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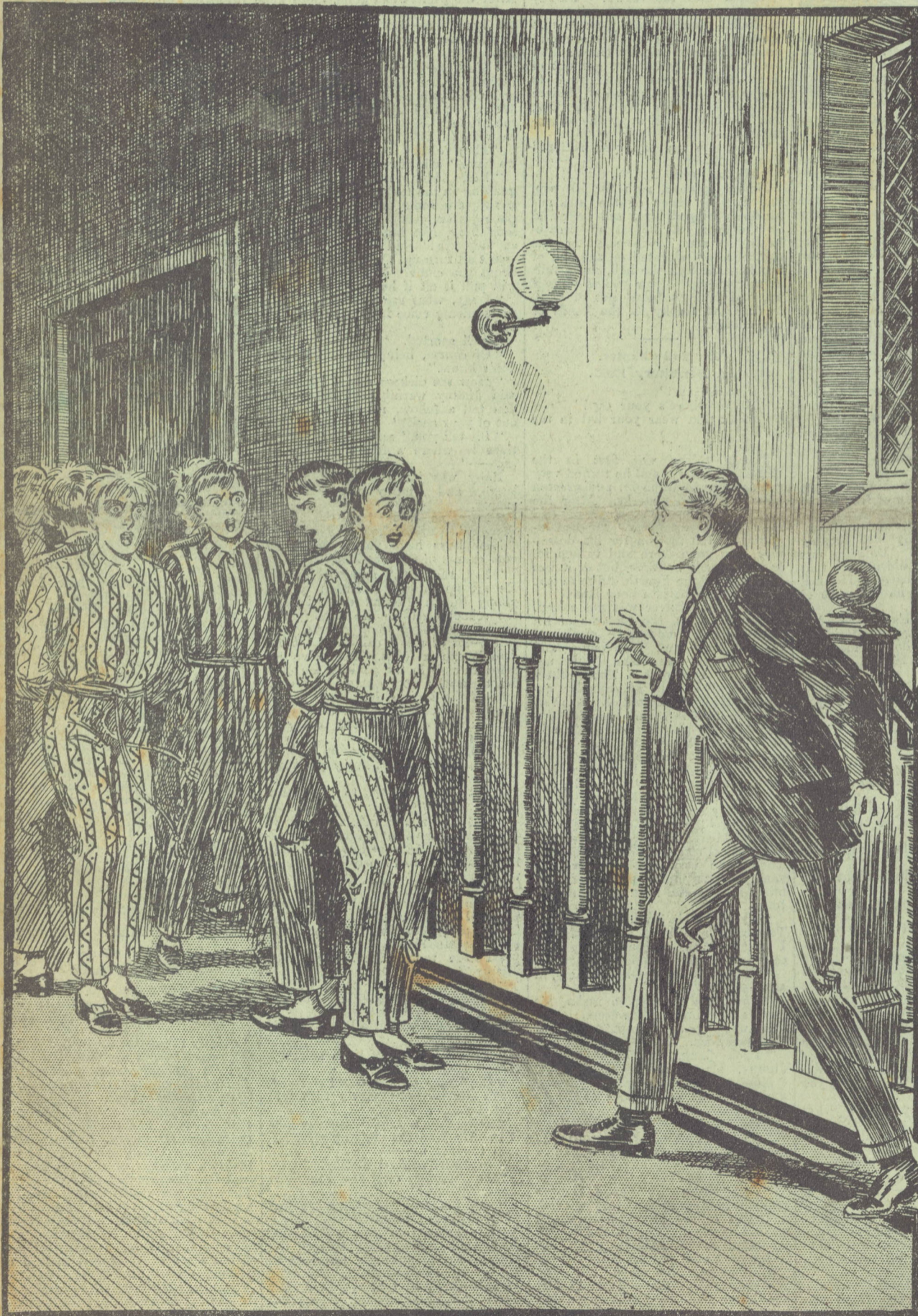
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THE BOYS' FRIEND

The Object
of
THE
BOYS'
FRIEND
is
To Amuse,
To Interest,
and
To Advise
British Boys.



JIMMY SILVER'S RUSE!

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale, dealing with the Adventures of the Juniors of Rookwood.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

First Night at Rookwood.

There was an incessant buzz of voices in Big Hall. It was First Night at Rookwood.

First Night was always somewhat free and easy. Though it was close upon bedtime, not even the youngest fags showed any signs of getting off to the dormitories. Fellows who had met from all four corners of the kingdom had heaps of things to say to one another, and they were all saying them at once.

Big, broad-shouldered Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, centre of an admiring crowd of seniors, was laying down the law on the subject of footer during the coming term. Groups of juniors were relating tall stories of wonderful doings in the holidays. New boys wandered about like lost sheep, or sat, with eyes and mouths open, staring at their unaccustomed surroundings, and wondering whether they would ever feel at home at Rookwood. Like that chap Lovell, or that nery bounder Tommy Dodd.

There was one new boy, however, who did not bear the remotest resemblance to a lost sheep. That was Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver strolled into Hall with his hands in his pockets, looking perfectly cool and self-possessed. Indeed, Knowles of the Sixth, the captain of the "Modern" side at Rookwood, bestowed a cuff on him in passing simply because he looked so very much "all there."

But Silver did not seem at all cast down by that sign of Knowles's disapproval. He only sniffed disdainfully, and dodged. He was quite satisfied with himself. For was not he on the "Classical" side—the old side at Rookwood; the gentlemanly side, as Lovell called it—and was not Knowles simply a measly Modern?

And although Jimmy Silver had only belonged to Rookwood for a few hours, he had already learned to entertain a tremendous scorn for the Modern side, from the oldest prefect down to the youngest fag.

But even Jimmy Silver, cool and cheerful as he was, wished that he had somebody to speak to in that buzzing crowd. He would have liked to add his voice to the general din. He approached Lovell and Newcome and Raby, his new study-mates; but they gave him the "marble eye," and turned their backs on him.

They resented having the new boy—Jimmy Silver—planted in their study, and they meant to let him know it. Jimmy indulged in another sniff, this time at the Classical juniors, and walked away, and leaned up against one of the pillars in the old hall, and looked on at the animated scene. Snatches of talk came to his ears from all sides, oddly.

"Yaas, I tell you winter sports are the thing." This came from Townsend, a classical dandy. "We had simply a topping time—top-hole, you know. Of course, this beastly war has mucked things up."

"That ass Smythe footer captain! Not this term!" came from Towle, a Modern junior. "The biggest ass on the Classical side—what!"

"Elections to-morrow, Towle—"

"It's spelt 'ski,' went on Townsend's drawing voice, "but you pronounce it 'she'—"

"My hamper hasn't come yet. I've spoken to the dame about it."

"Hallo! Here's that new boy!"

Jimmy Silver looked round quickly as he heard that last remark. Three juniors bore down upon him: Tommy Dodd, and Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle, of the Modern side. Jimmy looked at them, with a smile. He had had some little trouble already with the three Modern heroes; but he was quite prepared for more.

"Here he is!" repeated Tommy Dodd, surveying the new boy with a severe glance. "The cheeky beggar who collared a Modern brake to get from the station, and left our prefect to walk!"

"And got licked for it," said Cook.

"Not licked enough, to judge by his looks," said Doyle.

(Continued on the next page.)

RETRIBUTION FOR THE DORMITORY RAIDERS!

"What's this little game?" roared Bulkeley. "What are you kids doing out of your dormitory? What are you tied up for like this?" "It's only a la-l-l-lark!" said Tommy Dodd, with a feeble grin. "It's First Night, you know, Bulkeley, and we—we called on the Classic chaps. They tied us up like this!" (See "Jimmy Silver's Ruse.")

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When finished with, please hand this grand number to a friend, and oblige—
YOUR EDITOR.

JIMMY SILVER'S RUSE!

(Continued from the cover.)

And the three Tommies frowned majestically at the new boy. Jimmy Silver laughed.

"You Modern worms wouldn't have had the nerve, would you?" he suggested.

"Still the same cheeky ass he was in the train," said Tommy Dodd. "Did you fellows notice him tucking into supper? Just as if the whole place belonged to him. Where are your colours, you young ass?"

"My colours?" repeated Jimmy, not understanding.

Tommy Dodd laughed scoffingly.

"Did you chaps ever see such a greenhorn?" he exclaimed. "Don't you know we have different colours for the sides here, young Hopful—red for the Moderns, and blue for the rotters."

Jimmy Silver nodded. He remembered having noticed that distinction in the caps of the Modern and Classical fellows.

"Well, where's your cap?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"I—I left it in the lobby."

Tommy Dodd looked at his watch.

"You've got just three minutes," he said.

"I suppose you wouldn't know, being a new boy," he went on patronisingly.

"But the Head always goes round on First Night, speaking to new kids, giving 'em a word of encouragement, you know. Says nice things to them about their side, whichever it is. Making the rounds, we call it here—it's a regular institution at Rookwood on First Night."

"Oh, leave him alone, Tommy!" said Doyle. "What does it matter to us if the Head rags him. He's only a Classic."

"Well, that's so," said Tommy Dodd, hesitating. "But—he's a new kid, and doesn't know the ropes."

Jimmy Silver looked a little alarmed.

The three Modern juniors looked preternaturally grave, and gave him pitying looks. Jimmy had been feeling that he was getting on remarkably well for a new boy. But here was evidently something that he did not know—and something of extreme importance, too, judging by the looks of the Modern trio.

"I—I say, you might as well tell me," he said.

"Hasn't Lovell told you?"

"Lovell's been cutting up rusty because I've been put into his study," explained Silver.

"No wonder, such a benighted greenhorn as you are," said Tommy Dodd scornfully. "A new chap who hasn't even heard of making the rounds—"

"But I—I'm new here, you know," said Silver. "Dash it all, you might as well tell a chap!"

Tommy Dodd seemed to reflect deeply.

"Well," he said, relenting, "as you're a new kid, perhaps I might. Don't you go telling fellows on my side, though, that I've been looking after a Classical kid. They'd scalp me!"

"All right—not a word."

"Only two minutes now," said Tommy Dodd. "I'll tell you, and chance it. You see, you can't expect the Head to know by the shape of your nose or the cut of your classic brow that you belong to the Classical side."

"I suppose not."

"Well, then, when the Head makes the round all new boys have to wear their hats or caps, as they like, so that he knows them at once. And if you don't want to get a thumping good wiggling, young innocent, the sooner you get your cap the better for you. Don't tell any of our fellows I told you. They'd like to see you licked, as you're only a Classic new boy. Come on, you chaps, don't let's be seen talking to him, or some of the fellows will guess we gave him the tip."

And the three Tommies walked

quickly away, without another word or look at Jimmy Silver. But Silver did not wait for another word or look. He was squirming through the crowd to get out to the lobby where he had left his cap. If the Head was to make the rounds in two minutes, there was evidently no time to be lost.

He dived into the lobby in search of his cap and found it, and heard the half-hour after nine strike as he came out again cap in hand. He hurried back breathlessly to Hall. He could not help thinking that it was very decent and good-natured of Tommy Dodd to give him that tip, considering that Tommy was a Modern and he was a Classic.

A good many glances were cast at Jimmy Silver as he came breathlessly into Hall with his cap on. Lovell & Co. stared at him and whispered to one another. Jimmy glanced round quickly, and was glad to see that the Head was not present. He was in time.

"By gad!" came Townsend's voice.

"Look at that new boy! Bulkeley's got an eye on him! My word!"

"Silver!" came Bulkeley's deep voice, booming across the hall.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy.

"Come here!"

All eyes were upon Jimmy as he approached the captain of Rookwood.

The junior felt his cheeks burn under the general scrutiny, and he wondered why everybody was looking surprised or amused. Bulkeley was frowning. Jimmy could not see that anything was the matter. He had his cap on in time, he was sure of that.

"Silver—your name's Silver—"

"Yes," said Jimmy, wondering.

"What the deuce do you mean by wearing your cap in Hall?"

"Eh?"

"What do you mean by it?" rapped out Bulkeley. "Have you got a cold in the head?"

"Nunno."

"Somebody find me a cane," said Bulkeley.

"But—but I say," gasped Jimmy, "it—it's all right, you know. I—I put it on on purpose, you know."

"You did, did you?" said Bulkeley. "Then it's up to me to teach you manners!"

"But—but— The Head, you know—"

"Eh? What's that about the Head?"

"Isn't he just going to make the rounds?"

Bulkeley stared at Silver open-mouthed.

"The what?" he stuttered.

"The rounds," said Jimmy, a little indignantly. "Don't new boys always have to wear their caps in Hall when the Head makes the rounds, so that—"

"He's mad," said Bulkeley—"he must be! Stark dotty! Nice kind of new kids we get at Rookwood nowadays. Take that cap off at once, you young idiot!"

"Just like these Classic new boys!" came Tommy Dodd's voice, in disparaging tones. "What do you expect of 'em, Bulkeley?"

Jimmy Silver stared blankly at Tommy Dodd.

"Why, you—you—" he gasped.

"You told me—"

"They've got no more manners than bears," said Tommy Dodd calmly.

"Still, coming into Hall with his cap on is a bit thick even for a Classic."

"You told me," roared Silver—"you told me that the Head was going to make the rounds, and that new boys had to have their caps on—"

Jimmy's voice was drowned in a roar of laughter. The new boy at Rookwood, who had been so satisfied with himself only ten minutes ago, realised at last that his leg had

been pulled by the cheerful Modern youths, and that he had been hopelessly done. His face was crimson as he blinked at the hilarious crowd. Bulkeley wiped away his tears.

"Oh, you young duffer!" he gasped. "You silly young ass! Clear off, and if I catch you wearing your cap in Hall again, I'll warm you! Dodd, you young rascal—"

But Tommy Dodd had discreetly retreated into the crowd. Jimmy Silver beat a prompt retreat as he could. Seniors and juniors were howling with laughter, and the unfortunate victim of Tommy Dodd's little joke was only anxious to get out of sight. But he was not allowed to escape so easily. A crowd of Modern juniors blocked his way to the door, and Towle snatched away the offending cap.

"Give me my cap, you rotter!" shouted Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy made a rush for his cap, and two or three of the hilarious Moderns tripped him, and he rolled on the floor. As he sat up breathlessly, he saw Towle parading the captured cap, elevated on the end of a poker, through the hall, amid yells of merriment. Silver picked himself up, and fairly scudded out of Hall, leaving the trophy in the hands of the enemy.

The 2nd Chapter.

A Dormitory Raid.

"Precious ass!"

"Hallo, where's your cap?"

"Don't you wear your hat in the dorm?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver was first in the Classic dormitory, and he turned very red as the rest came in, and greeted him with those remarks. After the absurd scene in Big Hall Jimmy had been glad to disappear. He had inquired of the matron for his dormitory, and gone there and turned in. It was already bedtime, but as it was First Night, the Fourth did not come up till nearly half an hour later.

But Jimmy Silver was not asleep. If he had been, the remarks of his Form-fellows would have awakened him. Lovell and Newcombe and Raby stared at him with unmeasured contempt. The others laughed at him in an equally unmeasured way. Lovell & Co. felt that the new boy had brought discredit on his side by being taken in by the Moderns. And they were not slow to let him see it.

That blessed new boy, who had been "shoved" into their study, and declined to seek fresh quarters at their lordly behest; he was ass enough to have his leg pulled in full Hall by a set of Modern duffers! No wonder the Fistical Three were indignant. They were very much inclined to yank the new junior out of bed, and bump him on the floor of the dormitory.

"By gad, he's blushing!" yawned Townsend. "What a complexion! I say, young Silver, put your pillowcase on your head—quick!"

"Eh? What for?" asked Jimmy, in astonishment.

"The Head's going to make his rounds," grinned Townsend; and there was a cackle of laughter through the dormitory.

"Look here, chuck it!" said Jimmy, his face like a beetroot.

"How was I to know? Dodd told me it was an old custom at Rookwood—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So it is—an old custom to pull the leg of a silly new boy!" grinned Jones minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that's the image they've planted in our study!" said Lovell, in tones of the most contemptuous disgust.

"Hard cheese, old chap!"

Jimmy Silver put his head on the pillow again, and closed his eyes. He was feeling the ridicule keenly. He knew that he had got on uncommonly well for a new boy until that unlucky moment when he fell into the humorous Tommy Dodd's little trap. Now it seemed as if there would be no end of it. The juniors did not tire of the subject. When Neville, a Classical senior of the Sixth, came in to see lights out,

Raby yelped out to the new boy to put his hat on quick. And Neville chuckled—the great Sixth-Former actually chuckled at the joke.

Poor Jimmy wished that the dormitory floor would open and swallow him up. Neville put out the light, and cleared off, and the Classic Fourth-Formers were left to themselves. The Modern juniors evidently had another dormitory. After the prefect had gone, there was a buzz from bed to bed. Late as the hour was—past ten o'clock—the juniors were not thinking of sleep yet.

"Elections to-morrow," said Lovell. "And mind you all turn up, and mind you rout out all the fags. We've got to be in strong force. If the Modern cads beat us at elections, we may as well give up the game."

"They've got more fellows than we have," said Townsend.

"Yes, but they're generally guzzling in the tuck-shop, or mucking about with some filthy chemicals, or photographs, or bug-hunting, or something, like beastly Modern cads as they are!" said Lovell. "They won't all turn up. What do they care about the clubs? But Tommy Dodd will pull it off if he can."

"I say, what are elections?" came an inquiring voice from the new boy's bed.

Lovell snorted.

"Of course, being a new kid, you don't know."

"How the dickens should I know?" said Jimmy warmly. "Why can't you tell a fellow, instead of talking out of your neck?"

"I'll tell you," said Raby. "Elections is where a fellow wears his cap—"

Raby was interrupted by a loud laugh, and Jimmy subsided into silence.

"May as well tell the chap, though," remarked Newcombe. "New boys have votes, and every vote counts in the elections."

"Yes, that's so," admitted Lovell. He sat up in bed. "Listen to me, young Silver. Second day of term the school elections are held. The senior clubs elect their officers, and so on—lot of rot, I call that! That doesn't matter to us. But we've got a footer club in the juniors, see? We don't see why we shouldn't have elections if the seniors do. Well, practically everybody is in the clubs, and the Modern cads are sure to try to carry it."

"I thought you were up against the Moderns?" said Jimmy puzzled.

"So we are, ass!"

"But they belong to the same club?"

"The junior school club, of course. We have our own teams as well—Classical and Modern—but for outside matches we have to play a combined team."

"Oh, I see!"

"Of course, we could make up a Classical team for School matches, so far as that goes, but we don't, because—because—"

"You're too modest?" suggested Jimmy.

"Don't you start being funny, young Silver. We consider it only the right thing to let those Modern cads have some sort of a look-in," said Lovell loftily.

"Besides, they pay their subscriptions," remarked Hooker.

"Oh, shut up, Hooker! As if that's got anything to do with it!" said Lovell irritably.

"Well, new kid, you see now how it is. We hold the meeting after lessons to-morrow—"

"In Hall?" asked Jimmy.

"The senior elections are held there, fathead!"

"But the junior elections are just as important, I suppose?"

"Of course they are. Still, we don't want to—to inconvenience the seniors, so we hold our elections in the junior common-room. We used to hold them in the woodshed, but there isn't room enough there now those Modern cads have taken to bringing in every possible man to vote. There's simply no meanness they would stick at to beat us at elections."

"Are you going to take every possible man?"

"Of course, idiot!"

"Well, if you do, why shouldn't they—"

"Hark at the silly fathead!" said Lovell wrathfully. "Why don't he go over to the Modern side, and have done with it?"

"Well, I only wanted to know—"

"You know what I tell you, and that's enough. After lessons to-morrow, you take jolly good care to turn up in the common-room, and vote for our man. That's what you've got to do."

"Who's our man?"

"Smythe of the Shell. You'll know him—a swankin' ass with an eyeglass."

"Good footballer, I suppose?"

"Rats! No, rotten!"

"Then what the dickens do you want to elect him skipper for?"

"Because he's a Classical, you silly ass! Haven't you got any patriotism?" bellowed Lovell.

"Well, I'd rather have a good skipper if I'm going to play in the team," said Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You play in the team!" snorted Lovell. "You—you idiot! About another dozen terms, and you may be allowed to try your luck. Don't be a silly ass! And if you don't come up and vote for Smythe, you'll be scalped, slaughtered, and ragged—see?"

"But why not put up a better man?" demanded Silver, who evidently had a thirst for information.

"Oh, you ass! We've got lots better in the Fourth, of course, but the Shell fellows won't vote for a Fourth-Former; they're too high and mighty. The louts think they're almost seniors. And as they stand by Smythe, we stand by him too to keep the Modern cads out. If we split the vote the Moderns will romp home. Now do you see?"

"That's all very well, but—"

"Oh, shut up! You know what you've got to do now."

"I haven't decided yet."

"What!"

"I haven't decided how I shall vote," said Jimmy coolly.

"My only hat! If you voted Modern you'd be cut dead by every chap on this side, as well as slaughtered and boiled in oil!" said Lovell excitedly. "You—you unpatriotic beast! You—you Prussian!"

"Have him out and bump him!" said Raby. "He's got too much cheek for a new boy!"

"Hear, hear!"

But just as Lovell & Co. were turning out of bed, with perfectly ferocious intentions towards the new boy, the door of the dormitory was thrown suddenly open, and a voice, recognisable as that of Tommy Dodd, was heard to howl:

"Go for the cads!"

"Give 'em socks, the Classic rotters!" howled Tommy Cook.

And Lovell, forgetting all about the new boy, shouted:

"Look out! Modern cads! Back up, Classics!"

The 3rd Chapter.

Back to Back!

There was a rush of feet in the darkness of the dormitory, a swiping of pillows, and howls and gasps galore.

Jimmy Silver sat up in bed, blinking round him in the gloom, wondering. A light gleamed out—a match, and then a candle. The light flickered upon a peculiar scene.

A dozen juniors in pyjamas, armed with pillows, had suddenly invaded the Classic dormitory. Tommy Dodd & Co. were taking advantage of the liberties allowed of First night to raid the dormitory of the rival party. They had come with their pillows for a pillow-fight, but it looked more like a rout than a fight, for the Classics were taken quite by surprise, and Townsend and some more of the slackers remained in bed instead of backing up as Lovell commanded.

The rush of the Moderns carried all before it. Lovell & Co. were knocked right and left, and fellows were "pillowed" out of bed and rolled on the floor amid gasps and howls and yells.

The three Tommies were well to the fore, laying about them with their pillows like ancient Crusaders with their battleaxes.

The Classics who backed up were sent spinning, and the Moderns carried the attack to the fellows who remained in bed.

There was a yelp from the aristocratic Townsend as he was dragged out by the ears and landed on the floor with a bump. Bedclothes were hurled right and left, pillows and bolsters and mattresses and the juniors' clothes flung round the dormitory by the victorious raiders till the room looked as if a hurricane had traversed it.

"Back up!" gasped Lovell, staggering to his feet. "Back up, I say! Turn out, you slackers!"

Lovell went over again under Tommy Dodd's pillow. The Moderns had not been in the room five minutes, and already, in the glimmering candlelight, it looked a wreck. Then Tommy Dodd & Co., fearful of a visit from a prefect with a cane, retreated towards the door.

That was where Jimmy Silver came in. The new boy had been too surprised to join in at first. But he quickly realised that all hands were wanted. And even as Tommy Dodd called out to his valorous followers to clear, Silver darted to the door, closed it, and turned the key in the lock, and faced the Moderns, his pillow in his hands.

"Back up!" he was shouting in his turn. "Don't go to sleep on the floor, Lovell! Get a move on, you fellows! Back up, Classics!"

Jimmy had no time for more. The Moderns were keen to get out of the dormitory now, and they rushed on him in a body. Like Horatius of old on the bridge, Silver faced the rush of the enemy, hitting out mighty swipes with his pillow. The great Tommy Dodd himself was bowled over, and Cook went sprawling across him, and Doyle across Cook. Then Jimmy was down on the floor, with two or three Moderns scrambling over him, and Towle dragged at the door. Towle gave a yell:

"Where's the key?"
The key was somewhere on the floor, under the struggling heap of juniors. The escape of the Moderns was cut off. And the Classics, having recovered from the surprise, were coming on now, and numbers were on their side.

Lovell & Co. led the attack gallantly, and the Moderns were hemmed in round the door.

Jimmy Silver stumbled to his feet in the midst of the Moderns, and brought his pillow into play again. Fortune no longer smiled on Tommy Dodd & Co. They had wrecked the dorm, but their escape was barred. They were outnumbered and they were surrounded.

"Give 'em socks!" gasped Lovell. "Oh, what a ripping wheeze to lock the door! Collar the cheeky rotters! Bump 'em over!"

"Pile in!"
"Back up, Moderns!" gasped Tommy Dodd; and then he went down again, and Jones minor sat on him and kept him there. Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were also on the floor, very much sat upon.

All the Classics were in the fray now, strong in numbers; even the ineffable Townsend had seized a bolster and joined in. The tables were turned.

"Go for the cads! Sit on 'em! Hurrah!"

"Ow! Gerroff!"
"Wow! Gerroff my head, you idiot!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Down and out!" yelled Raby, as the last Modern was floored and a Classic junior jumped on him and pinned him down. "Hurrah for us!"

"Hip-pip-hurrah!"
"Not so much of your hip-pip, or we shall have a blessed prefect here!" panted Lovell.

"Not on first night," grinned Newcome. "Old Bulkeley's deaf on first night. That cad Knowles would chip in, but, thank goodness, he's on the other side! Now we've got all the cads, and we're going to execute 'em."

"What-ho!"

The Classical juniors were chirruping with triumph. Every raider was on the floor, pinned down by a Classic junior, and struggling to escape, but struggling in vain.

"Ow, you rotters!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "Lemme gerrup, and I'll lick any two of you! Ow!"

"What a nobby wheeze to lock the door!" chuckled Raby. "Who did it?"

"I did!" panted Silver.

"Like your cheek to chip in!" said Raby, rather unreasonably. "Still, we've got 'em now. Keep still, Duddy. If you wriggle, your face gets trodden on—"

"Grooh!"

"I warned you. My word, what a haul! Twelve Modern cads in the

cart. We're going to make an example of you, Duddy!"

Lovell waved his hand commandingly. Lovell was master of the ceremonies now.

"Tie 'em up!" he said.

"Wha-at!"

"Tie 'em up!" repeated Lovell firmly. "Back to back!"

"My hat!"

"Then they can wriggle home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters—"

roared Tommy Dodd. "Groooooogh!"

"I warned you," said Raby again, as his foot caressed the face of the furious Modern leader. "You will have it."

"Oh, crumbs! Grooh!"

"I—I s-s-say!" gasped Tommy Cook. "We c-c-can't get back to our dorm, you know, if you fix us up like that. Now—"

"You can carry one another picka-back," said Lovell cheerfully. "Take it in turns, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "Oh, you wasters! You—Gerroooooogh!"

The grinning Classics hastened to carry out their leader's behest. Pockets and boxes were searched for

lighted landing, and then wriggle home to their own dormitory.

With gentle pushes from the foot and swipes from the pillows, the Classics helped them to start. In an awkward procession, the defeated raiders stumbled away down the passage, half of them walking backwards, and all of them growling and grumbling as they received back-kicks from one another.

"What the dickens—"

The deep voice of Bulkeley from the direction of the landing put a sudden stop to the Classic laughter. The Classics bundled back into their dormitory, closed the door, and blew out the candles in hot haste.

But for the unlucky Moderns there was no escape. In the light on the landing they had almost stumbled into the captain of Rookwood.

Bulkeley stopped dead, staring blankly at the extraordinary procession.

"What the thunder—" he exclaimed.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Don't hang on me, Towle, you ass!"

"Well, don't bung me with your heels, you fathead!"

"What's this little game?" roared

there greeted them with a howl of surprise and merriment.

"Oh, don't cackle!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "Come and get us loose, you fatheads!"

"You let those Classic duffers handle you like that?" shrieked Lacy. "Ow! They couldn't have done it. It was that new kid. He locked us in, and then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us loose, I tell you, you cackling dummy!"

And when they were freed at last Tommy Dodd & Co. were glad enough to turn in, and postpone to a future occasion vengeance upon the Classics. But even Tommy Dodd had to admit that on the first day of the term the Classics had distinctly scored, and that it was all due to the new boy at Rookwood.

The 4th Chapter. Votes Wanted.

Jimmy Silver took his place in the Fourth Form at Rookwood the next day.

He found that some lessons were shared by Classics and Moderns, but for the most part the rival juniors saw little of one another in the classrooms.

greater asset than any amount of Latin. A Modern fellow would ask you, with a superior smile, what salary you could command in the City for hexameters of the most classic finish and grace. To which the Classics would retort that it was just like a measly Modern to be thinking about disgusting money.

According to the Classic idea, there were two kinds of fellows at Rookwood now—Classics and cads. According to the Moderns, there were two kinds, classified as Moderns and duffers. Nothing could exceed the Classic contempt for French, book-keeping, stinks, and the rest, unless it was the scorn the Moderns felt for the dead languages, which, according to them, being dead, ought also to be buried.

But it was not only the items in the curriculum that the Rookwood fellows disputed about. Of late, since they had grown in numbers, the Moderns had "wedged" themselves into all sorts of things that, according to the Classics, did not concern them. They did not venture to lay sacrilegious hands on old Bulkeley's position as captain of the school. But they had carried the election of their own head-prefect, Knowles, as vice-captain.

They were equally represented in the school eleven. And they made it a great merit on their part that they didn't bag all the offices in the school clubs, as their numbers would have enabled them to do if they had been inclined to carry matters with a high hand. Indeed, there was suspicion in some quarters that Knowles had an idea in the back of his head of supplanting Bulkeley as captain of the school as soon as a convenient opportunity arrived, and the bare idea of that was enough to put every Classic's back up.

Needless to say, the juniors took even more pronounced views than the seniors. Lovell & Co. especially stood up for the Classics—not to the extent of displaying any extraordinary energy in the Form-room. Indeed, their private feelings towards Julius Cæsar and Virgil were frequently almost homicidal. Tommy Dodd & Co. were equally stubborn in their support of Modern ideas—though, again, their kind teachers had never observed them to take a sincere delight in French verbs.

But there was no doubt that the Modern side was more "go-ahead" than the Classic. Even Lovell confessed that, more in sorrow than in anger. In his own Form, Townsend and his set were slackers of the first water, much more occupied about manieuring their hands and parting their hair than about standing up for the rights of the Classic side. While Tommy Dodd & Co. were all hustlers. But that, as Lovell would remark, was just what you might expect of Modern cads.

Jimmy Silver absorbed all this information with eager interest during his first day in the school. And he was prepared to go to any length to maintain the ancient dignity of the side he belonged to. And the great question of elections was to be decided that day, and a most important question it was.

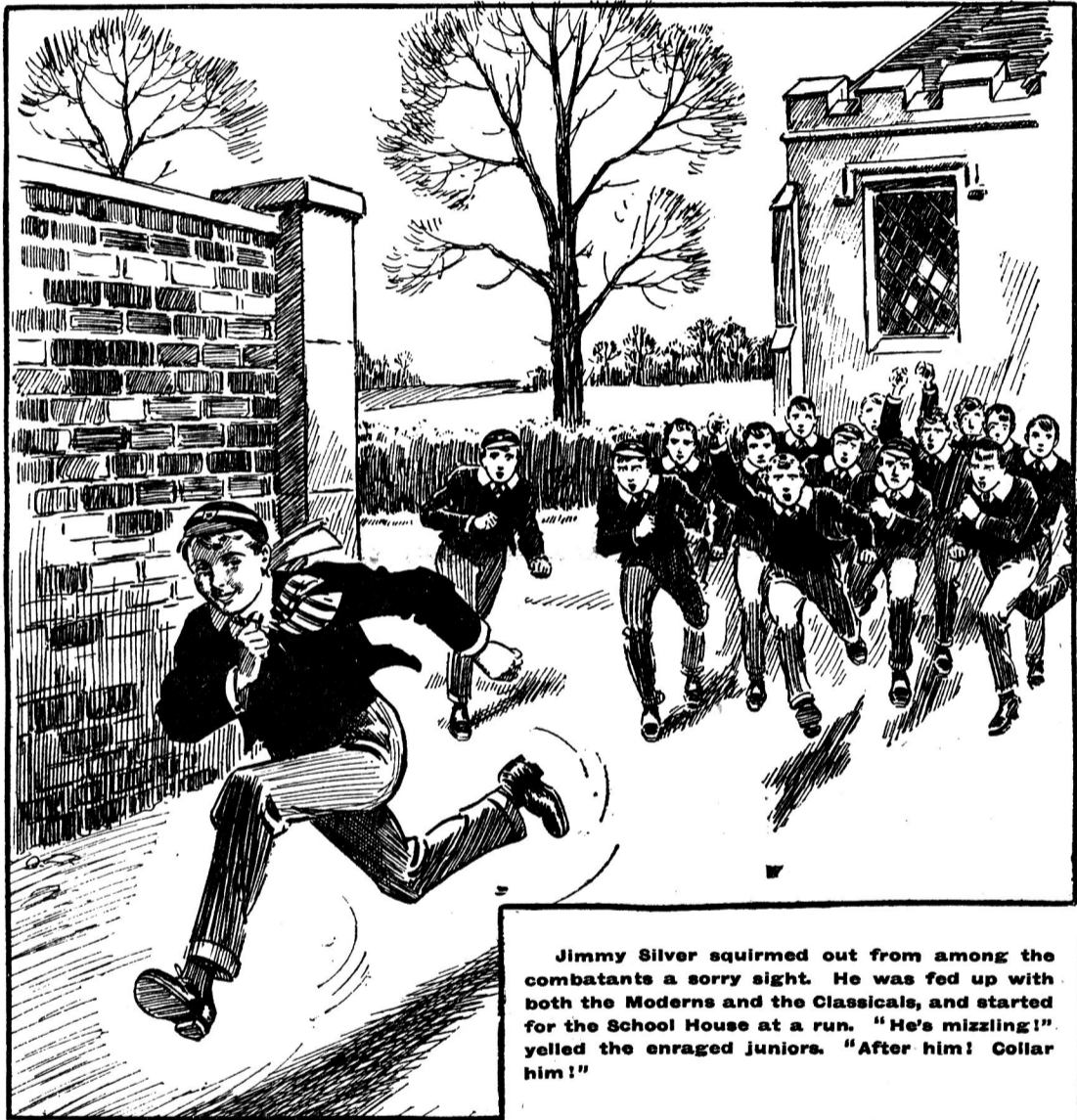
For, from the junior point of view, the junior clubs were out of all comparison more important than the senior variety. If a Modern cad should get in as captain, all the Classics agreed that Rookwood would go to the dogs. Smythe of the Shell might be an ass—he was; he might be a swanker—he was; he might wear an eyeglass—he did; but he was a Classic, and it was the duty of all true Classics to see that he got in as captain of the junior clubs. He might be no footballer—he wasn't; he might be a rotten skipper—it was sad, but true; but he was a Classic, and Lovell & Co. were prepared to move heaven and earth to secure his re-election.

On that point Jimmy Silver had his doubts, perhaps through being not yet thoroughly permeated with the Classic atmosphere.

After lessons the great question was to be decided, and about that time Lovell & Co. showed Jimmy Silver a new civility that was as surprising as it was pleasing. Lovell offered him a "whack" in the study bookcase, which was his private property. Newcome showed him where to "bag" a chair for his own use in the study. Raby made him a present of a pocket-knife—of which Jimmy afterwards discovered that both blades were broken. The fact was, the Fistical Three had realised that the new boy had a will of his own—and every vote counted in a close election.

But to all hints and remarks on the matter of the election Silver responded, in an airy way, that he hadn't decided yet how he would vote.

His indecision was perhaps excusable, but it made the Classics writhe with rage. One vote might turn the



Jimmy Silver squirmed out from among the combatants a sorry sight. He was fed up with both the Moderns and the Classics, and started for the School House at a run. "He's mizzling!" yelled the enraged juniors. "After him! Collar him!"

whipcord, any kind of cord, to serve as bonds. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook were the first victims.

Struggling manfully, but in vain, they were rolled together on the floor, their arms placed in position, and bound tightly together. Then they were hauled upon their feet, and stood up, back to back, unable to escape from that awkward position, and panting with rage.

Pair by pair the captured raiders were tied up, back to back, till the last pair were disposed of, and six couples stood glaring and panting in the candlelight. Round them the triumphant Classics were grinning and chuckling.

Jimmy Silver hunted for the key, and the door was unlocked.

"Kick 'em out!" said Lovell. "Come back whenever you like, you know. Always glad to see you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We—we can't— Oh, you beast!"

"I tell you, you Classic cads— Oh, yarooooh!"

With howls of laughter, the Classics bundled the unfortunate raiders out of the dormitory. Fortunately, Tommy Dodd & Co. had no stairs to negotiate. They had to go down the passage, across a wide

Bulkeley. "What are you kids doing out of your dormitory? What are you tied up like this for?"

"Ahem!"

"You—you see, Bulkeley—"

"First Night, you know, Bulkeley," said Tommy Dodd, with a feeble grin.

"It—it—it's only a la-l-l-lark!"

"A lark, is it?" said Bulkeley grimly. "You call it a lark to tie yourselves up like that and parade about the passages?"

"We—we didn't!" gasped Cook.

"We—we—we've—"

"We—we called on the Classic chaps, you know," stammered Doyle, "and—and—and—"

"And they fixed us up like this!" groaned Towle. "Only a—a—a lark, you know!"

To their relief, Bulkeley burst into a laugh.

"Well, get off to your dorm," he said. "My hat, you look a weird sight! Wriggle away, you worms!"

The unhappy Moderns wriggled away. It took them quite a long time to wriggle to their own quarters. They were glad that they did not encounter Knowles or any Modern prefect during that prolonged and painful wriggling. They were panting and aching by the time they wriggled into their dorm at last. And the fellows

Between Classic and Modern at Rookwood, in fact, there was a great gulf fixed.

It was not so very long since Rookwood had been wholly a Classical school. The old-fashioned curriculum had been taught there for centuries with little change. But the spirit of modern times had penetrated even to Rookwood at last.

The Modern side had begun in a small way with the introduction of German instead of Greek for those boys whose parents preferred it. Then the chemistry class had made its appearance—"stinks," as the Classic juniors called it, sniffing whenever they mentioned it. Then came other improvements—or otherwise, according to the view taken—till, as Lovell said sorrowfully, even book-keeping could be mugged up at old Rookwood. Indeed, Lovell asked sarcastically why they didn't institute a typewriting class while they were about it.

The Modern side, which had started so modestly, progressed by leaps and bounds till at last it was the bigger side. Fellows, when they went out into the world, found French more useful than Greek somehow—perhaps because they did more business with modern Frenchmen than with ancient Greeks.

Book-keeping, it appeared, was a

scale, and start Rookwood on the road to honour, or the path to the giddy bow-wows. And the new boy hadn't made up his mind.

Lovell & Co. darkly debated whether a general licking would help him make it up a bit more quickly. But the thoughtful Raby pointed out that it might make the beast go and vote Modern out of sheer ingratitude.

They decided to get Smythe of the Shell to speak to him; and the great Smythe, who was very keen to be elected, bore down on the new junior in the quad, nobly condescending to become aware of his existence. With his beautifully-cut trousers, his diamond pin, and his eyeglass, Smythe ought to have overpowered the new kid at first sight, but Jimmy Silver seemed singularly unmoved. He looked coolly at Smythe, just as if Smythe was a mere ordinary mortal, instead of—Smythe!

"Look here," said Smythe, "you're voting for me—what?"

"I haven't decided yet how I'm going to vote," said Silver.

"Look here, when my name's called, you put up your hand for me. See?"

"I haven't decided—"

Smythe clenched his fists. But he remembered the value of a vote, and unclenched them again.

"You want your own side to win—what?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!"

"Then you must vote for me."

"Suppose you stand down, and let in a candidate who's some good?" suggested Jimmy. "You're no footballer—anybody can see that."

Smythe nearly choked.

"You cheeky young ass! Do you think any of the Shell would vote for a Fourth Form kid? They're solid for me."

"Must be awful duffers in the Shell, then!" was Silver's remark.

"Look here," roared Smythe, losing his temper, "you're going to vote for me at elections, or I'll whop you—see? And if you don't give me your word now, honest Injun, to vote for me, I'll whop you now! Now, what do you say?"

"I haven't decided yet how I shall vote," replied Silver sweetly.

Smythe pushed back his immaculate cuffs. He was much bigger than the Fourth-Former; but Jimmy looked at his weedy form and pasty complexion and smiled. He wasn't afraid of Smythe of the Shell.

"Then I'll give you a jolly good hiding to start with!" said Smythe.

And he rushed at the new boy, intending to wipe him right off the quadrangle.

What happened next was a surprise to Master Smythe—a surprise he was a long time in recovering from.

His windmill blows were all knocked aside, and a fist that felt like a lump of lead crashed on his nose, and there was a spurt of claret.

Master Smythe sat down in the quad, greatly astonished and very much hurt. While he sat dazed, his beautiful silk topper was jammed down over his eyes, and his highly-scented cambric handkerchief was jerked out of his pocket, and crammed down his back.

Smythe of the Shell sat gasping and spluttering, dabbing at his streaming nose with one hand and struggling with his topper with the other. When he recovered himself a little, and glared round for Jimmy Silver, he saw the new boy strolling cheerfully away with his hands in his pockets.

And Smythe of the Shell, for reasons best known to himself, allowed him to stroll away in peace.

The 5th Chapter. Rival Claimants.

"Here he is!"

It was Tommy Dodd. Jimmy's saunter through the quad had brought him near the little school shop, tucked away in a corner of the old quad. The three Tommies were in the doorway, and Jimmy Silver prepared for war at the sight of them. But the three Toms were smiling sweetly, and looking as if butter or cream would not melt in their mouths.

"Come in, kid," said Tommy Dodd.

"Have you tasted the tarts here yet?" asked Tommy Cook.

"Come and try 'em," said Tommy Doyle. "Our treat!"

Jimmy looked at them suspiciously. He suspected another jape. But the three Modern juniors walked him into the tuckshop, and Tommy Dodd ordered tarts. Sergeant Kettle, the old soldier who kept the school shop, trotted them out. This looked like business, and Jimmy Silver thawed.

"You don't mind that little joke last night—about your cap, I mean?" said Tommy Dodd.

"We always jape Classic cads—ahem!—I mean, fellows. No offence."

"Not at all," said Jimmy, tucking

into his tart. It was certainly very nice. "I can take a joke."

"And you did us brown in the dorm," said Tommy Dodd. "It was you that locked the door, wasn't it?"

"You bet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the three Moderns, apparently enjoying the joke against themselves. "It was great!"

"Oh, good!" said Silver, considerably puzzled.

What the Modern heroes were butting him up in this fashion for, and why they were standing him tarts, was a deep mystery. But the mystery was explained as he started on his second tart.

"I've heard some of your side talking about you," said Tommy Dodd.

"I hear that you won't allow that ass Symthe to lead you by the nose, as he does the rest of them."

"No fear!" said Silver promptly.

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy Cook. "Britons never shall be slaves. Is it true that you haven't decided how you're going to vote, Silver?"

Then Jimmy understood. Those three extremely artful young gentlemen were after his vote. The new junior began to realise what a very important person he was.

"Certainly!" he smiled.

"That's really decent of you, Silver," said Tommy Dodd impressively. "You see, that cad Smythe is no good. He can't play footer. You should have seen how we were licked last time we played Greyfriars, because that howling ass was captain. Smythe only puts his own pals into the team, and they're all as duffy as he is. Now, I know you're too sensible a chap to vote for a duffer like that, simply because he's a Classical. The first time I saw you, I thought to myself, now here's a sensible chap."

"So did I," said Cook, with a nod.

"Same here!" said Doyle heartily.

"It's a queer coincidence."

Jimmy thought the coincidence very queer indeed. Those tributes to his good sense were extremely flattering. He started on a third tart.

"Have some ginger-pop?" said Tommy Dodd hospitably.

"Oh, good!"

"You see, you're a pretty important person just now, Silver," said Tommy Dodd. "Your vote may make all the difference. If that frabjous ass Smythe gets in, Rookwood may as well throw up the sponge at once, as far as footer's concerned. Now, if I'm elected—"

"You!" said Silver.

"Yes, I'm the rival candidate."

"Oh!"

"If I'm elected, we shall finish the season in grand style. And, you see, what we've got to think of is the good of the school as a whole, not this side or that," said Tommy Dodd patriotically. "Like those giddy Greeks, you know, in the poem: 'Then none were for a party, then all were for the State—' What are you cackling at?"

"I thought they were Romans!" grinned Silver.

"I tell you they were Greeks!" said Tommy Dodd.

Silver shook his head.

"Romans!" he replied.

"Greeks, you fathead!"

"Romans, you ass!"

"You cheeky kid— Leggo my arm, Tommy Cook! I'm going to— Ahem—ahem! Perhaps you're right, Silver," said Tommy Dodd, with a startlingly sudden change of front, as he received warning glares from his comrades. "I—I dare say they were Romans, just as you say. Have—have another tart?"

"Thanks; I will!"

"The election's going to be very close," went on Tommy Dodd, sweet and conciliatory again. "In fact, it depends on you doing the right thing, Silver."

"You bet I'll do the right thing, if I know how," said Silver.

"That's right!" said Dodd approvingly. "I said at first you were a sensible chap, and wouldn't let those measly Classics—"

"I'm a Classical!"

"I—I mean those Classical chaps lead you by the nose. Now, I don't mind telling you that I've been making a calculation. We can make calculations on our side," said Tommy Dodd loftily. "The fact is, if you hadn't come, the number of voters would have been just equally divided."

"I thought there were more Moderns," said Silver.

"So there are; but they don't all belong to the club," explained Tommy Dodd. "Some of 'em go in for bug-hunting instead of footer. Some of 'em are nuts on botany and stinks. Even as it is, some of them didn't join till I hammered them. And, you see, only those who've paid up their subscriptions are allowed to vote. And those chaps I licked into joining haven't all paid up their sub-

scriptions. 'Tain't all lavender trying to do one's duty by the school, I can tell you. By the way, you've paid up your sub, I hope?"

Silver nodded.

"That's all right, then. You can vote. You see, last term they got Smythe in by a rotten Classical majority of four. This term there are four new kids in the Modern side. Well, we looked after 'em to-day; we simply licked 'em till they agreed to join the club and pay up their subs. See? So that makes the voting exactly equal on both sides."

"Without counting me?" said Silver, understanding at last what an important position he occupied in the politics of the Lower School.

"Just so!"

"You're the only new boy on the Classical side," said Doyle. "If you hadn't come, we should have tied. None of those cads would have voted for our man; they're too jolly mean for that. And you can bet that the Moderns are too decent to vote for a Classical idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Now then, Doyle, don't you start ragging the new kid!" said Tommy Dodd, in an authoritative manner.

"Silver's a good sort, and he's going to do the right thing. You haven't made up your mind yet, Silver?"

"Not yet," said Jimmy.

"Have another tart?"

"Thanks!"

"You see how the matter stands," urged Tommy Dodd eloquently.

"With me as captain, we go ahead by leaps and bounds. We shall lick Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and that's worth something, isn't it? With that ass Smythe, we shall be wiped off the field, as usual. Now, decide how you are going to vote, old man."

"I'll think it out."

"But look here—"

"Look at the rotters!" shouted Lovell's voice in the doorway.

"They've got hold of our voter! Buck up, Classics!"

There was a rush of Classic juniors into the tuckshop. Evidently they had been looking for that very valuable new boy. Tommy Dodd & Co. gathered round Silver, prepared to defend him by force of arms until they had extracted his promise to vote for the Modern candidate.

"Yah! Cads!" howled Newcome.

"Trying to nobble our voter?"

"He ain't your voter!" retorted Tommy Dodd. "He's our voter! You're going to vote Modern, ain't you, Silver?"

"He'd better not!" roared Lovell.

"We'll scrag him if he does! You haven't promised those cads your vote, Silver?"

"Haven't promised anybody so far," said Silver lazily.

"But he's going to—"

"He isn't!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Lovell, seizing Silver by the arm. "You come with us. Decent fellows never speak to Modern cads! 'Tain't safe to leave you here! They're mean enough for anything. You come on!"

"Let him alone!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Rats! He's our voter!"

"Rot! He's ours!"

"Modern cad!"

"Classical snob!"

"Back up, Classics!" shouted Lovell.

"Rally round, Moderns!"

"Here, I say," yelled Silver, as he was seized on all sides by the rival juniors. "Let go! Leggo, I say! Oh, my hat! Gerrrrrrrrrr!"

The rivals did not let go. Jimmy Silver's vote was too precious for risks to be run with him. Lovell had evidently been making calculations, as well as Tommy Dodd, and understood the extreme value of the new junior. The Fistical Three all collared Jimmy Silver together, and Tommy Dodd & Co. promptly collared him also—and other Classics and Moderns crowded in, and all seized hold of the unfortunate voter wherever they could get a grasp.

A whirling crowd surged out of the tuckshop, with the breathless new boy struggling vainly in their midst. Neither party was inclined to yield him to the other, and it really looked as if Jimmy Silver would be divided between the two.

"Let go our voter, you Modern rotters!"

"Hang on, Moderns!"

"Drag him away!"

"Hold tight!"

"Yaroooooooh!" came in tones of anguish from the subject of dispute. It was not all lavender to be a very valuable voter.

The juniors struggled, and swayed, and staggered to and fro, but they all held on to Jimmy Silver. The Moderns had captured his legs, and the tail of his jacket. But his arms were in the possession of the Classics, also his head, and Lovell had an

arm round his neck, in a regular strangle-hold. The struggle was tremendous—especially for Silver.

"Ow! Ow! Ow, wow!" came from the victim of Rookwood politics.

"Wow, wow, wow! Leggo! Grooh! I'm chook-chook-chook! Ow, wow!"

"Let go, you Modern cads! You're damaging him!"

"Damaging our voter!" howled Jones minor indignantly. "Never mind, Silver, we'll look after you. We won't let go!"

"No fear!"

"Yow! Wow, wow, wow, wow!"

"Punch their heads if they don't let go!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Mop up those Modern cads, you fellows."

The fight grew hotter. The necessities of attack and defence caused the rivals to relax their hold on Silver, and he dropped to the ground among the trampling feet.

The tussle raged over him. Jimmy Silver squirmed out from among the combatants—a sorry sight—his jacket split, his trousers rumpled, and all the buttons gone from his waistcoat. He started for the School House at a run. He had had enough of both sides just then. "A plague on both your houses," was his feeling, to put it in Shakespearean language.

There was a yell from the juniors who spotted the escape of the bone of contention.

"Ho's mizzling!"

"After him! Collar him!"

The whole troop broke into pursuit, Classics and Moderns racing across the quad together after the fleeing voter, ready to renew the struggle as soon as he was captured. But the voter was not to be captured. He was fed up. He ran like a deer, and vanished into the School House; and without a pause sped up to the Fourth Form Classic dormitory, and locked the door after him. Then he sank, panting, on a bed.

"Oh, my eye! Oh, my hat! The silly chumps! I've a jolly good mind not to vote at all! Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

The 6th Chapter. The Election.

"Silver, old man!"

It was a sweet and gentle voice through the keyhole, about a quarter of an hour later. Jimmy Silver, having got his second wind, was making some much-needed improvements in his toilet. He was looking more like himself when Lovell's dulcet tones came through the keyhole. Lovell had tried the door and found it locked.

"Hallo!" growled Silver.

"I—I hope you weren't hurt!"

Silver understood exactly how much Lovell cared whether he had been hurt or not, and so he replied with a snort.

"We backed up like anything to rescue you from those Modern cads," went on Lovell, through the keyhole.

"I didn't want rescuing," growled Silver. "They were standing me ginger-pop and jam-tarts."

"That was a rotten bribe. They were trying to corrupt you," said Lovell indignantly. "But I know you're going to do the decent thing, Silver."

"Oh, yes!"

"And vote Classical."

"Bow, wow!"

"Look here, Silver, it depends on your vote. I've counted 'em on both sides, and it's a tie."

"I've had that from Dodd."

"So that worm's been counting, has he? Just like a Modern cad—always making some rotten calculations. They learn that rot on their side. I say, Silver, open the door."

"Rats!"

"How are you going to vote, old chap?"

Silver chuckled.

"I haven't decided yet."

Lovell breathed hard through his nose. Never had he felt so inclined to give the new junior a tremendous licking.

"I say, Silver!"

"Well?"

"If we get our man in, we're going to have a feed in the end study. You will be the guest of honour—ahem!—if you vote Classical."

"What about bribery and corruption now?" chuckled Silver.

"Time we got down to the common-room," said Raby's voice.

"Those cads will be holding the meeting without us, and getting their man in. Bootles will be there, and he won't wait."

"Silver," came Lovell's persuasive voice through the keyhole, "the meeting's coming off now. You don't want to miss it, do you?"

"No fear!"

"Then come out."

"Thanks! I'm not going to be yanked about any more. I know where the common-room is, and I can walk there on my own."

"Those Modern cads will try to nobble you."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you young scoundrel, if you dare to vote Modern—"

"Bow, wow!"

"How are you going to vote, confound you?"

"I haven't decided yet."

The grinning Silver heard a muttering of curious voices outside the door. Then there was a sound of retreating footsteps. Jimmy waited till all was quiet in the passage, and then unlocked the dormitory door and stepped out. Immediately there was a rush of feet, and he was surrounded by triumphant Classics. Too late he realised that those wary young gentlemen had only pretended to depart, and had stolen back on tiptoe to lie in wait for him.

"Let go!" shouted Silver, as Raby took one arm, and Newcome the other, and Lovell made a hasty grab at his hair.

"We're not going to hurt you," said Lovell reassuringly. "Only just going to walk with you into the common-room."

"Leggo!"

"Bring him along, you fellows! Those cads mustn't be given another chance."

In the midst of the Classics, Jimmy Silver was walked along the passage, and down the stairs. A crowd more fellows joined them, heading for the junior common-room. The hour of elections was nigh, and all the fellows who had votes were anxious not to be left out. If any Classic had failed to register his vote, his life would not have been worth living on the Classic side at Rookwood afterwards—and the same was the case with the Moderns.

Fourth-Formers, and fags of lower Forms who belonged to the School club, were swarming towards the rendezvous. Classics and Moderns chipped one another, and exchanged words and howls of defiance, as they trooped in. There was a rush as the new boy was spotted, but the Classic Fourth-Formers closed round him in a solid phalanx, and marched him on triumphantly into the common-room.

"There!" panted Lovell, as they came into the crowded room. "Now, if the beast's got a spark of gratitude, he'll vote Classical, after we've looked after him like that."

"How are you going to vote?" hissed Raby.

"Haven't decided yet," said Silver cheerfully. And Raby looked daggers, or rather machine-guns, at him. He was mentally promising the new boy all sorts of things later for keeping the anxious Classics on tenterhooks like this.

Smythe and his friends in the Shell were there in all their glory. More and more fellows were crowding in. With the swarm of fags, there were over a hundred fellows in the common-room. Leaving a trusty band to guard the new boy, Lovell hurried about, ascertaining whether all his backers were present.

He was really taking much more trouble about the election than the candidate himself. For Smythe, as a matter of fact, did not care two pins. What he wanted was to get a Classic elected, and it was Smythe or nobody. All other considerations vanished before that great and important point—the alternative of Classic or Modern.

A tall, thin man, with bushy whiskers, in a gown, came into the room, and Moderns and Classics, who were ragging one another, became more orderly. The new-comer was Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth. The Form-master kindly presided at the election in order to prevent it from ending in a free fight. For, without that restraining presence, it was a dead certainty that the defeated side would have proceeded from the counting of hands to the punching of noses.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles, peering round the crowded room through his spectacles. "Are we all here—what—what?"

"All here, sir," said Lovell promptly.

Lovell had ascertained that all his voters were in the room, and he was not without hopes that some of the rival party were still outside. Once the door was closed, and the counting started, late comers would apply in vain for admittance.

"Then we may proceed—what—what?"

"Hold on!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Not all here yet, sir. Some of ours—"

"Time!" exclaimed Raby, pointing to the clock. "Look, sir—it's half past seven! If we waste any more time, we sha'n't be able to do our preparation."

Mr. Bootles nodded approval.

"Quite so, Raby. I am glad to see—ahem!—that you have returned

to school this term with a determination to work—what—what! A decided improvement upon last term, Raby!"

"Oh, the rotter!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Fat lot he cares about prep, the sweep!"

"What did you say, Dodd?"

"N-n-nothing, sir; but I think that clock's fast, sir."

Mr. Bootles consulted his watch, and compared it with the clock. The Classics watched him anxiously. They were anxious to get to business. But Tommy Dodd & Co. highly commended that deliberation of manner. Lacy and Towle were still absent. Tommy Dodd cast a desperate look down the passage. He did not dare to go in search of the missing juniors, lest he should be shut out himself.

"H'm! The clock appears to be right," said Mr. Bootles, putting back his watch. "And as Raby has very justly remarked, further delay will interfere with evening preparation—which is not to be thought of, not for a moment—what, what! Please shut the door, Dodd."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Well, you are not shutting it."

"I—I—yes, sir. It—it seems to have caught," stammered Tommy Dodd, who did not intend to shut the door, if he could help it, until Towle and Lacy were on the right side of it.

"I'll help you, Dodd, old chap," said Lovell sweetly. "Why, it's not jammed at all, Duddy. Quite a mistake on your part."

"It won't shut."

"The cad's got his boot in the way. Look here—"

There was a hurried scampering of feet in the passage, and Towle and Lacy rushed up—just in time.

"Too late!" shouted Lovell. "Shut 'em out!"

"Let 'em in, you spoofers!"

Lacy and Towle settled the matter by squeezing in. Then the door was shut, Lovell glaring at Tommy Dodd, and Tommy Dodd grinning triumphantly at Lovell. They were all there now, full force on both sides, and the momentous decision depended on the new boy—who hadn't decided how he was going to vote.

"You silly chumps, you nearly spoiled it all!" muttered Tommy Dodd fiercely to the two late-comers.

"All your fault!" said Towle indignantly. "Didn't you tell us to watch for Bulkeley's fag, and shut him up in the box-room—"

"Ahem! Silence!" said Mr. Bootles. "You must not waste time. We will proceed—what—what!"

And they proceeded.

The 7th Chapter.
Awfully Close.

The great question was about to be decided.

The two candidates, Dodd of the Fourth, and Smythe of the Shell, were proposed by their friends, amid cheering from their respective sides.

As both sides demanded a show of hands, it was necessary to count. It was clear from the rival cheering and howling that the voting would be very close. Curiously enough, the two candidates attracted less general attention than the new boy at Rookwood—the fellow who hadn't been forty-eight hours in the school.

Anxious glances were turned on Jimmy Silver from all sides.

Silver stood with his hands in his pockets, and a serene smile on his face. If he liked the limelight, he had plenty of it at that moment.

"Silver, old man, how are you going to vote?" murmured Lovell, almost in tones of anguish. And a crowd of fellows hung upon Silver's reply, as if pearls of wisdom were to fall from his lips.

"I haven't decided yet!" said Silver cheerily.

Lovell ground his teeth.

"Oh, you wait till afterwards!" he gasped.

"Eh! What did you say?" asked Silver calmly. "Wait for what, Lovell?"

Lovell smiled a sickly smile.

"The—the feed," he said feebly. "A ripping feed in the end study, you know, if our man gets in—my hamper from home—"

"We will now count—what—what!" said Mr. Bootles, apparently quite oblivious to the thrilling excitement of the situation, and only anxious to get back to his pipe in his study. "Boys in favour of Master Dodd will hold up their right hands."

A forest of right hands went up. Mr. Bootles proceeded, in his deliberate and solemn manner, to

count. Lovell looked at Silver. The new boy still had his hands in his pockets. He wasn't going to vote for the Modern beast, anyway. At the worst now it could only be a tie. Lovell felt immensely relieved, and Tommy Dodd looked daggers. The bribery and corruption in the tuck-shop had evidently been wasted—a sheer waste of four jam tarts and two ginger-pops.

Classicals and Moderns waited anxiously for the result. Tommy Dodd had a desperate hope that some Classical at the last moment might do the right thing, and Lovell had a lurking terror that some unspeakable cad might go over to the enemy. But when the result was announced, all their doubts were set at rest.

"Thomas Dodd—fifty-four votes!"

It was the exact number of Modern juniors and fags in the assembly. Well enough the rivals knew the numbers—they had counted and recounted many times.

"Now hands up for our man!" said Lovell, with an imploring glance at Jimmy Silver.

Raby whispered to the new boy: "I say, Silver, do you like white rabbits? I've got a beauty—a real

that moment he felt that he could forgive that exasperating new junior everything.

"Fifty-three, fifty-four—ah, fifty-five!" droned Mr. Bootles' voice as calmly as if nothing out of the ordinary was occurring.

A cheer from the Classics and a groan from the Moderns. The die was cast.

"Silence, please! As Dodd has taken fifty-four votes and Smythe has taken fifty-five, I declare Master Smythe to be elected," said Mr. Bootles.

"Hurrah!"

"Smythe for ever!"

"Yah! Classic cads! Yah!"

"Our game!" roared Lovell. "Bravo, the Classics! Hurrah!"

Smythe of the Shell stood smiling and smirking. Once more he was captain of the school junior club, and free to distinguish himself on the football field in his usual manner with disastrous results to the Rookwood record.

But the Classics did not think of that. They had won the victory. They had defeated the hated foe. They had upheld the ancient honour of the Classic side of Rookwood.

"Rats!" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "Of course, I meant to vote Classical all along. Did you think I would vote for a Modern rotter?"

"You said you hadn't decided how you'd vote!" roared Lovell.

"I know that; and I hadn't."

"You—you hadn't!"

"No. I meant to vote Classical, but I hadn't decided how I'd vote," explained Silver affably.

"What—why—how—"

"You see, I could have voted with my right hand or my left hand," Silver further explained. "It really didn't make a pin of difference, you know. But I finally decided how I'd vote. I voted with my right hand."

"You—you funny idiot!" burst out Lovell, when he found his voice at last. "So—so you were rotting us—what!"

Silver nodded cheerfully.

"Yes. I thought you were a bit too lordly, you know, the way you told me how to vote, so I thought I'd pull your leg a bit—see?"

"Why, you—you—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Lovell.

"You'll come up to the study and stand that feed?" said Silver. "You gave your word. I suppose you're



Jimmy Silver faced the rush of the enemy, hitting out mighty swipes with his pillow. The great Tommy Dodd himself was bowled over, and Cook went sprawling across him, and Doyle across Cook.

beauty—and you can have him for— for nothing if you like."

Jimmy Silver grinned. "Have some of this butterscotch, Jimmy?" murmured Newcome.

"Thanks!"

"How are you going to vote, old fellow?"

"I haven't decided."

If Mr. Bootles had not been there, Jimmy Silver would have been massacred on the spot. Fortunately, Mr. Bootles was there.

"We will now count hands for Master Smythe, what—what!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Hands! Back up, Classics!"

Mr. Bootles started at the end, and came slowly towards where Lovell & Co. stood with Silver, counting.

Beseeching looks were cast upon the new junior. Silver appeared to hesitate for a moment. He drew his left hand from his pocket, and the Classics' hopes rose, while Tommy Dodd's went down to zero. Then he put it back again, and Lovell & Co. gasped, and Tommy Dodd brightened up. Then, just before Mr. Bootles reached him, he detached his right hand from his pocket and held it high in the air.

There was a gasping cheer from the Classics.

"Our game!" chortled Lovell. At

What did anything else matter in comparison with that? The Moderns were defeated, beaten, baffled, licked to the wide. And the Classics cheered and cheered till the roof rang.

"I congratulate you, Smythe," said Mr. Bootles gracefully. "Dodd, if you throw that cushion at Master Lovell I shall cane you." Tommy Dodd dropped the cushion. "Please do not make such a dreadful noise, my dear boys. There is really nothing to be excited about; and you must not forget your preparation. You Modern juniors will now return to your own side. I will—ahem—see you off."

Mr. Bootles knew what would happen if he left Moderns and Classics in the common-room together after the election. And the defeated Moderns, thus compelled to postpone dire vengeance, were shepherded off by the thoughtful Mr. Bootles, accompanied by thunderous cheers from the Classics.

"Beaten to the wide!" chuckled Raby.

"Got our man in," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Now, what about that feed in the study, Lovell? There's time before prep."

Lovell gave him a glare.

"You jolly near turned traitor!"

not going to back out like a beastly Modern?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby. "It's a fair catch, Lovell old man. Bury the giddy hatchet. After all, we got our man in, and it was Silver's vote that did it. Come on; no scrapping after a glorious victory. Think how we've dished the Moderns. Come on!"

"Yes, make it pax, old son!" said Newcome. "I'm hungry."

"Well—"

But he made it pax, and the hatchet was buried, and good-humour was fully restored in the end study, where a tremendous feed celebrated the great victory of the Classics over the Moderns. Rookwood had had, as the Classics said, an awfully narrow escape of going to the giddy bow-wows, but the situation had been saved, and it was Jimmy Silver who had saved it. And so, for that evening at least, Jimmy Silver was a personage whom the Classics delighted to honour.

THE END.

("Healing the Breach" is the title of next Monday's story of the Rookwood Rivals. Although the first two stories in this grand new series of school tales have been really excellent ones, number three will beat them both. You must not miss it!)

TALES TO TELL.

Our weekly prize-winners. Look out for YOUR winning storyette.

UNBEATEN.

The following notice appeared in a paper which had offered a prize for the largest beetroot:

"The beet that beat the beet that beat the first beet we mentioned is now beaten by a beet that beats all the beets, including the original beet, the beet that beat that beet, or the beet that beat the beet that beat the beet that beat the original beet."—Sent in by H. Angier, Colchester, Essex.

A TRIFLE MIXED.

Small Boy: "Er—have you any books on cricket, please?"

Bookseller: "Yes. Here's a nice little book, 'How to Score,' by A. Sharp; or 'Through Lapland with a Cricket Bat,' by Montague Mump."

Small Boy: "No; I don't want either of those. The one I want is called 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire!'"—Sent in by G. E. Mainwaring, Birmingham.

A BIT TOUGH.

"Here, waiter," shouted the rude man in the restaurant, "tell the orchestra to play 'Carmen' while I eat this steak!"

"Yessir. Might I inquire why?"

"I want to hear the 'Toreador' song; I feel like a bull-fighter!"—Sent in by H. Jones, Homerton.

AWKWARD.

It was the case of a riot in a tavern.

"Witness," said the magistrate, "tell me how the dispute arose."

The witness, turning to the jury, said:

"The accused all of a sudden began to shout, 'You are a lot of fools, you idiots!'"

"Don't address the gentlemen of the jury," said the judge; "speak to the Court!"—Sent in by M. Shores, Grimsby.

A TRAGEDY.

She laid the still white form beside those which had gone before. No sob, no sigh forced its way from her heart, throbbing as though it would burst. Suddenly a cry broke the stillness of the place, a cry essentially feminine—ono single heartbreaking shriek.

Then silence, except for a low murmur which seemed to well up from her very soul.

She slowly left the place. She would lay another egg to-morrow!—Sent in by A. W. Brooks, Ipswich.

FORGOTTEN.

Little Jacky was playing about the harbour, when suddenly, with a piercing yell, he fell into the water. Seeing that he was in danger of being drowned, a young man who was passing by jumped in and pulled him to safety.

Having done so, he walked swiftly away, as he thought that a change of clothes would be both grateful and comforting; besides, he didn't want any cheering crowd coming round and mobbing him for being a hero.

Suddenly he felt his arm gripped hard.

"Excuse me, sir, but are you the gentleman who saved my little Jacky's life just now?"

The rescuer blushed.

"Well, I—er—that is, yes, I did pull him out of the water, if that's what you mean. But it doesn't matter. It was nothing. I—"

"Excuse me, sir, but it does matter. What's become of my little boy's hat—eh?"—Sent in by A. McClymont, Holytown, Scotland.

A BOOT-FUL IDEA.

Comedian: "I ain't goin' on again. One of the audience has thrown a boot at me!"

Manager: "Yes. Go and have another try; you might get the other one!"—Sent in by G. Astbury, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send on a postcard storyettes or short interesting paragraphs for this feature. For every contribution used the sender will receive a money prize. All postcards must be addressed: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and "Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.