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"Dodges Which Win Matches!"

GRAND FOOTBALL ARTICLE BY ARTHUR GRIMSDELL, TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR'S FAMOUS HALF-BACK.



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THREE HALFPEACE.

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Rough On Algernon!



PULLED UP!

Algy struck out recklessly on all sides, as his horse leaped forward. In a few moments he would have been clear. But the leader of the "Flour-bag Gang" whipped a lariat from his saddle, and the rope uncoiled through the air after the fleeing schoolboy. It was the Honourable Algernon's first experience of the lasso! Something clutched him and plucked him from the saddle. "Oh gad!" gasped Algy.

The 1st Chapter. A Very Good Turn.

"Bob, old chap—"
"Well?"
"It's rather too bad, you know."
"Bosh!"
"You see"—Frank Richards hesitated—"you see, Bob—"
"Oh, I see!" assented Bob Lawless,

"I see that it's a jolly good stunt, and I see that it will do the Dandy of Cedar Creek a lot of good. What more do we want?"
"But he's Beau's cousin, you know, and—"
"That's why I'm taking all this trouble about him," explained Bob Lawless. "If he wasn't the Cherub's cousin, I shouldn't bother!"
"But—"

"Bosh, old fellow!"
Bob Lawless had evidently made up his mind.
Frank Richards watched his chum in silence. It was early morning—only the first rays of the sun were showing over the barrier of the Rocky Mountains to the east. Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin were down unusually early that morning.
"But—"

Bob Lawless' occupation was a peculiar one.
He had been sorting out old clothes, and he had selected a pair of rough leather trousers, a dingy Mexican jacket, thrown aside by a cowman, a ragged Stetson hat, and a pair of ancient boots that had seen better days, and seen the last of them.
That extraordinary collection had been taken out of the ranch-house,

and Bob was engaged in rubbing them into a half-dried puddle left by recent rain—apparently to make them dingier than they were already.
The person who was to wear those clothes, when Bob had finished with them, was not to be envied.
"What the dickens are you grumbling at, Franky?" said Bob, in an injured tone. "Isn't Beau's cousin
(Continued on next page.)



ROUGH ON ALGERNON

(Continued from
the previous page.)

Algy the joke of the school, with his blessed Etons and his top hat?"

"Yes, but—"

"Hasn't Miss Meadows told him to get into more suitable rig—"

"Yes—"

"And hasn't he said that he's going to stick to his own style—"

"But—"

"And haven't we decided to get him a change of clothes, a bit less dandified than his own—"

Frank Richards laughed.

"But this is rather too thick, Bob," he said.

"Not a bit of it," answered Bob Lawless cheerily. "What the dear boy wants is a lesson, and that's what he's going to get. I guess he ought to be grateful to us for taking all this trouble."

"I rather think he won't be, though!" grinned Frank Richards.

"It's an ungrateful world," said Bob. "All a chap can do is to keep on doing good turns, without bothering about the gratitude."

The rancher's son collected up the dusty, dingy, muddy articles of attire at last, in a bundle.

"I reckon they'll do now," he said. "I guess I won't make 'em too grubby, as Algy is so fastidious. We'll let him off lightly."

"My hat! If that's letting him off lightly—"

"More than he deserves. Come on, we've got to fix it up with Billy Cook before breakfast."

"I suppose you're going to have your way, Bob—"

"I guess so. Come on!"

The chums of Cedar Creek proceeded to the cabin occupied by Billy Cook, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch.

Billy Cook was at breakfast. He was breakfasting and mending a stirrup at the same time on a bench outside his cabin. He looked up with a grin and nodded to the rancher's son and nephew.

"Waal!" he said.

"I've got the rig-out, Billy," said Bob Lawless. "Look!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the ranchman.

"We can rely on you, Billy? You'll be on the spot early?"

"You bet!"

"With a couple of the hands?"

"Leave it to me, Bob!"

"And mind, the pilgrim isn't to know who you are, of course. We don't want any complaints to come along to the popper."

"I guess I can work the rifle," answered Billy Cook. "You leave it to me, sir. It's a cinch!"

Bob Lawless deposited the bundle on the bench beside the ranchman, and the chums of Cedar Creek strolled back to the ranch-house for breakfast.

Bob Lawless was smiling cheerily; and Frank Richards, though he had a rather doubtful expression, smiled too.

There was no doubt that the Honourable Algernon Beauclerc was in need of instruction; but Frank wondered whether his chum's methods were a little too drastic. It was quite certain that the Honourable Algernon would find them so.

"You seem very cheery this morning, Bob," remarked Mr. Lawless, glancing at his son's smiling face at the breakfast-table.

"I guess so, popper," answered Bob. "I'm going to do a good deed this morning."

"Eh?"

"A good turn to a pilgrim and a stranger," explained Bob.

"You young rascal!" replied the rancher, laughing.

Mr. Lawless asked no questions, however. After breakfast the chums mounted their horses to ride to the school. They did not see Billy Cook as they started. That burly gentleman had disappeared.

The 2nd Chapter.

Held Up on the Trail.

"What a picture!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards smiled.

The two cousins had reached the fork of the trail in the timber, where they usually met Vere Beauclerc on their way to school.

Vere Beauclerc and his cousin were in sight, trotting up by the branch

trail from "Old Man Beauclerc's" cabin on the creek.

The Honourable Algernon was, as Bob remarked, a picture.

The previous day—his first day at Cedar Creek School—the Honourable Algernon had turned up in spotless array: Etons,

starched collar, and topper complete. The merriment his array had caused in the backwoods school did not seem to worry him.

Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress, had warned him that it would be advisable to change into more serviceable attire for a frontier school. But the Honourable Algernon knew better.

He had paid no heed whatever to his schoolmistress' injunctions. Algy did not exactly mean to be disrespectful, but he was so accustomed to having his own way that it did not occur to him to do otherwise.

Vere had argued with his cousin in vain. Algy knew better, and it was quite useless to argue with a fellow who knew better. So the Cherub had given it up.

Accidents had happened to Algy's topper the previous day. He had left it a wreck at Cedar Creek. But he had replaced it with another, as glossy and beautiful as the first. Old Man Beauclerc's cabin was crowded out with the "truck" his nephew had brought from England, and it was likely to be a long time before Algy came to the end of his beautiful clothes.

Vere Beauclerc gave his chums a nod, with a half-apolgetic and half-amused glance at Algy.

"Here we are," he said. "Not late this time!"

"Algy seems to have forgotten what Miss Meadows told him yesterday," remarked Frank Richards.

Beauclerc shrugged his shoulders.

"By gad! Did Miss Meadows tell me anythin' yesterday, dear old man?" asked Algy.

"About your clobber, you know."

"What's the matter with my clobber?"

"Nothing," said Frank, laughing. "But for Cedar Creek—"

"Oh, I know. I've had all that from Vere," yawned Algernon. "I seem to be the only fellow at Cedar Creek who dresses decently! But that's all right! I'm settin' an example, you know!"

"An example?" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

"Yaas. The sooner the other fellows learn to dress like me, the better, you know. What?"

"I guess it would be rather difficult in this section," grinned Bob Lawless. "There's no fashionable tailors in the Thompson Valley. And those collars—"

Algernon nodded.

"Yaas," he remarked. "I've had a lot of anxiety about my collars. But it's all right! There's a Chinese laundry in Thompson where they can get up my linen. That's a boon and a blessin', isn't it?"

"I guess it must be. Come on!"

The four juniors rode on through the timber.

Vere Beauclerc was looking a little worried. He found his cousin from the old country a rather heavy responsibility on his hands. Bob Lawless glanced about him several times, as they rode up the trail towards Cedar Creek School.

Bob seemed to be rather expectant of something, and his expectations were not disappointed.

At a place where the trail ran through a narrow, rocky defile, three horsemen came out into the trail as the schoolboys came trotting by; and Frank Richards & Co. had to pull rein. The three riders blocked the trail in advance.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Vere Beauclerc. "What the dickens—"

"Halt!"

"I guess we've halted!" said Bob. "What do you want?"

Frank Richards was silent. The three horsemen were not recognizable, but Frank had a pretty clear idea who they were. The three had flour-bags drawn over their faces, with eye-holes cut in them, through which their eyes were twinkling. The Honourable Algernon blinked at them in wonder and alarm. He had heard his chums speak of the "Flour-bag Gang," a gang of outcasts who had once haunted the Thompson Valley, till they were rounded up by the sheriff.

"I—I—I say, Vere!" he gasped, catching his cousin by the arm. "Are these johnnies—what d'ye call 'em—robbers?"

"Blessed if I know what they

are!" said Beauclerc in perplexity. "More likely practical jokers. There are no road-agents in the Thompson Valley, or this side of the Line at all, for that matter."

The leader of the flour-bag trio pushed his horse a little nearer to the schoolboys.

"You can ride on, young Lawless! You, too, Richards. And you, young Beauclerc."

"Right you are!" said Bob.

"I guess we want a leetle talk with your friend, that's all," said the flour-bag gentleman.

"My cousin?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Yep."

"I—I say!" ejaculated Algy in dismay. "By gad! Look here, if you think you are goin' to rob me—"

"All O.K.! We ain't road-agents. We only want you to mosey along with us a leetle."

"What does he mean by mosey, Vere?"

"Go with them," said Beauclerc. "You're not going, Algy. We're all sticking together."

"Come on, Cherub!" said Bob Lawless.

"But—"

"They won't hurt, Algy. This way—"

"I'm not— Let go, you ass!" exclaimed Beauclerc in astonishment.

But Bob Lawless did not let go.

He had caught Beauclerc's rein, and urging on his own horse, drew the Cherub's steed after him. Before Beauclerc quite realised what was happening, he was galloping on to Cedar Creek with Bob, and Frank Richards was riding after them. The flour-bag trio opened out to let them pass, and then closed in on the Honourable Algernon, as he attempted to follow.

The schoolboys were a hundred yards up the trail, and had rounded a bend before Beauclerc succeeded in pulling in his horse.

"Stop!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean, Bob? I'm not going to leave Algy in the lurch!"

"I guess you are!" grinned Bob.

"They won't hurt him."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I guess I do know, and so does Franky."

Beauclerc looked from one to the other of his chums.

"Those fellows are only practical jokers, I suppose?" he said.

"Correct!"

"And you've got a hand in it?"

"Least said soonest mended!" was Bob Lawless' reply. "Algernon won't be hurt. Let's go on."

"But—"

"Oh, come on, Cherub! We've got to get to school, you know."

"But Algy—"

"Algy will follow on—when he's changed his clothes—"

"Changed his clothes?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"You've got it!"

"Look here, Bob—"

"This way!"

"I think I'd better go back," said Beauclerc. "Algy doesn't understand this region, and practical jokes are rather out of place on a tender-foot."

"I guess not. Come on!"

"I'm not coming on, Bob!"

"I reckon you are!" grinned Bob Lawless. "Cherub, old chap, you don't want to fight your old pards, do you? And you can't mosey back without—"

"It's all serene, Beau," said Frank Richards. "Only one of Bob's idiotic jokes!"

"Yes, but—"

"Come on!"

Vere Beauclerc still hesitated, but Bob was still grasping his rein, and he urged the horses on again. And the chums trotted on towards Cedar Creek.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Change of Attire.

Algernon Beauclerc blinked at the flour-bagged riders as they closed round him, in very considerable alarm.

He made an effort to push his horse through, but his bridle was held, and he had to stop.

"Look here, you horrid ruffians—" began Algy hotly.

"Nuff said! Get down!"

"By gad! I'm not getting down for you!" said Algernon independently. "I don't know who you are, and I don't care, but I'm not afraid of you!"

"Look hyer! Are you getting down?" roared the leader of the Flour-bag Gang.

"No fear!"

"Then I reckon I'll tumble you off!"

Algy compressed his lips.

There was no doubt that Algernon was a dandy of the first water, and several sorts of an ass, but he possessed the quality of pluck. He was alarmed, but he was not by any means frightened. He did not doubt that he had fallen into the hands of a desperate gang of road-agents, but surrender was not in his thoughts.

He gripped his natty riding-whip, and struck his horse a sharp blow. As the animal bounded forward, Algy struck out recklessly on all sides.

There was a loud roar from the flour-bag leader, as he caught the whip across the flour-bag on his face.

In his surprise, he let go the bridle, and Algy's horse leaped forward, with the way clear before him.

Algernon drove his steed on desperately. In a few moments he would have been clear, but the flour-bag leader whipped a lariat from his saddle, and the rope uncoiled through the air after the fleeing schoolboy.

It was the Honourable Algernon's first experience of the lasso.

What happened to him he hardly knew.

He was only aware that something clutched him in full career, and plucked him from the saddle.

He was sitting in the grass the next moment, and his horse, startled and scared, dashed on down the trail.

"Oh gad!" gasped Algy.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"I reckoned the riata would do it," grinned Billy Cook. "Nail him!"

The flour-bag gentlemen dismounted, and Algernon was quickly secured. He was so confused and breathless from his sudden fall, that he was quite incapable of offering further resistance.

Strong hands closed on both his arms, and he was jerked to his feet, gasping dazedly.

"Ow! You rotters! Wow!" mumbled Algy. "Oh! Bedad! Wow!"

"You—you goldarned galoot!" growled the flour-bag leader, rubbing his face. "I guess you're too mighty spry with that whip of yours!"

"I'll have you locked up for this!" gasped Algy.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The flour-bag leader threw a bundle at Algy's feet.

"That's for you!" he said.

"What?"

"Open it!"

Algy blinked at him. He made no movement, and the flour-bag man stooped to pull open the bundle. As he did so, Algy suddenly dragged loose his right arm, and snatched at the flour-bag on the man's head. It came off in his grasp.

The ruddy, bearded face of Billy Cook was disclosed.

Algy gave a cry of astonishment.

He had seen the foreman of the Lawless Ranch, and he recognised him at once.

"You!" he yelled.

"Goldarn you!" exclaimed Billy Cook wrathfully. "Why don't you hold the young scallywag, you 'uns!"

He dragged open the bundle, and a remarkable set of attire was revealed. Algy stared at it.

"Now change!" said Billy Cook, crossly.

"What?"

"Change into them duds!"

"Is this a rotten joke?" demanded Algy, relieved of his fear that the flour-bag gentlemen were robbers, at least.

Billy Cook grinned.

"I guess so, more or less," he answered. "But we're waiting. There's your clothes. Get into them!"

"I won't!" roared Algy, in breathless indignation. "Do you think I can wear those rags?"

"I reckon so!" assented Billy Cook.

"I won't!"

"Take his duds off!" said the ranchman.

Algy began to struggle. But the two ranchmen who held him were rather too hefty for Algy's resistance to have much effect. His shining topper was already off, and one of the flour-bag gentlemen had trodden on it—making it look as much like a concertina as a hat. His beautifully-fitting Eton jacket was whipped off, and his waistcoat, and then his elegant "bags," and his gleaming boots. Algy was left in rather airy attire, and he shivered as the sharp wind struck him. The Canadian autumn was not a time for thin attire, however elegant in design.

"Grooogh!" gasped Algernon.

"You awful brutes! Ooooh!"

"Are you going to get into your clothes?" demanded Billy Cook.

"No!" yelled Algy.

"I guess you ain't much choiced about it," remarked the ranch foreman. "Howsumdover, you can please yourself. Come on, boys!"

"Oh, you awful beasts!" wailed Algy.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Billy Cook and his companions remounted their horses, taking the Honourable Algernon's clothes with them. Algy stared after them blankly as they galloped down the trail, and disappeared from sight.

"Oh gad!" he stuttered. "What am I goin' to do?"

He shivered again.

His look expressed the strongest distaste and disgust, as it dwelt on the clothes so carefully selected for him by Bob Lawless that morning. But there was evidently no choice in the matter.

It was too cold to walk about without clothes, even if there were no other considerations—and there were.

With deep disgust and reluctance, Algernon dragged on the old leather trousers, shuddering at the contact.

The ancient boots followed.

He hesitated long before he put on the old Mexican jacket, once gaudy, but now a dingy and tawdry rag. But it was on at last. As for the ragged old Stetson, Algy left that lying in the trail. He preferred to be bareheaded.

He gave a deep groan when he was fully arrayed.

The change in his appearance was startling. The raggedest "hobo" that ever "moseyed" up the Thompson Valley, was better clad than the Honourable Algernon at that moment.

"Now, what am I goin' to do?" he muttered. "Oh, those rotters—and those other rotters to ride on an' leave me in the lurch like that! Why, my hat, that awful beast Lawless must have had a hand in it! That ruffian is employed on the ranch! It's a plant! Oh dear!"

Exactly what to do was a puzzle to the hapless Algy.

He was already late for school—though school did not loom very largely in his thoughts. That did not matter very much, to Algy. But he was nearly two miles from home, and his horse was gone. It had dashed up the trail, and vanished towards Cedar Creek—and Algy could not help suspecting that Bob Lawless would see that it did not return. Walking two miles was no attraction to Algernon, especially as the timber trails were new to him, and he had only the very vaguest idea of the way

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to get back to the Beauclerc clearing.

The thought of wandering about all day, in his present attire, made him shudder.

But to go on to the school, clad as he was now, that was an unnerving prospect.

"Oh, the awful rotters!" groaned Algy, as he thought it over.

He lingered in the faint hope that the ranchmen might relent, and come back with his clothes; or that Frank Richards & Co. might return. But there was no sound on the trail. He was left alone, and it was necessary to move.

"Oh dear!" said Algy again.

He knew he was close to Cedar Creek—it would be in sight round the bend of the trail. There was evidently nothing else to be done, and Algy, with a wrathful face, tramped on, the old boots squashing and creaking under him as he went heading for Cedar Creek.

The 4th Chapter.
Poor Algy!

"Beauclerc!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows?"

The Cedar Creek fellows were in class. Miss Meadows noted at once the absence of the new boy.

Bob Lawless and his comrades had come into school, wondering a little where Algonson was. Bob had caught his horse on the trail, and brought it on to Cedar Creek; but Algy was only ten minutes' walk distant, and Bob had expected him to turn up before lessons commenced. But Algonson hadn't turned up.

Beauclerc coloured as Miss Meadows addressed him. Algy's absence had to be explained, and the Cherub did not quite know how to explain it.

"Your cousin has not arrived at school this morning, Beauclerc," said Miss Meadows.

"He—he is coming, Miss Meadows."

"Then he is late!"

"I—I think he has been delayed, ma'am."

"If you please, Miss Meadows," said Bob Lawless meekly, "we met Algonson on the trail, and—and persuaded him to change his clothes, ma'am."

Miss Meadows started.

"Indeed!" she said.

"Ye-es, indeed, Miss Meadows."

"Very well!" said the school-mistress abruptly.

She was puzzled, but she allowed the subject to drop. Lessons commenced at Cedar Creek.

The first lesson was over, when footsteps were heard in the passage outside the school-room.

"Here he comes, I guess!" murmured Bob Lawless.

The door opened.

All eyes in the class were turned towards the late-comer as he entered. Then there was a gasp.

It was followed by a wild howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Honourable Algonson stood in the doorway.

Algy's attire had attracted much attention at Cedar Creek the previous day. It attracted still more now, though it was very different. Algonson had been a dandy the day before, but now—certainly Solomon, in all his glory, was never arrayed like Algonson at the present moment.

He stood with a crimson face, in dirty leather trousers, turned up about a foot from the ankle, as they were much too long for him—dingy cowman's jacket, and creaky, leaky boots.

Miss Meadows gazed at him transfixed.

Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd looked round, and tried not to laugh. But they couldn't help it. And their classes howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a sight for sore eyes!" yelled Chunky Todgers. "Where did he pick up those duds? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Miss Meadows, finding her voice at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, I repeat! Beauclerc, what do you mean by coming to school late, and clad in such a ridiculous manner?" exclaimed the Canadian schoolmistress angrily.

"Oh dear!" was Algy's reply.

"Explain yourself at once."

"I didn't want to come like this!" gasped Algonson. "I've been robbed of my clothes."

"What?"

"Some awful rotters stopped me on the trail, and made me change into these rags!" howled Algonson. "It wasn't my fault."

"Goodness gracious!"

"It's an outrage!" gasped the new boy. "An awful outrage! This clobber isn't even clean! Ow!"

"Lawless!" exclaimed Miss

Meadows, turning towards the grinning Bob.

Bob tried not to grin as he caught the schoolmistress' eye.

"Ye-es, ma'am," he stammered.

"You know something about this, I presume?"

"I, ma'am?"

"Yes, you, Lawless! You stated that Beauclerc had stopped to change his clothes. Is this an absurd joke on your part?"

"Oh, Miss Meadows!"

"Answer me at once, Lawless."

Bob Lawless coughed.

"Well, ma'am, you—you see, you told the galoot to change, you know, and—and some fellows thought they'd help him. I—I knew. But—but I couldn't very well interfere, could I?"

"Well, I do not know that you were called upon to interfere, Lawless," said Miss Meadows. "Boy, do you know who the persons were who made you change into this exceedingly disreputable attire?"

"I know one of them," said Algy.

"A beast—"

"What?"

"I mean, a man named Cook—Billy Cook," said Algonson. "I'm goin' to the ranch after lessons to—"

"It is ridiculous!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "As you have no other clothes here, I suppose you must remain like that. It is your own fault, for having dressed in such an absurd way yesterday. You provoked this absurd practical joke."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Algonson indignantly.

He certainly was not so "wide" as he supposed; but he was wide enough to recognise the fact that the Canadian schoolmistress was not to be trifled with at that moment. He made up his mind quite suddenly to obey orders.

"Oh, all right!" he mumbled.

And he limped to his desk, and sat down between Vere Beauclerc and Frank Richards, who gave him plenty of room. They were not anxious for contact with Algonson's clothes.

There were continuous ripples of merriment in Miss Meadows' class that morning, in spite of the schoolmistress' frowns.

For the merriment of the fellows Algy did not care so much, but he blushed deeply at the merry smiles of Molly Lawrence and the other girls. He seemed to be sitting on pins and needles all the morning.

When lessons were over, Algy was glad to escape from the school-room; but it was only escaping from the frying-pan into the fire. In the playground he was surrounded by a laughing crowd. Algy was not enjoying his second day at Cedar Creek.

The 5th Chapter.
Algy's Vengeance.

"Rotters!"

The Honourable Algonson made that remark to Frank Richards & Co. when they came out after dinner. The Co. were grinning—even Vere Beauclerc was grinning, though he was rather concerned for the unhappy Algy.

With that Algonson turned on his heel and walked away.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another in some dismay. Frank whistled softly.

"I—I say, there'll be a row if Algy blabs all this out to your father, Bob. I'm afraid Billy Cook will be called over the coals."

Bob knitted his brows.

"If he's pesky scallywag enough, let him!" he growled. "I'm not going to ask him to keep his mouth shut. Bother him!"

Beauclerc flushed uncomfortably, but said nothing. The three chums were in a much less merry mood when they went into the lumber school for afternoon lessons. Algonson's threat made the matter a little more serious, for it was not easy to tell exactly what view the rancher might take of the matter.

Algonson had changed his striking attire in time for afternoon lessons. Black Sam, the stableman, had obliged him with a change, having on hand some cast-off clothes that had belonged to Frank Richards the previous term. Frank had given them to Black Sam to turn an honest penny on, and the astute Samuel had seized this opportunity. He had turned a good deal more than an honest penny on those clothes. Algy would have given almost their weight in gold for them. And he had certainly paid more for them second-hand than Frank Richards had paid for them new.

quartette rode on the homeward trail.

At the fork in the trail Vere Beauclerc cast an almost beseeching look at his cousin, but Algy did not seem to see it. He rode on—after Frank Richards and Bob, and Beauclerc, with a flushed face, followed.

"Algy!" he called out.

"I'm goin' on to the ranch. You can go home."

"I'll come, too, but—"

"Let him do as he likes," said Bob Lawless scornfully. "I wouldn't mind if it wasn't for landing poor old Billy into a row with popper. Of all the pesky, mean, sneaking coyotes—"

Bob paused. "I won't say what I think, as he's your cousin, Cherub."

Beauclerc looked deeply distressed, but he did not answer. Algonson gave Bob Lawless a rather curious look, and rode on.

It was not a merry party that arrived at the Lawless Ranch.

Algy's face was set and determined, and his three companions were feeling angry with him, and more ashamed than they were angry.

Mr. Lawless was sighted on the trail, talking to Billy Cook. The ranch foreman grinned at the sight of Algonson, and walked away, and Mr. Lawless greeted the schoolboys with a cheery nod.

"Your cousin, I suppose, Beauclerc?" said the rancher cheerily.

"Yes, Mr. Lawless," said Beauclerc, in a low voice.

Frank Richards compressed his lips. Bob drew a deep breath of anger, as he prepared to hear Algonson's tale of woe poured into the ears of his father.

"Mr. Lawless?" asked Algonson.

"Yes, my boy—Bob's father," said the rancher, with a smile. "I'm glad you've come over to see us. How do you like Canada?"

"It's rather soon to say how I like it, sir," answered Algonson; "but I've found the people very obligin'."

"I'm glad of that," said the rancher, though he was a little puzzled by Algonson's tone.

Frank Richards & Co. were grimly silent.

Mr. Lawless seemed to realise that something was amiss, for he looked rather sharply from one to another.

"Very obligin' indeed!" continued Algonson calmly. "They have a very kind way of puttin' a chap up to the customs of the country. Bob has been no end kind to me in that way."

"Indeed!" said the rancher.

"Yes, indeed; I'm ever so much obliged to him. He's taken a lot of trouble," said Algonson. "I thought I'd run over and have the pleasure of makin' your acquaintance, sir, as Bob has been so very kind. Good-evenin', sir!"

Algonson wheeled his horse.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

Beauclerc's clouded face cleared, and he smiled. It dawned upon all three of the chums now that Algy—Algy the greenhorn, Algy the tenderfoot—had been gently pulling their leg as a punishment for the enforced change of attire in the timber that morning.

"Don't run away, my lad," said Mr. Lawless. "You'll come in to supper, Bob. Bring your friends in."

"Yes, dad!" gasped Bob.

Mr. Lawless went into the house. The schoolboys dismounted, and three pairs of eyes were fixed on Algonson. Algy smiled.

"So—so you're not—you didn't—you—" stuttered Bob.

"Only pullin' your silly leg, old scout!" said Algy cheerfully. "I'm not a sneak, you know. Are we goin' in to supper, Vere?"

"I guess you are, you blessed ass!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, clapping the Honourable Algonson on the shoulder. "You can't help being a silly ass, I guess, but you're the right sort, after all. I'm sorry I thought—"

"Oh, you can't think, dear boy!" answered Algy coolly. "Don't try. It's not in your line, you know, begad!"

Bob Lawless laughed, and linked his arm in Algy's to lead him into the ranch.



A CHANGE OF RAIMENT! All eyes turned towards the doorway and a howl of merriment escaped the class. Algonson stood, with crimson face, in dirty leather trousers turned up about a foot from the ankle, and a dingy cowman's jacket and creaky, leaky boots. Miss Meadows gazed at him transfixed.

"That will do. Get to your place."

"I want my horse," said Algonson sulkily. "I'm goin' home."

"What? What?"

"I can't hang about in this awful clobber, can I?" howled Algonson.

"I want to go home, and Vere will have to come and show me the way."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank Richards.

The Honourable Algy evidently did not realise that he was no longer in an indulgent home, dealing with a meek and indulgent tutor. But he was going to realise it.

"Beauclerc," said Miss Meadows, "you are unaccustomed to our ways, and perhaps you do not mean to be impertinent."

"Not at all, ma'am. I'm only goin' home."

"You are not going home, boy."

"But I want to," said Algonson.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Miss Meadows.

Algonson evidently regarded his last statement as a clincher.

"Come on, Vere," called out Algonson. "I can't find the dashed way alone!"

"Boy," exclaimed Miss Meadows, "go to your place at once!"

"I can't—like this."

"Obey me at once!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Do you wish me to cane you?"

"Oh gad! Oh no!"

"Then go to your place instantly!"

The Honourable Algonson measured Miss Meadows with his eye. The greenhorn of Cedar Creek rather prided himself upon being "wide."

Algonson shook his fist under Bob Lawless' nose, which only made Bob laugh all the more.

"You can chortle now!" exclaimed Algonson indignantly.

"Thanks, I will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the playground.

"Oh, those trousers!" giggled Chunky Todgers.

"And those boots!" roared Eben Hacke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Algonson frowned darkly.

"I'm not standin' this awful outrage," he said. "I know the ruffian who did it. I jolly well pulled the bag off his face. I'm goin' to the ranch after lessons."

"Going to lick Billy Cook?" chuckled Bob.

"The ruffian ought to be reported to his employer!" said Algonson loftily. "Perhaps your father won't think this so funny as you do, Lawless!"

Bob's merry laugh was suddenly checked.

"Why, you scallywag—" he began.

"Algy," said Beauclerc, colouring, "you need not make a fuss about it at the ranch. Mr. Lawless would most likely be annoyed at Billy Cook helping Bob in a joke like this."

"I should jolly well think so!" said Algonson emphatically.

"Well, then, don't go to the ranch. Take a joke, and play the game, old chap."

"Rats!"

But he felt better in them—and undoubtedly he looked better.

Bob Lawless wore a slightly troubled look during afternoon lessons. He was thinking of the probable results of Algonson making a complaint at the ranch. Vere Beauclerc was more troubled still, with a sense of shame for his cousin.

After lessons the schoolboys started for the corral to fetch out their horses, and then Beauclerc spoke quietly to the dandy of Cedar Creek.

"You're not going to the ranch, Algy?" he said, in a low voice.

"I am!" snapped Algy.

"It may make a lot of trouble for Bob."

"He's made trouble enough for me, hasn't he?"

"That was only a joke, anyway, and you asked for it—"

"Rot!"

"This is complaining. It's like sneaking, and—"

"I'm goin'!" said Algonson, in a tone of finality.

"It's rotten, Algy!"

"Rats!"

Bob Lawless compressed his lips. He would not ask Algy to hold his tongue about what had occurred, but he was deeply worried at the prospect of burly, good-natured Billy Cook being hauled over the coals by his father for taking a part in the joke on the tenderfoot. Bob's feelings towards the tenderfoot were far from amiable just then, and he did not speak to him, or look at him, as the

THE END.

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The 1st Chapter.

A Very Important Meeting.

"You let me in!" Tubby Muffin's voice was loud and indignant.

The fat Classical was standing at the door of the box-room, and thumping on it with a fat fist.

The box-room was at the end of the Fourth Form passage, which was deserted, save for Reginald Muffin. The buzz of voices in the room showed that a good many of the Classical Fourth were assembled there.

And the door was locked. Naturally, Tubby Muffin was wrathful and indignant. He was locked out of the box-room, and the only conclusion he could possibly come to was that a spread was going on, from which he was to be excluded. And the bare thought of being excluded from a spread threw Reginald Muffin into a state of the deepest indignation.

Thump, thump! "Jimmy Silver! Lovell! I say, old chaps! You rotters! Let me in!"

Thump! Bang! "Cut off, you bothering barrel!" came the wrathful voice of Arthur Edward Lovell from within the box-room. "Buzz!"

"Sha'n't!" retorted Tubby Muffin, emboldened by the fact that there was a solid oak door between himself and Arthur Edward.

"I'll come out to you!" roared Lovell.

"You let me in! Jimmy Silver—I say, Jimmy—"

"Clear off, Tubby."

"You let me in!"

"It's not a feed, you fat chump!" called out Jimmy Silver. "It's a discussion."

"You can't pull my leg, Jimmy!"

"Why, you—"

"You let me in, anyhow," said Tubby. "I've a right in the box-room, I suppose. In—fact, I want to look for some—some banknotes I left in my box by mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of merriment from the box-room. Tubby Muffin's statement did not find any believers there.

Thump! Kick! "Look here, I'm coming in!" shouted Tubby.

"Better let the fat duffer in," murmured Raby. "If this row goes on we shall have some of the Moderns nosing round."

"Bless him!" growled Jimmy Silver.

The key turned in the lock, and the door opened. Tubby Muffin grinned with satisfaction. He was admitted to the secret conclave at last. But his grin vanished the next moment, and he roared. The mode of his admittance was not to his taste, for Arthur Edward Lovell reached out, grasped him by the hair, and jerked him headlong inside. Then Jimmy Silver closed and locked the door again.

"Yooop!" roared Tubby. "Yah! Leggo my hair! Oh, my hat! Yooop!"

"Well, you wanted to come in," remarked Lovell. He released Tubby's hair, and sniffed at his hand. "I forgot the fat beast uses hair-oil. Groooh! You fat porpoise—"

"Look here, do you call it pally to leave a chap out of a feed?" demanded Muffin reproachfully. "I'm surprised at you, Jimmy Silver!"

"Fathead! There isn't any feed." Tubby Muffin blinked round the box-room.

There were more than a dozen juniors present, seated on boxes or trunks, all of them belonging to the Classical Fourth. But there was certainly no sign of a feed. The fat Classical's face fell.

"What the thump are you doing here, if there isn't any feed going on?" demanded Tubby, with an injured expression.

"It's a discussion of ways and means, fathead!" answered Jimmy Silver, "and it's got to be kept dark,

or the Moderns will be chipping in. See? That's why you were left out, because you're such a chatty chatter-box. See?"

"If you think I can't keep a secret, Jimmy—"

"Well, if you don't keep this one you'll be scalped!" growled Lovell. "Shut up, now, and let's get on with the washing."

"But, I say—"

"Kick him whenever he opens his mouth," said Mornington.

"Good egg!"

"Yah!" growled Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical dodged Lovell's boot, and sat down on a trunk. He was disappointed and indignant. There was no feed, evidently, and to Tubby there were only two pleasures in life—enjoying a feed, or anticipating one to come. But now he was in the box-room curiosity kept him there. He wanted to know all about it. He always did.

"Now," said Jimmy Silver, resuming the remarks which had been interrupted by the fat Muffin, "it's settled that we, the Classics, take up this stunt and see it through."

"Hear, hear!"

"No good letting the Moderns into it. Tommy Dodd & Co. wouldn't be any use."

"Hardly!"

"Besides, they can come in as audience, when the concert comes off," said Jimmy Silver. "They'll have to pay for admission, of course."

"What-ho!"

"Now, some of you fellows know how the matter stands," said Jimmy, "some of you don't. I'll explain in a few words—"

"The fewer the better," remarked Putty of the Fourth, with a nod of full agreement.

"Dry up, Grace! You all know Mrs. Wickers, who does sewing for the Head's wife—a nice little body," said Jimmy Silver. "She's a war widow, you know, and does not live on the fat of the land on her magnificent pension. One of the nippers was ill, and Mrs. Wickers let the rent run—I suppose she couldn't help it. Landlord comes down, demands payment, which isn't forthcoming, and shoves in a bailiff—"

"Shame!"

"Rotten!"

"Yes, it's a rotten shame!" said Jimmy Silver. "Old Grubb is a hard nut to crack. But that's where Rookwood comes in. We went along, and chipped in, kept the bailiffs out, and we've left Mrs. Wickers full instructions for keeping the Huns at bay."

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mornington. "As the matter stands, Mrs. Wickers will be besieged in her cottage every day by the bailiff Shingle and his man Smunk," said Jimmy Silver. "That's only to gain time, of course. The rent's got to be paid. I've got the particulars, and it comes to six pounds, up to date. I've persuaded Mrs. Wickers to leave the matter to us. The poor soul doesn't know which way to turn, and it's up to us to see her through. The question is, where is six pounds coming from?"

"Echo answers, where?" remarked Putty.

"It doesn't. I've got a stunt for raising the wind. We're going to give a concert in the Form-room, charging for admission. We've got lots of talent. We charge a bob a time, two bob for reserved seats, five bob for special seats for masters and prefects—"

"Great pip!"

"Fellows will come, and pay, for the good of the cause, you know."

"I suppose they wouldn't have any other reason," assented Putty.

"And to see the show, of course," said Jimmy Silver, frowning. "Don't you be too funny, Putty. Funny merchants are liable to get sat upon. Now, we want the concert to be a success—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We can get plenty of talent in the Classical Fourth—"

"Yes, rather!"

"And we don't want any assistance from the Moderns—"

"No fear!"

"It's important to keep this from Tommy Dodd's crowd. You see, it was Tommy Dodd who found out that Mrs. Wickers was in such a scrape. He couldn't think of anything, of course," said Jimmy Silver loftily.

"All the thinking that's done in the Fourth Form at Rookwood is done on the Classical side. We took the matter up, and the enemy's being kept out of Mrs. Wickers' house—all us! So the Modern bounders ain't entitled to take a hand. They can come in as audience on the day of the concert, if they like; but that's all. We'll post up an announcement at the last minute. This is entirely a Classical stunt. If the Moderns knew, they'd come chipping in—they might even try to get up a rival show. Of course, it would be a failure—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The thing's in our hands, however, and it's got to stay there. Now, if all you fellows are agreed, we'll set to work making up a programme."

"Passed unanimously," said Lovell. "I'll do a tenor solo myself."

"I say, the audience pay at the door, I suppose?" asked Putty.

"Oh yes!"

"Good! It will be necessary to make sure of the money in advance, if Lovell is going to sing a tenor solo."

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got an idea, Jimmy!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin. "I don't mind doing a turn for you."

"But we mind!" grinned Newcome.

"But I've got a jolly good wheeze," said Tubby Muffin eagerly. "I'll give a recitation as Hamlet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Better make it Falstaff."

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Recitations are off," said Jimmy Silver, laughing, "and you'd better be off, too, Tubby. You're dead in this act, you know."

Tubby Muffin rose from the trunk, with a sniff.

"You're a lot of asses!" he said. "You're leaving out your best man—just as you did in the cricket. I'm afraid your concert is going to be a failure, Jimmy. No, you needn't ask me now," said Muffin, with great dignity, holding up a fat hand as Jimmy Silver opened his lips. "I'm not going to give you a turn now. You're refused. You can ask me on your bended knees, and I shall decline to appear on your silly stage at all."

"Look here, Tubby—"

"No good, I tell you," interrupted Tubby. "I simply decline to appear."

"You silly ass!" howled Jimmy Silver. "I—"

"That's enough!" said Tubby loftily. "You can muck up the concert your own way, and I shall simply laugh at you. Yah!"

And with that crushing observation, Tubby Muffin rolled out of the box-room. He paused in the doorway to blink back and discharge a Parthian shot.

"I wash my hands of the whole matter!" he said, with an air of finality.

"Well, it's about time you washed them!" remarked Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Tubby Muffin. It was the most crushing retort he could think of. And he rolled out and slammed the door.

And Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to put their heads together over the programme of the Classical concert, quite undismayed by the fact that Reginald Muffin had washed his hands of the whole matter.

The 2nd Chapter.

Keeping the Secret.

Tommy Dodd looked suspicious. It was the following morning, and Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, had come upon Jimmy Silver & Co. in the quadrangle.

The Fistical Four were standing in a group, in very deep and earnest discussion, as the Modern junior came

along. But at sight of Tommy Dodd they ceased speaking very suddenly.

Tommy Dodd looked at them. "Well, what's up?" he demanded. "Up?" repeated Jimmy Silver vaguely.

"Yes. You Classical duffers were confabbing about something, and you shut up mighty sharp when I came along," said Tommy Dodd suspiciously. "Dumb all of a sudden?"

"Well, old chap, your merry features are liable to produce that effect on anybody," argued Jimmy Silver. "Be reasonable, you know."

"Br-r-r!" grunted Tommy Dodd. And he walked on, still looking suspicious.

"All serene," said Jimmy Silver. "The Modern bounder doesn't guess. I don't see how he could, without being a merry magician. Hallo, Tubby! Pining for your dinner?"

Tubby Muffin rolled up to the Fistical Four, with a very serious expression on his fat face. Muffin looked as if he had been doing some thinking. He blinked solemnly at the Classical quartette.

"I say, Jimmy, I was just thinking that I'd like a snack before dinner," said Reginald Muffin seriously.

"And dinner's in twenty minutes!" snorted Lovell. "You'll burst your crop one of these days!"

"Well, I'm hungry! I say, Sergeant Kettle has some lovely little cakes at sevenpence each—"

"Well, roll away, and blow your sevenpence!"

"But I haven't got sevenpence," explained Tubby Muffin.

"Well, roll away, anyhow!"

Tubby Muffin did not move. It looked as if he had business with the Fistical Four, though they could not guess what it was.

"Sevenpence isn't much!" he remarked. "I suppose you could lend me sevenpence, Jimmy?"

"I'll lend you a thick ear, if you like," answered the captain of the Fourth.

"I said sevenpence." An aggressive note crept into Tubby Muffin's voice, which made the Classical four stare at him. "I said sevenpence, and I mean sevenpence."

"Money's tight," explained Jimmy Silver. "We had to spend some yesterday on Mrs. Wickers' account. There isn't more than a bob left in the whole firm. So roll up, and be quiet."

"A bob would do, of course."

"What he really wants is a good, hard kick," said Lovell. "We've got to get into form for footer. Let's begin on Tubby. I'll take the first kick, and see how far I can land him."

"Go it!" said Lovell's chums.

Tubby Muffin jumped back. He had no desire whatever to figure as a footer in the first practice of the season.

"Yaroo! You keep off!" he roared.

"Where will you have it?" demanded Lovell.

"The sevenpence?"

"No, you ass—the kick!"

"Oh, all right," said Tubby Muffin, backing away again. "I dare say Tommy Dodd will lend me sevenpence if I ask him. I dare say he'll be interested in something I can tell him. Yah!"

And Tubby Muffin rolled away.

The Fistical Four stood transfixed for a moment or two, staring after Reginald Muffin. They understood now the note of truculence in the fat Classical's manner.

"Why, the—the—the fat traitor!" howled Lovell.

He made a rush after Tubby, and grasped him by the collar and span him round. There was a terrific roar from Tubby.

"Yooop! Leggo!"

"You fat rotter—"

"Yow-ow! I was only j-j-joking!" gasped Tubby. "Of course, I wasn't going to tell Tommy Dodd anything about the concert—"

"Shurrup!" muttered Jimmy Silver, as Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth, came along the path under the beeches.

Cook and Doyle glanced at the Classics.

"Phwat's that about a concert, bedad?" exclaimed Tommy Doyle.

Jimmy Silver did not reply.

The Fistical Four grasped Reginald Muffin together, and marched him away, wriggling and gasping. Cook and Doyle stared after them.

The Fistical Four marched Tubby Muffin through the archway into Little Quad, and there they jammed him up against a stone wall, spluttering.

"Groooh!"

"You fat rascal!" said Jimmy Silver. "You've jolly nearly given the game away already. I've a jolly good mind—"

"Ow! Leggo! I—yaroo!—I say,

leggo, you know! I won't say a word if you stand me the sevenpence!"

"What?" roared Jimmy Silver. "I—I mean I won't say a word anyway!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I—I suppose you know I'm an honourable chap."

"There's honourable chaps like you in chokey!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Let's bump him! If we burst him, so much the better."

"Help!"

"Hallo, what the thump's the row about?" demanded three voices at once, as Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle came through the archway. The three Tommies were evidently interested.

Jimmy Silver & Co. released the spluttering Tubby.

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Lovell. "You Modern bounders mind your own bizney!"

"Can't allow bullying on the Classical side!" said Tommy Dodd, shaking his head seriously.

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"It's all right, Dodd," said Tubby Muffin. "Only fun, you know. These fellows are really going to lend me sevenpence—ain't you, you fellows?"

The Fistical Four looked at Tubby. Tubby's eyelid quivered in a fat wink.

He held out a podgy hand. "I'm waiting, old chaps!" he said.

The three Moderns were looking on curiously. Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath. The unscrupulous Tubby held the whip-hand. Slowly—very slowly—Jimmy Silver slid his hand into his pocket, and extracted therefrom a sixpence and a penny.

"Thanks, old fellow!" said Tubby Muffin affably.

And the fat Classical scudded through the archway, heading for Sergeant Kettle's little tuckshop—where he was quickly enjoying the sevenpenny cake, as an appetiser before dinner.

The 3rd Chapter.

Tubby Muffin Makes a Discovery.

"The important thing is, to keep it dark!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Faith, and ye're right, Tommy, darling!"

It was tea-time in Tommy Dodd's study, in Mr. Manders' house, on the Modern side of Rookwood.

The three Tommies were discussing fried kippers and tea, and also still more important matters. And Tommy Dodd's chums fully agreed with their leader that it was very important to keep it dark.

"So far," continued Tommy Dodd, "I suppose a chap must admit that those Classical bounders have played up rather well. I found out what was the matter at Mrs. Wickers'; but—but I admit I didn't get on to anything to be done to help. Of course, it was sheer cheek of those Classical duffers to hike along there and keep the bailiffs out. But—but they did it."

"Sure, they did it!" assented Doyle. "Faith, and I wish I'd been with them intirely."

"Still, that only gains time," said Tommy Dodd. "Poor old Mrs. Wickers can't stand a siege for long. I've been down there on my bike today, and the bailiff's man, Smunk, was sitting on the front gate, watching for a chance to dodge into the house if the door was opened."

"Rotten!"

"Old Grubb has got to be paid his rent," said Tommy Dodd, "and it comes to six pounds. I don't deny that the Classical chumps have done a good turn for Mrs. Wickers so far; but they've only gained time. The chief thing is to pay the bill, and see the poor lady clear."

"Yes, rather!" said Cook. "But—"

"If we do that, we score, and no mistake about it," said Tommy Dodd. "It's the chief thing, and it's up to us. Those Classics are all very well for a row with a bailiff, but that's their limit. Now, there's no reason at all why our concert shouldn't be a success."

"Hear, hear! Pass the kippers!"

"It's a stunning idea, though I say it myself," said Tommy Dodd modestly. "To be quite candid, I don't say that the chaps would pay two bob a time simply to see us give a concert. But it's the cause that will do it—the good cause, you know. We shall have a notice up that it's for the benefit of a war widow, and that will do the trick. Rookwood's patriotic. The fellows will roll up."

"Sure to!" said Cook. "I say, these kippers are good."

"Oh, bother the kippers! But it's understood, from the beginning, that it's a Modern concert," said Tommy Dodd impressively. "That's important. We can't have the Classics bragging that they did the business. We do



A DUAL SECRET!

(Continued from previous page.)

the whole thing; but you know what rotters they are—they'd think nothing of starting a rival concert to give us the kybosh. Not that it would be any good, of course."

Tommy Dodd paused; not, like Brutus, for a reply, but to tackle his kipper, which was getting cold. But he was soon going strong again.

"We can give a good concert. Putting up a play would take time—rehearsals, and all that. But we can give a concert on our heads. I will sing the Toreador song from 'Carmen'—"

"You will!" ejaculated Doyle. "Certainly; why not?" asked Dodd, rather warmly.

"But—but will the fellows stand it?" asked Doyle thoughtfully.

Tommy Dodd gave his chum a withering look.

"If you're going to be a funny idiot, Tommy Doyle, you may as well shut up at once. Is this a serious discussion, or is it a time for idiotic jokes?"

"Well, sure, I thought it was a serious discussion, till you said you would sing the Toreador song from 'Carmen'—"

"Look here—" began Tommy Dodd wrathfully.

He stopped suddenly, and fixed his eyes on the door. With a rather grim look, he rose quietly from his chair, stepped quietly to the door, and threw it suddenly open.

There was a startled gasp outside. The fat face and plump figure of Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, were revealed by the sudden opening of the door. Tubby was in a bending position—and it was pretty evident that his fat ear had been very near the keyhole.

"You fat rotter!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Listening by Jove! I thought I heard a grunt like a pig!"

"I—I wasn't!" stammered Tubby, in great alarm. "I—I was simply bending down to—to look for—a—a pin I'd dropped— I—I never heard a word, and—and I don't know anything about you rotters—I mean you fellows—giving a concert. I—I never heard a word, and I think you'd sing the Toreador song rippingly, old chap!"

"Howly Moses! It's all out now!" groaned Doyle.

Tommy Dodd grasped the fat Classical by the collar, and dragged him into the study. Tubby Muffin had apparently come there on a visit to the three Tommies; but he seemed very reluctant to enter their quarters now. He felt a good deal like Daniel entering the lion's den. But he had no choice about the matter, with Dodd's grasp upon him.

The Modern junior kicked the door shut, still grasping Tubby's collar. He looked a rather alarmed Tubby.

The hapless Peeping Tom of Rookwood grinned feebly round at the three Moderns, as if seeking to propitiate them.

"I—I—I'm going to keep it dark," he murmured. "I haven't heard a word, you know—not a single word, and I won't repeat it. Honour bright, you know!"

"Scalp him!" growled Tommy Cook.

"I—I say—"

"I'll bet the fat beast has been listening before," said Tommy Dodd. "You know those Classical chumps were mumbling something about a concert in the quad to-day—"

"I haven't!" howled Tubby Muffin. "And I didn't listen now. I was simply stooping to look for a sovereign I'd dropped—"

"A what?"

"I—I mean a currency note, of course—"

Tubby Muffin wriggled painfully in the Modern junior's grasp.

"What did you come here for, you fat rotter?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Because it was tea-time—I mean, because you—you fellows are such good company, you know. I—I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind singing the Toreador song from 'Carmen,' old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve him right if you did, Tommy!" remarked Doyle.

"You silly ass!" howled Tommy Dodd. "Look here, Doyle, you Irish idiot—"

"I say, I'll stop and have tea with you, if you like," said Tubby Muffin.

"You leggo my collar, Tommy Dodd."

"I'm going to smash you—"

"You'd better not, if you don't want me to tell Jimmy Silver about the Modern concert!" grinned Tubby Muffin, recovering courage a little.

"As a pal, I'm willing to keep it dark. But—"

Tommy Dodd released the fat Classical's collar.

"Will you keep it dark, you fat rotter?" he asked dubiously.

"Of course, if you treat me decently. I heard it quite by accident, while I was stooping down to look for a half-crown I'd dropped. Of course, an honourable chap wouldn't repeat what he heard by accident—not if he was treated decently. I mean," added Tubby Muffin hastily.

"Did you say you wanted me to stay to tea?"

Tommy Dodd did not answer. He was a prey to very mixed feelings. His strong inclination was to seize the happy Tubby and dust the study with him. But it was only too clear that if he did so, the secret would be out, as soon as Muffin escaped from Mr. Manders' house. The question was, whether the secret could be kept by making terms with Reginald Muffin. And that came to a question of feeding him.

Tubby dropped into Tommy Dodd's chair at the table, grinning affably at the company. He had quite recovered his assurance now.

In fact, he was congratulating him-

self. He did not intend to breathe a word respecting the Classical concert. Being in possession of the secrets of both sides, Reginald Muffin looked forward to quite a happy time till the rival concerts came off. Keeping the secret for two parties was quite a paying proposition, and the happy Tubby already looked upon himself as a pig in clover.

Tommy Dodd, after an inward struggle, sat down quietly.

His chums looked at him, and he looked at his chums. And there was silence.

But Tubby Muffin did enough talking for three.

Tubby was in a very cheery mood. He cleared the tea-table in great style, and volunteered his services to look into the cupboard and see if there was any more. There was more, and Tubby industriously handed it out—all of it. And he did not rise from the table till the last crumb had vanished.

Then Reginald Muffin looked round him, like Alexander, for fresh worlds to conquer. But there was nothing left, and Reginald took his leave.

"Ta-ta, you fellows," he said, with a cheery wink. "Rely on me, you know. I'll drop in to supper if you like."

"Oh, do!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Have it a bit early, will you? I'm going to have supper with Jimmy Silver, as it happens, and I don't want to be late."

"Oh! Ah! All right!"

And Tubby Muffin, with a friendly nod, rolled out of the study. The three Tommies sat in silence for some moments after he had disappeared.

"Well—" said Tommy Dodd at last.

"Faith, and how I kept me hands off the baste I don't know!" said Tommy Doyle.

"We—we—we've got to toe the line till after the concert!" said Tommy Dodd. "But when it's over I—I—I'll burst him!"

Tubby Muffin strolled away from Mr. Manders' house, feeling quite satisfied—unconscious of that dreadful fate which was hanging over his head.

The 4th Chapter. Great Preparations.

FRIDAY EVENING AT 7!

A GRAND CLASSICAL CONCERT

will be given in the Fourth Form-room by the Classical Players.

SPLENDID PROGRAMME!

The concert will be given for the benefit of a war window in Coombe, and all patriots at Rookwood are expected to

RALLY ROUND!

Treasurer: J. Silver.

NO EXPENSES! All takings will go to the FUND!

"There, I think that sounds all right!" said Jimmy Silver, with considerable satisfaction.

"Ripping!" agreed Lovell. "But, I say, to-morrow night's rather soon, isn't it?"

"The sooner the better. We can't leave Mrs. Wickers besieged in her house over the week-end," said Jimmy. "We've got to raise the wind, and take the money down to old Grubb and pay the rent. After all, we don't need a lot of rehearsals."

"Well, I don't," agreed Lovell thoughtfully. "I can turn on my tenor solo at a moment's notice. But the other fellows—"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"That's all right; I've had a lot of offers, and I've only got to draw up the programme," he said. "If the thing isn't exactly classical, it really doesn't matter—the great object is to raise the wind. I—"

"Jimmy, old chap—" came a fat voice in the doorway of the end study.

The captain of the Fourth looked round with a frowning brow. Tubby Muffin had been to supper in the end study—after supper—with Tommy Dodd—and the delights of his society had palled upon the Fistical Four. But those delights were not easily to be got rid of.

"Well, you cormorant?" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"I say, a chap's asked me for the half-crown I owe him," said Tubby.

"Pay him, then!"

"I haven't got a half-crown."

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard through his nose. His hand strayed towards a ruler.

Tubby Muffin watched him warily. The path of an amateur blackmailer was beset with perils—though Tubby was quite unaware that he was a blackmailer. He simply considered that he was "on" to a good thing, which it behoved him to make the best of. He was not given to deep reflection. If he had been, he might have reflected upon what was likely to follow, on both sides of Rookwood, once the concert was over.

"I've told you I'm stony, you fat worm!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Awfully sorry for you, old chap; I know what it's like."

"Well, cut off!"

"Raby had a remittance to-day," remarked Tubby Muffin casually.

"And Raby's keeping it in his trousers' pocket," remarked the owner of that name grimly.

"Oh, all right! I dare say Tommy Dodd will lend me a half-crown, if I ask him! Don't you worry."

Raby looked at his chums. Tubby Muffin gave them all a lofty blink, and turned away.

"Here—here's your half-crown!" said George Raby, in a suppressed voice.

"Thanks, old chap—sure you can spare it?" asked Tubby genially.

"Oh, get out!"

"If you can't be civil, Raby—"

"Get out!" roared Lovell.

And as Lovell was starting towards him with the ruler, Reginald Muffin decided to get out—especially as he had annexed the half-crown.

"I—I—I'll burst him, after the concert!" breathed Lovell, little guessing that Tommy Dodd, on the Modern Side, had the same ferocious intentions, for the same reasons.

"Must keep the fat beast's mouth shut till after the concert to-morrow, though," said Jimmy Silver. "Then you can burst him as soon as you like. We'll get on with the programme."

"Have you asked Mr. Bootles—"

"Yes, that's all right. We can have the form-room at seven, and Mr. Bootles has given us his best wishes."

"Has he given you the price of a ticket?"

"Well, no! Still, we've got the form-room. And we'll sell plenty of tickets. We start canvassing to-morrow."

And the Fistical Four bent their heads over the task of drawing up the concert programme; somewhat to the detriment of prep that evening.

Little as they guessed it, another programme was being drawn up in

Tommy Dodd's study, over in Mr. Manders' house. The three Tommies were very busy upon it, after prep—prep having been finished rather hastily on this occasion.

"Must get all the arrangements through this evening," Tommy Dodd remarked. "There won't be much time for practice—but every fellow must do his best, that's all. We've got to put the thing through on Friday, so as to get Mrs. Wickers' rent paid on Saturday. Can't leave her in that uncomfortable state over the week-end."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Tommy Doyle.

"I went to the Head about the room," continued Tommy Doyle. "The Head was very kind when I explained that the concert was for the benefit of a war widow, and we weren't keeping anything for expenses. I dare say he's heard of those giddy benefit concerts where the people who get 'em up keep nine-tenths of the takings for exes. He was really sympathetic, and though he said he couldn't be present, he took a two-shilling ticket. Rather brickish of him, what?"

"Good old Head!" said Tommy Cook approvingly.

"That's the first two bob," said Tommy Dodd, with satisfaction. "It'll be six pounds by to-morrow, you see! And we've got the form-room from seven—concert begins at seven."

"Good!"

"The programme will be really topping—Toreador song from 'Carmen,' sung by Thomas Dodd—"

"Oh!"

"What did you say 'Oh!' for, Doyle?" asked Thomas Dodd in a dangerously calm tone.

"Ahem! Go on, old chap!"

"If you're going to say 'oh,' I'm quite ready to give you something to say 'oh' for, Doyle."

"Order!" murmured Tommy Cook. "Let's get on with the washing. What am I down for, Tommy?"

"But if Doyle—"

"My dear chap, you can sing the Toreador song from 'Carmen' till you burst your crog," said Tommy Doyle. "I can't say fairer than that."

Tommy Dodd sniffed, and the painful subject was dropped. But the three Tommies were quite amicable again as they went on with the work of drawing up the Modern programme. They finished it to their satisfaction, about the same time that Jimmy Silver & Co. finished the Classical programme to their satisfaction.

So both parties were satisfied, which really does not often happen in this dissatisfied world.

The 5th Chapter. A Little Surprise.

There were thoughtful faces in the Fourth Form at Rookwood the following day.

Quite a number of the juniors, both Classical and Modern, seemed to have plenty of food for thought.

That the extra thinking they were putting in was not on the subject of their lessons was pretty clear. Never had Mr. Bootles had such an absent-minded class, and never had lines fallen so thickly at Rookwood as they did in the Fourth Form-room that day.

Leaves in Vallambrosa were not in

(Continued on the next page.)

LIFE IN A VILLAGE.

By CLIVE FENN.

There is a lot of talk nowadays about folks wanting to be near a town, or right in one with cinema shows close handy, and shops in the same street, which sort of thing may be all very well in its way, but it does not come anywhere adjoining life in a country village. There you do see life, and you do not have to go to a picture-house to find it, either. Life of a most interesting kind is close to your doors.

I am thinking at the moment of a hamlet—nothing to do with the melancholy Prince of Denmark, who made such a rare lot of speeches—which lies buried a good many miles from London. Please do not imagine that there has been an eruption of a volcano in the neighbourhood. The place is only buried in that it is right out of the world, and intends to remain so. It has a supreme contempt for London. And the hills about that district are not eruptive—would not do anything dangerous at all. But the hamlet or village is quite genuine.

Not a new house has been built in it for thirty years.

The place is full of interest, and its celebrated characters are quite numerous for a village which has under eight hundred people inhabiting it. There is Tim Baker, locally known as "Pat-a-cake," who is a pedlar by profession. He has a quaint way of dressing himself in petticoats—at least, that is what his costume suggests as you see him waddling along the lanes, doing errands; but it may be that it is merely that his coat—worn very long—is one of the fashions of the century before the last.

It is wonderful what you can live for in that village—even now, after the war. You can obtain a comfortable, and even roomy mansion, with a large garden and a paddock for fifty pounds a year, and if you have no objection to being eight miles from a railway, all is well.

But I wanted to say in these few lines something as well about the wonders of the country—the chance of getting a magpie's egg from the nest flung untidily in an awkward fork of a tall tree at a height only to be negotiated with a rope and edging oneself up. There are adventures, too. I recall one with an adder which was a record size, and showed plenty

of fight; but he was killed and carried back as a trophy.

The woodland place I am thinking of is a paradise for birds—it beats Selborne all to fits. There are wagtails—dish-washers, country folk call them.

It is a land, too, for the nightjar, the bird that was always a bit of a mystery to me, with its weird, harsh note, rather resembling a goat's music (!) when the goat has something on its conscience, having been too giddy, perhaps, or having butted its best friend in a moment of thoughtless irresponsibility. The nightjar is worth listening to, all the same, for it is better than a goat, and, then, I never could get up any special respect for the goat.

The woods round the village are odd and silent and mysterious. If you plunge into them one summer day you would imagine yourself in some foreign land, such as one reads about, thousands of miles from civilisation. It is all nonsense to think there is no getting away from crowds and towns in this little island. It is as easy as pie. All you have to do is to take the light railway to— But I shall not give the secret away in public, or there would be crowds hastening to the place next spring to see the primroses.

But, funnily enough, one day when out exploring the woods, I came upon a queer and ancient meat-screen. For all I know it is there to-day. Most likely it is, for nobody would have been able to get it away through miles of dense undergrowth. You could lose your way in those woods. I know it well. But it is a pleasure always to be remembered to be lost in a wilderness in the Old Country, and get out at last on a brown, winding lane a dozen miles from home.

It is easy to understand the reasoning of the individual who made up his mind to trek south and escape all the worries of the town. Of course, the man I am thinking of could take his work with him, and he had a little to live upon. But he was a simple-minded fellow when it came to the method of living. He did not want motor-cars, clubs, and all modern contrivances.

I hope to have something more to say about Simpkins—that is the name of my friend, so he may as well be known by it. He just packed up most of his household goods, selling the rest, hired a cart, and started off. He was in no special hurry, you understand. He wanted to take things quietly for a bit, to sit on a gate and think-out matters and not be bothered

every day of his life with catching trains. Moreover, he had strong attachments for just the kind of country place I have mentioned.

He reached the cottage a farmer had taken for him late at night, and there it was—just a cottage, quite empty, for they had not expected him so soon. Not that a detail like that would have upset the composure of Simpkins. He had candles, and he fixed one up, and had a look round, before strolling into the village and getting a few necessities.

He was out to prove that you can be a regular Swiss Family Robinson all by yourself if you are adventurous and so minded, and he is doing his bit of work, and in his odd time seeing to the cottage. The latter was a sadly tumble-down affair; but Simpkins acquired it cheap, and, with a little paint and some amount of carpentering, he is doing wonders with it.

Besides all this, he finds time to sit on a gate and listen to the country! The country is worth listening to. Simpkins has no notion of coming back to town. He is planning wonderful schemes for his cluster roses next summer, and is arranging for his potato crop. Simpkins is a wise chap.

THE END.

it, as Putty of the Fourth remarked, in comparison with the lines showered around by Mr. Bootles.

But everything comes to an end, and so did lessons on that great and important day. The juniors were relieved of Mr. Bootles at last, and he was relieved of them, and over tea there was deep and earnest discussion in nearly every Fourth Form study, on both sides of Rookwood.

Tubby Muffin had kept both secrets so far, and nobody else on either side was likely to let it out. So the rivals of Rookwood were going ahead cheerily, preparing a great surprise for one another, and preparing different performances which were to take place at the same hour in the same spot, preparations which could scarcely fail to end in trouble.

That neither party had any suspicion of the other's intentions was natural enough, as both had permission to use the Form-room. Only Jimmy Silver had asked the Form-master for permission, while Tommy Dodd had applied to the Head. And neither gentlemen had the remotest idea that the Form-room had been asked for by another party.

After tea Jimmy Silver & Co. were very busy.

Tickets, marked with various prices, had been written out on impot paper, and scissored into neat little squares. Lovell took a bundle to the Sixth-Form passage, for the prefects to purchase, while Raby canvassed the Fifth with another bundle. Newcome, with a third stack, started operations with the Shell and the fags.

Jimmy Silver was left in the study cutting up a fresh sheaf of tickets, with which he intended to visit Mr. Manders' house. Now that it was too late for Tommy Dodd & Co. to devise any rival stunt they were to be apprised of the benefit concert, and politely invited to attend as audience!

That was Jimmy's intention, but his intentions were never carried out. For he had not yet finished cutting the tickets when there was a tap at the door of the end study, and Tommy Dodd came in.

Tommy Dodd nodded smilingly to the captain of the Fourth.

"Busy, old scout?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, rather! In fact—"

"Well, I won't detain you. I've simply brought something for you to look at," explained Tommy Dodd. "Read it over, old man! Tickets can be had in advance, in my study, two bob each."

"Tickets!"

"Yes; otherwise you pay at the doors, you know."

"The—the doors!" stuttered Jimmy Silver.

"Exactly!"

Tommy Dodd threw a sheet of impot paper on the table, and walked out of the study, still smiling.

Jimmy Silver mechanically picked up the sheet.

And he read:

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

GRAND MODERN CONCERT

will be given in the Fourth Form-room this evening, at seven o'clock precisely. The most talented artists on the Modern side of Rookwood have consented to appear.

THIS GRAND CONCERT is given for the benefit of a war widow in Coombe, and no expenses will be deducted from the takings. Roll up in your thousands!

PATRONISED BY THE HEAD!

The programme followed; but Jimmy Silver did not read the programme. He was not interested in the Modern programme. He stood rooted to the floor, staring blankly at the paper in his hand. He was still staring at it when Lovell and Raby and Newcome came back into the study.

"Hallo! What's up?" inquired Lovell.

Without a word Jimmy Silver held up the paper. His chums fairly blinked at it.

"Mud - Mud - Modern concert!" bawled Lovell. "Oh, my hat! Then—then they knew, after all!"

"That fat villain!" roared Raby.

"Tubby, of course."

"Why, I'll—I'll—we'll—"

"But we've got the Form-room!" howled Lovell. "They can't give a concert in our Form-room. Bootles gave us permission—"

"Patronised by the Head! Does that mean he's gone to the Head?"

"It's Tubby—that awful rascal, Tubby!" Lovell spluttered with rage.

"Why, I—I—I'll—"

"Hallo, Jimmy!"

It was the mellifluous voice of Reginald Muffin at the door. Lovell broke off, on the point of choking. Tubby Muffin was just the fellow he wanted to see at that moment.

Tubby came smilingly into the study.

As the concert hour was now close at hand Tubby considered it judicious to reap a last harvest, before it was too late. But, as a matter of fact, it was too late.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver, with a deadly look at the fat Classical.

"Could you stand me five bob, Jimmy?"

"Oh, is the price going up?" asked Jimmy sarcastically.

"I don't understand you," answered Tubby, with a great deal of dignity.

"I am simply asking you for a small loan. If you can't lend me the tin I dare say Tommy Dodd can. Shall I ask him? I— Oh! Ah! Wharrer marrer? What the—how the— Yarooooooh!"

Arthur Edward Lovell's grasp was on the fat Classical.

Tubby Muffin was swept off his feet, and he came down on the study carpet with a mighty bump and a terrific roar.

"Scalp him!" yelled Raby.

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Gerroff! Fire! Oh, crikey!"

"You fat rotter!" roared Lovell.

"So you gave us away to the Moderns, after all!"

"I—I didn't! I never! I wasn't— Yarooooo!"

"Roll him over!"

"Bang his napper!"

"Yoop! Help! Oh, crikey!"

shrieked the unhappy Tubby. "Leave

There were six or seven Modern juniors there, and they were making preparations for the evening concert. Towle, of the Modern Fourth, grinned at the excited faces in the doorway.

"Too early!" he called out. "Concert begins at seven."

"Turn them out!" roared Lovell.

"Back up, Classics!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons came running up, and then Mornington and Erroll, Rawson and Putty.

It was quite a little army that rushed into the Form-room, led by Jimmy Silver.

"Here, hands off!" roared Towle.

"No larks! We've got permission from the Head! We— Oh! Ah! Yah!"

Towle flew out of the Form-room head first.

The odds were on the side of the Classics, and they did not stay to argue with their rivals.

They smote the Moderns hip and thigh, and bundled them out of the Form-room in a sprawling heap in the passage.

"We'll give you Modern concerts!" gasped Lovell, as the last Modern went whizzing. "You can come to the Classical concert, if you like—if you pay at the doors! Scat!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

The hapless Moderns "scatted"—there was no help for that. In a dusty crowd, they fled to the Modern side, to acquaint Tommy Dodd with the raid. And Jimmy Silver & Co., a

"Yes, rather!"

In a very few minutes nearly every member of the Modern Fourth was speeding across to the School House on the war-path.

They came down the passage to the Fourth Form-room with a war-like whoop.

"Look out!" shouted Mornington, at the door. "The giddy enemy!"

"Back up!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

The Classics crowded to the doorway in defence of their quarters.

There was a brief pause, for just then Tubby Muffin happened along.

"Here's Muffin!" yelled Doyle.

"Collar him!"

It was Tubby Muffin's evil genius that brought him along, or else it was Nemesis, in time to fall into the hands of the enraged Moderns. He dodged too late.

"I say, leggo!" howled Tubby.

"I—I was just coming over to see you, Doddy. I want you to lend me— Yaroooo!"

"So you gave us away, after all!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"I didn't—I wasn't— Why, you ass, I've just had that from— Help!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell from the Form-room.

"Go it! Give him beans—all the beans you like!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Oh, my hat!"

"There!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Now perhaps you'll keep a secret another time, you fat villain!"

"I didn't—I never—"

Tommy Dodd. "Do you mean to say—"

"I mean to say that we've got the Form-room by permission of Bootles, and we're giving a concert!"

"We've got it by the Head's permission!"

"You haven't got it, old top, and you're not going to have it! You can come in as audience if you like! Pay at the doors!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you give up this Form-room?" roared Tommy Dodd.

"No fear!"

"Then you'll be hoofed out!"

"Rats!"

"Nuff said!" shouted Doyle. "Go for the spalpeens!"

"Charge!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Back up, Classics!"

The Moderns charged, but the Classics stood firm. The next moment there was a terrific combat in progress.

Tramp, tramp! Crash! Bump! Crash!

"Bless my soul! What—what—"

It was Mr. Bootles' voice. The master of the Fourth came up with whisking gown, his eyes almost starting through his spectacles. "What—what—what—"

"Go for 'em!"

"Back up, Classics!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Boys," shouted Mr. Bootles, "what do you mean? How dare you! Cease this at once! Do you hear me? Cease, or I will summon the Head!"

"Oh, my hat! It's Bootles!"

The excited juniors had forgotten the existence of their Form-master. But Mr. Bootles reminded them of it. He strode among the breathless juniors as the combatants separated.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed sternly. "What is this unseemly disturbance about?"

A dozen voices were raised in explanation at once. Mr. Bootles put his fingers to his ears.

"Silence! You explain, Silver!"

Jimmy Silver explained with great heat, but he was soon interrupted by Tommy Dodd. Mr. Bootles listened in perplexity, but he had an idea how matters stood at last.

"Silence! It is very unfortunate!" he said. "Permission seems to have been given to both parties to use the Form-room. I should dismiss you all to your studies—"

"Oh, sir!"

"But your object is a most laudable one. Why do you not act in conjunction to promote this most laudable object?"

Classicals and Moderns looked at one another. Mr. Bootles' question was rather difficult to answer. There were plenty of reasons, certainly, but the juniors felt that it would not do to explain them all to Mr. Bootles.

"My dear boys," said Mr. Bootles kindly, "you must join together to carry out this excellent scheme, and on that condition I will overlook this—this riot! Otherwise I shall forbid a concert to be held at all!"

"Oh!"

"Hem!"

"We—we'll do as—as you say, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Sus—sus—certainly!" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

"Very good!" said Mr. Bootles. "And I will remain present, in order to see that perfect harmony obtains."

"Oh!"

"Ahem!"

Which was decidedly wise of Mr. Bootles, though neither party of the rivals of Rookwood fully appreciated his wisdom just then.

The concert was an hour late, and the programme was rather mixed, but it was a great success. Modern juniors crowded in to cheer the Modern performance; Classics came in droves to shout for the Classical. And between the two, the takings were very considerable.

After the concert Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd quite amicably counted the takings, which came to the sum of five pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence. And the rivals of Rookwood tossed up who should add the final sixpence required.

And the next morning Mr. Bootles kindly gave both of them leave from lessons to cycle down to Coombe and call on Mr. Grubb with the money. On their way back they looked in at Mrs. Wickers' cottage. Mr. Smunk, the bailiff's man, was leaning on the gate, but he gave a snort of disgust and retired when Jimmy Silver flourished the landlord's receipt under his beery nose. And that receipt brought joy to the home of the widow of Coombe.

The widow's home had been rescued by the juniors of Rookwood, though they had been rival rescuers!

THE END.



A CONCERTED ITEM! "Charge!" yelled Tommy Dodd. The next moment there was a terrific combat in progress—instead of a concert! Mr. Bootles found himself in the thick of it. "Bless my soul! What—what—!" "Go for 'em!" "Back up Classics!" yelled the combatants. "Boys," shouted Mr. Bootles, "cease this at once! Do you hear me?"

off! Leggo! I tell you—I didn't—never—wasn't— Yarooooh!"

But the Fistical Four did not leave off till they were tired, which was not till after Reginald Muffin was tired. When they had given Tubby enough, or, perhaps, a little too much, the fat Classical went rolling out into the passage, with four pairs of boots behind him to help him on his way.

Reginald Muffin was feeling as if he had been under several motor-cars in succession by the time he scrambled away and fled.

"Oh!" gasped Lovell breathlessly.

"I'm feeling a little better now. But what the thump's going to be done, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows. He was feeling rather breathless, too, after his exertions on Tubby Muffin's account.

"We're going to be done, unless we're jolly sharp!" he said. "Never mind about selling any more tickets. We've got to get into the Form-room, or those Modern rotters will be collaring it over our heads!"

"My hat! Come on!" exclaimed Lovell, in alarm.

The Fistical Four left the study, and ran for the stairs. They passed Tubby Muffin in the passage, and Lovell paused a moment to give him a shove. Tubby sat down again with a yell.

Then the Classical chums raced down to the Form-room.

But the room was not empty.

litle breathless, but victorious, continued the preparations started by the Moderns, transforming the Form-room into a concert-hall, ready for the performance of the Grand Classical Benefit Concert.

The 6th Chapter.

Disconcerted Concerts!

Tommy Dodd breathed wrath.

Achilles of old, in his hour of most destructive wrath, was "not a circumstance" to Tommy Dodd at that moment.

"Collared the Form-room," stuttered Tommy, "when we had permission from the Head! Collared it—bagged it! Why, I—I—I'll—"

Words failed Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, we'll spicicate thim!" roared Doyle.

"It's a put-up job, you know!" gasped Towle. "They must have known of it long ago, because I saw one of them sticking up a bill on the door, with a programme all finished! They had it all ready!"

"Muffin!" yelled Cook. "Muffin gave us away, after all!"

Tommy Dodd clenched his fists.

The three Tommies had been making up for the concert, but all thought of that was thrown aside now.

"Come on!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"We'll see whether they'll bag our concert-hall! Call up the fellows! Every chap's got to roll up!"

"Kick him out!"

"Yow! Wwwooop!"

Tubby Muffin departed headlong, and Tommy Dodd turned to the Form-room again. The wide doorway was crammed with Classics.

"Now, then, let us in, you Classical rotters—"

"Bow-wow!"

"The Head's given us permission to use this room for our concert!" bawled Tommy Dodd.

"Mr. Bootles has given us permission!" retorted Jimmy Silver.

"But we got permission yesterday!" roared Tommy.

"So did we!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And you've only bagged our wheeze, or tried to! You got it out of Tubby Muffin!"

"What?" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"You mean you're bagging our stunt, and you got it out of Tubby Muffin!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you it was our stunt, and that fat villain listened at the keyhole, and—"

"And I tell you it's our wheeze, and—"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Is it possible these Modern asses thought of the same wheeze, and were keeping it dark!"

"Phew!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"We—we thought it was Tubby, and we've ragged him!"

"And—and we thought it was Muffin, and ragged him!"—exclaimed