

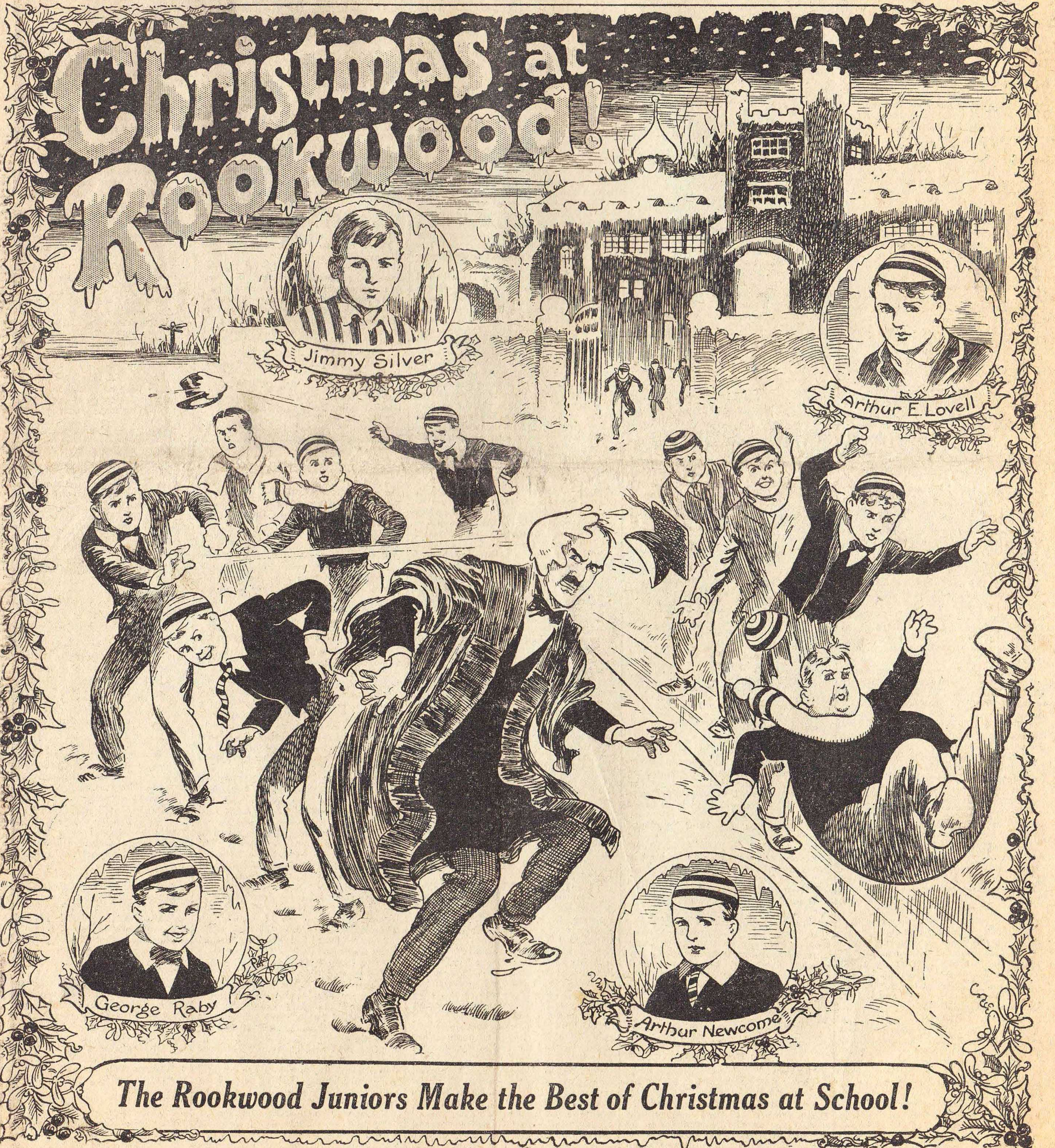
Grand Christmas Bumper Number-16 Pages.

The Boys' Friend 2d

No. 1,073. Vol. XXII. New Series.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

[Week Ending December 31st, 1921.]



Christmas at Rookwood!



Jimmy Silver



Arthur E. Lovell



George Raby



Arthur Newcome

The Rookwood Juniors Make the Best of Christmas at School!

A SPECIAL EXTRA LONG COMPLETE STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD JUNIORS' CHRISTMAS ADVENTURES BY OWEN CONQUEST.

Christmas at Rookwood!



The 1st Chapter.

Muffin Knows Too Much!

"Of all the silly owls—" said Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell did not finish the sentence.

Words seemed to fail him. He kicked a cushion against the end study, plumped down in the armchair, and drove his hands deep into his trousers-pockets, and glared.

Evidently Arthur Edward Lovell was perturbed.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome did not look cheerful, either. Even Jimmy Silver, whose motto was "Keep Smiling!" failed for once to live up to his own cheery maxim.

The almost owl-like seriousness in the end study was rather surprising, too, for it was the last day of term at Rookwood. On the morrow the school was to break up for the Christmas holidays, which was generally a joyous prospect to the Rookwooders.

"Of all the giddy chumps—" resumed Arthur Edward Lovell, finding his voice again.

"Just like a Modern!" said Raby disparagingly.

"Just!" said Newcome.

"Poor old Towle couldn't help catching the 'flu!" said Jimmy Silver, with a faint smile.

"Sport from Lovell!

"He ought to have helped it! Just like a Modern ass! What right had Towle to go and catch influenza just before break-up? Of all the exasperating asses—"

"I don't suppose he caught it on purpose!" suggested Jimmy Silver mildly.

Another snort! Arthur Edward Lovell evidently was not to be reasoned with.

"I believe you'd find something to say in favour of the Kaiser himself, if that rotter was ever brought to trial, Jimmy Silver," said Lovell, in great exasperation.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well," he said, "Towle—" "Bother Towle!" roared Lovell.

"He had no right whatever to go and catch 'flu and hand it out to other fellows. He might have kept it to himself, at least, if he liked it so much that he had to go around and collect it!"

"He might!" agreed Newcome.

"But he didn't!" said George Raby dolorously. "I hear there's a dozen fellows of the Modern side down with it."

"And six or seven Classical," said Newcome. "Lucky it hasn't come along to this study!"

"I looked into Study No. 2 as I came along," said Lovell. "Higgs and Jones minor are down."

"In sanny?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes; Putty said so."

"Poor chaps!" said Jimmy sympathetically. "What a giddy Christmas for them—sneezing and barking."

Lovell grunted.

"Bad enough," he said. "But that's not the most serious thing. There's talk about cancelling the vacation on account of it!"

"Rot!" ejaculated Raby and Newcome together.

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful.

"Well, a lot of fellows have probably got the merry microbe disporting around them," he remarked. "It would be no joke to carry the 'flu into the four merry corners of the kingdom. I'm dashed if I want to take it home to the pater and mater, and cousin Phyllis—"

"Rot!" roared Lovell.

Lovell's opinion on that subject could be heard from one end of the Fourth Form passage to the other.

"These medical johnnies are always talking out of their hats," continued Lovell. "What do they know about it?"

"More than we do, possibly."

"Bosh! If Sawbones thinks he's going to stick me at Rookwood over Christmas, Sawbones is making a mistake. But Muffin says—"

"Oh, Muffin?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Probably there's nothing in it!"

Tubby Muffin is always talking out of the back of his neck!

"He says he heard Mr. Dalton ask old Greely whether he would be staying," said Lovell, "and Greely thought it would be Manders."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "If the doctor thinks we ought to hang up here over the vac, it can't be helped; but Muffin is always starting some mare's-nest. I'll wait till it's official before I begin to grouse, anyhow!"

"I'm not grouching, ass!"

"My hat! It sounded as if you were!"

"But of all the thumping idiots," continued Lovell, very emphatically for a fellow who was not grouching.

"That half-baked cuckoo Towle takes the cake! Fancy catching 'flu and spreading it around. Then the other silly Moderns had to catch it, and then they had to pass it over to the Classical side. Rookwood oughtn't to have a Modern side at all. Why can't people be satisfied with Latin and Greek, without German and chemistry? Jabbering Hun lingo, and inventing fearful smells in the lab," Lovell snorted.

"And now the Modern asses have landed us for Christmas!"

"If you're not grouching, Lovell," remarked Jimmy Silver, "for goodness' sake don't begin to grouse! For if you're like that when you're not grouching—"

"Rats!"

"I say, Jimmy!" The rotund figure and fat face of Tubby Muffin loomed up in the doorway of the end study. "What do you think?"

Four glares were turned upon the fat Classical.

The bearer of ill-tidings is never welcome, and the possibility that Tubby invented his ill-tidings for the sake of having something startling to say, was very exasperating.

"Think!" repeated Jimmy Silver gruffly. "I think you're a fat duffer, Muffin!"

"But I say, I've heard—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"We're booked for Christmas!" said Tubby. "Horrid, ain't it? Dr. Bolton has told the Head that the school oughtn't to break up, in the circumstances. We're going to be landed at Rookwood over the vac."

"Rot!" roared Lovell.

"It's official!" said Reginald Muffin. "I heard—"

Lovell jumped up.

"You blessed Jonah!" he exclaimed. "Ten to one there's nothing in it! Anyhow, we'll stop your playing Jonah!"

"I say—Yaroooooh!"

"Bump him!"

"I say—"

Tubby Muffin sought to retreat—too late! Lovell and Raby and Newcome seized him, and he bumped on the floor of the end study with a mighty bump. The yell that Tubby Muffin let out might have been heard in the quadrangle.

"There, you fat idiot!" gasped Lovell.

"Yoooooop!"

"Now, are we going to be kept at Rookwood over Christmas?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooop!"

Tubby Muffin tore himself away and fled. Lovell breathed hard. Some exertion was required to bump Reginald Muffin, whose weight was considerable. But Lovell seemed to feel the better for it. Whether the ill-tidings proved true or false, at any rate there was some satisfaction in bumping the too-eager bearer of them.

The 2nd Chapter. No Break-Up!

"Rotten!" That was the general verdict throughout Rookwood.

From Bulkeley, the head of the Sixth, down to the smallest and inkiest fag in the Second Form, all Rookwood agreed that it was rotten.

For Tubby Muffin's gloomy prognostications turned out to be well-founded.

The fiat had gone forth!

On break-up day there was to be no breaking-up! The school doctor and the Head had been in deep and serious consultation. Many parents had been consulted by telephone, and the upshot of it was that Rookwood School, for probably the first time in its long history, was not to break-up for Christmas!

That it was "rotten" was certain; indeed, nothing could have been more rotten.

There was grouching on all sides. But of the crowds of fellows who groused on the last night of term, there were five or six in the sanatorium the next morning.

The epidemic was spreading!

Some of the wiser heads agreed that the doctor was right, and that it would have been folly to scatter the school all over the kingdom with the influenza germ raging at large among them.

Right or wrong, the Head had made his decision, and the Rookwooders were booked for Christmas.

Nearly a third of the school were down, anyhow, and certainly could not have gone home. Doctors and nurses were unusually in evidence at Rookwood. In the end study, Jimmy Silver impressed upon his chums the strict necessity to "keep smiling."

"You see," said Jimmy oracularly, "fellows catch 'flu and things when they're not fit, when they're run down, when they're depressed, and when they're given to grouching."

"Who's given to grouching?" rapped Lovell.

"Some fellows are," said Jimmy Silver diplomatically, "and that's the way to entrap the merry microbe, who goes about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. We've got to keep cheery in this study, and set an example to the rest of the school."

"Christmas holidays all mucked up!" groaned Lovell.

"We'll make it a holiday here," said Jimmy cheerily. "After all, it's something not to be in sanny along with Towle & Co.—"

"Bless Towle & Co.!"

"There won't be any lessons, of course," said Jimmy. "Hardly any masters; only one or two left to keep order. We shall have the school to ourselves, and we can have a merry time—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Theatricals, you know—" "Rot!"

"And football—" "Rubbish!"

"Japing the Moderns—" "Bosh!"

"My dear chap—" "Oh rats!" said Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed to be understudying Rachel of old, who mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted.

"As for keeping order," said Lovell, "let 'em try to keep me in order during the holidays, that's all! I'm going to do as I jolly well like in the vac."

"Mr. Manders will be in charge, I hear," said Raby.

"Manders! A blessed Modern master! A dashed science master! A blighter oozing chemicals!" snorted Lovell. "Nice sort of a master to be left in charge of the Classical side! Let him come Mandering over here, that's all!"

"The Head will be away," said Jimmy Silver, "and Mr. Dalton and Mr. Wiggins have both got the 'flu now, and have gone into sanny. We shall have to take Manders for what he is worth, Lovell."

"That's about a German mark!" said Lovell. "Let him come Mandering around the end study, and I'll give him Manders!"

And Arthur Edward Lovell stamped away, evidently wrathful. But the wrath of Arthur Edward was of no avail. Rookwood did not break-up, and the Christmas vacation found Jimmy Silver & Co. still occupying the end study, and Mr. Manders, the science master of the Modern side, in charge of the school.

Tubby Muffin, at least, found very

great comfort in learning of the arrangements the Head had thoughtfully made.

Grub, Tubby announced to the interested juniors, was going to be on an unusually liberal scale, and on Christmas Day there was to be genuine Christmas fare.

Moreover, most of the fellows were expecting hampers and gifts from sympathising relatives. So far as the commissariat went, even Lovell admitted that the outlook was satisfactory.

There were no lessons that day, and the Fistical Four found solace on the football field in the afternoon, and came in to tea in the end study with ravenous appetites.

In spite of everything, they found themselves feeling cheerful. A roaring fire blazed away in the end study, contrasting with the wintry cold and mist without, and the firelight played on four bright faces round the tea-table.

Holly was stuck up round the study to give the room a Christmas effect, and the effect was pronounced excellent. And when Putty of the Fourth looked in he was met with welcoming smiles.

Teddy Grace, better known as Putty, was always cheerful. Nobody had ever seen him look down in the dumps.

"Feeling chippy—what?" he asked.

"Topping!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Trot in, old top! We're going to discuss what to do with the vac."

"Just what I came in to speak about," said Putty.

"Sit down, old fellow!"

Putty of the Fourth dropped into the armchair.

"I say—" began Lovell, rather hastily, remembering that he had left a sprig of holly in the armchair.

He had no time to finish. Putty of the Fourth reposed gracefully in the armchair for the millionth part of a second, then he leaped to his feet with a fearful yell.

"Yoooooop!"

"Why—what—" began Jimmy, in amazement.

"Ow! Ah! Yow! Woop!" howled Putty. "What born idiot has been sticking holly in that chair?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry!" gasped Lovell. "I was just going—"

"Ow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four.

Putty of the Fourth did not laugh. He did not seem to see, somehow, where the joke came in. He jerked the sprig of holly into the fire and grunted.

"Too bad!" said Jimmy Silver, smiling. "Never mind, old chap! All clear now. Sit down again."

But Putty did not accept the invitation. He leaned on the mantelpiece, apparently preferring to stand.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Great Wheeze Goes Begging!

"We're fixed at Rookwood for Christmas!" began Putty.

"We are!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"We is! Sample this cake—" "Thanks!" Putty of the Fourth munched cake as he continued. "I suppose you've heard that Satan finds work for idle hands to do?"

"I've heard something of the kind," admitted Jimmy Silver. "I suppose that's why you're always in hot water, Putty."

"Bow-wow! My idea is that we oughtn't to be idle this vac. We must keep the flag flying, and the home fires burning, and so on," said Putty. "Slacking around will do no good. Now, it was a Modern ass who started this influenza epidemic. My idea is to keep busy these holidays by giving the Moderns a high old time—a real merry Christmas. This is the first real chance we've had of giving the Moderns the kybosh. Now there are no masters and no lessons, we've got lots of time to put Tommy Dodd & Co. in their places."

"Hear, hear!" said the Fistical Four cheerily.

"I've thought of a wheeze!" added Putty modestly.

Lovell shook his head.

"Your wheezes ain't much good, old chap," he said kindly. "You mean well, I know. But you haven't the brains. This is the study for wheezes."

"Can it!" said Putty. "Now, my idea is this. Lots of the Moderns are down with 'flu, but lots are up and alive and kicking. I think a specialist ought to come down from London to see them—"

"A what?" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Specialist. One of those coves with bald head and ginger whiskers, you know, who stick a stethoscope on your chest, and say you'd better have the appendix removed, and send

in a bill for a hundred guineas, to your next-of-kin."

"Oh! But—" "The Head's gone. What more natural than that he should send Dr. Bletherer, the famous specialist on chest troubles, to have a look at Rookwood? Whisper it in Tubby Muffin's hearing, and it will be all over the school in an hour. Then the Moderns won't be surprised when Dr. Bletherer arrives."

"Is there a Dr. Bletherer?" demanded Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

"There's going to be," explained Putty. "Little me, you know, with the aid of the Classical Players' property-box—bald scalp, ginger whiskers, steel eye-glasses, frock-coat, and elastic-sided boots—the whole Harley Street guy complete. What?"

Putty of the Fourth beamed on the chums of the end study, waiting for the outburst of rapturous applause that ought to have followed the enunciation of his remarkable wheeze.

But it didn't follow.

There was a dead silence in the end study, and the Fistical Four blinked at Putty.

"Call that an idea?" asked Lovell, at length.

"Yes, I jolly well do!" answered Putty warmly. "Can't you see how ripping it is?"

Lovell shook his head.

"Blessed if I can!" he answered. "Where does the rip come in?"

"Why, I shall be able to put the Moderns through it till their eyelashes turn grey!"

"But you won't be able to do it at all."

"Why not?" hooted Putty.

"You haven't the brains, old rabbit!"

"You crass ass—" "Order!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "The fact is, Putty, it's a topping wheeze, but it wouldn't work. You see, the part of a Harley Street specialist is rather too hot for our amateur theatricals. We could do it all right in a comedy, but in broad daylight—wouldn't wash, old son!"

"Exactly—if this study took it in hand!" agreed Putty. "But I'm suggesting that I should play the part. That makes all the difference, you know."

"Why, you cheeky ass—" "I could do it on my head," declared Putty. "I suppose you fellows have noticed that I am a born actor—"

"We've noticed that you're a born idiot!" remarked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't I play all the most difficult parts in our private theatricals, and don't I bring down the house every time?" demanded Putty. "Look at the way the audience cheered when we had that scene of Falstaff and Pistol. I was playing Falstaff to Lovell's Pistol—"

"It was the part of Pistol they were applauding, wasn't it?" asked Lovell.

"Of course it wasn't; it was Falstaff!"

"You've got it wrong, old fellow," said Lovell, with a shake of the head.

"You haven't much brains, Putty, but you've got swank enough to float a battleship. Sit down and finish the cake, old chap, and don't start wheezes on your uncles, who knew all about wheezes before you were born."

"Fathead!" Putty sat down to the cake, and continued with his mouth full. "Ow Christmas Eve there's going to be a merry surprise for the Moderns. A Harley Street specialist—"

"Cut it out," said Lovell. "It's too big an order for you, Putty. It would be no end of a wheeze if it would work; but it wouldn't—not in your hands, anyhow. I might try it on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Putty. "What are you cackling at now?"

"Your little joke."

"I wasn't joking."

"Must have been," said Putty. "Now let's talk sense. I—"

Putty of the Fourth was interrupted. The door of the end study flew violently open, and Tubby Muffin came in with a tremendous rush. So rapidly did Tubby fly into the study that he crashed on the tea-table before he could halt. He stopped himself by clutching at the table with both hands, and the crockery danced.

"Oh!" gasped Tubby.

"You fat duffer!" roared Lovell. "Wharrer you up to?"

"Ow! The gig-gig-gig—" spluttered Tubby.

"The what?"

"The gig-gig-gig—" "Somebody arrived in a gig?" asked Jimmy Silver, in wonder.

"Nunno! The gig-gig-ghost—" "Ghost!" yelled Raby.

"I've seen it!"

"Rot!"
"Oh dear! The Rookwood ghost!" panted Tubby, dodging round the table. "I—I think it was after me! I saw it in Long Corridor—ow! I—I just bolted in time. Oh dear!"
"What utter rot!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"I tell you I saw it!" hooted Muffin.
"Rot! Somebody playing the goat with a white sheet over his head," said Lovell.

"It—it was breathing fire and flame!"

"Bosh!"
"Let's go and have a look at Long Corridor," said Jimmy Silver. "If some ass is playing ghost, we'll jolly well squash him!"

The Fistical Four left the study with Putty, Tubby Muffin preferring to keep by the light and the fire. Long Corridor was the passage that connected the School House with the Modern side. On account of the raids between the rivals of Rookwood, the door in the corridor was kept locked, but it was not unknown for one party or the other to obtain, surreptitiously, a key to fit the lock.

Long Corridor was dark and deserted when Jimmy Silver flashed the light of his electric torch there.

"Only Muffin's silly rot!" growled Lovell. "He's scared at his own shadow. Groogh! It's cold here! Let's cut."

And the Fistical Four returned to the end study, where they gave Tubby Muffin their opinion of him at some length. But Tubby, having taken a seat at the well-spread tea-table, did not mind. He listened more or less, but did not answer; his jaws were too busy for talk. The ghost in Long Corridor had not, at all events, taken his appetite away. It is probable that that feat could not have been accomplished by all the spirits called from the vasty deep!

The 4th Chapter.

The Ghost of Rookwood!

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth sat up in bed in the dormitory in Mr. Manders' House.

It was eleven o'clock; and outside, in the quad, all was black. The old beeches groaned and swayed under the biting wind. It was a cold winter's night, and Tommy shivered as he sat up.

"You fellows awake?" he called out, in cautious tones.

There was no answer from the Modern Fourth. The whole dormitory was deep in the embrace of Morpheus.

Tommy Dodd grunted, and turned out of bed. Tommy Dodd had planned an enterprise that night, in conjunction with his chums, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. But two of the Tommies had evidently forgotten all about it.

"Wake up, you slacker!" growled Tommy Dodd, shaking Cook by the shoulder.

"Ow! Oh! Wharrer marrer?" mumbled Cook.

"Turn out!"

"Groogh! 'Tain't rising-bell."

"Fathead! It's eleven! Turn out, before I squeeze a sponge down the back of your neck!" said Tommy Dodd ferociously.

Tommy Dodd proceeded to Doyle's bed, and shook Doyle. That youth came out of slumber with a jump.

"Leggo! What's the game? Ow!"

"You lazy sweep!" said Tommy Dodd. "Have you forgotten that we're going to make the Classical cads sit up to-night?"

Doyle rubbed his eyes, and blinked in the darkness.

"Stare, it's a bit unfeeling to jape them, with Christmas just coming on, and all, and all!" he murmured.

"Let's let them off!"

"Just what I was thinking," chimed in Tommy Cook heartily. "After all, those Classical bounders ain't worth powder and shot, Duddy. Let 'em rip!"

"Faith, and I agree wid ye," said Tommy Doyle. "Never mind scaring the poor little Classicals, Duddy—Yaroooooh!"

Doyle broke off with a roar as his bedclothes were whipped off. He jumped up and spluttered.

"Howly mother av Moses! Ye silly spalpeen—"

"Turn out!" rapped Tommy Dodd.

"Look here, Duddy—" began Cook feebly.

"I'm just dipping the sponge in the jug for you, Cooky!"

"I—I'm getting up!" said Tommy Cook hastily.

And he got!

The three Tommies proceeded to dress themselves in the dark. Tommy Dodd was in a determined humour, and his faithful followers had no choice about following their leader.

"Sure, we shall be sickening for the beastly flu, turning out in the

could like this!" grumbled Tommy Doyle.

"Didn't we arrange it all in the study this evening?" demanded Dodd.

"Yis; but—"

"But it wasn't so jolly cold in the study!" said Tommy Cook, with a shudder.

"Oh, get a move on, and you'll get warm!"

"Groogh!"

"Do you expect a sultry night just before Christmas?" asked Tommy Dodd, with sarcasm.

"Oooooooh!"

"Don't wake up the whole house!" advised Tommy Dodd. "If Mr. Manders drops on us he mayn't approve of the ghost of Rookwood taking his little walks abroad at this hour of the night! Ready?"

"Groogh! Yes!"

Tommy Dodd took a bundle from under his bed. The three juniors left the dormitory, and followed the passage in the dark, and then another passage. That brought them into Long Corridor.

"You haven't forgotten to bring the key, Duddy?" whispered Cook.

"No more than I've forgotten to bring two silly owls!" answered Tommy Dodd caustically.

The big oaken door in Long Corridor was locked. But there was a click of a key as Tommy Dodd reached it, and the heavy door swung open. The three Modern juniors passed through into the Classical precincts.

"Aft'er all, we're going to make the Classical spalpeens sit up!" remarked Doyle, taking comfort in that

Tommy Dodd swept into the dormitory.

There was a sound of steady breathing, and a deep, unmusical snore that betrayed Reginald Muffin.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a deep, hair-raising groan.

According to the legend, the phantom abbot of Rookwood was given to groaning when he prowled around the old buildings at Christmas-time. What he groaned for was not stated in the legend. But undoubtedly he was supposed to groan, so Tommy Dodd groaned deeply.

Groan!

The hair-raising sound echoed through the dormitory.

Jimmy Silver started out of slumber.

"What—what— My hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver

The whole dormitory was awake the next moment. Mornington sprang up in bed, with a shout.

"What the thunder—"

There was a fearful yell from Tubby Muffin.

"The ghost! The gig-gig-ghost!" And Reginald Muffin plunged under his bedclothes, and curled up there palpitating.

The phantom abbot walked up the dormitory with a slow and stately pace, soundless, silent. Sitting up in the long row of beds, the Classical juniors watched him with starting, fascinated eyes.

Even Jimmy Silver was dumb-founded.

Jimmy did not believe in ghosts, of course; anything so unhealthy as a belief in spooks was not likely to

"You blithering jabberwock—"

"After the ghost!" yelled Putty. He rushed to the door and dragged it open. But the ghost of the abbot of Rookwood was gone. From somewhere in the darkness came a chortle, and a voice:

"Sold again, you Classical duffers!"

Then there was silence.

The 5th Chapter.

Putty to the Rescue!

"Slept well, old top?"

Tommy Dodd asked that question very affably as he met Jimmy Silver in the quadrangle on the morning of Christmas Eve. And Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook smiled audibly.

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"So it was you?" he asked.

"What was me?" asked Tommy Dodd, in mild surprise.

"Playing ghost, you fathead!" said Jimmy Silver morosely.

"Anybody been playing ghost?" asked Tommy Dodd innocently.

"My dear chap, it's nerves! If you're beginning to see things, you'd better try some Pale Pills for Peaky Pippins!"

"If it was you, Dodd—" began Arthur Edward Lovell hotly.

"My dear chap, what happened?"

"Some silly owl got up as a ghost trotted along our dormitory last night—from end to end—"

"And you let him?" smiled Tommy Dodd.

"Why didn't you collar him on the spot?"

saw the ghost, must have been worth a guinea a box.

It was quite useless for the Classical Fourth to declare that they hadn't been scared at all; and that they had guessed it was a Modern spoof; and that playing the ghost was a silly, dangerous trick, and so forth. The fact remained that the phantom abbot had walked up and down the Classical dormitory, while the Classical Fourth sat in bed and blinked at it. And if they hadn't been scared stiff, the other fellows wanted to know why they hadn't tumbled out of bed on the spot and collared the spoofer. A question which the Classical Fourth found it very difficult to answer.

Even some of the seniors joined in pulling Jimmy Silver & Co.'s leg on the subject. Hansom of the Fifth stopped him as the juniors were going in to dinner.

"I hear you've been seeing ghosts, Silver," said the captain of the Fifth very seriously. "You'd better not go to the pictures so much, kid. It's going to the pictures makes kids frightened in the dark, you know—works on their imagination, and all that."

And Hansom of the Fifth walked on, before Jimmy Silver could think of anything sufficiently offensive to be adequate as a reply.

Even Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, heard the story, and mentioned it to Jimmy, with a smiling face.

"What's this about the abbot's ghost, Silver?" he asked after dinner. "Did you kids really fancy you saw something last night in the dormitory?"

"Only a silly owl playing ghost," said Jimmy. "We—were weren't scared, of course, Bulkeley."

"Oh, of course not!" said Bulkeley, with a smile. And that smile had a rather irritating effect on Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave his study-leader a rather aggressive look when Bulkeley strode away, still smiling.

"You were talking about making the Moderns sit up this Christmas, Jimmy Silver!" snorted Lovell.

"Looks to me as if it's going to be a giddy boot on the other blessed foot! They're making us sit up!"

"No doubt about that," said Raby.

"Dash it all, Jimmy, we've got to put a stop to their chortling, somehow!"

"We ought to have collared that silly japer and made an example of him!" said Newcome. "Really, Jimmy—"

"Put it all on me!" said Jimmy, with sarcasm.

"Well, you're leader, you know!" said his three chums in chorus.

"Let's go and see Putty!" said Jimmy Silver abruptly.

"Oh, Putty's wheeze isn't any good!" said Lovell. "I saw him this morning in his study, cutting out and stitching things. But it's not good enough."

"You mentioned just now that I was leader," said Jimmy sarcastically.

"If I am, follow on, and let's go and see Putty."

And Jimmy Silver led the way to Study No. 2 in the Fourth. Putty Grace had been busy there most of the morning, evidently making preparations for the great wheeze that had been turned down so scornfully in the end study. He was there again now, and he nodded cheerily to the Fistical Four as they came in.

A silk hat was standing on the table, and beside it lay a black frock-coat, and several other articles of attire, as well as ginger-coloured side-whiskers and a bald scalp.

"Hallo, old toplets!" said Putty genially. "Are you going to lend a hand, after all?"

"You're going on with it?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"You bet!"

"Like your cheek when we've told you it's no good!" said Arthur Edward Lovell warmly.

"Bow-wow!"

"I've been thinking it over, Putty," remarked the captain of the Fourth. "If you think you can work it—"

"On my head!" said Putty confidently.

"We've got to stop those Modern bounders cackling somehow. We'll help."

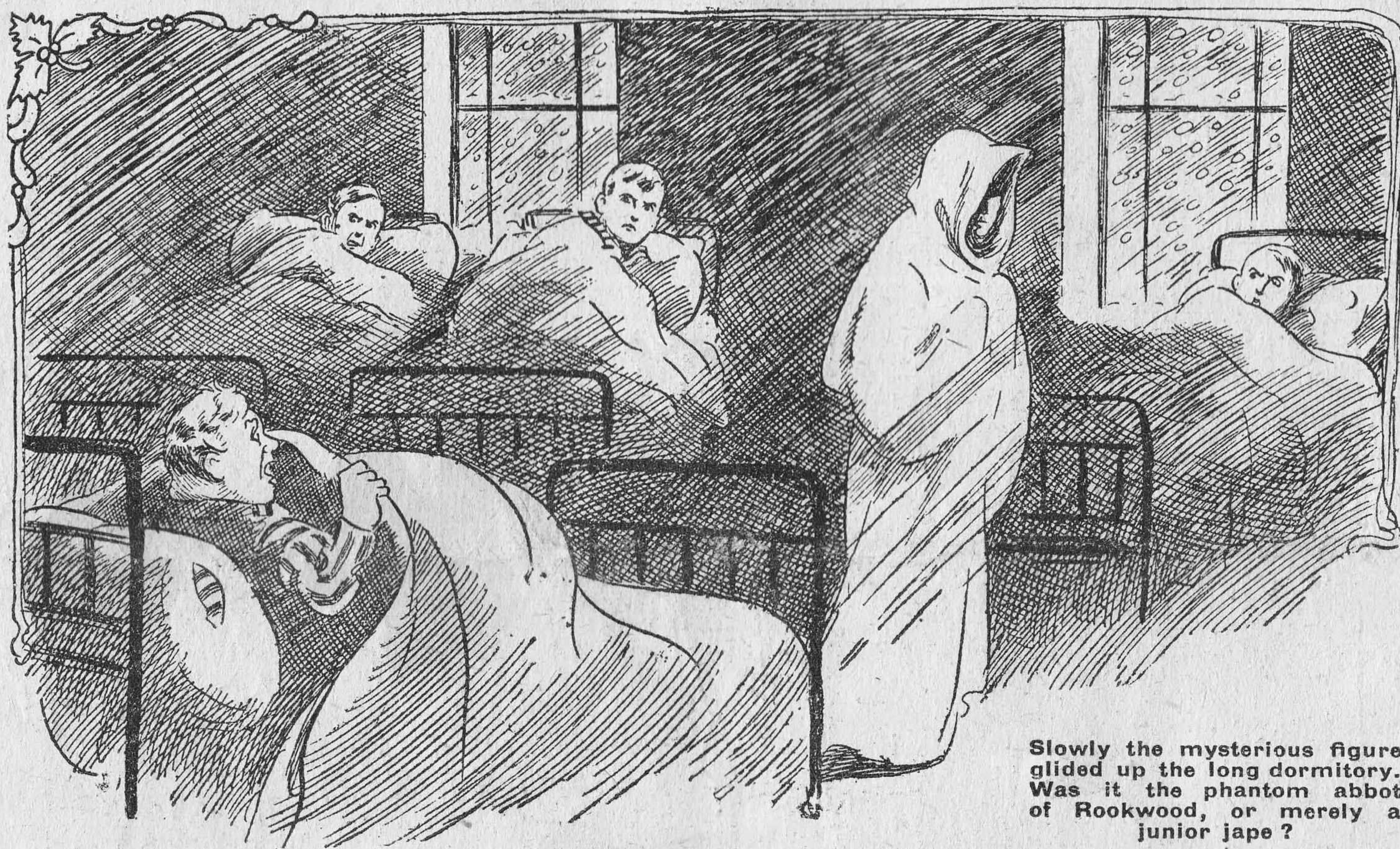
"Will we?" grunted Lovell.

"Yes, fathead! Dry up!" said Jimmy Silver. "I've heard talk already of the Harley Street specialist that's coming to-day, Putty."

Putty of the Fourth chuckled.

"It's all over the school," he answered. "I asked Tubby if he had heard that Dr. Shooter of Harley Street, the famous lung and chest specialist, was coming down here this

(Continued overleaf.)



Slowly the mysterious figure glided up the long dormitory. Was it the phantom abbot of Rookwood, or merely a junior jape?

reflection. "Got all the stuff in that bundle, Duddy?"

"Yes, ass!"

Tommy Dodd turned on the light of a pocket-torch, and gave it to Doyle to hold. Then he unfastened the bundle he was carrying. It contained a set of garments that looked a spotless white. Tommy Dodd proceeded to drape himself in them. At a close view in the daylight it could have been seen that the garments were of a cheap canvas, cut rather roughly in imitation of an old-time abbot's robe and cowl. But in the shadows of night they looked quite imposing. Tommy Dodd belted in the trailing robe and adjusted the cowl, and grinned at his comrades.

"How's that for high?" he asked. "What price me as the phantom abbot of Rookwood?"

"Topping!"

"I tried it on Muffin last night!" said Tommy Dodd. "The fat idiot sprinted for his life! It will answer, you bet! You fellows come along, and be ready to cover the retreat if I have to bolt!"

"Right-ho, old bird!"

The three Moderns moved on, Tommy Dodd with a swish of ghostly robes. They came out into the passage at last upon which the Classical Fourth Form dormitory opened.

"Wait here!" whispered Tommy Dodd.

"Right-ho!"

The phantom abbot of Rookwood moved on to the dormitory door, and opened it cautiously and silently.

All was dark within save for a pale glimmer of starlight at the high windows. But in the darkness the figure of the phantom abbot began to glow with a pale, strange light.

Certainly it was only caused by rubbing phosphorus on the flowing robes; but the effect was ghostly in the extreme.

appeal to a fellow like Jimmy. But in the middle of a dark night matters seemed different somehow. Jimmy Silver sat as if frozen, staring at the fearsome apparition. Valentine Mornington, the most reckless fellow in the Fourth, sat as if rooted to his bed. Under his blankets Tubby Muffin panted and palpitated.

The ghost reached the end of the dormitory, and swung round, slow and solemn. Silently, eerily it paraded back to the door.

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver came to himself, as it were, suddenly. He reached round for his pillow, and hurled it with deadly aim.

Crash!

The ghost had just uttered a deep groan. The groan was followed by a wild yell:

"Yaroooooogh!"

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "You rotten spoofer—"

There was a chuckle from the passage outside. That yell from the ghost seemed to tickle Doyle and Cook.

"Turn out!" roared Lovell. "It's some Modern cad spoofing us!"

Morny's bolster whizzed through the air. It struck the door as the ghost departed, closing the door after him hastily. Jimmy Silver bounded out of bed.

Crash! Lovell had jumped from his bed at the same time, and in the dark he jumped fairly into Jimmy.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Strike a light, somebody!"

Oswald struck a match. Erroll held a candle-wick to it. Jimmy Silver picked himself up dazedly. Lovell was sprawling on the floor.

"What silly idiot bumped into me?" spluttered Lovell.

"You silly owl, it was you bumped into me!" gasped Jimmy.

"You frabjous chump—"

"Well, we—we—we—"

"Taken by surprise," said Raby.

"Sort of flabbergasted just for a minute," said Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Frightened out of your wits, you mean! It wouldn't be safe for a ghost to walk in the Modern dorm! We would lay the ghost fast enough! Silver, old man, you'd better try those pale pills! Good for the nerves after a scare!"

And the three Tommies strolled away chuckling, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. looking rather sheepish.

"It was that gang, of course!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"They didn't scare us, of course!" said Lovell. "I wasn't scared! Just surprised for the moment—"

"Just!" agreed Jimmy.

"If those Modern duffers think they've got the laugh of us they're jolly well mistaken!" said Lovell gruffly.

"They are!" said Jimmy. "I hope the other fellows will think so."

"We weren't scared!" roared Lovell.

"Of course not, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "Not the least, weeniest bit in the world! But very likely the fellows will think we were. We didn't collar the ghost, did we?"

"Well—"

Jimmy Silver was prepared for chipping on the subject, and he was not disappointed. All the Modern side—all who were not in sanny—chortled over the ghost story. Even on the Classical side there was laughter. Fags of the Third and the Second ventured to chip even the Fistical Four. Snooks of the Second asked Jimmy Silver whether it was true that he had fainted. Algy Silver of the Third declared to Arthur Edward Lovell that his face, when he

CHRISTMAS AT ROOKWOOD!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from previous page.)

afternoon. That was enough for Tubby. He wouldn't admit that he hadn't heard of it before me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "So he's spread it around," said Putty. "Nobody quite knows how it started, but everybody's heard that the specialist is coming, and thinks he's been sent by the Head. And he's coming, right enough. I've got the things nearly ready. You fellows can lend a hand with the bags, getting them out of gates, if you like."

"Where are you going to make up?" "In the wood." "Bit parky!" remarked Lovell. "I'll have a first-class dressing-room, if you can have one put up ready for me, old top. Otherwise, the wood will have to do," said Putty serenely. "I can put the clobber into two bags; they won't attract any attention. Two of you fellows can take one each. Another can walk down to the village and bring the station hack along at three o'clock to the stile. That will look as if Dr. Shooter has arrived by train."

"Suppose you drop on old Manders?" asked Raby, with a deep breath. "You're pretty certain to."

"I shall doggo him if I can." "But if you can't?" "Well, I can deal with old Manders," said Putty. "My dear chaps, you just pile in and help, and I tell you that this Christmas campaign against the Moderns will be the biggest jape in the history of Rookwood. They won't feel like cackling and chortling when the Harley Street specialist has done with them."

"But—" began Lovell. Putty waved his hand. "But me no buts," he said. "You're as full of butts as a billy-goat. Just ring off and make yourself useful."

Arthur Edward Lovell suppressed his feelings. The Fistical Four proceeded to give Putty their aid, and half an hour later they strolled out of the gates of Rookwood, one by one, Jimmy and Raby carrying a bag each. Lovell still inwardly rebellious—walked down to Coombe for the hack; while the other three accompanied Putty into the wood, to help him with his peculiar toilet.

And when Tommy Dodd & Co. looked for the great chiefs of the Classical Fourth, to give them a little more playful chipping on the subject of ghosts, they found that the Fistical Four were missing.

"Cleared off to get out of the lime-light!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "We'll laugh 'em to death all through Christmas with this yarn, you fellows!"

"Sure we will, intoiely!" said Doyle. "They're played out on the Classical side, you know," said Tommy Dodd disparagingly. "They can't keep their end up. Hardly worth the trouble of pulling their legs, really. But we must do something to keep ourselves lively over Christmas."

"Hallo, who's this Johnny?" said Cook, as the hack from Coombe station turned in at the gates.

Tubby Muffin came rolling up.

"That'll be the specialist," he said.

"Oh, the giddy chest man from Harley Street!" said Tommy Dodd. "I heard that the Head was sending down a specialist to look over us. May mean that we can get off for Christmas, after all."

"Good!" And the three Tommies capped the Harley Street specialist very respectfully.

The 6th Chapter.

Medical Advice for Mr. Manders!

A good many eyes were turned upon the gentleman in the station hack as it rolled up the drive to Mr. Manders' house.

Nearly everybody at Rookwood had heard of the expected specialist, and the fellows were rather interested in him.

He was a rather small gentleman, wrapped in an overcoat with an imposing fur collar. He wore steel-rimmed glasses, ginger whiskers, and a shining silk hat. His complexion was rather pale, his eyebrows thick and bushy. He looked about fifty-five; but he was, as Tommy Dodd remarked to his chums, small for his age.

"Little but good, perhaps," said Tommy Doyle hopefully. "Sure, I hope he'll let us off for Christmas."

The hack stopped outside Mr. Manders' House.

The little gentleman hopped out actively enough.

Knowles of the Sixth was just coming out, and he paused at the sight of the stranger, and raised his hat civilly.

"This is—ahem!—Rookwood, I

"Dr. Shooter, sir, of Harley Street!" said Knowles. "The specialist sent by the Head!" "I have heard nothing of it!" snapped Mr. Manders. "The Head has not informed me of his intention to send a specialist here!"

"There's been a lot of talk about it, sir!" said Knowles, in surprise. "I repeat that I have heard nothing of it! This is very—very unusual!" said Mr. Manders. "Really, Dr. Shooter, it is very extraordinary! Not a word has been said to me—"

"Are you in control here, sir?" "Most certainly!"

"Then it is extraordinary—most extraordinary!" snapped Dr. Shooter. "Most careless—most absentminded of Dr. Chisholm! But, excuse me, sir—"

The little gentleman came nearer to the thin, angular Modern master. "My dear sir, what are you doing in the open air—so unprotected, too? Do you wish to see another sun rise or not?"

"What—what!" ejaculated Mr. Manders.

"Pray let me see you in your study at once!" said Dr. Shooter. "You alarm me, sir—your colour—your temperature! For goodness' sake, let us lose no time! The boys can wait!"

"Pray come in, sir!" gasped Mr. Manders. The Modern master was much given to being alarmed for his health; the slightest ache or pain always threw him into a flutter; and since influenza had broken out at Rookwood Mr. Manders had lived on tenterhooks. Possibly Dr. Shooter of Harley Street was aware of that.

staring towards Mr. Manders' window from a safe distance.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Shooter of Harley Street was getting on quite well with Mr. Manders. At that very moment he had a stethoscope to Mr. Manders' bony chest, and was listening to it, with an expression of owl-like gravity on his face.

Mr. Manders was watching him anxiously.

Mr. Manders was too concerned about his own precious health to think for a moment of questioning the specialist's bona-fides.

The expression on Dr. Shooter's face grew more and more portentous. "Are you under the care of a doctor now?" he rapped out.

"I have taken advice from Dr. Bolton," faltered Mr. Manders. "You—you do not think that the lung is affected?"

"When can I see Dr. Bolton?"

"He will arrive at the sanatorium at five."

"Very good! I shall be here, then. I prefer to make no statement for the present, Mr. Manders. I must—ahem!—consult your own doctor first. You will go to bed immediately."

"To—to bed?" "Place a hot mustard-plaster on your chest—as hot as you can bear it, or a little hotter—"

"C-c-certainly!" "And your feet in boiling water."

"Bub-bub-boiling—" "As near boiling as you can stand, I mean," said Dr. Shooter hastily. "Lose no time." He rose. "I have much to do here. Perhaps you will instruct the prefects to see that my directions are carried out. Unless you

sizzling at his feet, and was waving his left arm in the air, regularly and rhythmically. And while Mr. Manders was keeping himself busy with that extraordinary occupation, Dr. Shooter of Harley Street was very busy elsewhere.

The 7th Chapter. Doctor's Orders!

"What rot!" said Tommy Dodd. "Bosh!" said Cook. "Now then, hurry up!" shouted Knowles.

The order had gone forth for all juniors members of the Modern Side to line up in the quadrangle for Dr. Shooter to examine them. Knowles had ventured to suggest gathering up the Classics also—but Dr. Shooter had snapped him short. The specialist had his own methods, and he preferred to examine the Moderns first. So the Modern juniors were lined up by the prefects—watched by a crowd of grinning Classics.

Why the Classics were grinning was rather a puzzle to Tommy Dodd & Co., who supposed that the Classics' turn was coming. But certainly they were grinning widely.

Perhaps Jimmy Silver & Co. had been whispering among their chums. Certainly the Classical fellows seemed to be taking the proceedings in a hilarious spirit.

The afternoon was frosty, but sunny. In the winter sunlight, the Modern juniors stood ranked in the quad, waiting for the specialist, and looking anything but pleased. A medical examination in the open air was rather unusual.

Dr. Shooter came whisking out of Mr. Manders' house. He jammed on his silk hat, and walked along the line of the Moderns, blinking at them through his steel-rimmed glasses.

"A precious-looking set!" he said to Knowles, loud enough for all the Moderns to hear. "Do they play football?"

"Why yes—"

"They don't look it! Stand upright, you—what is your name?"

"Dodd, sir!" said Tommy, with ferocious politeness.

"Bodd, stand upright!"

"Dodd, sir; not Bodd!"

"Put up your shoulders—don't hunch yourself like a sack of coke, Jodd! Goodness gracious, what a set of unfit slackers!"

The Modern juniors exchanged looks. They simply yearned to take Dr. Shooter by the neck, and rag him in a manner that would have been anything but slack. But they had to resign themselves to their fate.

"Put out your tongues!" snapped Dr. Shooter.

The Moderns obediently put out their tongues.

"Shocking!" snapped the specialist. "Here, you, Podd—is your name Podd?"

"Dodd!" hissed Tommy.

"Dodd, then; you eat too much toffee. Keep your tongue out, boy! All of you put out your tongues to the fullest extent."

The unhappy Moderns projected their tongues. There was a ripple of laughter from the Classical crowd. Arthur Edward Lovell dabbed his eyes with his handkerchief.

Dr. Shooter blinked at the Modern juniors, as they stood with their tongues out to the fullest extent.

"Shocking!" he said again.

"What's the matter with us, sir?" asked Tommy Dodd, between his teeth.

"Everything! Knowles—your name is Knowles, I think—"

"Yes, sir!" said the Modern prefect.

"You are in charge of these boys now that Mr. Manders is indisposed?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good! I am very dissatisfied with them. They look more like moulting scarecrows than healthy schoolboys—like the boys yonder, for instance." Dr. Shooter jerked his thumb towards the Classical crowd.

"Oh gad!" murmured Knowles, while the Modern juniors gritted their teeth.

"Every boy here is in a state more or less serious," continued the gentleman from Harley Street. "They must be put to bed at once!"

"All of them, sir?" gasped Knowles.

"Every one!"

"In the sanatorium—"

"No; not in the sanatorium—certainly not in the sanatorium! In their dormitory!"

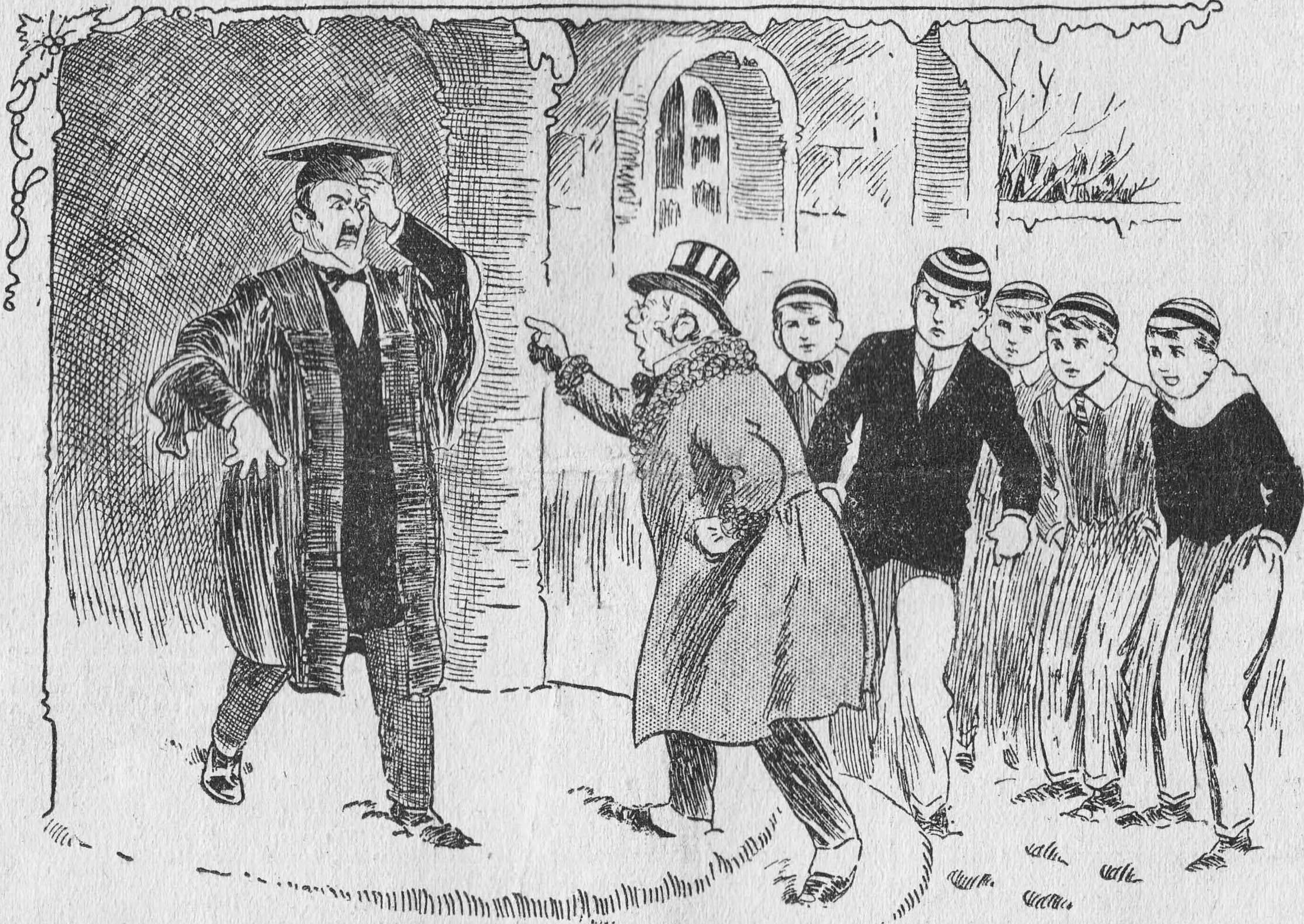
"Very well, sir!"

"They must have nothing to eat for the remainder of the day, excepting a little dry bread, and perhaps a little water—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"You will see to this, Master Knowles?"

(Continued on page 297.)



A SHOCK FOR MR. MANDERS! Putty Grace, in his disguise of a Harley Street specialist, stepped up to the unfortunate master and peered at him for a moment. "Good heavens, man!" he cried. "Get to bed at once or I'll not answer for the consequences!"

suppose?" said the little gentleman, in a rather high-pitched voice.

"Yes, sir!" answered Knowles.

"Is Dr. Chisholm at home?"

"The Head's away for Christmas, sir," answered Knowles.

"Ah! He has not returned?"

"Oh, no!"

"Someone is here in authority, I suppose?" said the little gentleman snappishly.

"I am Dr. Shooter—Dr. Shooter of Harley Street! I presume you have heard the name?"

"Not that I know of," answered Knowles, not over-pleased by the little gentleman's snappy manner.

"Mr. Manders is in charge here now, if you wish to see him. I'll call the page—"

"I am here to see the boys! My time is of value! I—ahem!—have to catch my train. I understand that a number of the boys here are down with influenza?"

"Yes, Dr. Shooter. I'll take you to the sanatorium, if you like," said Knowles.

The man from Harley Street shook his head.

"My business is with the boys who are not yet taken ill," he answered.

"I have to examine them."

"You'd better speak to Mr. Manders, then. Here he is," said Knowles.

Mr. Manders, the science master, had seen the hack from his study window. He came to the door.

Mr. Manders hurried the little gentleman into the house. In the hall the specialist removed his overcoat, disclosing a well-fitting black frock-coat. It had a very professional look, and, though short in stature—for a man—Dr. Shooter had a considerable circumference.

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled in at the gates, and came over towards Mr. Manders' House. They glanced at the waiting hack.

"Anybody arrived?" asked Jimmy Silver carelessly.

"The Harley Street man," said Tommy Dodd. "Some sort of a specialist about people's insides. He's just gone in with Manders."

"With Manders?" ejaculated Lovell. "Oh, my hat!"

"The Head hadn't told Manders he was coming," said Tommy Cook.

"Bit careless of the old bird, wasn't it?"

"Very!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four strolled away towards the Classical side, smiling. Arthur Edward Lovell drew a deep breath.

"What a neck!" he murmured.

"Fancy interviewing old Manders personally! Suppose the Manders bird sees through him?"

"Let's hope he won't!" said Jimmy Silver fervently.

"Hear, hear!"

"I'd like to know how he's getting on with Manders," remarked Raby,

desire to be seriously ill, you will go to bed at once!"

"C-c-certainly!" gasped Mr. Manders. "B-b-but how can I have my feet in—in bub-bub-boiling water if—if I am in bed?"

"Hot-water bottles will do—very hot! The hotter the better. Are you subject to coughs?"

"I—I cough a little."

"Does it leave you with a sharp needle-like pain on the left side?"

"I—I believe it does!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Yes—yes, I am sure it does!"

"I thought so." Dr. Shooter shook his bald head portentously.

"Lie on your right side in bed—"

"Yes, yes—"

"And wave your left arm in the air regularly, to and fro. Keep this up for twenty minutes exactly. Then, after ten minutes' rest, resume."

"Yes, yes."

"Lose no time. If any time is lost, I will not answer for the consequences!"

Mr. Manders lost no time. Knowles and Frampton, the Modern prefects, were called in to hear his hurried instructions, and then Mr. Manders fairly bolted for his bedroom. The housekeeper was kept busy for some little time, carrying out the specialist's instructions to Mr. Manders' satisfaction. But at last the Modern master was safe under a pile of blankets, with hot-water bottles

"Still, this is a big case, and there have been several others in the neighbourhood, I hear."

Holdfast nodded. "You did quite rightly. Still, I suppose I can have a look round. I see the coffee things are still on the table there. I should like to have a squint at those for reasons of my own. Very particular reasons. In fact, someone tried to dope me last night, by a curious coincidence, but I spotted it in time."

"Did they, sir? That's funny, isn't it, two of us in one night! Look and welcome. I'd be grateful for anything you can tell me. I'm frankly puzzled as to how the trick was worked."

Holdfast picked up the cup, in which some dregs of the coffee remained, dipped his fingers into it, and tasted it gingerly.

Then he tried the same with the coffee-pot, which was still about two-thirds full.

"Same dope!" he said cheerfully. "Chlorodyne! You didn't taste it so much in your cup, because of the sugar; but there's enough in the coffee-pot to put a Texas mule to sleep, and that wants a bit of doing at times!"

"I must be getting along; I've several little things to see to. But you're all right, so don't worry!"

He motored leisurely back to Sir George's, and sent a long wire over the telephone.

At nine o'clock that same night he was standing on the doorstep of the Willows, ringing the bell.

"Mr. Spindler in?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the man, and led the way to the billiard-room, where Mr. Spindler was aimlessly knocking the balls about and trying screw cannons.

"Hallo, Mr. Holdfast!" he said, with his cue poised in an arrested shot. "I'm very glad to see you! What lucky wind brought you here at this time of night?"

"Will you have a game of snooker, or a hundred up? I was getting tired of playing me versus myself. I very nearly roped the butler in to come and have a game, only he would probably have cut the cloth. Found out anything about the burglaries?"

"Have a drink! Help yourself! You'll find everything you want in the cabinet over there. And I'll play you a couple of hundred up for a fiver!"

Holdfast, standing with his back to the door, turned the key quietly and slipped it into his pocket.

"About those burglaries," he said slowly. "Oh, yes, I've found out quite a lot! Rather interesting case, in fact! You're not quite such a fool as you look, Spindler! I'll give you credit for that!"

"Still, you are a fool! You over-

did the chlorodyne in my drink—overdid it so badly that you made it cloudy—and me suspicious!"

"Also, I appreciate your taste in old furniture. That's a fine bit of work that old bedstead of yours. But it didn't work out according to plan! Put 'em up! It will save you trouble!" he added sharply, and pulled out an automatic.

Spindler flung up his left hand and lugged out a revolver from his dinner-jacket with his right.

For perhaps six ticks of the old grandfather's clock in the corner the two men stood glaring at one another.

Then Holdfast laughed.

"Better throw down your hand. I'll see you!" he said.

"You're an unclean sort of beast! But I'll give you this much credit. You do occasionally have a tub in the morning! Whilst you were doing so, I took the precaution of reloading that gun of yours with dud cartridges!"

Spindler went livid, and sprang forwards with an oath. Holdfast took a couple of steps backwards to get a clear line of range and shot him through the knee-cap.

That is a shot which is particularly painful, for the simple reason that it shatters the bone, and makes a man feel for the moment as though he had been poleaxed.

Mr. Spindler said many unprintable things, and subsided in a heap.

Holdfast picked up his revolver, broke the breach, and jerked out the cartridges, which, as a matter of fact, hadn't been tampered with at all. Then he went to the window, drew aside the curtains, and raised the sash.

He gave a very fair imitation of an owl's hoot, which was instantly answered from a clump of laurels near by. And a grizzly-haired man, in plain clothes, followed by three in uniform, came scrambling in.

"You got my wire all right, then, Fyfe?" he said to the man in mufti.

"Yes, sir. And I was glad enough to get it, too! We've had an eye on things down here up at headquarters; but, of course, we couldn't do anything officially till we were asked."

"Well, there's your man. I had to shoot him in the leg to keep him quiet! You'd better cart him off and have him seen to."

"There'll be a heap of charges against him—to say nothing of attempted murder!"

"See to him, some of you," said the inspector. "Put that leg in splints of some sort and carry him to the car."

The men made some rough splints with the slats of a Venetian blind, and carried him away—only semi-conscious.

"There's no doubt about the case, I suppose, sir?" said Fyfe.

"Divil a bit! The man's an out and out wrong-'un!" said Holdfast cheerfully. "Look here!"

He crossed to the bookshelf which lined the whole side of one wall, and was filled with elaborately tooled leather-bound books. Many of them had pages still uncut, and none had the appearance of having been used.

pearls, and rubies, roughly torn from their settings; in fact, in some cases, bits of gold and platinum still adhered to them.

"Those," he said, "were looted from Lord Raymond, after he had drugged the detective in charge."

The inspector whistled softly. "A nice haul, too! But what put you on to his track, sir, if I may ask?"

"We've had our men down here twice to look into things, and drew a blank."

Holdfast grinned.

"Those burglaries of his were sheer fakes—just a bit of bluff to throw dust in your eyes."



Slowly the bed in which he should have been lying insensible tipped up and shot its contents into the blackness below!

He picked out a row of half a dozen big volumes from an upper shelf and stacked them neatly on the floor; then he moved another batch.

"Bring that chair over, inspector," he said. "Now, watch."

The back of the bookshelf was made apparently of quite ordinary panelling, but this particular section had a little spring—like the spring of a so-called secret drawer in an old-fashioned writing-desk.

He pulled it aside, and, after a little fumbling about, drew out a small attache-case. He handed it down, and opened it. Inside was a glittering heap of diamonds, emeralds,

"If there was going to be an epidemic of burglaries in the neighbourhood, it was only common sense from his point of view that he should make a beat about being one of the victims."

The only man who ever burgled him was himself. He's a bit of an amateur carpenter, by the way, and made that contraption in the book-case himself. I met him quite by accident at the golf-club with Sir George Ronald.

The talk turned on to burglaries, and I saw that for some reason or another the man funkled me. I hadn't the least idea why, of course; but it

started me thinking, and his yarns about his own burglaries sounded a bit thin. They were too circumstantial in parts and too vague in others. There was nothing definite, but there were small things which gave me side-lights.

"For instance, I found from the house-agents that instead of giving the usual references when taking this place, he had planked down a lump sum."

"Again, his wife was supposed to be a keen collector of curios. He even told me the names of some of the dealers with whom she had bought several things."

"I found out by wire that neither her name nor his were known to these people. If they bought anything there, they must have bought it under an alias. That, in itself, was suspicious."

"As I told you, the house-agent had taken money in place of the usual references. Now, if there's nothing against a man, he can always get someone to give him a reference. That was fact number two."

"When on top of that he tried to dope me, and gave me a bed-room with barred windows, a locked door, and a trick bed—intended to land me in the cellars with a good many broken bones—I felt really annoyed! He got the scare of his life when he discovered that I was very much alive and kicking, and that I had guessed that he had done the job at Lord Raymond's place, and knew that he had been away from the house for some hours!"

"Of course, the revolver dodge was all sheer bluff. I knew he'd got a gun in his pocket all right, and I knew it was loaded. So the simplest thing to do was to persuade him that it wasn't."

"It was rather like bluffing on a cold pair against four aces—but it comes off sometimes if you can keep a straight face, and don't laugh until the other man has coughed up."

"You'd better overhaul the place thoroughly—more especially the panelled parts. I think you'll find it well worth while!"

The inspector looked at him quizzically.

"I wish you were officially attached to headquarters, sir; we could do with some like you."

"Oh, I only work on holidays!" said Holdfast. "We'll have a look round, and then I'll give you a lift back—and we'll splice the main brace."

THE END.

(The title of the next long, complete story of the adventures of "Bulldog" Holdfast is "The Stolen Plans!" Why not place an order for your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND to be delivered to you every Monday in the New Year?)

"AFTER-DINNER TRICKS FOR CHRISTMAS!"

(Continued from Page 289.)

CLEANING-OFF.—To clean-off so that your face does not look smudgy, rub off any black with an old cloth, then use plenty of cocoanut-oil on face. Wipe off with towel, wash in warm water, and thoroughly dry the face.

Just Another Bottle Trick.

Any bottle will do. Place it on the floor in some conspicuous place and let your audience attempt to "take their bearings," as it were. Now explain that you want a volunteer to be blindfolded and to walk into the room and kick the bottle over. As soon as the volunteer is safely blindfolded and outside the room you remove the bottle. The sight of your "victim" wildly kicking the air on his return is as amusing as anything you will find. There is no actual "trick" in this; but, don't forget, you are there to amuse your audience—and, believe me, you'll succeed.

A Coin Trick.

Can you throw a coin up into the air, and make it stop there until you wish it to descend? No, you can't; but you can make your audience think you can! Sit down in a chair, and ask a member of the audience to lend you a penny. Take this in your right hand, and make a few trial throws, as if you were going to make a drive at golf. At last you decide to throw. In an upward sweep from the floor goes your arm, and apparently

the coin goes with it. That is the catch, however, for the coin is safely resting in the turn-up of your right trouser-leg. Getting the coin out of thin air again is merely the same process reversed. So long as care is taken in slipping the coin into the trouser turn-up, this trick can be repeated all night, and your audience will never tumble to it.

Thought Reading.

Having gone through these tricks more or less single-handed, you can try this trick, with the aid of a chum whom you will introduce to your audience as a medium. He is, of course, what, in vulgar parlance, is known as "in the know." Having done this, you leave the room. The medium will now help the audience in choosing some article of furniture or ornament, the name of which you intend to discover through the telepathy between you and your medium. Let us suppose the chosen article is a vase. You re-enter the room, and your medium gazes at you, and makes mystic passes. This, of course, has nothing to do with the illusion, but gives colour to the show. Now, from casual remarks made by the medium, you will gather what is the article chosen. The rule is that the first letter in every sentence builds up the spelling of the chosen article.

In this case the medium's questions might run on these lines: "Very hot in here, isn't it?" To which you will agree. His next remark might be: "Are you feeling well?" The third question: "Such a difficult trick this. Every time it has worked, so far, though."

The medium should be careful, and not fire these remarks off one after the other quickly.

If well done, you will be surprised how baffling the audience will find this trick. But do not let their surprise lead you to perform it too often. Twice is enough.

CHRISTMAS AT ROOKWOOD!

(Continued from page 288.)

"Certainly, sir!"

"When Dr. Bolton arrives, pray ask him to look at them, and he will give further instructions."

"Very good, sir! Get into your dormitories!" added Knowles, turning to the infuriated crowd of Modern juniors.

Dr. Shooter watched them into the House, and then turned to Knowles.

"See that my orders are carried out. I will not answer for the consequences otherwise. Good-afternoon!"

"Are—are you not going to examine the Classics, sir—the other boys—?"

"I have no time now. I have a train to catch. Good-afternoon!" Dr. Shooter stepped into the station hack.

"Drive to the station—as fast as you can go!"

"Yessir!" said the driver. And the hack rolled out of the gates. There was a yell from the crowd of Classics.

"Three cheers for Dr. Shooter!" yelled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hip-pip-hurray!"

And the Classical crowd broke up, chortling and chuckling. But the hapless Moderns—sent to bed at half-past three in the afternoon, on a diet of bread and water—did not feel like chortling or chuckling. Their feelings were homicidal; and in the Modern dormitories there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The 8th Chapter.

A Merry Christmas!

Putty of the Fourth strolled in at the school gates half an hour later.

Dr. Shooter had not gone quite so far as the station in the hack!

There was a beatific smile on Putty's face as he strolled in and

sauntered across the quad to the School House.

"Hallo, where are the merry Moderns?" he asked, as he joined Jimmy Silver & Co. in the School House doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Gone to bed—with bread and water for tea!" chuckled Mornington.

"And—and it was really you?"

"Blessed if I can quite believe it now!" said Erroll, laughing.

Putty smiled complacently.

"Didn't I say I could do it on my head?" he asked. "Do you think I could do it, Lovell—what?"

Lovell gave a gurgle.

"It was great!" he said. "You're a cheeky ass, Putty—but it was great! Gorgeous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what on earth will Dr. Bolton say when he hears of what the specialist has ordered?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classical chums yelled again.

What the school doctor thought when he arrived at five o'clock and found Mr. Manders' House in such an extraordinary state, he did not confide to Jimmy Silver & Co. But his thoughts must have been interesting. Mr. Manders, stretched on his right side, with hotwater bottles at his feet, was rhythmically waving his left arm in the air—and the Modern Fourth and the Modern fags were in bed, and their "tea" of bread and water had been brought up to them. It was really a wonder that Dr. Bolton did not faint. He lost no time in countermanding the orders of the Harley Street specialist—indeed, he told Mr. Manders that the whole thing was absurd, and that he—Mr. Manders—must have been taken in by some lunatic.

That evening, Tommy Dodd & Co. came over to the School House, and dropped into the end study. Smiling faces greeted them there from the Fistical Four and Putty of the Fourth.

"To-morrow's Christmas!" said Tommy Dodd. "I propose chucking rags for the day—what?"

"Done!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We've had an awful afternoon," said Tommy feelingly. "As bad as you felt when you saw the Rookwood ghost, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"That ghost's a back number, Doddy—the specialist is the latest thing. Would you like to see him again?"

"Wouldn't I just!" said Tommy Dodd, clenching his hands.

"Ha, ha! Let's introduce him."

"Eh?"

"Dr. Putty Shooter of Study No. 2 and Harley Street!" chortled Jimmy Silver, "minus his ginger whiskers and bald scalp—but the same merchant."

It took a full minute for the three Tommies to comprehend. Then, with one accord, they rushed on Putty of the Fourth, and smote him hip and thigh. But the Fistical Four rushed to the rescue, and the three Tommies left the end study with five pairs of boots helping them to go. And a roar of laughter followed the discomfited Moderns down the passage.

But the hatchet was buried the next day—for one day only. On Boxing Day it was quite certain that the warfare would be renewed; but in the meantime the rivals of Rookwood spent a very peaceful and a merry Christmas.

THE END.

(The Mysterious Mrs. Manders! is the title of the long, complete school story featuring Jimmy Silver & Co. appearing in the next issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. Why not place a standing order for the BOYS' FRIEND for the New Year with your news-agent?)