmy Silver understood.

The Italian skipper was tickled by the nerve of a junior schoolboy in challenging him to a football match, but he was couching his reply in the politest possible way.

Signor Frulo bowed Jimmy Silver out into the corridor very graciously, and shook hands with him as he said "buon giorno" again. After the door had closed, Jimmy heard a chuckle within.

Jimmy's cheeks were a little pink as he descended the stairs.

In the vestibule below, six juniors were waiting for him with grinning faces.

"Well?" said six voices in unison.

"Time we got home to Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver briskly.

"Yes, but——"

"Come on!"

Jimmy marched out, and his comrades followed him. But in the hotel yard they surrounded him.

"Now, what did the Italian chap say?" demanded Lovell.

"Eh! He said it was a fine day!"

"Has he accepted?"

"Accepted what?"

"Your challenge, you ass!" exclaimed Raby.

"Oh, let's get off!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Did he pitch you out on your neck?"

"No, ass!"

"Did he say it was a thumping cheek to ask him?" chuckled Conroy.

"Certainly not!"

"Bet you he thought it."

"Yes, rather. Ha, ha!"

"Look here! What happened, Jimmy?" demanded Lovell. "Give it a name."

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy. "Mr. Frulo consulted with the club secretary, and was sorry that they had no date open——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at, that I can see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the six Classics.

"Look here, you chortling chumps——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy Silver.

He clambered into the trap. His comrades followed him, still chortling gleefully. Lovell secured the reins this time and "tooled" the trap out, and drove away for Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver did not talk much on the way home. But his comrades made up for it. They chipped Jimmy so incessantly on the subject of his colossal nerve that the captain of the Fourth repented most sincerely that he had ever thought of that ripping idea of challenging the Contadini to meet a Classical team at Rookwood.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Bitter Blood.

**B**ULKELEY of the Sixth bore down upon the Fistical Four as they came into the schoolhouse after dusk. Bulkeley's look was severe.

"You're wanted," he said.

"More trouble!" sighed Jimmy Silver.

"What is it now, Bulkeley?"

"What have you been doing this afternoon?" growled Bulkeley.

"We've been over to Latcham."

"To see a footer match," added Conroy.

"No harm in that, Bulkeley?"

"You collared a trap belonging to the Modern kids, I understand?"

"Ye—e—es."

"You don't mean to say——" began Lovell.

"Mr. Manders has complained to your form-master about it," said Bulkeley.

"You're to go in to Mr. Bootles at once."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Get a move on!" said Bulkeley.

Jimmy Silver & Co. moved off to Mr. Bootles's study. They were astounded by the summons. Not for a moment had it crossed their minds that Tommy Dodd would make any complaint of the raid in the afternoon. That was not "in the game" at all.

"Well, my word!" said Lovell, as they approached Mr. Bootles' study door. "Fancy the Moderns sneaking to a master about it!"

"Rotten!" growled Van Ryn.

"We'll jolly well make the sneaks sit up for it," said Raby wrathfully.

"I can't understand it," said Jimmy Silver, knitting his brows. "It isn't like Tommy Dodd to sneak."

"How did Manders know, then?"

"Blessed if I know."

Jimmy Silver tapped at the door, and the Fourth Form master's voice bade him enter. The seven juniors filed quietly into the study.

Mr. Bootles blinked at them over his glasses.

"Ah! You have returned, what, what?" said Mr. Bootles, "Silver and the rest, I have received a very serious complaint concerning you. Mr. Manders has informed me that you actually attacked a number of boys of his house, and took a vehicle away from them by violence this afternoon."

"Oh, sir!"

"Have you anything to say?" demanded Mr. Bootles, in his most magisterial manner.

"Ahem!"

"You do not deny, I presume——"

"It—it was only a lark, sir," murmured Jimmy Silver. "Just a lark on the Modern chaps, sir."

"Mr. Manders does not regard it in that light. It appears that Knowles, his head prefect, informed him of the matter, having found a number of Modern juniors in a very dishevelled state on the road, and they informed him——"

"They did?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Sneaks!" growled Lovell.

"Silence, Lovell! They informed Knowles of the occurrence, and he placed it in Mr. Manders' hands; and as you are in my Form, Mr. Manders naturally came to see me about it. He is very angry."

"Oh!"

"The Modern boys—Dodd and some others—seem to have been roughly handled!" said Mr. Bootles severely.

"Ahem! We—we——"

"Knowles found them in a most deplorable state, Mr. Manders informs me."

"H'm!"

"They stated that you were responsible for the condition Knowles discovered them in!"

"Oh, did they?" said Jimmy Silver, between his teeth.

"What? what?"

"N-n-nothing, sir."

"I am very much shocked," said Mr. Bootles. "A certain amount of rivalry between the two sides at Rookwood makes, no doubt, for healthy emulation, and I do not disapprove of it to that extent. But this rivalry should never be allowed to degenerate into ruffianism!"

"Oh, sir!"

"I fear, Silver, that it is my duty to punish you somewhat severely," said Mr. Bootles, taking up his cane.

The Fistical Four set their lips.

One after another they went through it. Mr. Bootles felt it his duty to administer punishment, and indeed, after the Modern master's angry report, he had no choice in the matter.

The Classical juniors did not blame Mr. Bootles.

Neither did they blame Mr. Manders very much. He was a crusty gentleman, very much down upon any ebullition of youthful high spirits, and he had long ago forgotten that he had ever been a boy himself.

But their feelings towards the three Tommies were simply furious.

Certainly the raid on the trap had been rather a rough experience for the Modern juniors. But it could be matched by many a Modern raid on the Classicals. It was all in the game. A complaint to a master or prefect was not in the game at all.

That Tommy Dodd and Co. should be guilty of sneaking on the subject was surprising information; but there seemed no doubt on the point after what Mr. Bootles had said.

The Fistical Four went through the infliction with all the philosophy they could muster.

The caning was severe; but that troubled them less than the fact that they had been betrayed to punishment.

"Now you may go, my boys," said Mr. Bootles, quite kindly; "I am sorry to have to punish you, but you must learn to keep yourselves in check."

The Co. left the study.

After Mr. Bootles' door had closed upon them the quartette squeezed their hands hard and looked at one another with eloquent looks.

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver, breath-

ing hard. "Fancy it! They gave us away—sneaked to a prefect——"

"Oh, the cads!"

"The rotters!"

"We'll make 'em squirm for it!" said Lovell savagely, "we'll show the cads up to all Rookwood!"

"Yes, rather."

"Hullo!" The Colonial Co. met the unfortunate chums, as they came down the passage, "You fellows in the wars, what?"

"Those Modern sneaks——" hissed Raby.

"What?" exclaimed Van Ryn, in astonishment.

Jimmy Silver explained.

There were exclamations of wrath and indignation from the three Colonials.

"You ought to have called us in," said Conroy. "We were in it as much as you."

"Oh, rats! No good you getting licked as well. That wouldn't be any use."

"It's a rotten shame!" exclaimed Pons hotly. "Ma foi! Those cads ought to be ragged by the whole school."

"They're jolly well going to be shown up as sneaks and informers!" said Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll make all Rookwood howl at 'em!" said Jimmy Silver vengefully.

"Why, even the other Modern cads would be down on 'em for sneaking. We'll give 'em the limelight over this!"

There was a council of war in the end study, over a late tea.

Oswald and Erroll, Rawson and Flynn, and several other fellows came in, to join in it, and they fully shared the indignation of Jimmy Silver and Co.

And at that excited and wrathful council measures were decided upon for "showing up" the Modern sneaks in a way that would, as Jimmy Silver remarked, fairly make them wriggle.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Plenty of Limelight!

"MY hat!"

Tommy Dodd uttered that exclamation in startled tones.

It was the following morning, and Tommy Dodd and Co., first down of the Modern Fourth, had just come out of Mr. Manders' house into the fresh air of the quadrangle.

Early as they were, a good many of the Classical Fourth were already out of doors. Jimmy Silver and Co. had come down specially early.

The first thing that met Tommy Dodd's startled eyes was a large banner, held by Lovell and Van Ryn, and floating gaily in the breeze.

It bore an inscription, in letters of huge size :

SNEAKS !  
SNEAKS !  
SNEAKS !

WHO GETS LICKED BY CLASSICALS ?  
TOMMY DODD !

WHO SNEAKS TO A PREFECT ?  
TOMMY DODD !

The three Tommies stood petrified. They blinked at that banner, and the crowd of Classical juniors, catching sight of them, burst into a yell :

" Sneaks ! "

" Modern sneaks ! "

" Yah ! "

" My hat ! " said Tommy Dodd. " What does that mean ? What are they calling us sneaks for, the Classical rotters ? "

" Sneaks ! " roared the Classics.

There were a dozen Classical juniors with Jimmy Silver, and they marched directly towards Mr. Manders' house, with the banner waving.

Other fellows stared at the banner, and at the procession, and there was a buzz of voices. Every fellow who came out of the houses stared, and fellows who were not yet down looked out of windows.

It was quite a sensation.

Certainly nobody at Rookwood was likely to be left in doubt of the sins of Tommy Dodd and Co.

It was the " limelight " Jimmy Silver had promised them, with a vengeance !

Tommy clenched his hands hard, his eyes blazing. He strode towards the procession, his chums at his heels.

" What does that mean ? " he roared.

" Sneak ! "

" Go and sneak to Knowles ! " yelled Flynn.

" Yah ! Go and sneak to Manders ! "

" Yah ! "

The three Tommies made a furious rush at the banner, to tear it down. The Fistical Four collared them at once.

" I'll smash you ! " roared Tommy Dodd. " It's a lie—a rotten lie ! You know it isn't true ! I'll—I'll— " "

" Sneaks ! " bellowed the Classics, drowning Tommy's frantic voice.

" March them along with the banner ! " shouted Conroy.

" Hurrah ! "

The three Tommies struggled desperately.

But they were in the hands of the

Philistines. Three or four pairs of Classical hands were laid upon each of them.

Breathless and furious, and still struggling, the three Tommies were marched along under the banner, in the midst of the shouting Classics.

More and more Classics crowded up to join the procession. Even the elegant Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, joined up, with Howard and Tracy and Selwyn. Townsend and Topham, Peele and Gower and Lattrey, the nuts of the Fourth, joined in. It was a demonstration of nearly all the Lower School on the Classical side.

Helpless in the grasp of the Classics, the three Tommies were marched round the quad, with the banner waving over their heads, amid a terrific uproar.

Modern juniors who rushed to their rescue were shoved and pushed aside, and left sprawling.

Dodd and Cook and Doyle were all shouting at once, but their voices could hardly be heard in the general din.

But more and more Moderns were crowding out now, and there was a furious attack upon the procession. Even Leggett and Cuffy joined in the attack. The insult on the waving banner was not to be borne.

There was a wild scrap round the banner, and the three Tommies tore themselves loose in the confusion and joined in the fight.

But the banner was well defended.

In spite of the fury of the Moderns, they could not get at it, and it waved in triumph over the conflict.

The " scrap " would have developed into a battle-royal, but for the arrival of Bulkeley on the scene.

" Stop this, you young villains ! " shouted the captain of Rookwood. " This is the second riot this week ! Stop it, or I'll report you all to the Head ! "

" We're going to tear that up ! " yelled Tommy Dodd. " It's a lie—a rotten lie ! "

" It's the truth ! " yelled Lovell. " You know it, you Modern rotters ! "

" You Classical cad— " "

" You Modern worm— " "

" Yah ! Sneaks ! "

" Silence ! " shouted Bulkeley. " Silence, I tell you ! Silver, put that silly foolery down at once. How dare you ! "

" It's the truth, Bulkeley. "

" Put it down ! "

" Oh, all right ! "

The banner was lowered at last. Round the stalwart captain of Rookwood Moderns and Classics glared at one



another, but Bulkeley's authority had stopped the conflict.

Some prefects would have reported the whole crowd for punishment or administered a licking all round, but George Bulkeley's method was different.

The anger and bitterness displayed on both sides was quite out of keeping with the usual character of the "rows" between Moderns and Classicals, and Bulkeley was troubled to see it, and he determined to go into the matter.

"Now, don't all speak at once," he said. "I'm going to inquire into this. That is a very insulting thing you've got on that silly banner, Silver."

"It's true."

"It's a lie!" yelled Tommy Dodd furiously.

"Silence! Let Silver speak first, please. Now, Silver, what do you mean by insulting the Modern kids in that way? You don't call that kind of thing a joke, I suppose?"

"It's not meant for a joke, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver. "It's meant to show those Modern sneaks up."

"Yes, rather!" roared Lovell. "All Rookwood's going to know the kind of sneaking worms they are."

"Be quiet, Lovell! It seems that you find fault with Dodd for giving information to a prefect," said Bulkeley. "Now, that depends! It might be a junior's duty to do so in some cases—and in other cases it would be tale-bearing, which every decent fellow is down upon. Suppose we hear Dodd explain?"

"It's a lie!" said Tommy Dodd, white with anger.

"You know it's the truth!" retorted Jimmy Silver.

"You Classical rotter——"

"Stop slanging," said Bulkeley, frowning. "Unless Silver can justify himself I shall take him to the Head at once. Now, Dodd, have you anything to say?"

"Only that it's a lie."

"And you, Silver?"

"It's the truth," said Jimmy savagely. "I don't mind telling you, Bulkeley, if Dodd don't mind."

"You can tell Bulkeley anything you like," said Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "If there's any truth in your rotten lies, I'd be glad to hear it."

"Go on, Silver."

"We went over to Latcham to see a footer match yesterday," said Jimmy. "Some of us raided a trap these Modern cads were driving to Latcham in. It was a lark—they've played tricks like that on us often enough. Well, Dodd com-

plained to a Modern prefect, and we were reported and licked. We don't mind the licking, it isn't that! But we bar sneaks."

"I didn't!" roared Tommy Dodd furiously.

"Knowles reported it to Manders, and Manders to Bootles," said Jimmy Silver. "He said you'd informed him, and I'd like to know how he knew if you didn't!"

Tommy Dodd almost choked.

"The rotter! The cad! Knowles was lying if he said we complained!" he raved.

"It's not true, Bulkeley. Knowles came on us when we were coming back, and noticed that we were dusty and a bit untidy, and asked us what had happened. We had to answer him, hadn't we? We told him it was only a lark, and that we didn't complain, and we didn't want him to interfere. If he interfered, it was of his own accord, the cad, to make trouble."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Bulkeley frowned.

"You must not speak of a prefect like that, Dodd!" he rapped out.

"I don't care!" shouted Tommy Dodd, beside himself with rage. "I tell you we never complained to Knowles. I saw at the time that he was trying to make something out of it, and I told him plainly we didn't want him to chip in, and that it was only a lark and we were satisfied. Didn't I, you chaps?"

"Faith, an' you did!" said Doyle.

"I was afraid at the time Knowles was thinking of making trouble," gasped Tommy Dodd. "But I never knew he'd reported it to Manders. Manders never spoke to us about it, or we'd have told him plain enough it was only Knowles's meddling."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell sheepishly. Jimmy Silver's face was a study.

"I—I—I'm sorry, Doddy!" he stammered. "Of course, I couldn't guess it was like that. Mr. Bootles told us plainly. Knowles said he was informed of what had happened by Dodd!"

"The liar!" howled Tommy Dodd. "The rotten Prussian!"

"Silence, Dodd!" said Bulkeley, with a worried look. "If you speak of your prefect like that I shall have to report you."

"I don't care!" panted Tommy Dodd. "I tell you Knowles only did it to make trouble, because he's down on us, and he's down on Silver. That's why he did it."

"You've no right to suggest such a thing about a Sixth-form prefect," said Bulkeley sternly. "Hold your tongue, you young fool. But now you see, Silver, that you've

made a ridiculous mistake. Dodd, at all events, never intended to act like an informer. You owe him an apology, and I'll see you make it."

Jimmy was crimson.

"I don't mind apologising," he said. "I was taken in. I couldn't think anything else, from what Mr. Bootles said. Knowles deliberately tried to make it look as if Dodd had sneaked."

"Enough of that! Now——"

"Oh, I apologise," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm sorry, Tommy—sincerely sorry, and all the fellows will say the same."

"Yes, rather!"

"Awfully sorry, Doddy."

"Now, don't let there be any more rows," said Bulkeley. "You can destroy that silly banner, and keep the peace."

"Right you are, Bulkeley."

The captain of Rookwood walked away, having restored peace and a right understanding. The rivals of Rookwood looked at one another—most of them rubbing damaged noses and eyes.

"So you're satisfied now?" snorted Tommy Dodd.

"Quite!" said Jimmy. "I'm sorry, as I said; but I can't blame myself for being taken in. It was Knowles's fault!"

"I admit that!" said Tommy Dodd. "Knowles is a first-class rotter! He did it on purpose. I know that."

And the offending banner was torn in pieces by both Classics and Moderns, as a sign that harmony was restored. The storm had blown over, but both Moderns and Classics were feeling towards Cecil Knowles in a way that could only be described as Hunnish.

Good old Bulkeley refused to believe, for a moment, that a Sixth-form prefect had so forgotten his dignity as to act the part of a fomenter of trouble among the juniors. But the juniors knew him better. And on both sides there was a determination to make Knowles, somehow, suffer for his treachery.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Knowles Is Not Reasonable.

**B**ULKELEY of the Sixth was looking rather thoughtful that morning.

He had restored peace among the incensed juniors, and banished the angry bitterness between them, and that was more satisfactory to Bulkeley than reporting them for punishment.

But the incident troubled his mind a little. He would not, and could not, believe that a Sixth-form prefect had

been so mean and base as to scheme deliberately to cause hatred between juniors whom he disliked. But his conduct had been, to say the very least, extremely injudicious.

After morning lessons, Bulkeley decided to speak to Knowles on the subject, in a friendly way. As head prefect of Rookwood, he had a right to give the Modern prefect a hint, but he did not mean to speak as one in authority. He thought that a friendly hint would meet the case.

Knowles was chatting under the beeches with his chums Catesby and Frampton, of the Modern Sixth, when Bulkeley joined them.

The three Modern seniors regarded him rather curiously as he came up.

There had never been any love lost between Bulkeley and Cecil Knowles. For the sake of the school generally, Bulkeley did his best to pull well with the head of the Modern side.

But he met with little encouragement from Knowles.

It was hardly a secret that Knowles had an ambitious eye on the captaincy of the school, and some fellows knew, and more suspected, that he always did his best to undermine Bulkeley's position.

Knowles had a very great influence on his own side of Rookwood, and many fellows backed him up in his attitude of standing up for Modern rights, who would never have dreamed of taking part in any of his secret and underhanded schemes for "downing" Bulkeley.

"I've been looking for you, Knowles," said Bulkeley, in quite a friendly way, with a nod to the three Moderns.

"Well, here I am."

"Can I have a few words with you?"

"Certainly! Go ahead!"

Bulkeley glanced at Frampton and Catesby.

"Oh, you can speak before my friends," said Knowles. "I've got no secrets from them, that I know of."

"I'll speak to you another time, then," said Bulkeley.

Frampton and Catesby exchanged a glance, and walked away. Knowles looked at Bulkeley rather impatiently.

"Get on," he said. "Is it about the footer? You know my views about that already. The Modern side isn't sufficiently represented in the team. I stick to that."

"It wasn't the footer I was going to speak about," said Bulkeley mildly.

"We can let that stand till we jaw it over in committee. It's another matter entirely."

"Blessed if I can guess what it is, then."

"About the juniors yesterday; you reported them!"

Knowles sneered.

"Don't you think I should report juniors of your side, when they're guilty of hooliganism? I beg to differ."

"Don't get your back up before I've had a chance to speak, Knowles. There's nothing to row about."

"I'm not getting my back up. But if this is going to be a lecture, I really must ask you to excuse me."

"It's not a lecture," said Bulkeley quietly. "It seems that some Classical kids raided a trap from some Moderns. It was a harmless joke, so far as I can see. You took a different view?"

"Certainly I did!"

"Well, you're entitled to your own view, of course."

"Thanks!"

"But in reporting the matter, you gave Mr. Manders an impression—a wrong impression—that Dodd and the rest had complained to you about what had happened. He passed it on to Mr. Bootles, from whom the Classical kids got it in turn. It led to a row among the juniors."

"They're always rowing, I believe," yawned Knowles.

"Yes; but in this case, it was a bitter quarrel, owing to Silver and the rest getting the impression that Dodd had deliberately given information about them. You know what the juniors think of that kind of thing."

"I haven't bothered to think about it at all."

Bulkeley compressed his lips.

"Of course, it was simply carelessness on your part, Knowles, I know that," he said. "But it's given the juniors a very unfortunate impression. Luckily, I was able to get an explanation made, and nip in the bud what might have been a very bitter dispute, with rankling feelings on both sides."

Knowles gave the captain of Rookwood a far from agreeable look.

"Oh, you did?" he said.

"Yes."

"I should hardly think the captain of the school had time on his hands to take part in a junior squabble," said Knowles sarcastically.

"I found time," said Bulkeley calmly.

"A few rows among the juniors don't do any harm, but we don't want bitter blood, if it can be avoided. You see that?"

"Not at all. I don't care a rap what the juniors think," said Knowles. "A few lickings would keep them in order, I suppose."

"If you look at it like that, Knowles I suppose there's nothing more to be said Tat-ta!" said Bulkeley; and he walked away, his brows knitted.

Knowles smiled sneeringly, and rejoined his friends who were strolling under the beeches at a distance.

"Well, what did the great man want, Knowles?" grinned Catesby.

"Oh, the same old tale," sneered Knowles. "He's annoyed at Classical kids being reported for punishment. Classics are sacred, you know, and mustn't be interfered with."

"Confound his cheek!" said Frampton hotly. "I hope you gave it to him pretty straight, Knowles."

"Believe me, I did," said Knowles.

The three seniors walked on towards Mr. Manders' house. Tommy Dodd was outside, and he stepped in Knowles's way, with a determined expression on his rugged face.

"Knowles, please——"

"Hallo!" said Knowles, halting. "More complaints of the Classics, what? Well, you can go ahead."

Tommy Dodd flushed crimson.

"I never complained of the Classics," he exclaimed. "That's what I want to speak to you about. They're calling us sneaks because you made out——"

"What!" thundered Knowles.

Tommy Dodd faltered a little. It required nerve to talk to a prefect of the Sixth Form in this way.

But the leader of the Modern juniors stuck to his guns. Prefect or not, Knowles was going to hear the truth.

"You made out that I had complained—sneaked, in fact," said Tommy. "It wasn't true."

Frampton whistled, and Catesby grinned. Knowles had an ashplant under his arm, and he let it slide into his hand.

"So that's what you've got to say, Dodd?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tommy. "You ought to tell Mr. Manders that we never complained, it's only fair."

"Hold out your hand, Dodd!"

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish!

"Now cut off," said Knowles, tucking the stick under his arm.

He went into the house with his friends, leaving the Modern junior rubbing his hands, with an expression upon his face that a wild Hun might have envied. At that moment Tommy Dodd's feelings towards his head prefect outdid those of the Classical juniors.

## CHAPTER 10.

## The Seniors' Match.

"COMING to see the Moderns licked?"

Erroll asked the question on Saturday afternoon. And the Fistical Four replied with one voice:

"What-ho!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. joined the crowd of fellows streaming towards Big Side.

There was a match that afternoon between two Rookwood senior sides, the Classical team captained by Bulkeley, the Modern by Knowles.

Most of the juniors were giving up other occupations for the afternoon to watch the game. Jimmy Silver & Co. formed up in a crowd near the ropes to cheer the Classical goals. They gave Bulkeley a preliminary cheer when he came on the ground with his men.

Tommy Dodd & Co., not to be outdone, greeted Knowles and his team with a roar. Knowles's unpleasant personal qualities were forgotten just then. He was there as the head of the Modern side, and the Tommies hoped fervently for his success.

The game was watched with keen interest from the kick-off.

But Jimmy Silver, at least, was thinking about other things as well as the senior football match.

The score against Knowles had not been paid off yet.

Jimmy Silver was a believer in reprisals. Knowles had played a mean trick on the juniors and very nearly caused the cheery rivalry between the juniors of Rookwood to become tainted with bitterness and malice.

Knowles had to be punished for that.

But punishing a prefect of the Sixth Form was a large order. Jimmy Silver had set his keen wits to work on the subject. But as yet he had to confess he had not been able to devise a "wheeze."

He was thinking it over now as he watched the footer.

Knowles's hope of a victory over Bulkeley's side was fervent, but it was not well founded. In the first half, two goals fell to the Classics, and the Moderns had not scored by half-time.

"Looks like a win for us!" grinned Lovell.

"By gad! The Moderns haven't a look in," said Mornington with a laugh.

"I fancy we could bottle them up with the junior eleven, if it came to that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Conroy. "I know I could keep goal better than Frampton is doing it, and chance it. I

shouldn't have let that last shot from Neville pass me."

"I say, Jimmy!"

Tubby Muffin joined the Fistical Four. He jerked at Jimmy Silver's sleeve.

"Buzz off!" said Jimmy, without looking round.

"But I say, you know——"

"Scat!"

"I say, now's your chance, you know," said Tubby, in a mysterious whisper. "Ain't Knowles going to be made to sit up for telling lies, you know. I've got an idea."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Jimmy, you ass——"

"Oh, let Tubby run on," grinned Raby. "Have you got some dodge for bagging Knowles's sugar, Tubby?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a matter of fact, Raby, it's something in that line," said Muffin. "I know Knowles has grub hidden in his study."

"Rats!"

"Leggett says so."

"Leggett's a Prussian."

"Well, you know what a rotter Knowles is, it's just the thing he would do," said Tubby Muffin. "My idea is to raid his study now he's on the footer ground, see. We'll confiscate all the grub we find there, that's only fair, you know. Food-hogs ought to be punished."

"Oh, ring off!"

"The fact is, I'm awfully hungry," said Tubby Muffin pathetically. "I never get enough to eat. You fellows raid the study, you know, and I—I'll keep watch outside. And we'll go halves. What do you say, Jimmy? The beast ought to be punished, and how can you punish a fellow worse than by bagging his grub?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Jimmy, it's up to you. I'll keep watch—I——"

"Goal!" roared Tommy Dodd & Co.

"Hallo, those Moderns have broken their duck."

"Time they did!"

"Ha, ha!"

Knowles had put the ball in and the Moderns were roaring applause. Knowles's team was nowhere near the Classical seniors in form, but there was no doubt that Knowles himself was a fine player.

Knowles was certain of his place in the first eleven, however the match went, but it was doubtful if many of the Modern seniors would be included with him.

"Well done, Knowles!" exclaimed Bulkeley heartily.

Knowles smiled sarcastically. Judging Bulkeley by himself, he looked on the

Rookwood captain's hearty congratulations as so much humbug.

"Well, that wasn't a bad shot," said Lovell critically. "I'll say this for Knowles, he can't make up a team, but he can play himself."

"I missed it through this fat oyster buzzing at me!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"I say, Jimmy," urged Tubby Muffin.

"Buzz off!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, but I say—yareoooooh!"

Tubby Muffin roared as he was sat down forcibly in the grass. Lovell's boot helped him away, and nothing more was heard of his wonderful scheme for punishing Knowles by raiding his "grub."

Knowles and Co. were fighting hard to equalise; but a good many of the Modern seniors had bellows to mend, and it was plain enough to all the onlookers that they were outclassed.

Knowles himself, certainly, was very nearly equal even to Bulkeley. But the rest of the team were obviously inferior.

But another stroke of luck came along when Catesby, from the half-back line, put the ball in by a long, lucky shot.

"Goal!" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"Hurray!"

"Bravo, Catesby!"

"Hurray!"

Knowles's eyes gleamed. The score was equal, and there was only a quarter of an hour to go.

It was quite on the cards that he might at least draw with the-Classical team.

But that hope was short-lived.

From the resumption the Classical seniors pressed on in a hot attack, and in three minutes Bulkeley had beaten Frampton in goal again.

And that was not the end.

The Classicals seemed to have woke up with a vengeance. Five minutes later, Jones major sent the ball to Neville, who slammed it home. Knowles gritted his teeth as he walked back to the line. That brief hope had vanished. The Classical score was doubled.

And then, almost on the stroke of time, Bulkeley drove in the ball once more. The whistle went, leaving the Classicals victors by five goals to two.

It was a crushing victory, and the Classical crowd roared applause. Jimmy Silver and Co. shouted themselves hoarse.

And as the crowd left the ground Jimmy Silver caught Lovell by the arm and shook him in his excitement. Jimmy's eyes were dancing.

"I've got it!" he gasped.

"Got what? Leggo!"

"The wheeze!"

"Oh! Out with it, then!"

"We're going to make Knowles sit up," chortled Jimmy Silver, "and I know the way. Ha, ha!"

"Well, how are you going to make him sit up?"

"Footer!"

"What?"

"We're going to challenge the Modern seniors, and beat them at footer!" said Jimmy Silver, in a thrilling voice. "What do you think of that?"

Jimmy's chums could only stare at him blankly. He had taken their breath away.

## CHAPTER 11.

### A Challenge From The Fourth.

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL found his voice at last.

And his first remark was:

"Fathead!"

And Raby and Newcome chimed in:

"Ass!"

"Well, of all the unenthusiastic duffers!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver indignantly. "Lot of good it is thinking out first-class wheezes. I shall jolly well give this Co. the sack and chum up with Tubby Muffin and Cuffy, by Jove!"

"Silly ass!" snorted Lovell. "You've been bitten by some football insect, I should think. You'll be challenging the Corinthians and Tottenham Hotspur next. Do you think Knowles would play a junior team with the Modern senior crowd, you duffer? First you challenge old Frulo, a chap old enough to be your Dutch uncle. Now you want to challenge Knowles. What do you think Knowles would say if you did, you chump?"

"Rats, I should think!" remarked Raby.

"He wouldn't play us, anyway, any more than the chocolate cream team would," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"He might be made to," he said.

"Made to! Oh, my hat!"

"Going to pull his ears if he doesn't?" inquired Newcome sarcastically.

"Oh, you make me tired!" said Jimmy Silver. "Could we put Knowles in his place better than by giving him a footer licking—him senior and us junior? Answer me that!"

"No, if he would play. But he wouldn't. Do seniors ever play juniors?" hooted Lovell.

"Not as a rule. But that's no reason why they shouldn't. It's a poor rule that can't be broken."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, my idea is to challenge Knowles to a football match," said Jimmy Silver obstinately. "My belief is that Classical juniors could beat Modern seniors. Of course, they're a heavy lot for us to tackle. But we're better players."

"Ha, ha!"

"Knowles is good, and so is Catesby, and Frampton isn't bad, but the rest are only so-so. We could make up a team of regular corkers."

"We might have a dog's chance," admitted Lovell. "Easier than playing Frulo's lot that you were so keen on, anyway. Even if we drew with them it would be an awful oner in the eye for Knowles. If we took a single goal he would never get over it. But they wouldn't play us. It's rot!"

"Might as well challenge them," said Raby, laughing. "Even that would be one in the eye for Knowles—a challenge from the Fourth."

Jimmy Silver gave a grunt.

"We'll challenge them right enough," he said. "And I dare say Knowles will accept. He can be made to. If he refuses, we'll let everybody know he's afraid to play a junior team for fear of getting licked. That will bring him up to the scratch very likely. And think, if we licked them at footer—why, Knowles wouldn't be able to hold his head up again in Rookwood for whole terms."

"He won't play us!"

"We'll see."

There was discussion in the junior common-room that evening on the subject of Jimmy Silver's latest extraordinary wheeze.

It was pretty generally cackled over.

There was a chance—a bare chance—of beating the Modern seniors if they consented to the match. But that Knowles would consent was a wild impossibility. It was even a more idiotic idea, Lovell declared, than the idea of challenging the Contadini.

Indeed, Jimmy Silver's chums averred pretty plainly that they feared that Uncle James's brain was failing him. That was the only way of accounting for his amazing schemes of late.

But the captain of the Fourth held to his idea.

On Monday, after lessons, the challenge was to be delivered. Nobody was very keen to accompany Jimmy Silver in delivering the challenge. Lovell declared that they would be kicked out of the house for their pains. Knowles was not likely to take such cheek as politely as the Italian gentleman had taken it.

On reflection, Jimmy Silver decided to send the challenge by note.

Accordingly the note was written in the end study after lessons on Monday. It ran:

"Dear Knowles,—The Classical junior eleven would have great pleasure in meeting Modern seniors in a football match, if a date can be arranged.

"Please send reply by bearer. Yours sincerely,  
J. SILVER."

Wegg of the Third was induced to cut across to Mr. Manders' house with that note. The fag disappeared with it, and Jimmy Silver and Co. waited with some anxiety for the reply.

Wegg returned in about ten minutes. He was grinning.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver. "Did you give Knowles my note?"

"What-ho!" said Wegg. "You should have seen his face when he read it."

"What did he say?"

"Cheeky cub!" said Wegg, with a chuckle.

"Ahem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, dry up, Lovell! There's nothing to cackle about," said Jimmy Silver crossly.

"Didn't he send any answer, Wegg?"

"Yes, rather. After he read it a second time he seemed sort of thoughtful," said the Third Former. "Then he said if you'd call over he'd give you his answer after speaking to Catesby and Frampton."

"When?"

"At once, he said."

And Wegg departed, whistling.

Jimmy Silver gave his chums a rather triumphant look.

"Looks as if he's going to accept," he said. "Of course he was rather surprised at first; it's unusual. But he's thinking it over, at least."

"More likely wants to get you to his study to lick you," said Mornington, who was in the group of Classical juniors.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Oh, rats! That would be a bit too mean, even for Knowles. I'm going to see him. I expect it will be all right."

And Jimmy Silver walked away briskly to Mr. Manders' house.

The three Tommies were in the hall, and they lined up at once.

"Classical worm crawling into our house, begorra!" said Doyle indignantly. "Chuck him out on his neck!"

"Pax," said Jimmy, "I've come to see your prefect."

"Knowles!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Yes. We're fixing up a football match with him," said Jimmy Silver carelessly.

"You're fixing up a football match with Knowles!" shouted Tommy.

"Oh, yes!"

"Gammon!"

"Knowles wouldn't play a fag team!" hooted Tommy Cook.

"You'll see, my infants."

And Jimmy Silver went on, leaving the three Tommies in a state of incredulous astonishment.

Jimmy knocked at Knowles' study door.

"Come in!" called out the Modern prefect.

And the captain of the Fourth marched in cheerfully.

## CHAPTER 12.

### In the Lion's Den.

C ECIL KNOWLES was not alone in the study.

Catesby and Frampton, of the Sixth, were with him, and they were grinning.

A cane lay on the table, just as if it had been placed in readiness for the Classical junior's visit.

Jimmy Silver could not help noticing it, and he gave Knowles a rather quick look. But Knowles' face was quite bland.

"Hallo! It's you, Silver!" he said.

"Yes, Knowles."

"Shut the door after you."

Jimmy shut the door.

"Now, about the note you sent me," said Knowles. "You want an answer to it, of course?"

Frampton strolled round, and stood leaning against the door.

Jimmy Silver felt an inward tremor for a moment. It certainly looked as if Frampton was there to cut off his escape. Jimmy had ventured into the lion's den, and if his old enemy choose to cut up rusty, there was not much help for him.

"Yes, Knowles," he said, as calmly as he could.

He would not allow his manner to betray uneasiness.

"It's very kind of you to think of us, when you've got a vacant date," said Knowles smoothly. "Of course it would be an honour for a team made up from the Sixth and Fifth to play a fag team. A great honour, in fact."

"We could give you a good game," said Jimmy stoutly.

"Lick us, very likely!" grinned Catesby.

"Yes, very likely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't send that note to me simply out of fag cheek, my dear fellow?" asked Knowles, still blandly.

"Certainly not."

"You thought I would take a challenge from the Fourth Form seriously?"

"Why not?"

"Well, my dear kid, I don't believe you," drawled Knowles. "I believe you wrote that note out of pure cheek—the kind of cheek I'm used to from you, Classics. But I don't allow Fourth Form fags to cheek me. I'm going to give you a licking for your insolence."

Jimmy backed away a pace, clenching his hands.

"Look here, Knowles, I came here on your invitation, and you can't go for me without acting like a treacherous Prussian Hun!" he exclaimed hotly.

"I'm not going to bandy words with you," said Knowles, rising. "I'm going to give you the licking you've wanted for a long time, my boy. Collar him!"

Jimmy Silver made a wild spring at the door.

Frampton pitched him back without ceremony. Catesby caught him by the collar, while Knowles picked up his cane.

Jimmy Silver's eyes blazed.

Perhaps Knowles had some excuse for regarding a fag challenge to a football match as cheek. But nothing could excuse the treachery with which he had inveigled the Classical junior into his power.

Jimmy wrenched himself away from Catesby's hold, and caught up a chair as the nearest weapon.

Catesby, who was striding at him again, backed away with great suddenness as Jimmy swung the chair aloft.

"Hands off, you modern cads!" panted Jimmy. "You'll get hurt. I warn you——"

"Put down that chair!" roared Knowles.

"Let me out of this study first!"

"You're not going out of this study till you're thoroughly licked!" said Knowles, between his teeth.

"Keep back!" said Jimmy savagely.

The three seniors were advancing upon him together.

Jimmy Silver's blood was up.

The treacherous trick by which he had been trapped in Knowles' study roused all his wrath, and he did not mean to take a licking quietly. He wished—rather too late—that he had heeded Morny's warning.

"Put down that chair, you young fool!"

"I'll smash it at you if you come for me!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mind, I mean it, you tricky cad!"

Knowles made a rush, with Frampton and Catesby close after him. The three seniors hurled themselves at Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver kept his word. He was utterly reckless now.

The chair smashed down at Knowles.

There was a yell of anguish from the Modern prefect. He caught the chair on his arms and saved his head, and his arms were bruised by the crashing blow.

But Jimmy Silver had no chance of hitting twice. Knowles clutched the chair, while Frampton and Catesby clutched Jimmy Silver.

The junior struggled desperately, hitting and kicking, and even the two big Sixth Formers did not find it easy to hold him.

Knowles hurled the chair into a corner and grasped Jimmy furiously by the collar. The junior was dragged to the table and flung face downwards upon it.

"Hold the young cad there!" hissed Knowles.

He grabbed his cane again.

Jimmy, still struggling and kicking, was held down, Catesby at his feet and Frampton at his head.

As he struggled, Knowles started with the cane.

Lash! lash! lash!

Knowles laid on the blows with reckless force, and Jimmy Silver roared with anguish.

Lash! lash! lash!

"Yaroo! Oh, my hat! You rotten bully! Oh!"

Knowles lashed away savagely.

The pain of that brutal infliction fairly doubled up Jimmy Silver. He had been through a flogging in his time, but it had been nothing to this.

He struggled so furiously that he tore his feet away from Catesby's grasp. Then his boots landed out, catching the senior on the chest, and hurling him backwards.

Jimmy curled off the table like a cat, clinging to Catesby, and dragging him to the floor. Knowles lashed at him furiously, but it was Frampton who caught the cane as he rolled over with Jimmy, and he jumped up with a roar.

Jimmy was free for a moment, and that moment was enough for him. He bounded to the door and tore it open.

Knowles was after him like a shot. The cane lashed again at Jimmy's back as he fled, a last terrific cut that made him yell.

Then he went down the passage like a stone from a catapult, and Knowles, panting, turned back into his study.

Jimmy Silver fairly flew. He crashed into the three Tommies as he neared the

doorway, and reeled back. The Tommies were chortling.

"Well, has Knowles fixed it up, bedad?" roared Tommy Doyle.

"Ow!"

"You look as if you've had a friendly talk," chortled Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, rats! Ow, ow!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

He dodged the Moderns, and ran out into the quad, leaving Tommy Dodd and Co. roaring with laughter.

Jimmy Silver returned breathlessly across the quadrangle. Outside his own house a crowd of Classical juniors were waiting for him. They burst into a roar as he came panting up. If ever a fellow looked as if he had been thoroughly licked, Jimmy Silver did just then.

"Fixed it up?" howled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow—the beast pitched into me!" panted Jimmy.

"What did I tell you?" grinned Mornington.

"Poor old Jimmy!" sobbed Lovell.

"He never had any luck with his footer challenges. I'll tell you what, Jimmy—send the next challenge to Manchester United. They're too far off to boot you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver snorted, and limped into the schoolhouse without replying. He did not feel equal to an argument, and certainly there was no doubt that Jimmy's luck was out. His reckless challenges to matches on the football field seemed likely to earn him more kicks than half-pence, so to speak.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome came in to tea grinning. But Jimmy Silver was not seen to grin all that evening. He was feeling too keenly the effects of the tremendous licking in Knowles' study.

"Never mind, Jimmy," said Lovell, consolingly, when the Classical Fourth went up to their dormitory. "We'll find another way of making Knowles sit up."

"We're going to beat him at footer!" snapped Jimmy.

Lovell stared.

"Great pip! Are you still sticking to that?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, ass!"

"You want another licking from Knowles?"

"Oh, rats!"

And Jimmy Silver went to bed while his chums chortled. Jimmy was a sticker, but they did not think he was likely to get Knowles into that football match.



## CHAPTER 13.

## Knowles is First in the Field.

"YOU coming, Jimmy?"

Tubby Muffin nudged Jimmy Silver as the latter stood in the schoolhouse doorway, with a frown on his brow. It was after morning lessons the next day, and Jimmy Silver was thinking deeply. He had plenty of food for thought.

"Eh! Coming where?" he asked, rather gruffly.

"Knowles' study!" said Tubby, in a deep whisper. "Knowles has gone to footer practice, and there's a good chance now. We'll confiscate his grub, you know, and——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Look here, I'll keep watch while you——"

"Sheer off, you fat duffer!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Well, I sha'n't let you have any of the grub if I bag it by myself," said Tubby Muffin.

"Br-r-r-r!"

Jimmy Silver walked out into the quad. The fat Classical frowned after him, and after some hesitation took his way to Mr. Manders' house.

Tubby's idea was that Knowles couldn't be more severely punished than by having his "grub" bagged. Tubby's thoughts generally, if not always, ran on grub.

He would greatly have preferred Jimmy Silver to do the raiding. But as a last resource he was prepared to undertake the raid himself. Probably Tubby was thinking more of the grub than of punishing Knowles.

Knowles was a selfish fellow, and he had a good deal of money, and many of the juniors hinted that he did not strictly observe the food regulations. Tubby Muffin looked on Knowles' study as a land flowing with mild and honey, and he was very anxious to sample the modern prefect's supposed stores.

The fat junior had reasoned it out very cunningly. Knowles couldn't make much of a fuss about his provisions being raided if he really was keeping a store in excess of the rules. He wouldn't venture to draw attention to the fact that he was "food-hogging."

Tubby felt safe enough from consequences; if only the raid itself was a success. He sidled very cautiously into Mr. Manders' house, and with still more caution sneaked into Knowles' study. He had seen the Modern prefect on the football ground, and he felt safe for a few minutes at least.

To Tubby's disappointment the study cupboard was locked.

"Rotter!" murmured Tubby, regarding it savagely. "Suspicious beast—afraid some fellow will come in and bag his grub, I suppose. Just like Knowles."

There was a step in the passage.

Tubby Muffin jumped, and without stopping to think he bolted under the bed in the alcove, like a scared rabbit. He did not want to meet Knowles just then—in Knowles' quarters.

"You here, Knowles?" It was Frampton's voice, as the door opened.

"He hasn't come in yet," said the voice of Catesby.

"Better wait for him."

Tubby Muffin suppressed a groan, as the two Modern seniors came into the study. He did not venture to show himself.

A few minutes later Cecil Knowles came in.

"Oh, you fellows are here," he said.

"Right!"

"What was it you wanted to talk about?" asked Frampton. "You said you had an idea for taking the wind out of Bulkeley's sails. We're on, of course."

Knowles closed the door.

"That's it," he said. "I've been thinking it out, you fellows, and I fancy I've got on to a scheme for making Bulkeley sing a little smaller."

"Go ahead!"

Tubby Muffin, under the bed in the alcove, pricked up his ears. Tubby was not a scrupulous fellow, and he was intensely curious. He was quite anxious to know what might be Knowles' scheme for making old Bulkeley sing small, as he expressed it.

"You fellows have heard of the Contadini," said Knowles, lighting a cigarette.

"That foreign team?" said Catesby. "Yes. I hear they beat a khaki team the other day at Latcham."

"They're a fine team," said Knowles. "It's a feather in anybody's cap to get a match with them."

"We shouldn't have much of a show in the match if they played Rookwood," said Frampton discontentedly. "Bulkeley would take care of that."

"They might play Rookwood if they were asked," said Knowles. "But I'm not thinking of that. I heard Bulkeley discussing them with Neville on Saturday, and he may be thinking of sending them a challenge. But my idea is, why not bag a match with them for the Modern side, if we can."

Catesby grinned.

"I heard some of the juniors saying that young ass, Silver, challenged them to a match with the fags," he said.

"The young idiot!" said Knowles. "It would be like his cheek. But there's no reason why the Contadini shouldn't play us; they have played several public school sides in their tour."

"But surely a challenge ought to go from the School, not from one side."

Knowles made an impatient gesture.

"Yes, in ordinary circumstances. But not under the circumstances that we want to bag the match for our side, and leave Bulkeley out in the cold."

"Oh! I see."

"Think what a leg-up it would be for us!" said Knowles, his eyes glistening. "The Classics are chortlin' over that game on Saturday. They did us brown, and there's no denyin' that. They would be simply green and yellow if we bagged a match with such a corkin' team as the Contadini, and left them out in the cold."

"By gad, they would!"

"But—but could we play them?" said Catesby dubiously.

"Well, we can put a good team into the field. I suppose you're not going to take Bulkeley's view that the Modern side can't play footer?" snapped Knowles.

"No, of course not; but——"

"Well, suppose they beat us, still, we shall have played them—we shall have bagged a tremendous fixture that Bulkeley would give one of his ears to get hold of."

"Yes, that's true."

"I understand that they've stayed in Latcham over the week-end," continued Knowles. "They played a match for some local charity on Saturday, I've been told. I'd have gone over to see them if we hadn't been playing here. I'm not sure whether they'll still be in the neighbourhood on Wednesday, but if they are, and they care to play us——"

"Good! No harm in asking them, anyway. Will you mention it to Bulkeley?"

"After I've posted the letter—yes."

"Ha, ha!"

"Well, what do you say?" asked Knowles. "I think it is a ripping idea! No harm done if it doesn't come off, and a regular triumph over the Classics if it does."

"I agree," said Catesby.

"Good egg!" said Frampton. "No harm done, anyway."

"Then you write the letter, Frampton, as secretary," said Knowles. "You needn't specially mention that we're the Modern side club. If Carlo Frulo happens to think we're Rookwood as a whole, he

may. No harm done, though you can't exactly say so."

Frampton laughed.

"All serene!"

He sat down at Knowles' table, and the letter was written. Cecil Knowles sealed it up with considerable satisfaction, and the three seniors left the study.

Tubby Muffin was glad to see their feet disappear from his hiding-place.

He crawled out, breathless and dusty, from under the bed, as soon as the foot-steps had died away down the passage.

"Silly asses!" growled Tubby. "To think the Contadini will play a scrubby lot of Modern chumps. Yah!"

Tubby shook a fat fist at the locked cupboard, and scuttled out of the study. He had not been able to carry out his purpose, but he was glad, under the circumstances, to escape without a thrashing. He knew that he had had a very narrow escape.

Quite unconscious of the fact that the fat Classical had been in the study at all, Knowles went down to the school letter-box, and dropped the letter into it, addressed to Signor Carlo Frulo, at Latcham.

As he strolled back, he spotted Bulkeley in the quadrangle, and joined him. Bulkeley gave him a civil nod.

"You've heard of that Italian team at Latcham, Bulkeley?" Knowles remarked, in a careless way.

"The Contadini—yes."

"I thought I'd mention to you that we've sent them a challenge to a match with the Modern club here," said Knowles. Bulkeley started.

"You have!" he ejaculated.

"Yes; I thought I'd mention it."

"You might have mentioned it before you sent it away," exclaimed Bulkeley, his brows contracting.

"I really meant to," said Knowles blandly. "But I haven't seen you lately, so——"

"Well, you know where my study is," said Bulkeley.

"No harm done, I suppose?" asked Knowles. "You weren't thinking of challenging them to meet a Classical team by any chance?"

"Certainly not. A team like the Contadini ought to play the School, if they play at Rookwood at all," said Bulkeley. "It would be hard enough to beat them with the best that all Rookwood could put in the field. One side alone couldn't hope to make up an eleven to beat them."

"Not even the Classical side?" said Knowles, with a suppressed sneer.

"I don't suppose so; and certainly not the Modern side," said Bulkeley sharply.

"Oh, we'll give them a tussle, if they agree to play us," drawled Knowles. "They won't exactly walk over us, you know."

"It's jolly awkward," said Bulkeley. "I was thinking of sending them a challenge from Rookwood. That would have been ever so much better. You can see that."

"You didn't do me the honour to mention it."

"I was going to propose it in committee this evening."

"Well, I'm sorry."

"It's awkward," said Bulkeley, knitting his brows. "If they play your team, they can't play the School; and if they refuse, the School can't very well challenge them. I suppose it wouldn't be possible, Knowles, to withdraw your challenge, and substitute one from the School?"

"Well, hardly, I think," said Knowles thoughtfully. "Of course, if you'd mentioned this to me before, it would have been different. I quite see the force of what you say, of course. But Frulo's answer to me may come by any post now, you see."

"Oh! It's some time since you wrote, then?"

"Yes, some little time," said Knowles calmly. "What a pity you didn't mention it before, Bulkeley. I'm really sorry."

"Well, it can't be helped," said Bulkeley. "I didn't know till to-day that the Italians had stayed at Latcham over the week-end, or I should have mentioned it before. Can't be helped now."

"I'm really sorry," said Knowles, with a smile.

"Oh, all right!"

Bulkeley could not help looking disturbed as he walked away. He did not like to suspect his fellow-prefect of acting in an underhand manner, but he could not feel that Knowles' conduct had been above-board.

A challenge to a team of the standing of the Contadini should certainly have gone from Rookwood, not from a section of Rookwood; Knowles could not help knowing that. He had acted within his rights, in a way, but good taste and proper feeling would have made him consult the captain of the School first.

Bulkeley was very unwilling to believe that it was Knowles' object to "dish" him. But he came very near thinking so now. And if he could have read Cecil Knowles' thoughts, he would have been quite sure of it.

## CHAPTER 14.

## Jimmy Silver On The War-Path.

JIMMY SILVER came into the junior Common-room, and several grinning glances were turned upon him.

"Uncle James" of Rookwood was really in danger of losing his prestige.

Somehow or other, his challenge to the Italian footer team had leaked out, and all the fellows had grinned over it. Now his challenge to Knowles of the Sixth, and Knowles' drastic reply, was a standing joke.

The Classical fellows shook their heads and declared that Jimmy Silver was getting played out.

Townsend and Topham, Peele and Lattrey and Gower, made the very most of it, and hinted plainly that a new junior skipper was required. Peele urged Mornington to have a shot for it, now that there was a chance.

But Mornington seemed to have forgotten his old desire to oust Jimmy Silver; at all events, he only replied "Rats!" to Peele's suggestion.

There was a buzz of talk in the common-room when Jimmy Silver came in, with knitted brows. Tubby Muffin was the centre of a group, swelling with the importance of the news he had to tell.

"Hallo, here's Silver!" grinned Higgs. "Good news for you, Silver! It seems that you're not the biggest ass at Rookwood, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's catchin', by gad!" said Townsend.

"The Third will be challengin' the Italian johnnies next!" chuckled Topham.

"Eh? What's that?" asked Jimmy.

"Tubby's got news!" said Lovell, laughing. "Knowles has sent a challenge to the Italian team at Latcham."

"My hat!"

"I heard him!" said Tubby Muffin. "I heard 'em talking it over, you know, and then Frampton wrote the letter, and Knowles went to post it. Knowles is as big a duffer as you are, Silver, ain't he?"

"I thought Frulo's team had left Latcham," said Jimmy.

"Still there, it seems," said Raby. "Awful cheek of those Modern cads to send them a challenge, I think."

"They won't play 'em!" said Rawson.

"No fear!"

"Well, Knowles borrowed the idea from this side," said Jimmy.

"He's welcome to it!" sniggered Townsend. "Of all the silly, fatheaded ideas——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And how does Tubby know all about it?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "I suppose Knowles didn't call him into the consultation?"

"I—I happened to be under his bed——"

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Tubby often happens to be in queer places. I suppose he was under the bed because he couldn't stick at a keyhole on the Modern side."

"I—I wasn't listening——"

"You heard without listening?" asked Van Ryn.

"I couldn't help hearing, you know, as I was under the bed, could I?" said Tubby warmly. "They were jawing in the room. Knowles said it would be a regular one in the eye for Bulkeley if they bagged a match with the Contadini. I jolly nearly told him what I thought of him, only——"

"Only you were afraid to show yourself!" grunted Higgs.

"And what were you doing in Knowles's study at all?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I—I was going to punish him—by—by raiding his grub, you know," said Tubby. "I believe he's a food-hog, and I was going to—to confiscate——"

"Food-hogs ought to be punished," said Conroy solemnly.

"Just so!" said Tubby. "I was going——"

"They ought to be bumped!" continued the Australian junior.

"That's just what I think——"

"And as you went to Knowles's study to be a food-hog yourself, we'll bump you," added Conroy.

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say," gasped Tubby. "I—I was going—oh, crumbs—— Leggo! Yah!"

"Bump him!"

Tubby Muffin wriggled in three or four pairs of hands. This was rather an unexpected result of the interesting news he had imparted to the Classics.

"One for food-hogging!" said Conroy.

Bump!

"Yow! Help!"

"One for eavesdropping!"

Bump!

"Yaroooop!"

"And one for luck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-wooop!" roared Tubby Muffin, as he sat on the floor. "You rotters! Yaroooh! I wasn't eavesdropping! Yah! It was quite by—yow-ow—chance! Yow-ow-ow!"

"And now jump on him," said Conroy, with a wink at his chums. "All together, and land well on his neck! Now!"

Tubby Muffin squirmed away and darted out of the common-room, followed by a yell of laughter.

"Well, Jimmy, have you thought it out!" asked Lovell, with a grin.

"I'm thinking it out!" grunted Jimmy.

"You're going to take Knowles by the nose and make him play footer?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, how are you going to do it, then?" grinned Conroy. "He won't do it of his own accord."

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He had taken a sheet of paper and a pen and was scribbling. He held up the paper when he had finished.

"What price that?"

The paper ran:

**NOTICE TO ALL ROOKWOOD!**

"The Modern Sixth, having been challenged to a football match, have declined for reasons of

**FUNK!!!**

The Modern Sixth are afraid of being

**LICKED!**

**KNOWLES IS A FUNK!**

**THE MODERNS ARE ALL FUNKS!**  
**RATS!!!**

"My only hat!" ejaculated Conroy, "what are you going to do with that?"

"I'm going to post that up on the Modern side!" said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"Oh, great Scott!"

"You wouldn't have the nerve!" yelled Lovell.

"Wait and see!"

"But—but Knowles will be as mad as a hatter!"

"Let him!"

"But—but—but——"

"Oh, blow your butts!" said Jimmy Silver, "I'm going to shame Knowles into playing. If he won't play after this, I'll have a hundred handbills printed and flood Rookwood with 'em, on the same lines."

"You'll get scragged!"

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver put the paper in his pocket, and marched out. Evidently Jimmy was on the war-path.

A crowd of fellows watched him cross over to Mr. Manders' house, and enter.

A couple of minutes later they watched him return.

"You—you've done it?" gasped Lovell, as Jimmy came up to the schoolhouse.

"Yes."

"Oh, scissors!"

"There'll be a row!" said Raby.

"Can't be helped! Keep smiling!"

"You won't smile when Knowles gets on your track!" grinned Townsend. "My hat! I wonder what Knowles will do?"

All the Classical Fourth wondered that. It was possible, of course, that Knowles would accept the football challenge, rather than have it announced far and wide that he was refusing it because he feared a licking at the hands of the Classical junior footballers.

But it was much more likely that Knowles would seek vengeance on the perpetrator of that extraordinary notice to all Rookwood. There were lively anticipations on the Classical side as to what Knowles of the Sixth would do.

## CHAPTER 15.

### In a Hornet's Nest.

"**B**Y thunder!"

Catesby of the Sixth stopped dead as he came into Mr. Manders' house.

A number of juniors were gathered about the notice-board there upon which a large paper was pinned.

They were discussing it in tones of indignation, though some of them were grinning.

Catesby's eyes fairly bulged as he read Jimmy Silver's startling notice.

"Who put that there?" he exclaimed.

"Give it up," said Tommy Dodd. "We found it there! Some Classical cheek, of course."

"Do you know the handwriting?" asked Catesby, staring at the paper.

Tommy Dodd coughed. He knew the hand well enough, but he did not intend to tell Catesby so.

"I'm not a handwriting expert, Catesby," he said meekly.

Knowles came in, and Catesby called to him.

"Have you seen this, Knowles?"

"No. What is it?"

"Look!"

Knowles looked.

His face became thunderous.

"By gad, this cheek is getting past the limit!" he said. "I think I can guess who put that there. Silver, of course!"

"What are you going to do about it?"

"You'll see. Leggett, fetch a cane from my study."

Leggett dashed off, and came back with a cane. Knowles jerked the notice from the board. With the paper in one hand

and the cane in the other, the Modern prefect strode away across the dusky quadrangle.

"My hat!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "There's going to be trouble. Modern prefects ain't allowed to cane Classics—in their own House, too!"

"Bulkeley won't stand it!" murmured Cook.

"Sure, Silver ought to be licked for his cheek," said Tommy Doyle. "But Knowles ought to report him intirely. He can't cane Classics. Sure the duffer is always putting his foot in it."

Knowles was striding away furiously to the Classical side.

The prefect's temper was never good, and the notice put up on the Modern board had exasperated him out of all self-restraint.

He strode into the school-house, and down the passage to the junior common-room, which was pretty well crowded.

There was a buzz as he entered.

The Fistical Four were all there, chatting, and most of the Classical Fourth and Shell were present. They were quite expecting a visit from Knowles, and as the angry prefect strode in, all eyes were turned upon him.

"Now look out for fireworks!" murmured Townsend.

Jimmy Silver was the only fellow who did not look up, though he was quite well aware that Knowles had come in.

He continued chatting in calm tones. Knowles strode up to him, his brow black with fury.

"Silver!" he thundered.

Then Jimmy looked up.

"Hullo, Knowles!"

"You cheeky young hound——"

"Good evening, old scout," said Jimmy affably. "Have you come to tell me you are playing us after all? Good! We'll give you a good match, Knowles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knowles held up the paper.

"Did you write this, Silver?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I'm going to give you a hiding for your cheek!" said Knowles, between his teeth.

Jimmy Silver backed away.

"Oh, go easy, old scout," he said, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "You haven't got me in your study now, three to one, you know. Don't you know that Modern prefects are nobodies on this side of Rookwood!"

"Come here!" shouted Knowles.

"Sorry," said Jimmy. "I've got another engagement. There's a rehearsal

of the Classical Players this evening. I shall have to deprive myself of the pleasure of your conversation, Knowles."

"You—you——"

"You fellows ready for the rehearsal?" asked Jimmy Silver. "You'll excuse us, won't you, Knowles?"

Knowles did not reply. He made a rush at Jimmy Silver, lashing out with the cane.

Jimmy dodged round the long table, with the Modern prefect in hot pursuit.

The Classical juniors yelled with laughter as Jimmy went round the table at great speed, with the Sixth Former panting after him.

The junior was a good deal more nimble than the senior, and at this game he seemed to have the advantage.

"Go it!" roared Van Ryn. "Here we go round the mulberry bush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knowles lashed out at Van Ryn, and the South African junior gave a yell as he caught the cane.

"Oh, you Modern rotter!"

Van Ryn caught up a cushion from the sofa, and hurled it, recklessly. It crashed on the back of Knowles' head, as he rushed on after Jimmy Silver, and he went spinning forward on his face.

Bump!

"My hat! He's down!" roared Lovell. "Good shot!"

"Pin him!" howled Flynn.

Mornington made a jump at the Modern prefect as he was getting up, and jammed him down again, with a knee in the small of his back. Knowles collapsed on the floor, gasping.

"Got him!" shouted Mornington.

"Hurray!"

Knowles struggled fiercely.

Jimmy Silver dashed up at once and grasped him, and the Co. piled in, and six or seven other juniors. Knowles was well held, with his nose grinding into the carpet.

The Classical juniors were in a state of wild excitement by this time.

"Let go!" Knowles was raving. "Geroff! I'll smash you! I'll have you flogged! Oh! Ah! Ow! Gerroff! You young fiends——"

"Lick him with his own cane!" shouted Lovell.

"Good egg! Lay it on!"

"Give him jip, the Modern rotter!"

And licked with his own cane Knowles undoubtedly would have been had not Bulkeley of the Sixth strode into the common-room at that moment.

## CHAPTER 16.

### Knowles Is Not Satisfied.

"CAVE!"

"Look out!"

The warning cry came rather late. Bulkeley was on the spot. The captain of Rookwood fairly jumped at the sight of a Sixth Form prefect struggling under a scrambling heap of juniors.

"You young rascals!" roared Bulkeley wrathfully. "How dare you!"

The Classical juniors released Knowles as suddenly as if he had become red-hot.

Knowles sat up, gasping.

He was dusty and dishevelled and ruffled and breathless, and almost inarticulate with rage.

"Knowles, old man, what on earth does this mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley, giving the Modern prefect a hand to rise.

Knowles staggered up.

"You saw——" He spluttered furiously. "You saw them! I—I'll smash them—I'll slaughter them—I'll——"

He choked.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood round in grim silence.

They were not sorry for having handled Cecil Knowles, but they realised that the matter was serious. Bulkeley's brow was like thunder.

"What does this mean, Silver?" rapped out Bulkeley. "You've laid hands on a prefect——"

"He laid hands on us!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What right's he got here at all?" demanded Lovell hotly. "Modern prefects haven't any right on this side! We look to you to stand up for the rights of the Classical side, Bulkeley."

"Hear, hear!"

Knowles stood trembling with rage.

"You hear them?" he panted. "That's the kind of talk prefects get on this side! That's the way you let your juniors act!"

Bulkeley bit his lip.

"The juniors will be punished for touching a prefect," he said. "But you had better explain what you are here for, Knowles. After all, this is a Classical room."

"I came to thrash Silver."

"You had no right to. You know as well as I do that you have no authority to cane Classics."

"You—you say that to me!"

"Yes, I do. I don't uphold the juniors handling a prefect, of course, but you should certainly not have interfered with them here. You would not like me to walk into Mr. Manders' house and take your authority into my hands, I suppose?"

"The juniors on my side are kept in order," panted Knowles. "They are not allowed to insult the Sixth as much as they choose."

"Come, come!" said Bulkeley. "If you've got any complaint to make of Silver, you can report him either to me or to his form-master. You know very well that you have no authority to cane him."

Knowles choked.

"Look at that!" he panted.

He held up Jimmy Silver's famous notice. Bulkeley stared at it in astonishment.

"What the dickens is this!" he exclaimed.

"Silver posted that up in my House!" shouted Knowles. "That's what I came to lick him for."

"My hat! Silver, you young rascal, what have you to say?"

"Guilty, my lord!"

"You insulted Knowles like this?"

"That isn't an insult, Bulkeley. It's a statement of fact. The Classical junior eleven has challenged the Modern seniors——"

"You young ass!"

"Knowles refuses to play, because he knows Classical juniors could lick Modern seniors!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Silence!" thundered Bulkeley. "How dare you talk such nonsense, Silver?"

"That isn't nonsense, Bulkeley; that's hoss-sense. Why don't Knowles play us, if he isn't afraid of being licked?"

"Yes, rather!" hooted Lovell.

"So you sent Knowles a ridiculous challenge to a football match, and posted up this silly paper in his House because he refused?"

"Ye-e-es. You see——"

"I see that you have been an impertinent young rascal!" said Bulkeley sternly. "You will be caned for insulting Knowles, Silver."

"Oh, I say!"

"You needn't say anything. I wish you'd come to me about this, Knowles. You might have been sure I wouldn't allow it to pass unpunished."

"I wasn't so sure of that," sneered Knowles. Bulkeley flushed.

"Well, it is so, at all events, and you can leave the matter in my hands," he said sharply.

"I'll leave it in your hands if the young scoundrel's going to be punished," said Knowles, "and the rest of the gang, too. You saw what they did."

"The chaps backed me up," said Jimmy Silver. "They were quite right. Modern

prefects ain't allowed to come here and bully Classics."

"No fear!"

"Blow the Moderns!"

"Yah!"

"Be quiet, will you?" exclaimed Bulkeley. "Every fellow who touched Knowles will take a hundred lines."

"Oh!"

"That isn't enough!" exclaimed Knowles fiercely. "A hundred lines for assaulting a prefect!"

"Leave it to me, Knowles."

"I'm not leaving it at that. Unless you punish them I shall report the matter to the Head."

"You can do so if you wish, of course. But you should not have come here to administer punishment to a Classical junior, Knowles, and if the kids got a little excited, you must excuse them."

"I shall go to the Head!" hissed Knowles.

"Well, please yourself."

Bulkeley turned to Jimmy Silver.

"You will come to my study, Silver?"

"Yes, Bulkeley."

Knowles, with a savage look on his face, strode out of the room. He was well aware that he was in the wrong, but that did not appease his rage. But he did not go to the Head with his complaint; he knew that that would be useless.

Dr. Chisholm would certainly have spoken to him very severely for taking Bulkeley's authority into his own hands, as he had done.

He tramped away to Mr. Manders' house in a savage temper. It was one more count in his indictment against Bulkeley, and his feelings towards the captain of Rookwood were more bitter than ever.

Jimmy Silver followed the Rookwood captain to his study, where Bulkeley selected a cane. Jimmy rubbed his hands in anticipation.

"I'm sorry to have to lick you, Silver," began Bulkeley.

"Same here, Bulkeley!" said the Fourth Former, with feeling.

"You understand that you deserve it?"

"Not quite."

"I'd rather you understood," said Bulkeley. "I suppose that paper you put up in Mr. Manders' house was a sort of joke. But that kind of thing can't be allowed. There must be discipline in the school, Silver, and prefects must be treated with respect. You had no right to send a football challenge to the Modern Sixth, and above all, no right to slang Knowles because he refused to play such an absurd match. If you think it over, you will

realise that. A licking may help to get it into your head."

"Ahem! I'd rather give it an extra hard think, if it's all the same to you, Bulkeley!" ventured Jimmy Silver. "A licking rather puts me off thinking."

Bulkeley smiled.

"Hold out your hand, you young rascal! Now the other! And the other again!"

"Ow! ow! ow!"

The captain of Rookwood laid down the cane.

"You can cut off, Silver. Mind, there's to be no more of that rot. If I hear of any more of it, you'll be in serious trouble."

"Ow!"

Jimmy Silver left the study in a dismal mood.

He had always had a great and loyal admiration for old Bulkeley, but his loyalty was put to a severe test now.

Really, Bulkeley might have had a little more sympathy and encouragement for a fellow who was standing up for the Classical side, and trying to put that unspeakable cad, Knowles, into his proper place.

At least, so it seemed to the captain of the Fourth. But the head of the Sixth did not see eye to eye with the Fourth Former.

Jimmy was getting fed-up, as he would have expressed it. His latest scheme for downing Knowles, by means of licking him at footer, was evidently "N.G." Not only was it a rank failure, but he was forbidden to continue his extraordinary campaign for taunting Knowles into playing that match. The game, in that direction, was up.

As Jimmy sat in the end study, rubbing his smarting hands and grousing, several fellows looked in on him. Some had words of consolation to proffer. But most of them were grinning. And when Lovell and Raby and Newcome came in to begin their prep. they shook their heads solemnly at Jimmy Silver.

"Jimmy, old chap, you'd better take a rest," said Lovell.

"Oh, rats!"

"You missed the rehearsal," said Newcome.

"Bother the rehearsal!"

"Did Bulkeley lay it on?"

"Ow! Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Lovell. "But you'd better take a rest, Jimmy. Your ideas are no good—absolutely N.G."

"N-blooming-G!" said Raby.

"This study is losing its prestige," continued Lovell. "Even that cad Lattrey's grinning at us, and talking about electing a new leader."

"Oh, rot!"

"It won't do, Jimmy," said Lovell, shaking his head. "You're a bit played out! Take my advice. Drop Knowles, and take a rest."

"Dry up!" roared Jimmy Silver ferociously.

And Arthur Edward Lovell dried up at last, and Jimmy Silver was at peace, though not in a happy frame of mind.

## CHAPTER 17.

### A Great Wheeze!

"Let me have about me men that are fat: Weak-headed men, and such as sneak o' nights."

THUS Arthur Lovell.

The Classical Players were at it. It was raining that afternoon, and it was a half-holiday. As footer was out of the question, the Classical Players were improving the shining hour by an extra rehearsal.

The Classical Players were great guns in amateur theatricals. There was a rival club "over the way," but the Classics agreed that the Modern Stage Club was all rot—utter rot. The Classical Players were "it"—in fact, they were It with a capital I.

The Players had become ambitious of late, and they were tackling the immortal William himself. They had long debated whether they should "do" Shakespeare. Tommy Dodd, indeed, declared that they were not only doing him, but doing him brown. But that was only envy.

"Julius Cæsar" was the play selected for treatment at the hands of the Classical dramatists. Certain improvements were made here and there by the masterly hands of the Classical Players.

Some suggested improvements, however, had been negatived. Lovell, who had Cæsar's rôle, was dissatisfied at being chucked out, so to speak, so early in the play, and he suggested that Julius should be resuscitated, and given a show in the later acts.

That suggestion was not adopted. Conroy declared that Julius Cæsar had been assassinated because the Romans had had enough of him, and that by the time Lovell was assassinated in the performance the audience would have had enough of him—perhaps even too much.

It had to be admitted that Lovell, though very keen, hadn't the best memory in the world, and sometimes "mucked" up his lines. Jimmy Silver, who was the



stage and general manager, was superintending the rehearsal in the box-room.

Jimmy had a very thoughtful expression on his face, which was not wholly caused by attention to what was going on.

But he interrupted Lovell.

"You've got it cock-eyed again, you ass!"

"What's the matter now?" demanded Lovell, leaving off Cæsar's speech to glare at Jimmy Silver.

"It isn't 'weak-headed men,' ass—it's 'sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights,' not 'sneak' o' nights."

"Sure?" asked Lovell dubiously.

"Yes, fathead!"

"Oh, all right, I don't mind. I must say my way sounds better."

"Bow-wow!"

"For instance, I've met weak-headed men in school," said Lovell argumentatively. "You're a bit that way, Jimmy."

"You chump!"

"But I never came across a sleek-headed man. You're quite sure that it's sleek-headed?"

"Yes!" roared Jimmy. "Look at the copy."

"My copy's a bit smudged, but I'll take your word for it, though it doesn't really sound well to me." And Lovell resumed: "Let me have about me men that are fat: Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.

Yond Cassius has a mean and mongrelly look——"

"Offside! 'Lean and hungry look,' fathead!"

"That can't be right."

"It is right."

"I don't believe they used such words in Shakespeare's time."

"Ass! Go ahead!"

"Oh, all right!"

"Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look, fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Players in chorus.

"I told you it didn't sound right," said Lovell, while Jimmy Silver stood speechless. "Look here, the word fathead isn't in my copy."

"You shrieking ass!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Oh, you chump!"

"That isn't the way for a stage-manager to talk. If you've made a mistake, Jimmy, no harm in saying so. Anybody might make a mistake. I knew you were wrong there, you know, because in Shakespeare's time they didn't call people fatheads."

"Oh, you—you—— Get on, for goodness' sake!"

'Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He blinks too much——"

"That's not it!" yelled Raby.

"Oh, you ass! Not 'blinks'!" howled Jimmy Silver.

Lovell snorted, and resumed:

"Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He drinks too much."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thinks!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Thinks!"

"Sure?"

"Yes, ass! Thinks! Thinks! Thinks!"

"Do you mean I've got to repeat the word three times? That's not in my copy."

"No!" howled the unfortunate coach.

"No! Only once! Ye gods!"

"Then what did you yowl it out three times for, if I say it only once? I don't think much of you as a manager, Jimmy."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Leave off crackling, you fellows, do. You put me out." And Lovell ran on:

"Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He thinks too much: such men are dangerous."

"On the wicket at last!" said Erroll, laughing.

"About time!" grunted Peele.

Jimmy Silver fanned himself.

"Suppose we make Lovell an extra murderer, or something, instead of Julius Cæsar?" suggested Pons.

"Did you say you wanted a thick ear?" snorted Lovell.

"Lucky he's assassinated early in the play," said Van Ryn. "Shakespeare must have foreseen this."

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Look here, you Dutch ass——"

"Order!" said Erroll. "Let's get on."

The Classical Players got on. But Jimmy Silver was still very thoughtful, and Erroll clapped him on the shoulder presently.

"Gone to sleep, Brutus?" he asked.

Jimmy started.

"I've been thinking, you fellows."

"Well, please don't," suggested Peele.

"He thinks too much: such men are dangerous," grinned Lovell. "Give it up, Jimmy. Thinking isn't in your line."

"About Knowles."

"Oh, bother Knowles!"

"Never mind finishing the rehearsal," said Jimmy. "We're about done, anyway. I've got a wheeze."

Jimmy Silver made that announcement in impressive tones.

Perhaps he expected a burst of enthusiasm. If so, he was disappointed. The Classical Players groaned in chorus.

"Look here, you duffers!" began Jimmy warmly.

"Mercy!" said Van Ryn tearfully.

"You silly ass!"

"Don't!" implored Lovell. "Jimmy, old man, we're fed up with your wheezes! They're no good. Let Knowles rip! You can't touch Knowles."

"Are you sending out any more football challenges?" chortled Peele. "Who is it now—Tottenham Hotspur or Aston Villa?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not footer."

"Well, thank goodness for that," said Lovell. "Never mind what it is; don't tell us."

"Look here, don't play the goat," exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I tell you I've got a ripping wheeze for making Knowles sit up. I suppose we're not going to let him gloat over us, are we?"

"Can't be helped."

"Well, what's the wheeze?" asked Conroy. "We'll give you a hearing, and if it's as rotten as your last wheezes, we'll bump you."

"Hear, hear! That's a go!"

"This blessed rehearsal put it into my head," said Jimmy Silver, his eyes glistening. "I've been thinking it out while you've been chin-wagging. We'll write a play."

"Oh!"

"A school play."

"Bosh!"

"With Knowles in it?"

"Phew!"

"And show him up to all Rookwood as a rotter, and a bully, and a beast," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll make the character a worm, and a sneak, and a Hun, and a rotter generally—just like Knowles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And name him Knowles," said Jimmy. "Then there can't be any mistake about whom it's meant for. Knowles can't grumble; there's lots of people named Knowles. We won't name the character after Knowles of the Sixth, but after Knowles, the butcher, in Coombe."

"My hat!" Lovell roared. "That's good! Knowles can't grumble if we name a character after the village butcher."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll write up the play, and give a performance for all Rookwood to come and see," said Jimmy Silver. "It will make Knowles fairly wriggle. I'll ask Bulkeley first if there's any harm in using names of local tradesmen in a play."

The juniors roared.

"Good!" said Lovell. "You're not such an ass as you've seemed lately, Jimmy. Let's get on with it now. We can't get out in this rain."

"Jolly good idea for a rainy day," said Erroll, "but I'm afraid there'll be trouble over using Knowles' name for a bad character, Jimmy."

"We're not going to use that Modern cad's name; we're going to use the name of Mr. Knowles in Coombe."

"Ahem! But——"

"Bow-wow! Let's get to work."

And the rehearsal broke up, and a crowd of amateur playwrights gathered in the end study, to put their heads together for the carrying out of that great scheme.

## CHAPTER 18.

### Kind Invitations.

"I SAY, Bulkeley!"

Jimmy Silver spoke very meekly when he met Bulkeley after breakfast the next morning.

The captain of Rookwood stopped, with a smile.

"Yes, Silver?"

"I want to ask you something, if you don't mind. We're writing a play—the Classical Players, you know."

Bulkeley laughed.

"I wish you good luck," he said.

"Thanks, Bulkeley. Do you think there would be any harm in using the names of tradespeople for the characters—people in Coombe—for instance? Must use some names, you know."

"No harm in that," said Bulkeley. "None at all. The Coombe tradespeople won't be here to see the play, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; it's only for ourselves."

"Then there's certainly no harm," said Bulkeley; and he passed on.

Jimmy Silver closed one eye at his chums.

"We've got Bulkeley's permission now," he remarked.

Lovell chuckled.

"What would you have done, if there hadn't been a butcher in Coombe named Knowles, Jimmy?"

"Easy enough. I should have looked through the telephone directory for a Knowles, and asked Bulkeley whether I could use names out of the directory."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley's permission having been obtained, in that manner, there was nothing to stop the junior playwrights.

Many hands make light work, and during the previous afternoon the play—

a school play—had been written. It was not, as Jimmy admitted, a high-class work of art; it could not be said to be equal to "Julius Cæsar," for instance. Shakespeare's laurels were quite safe. But all the authors were agreed that it was a "corker."

The principal character was a school prefect, and the part was to be taken by Higgs, the biggest fellow in the Fourth. Higgs was also the biggest duffer, but that did not matter, as the character was not an intellectual one.

He simply had to hector and bully juniors, make bets on gee-gees, smoke cigarettes, and show the bluest of blue funk on all occasions.

The whole game was to hold up Knowles to ridicule, and that purpose certainly was effected, whatever might be the value of the play from an artistic point of view.

After lessons that day there was a rehearsal of the new play in the box-room, and it was highly successful. The lines were simple and easily remembered, and if forgotten, gagging was just as good—the lines not being masterpieces in themselves.

"Ripping!" said Jimmy Silver, after the rehearsal. "It will be a regular scream. One more rehearsal to-morrow, and the performance on Saturday; and we'll ask the Moderns to the show."

"Yes, rather!"

"Tommy Dodd will be pleased!" grinned Lovell.

"Why not ask Knowles, too?" exclaimed Raby. "It would entertain him no end."

"Well, we'll ask him, but he won't come. But he'll hear about it afterwards. The Modern juniors will come."

"And that will be good enough!" said Van Ryn.

That evening Jimmy Silver requested permission of Mr. Bootles to use the form-room on Saturday for a dramatic entertainment.

Mr. Bootles kindly consented.

"You are—ahem!—playing Shakespeare, I understand, Silver?" said the Fourth Form master, with a smile.

"We've been rehearsing 'Julius Cæsar,' sir," said Jimmy diplomatically.

"Very commendable," said Mr. Bootles. "I wish you every success."

"Thank you, sir."

The next day the final rehearsal was gone through, to the eminent satisfaction of all concerned.

After it was over Jimmy Silver strolled over to Mr. Manders' house to issue his invitations to the Moderns.

He certainly meant to ask Knowles, with a faint hope that the Modern prefect might come, and hear what the Classics thought of him. But he was very wary as he approached Knowles' study.

Knowles' reply to his invitation might not, possibly, be very polite. Jimmy remembered painfully the prefect's reply to the football challenge. There was no depending on Knowles' temper.

Knowles' door was half-open as Jimmy came along the passage, and he heard the Modern prefect's voice within.

"It's not exactly a refusal, Frampton. They've left Latcham—this letter comes from Middlewood—and they couldn't come that distance. Frulo is jolly polite. But, of course, that settles it."

Jimmy Silver grinned as he heard that.

Through Tubby Muffin he knew of Knowles' letter to Signor Carlo Frulo. Evidently the Italian football skipper had replied without accepting the invitation to play the Modern team.

"It's rather rotten, though," said Frampton, "I'd have liked to have them come here."

"Yes." Knowles spoke thoughtfully. "I wonder whether it might still be arranged——"

Jimmy Silver coughed loudly in the doorway, and Knowles spun round with a scowl.

"What do you want, you spying little rascal?" he exclaimed angrily.

"I'm not spying," snapped Jimmy. "Go and eat coke!"

"By Jove! I'll—— Give me that cane, Frampton."

"Hold on," said Jimmy Silver, without coming into the study, "I came over here to bring you an invitation, Knowles."

"What do you mean?"

"The Classical Players are giving an entertainment to-morrow afternoon, in the Fourth Form room," said Jimmy. "Prefects are specially invited."

"You young idiot!"

"Ahem! If you'd care to come Knowles, and bring your friends, we should all be delighted. It would be an honour."

Frampton burst into a laugh. Knowles scowled.

"Cut off, you young fool!" he said. "Do you think you will get prefects to come and see you massacre Shakespeare?"

"It's not Shakespeare this time—it's a really ripping play, written by ourselves."

"Oh, get out!"

"But, I say, Knowles, I'm sure you'd like it——"

Jimmy Silver did not finish. The ungrateful Knowles was striding towards him with the cane lifted, and Jimmy Silver dodged out of the doorway, and down the passage, just in time. Knowles kicked the door shut after him.

Jimmy paused at the end of the passage, and looked back. He half expected to see Knowles in pursuit. But the Modern prefect had not followed him, and Jimmy walked away to Tommy Dodd's study. He found the three Tommies at tea.

They looked warlike as Jimmy looked into their study, but the Classical junior held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax!" he said. "It's a merry invitation, dear boys. There's a splendid drama being given in the Form-room to-morrow afternoon by the Classical Players. All Moderns are invited, if they wash their necks and behave themselves."

"Catch us coming to see your silly play!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "You Classical duffers can't act!"

"You'll find it interesting," said Jimmy. "The heavy villain of the piece is a rotter named Knowles——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Named after the Coombe butcher man——"

"Oh!"

"But remarkably like your prefect—a cad, a bully, a rotter, a waster, a Hun, and several things like that."

"We'll come," said Tommy Dodd.

"Good."

And Jimmy Silver went his way, leaving the three Tommies grinning.

Before bedtime that evening all the Lower School knew that the Classical play was being specially given to caricature Knowles of the Sixth, and it was certain that there would be a crowded audience.

The Fourth Form room was likely to be taxed to its utmost capacity. And Jimmy Silver and Co. joyfully anticipated the gnashing of teeth on the part of Cecil Knowles—afterwards!

## CHAPTER 19.

### The Play's the Thing!

**M**ORNING lessons seemed very long to Jimmy Silver and Co. on Saturday. They were anticipating the afternoon's performance very keenly.

Immediately the Fourth was dismissed, and Mr. Bootles was gone, preparations for the matinee began.

Chairs were borrowed from all the junior studies, to range along with the

forms and accommodate a numerous audience.

The curtain was rigged up across the upper end of the room, which formed the stage.

The preparations were finished by dinner-time, and the Classics went in to dinner in great spirits.

After dinner the members of the acting company repaired to the form-room, to get on their war-paint, as Jimmy called it.

Most of the junior members of the company were playing in their Etons, suitable to the character of schoolboys. But the burly Higgs was got up with great care.

He was dressed in a tail-coat, like a prefect, which made him look a good deal older. His face was made up to imitate Knowles—but if it was an imitation, it was not a flattering one.

Jimmy Silver, who was very skilled in make-up, did the work well. Higg's mouth, which was not small, was enlarged by paint, till it seemed to stretch almost from ear to ear.

His eyebrows were touched up in a way that made the eyes seem closer together, imparting a somewhat foxy look which really was like Knowles'.

Several other artistic touches were laid on, till Higgs, who never was beautiful, looked as ugly a customer as could have been found in any school, or out of it, for that matter.

The Classical Players chortled as they looked at him when Jimmy Silver's work was finished. Higgs had a cigarette stuck in his mouth, in imitation of one of Knowles' little habits which was more than suspected by the juniors.

"Isn't he a corker?" said Lovell admiringly. "Blessed if I ever thought you could look as ugly as that, Higgs, though you're pretty good in that line."

"You silly chump!" grunted Higgs.

"Now, all you want is a pink sporting paper sticking out of your pocket," said Jimmy Silver.

"Here you are!"

"Ripping!" said Mornington. "But, by gad! there will be a row when Knowles hears about this."

"Well, we're always having rows with Knowles," said Jimmy Silver, smiling.

Lovell peeped through the curtain

"They're coming in!" he said.

The form-room was filling rapidly.

Tommy Dodd and Co. had come over with a crowd of Moderns. Smythe had brought a good number of the Shell. The Third was well represented, and Mornington Secundus led in a horde of the Second Form.

All the Classical Fourth who were no included in the cast were in the audience. Even Lattrey, the cad of the Fourth, had turned up, probably giving up an engagement at the Bird-in-Hand for the purpose. There was a rather peculiar expression on Lattrey's face as he came in.

Lattrey was on the worst of terms with Jimmy Silver, who was very much down on the shady "blade" of the Fourth; but he had been offered a place in the cast. He was a clever actor.

He had refused the honour, however.

Jimmy had concluded that Lattrey's refusal was caused by his fear of reprisals on the part of Knowles, and he had shrugged his shoulders over it. Lattrey, however, had evidently determined to see the play, though he would not act in it.

"Not started yet," Lattrey remarked, as he joined Townsend and Co. in the seats.

"It's time," remarked Towny, looking at his watch, "I fancy it is goin' to be rather funny."

"Knockabout farce, what?" said Lattrey, "and all about Knowles."

"Yes." Towny grinned. "It will make Knowles rage when he hears of it, too. They're representin' him as a frightful character."

"There'll be lickin's handed round afterwards," said Topham, with a shake of the head. "I wouldn't care to be in the cast."

"Peele's riskin' it," said Gower.

"More duffer Peele."

"Lucky Knowles don't know anything about it beforehand," remarked Lattrey carelessly. "I rather think he would chip in."

"Ha, ha! He would!"

"Hullo!" said Smythe of the Shell. "Here's Bootles! My hat! If Bootles sees this show——" Smythe whistled softly.

The Fourth Form master was looking somewhat perturbed as he came into the crowded form-room. Tubby Muffin, who was near the door, jumped up politely.

"Take my seat, sir!"

"Thank you, Muffin. I have not come to witness the performance," said Mr. Bootles. "Where is Silver? Ah!"

The curtain went up as the form-master spoke.

The stage was disclosed, representing a study. Higgs, in the character of Knowles, was sitting with his feet on a table, a cigarette in his mouth, reading a pink sporting paper. Mr. Bootles stared at the scene.

"Fag!" roared Higgs.

Jimmy Silver, as fag, came in timidly, trembling in every limb as he approached the ferocious-looking Higgs.

"Yes, Knowles!" he faltered.

"I'm going to thrash you!" roared Higgs.

"Wha-a-t for, Knowles?"

"My gee-gee's lost the race! I'm five quid out of pocket. I'm going to take it out of you!"

"Oh, dear, Knowles."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience. There was a rumour in the Lower School that Knowles of the Sixth had "whopped" his fag once for that very reason. Towle, the fag in question, nodded vigorously.

"That's Knowles all over," he said.

"Bring me a cricket stump, and bend down!" roared Higgs. "Don't knock over my whisky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles.

He strode towards the stage.

"Silver!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, startled.

Higgs spun round and blinked at Mr. Bootles. The form-master hardly recognised him in his extraordinary make-up.

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Cease this instantly!"

"Oh, sir!"

"It—it's only our play, sir," stuttered Higgs.

"Silence. Silver, I have received a complaint from Knowles that, under cover of a pretended theatrical performance, you have planned to insult him in public, before all Rookwood." said the master of the Fourth sternly. "From what I have just heard it is quite clear to me that Knowles' statement is correct."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

There was a silence of dismay in the crowded form-room.

## CHAPTER 20.

### Jimmy's Luck is Out.

**M**R. BOOTLES was looking very grim and stern. It was plain that the usually good-tempered form-master was very angry.

The juniors were silent.

Jimmy set his lips. How on earth had Knowles known anything about the Classical play before it was even performed? There was only one explanation of that. Most of the juniors had known, and one had given the information. A sneak had been at work.

Jimmy had expected trouble to follow that dramatic representation. It was certain to make Knowles furious when he heard about it. But it was rather hard to be jumped on by authority before half a dozen lines had been spoken. Knowles had beaten him again.

"By gad!" murmured Townsend, "Silver's in for it. Clever dog to keep out of the cast, Lattrey, old scout."

Lattrey grinned.

"But who put Knowles on the scent, I wonder?" remarked Topham.

"I wonder!" said Lattrey.

"Silver!" Mr. Bootles' voice was very deep. "Have you anything to say?"

"Ye-es, sir. This—this is our play, sir. Only a—a—a comic play, sir. Written by ourselves."

"I understood that you were performing Shakespeare, Silver, when I gave you permission to use the form-room for the purpose."

"Yes, sir—we've only postponed that. That's coming off later."

Mr. Bootles raised his hand, and pointed at the dismayed Higgs.

"And is that—that—intended, Silver, to be a representative of a prefect of the Sixth Form at Rookwood?" he rapped out.

"That—that's Knowles, sir, in—in the play," murmured Jimmy Silver.

"You have dared to use Knowles' name——"

"Oh, no, sir."

"What?"

"You see, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver, "we had to use some name or other; a—a character in a play has to have a name. So—so we named our villain, sir, after the—the butcher in Coombe, sir."

"The butcher in Coombe!"

"Yes, sir. I—I asked Bulkeley whether there was any harm in using the names of local tradespeople in our play, and he said there wasn't."

Mr. Bootles' face was a study.

"Is—is the village butcher named Knowles?" he exclaimed at last.

"Oh, yes, sir!" answered a dozen voices at once.

"And you have adopted the village butcher's name, Silver, for the bad character in your play?"

"That's it, sir."

"Did it not occur to you that it was also the name of a prefect on the Modern side of Rookwood?"

"Ahem!"

"Answer me, Silver!"

"Well, sir, the name happens to be the same," said Jimmy Silver cautiously.

"Lots of people have the same names, sir. We can't help it if Knowles has the same name as the butcher, sir, can we?"

Mr. Bootles gave Jimmy a very searching look.

"Then this character, Silver, is not intended to make any allusion to Knowles of the Sixth Form at all?"

"Ahem!"

"What"—Mr. Bootles pointed at Higgs' made-up face again—"what is that boy meant to represent?"

"A—a school prefect, sir."

"Quite so, of the name of Knowles. I cannot believe, Silver, that you chose the name of Knowles for an exceedingly offensive character, forgetting that it was the name of a prefect of this school."

"Ahem!"

"Do you affirm, Silver, that such is the case?"

"Ahem!"

"In short, that absurd boy is a caricature of Knowles of the Sixth Form, and the whole performance is intended to ridicule and bring into contempt a senior boy in a position of authority in this scholastic establishment!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Jimmy Silver. Mr. Bootles' way of putting it made it seem much more serious than it had seemed before.

"Silver, this is most reprehensible."

"Oh, sir!"

"You have been guilty of the most outrageous impertinence, and disregard of the respect due to those in authority."

"Oh!"

"This absurdity," continued Mr. Bootles, "must stop at once. The play must not, under any circumstances, be performed at all. I forbid it. And every member of the cast will follow me to my study, where I shall administer exemplary punishment."

"Oh!"

"Come!"

Mr. Bootles swept away with pink face and rustling gown.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you ass!" howled Higgs. "Now we're going to be licked!"

"Oh, you duffer, Silver!" said Peele.

"Ass!" growled Lovell.

"Chump!" said Flynn.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"Oh, dry up! What's the good of piling on me? How could I guess that Bootles was going to come into the show? What rotten sneak put Knowles on his guard? Some sneaking cad gave him the tip."

"I wish I knew who it was!" muttered

Lovell, clenching his fists. "Some Modern cad, I suppose."

"Some Classical sneak, you mean!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"We'd better get after Mr. Bootles," remarked Erroll. "We don't want him to come back to us."

Erroll's advice was too good not to be taken.

In a dolorous crowd, the cast of the great drama marched out of the form-room and took their way to Mr. Bootles' study.

There was to be no entertainment that afternoon. Lattrey remarked that Jimmy Silver's face was an entertainment in itself, so far as that went.

Some of the fellows were grinning. Jimmy Silver's run of luck had seemed rather comic to his form-fellows, though Jimmy saw nothing comic in it.

Really it seemed that Knowles was not to be "got at." Every attempt of the captain of the Fourth seemed destined to end in dismal failure.

In Mr. Bootles' study there was a sound of the incessant swishing of a cane.

The whole dramatic company "went through it."

It was quite a large order, and Mr. Bootles was panting a little when he had finished. He was not an athlete.

He pointed to the door with his cane, and the unhappy Players streamed out. The Fistical Four went up to the end study. The form-room had to be put to rights, but that could wait. For the present, the chums of the Fourth were fully occupied in groaning over their injuries.

There was a chorus of groans for some time in the end study. Mr. Bootles had laid on the cane not wisely, but too well—in the opinion of the unfortunate recipients, at least.

Jimmy Silver pulled himself together at last.

"Keep smiling!" he said feebly.

"Ass!" said Lovell ferociously, while Raby and Newcome only glared. They did not feel like smiling.

"All in the day's work!" said Jimmy, as cheerfully as he could.

"Ow, my hands!"

"Yow-ow!"

"It was a muck-up, and no mistake," said Jimmy. "It wouldn't have been so bad if the play had come off. But it hadn't."

"Wow-wow!"

"Some sneaking cad gave it all away to Knowles, and it was just like that Modern rotter to spring Bootles on us. Lattrey, very likely—he's sneak enough. I wish I knew."

"Ow! My paws! Ow!"

"But one swallow doesn't make a summer," continued Jimmy Silver, with resolute cheerfulness. "Next time——"

Lovell sat up and glared.

"Next time!" he repeated.

"Yes, next time," said Jimmy.

"So there's going to be a next time?"

"Yes, rather! We've not done with Knowles. We haven't made him sit up yet."

"Don't you think we've done enough sitting up?" howled Raby.

"Oh, keep smiling!"

"You—you——" Words failed Raby.

"We shall have to be a bit more careful next time, that's all," said Jimmy Silver.

"I'll think out a wheeze——"

"Oh, you'll think out a wheeze!" said Lovell, with deadly calmness.

"Certainly. I——"

Lovell jumped up.

"You hear him, you fellows? He's mucked up everything he's touched, and landed us all into lickings, and given the Modern cads the grin of us, and now he's talking about next time! There's not going to be any next time! Collar him!"

"Here, I say!" roared Jimmy Silver.

But he had no time to say anything. His chums were quite fed-up, and the exasperated trio seized their study leader, yanked him out of the armchair, and bumped him on the hearthrug with terrific vigour.

"Now!" panted Lovell. "Is there going to be any next time?"

"Yaroo!"

"Give him another!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Oh! Yah! Oh! Ah! Yarooop! I'll—yow—ow!"

"There!" panted Lovell. "Next time we'll give you some more. I'll give you next time, you burbling jabberwock!"

And the Co. stamped out of the end study, leaving Jimmy Silver sitting on the hearthrug, trying to get his second wind.

## CHAPTER 21.

### Never Say Die!

THE next day Jimmy Silver was in a somewhat subdued mood.

Jimmy's luck really seemed to be out.

It was hard for the captain of the Fourth to live up to his own maxim, and "keep smiling."

Knowles, after all his manifold iniquities, remained unpunished.

Jimmy Silver, as he had to admit himself, had been defeated all along the line. Of course, "getting even" with a prefect of the Sixth was a large order. It was a big undertaking even for Jimmy Silver. Perhaps Jimmy had been a little cocksure about it. Certainly he had failed.

Even the end study was fed-up.

Jimmy Silver had never lacked self-confidence, but his luck had been simply cruel.

But he was not beaten yet.

His active brain was still at work, and he was determined that sooner or later Knowles of the Sixth, and the Moderns generally, should be made to "sit up" in the most effective manner.

Meanwhile, the end study was in danger of losing all its prestige. Lattrey, Higgs, Tubby Muffin, and other fellows declared that a new captain was wanted.

Townsend & Co. said that Jimmy Silver was played out, and even mooted the idea of re-electing the great Adolphus Smythe as junior captain. Even Van Ryn and his comrades shook their heads at Jimmy Silver.

For a couple of days Jimmy, like the celebrated Brer Fox, lay low. Even Jimmy was fed up, for a while, with going on the warpath.

Knowles was more unpleasant than ever.

The Classical Players' dramatic performance had been nipped in the bud, and the Players punished. But Knowles was annoyed, all the same. And he had other causes of annoyance. The fact that the Contadini had declined to play the Modern senior team was known over the School, and it caused smiles.

The Classics were well aware, or at least quite satisfied, that Knowles had intended to "dish" old Bulkeley by bagging a match which Bulkeley would have been glad to secure.

Bulkeley himself did not quite think so, perhaps, but nearly everybody else on the Classical side, seniors and juniors, thought so, and said so.

As the match was not arranged, everyone knew, of course, that the Contadini must have declined it, and the Classics grinned over it. It was rather a "facer" for Cecil Knowles, who, after all, had succeeded in dishing only himself instead of the captain of Rookwood.

Any reference to the big match that had not come off was sufficient to exasperate Knowles, and there were many allusions to it.

Classical seniors asked him politely if the match was coming off. "Well, round corners

some allusion to the match, and bolt before Knowles could spot them.

In a few days Knowles was sorry that he had thought of that scheme for taking the wind out of Bulkeley's sails. The seniors on his own side were annoyed with him.

If the Modern seniors had played the Contadini, certainly that would have been "one in the eye" for the Classics. But they hadn't. Knowles might say that it wasn't exactly a refusal. The simple fact was that the Contadini were no longer in the neighbourhood, but it was pretty certain that Frulo and his men could have come over from Middlewood if they had liked.

Indeed, it was probable that Frulo had declined the match because it did not come from the First Eleven of Rookwood. Bulkeley thought so.

Naturally, the Contadini skipper would expect to play the School, if he came to Rookwood at all. By chipping in as he had done, Knowles had simply deprived Rookwood of a very distinguished fixture without gaining anything for himself.

Had he not "shoved in" in that way, the Contadini might have accepted an invitation from Bulkeley, in the name of the School, and Knowles would then have played them as a member of the Rookwood First.

But after the refusal sent to Knowles, Bulkeley did not care to challenge the Contadini, and the idea had to be dropped.

So even the Modern seniors were a little sore about it, and some of them made rather plain remarks to Knowles on the subject. His action had not been quite aboveboard, and they hinted pretty plainly that they thought so.

"Knowles is like a bear with a sore head," Lovell remarked at tea-time in the end study on Monday. "He's made himself look an ass by shoving in to cut the ground from under Bulkeley's feet as he did. He's been taking it out on Tommy Dodd this afternoon."

"Rotter!" grunted Raby.

"Yes, I must say that Knowles is jolly nearly as big an ass as Jimmy Silver," remarked Newcome, with great candour.

There was a grunt from Jimmy Silver.

"Got any new ideas yet?" asked Lovell, with a sarcastic grin. "There's another bumping ready for you when you have, Jimmy."

"Fathead!"

"Knowles is getting worse than ever," continued Lovell. "He laid into Tubby Muffin with his ashplant to-day. He's no right to whack Classics."



"Perhaps he could be bottled up, if fellows would back up a fellow instead of grousing," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, you're such an ass, you know."

"Such a silly ass!" remarked Raby.

"Such a thumping duffer," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"I've been thinking," he said, after a pause.

Lovell held up his hand.

"Is it a wheeze?"

"Yes, ass."

"Then you know what to expect."

"Look here, you chumps!" roared Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "Are we going to lie down and let those Modern cads walk over us?"

"Can't do anything else with such a leader as we've got."

"Hear, hear!"

"I've been thinking, I tell you."

"Oh, you can't think," said Lovell, with a shake of the head. "Give your poor old brain a rest, Jimmy."

"You—you silly chump!"

"Look at your record for the last week or two," said Lovell warmly. "That fat-headed challenge to Frulo's team—all Rookwood cackled over that. Then that fat-headed challenge to the Modern seniors—and a licking! And then that fat-headed play, and a licking all round. Be candid, Jimmy. Isn't it time you took a long rest?"

"I've got an idea."

"Go and boil it, then."

"And bury it afterwards," said Raby.

Another snort from the incensed captain of the Fourth. He rose from the tea-table.

"I'll buzz along and tell the Colonial chaps, then," he said. "They've got sense enough to back up a chap."

"More likely to bump you."

"Oh, rats!"

"Hold on," said Lovell, as Jimmy Silver went to the door. "Don't get your little back up, Jimmy. We'll hear your wheeze if you like, on condition that we bump you if it's no good."

"That's fair," said Newcome.

"It's the wheeze of the season," said Jimmy Silver. "I've been thinking it out carefully. It's risky."

"Never mind the risk, if there's anything in it. Go ahead!"

Jimmy turned back into the study.

"Mind, it's a regular corker!" he said impressively.

"We know your corkers," said Lovell disparagingly. "But let her rip! We're listening."

Jimmy Silver opened the door and glanced into the passage. He closed it again carefully, his chums watching that proceeding in astonishment.

"Afraid of somebody bagging the wonderful wheeze?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"You can't be too careful," said Jimmy.

"If a whisper got to the Modern side, we should be dished, and I more than suspect Lattrey of sneaking. Walls have ears, my son."

"Get it off your chest, then," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver was looking quite serious, and his eyes were gleaming. Evidently, whatever the wheeze was, Jimmy himself looked upon it as a "corker."

And his chums, their curiosity somewhat excited by this time, waited for him to speak.

## CHAPTER 22.

### Tremendous!

"GO it, Jimmy!"

"Get a move on!"

"On the ball, fathead!"

"Mind, not a syllable outside this study!" said Jimmy Silver warningly.

"Oh, all right! Cut the cackle and get to the hosses."

"We're going to dish Knowles," said Jimmy Silver impressively. "We're going to dish him in such a way that he'll never get over it this term, at least. He's going to be chortled at by all Rookwood."

"Perhaps."

"No perhaps about it. Look here, my belief is that the Classical junior team could beat the Modern senior team."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"We're younger, of course, but we're better footballers," said Jimmy. "We should have a good chance, anyway."

Lovell snorted.

"You thumping ass, isn't that wheeze fairly knocked on the head? Knowles won't play us, and that's settled."

"Not if he knows it," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose he can't play us without knowing it?" snorted Lovell.

"He might."

"Wh-a-a-t!"

"That's the idea—or part of it."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared blankly at Jimmy Silver. Lovell tapped his forehead significantly.

"Fairly off it," he said. "Has this been coming on long, Jimmy?"

"Ass!"

"You mean to say that Knowles might play us without knowing it was us?" said Lovell blankly.

"Yes."

"Then you must be potty."

"Have you forgotten there's such a thing as the Classical Players Club?" asked Jimmy Silver quietly.

"But—but—what—"

"Can't we make up?"

"Make up!" yelled Lovell.

"Yes. Don't lift the roof off. No need to tell all the county."

"Make up!" repeated Lovell dazedly. "You want to play football disguised as Hamlet or Julius Cæsar? For goodness sake go to Colney Hatch before you get worse, Jimmy."

"You don't know the game yet," said Jimmy calmly.

"No, blessed if I do. I know you're off your chump. Don't let him get near the bread-knife, Newcome. He's dangerous."

"Mad as a hatter," agreed Raby.

And in sober fact the Co. were really a little alarmed as to the state of Jimmy Silver's "roof." Certainly his remarkable words needed explaining.

"When you've done gassing, perhaps you'll listen to your Uncle James," Jimmy Silver suggested calmly.

"Oh, get on! Don't pile it on too thick."

"You know Knowles sent a challenge to the Contadini—"

"Your wandering from the point. I suppose all lunatics do that."

"Fathead! You know that Knowles sent—"

"All Rookwood knows it, dummy! What's that matter now?"

"You know the Contadini declined with thanks?"

"Or without thanks," grinned Lovell. "We know they declined, anyway."

"Exactly. Knowles is ratty about that."

"He's shown it pretty plainly. He tried to dish old Bulkeley, and got a refusal. Serve him right."

"Suppose he heard from Frulo, or his secretary, that they had a date open after all, and could come over and play him?" said Jimmy Silver.

"He won't, I suppose. The Contadini might have accepted a challenge from the school, but not a House challenge."

"If Knowles got that message he would jump at it, wouldn't he?" persisted Jimmy Silver.

"Of course he would. He'd jump at it with both feet. But what's that got to do with the matter in hand?" roared Lovell.

"Lots!"

"I don't see it."

"You wouldn't," said Jimmy Silver.

"The brains of this study are supplied by your Uncle James, old chap."

"Oh, cheese it! What are you burbling about, anyway?"

"Knowles gets that message from Frulo's secretary," said Jimmy Silver. "He jumps at it with both feet. The match is fixed up for next Saturday, say. A team comes to Rookwood—"

"Well?"

"Knowles takes them for the Italian team; he's never seen them."

"Well?" gasped Lovell.

"But, as a matter of fact, they will be the Classical junior eleven."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Which?"

"The Classical junior eleven, with Italian complexions and Italian accents, complete. That's where the Classical players come in. If we can play ancient Rome, we can play modern Italians. Catch on?"

"Great pip!"

Jimmy Silver looked triumphantly at his chums as he propounded that astounding "wheeze."

His chums looked blank.

They had not quite known what to expect, but certainly they had not expected anything like this.

"We—we—we're to make ourselves up as Italians?" said Lovell faintly.

"Yes."

"And play the Modern seniors as Frulo's team?"

"Exactly."

"Great jumping Moses!"

"What do you think of the idea?" asked Jimmy Silver loftily.

"I—I can't quite tell you what I think of it!" gasped Lovell. "There ain't any words strong enough."

"Of all the potty ideas!" said Raby.

"Of all the howling maniacs!" gasped Newcome.

"Think it over," said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "It's a bit startling at first, I know."

"Great pip, I should say it was!"

"But just think of it! In the first place, Knowles couldn't possibly suspect anything of the kind."

"Ha, ha, ha! No; he doesn't know we've got a wild lunatic in this study."

"He wouldn't dream of suspecting it—"

"Not unless he was potty, too."

"Well, that's agreed, then—Knowles wouldn't suspect. The Contadini fix up the match—or they're supposed to. We write a letter from Middlewood; we can easily bike over there and do it."

"But you're not allowed to use Frulo's name!" shouted Lovell. "That's against the law."

"I shouldn't use Frulo's name. He's not their sec., anyway."

"Knowles must have had a letter from their sec., though, as they've written declining the match," remarked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Of course, the details will have to be thought out," he admitted. "We couldn't think of writing a letter in another chap's name. That's impossible."

"I should jolly well say so!"

"But we can write a letter in our own name, slightly changed. A name can be changed into Italian lingo. I'll get an Italian dictionary out of the library, and fix that up."

"But that wouldn't be a member of the Contadini team."

"I know it wouldn't, ass, but Knowles wouldn't know that. He doesn't know the names of all Frulo's men; or any of them, for that matter. We'll take it that he's had a letter from Frulo's sec. Well, Frulo's supposed to get a new sec., and there you are. The first talk with Knowles is on the telephone."

"Oh!"

"Who's going to talk with him on the telephone?" asked Newcome.

"I am."

"Oh!"

"We'll bike over to Middlewood on Wednesday afternoon on purpose. Better have the call come from there, as the Italians are there, in case Knowles should inquire at the exchange where the call comes from. He's not likely to, but he might. Can't be too careful."

"Good!"

"And while I'm on the 'phone I can see whether Knowles swallows it or not."

"That's a good idea—out of his reach," assented Lovell.

"Knowles wouldn't fix up a match like that simply by telephone," said Raby, shaking his head. "He would want it confirmed."

"Exactly. I shall promise to write confirming it."

"But——"

"And while we're at Middlewood we'll go into a good hotel and have tea."

"Jolly expensive."

"Oh, rats!"

"But what for?" demanded Lovell. "Why can't we come home to tea?"

Jimmy Silver smiled pityingly.

"My dear ass, we've got to write to Knowles, and it's got to be done on some

properly engraved Middlewood hotel paper, to look all right. By having tea in the hotel we can use the hotel paper to write a letter."

"By gad! You've got a head on your shoulders, after all."

"It's all as easy as falling off a form," said Jimmy Silver confidently.

"Well, so far as fixing up the match goes, perhaps it is," admitted Lovell. "But—but for us to come to Rookwood as Italians—oh, my hat! They're bigger than we are, for one thing."

"We noticed they were mostly rather small chaps," said Jimmy; "and as Knowles hasn't seen them, he will simply think the same."

"But—but——"

"Of course we shall have to rehearse carefully. We've got to learn a few Italian words to jabber occasionally. With our hair dyed black, and our complexions coffee colour, our own grandfathers wouldn't know us. We can make ourselves a bit darker than the real article, too. And we can make our eyebrows black and bushy, and shade our upper lips——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What's the good of being members of the best dramatic society at Rookwood if we can't do a little play-acting?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Ahem!"

"And just think of it!" said Jimmy, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Knowles and Co. play us, thinking we're the Contadini——"

"Oh!"

"We lick them——"

"Perhaps!"

"Well, if we don't lick them, never mind; we play them. Knowles swanks all over Rookwood about his fixture with the Contadini. His hat won't be big enough to put his head into. He will put on airs over old Bulkeley. He will swell like the merry old frog in the fable. And then—then it comes out that he's really been playing a junior team of his own school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four roared.

"My hat! It's worth trying," exclaimed Lovell. "Even if it's a frost, even if we get licked, it's worth trying, for the thousandth part of a chance of spoofing Knowles like that. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" said Raby heartily. "We'll try it."

"I'm on!" said Newcome.

And so it was arranged. It was undoubtedly a tremendous scheme, the

biggest "jape" that had ever been hatched even in the end study. Perhaps Jimmy Silver was not quite confident of success.

But at all events he was determined to go ahead, and hope for the best. If the "jape" failed, it failed. But if it succeeded, the utter ridicule that would fall upon Knowles of the Sixth would be a complete punishment for his many sins, and it would furnish merriment to all Rookwood for the rest of the term.

And with that prospect in view, the Fistical Four agreed that it was worth while to take a good deal of trouble.

### CHAPTER 23.

#### Jimmy Silver is Busy!

JIMMY SILVER was busy the next day. Lessons did not occupy his attention any more than usual. Indeed, they occupied it rather less than usual. Mr. Bootles, in the form-room, bestowed a hundred lines upon him for allowing his thoughts to wander from the extremely important subject of Early Roman history.

But outside the form-room Jimmy was very busy indeed.

Members of the junior Classical eleven, who could be relied upon to keep the secret, were cautiously admitted to the scheme.

The strictest secrecy was, of course, necessary. The slightest whisper outside their own select circle would have been fatal to the scheme.

The Colonial Co. were the first to be admitted to the secret. Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons gasped when they heard it. But after they had finished gasping, they entered into the scheme with great keenness.

Whether it was a success or not, it would be a tremendous lark, and that was enough for the three merry colonials.

Erroll and Mornington were the next to hear. Erroll whistled, and Mornington roared. Both of them agreed heartily to back up Jimmy Silver.

Rawson and Oswald, finally, were taken into the scheme. They showed, at first, some concern for the state of Jimmy Silver's sanity. But they agreed to back up.

That made up the eleven. And outside the Classical junior football eleven, not a syllable was breathed.

It was safer to keep the little game from the knowledge of everyone not directly concerned in the great "jape." It was only necessary for the members of the eleven to know.

There was a run on the school library for Italian dictionaries and books in Italian. The new Contadini wanted to have, at least, a slight smattering of that beautiful language.

Jimmy Silver had other work in hand, too. There was a general subscription among the eleven merry juniors, and with quite a handsome sum in his pocket, Jimmy Silver cycled over to Latcham after lessons, to give an order for "clobber."

The "visitors," of course, would not be able to play that curious match—if they played it at all—in their own colours. Football rig for eleven was wanted, new. Jimmy remembered the Contadini colours very well, but he did not care to imitate them exactly.

He chose a colour-scheme for the footer clobber, in which the Italian tricolour was worked in, considering that near enough. And the order was given, and the goods promised for delivery in a few days.

Lovell pointed out that if the scheme didn't come off, the clobber would not be wanted, and it would be safer to leave the order till after the match was fixed with Knowles.

But Jimmy did not heed. There might be delay in the delivery of the things, and he did not want to run risks. Even as it was, to make all sure he decided to arrange the fixture for the Wednesday the following week.

That evening, there was a rehearsal in Jimmy Silver's study, with the door locked. To the other fellows, it was a meeting of the junior football eleven, and they did not know that it was a rehearsal.

Jimmy Silver had made some rather extensive purchases in Latcham, the "props" of the junior dramatic society not being quite equal to the strain put upon them.

In the end study the juniors set to practice.

They made up their faces with dusky complexions, they darkened and ruffled their eyebrows, and the change it made in their appearance was startling.

There was a little doubt that, when the disguise was adopted with completeness, they would be totally unrecognisable.

Jimmy Silver went to bed that night in a very satisfied mood. All was going well.

The next day he was very anxious for morning lessons to be over. And he was very careful in class that morning, not wishing to run the risk of being detained in the afternoon.

The chums of the Fourth were very glad when the form was dismissed. After

dinner Jimmy Silver sauntered out into the quad with his chums.

There was a junior football match that afternoon, between the Classics and the Moderns.

As a rule Jimmy Silver was very keen indeed on beating Tommy Dodd and Co. on the footer ground. But on the present occasion even that had to take a back seat.

Erroll captained the junior Classical side, and after some debate it was decided that Raby and Newcome should play, while Jimmy and Lovell went over to Middlewood.

Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell sauntered down to the field, to see the match. Jimmy was anxious to see his men keep in first-class form, considering what was before them.

After watching the game for a few minutes, the chums walked off the ground. They passed Bog Side, where the seniors were at practice.

Knowles of the Sixth, in a somewhat ratty temper, was keeping his men up to the mark. His late defeat by Bulkeley's team rankled, and Knowles had to admit that, on that occasion, the Modern seniors had not shown up well.

As a matter of fact, there was a good deal of slacking and smoking among Knowles' chums, and Knowles was not a fellow to play a man he did not like. Under those circumstances the Modern senior team was never likely to be first-class.

Jimmy and Lovell stopped for a few minutes to look on at the seniors. Frampton was in goal, and he had let the ball through several times.

"For goodness sake, buck up, Frampton!" Knowles exclaimed irritably. "Do you call that goal-keeping?"

And Frampton responded by scowling.

Frampton was looking rather white and seedy, and some of the fellows guessed the cause.

"Lovely goalie—I don't think," remarked Jimmy Silver, as he walked away with Lovell. "He's been keeping it up, you know. Knowles and his set break bounds at night sometimes, and it doesn't do them any good when they come to play football."

"All the better for us, if we play them!" chuckled Lovell.

"Well, yes. If Frampton keeps goal like that, why, we shall walk over them."

The chums wheeled out their bicycles. It was a long ride to Middlewood—fifteen miles at least—but Jimmy and Lovell were hardy riders. Tubby Muffin met them in the gateway.

"You fellows going out?"

"Yes, fatty."

"I'll come," said Tubby cheerfully. "Erroll's refused to put me in the footer team."

"Go hon!"

"Hold on a minute, while I get my bike," said Tubby. "We'll have tea somewhere out—eh? I'll stand my whack, at least, I'll settle up to-morrow."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

He did not want the chatterbox of Rookwood to suspect that there was anything secret about their ride that afternoon. Once Tubby Muffin had got on the track of a secret he would never have rested.

"Well, buck up with the jigger," said Jimmy.

"Look here, we can't take that fat idiot to Middlewood, Jimmy!" exclaimed Lovell, as Tubby toddled away to the bike shed.

"We'll start in the other direction," said Jimmy. "I fancy Tubby won't keep up long."

"Ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin rolled out on his bike, and the three juniors started in the direction of Coombe.

Tubby's fat face was very cheerful. He did not suspect that the chums were bound for Middlewood, in the least, but he was assured that he was going to "stick" them for tea.

"Not quite so fast, you fellows," panted Tubby, when a quarter of a mile had been covered. "No need to hurry if you're going to stop in Coombe."

"We'll race you!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, I say——"

Without waiting to hear what Tubby had to say, Jimmy and Lovell put on speed, and fairly walked away from the fat Classical.

Tubby Muffin laboured after them in vain.

In two minutes they were out of sight.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tubby. "Rot-ters! Ow!"

The fat Classical laboured on to Coombe. Jimmy and Lovell had turned into a lane, and were riding hard for the road to Middlewood, but Tubby was quite unaware of that fact.

He laboured on, and reached Coombe at last. For the next hour or two Tubby was making a frantic search in every place of refreshment in and about Coombe. But he did not find Jimmy Silver.

"Beasts!" groaned Tubby at last. "Dodged me to save a tea—mean beasts! Yah!"

And in great wrath, and without tea, the fat Classical pedalled home to Rookwood, there to seek other victims.

By the time Tubby Muffin reached Rookwood Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell had arrived in Middlewood, dusty but cheerful.

## CHAPTER 24.

### Caught on the Wire.

"KNOWLES!"

Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, came on Big Side, and called to Knowles. The Modern prefect was looking on now at the practice with a discontented expression. Knowles was far from satisfied with the form his men were showing, and he had been coaching hard.

Knowles was a good player himself, and was always sure of his place in the Rookwood First. But his ambition of capturing a majority of the places for his side was not likely to be realised.

Even Knowles had to admit, to himself, that Bulkeley was right in passing over most of the Modern claims, though he would never have dreamed of admitting it openly.

He stared round angrily at Leggett, as the junior came up.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Mr. Manders sent me——"

"What, what is it?"

"Somebody's called you up on Mr. Manders' telephone, Knowles."

"Confound!" muttered Knowles.

"Don't you know who it is, you young idiot?"

"Somebody with an Italian name——"

Knowles' expression changed.

"What? What's that?"

"An Italian gentleman at Middlewood, Mr. Manders said," replied Leggett. "I can't remember the name. A foreign name—something like Blanket, or Bunket, or something——"

Knowles did not wait for Leggett to finish.

He threw on his coat and muffler, and strode off the football ground. Without losing a second, he made his way to Mr. Manders' house.

There was a gleam in his eyes.

If an Italian gentleman had rung him up from Middlewood, it could only be a member of the Contadini team—Carlo Frulo himself, most likely. It could only mean that Mr. Frulo had changed his mind after all, and that the match would come off.

Knowles' eyes danced at the thought

That distinguished match—that triumph over Bulkeley—it would come off after all! The Classical seniors would be green with envy; Bulkeley would be deeply annoyed and irritated.

The Modern prefect looked quite cheerful as he tapped at the door of Mr. Manders' study.

Mr. Manders nodded to him. The Modern master made rather a favourite of Cecil Knowles, whose nature was very like his own. Mr. Manders was not popular at Rookwood, but Knowles found means of keeping in his good graces.

"Someone has rung up on the telephone, Knowles," said Mr. Manders. "He desires to speak to you; an Italian gentleman who gives the name of Metallobianco—a somewhat odd name. I have requested him to hold the line while I sent for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Knowles. "It must be a member of the Contadini."

"Indeed! The Italian football team people have been speaking about a good deal?" asked Mr. Manders.

"Yes, sir. I'm trying to fix up a match with them."

"I hope you will be successful, Knowles," said Mr. Manders graciously. "You are quite welcome to use the telephone."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"Not at all, Knowles."

Mr. Manders rustled out of the room, and Knowles took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Are you there?"

"Si, si, signor."

"Eh?"

"I mean to say, yes, yes; excuse me," came the voice on the telephone, in English this time. "You speak not Italian, I zink?"

"No," said Knowles into the transmitter, with a grin.

His knowledge of Italian was limited to the words macaroni and vermicelli.

"Is that Mistair Knowles?"

"I'm Knowles."

"Zat is ze name given, I zink. Did you not write to us——"

"Our sec., Frampton, wrote to you," said Knowles. "That is, if you are a member of the Contadini."

"Yes, yes, zat is what I mean," came the voice, rather hastily Knowles thought. "Signor Frampton—he write——"

"Yes, he mentioned my name, as captain, in his letter," said Knowles.

"Are you Mr. Frulo?"

"No, no! I give my name to somebody who answer ze telephone: I give ze name of Metallobianco."

"Ye gods! what a name!" murmured Knowles.

"What you say?"

"Nothing, sir! You are a member of the Contadini, I presume?"

"You receive a letter from us—isn't it?"

"Yes, we had a letter from your secretary, Luigi Sasso," said Knowles.

"Ah! But Luigi Sasso is not now secretary of the team zat you are to play—I am secretary," explained the voice on the telephone.

"I see, sir."

"My name—you catch my name——"

"Metallobianco, I think?"

"Zat is right, Signor Metallobianco, segretario."

"What the thunder does segretario mean?" murmured Knowles. "Oh, secretary, of course."

"What is zat?"

"I quite understand, Mr. Metallobianco," said Knowles civilly. "You are the new secretary of the Contadini."

"Ze Contadini undici."

"Oh! Excuse me, I don't know what undici means."

"Eleven."

"I see," assented Knowles. "Undici is Italian for eleven?"

"Zat is right."

"I wish he'd stick to English!" murmured Knowles. "Yes, sir," he went on aloud, "I'm glad you've rung me up, Mr. Metallobianco. I was very sorry you hadn't a date open for a match with us. Perhaps——"

"I find zere is a date."

"Oh, good!"

"It would be a great honour to us to play you at your scuola——"

"At our what?" ejaculated Knowles.

The Italian word was pronounced something like "squaller," and it surprised Knowles.

"Scuola—school!"

"Oh, I see! Squaller means school, does it?"

"Si, si."

"Yes, I see." The Italian yes, "si," being pronounced "see," caused Knowles to misapprehend again. "I quite see, Mr. Metallobianco."

"We talk it over," went on Mr. Metallobianco. "We find zere is open date on mercoledi——"

"On—on what?"

"Wednesday."

"Oh, on Wednesday. Yes. Next Wednesday?"

"Just so—what you call Wednesday coming."

Knowles grinned. He would not have called next Wednesday "Wednesday coming." But he let it go at that.

"Exactly," he said. "You have a vacant date on Wednesday week."

"Vacant? You say—vacant——"

"I mean an open date. You're free to play us on Wednesday, next Wednesday?" said Knowles, wishing that Mr. Metallobianco had studied English a little more carefully.

"Zat is correct. If zat date, Wednesday coming, is good for you, zat date is good for us to play. I make myself very clear?"

"Quite clear, sir."

"Very good. You are free to play zat day, isn't it?"

"Certainly; We shall be glad."

"Zen zat is settle."

"Good."

"We go from Middlewood," further explained the Italian gentleman. "We go on what you call tour—da per tutto——"

"Eh?"

"Up and down and round about, as you say in English. But we manage to come over to your scuola—Rookwoot, isn't it?—on mercoledi—Wednesday. What time is it zat we come?"

"Any time you like, sir," said Knowles heartily. "Any time in the afternoon."

"Shall we say tre ore."

"Tray oray?" repeated Knowles, "What-a-at's that?"

"Three hours."

"I—I——"

"Three of the clock, as you say."

"Oh, I see, three o'clock. Certainly. That's an excellent time for kick-off."

"Bene!"

"Bay-nay!" repeated Knowles hopelessly, "I don't quite follow."

"Bene! Good."

"Oh! I see! Quite so! Good!"

"I ring you up to ask if all right serene for Wednesday coming," explained Mr. Metallobianco. "Now you say 'yes' we write! I write you letter zis evening to finish up, isn't it?"

"To confirm it—quite so! Yes, I'd be glad to have it in a letter."

"Zen I write him and post him to you, isn't it—or Signor—what iz zat name zat you say——"

"Frampton!"

"Zat is it. Ze English names are a little difficult for us, isn't it? Is it, to Signor Frampton zat I write?"

"It doesn't matter—Frampton or me, it's all the same."

"Bene! We leave Middlewood zis evening, but I post zat letter first, I zink."

You expect us on Wednesday coming—  
Wednesday next week.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Zat is all, zen. I hope zat we have a  
good match, Signor Knowles.”

“I hope so, I’m sure. And I’m very  
glad. It will be an honour for us to play  
the Contadini,” said Knowles, with great  
satisfaction.

“Bene! Buon giorno, signorino.”

“Good-bye, sir.”

Knowles put up the receiver with a  
smile. It was good news for Knowles.  
He hurried out of Mr. Manders’ study to  
impart that excellent news to his comrades.  
And when it was imparted there was  
much rejoicing in the Modern camp at  
Rookwood.

## CHAPTER 25.

### Zio Metallobianco!

JIMMY SILVER came out of the tele-  
phone box at Middlewood Post Office  
with a cheery smile on his face and  
joined Lovell.

Lovell had heard Jimmy’s half of the  
conversation on the telephone, and he had  
seemed to be suffering from inward con-  
vulsions the while.

“Oh, Jimmy!” he gasped.

“Come on,” said Jimmy cheerily.

They left the post office and returned to  
their bicycles. The two juniors were  
grinning as they wheeled the machines  
away down the street.

“And it went all right?” gasped Lovell,  
hardly able to believe it yet.

“Right as rain.”

“It was Knowles on the ’phone?”

Jimmy chuckled.

“Yes. I knew his toot at once, though  
I took jolly good care that he shouldn’t  
know mine.”

“Ha, ha, ha! And he’s swallowed it  
whole?”

“Rather!”

“Oh, my hat! Blessed if it doesn’t  
begin to look as if it will work,” gurgled  
Lovell. “Poor old Knowles!”

“Of course it will work, fathead,” said  
Jimmy Silver loftily. “You leave it to  
your Uncle James.”

“Well, Uncle James is a bit of an ass,  
you know,” remarked Lovell.

“It will work like a charm,” said Jimmy  
Silver, unheeding. “It’s a bit difficult,  
too, to give your name to a chap without  
letting him know who you are. Of course  
I couldn’t give a false name.”

“You—you couldn’t!”

“Certainly not.”

“But—but you——”

“I gave him my own name,” said Jimmy  
calmly. “That’s what comes of mugging  
up Italian yesterday, my son. You can  
get lots of wisdom out of a dictionary. I  
gave him my name in Italian—a chap has  
a right to construe his name if he likes.”

“But—your name——”

“My name’s Silver, isn’t it?”

“Yes, but——”

“Silver’s a white metal, isn’t it?”

“Of course it is, fathead; but you  
didn’t give your name as Whitemetal!”  
howled Lovell.

“Yes, I did!”

“You—you did?”

“Yes, ass! Metallo is Italian for metal.  
Bianco is Italian for white. Metallo-  
bianco means white metal—otherwise  
Silver.”

“My only hat!” ejaculated Lovell.

“You see, I happen to know that—I  
didn’t know it last week, but I do now,”  
grinned Jimmy Silver. “Knowles doesn’t  
know it and won’t know it—not till after  
the match, anyway.”

“He wouldn’t think of you, anyway”  
grinned Lovell. “But—but my hat!  
What would Knowles say, Jimmy, if he  
knew that it was a Fourth Former who’d  
been telephoning to him?”

“Something emphatic, I expect.”

“And—and if it works, Jimmy——”

“It will work, fathead!”

The bicycles were wheeled to the railway  
station and left there for a time while the  
chums of Rookwood were making a few  
inquiries.

They knew that the Contadini eleven  
had been lately in Middlewood, whether  
they were still there or not. They soon  
discovered that Mr. Frulo and his team  
had left that day, and that during their  
stay in the town they had put up at the  
Railway Hotel.

Into the Railway Hotel, accordingly, the  
two juniors walked cheerfully.

There they had tea, and while tea was  
preparing, Jimmy Silver strolled into the  
reading-room to write a letter.

It did not take him long.

Then he rejoined Lovell at the tea-table,  
and did justice to the fare provided—at  
steep war prices—by the Railway Hotel.

After tea the chums sauntered back to  
the station, and wheeled out their bicycles.

They rode away on the long ride back  
to Rookwood in cheerful spirits.

They were dusty and tired by the time  
they reached Rookwood, but very cheerful  
in mood. All was going well.

As they wheeled their machines in, in  
the dusk, Conray and Co. met them in  
the quad.



"All serene?" asked the Cornstalk.

"Right as rain," said Jimmy. "Any news, here?"

The Colonial chums chortled.

"Yes, rather! It's got out that Knowles has had a telephone call from the Italian eleven at Middlewood, accepting his challenge. In fact, he's swanking about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tommy Dodd's full of it," grinned Van Ryn. "All the merry Moderns seem pleased. It seems that they're to receive a letter from Frulo's sec., confirming arrangement made by wire."

"They will," said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not the slightest doubt about that," murmured Jimmy Silver. "You see I posted the letter in Middlewood, so I know."

And the Classical juniors roared.

"But mum's the word," added Jimmy Silver. "Not a syllable, for goodness' sake, or the game will be up."

"You bet."

"How did the match go?" asked Lovell.

"Oh, we beat the Modern kids—two to one. Erroll kicked one goal, and Raby the other. All serene."

"We can walk over Modern juniors," grinned Pons; "but Modern seniors—rather a big order that."

"Wait and see!" said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy and Lovell put up their machines, and strolled into the schoolhouse in good time for call-over. Tubby Muffin blinked at them reproachfully as they came out of hall after roll-call.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy genially. "Why didn't you keep up with us on the road, Tubby? We missed you awfully."

"You dodged off," grunted Tubby.

"My dear chap!" exclaimed Jimmy, in surprise. "You surely don't think we should have lost the pleasure of your company if we could have helped it?"

"Well, didn't you?" demanded Tubby.

"Well, as a matter of fact we did!" said Jimmy. And he walked away, leaving the fat Classical sniffing with wrath.

In the end study Raby and Newcome received an account of the afternoon's doings at Middlewood, and chuckled gleefully thereat.

"Blessed if I don't think it will work," said Raby. "If it does, the Moderns will be ready to kick themselves. Jimmy, old man, you're not such an howling ass after all."

"Go hon!" said Jimmy sarcastically.

"And you've actually written to Knowles?"

"Certainly."

"If he spots your fist——"

"He won't, ass! I've been specially practising an artistic Italian hand for the purpose."

"And what did you sign yourself?" asked Newcome.

"Z. Metallobianco."

"Oh, crumbs! What a giddy name!"

"What does the Z stand for?" asked Lovell.

"Zio."

"Is that a name?"

"No, ass; but Knowles will think it's the initial of a name. Zio is Italian for uncle."

"Uncle!" yelled the Co.

"Certainly."

"Oh, holy smoke!" roared Lovell.

"Then that letter is really signed 'Uncle Silver,' if Knowles only knew it!"

"Exactly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were bursts of chuckling in the end study as the Fistical Four settled down to their prep. They tried to imagine Knowles's feelings if he could only have known that he was corresponding with "Uncle Silver." That, however, Knowles was not to know till after the great match.

## CHAPTER 26.

### All Clear!

KNOWLES of the Sixth was very keen to see the letters that arrived at Rookwood the following morning.

As he expected, there was a letter for Frampton, with the Middlewood postmark on it.

It was addressed in a very graceful hand, and certainly the writing did not look anything like that of a Rookwood junior.

Knowles collared the letter, and hurried away to Frampton with it, and it was opened in Knowles's study before breakfast.

Knowles, of course, had had no doubts of the matter since receiving the telephone message from Signor Metallobianco at Middlewood. But he was glad to have a confirmation of the arrangements in writing.

Already he had talked quite freely on the subject; and all Rookwood knew that the fixture with the Contadini was coming off after all.

The Moderns, from the house captain down to the smallest fag, rejoiced.

It was such a distinction, that the Modern fellows felt that it was justifiable to put on a little side.

The Contadini might have played the School, or they might have played the Classics, but they were going to play the Modern side. After that, the Moderns felt that it could not be gainsaid that the Modern side was top side of Rookwood.

The Classics, naturally, did not share the feelings of the Moderns on the subject.

They were distinctly annoyed.

Bulkeley said nothing. But a good many of the Classical seniors did not conceal their opinion that Knowles had played it "low down" in bagging that match, instead of leaving it to the School.

On the Classical side, there was a full expectation that the Modern team would be hopelessly beaten, whereas a Rookwood first eleven could have kept its end up even against the Contadini, and perhaps might have scored a victory.

Knowles had, in fact, only succeeded in bagging a defeat for his team; that was the Classical opinion.

But Knowles and Co. cared nothing for the Classical opinion. The more the Classics groused the more Knowles was pleased. He had scored over his rivals, and that was enough for him.

Knowles and Frampton and Catesby eagerly scanned the letter from Middlewood, when it was opened.

It was satisfactory enough. It ran:

"Caro signore,—I have the honour of to write to you confirming the arrangements made on the telephone.

"We shall have the great pleasure to play you at Rookwood School on Wednesday afternoon next; kick-off at three of the clock.

"Accept, signore, my most distinguished and respectful salutations.

Z. METALLOBIANCO.

"Well, that's all right," said Knowles, with great satisfaction.

"Ripping!" said Catesby.

"Awfully polite," said Frampton. "These foreigners are jolly civil. What thumpin' queer names they have, too."

"Yes, that name's rather a corker" grinned Knowles. "I wonder what Z stands for? Zeno or Zenobio or something, I suppose. But the surname is a corker and no mistake."

"Metallobianco," said Frampton. "I dare say it means something in Italian—metal-worker or something of that kind."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Well, this letter settles it," remarked Catesby. "We're meeting the merry Contadini! Knowles, old man, this is the best idea you ever had under your roof. Bulkeley will simply writhe."

Knowles laughed.

"He doesn't say anything," he remarked. "Not a word! In fact, he's congratulated me on getting the match. But I know how he feels. The others are pretty open-mouthed about what they think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose," said Frampton rather slowly, "it would have been rather—well, rather more in rule, for the School to send the challenge. It does look a bit as if we did it to dish Bulkeley."

"We did, of course," said Catesby.

"Ahem! Yes, but it's better not to say so."

"We're not going to say so," grinned Knowles. "We simply sent this challenge as the Modern Football Club, without thinking of Bulkeley at all. The Classics sniggered when they heard it had been declined. They can snigger now on the other side of their mouths."

The three seniors left the study. Hoke and Tresham, of the Modern Sixth, met them in the passage.

"Brek's ready," said Hoke. "Is it news from Middlewood?"

Knowles showed them the letter.

"Good egg!" said Hoke.

"Topping!" said Tresham. "My hat! Won't the Classics be pleased?"

Knowles & Co. went in to breakfast in great spirits.

During the morning all Rookwood learned of the letter received from the "segretario" of the Contadini.

Knowles showed the letter to several fellows, in fact. He wanted all Rookwood to know that there was no doubt about the matter.

The letter was written upon the Railway Hotel notepaper from Middlewood. It was impossible to doubt its genuineness, even if a doubt had occurred to anyone. But no doubt occurred; there was no reason why it should.

In fact, the letter was quite genuine, as far as it went. Signor Metallobianco's eleven certainly was coming on Wednesday to play the Modern seniors. There certainly was no doubt about that.

The mistake was on Knowles' side in supposing that "Signor Metallobianco's" team was the celebrated Contadini eleven. He had not even been told so. Naturally, he had supposed so from the talk on the telephone. But that, as Jimmy Silver remarked to his chums, was Knowles' business. If he chose to take things for granted that was his look out.

Cecil Knowles was sometimes given to "swanking," and it could not be denied

that there was more than a suspicion of swank in his manner that day.

The Modern seniors had been booked for another practice match with the Classical seniors for the following Wednesday, and it was necessary to scratch this match in order to play the Contadini.

Bulkeley, of course, could not raise any objection. It would have made no difference if he had, Knowles would simply have scratched.

Frampton suggested sending a polite note to Bulkeley by a fag, intimating that the Modern eleven wanted their Wednesday afternoon free, but Knowles, who took a keen pleasure in "rubbing it in," decided to call on Bulkeley personally and explain.

"It would only be civil, you know," he said to his friends.

And his friends grinned and agreed that it would.

Soon after lessons that day Knowles strolled across to the schoolhouse to speak to the captain of Rookwood.

The Fistical Four were on the schoolhouse steps, and they grinned as the Modern captain came along.

"Looks a bit important, what?" murmured Raby.

"Striking the stars with his sublime napper, like the chap in Horace," smiled Jimmy Silver. "Well, pride goeth before a fall."

"It do—it does."

And the four young rascals chortled. Knowles gave them a scowling look as he passed.

Jimmy stepped forward.

"I say, Knowles, is it true you're playing the Contadini next Wednesday?" he asked.

"Quite true," said Knowles.

"I suppose you'll ask Bulkeley to lead you some players, won't you?" asked Jimmy meekly.

"Certainly not."

"Oh! It's football you're going to play, isn't it?"

"Eh? Of course it is!" snapped Knowles.

"Not marbles?" asked Jimmy.

"Not what?"

"Marbles."

"Why, you——"

"If it's footer, what will be the good of playing Moderns, that's what I mean," said Jimmy, with the seriousness of an owl. "Have you thought of that, Knowles?"

Knowles' reply was a sudden lunge at the captain of the Fourth, and Jimmy Silver roared as he received a tremendous box on the ear.

"Yaroooh!"

Knowles walked on into the house, leaving Jimmy rubbing his ear and glaring after him with a Hunnish expression.

"Ow! The rotter! I've a jolly good mind——"

"Well, you asked for it!" grinned Lovell.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Jimmy rubbed his burning ear ruefully, but he consoled himself with the prospect of Wednesday. On that day Knowles of the Sixth was going to pay for all his sins. And the more Knowles "swanked" about his match with the Contadini the more utterly absurd he would look when the facts came out. And that prospect was very consoling to the heroes of the end study.

## CHAPTER 27.

### Swank!

**B**ULKELEY was in his study, with Neville and Carthew of the Sixth, when Knowles looked in with an agreeable smile on his face. Neville and Carthew looked rather grim, but Bulkeley's manner was quite cordial as he nodded to the Modern prefect.

Bulkeley was not a suspicious fellow, and he was determined, anyway, not to see in Knowles' action what the other fellows suspected.

For the Modern captain to scheme to "dish" the captain of the school was a very undignified proceeding, and it was in the worst of taste, and Bulkeley was determined not to believe it of Knowles.

So, although Bulkeley could not help feeling a little annoyed, he was resolutely cordial to Cecil Knowles.

"Come in, Knowles," he said. "There's a chair."

Knowles did not sit down, however.

"I've just dropped in to speak about next Wednesday," he remarked. "I've had a letter from the Contadini sec. confirming the telephone arrangement. They're meeting us on Wednesday next week."

"So I understand."

"We had a home match fixed for that afternoon. You don't mind scratching, of course?"

"Not at all," said Bulkeley heartily. "Of course, you'll have to scratch. It was really only a practice match, anyway, and you were bound to give the Italian chaps any date that was convenient to them under the circumstances."

Knowles compressed his lips a little.

"Rubbing it in" was not very gratifying when George Bulkeley took it in this hearty and unsuspecting way.

Not that Knowles believed in Bulkeley's heartiness. He was quite convinced that Bulkeley was only acting in order to conceal his real feelings on the subject.

But he would have been glad to make the captain of Rookwood come out into the open, he wanted to "draw blood," so to speak.

"Then we'll put off our little match," he said. "I suppose next Saturday will do for that?"

"Certainly."

"And you're really meeting the team that beat Loamshire Rifles at Latcham, Knowles?" remarked Neville.

"Yes, as I've said."

"It's rather a big order, isn't it?"

Knowles smiled. Bulkeley's friends were not so good at hiding their feelings as Bulkeley himself, it seemed.

"Oh, I dare say we shall handle them," he said carelessly. "Of course they're an older team. But we're not exactly infants."

"I've heard that they're not a very big team," said Bulkeley. "Some of our juniors saw them play at Latcham, and they said that some of the Italian players were no bigger, physically, than Rookwood fellows."

"They beat Loamshire Rifles—a khaki team," grunted Carthew. "My opinion is that even Rookwood First wouldn't find it easy to hold them. As for the Moderns playing them on their own——"

"You don't like the idea?" smiled Knowles.

"I think it's rot!" said Carthew.

"Really?"

"Well, I must say it would have been better for them to play the School, if they play Rookwood at all," said Neville. "I agree with Carthew there. It doesn't seem the right thing for a team, ranking with the Corinthians, to play a House eleven."

"Well, it's rather too late to think of that," said Bulkeley hastily. "We hadn't considered the matter when Knowles sent his challenge."

"Knowles might have mentioned it in committee. He's a member of the school footer committee."

"Never thought of it," said Knowles blandly. "I was just thinking of bagging a match for my own club, and unfortunately it didn't occur to me that you fellows would feel left out in the cold."

"It's not that," said Neville sharply. "We get separate matches for the Classical senior teams sometimes. But a special match like this——"

"It doesn't matter now, anyway," murmured Bulkeley.

"It's not too late for Knowles to do the right thing now," remarked Carthew.

"The right thing!" repeated Knowles.

"Yes."

"May I inquire what that is?"

"Hand the match over to the First Eleven," said Carthew at once. "It's easily done. And then Rookwood might have a chance of winning. You'd play them all the same—you're in the First Eleven."

"And you don't think we've a chance of winning on our own?" asked Knowles, with smiling sarcasm.

"I know you haven't."

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"Thanks! We shall try, you know."

"Well, you know what would be the right thing to do, anyway."

"Not at all. The match is ours," said Knowles calmly. "At the time, I never thought a word about it causing jealousy on this side."

"It's not jealousy!" broke out Neville, hotly. "Nothing of the kind. It's the fitness of things. Rookwood First ought to be playing the Contadini, if they're played here at all, not a House team, either Classical or Modern."

"That's my idea," said Carthew.

"Come, come, that's all useless now," said Bulkeley pacifically. "But there's one thing I was thinking of mentioning to you, Knowles."

"Go ahead."

"You want to win, of course, if it's possible. Would you care to strengthen your team with a few Classical players? The Contadini, of course, wouldn't mind—they're coming here to play a Rookwood team. I'm not suggesting for a moment your putting it in my hands——"

"He ought to!" grunted Neville.

"Dry up, Neville, there's a good chap!"

"Oh, let him run on!" smiled Knowles.

"I expected it to be taken in this way, on this side of Rookwood."

Neville's lips opened again, but he closed them at an almost beseeching look from Bulkeley. The Rookwood captain was very anxious to avoid anything like a "row" on the subject.

"You were saying, Bulkeley——" said Knowles.

"Oh, yes! If you'd care to strengthen your team with a few Classical men, it might be a good idea," said Bulkeley. "It's your match, but naturally we all want to see a Rookwood team put up a good game. To be candid, Knowles, a match like this is a bit above the weight of a House team. If you'd care for a few men——"

"To strengthen my team?"

"Yes."

"Thanks very much. But I'm afraid that it wouldn't strengthen my team to put any Classics in it," said Knowles calmly.

Bulkeley bit his lip hard.

"Well, if that's how you look at it, there's nothing more to be said, of course," he answered, after a pause. "I wish you good luck, Knowles."

"Thanks."

And Knowles, with a nod, strolled out of the study, satisfied that he had, after all, "rubbed it in."

Neville and Carthew grunted simultaneously.

"Conceited ass!"

"Swanking cad!"

Bulkeley looked worried.

"For goodness' sake be careful how you talk to Knowles, you fellows," he said. "If there's any jaw, it will get round that we're jealous of Knowles and his blessed fixture. It would look rotten."

"Knowles is trying to make it look like that," said Neville savagely. "He knows it's nothing of the sort. He knows what's the right thing to do and he won't do it. And his team will be hopelessly outclassed and licked. He might save the match by putting in some of our men——"

"Well, he's afraid it would be claimed as a Classical win in that case I suppose."

"So it would be if it was a win," growled Carthew.

Bulkeley laughed.

"There you are, you see! You can't expect Knowles to agree to that."

"Oh, you stand up for him, of course! I believe you'd stand up for the Crown Prince of Prussia!" grunted Carthew. "Knowles has schemed this out as one in the eye for the Classical side."

"I—I hope not."

"Well, he has."

"Of course he has," said Neville. "And it was in rotten bad taste and makes us all look asses!"

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Bulkeley. "Let us turn up on Wednesday to see the match and back up the Rookwood side. That's all we can do."

"Well, it may be rather entertaining to see the Contadini making hay of those fumbling chumps!" said Neville.

And Bulkeley laughed and the matter dropped. But there was no doubt that feelings were very sore on the Classical side of Rookwood. And Knowles drew very considerable satisfaction from his knowledge of that fact.

## CHAPTER 28.

### The Day of the Match.

JIMMY SILVER and Co. were hard at work during the remainder of the week on the football ground.

Jimmy entertained a wild hope of beating the Modern seniors when the great match came off.

That is to say, if it did come off! Jimmy's friends were backing him up heartily, but only Jimmy was convinced that the extraordinary scheme would be a success.

So far, certainly, all had gone well.

The match was arranged. The team was expected on Wednesday, and Knowles and Co. had not the slightest suspicion.

But when the pretended Contadini put in an appearance at Rookwood, it was possible—in fact, very probable—that there would be a hitch.

The young rascals hoped for the best, though they did not fully share Uncle James's sublime confidence.

It was, at all events, worth risking, and they were certainly going to risk it.

And so the Classical footballers gave their very special attention to hard practice, determined to be at the very top of their form—if the match did come off.

Jimmy's hope of a victory over the Modern seniors was rather daring, perhaps. Age and weight would be on Knowles's side, and the match would be altogether disproportioned.

But it was not to be denied that there were only three good men, at the best, in Knowles's team. Some were average players, and at least four or five were what Jimmy called "duds."

Jimmy's men were all juniors, but they were of the very best. Conroy, the goal, was a tower of strength. Raby and Van Ryn were splendid backs. Jimmy Silver, who played centre-half, was undoubtedly first class; and Rawson and Oswald, the other halves, were decidedly good. Mornington, Lovell, Erroll, Pons, and Newcome, the forwards, were as good a front line as any junior club was likely to put into the field.

So far as weight went, of course, the Modern seniors would have a big advantage. But Jimmy flattered himself that his men played a more scientific game than Knowles's crowd.

At kick and rush, the Modern seniors might have had the best of it. At real footer, as Jimmy declared, the Classical juniors might very possibly put the lid on the Modern fumlars.

It was a "large order," undoubtedly, but the chances of a win were by no means negligible.

On Saturday, the Classical juniors played Tommy Dodd's team again, and even Tommy Dodd could not deny that the Classics were in tremendous form, and that they simply walked over the Moderns.

Jimmy was quite satisfied with the progress of his men. The Classical junior eleven, in point of fact, were not playing footer, they were working it, at present. To beat the Modern seniors was so gorgeous a prospect, that it was worth any amount of trouble.

But while Jimmy Silver kept his men well up to the mark, he was not neglecting the other aspects of his amazing scheme. After the match on Saturday he cycled over to Latcham for the new clobber.

The football rig, which the pseudo Contadini were to wear on Wednesday, was all ready for him, and the Fistical Four brought it away in bundles on their machines.

They did not take it to Rookwood, however.

It was carefully concealed in the deserted barn a mile from the school, for use when wanted.

Overcoats, to be used on the same occasion, had been borrowed for a moderate sum, to be returned afterwards.

At the barn, the Classical juniors were to "make up" on the day of the match, and turn themselves into dusky Italians.

On Sunday, several of the Classics took their Sunday-walk in the direction of the old barn, and deposited there the articles they would require, selected from the property of the Classical Players' Club.

Meanwhile, the eleven young scamps were devoting some of their spare time to "mugging up" Italian words and phrases.

They would not be expected, of course, to speak Italian at Rookwood on Wednesday; probably, nobody there knew the language, excepting Mr. Bootles.

But a few Italian phrases dropped carelessly would help to keep up the deception.

And not a word had been whispered of the scheme. Some of the Classical fellows had scented that something was "on," that was all. The eleven kept their own counsel very carefully.

Meanwhile, they were immensely tickled by the "side" the Moderns put on, on the subject of the forthcoming match.

But for Bulkeley's influence, there would have been sharp words between Moderns and Classics of the upper forms. Fortunately, the captain of Rookwood managed to keep the peace there.

But the juniors of both sides slanged one another heartily.

Tommy Dodd and Co. did not like Knowles—not at all. The three Tommies, in fact, disliked him most heartily. But he was their house-captain, and he had scored a distinct triumph for the Modern side in bagging that great match, and the three Tommies rejoiced over it.

They explained to the Classics that the Contadini were playing the Moderns, instead of the School, because they wanted a really good match. And Flynn, and Jones minor, and Townsend and Co., and other fellows, who were not in the secret, retorted with great wrath that the Contadini were simply playing the match by way of a joke, and that the score would be about fifty goals to nil when they had finished with the Moderns.

Even Lattrey of the Fourth joined in the endless "slanging" that went on, on the subject, and Jimmy Silver grinned as he noted it. Even the keen-eyed Lattrey had no suspicion of the real facts, and there was no opportunity for the exercise of his sneaking propensities.

Fellows inquired of Jimmy Silver, occasionally, whether he had forgotten his undertaking to make Knowles sit up for his sins, and whether the end study was going to take a back seat, and so forth. To which Jimmy only replied, in the words of the politician:

"Wait and see!"

As Wednesday drew near, there was much suppressed excitement in the breasts of the eleven Classics who were in the secret.

On Wednesday morning, Mr. Bootles was greatly pleased with them in class. They were as good as gold, or better. Jimmy had promised to boil them in oil if they ran the slightest risk of detention. Mr. Bootles found that he had at least eleven model pupils in his class; but he little dreamed of their reasons for being so exceptionally good that morning.

They breathed more freely when they were out of the form-room.

"All serene, now!" said Lovell.

"The serenity is terrific, as that Indian johnny at Greyfriars would say," grinned Jimmy Silver.

In spite of their suppressed excitement, the eleven made a good dinner. And when they strolled out into the quad, after dinner, the three Tommies met them.

"I suppose you're coming to see the match this afternoon?" asked Tommy Dodd. "No rags to-day, you know."

"Oh, yes, we'll see it, I think!" said Jimmy Silver. "No hurry, is there? I'm going out of gates, but I'll try to get back in time. When's the kick off?"

"Three o'clock."

"Oh, we'll be in by three."

"Don't be late," urged Tommy Dodd.

"You don't see a match like this every day, you know."

"We're going to be on the ground early and bag good places," remarked Tommy Cook. "There'll be a crowd."

"Faith, I believe all Rookwood's coming," said Tommy Doyle. "Mind you're not late, you fellows."

"What-ho!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Colonial Co. were the first to leave Rookwood. The eleven did not intend to go all together. Jimmy Silver's caution did not desert him, right up to the last moment.

A little later, Mornington and Erroll went out together.

Rawson strolled away quietly alone, and a few minutes afterwards, Dick Oswald sauntered out of gates.

After they had disappeared, the Fistical Four walked away, chatting together in the most careless manner.

By devious paths, the eleven juniors reached the old barn. Meanwhile, Knowles of the Sixth and his men were getting ready for the match, and looking forward with great keenness to the arrival of the Contadini.

## CHAPTER 29.

### A Transformation Scene.

"ALL here?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"All serene, O king!"

chuckled Oswald.

"Waitin' for you, dear boy," said Mornington.

The earliest arrivals at the rendezvous were already at work. There was a good deal of making-up to be done, and they were getting on with it.

"What about the brake?" asked Oswald, as Jimmy Silver threw off his jacket.

"That's all serene. I arranged that on Monday, you know."

"I suppose it will turn up?" grinned Mornington.

"You bet. It's waiting now in the Bagshot lane," said Jimmy Silver. "When it drives up to Rookwood, nobody will know that it hasn't come all the way from Latcham Station."

"Well, I suppose Knowles isn't likely to have a chat with the driver?" assented Mornington.

"Hardly."

"That's all right, too," said Jimmy Silver. "The brake will drive away as

soon as it's landed us at Rookwood. You see, we sha'n't be leaving after the match, as dear old Knowles supposes. We can't very well clear off from Rookwood. The Head wouldn't like us to go on a football tour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If any of the fellows notice it's driving off, they'll simply think it's coming back for us, if they think about it at all."

"Oh, that's all serene!"

"I've seen the driver," explained Jimmy, "and he knows he's to pick up some foreigners and drive them to Rookwood."

"Foreigners! Good!"

"Well, we shall be foreign enough by the time we've finished making-up. Mind how you talk when we get to Rookwood. We don't want our voices recognised."

"Least said soonest mended," remarked Rawson.

"Exactly."

"Except for a few remarks among ourselves in Italian," chortled Raby. "Buono giorno, signore."

"Tutti frutti! Ice-creamo!" chuckled Newcome.

"Saffronillo - Soho - Squaro!" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Classical juniors chortled gleefully. Whether or not they succeeded in "spoofing" the Modern seniors, there was no doubt that the scheme was a tremendous lark.

All hands were busy now.

Complexions were darkened in the most artistic way. Eyebrows and eyelashes were rendered dusky and a little fuzzy. A few artistic touches by Jimmy Silver's skilled hand gave all the faces an older look. And neat little black moustaches were affixed with great care.

Jimmy Silver had even contemplated dyeing their hair, but the line was drawn at that. Not much of the hair would be seen under the caps, anyway, which the footballers did not intend to remove.

The making-up was finished at last, and the Rookwood juniors surveyed each other with many chortles.

Undoubtedly the change in their appearance was a perfect disguise. Their nearest relations would not have had the slightest chance of recognising them.

They changed into the new football "clobber," and that gave it the finishing touch.

Over the footer rig they donned the borrowed overcoats.

If their entertainers were a little surprised at the Italians making the long journey to Rookwood in footer rig, it could

not be helped. The Contadini had a right to travel how they liked.

There would be no need to change at Rookwood, which was all the better from the point of view of the spoofers.

Coats and mufflers were donned, and Jimmy Silver surveyed his men and nodded with satisfaction.

"All O.K.!" he said approvingly.

"You think we shall pass?" grinned Conroy.

"Yes, rather."

"I don't see why anybody should suspect anything," said Erroll, laughing. "If Knowles had seen the Italian team, it would be different. But he hasn't."

"He knows the Contadini are rather small chaps, too," remarked Van Ryn. "Perhaps he would expect them to be a size larger than us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, after all, we're jolly nearly as big as they are," said Jimmy. "Some of our Sixth are bigger. Anyway, we can't grow a few inches taller for this occasion."

"Oh, we're all right!" said Lovell. "With this blessed complexion I feel like a merry Italian already. Buon giorno."

"How do you say good-afternoon in Italian, Jimmy?"

"You don't say it at all. Buon giorno does for the whole blessed day," said Jimmy. "In the evening you say buona sera."

"Bony Sarah!" ejaculated Raby. "My hat! What do you say bony Sarah for?"

"Ass! Buona sera."

"Well, what's the difference?"

"Bow-wow! Don't say good-evening to anybody at Rookwood, if you don't see the difference. Keep to 'Bene.'"

"What does 'bay-nay' mean?" demanded Rawson.

"Good."

"Oh, I see; if you pronounced it as it's spelt, a chap would get on to it from Latin."

"But it can't be pronounced as it's spelt, fathead, or it wouldn't be Italian!"

"Righto! Make it bay-nay, if you like."

"Doesn't bene mean 'well'?" asked Lovell, who had also been excavating the Italian dictionary in the end study.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, then——"

"It comes to the same thing. Now, are you ready?"

"We're pronto," said Lovell.

"What?"

"Pronto."

"Look here——"

"Pronto means ready," said Lovell. "Now we've changed our complexions, we're not ready—we're pronto."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you're pronto, andiamo," said Jimmy Silver.

"Which?"

"Andiamo, fathead!"

"What does 'andiamo, fathead' mean?"

"Fathead is English for Arthur Edward Lovell!" hooted Jimmy Silver. "And andiamo means get a move on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All serene. Don't get eccitato," chuckled Lovell. "I meano, all sereno."

"Come on. This is where we getto offo," chortled Raby.

And the eleven Italians—who looked remarkably Italian, though their "lingo" perhaps left something to be desired—walked out of the old barn.

Great faith as the Classical Players had in their make-up, they felt a little uneasy as they came out into the open air in the keen sunshine.

But, with Jimmy Silver leading the way, they marched off. Their clothes were left in the barn "till called for."

A labourer at work in the fields glanced up, and then stared. He touched his hat civilly.

"Buon giorno, signore," said Lovell politely.

"Which I don't understand German, sir," said the man.

And the juniors walked on, feeling more satisfied. Their guise had not excited the labourer's suspicion, at all events, and if they could pass his eyes they could pass others.

They arrived in Bagshot Lane, and found the brake awaiting them. Somewhat to their dismay, a couple of fellows from Bagshot School were sauntering along, and they glanced at the Rookwood party.

"My hat! There's old Pankley and Poole!" murmured Raby.

"Shushi!"

Pankley, of the Fourth Form at Bagshot, had very sharp eyes. Both the Bagshot fellows seemed interested in the crowd of foreigners as they came out into the lane. But the ordeal had to be passed through, and Jimmy Silver and Co. marched on towards the waiting brake as bold as brass.

"You take us to Rookwood School, amico?" said Jimmy Silver to the driver.

The man touched his cap.

"Yessir."

There was no suspicion there, at all events. The man had been told he was to pick up a party of foreigners at that spot,



and he was picking them up, and evidently did not see beyond their dark complexions.

Pankley and Poole paused and looked on as the foreigners crowded into the brake.

Foreigners were rather scarce in that quiet district, and the two Bagshot fellows were interested.

Jimmy Silver glanced down at them.

"Buon giorno, signore," he said civilly.

"By gad!" said Pankley. "Good-day to you, sir."

"You belong to Rookwood School, isn't it?"

"Not quite," said Pankley, with a smile.

"We belong to Bagshot, sir."

Jimmy Silver raised his cap politely, and Pankley and Poole returned the salutation.

"Andiamo!" said Jimmy to the driver.

"Hay?"

"Zat you drive?"

"Oh, lor'!" said the driver. "Yessir."

The brake rolled on, the two Bagshot juniors gazing after it curiously. The "Italians" did not smile till they were out of sight of them.

"My hat!" murmured Lovell. "I mean, mio cappello!"

"Ha, ha!"

"Pankley's as keen as mustard, and Panky's satisfied," grinned Jimmy Silver. "All serene, I think, for Rookwood."

"Titto sereno!" chuckled Oswald.

The Rookwood eleven were elated. They had passed muster with Pankley and Poole, that was clear, and Pankley and Poole knew them very well in their proper persons. After that test they had no misgivings. With cheery and serene confidence they rattled on to Rookwood.

## CHAPTER 30.

### The Italians at Rookwood.

**R**OUND the old gateway of Rookwood School a considerable crowd had gathered.

Many of the fellows were curious to see the "Contadini" arrive.

Nobody at Rookwood was aware of the fact that the genuine Contadini were about a hundred miles away on that particular date.

They were expected at Rookwood, and a crowd gathered to see them arrive and to give them a cheer.

The three Tommies were prominent there. Tommy Dodd and Co. were quite elated that afternoon, feeling that Knowles had given the Classical side the "kybosh" without the possibility of a doubt.

At every sound of wheels along the road there was a craning of necks, to see whether it heralded the arrival of the Contadini.

"Time's getting pretty close," remarked Tommy Dodd, with a glance up at the clock-tower on the Modern side. "Quarter to three."

"May be late," remarked Tommy Cook. "It's a long way from Middlewood, if they're at Middlewood."

"No, they've left there," remarked Towle. "Left there last week. I don't quite know where they're coming from."

"Anyway, they're coming."

"Oh, yes, they're coming."

"Bedad, what a howlin' joke if they didn't come after all," grinned Flynn, of the Classical Fourth.

And the Classics in the crowd chortled at the idea.

"May be a little joke of theirs," remarked Smythe of the Shell. "By gad, you know, they might only be foolin' Knowles for his cheek in challengin' them."

"Quite likely," chimed in Townsend and Topham.

"Silly asses!" said Tommy Dodd witheringly. "They're coming, of course."

"Well, they haven't come yet," smiled Adolphus Smythe, turning his eyeglass upon the road again. "And if they do, it will be a joke anyway—they'll walk over your silly Moderns with about fifty goals to nix."

"Rats!"

"Fathead!"

"Hallo, here's somebody!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, as there was a rumble of wheels on the road again.

"It's a brake!"

"A brake, bedad!"

"It's the Italians!"

"Hurrah!"

All eyes were fixed on the brake as it came thundering up to the gates. In the vehicle a crowd of dark-faced fellows could be seen. There was no doubt it was the expected team.

"By gad! They've come!" said Smythe.

"Give 'em a cheer," said Tommy Dodd. "That ass Silver ought to be here to see this. Fancy those chumps going out and risking missing a match like that."

"Just like those Classical duffers."

"Three times three, when they get here," said Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, rather."

The brake clattered up to the gates, and slowed down as it turned in on the drive. A tremendous cheer burst from the crowd

of juniors. They waved their caps and roared, especially the Moderns.

A dusky footballer with a trim little moustache stood up in the brake and saluted the cheering crowd.

"That's the skipper," said Doyle. "That must be Frulo."

"By gad! What a shrimp for a football captain!" murmured Adolphus Smythe.

"Not so big as Knowles, by thunder!" said Townsend, in astonishment.

"And that's the captain of the Contadini, who beat the Loamshire Rifles!"

"My hat!"

"Hurrah!" roared Tommy Dodd and Co., careless whether the Italian footballers were the size of Lilliputians or of Brobdingnagians. Their size did not matter, so long as they played the Modern team on Big Side at Rookwood.

"Grazie tanto, signori!" said the dusky footballer.

"What did he say?"

"Viva! Evviva!" shouted the Italian team in chorus.

"That must be an Italian cheer," said Smythe. "Jolly queer, ain't it?"

"Like the French 'vive' I suppose," remarked Topham, with an air of wisdom.

The brake rolled in.

The crowd followed it, some of them still cheering, others cutting off to the football ground to secure front places. There was certain to be a big crowd to watch that unique match.

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravissimo!" replied the Italians cordially.

Knowles of the Sixth was on the football ground with his men. They had already changed for the match, and were regarding the clock in the tower somewhat anxiously.

It was getting very near to three, and Knowles had felt quite a cold chill at the idea that something might have occurred to delay the Contadini, or to prevent them turning up at Rookwood.

He did not know what town they were starting from, and war-time trains were not very reliable. But his chilling doubt vanished, and he smiled with satisfaction at the sight of the brake and at the sound of the enthusiastic cheering.

"Bravo! Here they are!"

"Hurrah!"

"Here come the Contadini!"

"Italy for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

Knowles hurried to meet the Contadini as the brake halted. Bulkeley was on the football ground with Neville, to look on,

and Knowles shot him a glance of triumph as he passed.

This was Knowles' hour of triumph, where, in sober fact, he felt like touching the stars with his sublime head.

The Contadini had come—and Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, was only a looker-on. Knowles was the great man of the day.

The Italian footballers alighted from the brake, and Knowles could not help noting, with surprise, how much smaller they were in stature than he had naturally expected the Contadini to be. So far from equalling the Modern seniors in height, they really looked more like the size of Rookwood juniors!

The Italians are not on the average a bulky race; but it was certainly odd that picked footballers should be so much below the average height.

Perhaps they made up for lack of size and weight by activity and knowledge of the game. Otherwise, it was difficult to account for the reputation they had won on the Soccer field.

The team that had beaten Loamshire Rifles, and a dozen other teams, including public-school first elevens, was not to be despised, at any rate.

The Italian captain met Knowles with great, indeed, effusive cordiality.

"Mr. Frulo?" asked Knowles as he shook the dusky hand.

"No, signore. Signor Frulo, he unable to play zis day. Io sono capitano."

"I—I beg your pardon!"

"Sono capitano io, oggi," explained the Italian.

Knowles looked hopelessly puzzled.

"Ah, zat you excuse me. I speak Inglese also, isn't it?" exclaimed the Italian. "I should say, to-day I am captain."

"Oh, I see!"

"I zink you know il mio nome—my name, zat is—Metallobianco."

"Oh, yes, quite well," said Knowles. "You telephoned to me."

"Siete Signore Knowles—you are Mr. Knowles?"

"Yes."

"Come sono felice—zat is to say, how happy I is to make your honourable acquaintance, signorino."

"It's a great pleasure to meet you, sir," said Knowles. "I am sorry Mr. Frulo could not come."

Inwardly, Knowles was rather pleased. He had heard of Mr. Frulo as the best forward in the Contadini, and he was by no means sorry that the best man had stayed

out for that occasion. It made the chances of a Modern win all the better.

"Signor Frulo, he too sorry," said Signor Metallobianco. "But it is all the same zing. We give you fine good match, isn't it."

"I'm sure you will, Mr. Metallobunko."

"Metallobianco, signore."

"Yes, yes. Excuse me!"

"Ze Italian names sono are a little deeficult for ze English tongue, isn't it?" smiled Signor Metallobianco. very good-humouredly. "Oh, yes—oh, yes!"

"Oh, yes," smiled all the Italians together.

They certainly seemed a very friendly and good-humoured crowd, though their knowledge of English was somewhat limited.

Knowles presented Frampton and Catesby, and the three Modern seniors walked on Big Side with their visitors. It did not seem to occur to Knowles that any of the Classical seniors might care to be introduced to the Italian footballers. Knowles was keeping his prize all to himself.

The Modern captain looked as if he were walking on air as he showed the Italians to their dressing-room. The Italians were muffled up with coats and mufflers, but it could be seen that they were already in their football rig. Knowles left them in their dressing-room, and rejoined his friends on the ground.

"Seem a jolly lot," remarked Frampton. "Listen to them. They're laughing in the dressing-room now."

"Rather small little beggars," said Catesby. "I was thinking we should be outclassed, so far as age and weight went. They're older than we are, of course, but, dash it all, we're the bigger team."

Knowles nodded.

"Yes. It won't be such a tough match as I was expecting, I think. I'm blessed if I see why we shouldn't beat them."

"Well, they're little, but they must be good," remarked Hoke. "They've beaten some whacking big teams in their tour."

"That's so," said Frampton. "They're good enough. Very quick on their feet, I expect; foreigners are, you know."

"And they're tough," said Catesby. "They've come here in their footer rig, and it's a bit cold for train travelling, I should say."

"Hallo, here they come!"

Round Big Side nearly all Rookwood was gathered now. It was a little surprising that keen footballers like Jimmy Silver & Co. were not present in the swarm of

spectators. But nobody had any time to waste thinking about Jimmy Silver & Co.

All attention was fixed upon the celebrated Contadini.

As they came out, minus their overcoats, their diminutive stature—comparatively to the Modern seniors—was still more striking. Adolphus Smythe remarked with wonder that they actually weren't any bigger than average Shell fellows, if as big.

They might be past-masters of the game, but certainly it was amazing that they had been able to keep their end up against a heavy team like the Loamshire Rifles, for instance.

"But they did it," remarked Townsend, "and they'll walk all over the Modern seniors, you'll see."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that."

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, the Contadini!"

Amid loud cheers from the Rookwood crowd, the Italian footballers joined Knowles & Co. in the field.

## CHAPTER 31.

### The Great Game.

THE kick-off fell to Knowles.

There was breathless attention round the field as the whistle went.

Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Second Form, was acting as referee. He was an old and keen footballer, and had willingly consented to referee that important match.

The whistle went, and the ball rolled, and hundreds of eyes were fastened on the game. Even the biggest First Eleven matches seldom drew such a crowd to Big Side. The Moderns had the satisfaction of putting the School into the shade—a great satisfaction for Knowles, at least.

The Italians attacked from the start.

But, to the surprise of the crowd, their attack was soon bottled up, and Knowles and his men got away in good style.

Weight was telling.

Signor Metallobianco and his men had to fall back, and there was a hot attack on the visitors' goal.

But the dusky goalkeeper was "all there."

He seemed all eyes and head and hands.

Four times in succession the ball went in, and each time the dark-faced custodian sent it whirling out.

"Well saved!" shouted Bulkeley heartily, as a dusky back cleared at last, and the game went to midfield.

"They've got a good goalie there," remarked Neville.

"First class," agreed Bulkeley.

"All the same, they don't seem quite able to hold Knowles's lot," said Neville, with a puzzled look. "They can't meet a charge. I'm blessed if I think the match is such a big order as we supposed, Bulkeley. They look like a lot of boys."

"Yes, that's queer, and no mistake," said the Rookwood captain. "I shouldn't say that they're heavier than average juniors here."

"How on earth did they beat Loamshire Rifles?"

"Well, they did beat them," Bulkeley reflected. "Frulo, their skipper, isn't here, it seems. Perhaps they're playing a lot of reserves in this match, not the men who play in their big matches. This may be their second team, or something like it."

"Yes, that's so."

"I've seen photographs of some of the Contadini in the papers, and I don't recognise any of the crowd," remarked Bulkeley. "I should say that it's a team made up of their reserves mostly. It's sheer rot to say that they could beat Loamshire Rifles—this crowd."

"Hallo, they're going through!"

The Italians were getting their hand in at last.

Knowles and his men, with a great advantage of weight on their side, were doing a good deal in the way of charging, which, as Neville remarked with a snort, was perhaps what the Moderns called football.

But the lighter Italians showed great skill in dodging and eluding the rushing tactics of the Modern seniors. There was no doubt that they were quick and nimble, and knew the game inside out, at all events.

And they took the first chance that came along. Their eyes were keenly open for the slightest chances.

The dusky forwards were away with the ball, and the heavy Modern backs could not stop them. They brought the leather right up to the Modern goal, passing like clockwork, and their passing, at least, was twice as good as that of Knowles's men.

The attack on the Modern goal was sharp, and Frampton had great difficulty in saving.

And the leather would have gone in, too, at the next shot, had not Metallobianco been bowled over by Hoke in a charge which, if it was not foul, came periously near it.

There was a shout from the crowd.

"Play the game there!"

"Play the game, you Modern spalpeens!" roared Flynn of the Fourth.

The dusky captain was on his feet in a twinkling, panting a little, and his hand went to his little black moustache at once.

The game surged away to the halfway line.

"Just like those Modern cads!" said Flynn indignantly. "They can't play the game."

"Rot!" growled Tommy Dodd. "There's a ref., ain't there? The ref.'s said nothing."

"Well, he's an owl, then!"

"Fathead!"

"Yah! Modern rotter!"

"Classical cad!"

It looked as if the proceedings would be enlivened by a "scrap" between Moderns and Classical outside the ropes. But Bulkeley looked round, frowning.

"Quiet, there, you fags!"

And the mutually incensed juniors glared at one another, and held their peace.

But really there was no time for "scrapping." Attention was fixed on the game, which was not going as most of the Rookwooders had expected.

The Moderns had hoped for a win, but had hardly expected it. The Classical had declared to a man that the Contadini would simply walk all over Knowles and his team.

But they were not doing it. They were playing a great game, but most assuredly they were not walking over Knowles & Co.

Sturdy as they were, for their size, they were at a plain disadvantage in size and weight, and it told.

It was by no means impossible that Knowles & Co. would win. Indeed, it looked more likely than not, from an unprejudiced point of view.

And it was puzzling, unless, as Bulkeley thought, the Contadini eleven was made up mostly from reserves who did not play in the big matches.

"By gad, Moderns will win!" said Lacy of the Fourth, with great satisfaction—Lacy being a Modern. "They'll pull it off, you chaps! Why, the Contadini can't hold them for a second! By gad, I'm jolly glad I took Lattrey on now. Lattrey offered ten to one against Knowles."

"So you've been betting on it, have you?" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Well, Lattrey said that there wasn't a Modern who'd stand up for his side, even to the tune of half-a-sov.," said Lacy. "I took him on to shut him up."

"You silly ass! Lattrey said that because he thought it was a sure thing," said Tommy, with a sniff of contempt.

"I suppose he did—but I took him on, and I'm jolly glad I did," said Lacy.

"Ten to one is the figure. Lattrey's got to square up five quid if Knowles beats the Contadini."

"Bet he won't pay!" grunted Cook.

Lacy chuckled.

"I made him put up the money with Smythe, in advance—a fiver against my ten-bob note. He thought he wasn't risking it, of course. He thought the Contadini would walk all over the Moderns. Ha, ha!"

"They won't, bedad," said Doyle.

"Serve Lattrey right to lose his fiver, but ye're a shady beast, all the same, Lacy."

"Oh, rats!"

Lacy was rather a "sporting" youth, like the nuts of the Classical Fourth. He was greatly elated. It was his pride in his House that had led him to accept Lattrey's bet, but it looked like being a good thing for him now.

The same thought was in Lattrey's mind as he stood watching the game with a gloomy brow.

The cad of the Fourth had striven to book bets on the match, on the side of the visiting team, far and wide. But he had found no takers, naturally, with the solitary exception of Lacy, who had been unable to resist the taunt that there wasn't a Modern ready to back up the Modern eleven.

Lattrey had regarded the "fiver" as being perfectly safe, as safe as if he had kept it in his own pocket. It was, to reverse the old saying, a whale to catch a sprat.

But Lattrey, though no player, was sufficiently well acquainted with the game of footer to know that the result of this match was extremely doubtful.

He could not understand it. He had backed the Contadini as a sure thing, a perfectly sure thing, and had chuckled at Lacy's simplicity in being taunted into accepting his bet.

Now it began to look as if, instead of bagging Lacy's ten-shilling note, he would have to say a long good-bye to his fiver.

It was exactly what the shady cad of the Fourth deserved, but that did not make the prospect any the more palatable to Lattrey.

As the game went on, Lattrey's brow grew darker and darker. He edged towards Lacy in the crowd at last, and tapped him on the arm.

"Bet's off?" he whispered.

Lacy grinned.

"No jolly fear!" he said emphatically. "Bet's not off, my boy. Bet's on. I'm hanging on to that fiver, old scout."

"This can't be the usual Contadini team," said Lattrey, biting his lip. "It must be their second eleven, or reserves, or duds, or something."

"Let it. That makes no difference. You put your money on the match and your money stays on the match."

Lattrey looked at Smythe, who grinned and nodded.

"Too late to back out now, dear boy," said the great Adolphus, who was the judge and arbiter in sporting matters among the Rookwood nuts. "If Knowles pulls it off that fiver goes to Lacy."

Lattrey bit his lips.

"You shouldn't be too sure of a sure thing," grinned Townsend. "There's surprises in footer as well as in racing, Lattrey."

"It's queer!" growled Lattrey. "Jolly queer! Who'd have thought that the Contadini would send a team like this!"

"You didn't, anyway!" chuckled Adolphus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lattrey drove his hands deep into his pockets and moved off with a darkened brow. There was a roar in the crowd.

"Goal!" "Goal!" "Bravo, Knowles!"

The dusky goal-keeper had been beaten at last. The ball, from Knowles's foot, shot into the net, and the Moderns roared applause. It was first blood to the Moderns.

"Goal! Goal! Hurray!"

"Bravo, Knowles!" roared Tommy Dodd, quite forgetting all the sins of the bully of the Sixth at that thrilling moment. Knowles had scored a goal against the celebrated Contadini, and that paid for everything. The three Tommies roared till they were hoarse.

The swarthy goal-keeper tossed out the leather. Knowles walked back to the centre of the field in great elation. He could not help giving Bulkeley a vaunting glance.

Knowles's star was in the ascendant now.

In the crowd, Classics as well as Moderns were cheering. After all, if Knowles won the match, it would be a Rookwood victory. The Classics were only too glad that their expectations had not been verified.

Neville growled that if Knowles beat the Contadini there would be no standing him afterwards, but George Bulkeley was joining heartily in the cheering.

The only fellow in the crowd who was really dissatisfied was Lattrey of the Fourth. Lattrey was thinking of his fiver and he did not feel like cheering. But everybody else roared, and that roar was like music to the ears of Cecil Knowles.

## CHAPTER 32.

## Half-Time!

"BY gum!" said Tommy Dodd, as the footballers lined up again. "By gum, my infants, we are going to pull it off! You hear your uncle. Rookwood Moderns are going to beat the Contadini."

"They are—they is!" grinned Tommy Cook.

"Why isn't that duffer Jimmy Silver here to see the Moderns win?" growled Tommy Dodd. "Fancy those duffers missing a match like this!"

"More duffers they, bedad," remarked Tommy Doyle. "It's quare, too, for the whole crowd to clear off this afternoon. I understood that they were going to be here."

"Jimmy Silver said they'd be back in time for the match, the ass!"

Tommy Dodd was feeling a little exasperated.

The Classics had laughed a Modern win to scorn, and Tommy Dodd wanted very much to see Jimmy Silver a spectator of Knowles and Co.'s success.

But the Fistical Four were not in the crowd, and the Colonial Co. were not to be seen, either.

Lattrey, as he heard the three Tommies' remarks, glanced round, and noted that Jimmy Silver and Co. were not present. It was curious enough that such keen footballers should have missed the match when even slackers like Leggett and duffers like Cuffy had turned up to watch.

Jimmy Silver and all his immediate friends were away—Erroll, and Rawson, and Oswald, and the Colonials, and neither was Mornington to be seen.

In fact, as Lattrey noted, the whole Classical junior team was away—and it was odd, to say the least.

"Hullo! Look at that!" gasped Tommy Dodd, his eyes on the field.

"Fair play!" roared Flynn. "Fair play, you spalpeens!"

The whistle went.

"Foul! Foul!"

Classicals were shouting indignantly; the Moderns were silent. It was a "foul" of the plainest kind.

Hoke, the back, had charged Metallobianco over—in the dreaded penalty area—a foul charge from behind if ever there was one. It had stopped a probable, if not certain, goal.

But the referee's eyes were open and the whistle rang out sharply.

"Foul!" shouted Neville, wrathfully.

"Foul!" roared the Classics.

"Dash it all, that was too thick," muttered Tommy Dodd uneasily. "Why can't that cad Hoke play the game? He's disgracing his side."

"It'll be a penalty!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Penalty! Penalty!" the crowd was shouting.

Signor Metallobianco was on his feet. His hand went to his moustache, as on a previous occasion. The referee came hastening up.

"Signor! A foul!" exclaimed the Italian skipper. "Non e guisto, quello—"

Knowles gave Hoke a savage look. He was not specially keen on fair play himself, but this was a little too palpable, and it had cost the Moderns a penalty. The roar of the crowd died down, as it was seen that the referee had awarded a penalty kick.

That kick was very carefully taken, the crowd watching breathlessly.

Frampton, in goal, was watching, all eyes. He was determined that it should not come off if he could help it.

But the ball flew into a corner of the net where Frampton wasn't expecting it and he jumped at it too late.

The leather was in.

There was a roar at once.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked!"

"Viva! Evviva!" shouted the Italian footballers in great delight. "Bravo! Bravissimo!"

"Bravo!" echoed the crowd. "Well kicked, sir!"

"Score equal," yawned Adolphus Smythe. "Hoke's made the macaroni gang a present of that. Getting on for half-time."

Knowles whispered savagely to Hoke as the players went back to centre.

"Careful, you fool!"

Hoke scowled.

"You told us to rush them," he said sullenly.

"Yes, idiot—use your weight, but don't give them penalties," growled Knowles. "That sets them equal, you crass duffer!"

Hoke grunted and took his place. He had rather over-zealously carried out his captain's instructions, and the result had not been profitable to the Modern seniors.

Lattrey was looking a little brighter after that goal; his fiver did not seem to be in so much danger now. But the consolation was short-lived. The Moderns were playing very roughly, though they were careful not to risk any more penalties, and the little dusky footballers seemed to be penned up in their own half powerless.

But for their splendid goal-keeper, the Moderns would have scored more than once. But the custodian seemed to be equal to all demands.

"My only hat!" murmured Lattrey suddenly, in utter wonder.

An Italian back had been over, and as he leapt up, he clutched up something from the ground, and dabbed his face with it. Then, with his hand over his mouth, he went off the field, dropping out of the game. He hurried into the dressing-room.

"Man hurt," said Tommy Dodd. "That was a bit rough of Tresham—quite a fair charge though."

"Oh, quite fair," said Doyle. "Hurt his mouth, it seems."

"By gad!" said Lattrey. "Didn't you chaps see what happened? His moustache came off!"

"Eh! What?"

"I'll swear to it! The silly chump's wearing a false moustache."

"Gammon!" said Tommy Dodd incredulously.

"I tell you it's so!" said Lattrey. "He was awfully quick—but I saw his face without a moustache over it."

"I—I thought I did, too," said Flynn, in wonder. "What a duffer to be wearing a false moustache! Some kid they've put into the team, trying to make himself look as old as the others, bedad! It's queer."

"Jolly queer," said Lattrey.

Knowles and Co. were pressing hard, while the injured—or supposed to be injured—player was off the field. But ten men struggled hard to defend and they held their own till the missing man came back. Lattrey and the Modern juniors scanned him carefully as he came along. He was certainly wearing his little black moustache now, and it looked natural enough.

"Must have been mistaken, Lattrey," said Tommy Dodd.

Lattrey shook his head.

"I wasn't mistaken. That's some kid they're playing."

"Well, it's a jolly odd thing to do."

"It is, and no mistake."

The player slipped into the game again and Lattrey noted, further, that there was no sign of damage about his face, though he had left the field holding his hand over his mouth. Lattrey was quite satisfied that the player was wearing a false moustache and he was keenly interested in that very curious discovery.

"Close on half-time, and the score level," remarked Smythe, looking up at the clock-tower.

"Blow that idiot Hoke!" growled Tommy Dodd. "We should have been ahead if he knew how to play the game."

"Hullo, here comes Bootles!" said Townsend. "Fancy old Bootles turning up for a footer match."

"Fancy Jimmy Silver not turning up!" grunted Tommy Dodd.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, came ambling down to Big Side. The Form-master was not much interested in football, but he was interested in the Italian team, as he knew the language and had lived in Italy.

He stopped near the group of juniors, who respectfully made room for him to get near the ropes. Mr. Bootles blinked at the players over his glasses.

"So they are the celebrated Contadini," he remarked.

"They're the crowd, sir," said Townsend.

"Bless my soul! They are quite, quite small men."

"Italians are generally rather small, ain't they, sir?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Not at all, Dodd. They are not a tall race, certainly, but these men by no means represent the average height of Italians—not in the least! They are the size of boys, not men. Remarkable! I understand that these men are very great footballers."

"First class, sir."

"How very odd! A whole eleven of undersized men, too!" said Mr. Bootles.

"How very odd indeed!"

"There goes the whistle."

"Half-time!"

Mr. Bootles moved forward, evidently with the intention of speaking to the Italians as they came off. Some of the juniors kept near him, and Lattrey was quite near.

He wanted to hear the talk—guessing that Mr. Bootles was going to speak to Signor Metallobianco in his own language. There were strange and startling thoughts working in the mind of the ead of the Fourth.

The Italian team were coming off, breathing hard after a gruelling first half. Mr. Bootles saluted them politely.

"Buon giorno, signori," he said, blinking amiably at the Italians. "Siete i Contadini, non e vero? Io sono stato in Italia, qualche anni fa, and sono molto felice di vedervi in questa scuola. Siete benvenuti, signori."

For a moment the Italian captain seemed dumb. He stood rooted, blinking at Mr. Bootles.

Then, instead of replying, he made a deep bow, and the rest of the dusky team followed his example.

Then they passed on to their dressing-room, leaving Mr. Bootles a little surprised and disappointed. He had been looking forward to a pleasant little chat in Italian with the celebrated Contadini.

### CHAPTER 33.

#### Lattrey Makes a Startling Discovery.

**K**NOWLES and Co., were mostly keeping in the field, chatting with fellows over the ropes, during the interval. But all the Italian team had gone into their dressing-room.

There was a buzz of talk round the ground. The Contadini had made a very curious impression on Rookwood. Good players as they plainly were, they were not the kind of team Rookwood had expected to see, and a School victory, instead of being a far-off chance, was a near possibility.

Indeed, but for the foul and the penalty, the Moderns would indubitably have finished the first half one up. Knowles was in tremendous spirits. A win was not only possible, but, to Cecil Knowles's mind, exceedingly probable.

And when the Modern team had beaten the great Contadini, they would have something to say about their rights of representation in Rookwood First. Even Bulkeley couldn't pass over men who had beaten the Contadini.

The unexpected success of the Moderns, and the surprising kind of team the Contadini turned out to be, kept the Rookwood fellows busy in discussion.

But there was one fellow who was thinking on quite different lines. Lattrey, of the Fourth, was quite pale with the amazing suspicions that had flashed into his keen brain.

His suspicions were so extraordinary that his mind could scarcely entertain them at first. It was the danger of his "fiver" that sharpened Lattrey's wits—always considerably sharp.

He looked once more over the crowd.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were not there, and their absence was remarked upon by many fellows, Classics as well as Moderns. It was strange enough that the chums of the Fourth should miss seeing that great match.

The Fistical Four—the three Colonials—Erroll and Mornington, Rawson and

Oswald—just the fellows who might have been expected to turn up, were not there; and they were just eleven in number! Just eleven—the number of a football team!

Lattrey was putting two and two together—with a vengeance!

One of the Italians was playing with a false moustache on his face—he was certain of that. Perhaps the others also? They were the size of boys of fifteen—the size of Jimmy Silver and Co. They had avoided speaking to Mr. Bootles in Italian!

And Lattrey was well aware that there had been "something on" among the Classical chums for a week past. Many of the fellows knew that, though they did not know what it was.

And Lattrey had seen an Italian dictionary in Erroll's hand, and Townsend, a study-mate of Rawson's, had mentioned that more than once he had seen Rawson mugging up Italian—and Towny had been greatly mystified thereat.

Jimmy Silver, in his proper person, had challenged Knowles to a footer match, too, some short time before. Now, Jimmy Silver and Co.—to the number of eleven—were missing, and eleven Italian players, remarkably small for grown-up men, had come to Rookwood. And the chums of the Fourth had been mugging up Italian! And the players had fairly dodged out of speaking Italian to Mr. Bootles, the only person at Rookwood who knew the language! And at least one of them was a mere boy wearing a false moustache to make himself look older. And some of the spectators, too, had remarked that the Italian goal-keeper had a way with him that reminded them of Conroy, of the Fourth.

Lattrey saw light!

His fiver, reposing in Adolphus Smythe's pocket to be handed over to Lacy if the Moderns won, did not seem so insecure now, if his amazing suspicion was well founded. But was it?

It was so astounding that Lattrey hardly ventured to place any faith in the evidence that presented itself to his mind. As the Italians marched towards their dressing-room, Lattrey was thinking it over, his eyes glistening under his knitted brows.

If it was spoof—if it was the most astounding spoof ever played at Rookwood—his fiver was safe. And what a revenge upon Jimmy Silver and Co., to give them away before the match was finished—a complete repayment for the contempt with which the chums of the Fourth had always treated him!



The driver of the brake should know—he would know. Lattrey cut away from the footer ground as the last of the Italians disappeared from sight. No wonder they were all going in—if matters were as he suspected, they would be touching up their disguises, out of sight of the Rookwood crowd. Possibly other moustaches were in danger of coming loose.

"Mack!" Lattrey ran up to the porter's lodge. "I say, Mack!"

The Rookwood porter was smoking a pipe in his doorway. He looked up inquiringly at the panting junior.

"Where's the brake, Mack?"

"Wot brake, Master Lattrey?"

"The brake the Italian team came in."

"Gone away."

Lattrey jumped.

"Hasn't it waited for them?" he exclaimed.

"No, Master Lattrey, it drove away at once," said Mack.

"How are they going to the station, then?"

"I ain't asked 'em," said Mack.

Lattrey turned away, and hurried back to the football ground. He was almost certain now. If the visiting team intended to go to the station after the match, why had they dismissed the brake?

Astounding as his suspicion was, it seemed more and more probable. Lattrey meant to know for certain, and he scuttled into the pavilion and tapped at the door of the visitors' dressing-room. If things were as he suspected, he could make sure there—if not, he could make some excuse for looking in.

He turned the handle of the door without waiting for an invitation to enter.

But the door did not open. It was locked on the inside.

Lattrey's eyes gleamed.

Why had the Italian footballers locked themselves in their dressing-room? Why, unless it was to keep anyone from opening the door by chance or carelessness while their disguises were "touched up?"

"Chie?" came a voice from within.

It was the voice of Signor Metallobianco, and, now that Lattrey's suspicions were so keenly aroused, he fancied he detected a familiar tone in the voice. The question was in Italian, but Lattrey knew what it meant.

"Open the door, will you?" he called out.

"Perche?"

"Open the door, Jimmy Silver!" said Lattrey, in a concentrated tone.

It was a bold shot to learn the truth! If the men within the dressing-room were

Italians, they would think him mad. That did not matter. But if they were the missing eleven Classical juniors—

In that case they would be startled into betraying themselves; they would doubtless let him in and seek to persuade him to keep their secret, and then he would know.

"My hat!" came a sudden, unguarded exclamation from within.

Lattrey grinned.

For that exclamation came in the undoubted tones of Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth.

The next instant the door was thrown wide open.

## CHAPTER 34.

### Desperate Measures!

LATTREY stared into the dressing-room.

Signor Metallobianco had thrown open the door; he was breathing hard. Some of the dusky footballers stared at Lattrey, some had turned their backs, and he knew it was because he had caught them "touching up" their dusky faces.

"Entrate, signorino," said Metallobianco.

Lattrey swaggered in.

"You call a nome—a name—zrough ze door," said the signor. "Is it zat you zink you know somevun here, ragazzo mio?"

"Yes, I know you, Jimmy Silver," said Lattrey coolly.

"Comé?"

"I don't know what 'com-ay' means, but I know you," said Lattrey. "My hat! What a game of spoof! I heard Lovell's voice just now! Which of you is Lovell—blessed if I can tell."

"Non capisco."

"Eh?"

"You speak in vat you call ze riddles," said Signor Metallobianco. "Vat for have you come here? Zis is no place for you."

"Oh, I'll go," smiled Lattrey. "I only wanted to make sure! Knowles will be awfully pleased to hear this."

Lattrey turned back to the door. He was quite sure now. There, full in his sight, were two false moustaches, which had been taken off to be replaced with much care. And Lovell's voice finished it! An Italian footballer was not likely to exclaim "My hat!"—especially in the familiar tones of Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Wait a moment, ragazzo," said Signor Metallobianco quietly.

He placed his back against the door. Lattrey sneered.

"You can't keep me here, Jimmy Silver."

"No good keeping it up, Jimmy," growled Lovell. "The cad has bowled us out."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lattrey. "That's a give-away, if you like."

Jimmy Silver turned the key in the door.

Lattrey's discovery had dismayed the footballers, but Jimmy was as cool as ice. If the discovery had been made by Flynn, or Jones minor, it would not have mattered. They would have understood that it was a jape of the Moderns, and would have kept silent.

Even Smythe or Townsend or Topham would have been loyal to their House, and held their tongues. But with the cad of the Fourth it was a different matter. Lattrey was the enemy of the Fistical Four, and there was not much loyalty of any kind in him.

He was grinning in triumph now. His fiver was safe, since the whole match was "spoof." And the spoof would be revealed as soon as he was outside the pavilion, and that great jape would be knocked on the head! That was evidently Lattrey's intention.

But he had to deal with Jimmy Silver yet.

The situation was delicate, but Uncle James flattered himself that he was equal to dealing with it—and with Lattrey.

"Well, you can unlock that door," grinned Lattrey. "You'll have to go out in a few minutes, anyway, or the fellows will be coming for you. Ha, ha, ha."

"Look here, Lattrey——"

"Own up that you're Jimmy Silver!" chuckled Lattrey.

Jimmy nodded.

"You know I am!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You understand," said Jimmy quietly, "it's a jape on the Moderns—the biggest jape we've ever brought off, Lattrey. And it's a success. I'm blessed if I know how you spotted it——"

"You couldn't pull the wool over my eyes for long," grinned Lattrey.

"I fancy we've pulled the wool over every other eye at Rookwood."

"That's right enough."

"Nobody knows but you, then?"

"Not yet!" chuckled Lattrey.

"They'll know jolly soon, though."

"Are you going to give us away, you cad?" growled Lovell.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"You're a Classical, sneak as you are, and it's a Classical spoof," said Raby.

"It's up to you to keep it dark."

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, Lattrey," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't give the game away. It's up to you."

Lattrey gave the footballers almost a gloating look. It was the first time the cad of the Fourth had had the whip-hand of Jimmy Silver and Co. He was enjoying the situation.

"Do you ask me to keep it dark?" he grinned. "Do you ask it as a favour?"

"I ask no favours of you," said Jimmy Silver disdainfully. "You're not the kind of chap I should care to ask favours of. You're bound to keep your mouth shut, from loyalty to your side."

"I don't see it," Lattrey laughed jubilantly. "You've been pretty rough on me at times, Jimmy Silver. You punched me only yesterday——"

"For bullying a fag."

"You did it! If I choose to rag a sneaking fag, that's my business, not yours," sneered Lattrey.

"You mean you're going to give this little game away because we've been down on you for a sneaking, cowardly, blackguardly cad?" said Jimmy Silver.

Lattrey's eyes glittered.

"Put it like that if you like! I'm going straight to Knowles to tell him that he's being spoofed by a gang of juniors!" he said. "That will nip your little game fairly in the bud, I think."

"I don't think you'll do that."

"You'll see!"

"I'll see—that you don't!" said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"Let me pass!"

"Not just yet."

Lattrey burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Do you think you can keep me here, you fool? There'll be somebody tapping at the door for you in a minute or two. I shall only have to call out."

Jimmy Silver did not answer that.

He made a sudden spring at Lattrey, grasped him, and bore him to the floor with a crash.

Lattrey's mouth was open to yell, but Jimmy Silver's hand was clapped over it before he could utter a sound.

"Lend a hand!" panted Jimmy.

The footballers were not slow to assist.

Nearly every hand in the eleven was laid on Lattrey as he struggled under the captain of the Fourth on the floor.

His arm, his legs, his ears, and his hair were held in a grip that was not too gentle. The Classical heroes had no tenderness to waste upon the sneak of the Fourth.

"Give me a handkerchief," said Jimmy, his hand still gripping Lattrey's mouth and keeping it shut in spite of him.

Lattrey's eyes fairly burned up at him.

He could not utter a cry, though he was striving to do so. His jaw ached with Jimmy Silver's savage grip on it.

"Stuff it into his mouth when I open his jaws, Raby," said Jimmy quietly, as his chum brought the handkerchief.

He jammed Lattrey's mouth open, and the handkerchief was jammed in quickly, and the yell Lattrey strove to utter was choked back.

The cad of the Fourth gurgled, and wriggled spasmodically in the grasp of the Classical juniors.

Unheeding his homicidal looks, Jimmy Silver squeezed the crumpled handkerchief solidly into his mouth. Then he tore up a couple of handkerchiefs into strips, tied them into a cord, and bound them round Lattrey's head, to keep the gag safely in its place.

Lattrey's faint gurgle died into silence. He had to breathe through his nose, and he could not utter a sound.

His eyes were glittering like a snake's.

With all his cunning, Lattrey had not foreseen anything of this kind. He had not counted upon such desperate measures.

He realised the intentions of the Co., and he strove to struggle, but his limbs were firmly held. He was helpless.

With quiet calmness, Jimmy Silver collected the handkerchiefs from the team and knotted them round Lattrey's wrists and ankles.

Then the footballers released him.

Lattrey, unable to move hand or foot, unable to utter a whisper, lay on his back, staring up at them with burning eyes.

"Bottled up, and no mistake," grinned Mornington.

"You—you're going to leave him like that, Jimmy?" breathed Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Yes."

"Oh, my only Aunt Selina!"

"He's asked for it, and now he's got it," said Jimmy coolly. "Lattrey, you sneaking worm, you came here to spy, and you've found out what we were going to tell the fellows after the match. You won't jaw about what you've spied out.

You'll stay here, with the door locked, for the second half. If you're uncomfy, you can thank yourself for it."

"Yes, rather."

"Hush!" whispered Jimmy Silver.

There were steps outside, and a tap came at the door. The interval was more than over, and the fellows outside were wondering why the Italian footballers did not reappear.

Tap!

"You fellows ready?"

It was Knowles' voice.

Lattrey almost choked with the effort he made to call out. But he did not succeed. Jimmy Silver had done his work in a workmanlike manner.

"Vengo, signore!" called out Jimmy Silver. "We come—in vun minute we are pronto—ready."

"Right you are!"

Knowles' steps receded from the door.

## CHAPTER 35.

### The Second Half.

JIMMY SILVER and Co. paid no more heed to Lattrey.

They hastily finished the "touching-up" of their complexions and their moustaches.

Lattrey lay on his back, helpless, his eyes burning.

His triumph had been short-lived.

He had believed that he held Jimmy Silver and Co. in the hollow of his hand, when once he had made sure that the pseudo Contadini were in reality the chums of the Fourth.

And now he was, as Mornington expressed it, "bottled up," with a vengeance. What he knew, he was welcome to know, while he lay bound and gagged on the floor of the dressing-room.

He had never dreamed of such measures on the part of Jimmy Silver. In the matter of the great drama given by the Classical Players, Lattrey's betrayal had brought failure. Jimmy Silver did not mean to run that risk again. The cad of the Fourth was silenced—till after the match. Then he was welcome to talk as much as he liked.

Even now Lattrey could scarcely believe that the juniors were in earnest—that they meant to leave him in such a position for three-quarters of an hour. He writhed with rage at the thought of it.

But he was soon convinced.

The "Italians" were ready, and Jimmy Silver unlocked the door and opened it.

wide enough for the footballers to file out. Lattrey was placed behind the door, out of view of anyone outside.

Jimmy changed the key to the outside of the door, and left last, turning the key after him. His comrades were crowded round him as he did so, completely screening his action.

He slipped the key into the pocket of his footer shorts.

Knowles and Co. were waiting impatiently for the Italians. The interval had been unduly prolonged.

"Oh, here they are!" grunted Frampton, as the dusky footballers came out at last.

"Scysateme, signori," said Signor Metallobianco gracefully. "Siamo un poco in ritardo, isn't it?"

"Eh?"

"We are a small late, I zink!"

Knowles and Co. grinned.

"A little late," said Knowles. "Never mind, all serene."

"Tutto serono!" said one of the Italians.

"Come on!"

"Andiamo, miei amici," said Metallobianco, and the footballers went into the field.

The Rookwood crowd were growing a little impatient, wondering what the delay was for. They little guessed!

"Those chaps believe in taking their time!" remarked Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, that's the Italian way; they're always leisurely," observed Adolphus Smythe, with an air of wisdom. "No hustlin' in Italy, you know."

"Get on the ball!" called out Flynn. "Get a move on, bedad!"

The two teams lined up.

It had been rather a gruelling first half for the smaller team, but Jimmy Silver and Co. were pretty fresh after their rest. As a matter of fact, some of the Modern seniors showed more signs of "bellows to mend."

Catesby and Hoke and Tresham were feeling the effects of yesterday's cigarettes, and Knowles himself was not so fresh as he might have been. The game had told upon them more, in fact, than upon their opponents.

All eyes were upon them as the ball rolled once more.

The "Italians" were forced back at the start by their heavier adversaries. Lacy, of the Fourth, chortled as he saw it.

"We win—we win!" he said gleefully. "Smythe, I shall want that fiver after the game."

"Begad, it looks like it!" said Adolphus.

"Lattrey! Where's Lattrey?" Lacy looked round. "Oh, he's gone! He don't want to see his merry champions licked! Ha, ha!"

"He went nosin' round the pavilion," remarked Townsend. "Hallo, those blessed foreigners aren't played out yet!"

"Go it, Contadini!"

"Bravo!"

Knowles and Co. had penned up the dusky players, but there was a sudden breakaway.

The dusky forwards were away with the ball, and though one of them was roughly charged over, the others kept on, passing in fine style.

The backs were beaten, and all depended on Frampton in goal.

The leather was whizzing in, and the crowd almost held their breath.

Frampton fisted it out.

"Saved!" murmured Tommy Dodd.

But Tommy spoke too soon.

The ball, as it whirled out, met a ready head, and it shot in again like a pip from an orange.

Frampton clutched at it a second too late.

There was a shout round the field as the whizzing leather lodged in the net.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked!"

"Oh, well kicked!"

"Viva, evviva!" shouted the dusky footballers in chorus.

It was one up for the Contadini! They were ahead on the score at last.

Knowles compressed his lips, and gave his goalkeeper a far from pleasant look. The Modern captain was not a good loser.

Frampton tossed the ball out sullenly.

It had been a first-rate goal, and the Classics were cheering the Italians vociferously, and even the Modern crowd, like the Tuscans of old, could scarce forbear a cheer.

Knowles spoke in a low tone to his goalie as the ball was kicked back to the centre.

"Pull yourself together, Frampton!"

"I can't perform miracles," grunted Frampton.

And he stepped back into his citadel not in a good temper. Knowles's policy of "nagging" his players was not really a judicious one.

Knowles strode away savagely.

That glorious victory he had dreamed of over the celebrated Contadini seemed further off now.

Knowles and Co. lined up again, and Knowles kicked off.

Again the Modern seniors adopted "kick and rush," and again the lighter team had to give ground.

The Moderns invaded the Contadini half, and there was a swarming and struggling round the Italian goal.

The dusky goal keeper was on the alert.

Knowles drove the ball in, but a ready fist met it and drove it out. Catesby headed it in like a shot, but the dusky goalie's luck was better than Frampton's, or his play was better. He drove the ball out to the backs, and the next moment it was cleared to mid-field, and the Moderns' chance was gone.

"By gad, that goalie knows his business!" remarked Adolphus Smythe, with the air of an expert. "I've seen somebody play like that chap before. You notice the way he jumps at it like a giddy kangaroo! I've seen a fellow with his style——"

"Bedad, so have I," said Flynn. "He's like Conroy, of the Fourth, over again."

"Conroy! By gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd and Co.

"What are ye cackling at, ye Modern spalpeens?" demanded Flynn warmly. "Sure, the man's the very spit of Conroy in his style."

"Ha, ha! Why, I fancy he would dot you on the nose if he heard you compare him to a junior kid—especially a Classical!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "Do you think your blessed Conroy could keep goal like that?"

"Sure, I do! I've seen him play up quite as well as that!" exclaimed Flynn. "Just in his style, begorra!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd and Co. simply shrieked at the idea of a comparison between the Contadini goalkeeper and Conroy, of the Classical Fourth. It struck them as exceedingly comic.

And as Flynn's words passed round there was a general chorus of chuckles among the Modern juniors.

"Like Conroy!" sobbed Towle. "Oh, that's too rich! Fancy Conroy, of the Fourth, stopping a shot from Knowles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll tell us next that the forwards are like your Classical forwards!" roared Tommy Dodd.

Flynn snorted.

"Well, bedad, and now you spake of it, so I do," he exclaimed. "Centre-forward has a way with him that reminds me of Erroll, of ours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And look at the centre-half!" said Flynn warmly. "Look at the way he feeds the forwards, and look at the way he heads the ball. I tell you, he's just our Jimmy over again."

"Pile it on!" moaned Tommy Dodd.

"Keep it up!" gasped Tommy Cook.

"Why, you howling ass, the chap's not much bigger than Jimmy Silver, but he's fifty thousand miles ahead of him in play! Fancy Jimmy Silver compared to a Contadini! Fancy saying that a chap like Jimmy Silver could get through a Modern senior side!"

"Don't be so funny, Flynn!" implored Towle. "You're giving me a pain in the side—you are, really."

Flynn grunted, and the Moderns chortled to their hearts' content.

"By gad, they're gettin' away again!" remarked Townsend. "Some of the Moderns look pumped."

"Too many cigarettes!" grinned Tubby Muffin.

"I know that fool Catesby smokes," muttered Tommy Dodd. "The silly chump! He's fairly winded!"

"Bedad, some of 'em haven't a run left in their legs," grinned Flynn. "You won't see a Modern win to-day."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look at them! Hurrah! Bravo!" roared Flynn.

"By Jove, that's a better team than they looked at first, Neville," said Bulkeley of the Sixth. "They're little but good, by gad! Look at the way they pass—it's simply ripping!"

"They'll get through!" said Neville.

"I think they will, by Jove! Frampton's got all his work cut out now," exclaimed Bulkeley.

Frampton was called upon to save again. Once, twice the ball came in, and the Modern goalkeeper had two of the narrowest escapes of his life. Again it shot forward, but glanced on a goal-post and fell back into the field of play. Then the Moderns succeeded in clearing.

Tommy Dodd breathed more freely as the leather was rushed over the half-way line.

"By thunder, that was a narrow shave!" he muttered. "We could win if the silly idiots were as fresh as they ought to be. Knowles doesn't keep his men in form."

"Half of 'em winded, and the other half fumblin'," smiled Adolphus Smythe. "I fancy Lattrey's fiver is safe enough, Lacy, old scout."

Lacy was beginning to think so himself.

The attacking was now mostly done by the dusky team, and it was easily to

be seen that they were in better physical condition than the Modern seniors. Time was getting close now, and the Contadini were still a goal ahead.

Knowles exerted himself to the utmost, and if all his team had been equal to his own form, certainly the Moderns would have pulled off the match. But they were not—not by any means.

Two or three of the Modern seniors had been played fairly off their legs; they were paying dearly now for cigarettes in the study. And when chances came to Knowles' men, the Italian goalkeeper proved to be "all there."

His goal-keeping was a sight for gods and men and little fishes, as Bulkeley himself remarked. Try as he would, Knowles could not get through that steady defence. Even when the halves and the backs were beaten, the citadel remained intact, with a dusky face smiling from it serenely.

Most of the crowd were glancing up at the clock-tower now.

"One minute to go!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, my hat! And the Contadini a goal ahead!" said Tommy Cook dismally. "It's all over bar shouting."

"There goes Knowles!"

"Bravo! Play up, Moderns! Play up, Rookwood!"

"Put her through!"

"Bravo!"

But the dusky goalkeeper was there. And as he fisted out Knowles' last desperate shot, the whistle rang out.

Pheep!

"Game's up!"

"Well played, Contadini!"

"Hurrah!"

The great match was over, and the dusky Contadini—otherwise Jimmy Silver and Co., of the Classical Fourth—remained the victors by two goals to one.

## CHAPTER 36.

### An Astounding Revelation.

**C**ECIL KNOWLES' face was not pleasant to look upon, at that moment, as he stood panting after the whistle had gone.

His luck in the first half had encouraged him to hope for a victory over the great touring team. But the Contadini, after all, had played up to their reputation.

The Moderns were beaten.

True, nearly all Rookwood had expected them to be beaten by a gigantic margin

of goals—six or seven, or perhaps sixteen or seventeen, to nil. The margin was, after all, quite a normal one—two goals to one. But a defeat was a defeat, and Knowles' rosy dreams had been shattered.

The results that would have followed from a glorious victory would not follow now. Knowles could not base the Modern claim to representation in Rookwood First, on the ground that they had beaten the Contadini. They hadn't!

Knowles' feelings would probably have been a good deal more bitter if he had known that he had never had any chance of beating the Contadini, as he had not played that famous team at all. But he did not know that—yet!

Signor Metallobianco smiled sweetly at the Modern skipper, apparently not noticing his sullen expression.

"Buon giuoco, signore," he remarked. "Good game, isn't it! Better luck next time, I zink!"

Knowles muttered something.

"Bravo, Contadini!" the crowd were shouting.

Tommy Dodd and Co. joined heartily in the cheering, disappointed as they were by the result.

"It's a jolly queer biznai, though, Neville," George Bulkeley remarked, as he walked off the field with his chums. "If Knowles' men had been up to the mark, they would have won. Rookwood First would have wiped that team off the ground; they wouldn't have had a chance. I can't understand their reputation, if this really is the ordinary Contadini team."

"Same here—I cannot!" assented Neville. "Knowles ought to have won."

The Rookwooders cheered cordially, as the victorious team marched to their dressing-room.

Every dusky face in the visiting eleven wore a grin.

The Contadini were pleased with their victory, but they also seemed to see something humorous in the matter.

They disappeared into their quarters, and the crowd began to disperse, discussing the great match.

Adolphus Smythe looked for Lattrey, now entitled, after all, to Lacy's ten-shilling note.

In the dressing-room—where Smythe never dreamed of looking—Lattrey of the Fourth greeted the dusky footballers with a fiendish scowl as they came in.

He was wriggling on the floor, engaged in trying to release himself from his bonds, as he had been engaged during the whole of the second half.

He had not succeeded, and the gag, securely fastened, was still in his mouth, stopping his utterance.

The footballers grinned down at him.

"Had a good time?" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope you've been enjoyin' yourself, old scout!" chuckled Mornington.

Lattrey's eyes blazed.

Jimmy Silver, in high good-humour, bent over him, and untied the twisted handkerchiefs.

"Open the door, Raby," he said. "Form up, and kick him out! Every fellow is to land him one!"

"Good egg!"

"Lattrey, my son, you must learn not to go in for spying and sneaking," said Jimmy, with a shake of the head. "You can get up, you worm, and crawl out! We're going to help you."

The grinning footballers formed up inside the doorway.

Lattrey staggered to his feet.

He was cramped from his long confinement, and his jaws were aching from the gag. And his temper would have done credit to the most uncivilised Hun in Prussia.

"Groogh! You rotters!"

"Run for it!"

"You hounds!"

"Are you going?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"You—you cad! You—you—you—yarooooh!"

Jimmy Silver was not there to listen to Lattrey's eloquence. He started the cad of the Fourth with a powerful drive from a football boot.

Lattrey yelled, and ran for the door.

Then the rest of the team got to work. There was a regular scrimmage to "land" Lattrey a kick before he escaped. In their eagerness, the juniors landed one another two or three, and there were loud yells.

But Lattrey got most of the benefit.

Five or six football boots clumped on him, as he dodged and ran, and he rolled on the floor outside, yelling.

"Dribble him out!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha!"

There was a rush, and Lattrey picked himself up and fled. Jimmy Silver and Co. turned back into their dressing-room, grinning. And two or three Rookwood fellows, who had witnessed the ejection of Lattrey from the Contadini dressing-room, fairly blinked in surprise.

Lattrey panted away, considerably hurt, quite out of breath, and in a towering rage. He spotted Adolphus Smythe and Lacy, and ran towards them. His first thoughts were for his fiver.

He had not the slightest knowledge, so far, that the Contadini had won the match. He took it for granted that the reverse was the case. He limped breathlessly up to the group of juniors.

"Oh, here you are!" said Adolphus, turning his eyeglass upon the dusty, panting Fourth-former. "By gad! You look as if you've been through it, dear boy. What the merry dickens have you been doin'?"

"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin. "Lattrey's been nosing into the Contadini dressing-room, and they kicked him out."

"Oh, gad!"

"I saw them!" chortled Tubby. "Kicked him out, you know! He, he he!"

Lattrey ground his teeth.

"That bet's off," he panted. "You can hand me my fiver, Smythe. The bet's off, do you understand?"

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated the astonished Adolphus.

"What!" echoed Lacy blankly. "You want the bet called off?"

"I insist on it!" shouted Lattrey furiously. "It's a swindle—it's all spoo! They're not the Contadini at all!"

"Eh! Who are not?" demanded Townsend.

"They—that team—they——" Lattrey choked. "They're not genuine! It isn't an Italian team at all! Ow!"

"Potty!" said Tommy Dodd, in wonder.

"Mad as a hatter, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle. "Lattrey, ye spalpeen, is it drinkin' ye've been doing?"

"I tell you they're not the Contadini!" yelled Lattrey. "It's all spoo! they've taken Knowles in!"

"Rot!"

"Gammon!"

"Who are they, then?" demanded Topham.

"Jimmy Silver!"

"What?"

"Jimmy Silver and Co!" shrieked Lattrey. "Can't you see, you fools? It's all spoo! It's Jimmy Silver and Co. got up like Italians, and they've been pulling Knowles' leg all the time."

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Impossible!"

"Oh, you fools—fools!" panted Lattrey, too furious to care what he was saying.

"I tell you it's so. I suspected them, and

went to make sure, and they collared me in their dressing-room, and tied me up!"

"Tied you up?" said Smythe dazedly.

"Yes, and fastened a hanky in my mouth so that I couldn't call out."

"By gad!"

"And I've been there all through the second half!" yelled Lattrey. "I've been a prisoner in the dressing-room, so that they couldn't be given away! Now you understand?"

"It's impossible!" yelled Tommy Dodd, whose face was quite a study. "Don't tell us such silly whoppers, you dummy!"

"I—I say, Jimmy Silver and the rest didn't come to see the match," muttered Tommy Cook. "We—we noticed that they weren't here."

The three Tommies looked blank. Impossible as it seemed, and as they wished to believe, it was forced upon their minds that it was true. And the idea of such a tremendous "spoof" made them fairly catch their breath. Lattrey was still raging.

"You'll see it's true in a few minutes—they can't keep it up any longer." A crowd was gathering round, attracted by Lattrey's vociferations. "They've sent away the brake—they're not going to leave Rookwood. You'll see in a minute. That bet's off, Lacy!"

Lacy grinned.

"You want it off?" he asked.

"Certainly I do—I insist upon it! Give me my fiver, Smythe! I tell you it wasn't a genuine match—they're not the Contadini at all! I never meant to lay money on a junior Classical team against Modern seniors! Give me my fiver, Smythe."

Adolphus chuckled. It was evident that Lattrey did not know how the match had gone.

Smythe opened his pocket-book, detached Lattrey's five-pound note, and handed it to him, smiling.

"And I'm to give Lacy his ten bob back, then?" he said, closing one eye at his comrades.

"Yes, of course—the bet's off," snarled Lattrey, "Hang his ten bob! I wasn't backing a junior team against a senior team, you know that. It's spoof, and the bet's off."

"Here you are, Lacy."

The grinning Lacy took his ten-shilling note, and slipped it into his pocket.

"You don't know how the match went, while you were enjoyin' yourself in that dressin'-room, Lattrey?" queried Smythe.

"I know well enough—Knowles won, by about a dozen goals, I suppose!" snorted Lattrey.

"He didn't!"

"What?"

"Knowles lost!"

"Lost!" yelled Lattrey.

"Ha, ha!" roared Smythe. "Yes, my infant, Knowles lost, and if your yarn's true, Modern seniors have been licked by Classical juniors!"

"Lost!" repeated Lattrey, dazedly.

"Lost! Jimmy Silver's won the match, then! Oh, crumbs!"

"And the bet's off, just as you wanted," said Lacy pleasantly, and the juniors yelled at the expression on Lattrey's face.

"I—I—" Lattrey stammered, "I—I took it for granted, of course, that—that the junior team was licked! I—I don't want the bet off—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—look here, Lacy, I've won, and that ten bob's mine!"

"Why, you called the bet off yourself!" exclaimed Lacy.

"I—I didn't know—"

"You were in rather a hurry," grinned Adolphus Smythe, "but the bet's off, my son, and it stays off."

"Look here, Lacy—"

"Bow-wow!" said Lacy, and he walked away with his hands in his pockets.

Lattrey gritted his teeth. In his haste to have the bet called off, on the supposition that Jimmy Silver and Co. had been beaten, he had over-reached himself, as he often did.

But there was no help for it now. The bet was off, and Lacy certainly didn't intend it to be "on" again. The expression on Lattrey's face made the juniors shriek.

"But that yarn can't be true!" said Topham, "it can't—"

"They're coming out!" called out Peele.

And there was a rush towards the pavilion, to see the "Contadini" come out. Whatever the truth was, it would be known now.

## CHAPTER 37.

### Only Jimmy Silver!

**T**OMMY DODD and Co. were watching for the Italians to emerge. A crowd of Rookwood juniors gathered round them. Lattrey's amazing story had spread far and wide now, to seniors as well as juniors. It reached Cecil Knowles' ears, and Knowles



heard it with disbelief and amazement. He could not believe that his leg had been pulled in that tremendous manner. But if it had——

The Contadini came out at last!

There was a buzz in the crowd.

The Italian team were in their overcoats and mufflers, over their football clothes. They presented exactly the same aspect as when they had arrived at Rookwood.

"I knew it was all spoof!" said Adolphus Smythe. "Lattrey was spoofin'—pullin' our leg——"

"Then why did he call the bet off?" said Townsend.

"By gad! I don't know."

Knowles stared hard at the dusky footballers, and drew a breath of relief. He was satisfied now. He had not been spoofed, as that wild rumour flying round the field hinted.

He came towards Signor Metallobianco.

"Your brake doesn't seem to be here, signor," he said.

"No, signore. I sent it away," said the dusky skipper. "Zat is all right."

"How are you going to the station?"

"We do not go to the stazione."

"Not!" ejaculated Knowles.

Signor Metallobianco shook his head.

"Not at all, caro amico. We stay zis night at Rookwood, in ze schoolhouse. It is all right—it is understood."

Knowles looked blank. It was the first he had heard of it.

"But——" he began.

"Zat is all right," said Signor Metallobianco, reassuringly. "Addio, signore! Good-bye, mister!" He turned to his followers. "Andiamo!"

"Andiamo!" repeated the Italians.

And they walked off the field, taking their way to the schoolhouse, followed by amazed glances.

"Didn't I tell you so!" shouted Lattrey.

"My hat!"

"But—but——"

Knowles was staring blankly after the Italian footballers.

"Bulkeley can't have asked them to stop the night," he muttered to Frampton.

Frampton shook his head.

"Mr. Bootles might have," he said.

"But—but why should he? This beats me! There—there can't be anything in what those kids were saying——"

"Rot, of course!"

The crowd were following the Italians to the schoolhouse. Bulkeley and Neville were on the steps, and they greeted the oncoming eleven with looks of surprise. Knowles—and Frampton and Catesby

followed them, too. A deep uneasiness had taken possession of Knowles.

"Hallo!" said Bulkeley, in surprise, as the Italian footballers marched up. "Is anything wanted?"

"No, only a wash and a change of clothes, Bulkeley," replied Signor Metallobianco.

But the signor no longer spoke in a deep voice with a foreign accent. He spoke in the well-known tones of Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth Form.

Bulkeley fairly staggered.

"What—what——" he managed to articulate.

"Surprised, Bulkeley?" pursued Jimmy Silver calmly. "I suppose it's a bit of a surprise to you—what?"

"Naturally," grinned Mornington. "It's all serene, Bulkeley. These complexions come off, you know."

"Wha-a-at?"

"So do the moustaches!" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Moustaches off!" commanded the captain of the Contadini.

Eleven hands went up, and eleven moustaches were removed, a sight that made Bulkeley and Neville gasp.

There was a roar from the Rookwood crowd gathering round the steps, and a gasp from Knowles, of the Sixth.

"Spoofed!"

"But—but—but," stuttered Bulkeley, "what—what does this mean? I—I—I don't understand——"

Words failed Bulkeley.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

He stood on the top step and looked back at the sea of faces below, Knowles' furious face prominent among them.

"Signori"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen of Rookwood, I have a little interesting news for you! I am Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth Form. These chaps are the Classical junior eleven!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Some time ago we had the honour of challenging Modern seniors to a football match."

"Jimmy!"

"Jimmy Silver!"

"Knowles refused to play, either because he had a swelled head, or because he was afraid of getting licked by Classical juniors."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you villain!" gasped Tommy Dodd. Even Tommy had no further doubts now.

"So we borrowed new complexions, and played Knowles as another team," continued Jimmy Silver calmly. "Knowles doesn't know enough Italian to know that Metallobianco is only another word for Silver."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I advise Knowles to learn a little Italian next time he undertakes to play an Italian team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You spoofing bounder!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Bravo, Jimmy!" howled the Classics.

Bulkeley stood rooted to the steps. He was still in a dazed state of astonishment.

"Where the real Contadini are this afternoon, I don't know," resumed Jimmy Silver. "Very likely a hundred miles away."

"Ha, ha!"

"If they had come here to play the Moderns, they would have walked all over them, of course. Well, we've walked over them instead."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"Knowles wouldn't play us knowing who we were, so he had to play us knowing who we weren't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, Classical juniors have licked Modern seniors at the good old game of soccer. I hope it will be a lesson to them, and that there won't be so much Modern swank for the rest of the term! That's all!"

A roar followed Jimmy Silver's speech.

It was a terrific burst of laughter, in which Moderns as well as Classics joined.

Even the three Tommies roared with the rest.

Bulkeley found his voice at last.

"Silver! You young rascal!" he gasped.

Jimmy smiled.

"All serene, Bulkeley! No harm done, I suppose!"

"No harm? Why, you young rascal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Neville. "Oh, my hat! So the merry Contadini belong to the Fourth Form at Rookwood!"

Knowles came bounding up the steps. His face was black with passion, his eyes burning.

"Silver!" The Modern prefect choked. "Silver! You! You!"

"I, dear boy!" said Jimmy Silver calmly, but with a wary eye on the enraged prefect. "Little me, you know! If you want a tip, Knowles, I should advise you to sack your goalkeeper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And make some changes in your front line, Knowles. If you want some coaching at footer—and you need it—I'm willing to give your senior team a leg-up any half-holiday!"

There was a roar of merriment.

"You!" panted Knowles. "You've dared, you—you young scoundrel! I'll smash you!"

Jimmy Silver jumped back.

"Hands off, Knowles, old scout! Don't lose your temper because you've lost the footer match, you know!"

"Back up!" shouted Lovell, as Knowles, beside himself with rage, fairly hurled himself upon the captain of the Fourth.

It would have fared ill with Jimmy Silver at that moment had he been at the mercy of the enraged Knowles. But he was not. The dusky footballers closed round Knowles, and dragged him off, and sat him down on the steps.

"Go easy, dear boy!" grinned Lovell.

"Take it calmly, Knowles."

"Keep smiling, you know," said Jimmy Silver, quite unabashed. "Classical side is top side of Rookwood, and you've been done in the eye. Come on, signori—*andiamo*."

"Ha, ha! *Andiamo*!" chorussed the eleven.

They marched into the house and headed for the Fourth-Form dormitory as Cecil Knowles staggered to his feet.

"Well, my hat!" said Bulkeley, quite overcome. "Who'd have thought it! The cheeky young rascals!"

Knowles was stuttering with rage.

"Bulkeley, they've got to be punished for this. They—they—I've been tricked."

Bulkeley suppressed his merriment.

"You'd better put it before their Form-master, Knowles," he said. "It certainly isn't treating a prefect respectfully. But, of course, they were dealing with you as a footballer, not a prefect, and you might take it as a practical joke, and look over it."

"I'll have them flogged for it!" yelled Knowles.

Bulkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, draw it mild," said Neville. "After all, you were trying to dish the Classical side in bagging a match with the Contadini. It was cheeky of the kids, of course, but, after all, they were only dishing you as you tried to dish us. The

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best thing you can do is to let the matter drop, and say nothing more about it."

If Knowles had been cool he might have decided that that was the best course. But he was not cool; he was boiling with rage.

He strode past the Classical seniors, and stamped away to Mr. Bootles' study, to pour the tale of his wrongs into the astounded ears of the Form-master.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver and Co. were changing in the dormitory, in merry mood. Their Etons were still at the old barn, to be fetched later, and they changed into their "Sunday clobber," after cleaning off their new complexions and the other traces of their temporarily adopted nationality.

They were looking quite their usual selves when they came down from the dormitory, to be greeted by cheers and yells of laughter by the hilarious Classics.

That stupendous jape on the Moderns had fairly taken Rookwood by storm. Jimmy Silver's prestige was more than restored; the end study had come into its own again, so to speak.

Jimmy Silver was the hero of the Classical side, even the great men of the Sixth roaring with laughter over the joke. The opinion of the Sixth was that Knowles had asked for it, and that it served him right if he had got it.

But Jimmy Silver and Co., as they came down, were met by a summons to Mr. Bootles' study.

Jimmy rubbed his hands.

"After the giddy feast comes the merry reckoning," he remarked. "That outsider Knowles has been complaining, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it was worth it!"

"Yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. marched away to the Form-master's study. They found Mr. Bootles quite flustered.

"Ahem! Silver—bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles, blinking at the meek-looking juniors over his glasses. "I—I have heard a most astounding story from Knowles, of the Sixth Form—most

astounding! It appears, Silver, that you have played a very extraordinary practical joke upon him!"

"Only a joke, sir!" said Jimmy.

"Bless my soul! But—but——"

"Wasn't Knowles pleased, sir?" asked Jimmy meekly.

"Certainly not! He appeared to be quite angry," said Mr. Bootles. "I think he was very much annoyed, Silver."

"There's no pleasing some people, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "Knowles hasn't much of a sense of humour, I'm afraid."

"I fear, Silver, that you have allowed the exuberance of your youthful spirits to carry you too far. You will all be punished!"

"Oh!"

"You will take two hundred lines each," said Mr. Bootles; "and, mind, nothing of the sort is to occur again."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. marched out in a state of eminent satisfaction. Two hundred lines did not hurt them. And they lost nothing by undertaking that nothing of the sort should occur again.

They were not likely to spoof the Moderns in that way a second time! Mr. Bootles looked severe until they were out of the study and the door was closed. Then he chuckled. Mr. Bootles had some sense of humour if Knowles hadn't.

A cheering crowd surrounded the heroes in the common-room. Jimmy Silver mounted on a chair.

"Gentlemen——"

"Go it, Jimmy!"

"I mean, signori——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Moderns have been done brown. Classical juniors have beaten Modern seniors at the good old game of football. We are the top side of Rookwood! We are the goods! We are IT! Gentlemen, three cheers for our noble selves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the cheers were given with a will that made the old rafters of Rookwood ring again.

THE END.

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