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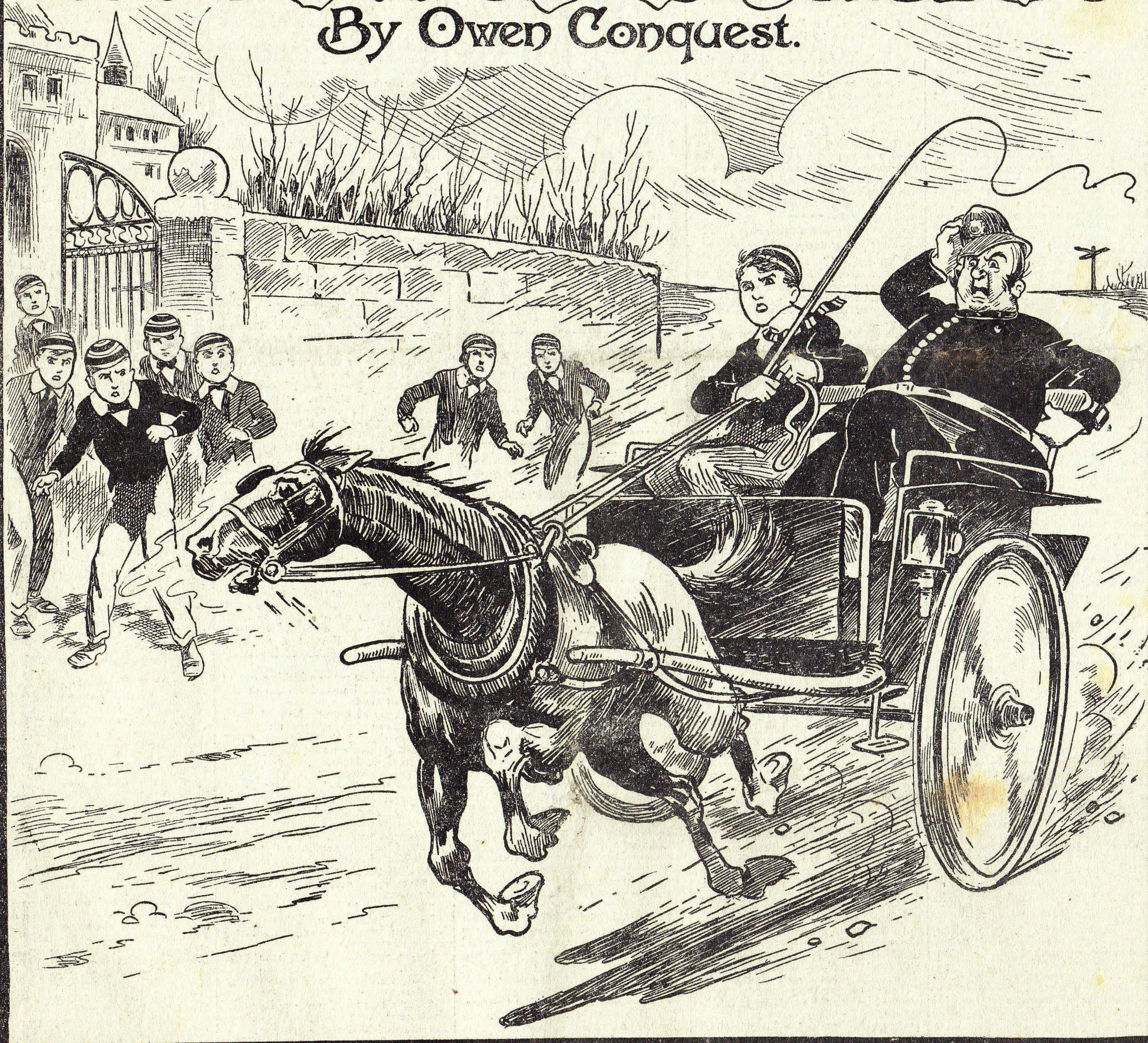
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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending January 14th, 1922.

Exit Mrs. Manders!

By Owen Conquest.



A RUNAWAY!

The group of Rookwooders stared in amazement as the trap containing Arthur Edward Lovell and P.-c. Boggs flashed past at a dangerous pace. There was no need for Lovell to keep up his pretence that the trap was out of control now—it was a grim fact!

A LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN BY OWEN CONQUEST.

"Exit Mrs. Manders!"**The 1st Chapter.****The Abduction of Police-Constable Boggs!**

"Don't break his neck!"
"Bother his neck!"
"You see—"
"He's got to be kept away!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I won't break his neck, if I can help it, but he's got to be kept clear of Rookwood this afternoon!"

The neck that Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Rookwood Fourth were discussing was the property of Police-constable Boggs of Coombe.

P.-c. Boggs was coming along Coombe Lane towards the school, with a slow and stately tread.

Mr. Boggs had been telephoned for in a great hurry from Rookwood School. He was wanted there, very urgently, by Mr. Manders. But Mr. Boggs had his own ideas about that. The majesty of the law was not to be hurried or flurried.

There was absolutely no sign of hurry or flurry about Mr. Boggs, as he solemnly marched up the lane. He might have been an express-driver on a great railway, for any sign of haste that he showed.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the four heroes of the Rookwood Fourth, lurked in the lane. Raby was holding the head of a rather fresh-looking horse, that was harnessed in a trap. Jimmy Silver & Co. had engaged that trap at their own expense, for the special purpose of giving P.-c. Boggs a free drive!

This was such unusual kindness on the part of the Fistical Four, that ulterior motives might have been suspected.

Lovell was to drive the trap! Hence Jimmy Silver's fears with regard to the safety of Mr. Boggs' neck.

Lovell sat holding the reins. Raby held the horse—not without difficulty. The fiery steed did not seem to want to keep still.

P.-c. Boggs glanced at the juniors as he came along, with elephantine tread. Jimmy Silver raised his cap in salute.

"Here you are, Mr. Boggs!" he said. "Jump in!"

"What?" said Mr. Boggs.
"You had a telephone-call at the station from Mr. Manders at Rookwood?"

"I did!" said Mr. Boggs.
"Mr. Manders is in an awful hurry," said Jimmy; "so we've brought a trap for you, Mr. Boggs."

"My eye!" said Mr. Boggs.
"Just jump in! We thought you'd rather drive than have such a thumping long walk," said Jimmy.

The trap creaked as the considerable avoirdupois of Mr. Boggs settled down into it. Neither did the lively horse seem so anxious to start now. Mr. Boggs, in any vehicle, bore a resemblance to a sheet-anchor. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome stood back.

"Go it, Lovell!"

"You bet!" said Lovell.

He cracked his whip.

"Careful with that 'orse, sir!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Oh, he's all right," said Arthur Edward Lovell confidently. "He would feed out of your hand, Mr. Boggs!"

Crack, crack, crack!

The horse started. He was rather fresh—in fact, the chums of Rookwood had selected him for that reason. In spite of the weight in the trap, the steed soon got going in great style. The trap rushed off in the direction of Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed at a trot.

The horses' hoofs clattered at a terrific rate on the hard road. Mr. Boggs held on and spluttered.

Lovell was not brandishing the whip now. He had both hands gripping the reins.

In a very short time, the gates of Rookwood School were in sight. In the gateway appeared a crowd of the Classical Fourth—Mornington, Erroll, Oswald, Flynn, Conroy, and several

more fellows. They all stared eagerly at the trap. Evidently there was some excitement going on at Rookwood that afternoon.

Horse and trap, Lovell and P.-c. Boggs, flashed past the gates of Rookwood like a meteor.

The trap rocked and swayed, the horse clattered, Lovell dragged on the reins, P.-c. Boggs clung on for dear life; and the whole show vanished from the sight of the Rookwooders, going strong.

"Spoof" had changed into reality! Arthur Edward Lovell could not have stopped the horse now if his life had depended on it!

"My only hat!" ejaculated Mornington. "Lovell's going it! What's the odds on two funerals after this?"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome came panting up to the school gates. The trap had long been out of sight.

"They're gone?" gasped Jimmy.

"Ha, ha—yes!"

"Where are they now, I wonder?" panted Raby.

"Half-way to Penzance by this time, to judge by the way Lovell was going!" chuckled Mornington.

"Well, Boggy won't drop in this afternoon, anyhow," said Newcome.

"More likely to drop out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. went in at the gates. They felt, perhaps, a little concern for P.-c. Boggs' official neck. But anyhow, the village policeman was engaged elsewhere for the afternoon—and Rookwood was not to receive a visit from him! Which was the most important consideration, just then, to Jimmy Silver & Co.

The 2nd Chapter.**Unladylike!**

"Oh crikey!"
Teddy Grace—otherwise Putty of the Fourth—uttered that ejaculation in dismal tones.

Putty of the Fourth was down on his luck.

The most cheerful and happy-go-lucky junior at Rookwood was plunged into the deepest throes of pessimism.

Putty of the Fourth was generally equal to any emergency in which he found himself landed. But on this occasion, even Putty had to admit that it was all U. P.

The situation was, in fact, awful! It was more than awful. Frightful, perhaps, would be a better description. There was no adjective in the dictionary that would have done full justice to it.

Not that Putty blamed himself. He had acted from the best of motives. Ragging Mr. Manders, the Modern master, was surely as good and noble an enterprise as any Rookwood junior could have thought of.

Rookwood School had not broken up for the Christmas holidays, owing to the influenza outbreak; and Mr. Manders, left in charge of the holiday school, had made himself unpopular, obnoxious, disagreeable, and many other things like that. Putty's scheme for ragging Manders had met with hearty support among the Classical juniors.

Putty's wonderful skill as an actor, his weird gift for impersonation, had come in remarkably useful—or so it had seemed at first.

With really marvellous ingenuity, Putty had made himself up as a not-beautiful lady of thirty or so, and presented himself at Rookwood as "Mrs. Manders"—in search of a deserting husband! Mr. Manders' feelings on the occasion had not been describable.

Rookwood had quite enjoyed it—up to a certain point! But when Mr. Manders locked Mrs. Manders in his study and telephoned for a policeman, enjoyment changed to utter dismay.

Not the least suspicion crossed Mr. Manders' mind that he had a disguised Rookwood junior to deal with. He was really not likely to suspect that. His suspicions ran to blackmail by an unscrupulous female!

That unscrupulous female he intended to give into custody, to be charged before the magistrates in due course!

Putty, raging in the locked study, in feminine attire, felt that it was all up with him.

"Oh crikey! Oh dear! What a life!" groaned Putty dolorously.

Putty had often had great success in his impersonating stunts. But it was only too clear now that he had done it once too often!

Certainly, the case was not likely to go before the magistrates. When the policeman arrived, Putty had only

to own up, and certainly he would not be given into custody.

But owing up to Mr. Manders—the bare thought made him dizzy!

A fogging was the very least he could expect. It was certain that Mr. Manders would demand his expulsion from the school, when the Head returned.

What view was Dr. Chisholm likely to take of such an escapade? The Head could not be expected to sympathise with the juniors in their yearning to "rag" Manders.

Putty wandered about the study like a caged tiger.

He haunted the window—saying frequently towards the gates, in dread of beholding the portly figure of Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe! He did not even know the masterly manner in which Jimmy Silver & Co. had planned to deal with Mr. Boggs and bar him off.

He thought of dropping from the window, gathering his skirts about him, and bolting. But outside the window, Mr. Manders had stationed Knowles and Frampton of the Sixth, with strict injunctions to see that the unscrupulous female did not escape that way.

Putty was a helpless prisoner in the study.

A stir at the school gates caught his

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PASTE THIS ON A POST-CARD AND SEND IT NOW!

eye, and his heart wobbled. Was it Police-constable Boggs at last?

It was only Jimmy Silver & Co. coming in, in a crowd. Putty breathed more freely again.

It was a respite, at least.

Knowles and Frampton, catching sight of him—or her!—at the study window, grinned. Like most of the Rookwood fellows, they had believed in the claim of Mrs. Manders at first. It seemed incredible that a lady in a bonnet could come to Rookwood claiming to be Mrs. Manders, if she was nothing of the kind! But Mr. Manders' action had restored him in the eyes of the Rookwooders.

Certainly, if the obnoxious female had had a genuine claim on the Modern master, Mr. Manders would not have ventured to lock her in his study and send for a policeman.

Evidently the prisoner in the study was some utterly unscrupulous and designing person, fit to be dealt with by all the rigour of the law! So Knowles and Frampton, fully sympathising with their master, kept watch and ward over the study window, prepared to stop Mrs. Manders if she attempted to bolt, and escape the legal penalty of her preposterous claim!

Little did they dream that under the fuzzy hair and bonnet, it was the face of a Fourth-Former of Rookwood that looked out at them! Putty was so thoroughly disguised that his own parents would never have dreamed of recognising him.

Putty shook his fist at the two prefects in a very unladylike way, and they grinned again.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, madam," said Knowles. "The bobby will be here pretty soon!"

"Forty bob or a month, ma'am!" grinned Frampton.

"Go and eat coke!" said Mrs. Manders.

"Where did you get those features?" asked the unscrupulous female. "Are they features? Do you call that a nose, Knowles?"

Knowles blinked at the lady in the window. Putty was speaking in the high-pitched voice he had adopted as Mrs. Manders; he did not intend to give himself away till the last possible moment. He still nourished a faint hope of escape. But certainly his remarks to the two Modern prefects could not be called ladylike!

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Knowles. "You—you—impudent person!"

"Cheeky old cat!" said Frampton.

"Turn your face away, for goodness' sake!" implored Mrs. Manders. "You oughtn't to take that face about in the daylight, Frampton. Why don't you wear a Guy Fawkes' mask?"

Or perhaps you are wearing one!" Frampton spluttered with wrath.

"You blessed old cat!" he roared.

"She seems to know our names pretty well!" muttered Knowles.

"Of course I do!" said Mrs. Manders, whose remarks were being listened to by a crowd of about thirty Rookwood fellows round the window.

"I've seen you before. You're quite a swell now, Knowles—quite a change from the time when you used to bring the fried fish home—"

"What?" gasped Knowles.

"Think I don't know you!" exclaimed Mrs. Manders scornfully.

"Often and often I've given you a penny at the back door when you brought the fried fish from your father's shop."

Knowles turned purple, as there was a yell of laughter from the delighted crowd. Knowles was not popular, especially with the Classics.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hansom of the Fifth. "We're learning something! Do you people keep a fried-fish shop, Knowles?"

"You know they don't!" yelled Knowles.

Hansom shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know?" he said.

"The lady says—"

"It's a lie!" howled Knowles.

"She doesn't know me at all!"

"She knows your name!" grinned Smythe of the Shell.

"Not know him!" exclaimed Mrs. Manders. "I can tell you all about him! His front name's Cecil. How do I know that if I don't know him?"

"Got you there, Knowles!" yelled Talboys of the Fifth.

Knowles almost staggered. How on earth did this obnoxious female know that he was named Cecil? Certainly his front name had not been mentioned in her hearing!

"Don't I know him?" continued the dreadful female. "Don't his people live in Back Street, Limehouse? Haven't I often and often seen his father go round the corner to the Red Lion on a Saturday night, and come home uproarious?"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Knowles.

"His people made their money profiteering in fried fish in the war," said Mrs. Manders, addressing the yelling crowd of Rookwooders.

"That's how he comes to be such a swell now. He'd like to forget about coming to my back door with the fried fish, and waiting for a penny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Knowles gasped for breath.

The roars of laughter were too much for him. He hurried away through the crowd, and escaped into the house, leaving Frampton to keep watch and ward alone at the study window.

Mr. Manders came whisking out of the house, and waved a cane at the hilarious crowd.

"Disperse at once!" he exclaimed.

"How dare you swarm about the house in this way! Disperse! Go!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Roger?" exclaimed Mrs. Manders.

"Silence, woman!"

"Dear Roger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Close that window, woman!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"Close it yourself, Roger!"

Mr. Manders strode up to the window, and reached up and grasped it, to close it. At the same time, Mrs. Manders leaned out, umbrella in hand. Swipe!

"Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Manders felt as if his mortar-board had been flattened down as far as his lower jaw.

He staggered back from the window.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Rookwooders.

"Come and have another, Roger!" shrieked the reckless female, brandishing the umbrella at the window.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Will that policeman never come! Oh dear! What—what—what an afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putty of the Fourth joined in the laughter. He could not help it. So artistic was Putty, so true an artist, that for the moment he had almost believed himself to be Mrs. Manders. But as Mr. Manders stood at a safe

distance, rubbing his head and seowing, recollection returned, and Putty retreated back into the study, gasping.

"I've done it now!" he murmured. "Oh, my hat! If Manders finds me out after that! The sack—the merry sack! Oh dear! Oh crikey!"

And Putty of the Fourth, repenting of his too highly developed sense of humour, groaned.

The 3rd Chapter.**Jimmy Silver to the Rescue!**

"What's going to be done?"
"Echo," said Mornington, "answers what?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. had joined in the hilarity caused by the scene at Mr. Manders' study window. But they had cleared off now, to gather in a group under the old beeches, and hold a consultation upon the really terrific state of affairs.

Somehow, Putty had to be rescued. But how? He had to be rescued with the truth undiscovered. But how? Even Uncle James of Rookwood was at a loss.

Police-constable Boggs, certainly, was not likely to arrive that afternoon to take Mrs. Manders into custody.

Police-constable Boggs was still in company of Arthur Edward Lovell, continuing his wild career with that enterprising junior. Where Lovell and Mr. Boggs were by that time, Jimmy Silver could not even guess.

Not quite so far as Penzance, as Morny had suggested; but at a safe distance from Rookwood. But it was only a respite! Putty was a prisoner, and Putty had to be saved from the consequences of his hare-brained "stunt." But how?

"If they find him out," said Jimmy, "he'll be sacked! No two ways about that! Biffing a master on the head is too thick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's funny!" agreed Jimmy, his face breaking into a grin. "And it's all right for Manders! He's mucked up the Christmas holiday even worse than the flu! But it's Putty for the long jump if it all comes out!"

"How the thump are we going to help him?" said Newcome. "The door's locked on him, and there's Manders and Frampton watching the window—even if he could jump down in those glad rags. What on earth's to be done?"

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Lovell's got Boggy away safe," he said. "We've got time to act. But—but—but what—"

"There goes Manders!" said Oswald.

Jimmy looked round. Mr. Manders was whisking away to the school gates, evidently anxious to see whether the policeman was coming up from Coombe. Like Sister Anne, he watched the road for Mr. Boggs, little dreaming that Mr. Boggs had passed the gates half an hour before at full gallop. The Modern master snorted with impatience as he watched.

"While Manders is out of the house we might get at the study door!" suggested Raby.

Jimmy Silver brightened up.

"Good! I'll cut in and see. You fellows stay here—a crowd would draw old Manders' eye on us."

"Right you are! Best of luck, old top."

Jimmy Silver sauntered away with an air of assumed carelessness towards Mr. Manders' house.

Mr. Manders was still at the gates, looking through the bars. He had ordered old Mack to lock the gates, being vengefully determined that the dreadful female in his study should not escape unarrested. After the amazing scene at the school, Mr. Manders felt that he was bound to prove, by legal process, that the lady was not what she claimed to be, in order to reinstate himself in the eyes of Rookwood. Only the clearest proof would convince the Rookwooders that there was "nothing in it."

Mr. Manders raged with impatience as P.-c. Boggs did not appear. He had no eyes for Jimmy Silver just then. The captain of the Fourth strolled into Mr. Manders' house, and found himself in the midst of a crowd of Moderns. Tommy Dodd & Co. closed round him at once.

"Classical cad!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Collar him!"

"Hold on," said Jimmy hurriedly. "I want to speak to you, Dobby—and Cook and Doyle! Come up to your study! It's awfully important."

Jimmy Silver's earnestness impressed the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth. They dropped their hostile designs, and accompanied the Classical junior to their study.

"Now what is it?" demanded Tommy Dodd suspiciously. "You fellows have been howling at old Manders like anything. He's a beast,

I know, but he's our master, and we don't allow Classical cads to howl at our master."

"We've got to save Putty!" said Jimmy.

"Eh! What's the matter with Putty?"

"He's in Manders' study!"

"With that old girl?" asked Tommy Dodd in wonder.

"Fathhead! The old girl is Putty!"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle blinked at Jimmy Silver.

The three Tommies wondered for the moment whether Uncle James of Rookwood was wandering in his mind.

"Don't you catch on?" exclaimed Jimmy irritably.

"It's one of Putty's stunts! He's Mrs. Manders!"

"Taint possible!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Ass! It's true!"

"Howly mother av Moses!" howled Tommy Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The three Tommies yelled as the truth dawned upon them.

They yelled and roared and rocked!

"Oh, what a jape!" gasped Tommy Dodd, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Putty—Putty all the time! The cheeky ass! Mrs. Manders! Ha, ha, ha! Just like a Classical jape, too, landing him like this!

You chaps ought really to give up japing. You're no good, you know!"

"Any old thing," said Jimmy Silver.

"But you'll stand by me to help him out? It's the sack for him if he's found out!"

"Yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd at once.

"But what can we do? Burgle Manders' door?"

"That's what I was thinking. The coast's clear."

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"Suppose Manders comes in and catches us?" he asked.

"I'm ready to chance it," said Jimmy desperately.

"We've got to have Putty out somehow. Look here, you fellows cut down and get the door closed, so that Manders can't come in. Lock it and lose the key. I'll attend to Putty."

"We'll do it," said Tommy Dodd.

"Good men!"

The three Tommies, still chuckling, went downstairs.

Jimmy Silver rummaged in Dodd's tool-chest, and then hurried to the corridor upon which Mr. Manders' study door opened.

The corridor was deserted. Certainly Mr. Manders had no suspicion that any junior would venture to "burgle" his study door.

He did not suspect that anyone had a motive for doing so!

Jimmy heard the big door close at a distance.

He stooped and called softly through the study door key-hole to Putty Grace.

"Putty!"

There was a jump within.

"Hallo! Is that you Jimmy?"

"Yes, I'm going to burst the lock! I've got a cold chisel here. Get ready to bunk!"

"I'm ready!" said Putty fervently.

"Oh crikey! If I ever get out of this you won't find me japing Manders again!"

Jimmy Silver shoved the chisel between the lock and the door-post, and crashed a hammer on it.

The blow rang through the house. It was a desperate expedient; but matters were at a crisis!

As the poet remarked of old, desperate diseases require desperate remedies.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Jimmy smote with all the strength of his arm.

The chisel went in and he wrenched at it vigorously, and the lock fairly cracked.

Putty, inside, was dragging at the door-handle to help.

Crack!

The door flew open quite suddenly.

Putty flew over backwards.

"Yow-woop!" howled Putty.

Jimmy laughed breathlessly.

"Cut!" he gasped.

There were footsteps at the end of the passage.

The din had brought someone along.

Jimmy Silver turned and ran in the opposite direction, and cut up a back staircase.

Knowles of the Sixth came stamping along the passage as he vanished—just in time to meet "Mrs. Manders" emerging from the study!

They met face to face! Putty stopped, dismayed for a moment.

But he remembered that he was still "Mrs. Manders" to Knowles.

He gripped his umbrella and rushed at the prefect!

"Here, keep off!" yelled Knowles.

"Oh, my hat! Yaroooh! Help! Yoop!"

Knowles turned and fled as the umbrella swiped.

It came down on the back of his head, and Knowles yelled again, and put on a speed that would have done him credit on the cinder-path.

He vanished round the corner of the passage.

Putty stopped, breathless.

He turned and ran up the corridor the way Jimmy Silver had gone.

"This way!" called Jimmy softly.

Putty sprang up the back staircase.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "I—I say—they'll be after me! Where now?"

"Tommy Dodd's study!" gasped Jimmy.

"But—"

"Come on, you ass!"

Jimmy grasped Putty's arm and rushed him away.

They sprinted into the Fourth Form passage, and met Cuffy of the Modern Fourth, who turned and fled at the sight of Mrs. Manders.

A minute more and they were in Tommy Dodd's study, and Jimmy had locked the door.

"Now get those things off!" he gasped.

"Quick, for goodness sake! Get those rags off! Stuff them in the cupboard! Wash that stuff off your face! There's some water in the kettle! Quick! Quick! Quick!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quick!" yelled Jimmy frantically.

And Putty was quick. He never was a slow youth; but on the present occasion he rivalled the lightning in his celerity.

The 4th Chapter. The Vanishing Lad!

"Open this door!"

Mr. Manders had come back to his house. He found the big door closed, and it did not open to his touch.

He rapped savagely on the door.

half gone. Under it appeared the Etons belonging to Putty of the Fourth!

Half-way through his transformation, Putty was a remarkable sight.

His face was still that of Mrs. Manders though now the wig was gone.

Manders looked as if she had had her hair bobbed!

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Stack the blessed rags away somewhere as he gets them off—into the cupboard—into the coal-locker—into anything!"

"Oh crumbs!" spluttered Tommy Dodd.

"I say, Manders will—"

"Putty's got to be Putty again before Manders sees him! Lend a hand, and don't jaw!"

The three Moderns played up loyally.

It was no time for rags now; the crisis was too awfully serious.

Putty divested himself of his female attire at a great rate, and the articles were jammed out of sight hurriedly by the Modern juniors.

He changed Mrs. Manders' shoes for a pair of Tommy Dodd's boots, and donned a collar and tie belonging to Cook.

The basin in which the three Tommies were accustomed to washing up their tea-things was filled with hot water, and Putty proceeded to rub and scrub at his face to get the make-up off.

Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd began to set the tea-table, and Doyle made the tea, while Cook cut bread-and-butter.

"You fellows come to tea with us,

was just coming out! Must have smashed it with the poker!"

"The fearful creature!" spluttered Mr. Manders.

"But the wretch cannot escape—the gates are locked! She cannot climb the wall, and the constable must be here soon. I will pursue her with the utmost severity of the law! She shall go to prison—to penal servitude—to the treadmill! Find the key of the front door at once, Knowles, and see if the constable is coming!"

The key of the house door was found—in a flowerpot—and Knowles opened the door.

He could see across to the gates, and there he sighted a portly figure being admitted by old Mack.

It was Police-constable Boggs at last!

Mr. Boggs strode across to Manders' House.

He was looking breathless, and he was looking angry. Judging by appearances, he had not enjoyed his afternoon's drive, though it had been free, gratis, and for nothing.

"The policeman's here, sir!" called out Knowles.

Mr. Manders came whisking up.

"Why did you not come before, constable?" he bawled.

"It is hours—hours—since I telephoned to you!"

"Which I couldn't 'elp it, sir!"

said Mr. Boggs.

"Young Master Lovell give me a lift in a trap, as there was a 'urry, and the bloomin' 'orse bolted, sir! 'Arfway to

searched through the house from end to end.

The ground floor was drawn blank, and they ascended to the upper regions.

Room by room, study by study, passage by passage, the house was searched.

The dormitories were examined. Mr. Manders even looked under the beds.

But there was no sign of the unprincipled female.

There was a sound of cheery voices and a clinking of teacups in Tommy Dodd's study when the search-party approached that apartment.

Mr. Manders hurried open the door—it was unlocked now!

Three Modern and two Classical juniors were seated round the table at tea.

They rose respectfully as Mr. Manders entered.

"Have you seen that female?" demanded Mr. Manders.

"We haven't seen any female, sir," said Tommy Dodd.

"That dreadful woman—"

"Isn't she locked in your study, sir?" asked Putty of the Fourth, with an innocent look of inquiry upon his newly-washed face.

"I should not be inquiring for her here if she were!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Don't be a fool, boy!"

"Ahem! Certainly not, sir!"

"Can we help in looking for her, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Certainly! Come, all of you! She must be in the house somewhere!"

"I'll be very glad to help, sir!" said Putty.

Mr. Manders strode out, and the juniors followed, to help in the search.

They helped industriously! Putty of the Fourth was the most industrious of all!

High and low the hunt went on; but the obnoxious female seemed to have vanished into thin air.

It was Putty—industrious and eager Putty—who suggested that the fugitive might have doubled back to Mr. Manders' study; and on that suggestion the search-party proceeded thither.

It was Putty—industrious Putty—who rooted into the study, dragged over a screen to see if Mrs. Manders was behind it, and landed the screen on Mr. Manders' desk, sending it spinning.

It was Putty who whirled the armchair out of the corner, and landed it against Mr. Manders' shins.

It was Putty who knocked the telephone over Putty who bumped the clock off the mantelpiece; and it was Putty who received a sudden, terrific box on the ear from Mr. Manders as a reward for his industry and zeal.

And it was Putty who gave a yell that rang across the quadrangle.

But the search was in vain. Mrs. Manders was not discovered.

Police-constable Boggs mooted a theory that she had escaped up a "chimbley."

Mr. Manders was utterly puzzled and floored.

But it was only too evident that Mrs. Manders was no longer in the house, and was not to be found within the walls of Rookwood, and the search was given up at last in despair, and Police-constable Boggs departed without a prisoner.

And a little later there was a joyous party in the end study on the Classical side.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were there. Arthur Edward Lovell was there, full of happy reminiscences of his drive with P.-c. Boggs.

The three Tommies were there, and Putty of the Fourth was there—only too thankful to be there, safe and sound.

Putty of the Fourth had had the narrowest escape in his harebrained career, and, in his relief, he thoroughly enjoyed the great celebration in Jimmy Silver's study.

But even Putty did not like to think of what would have happened if Mr. Manders had found out the identity of "Mrs. Manders!"

THE END.

"Too much Manders!" is the title of the long, complete Rookwood story appearing in the BOYS' FRIEND next Monday. Avoid possible disappointment, and ORDER NOW!



A FORM-MASTER IN PERIL! Mr. Manders advanced towards his study window. As he came within striking range Putty Grace in his feminine disguise hit out with his umbrella!

"Let me in! Who has locked this door? Open it at once!"

"It's locked, sir!" came Knowles' voice, from within.

"Unlock it at once, then, you idiot!"

"The key's not here," said Knowles sulkily.

"Somebody's locked the door, and taken away the key!"

"Upon my word! I—I—"

Words failed Mr. Manders.

He whisked away, and whisked round the house to enter by the back door.

The three Tommies, on the staircase, looked at one another.

"We've done our best!" murmured Tommy Dodd.

"If they're not clear by this time—"

"Let's get up to the study," murmured Cook.

"I don't want to meet Manders just now."

"Good idea! Hook it!"

The three juniors scuttled away to their study.

But locked doors seemed to be the fashion in Mr. Manders' house that afternoon.

Tommy Dodd's study door was locked on the inside.

"What the thump's this?" exclaimed Tommy wrathfully.

"I say, who's in there? I'll give you a thick ear—"

"Is that you, Duddy?"

"Jimmy Silver, by gum! You cheeky Classical ass—"

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!"

Jimmy hastily unlocked the door.

The three Tommies crowded in, and almost fell down at the sight that met their gaze.

They stood transfixed while Jimmy Silver closed and re-locked the door.

"He—she—he—"

stuttered Tommy Dodd.

Mr. Manders was in the study! Her bonnet and golden curls were gone, and her feminine attire was

if anybody looks in—catch on?" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, good!"

"I wish I had some dashed soap!" spluttered Putty.

"No time to get soap now! Rub hard. I've got a boot-brush here, if you like—"

"Yah!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"That's old Manders' toot! He's found out that the giddy bird has flown!"

Downstairs, Mr. Manders was simply raging.

Knowles had informed him that the obnoxious female was out of the locked study, and Mr. Manders had fairly flown to the study to see for himself.

The sight of the broken lock made him rave. Fortunately, he did not observe that it had been smashed from the outside.

"I heard an awful row, sir," said Knowles.

"I came along, and she

Bunbury we was, when a constable stopped the 'orse for us—and then it nearly got away again, owing to that young idiot. I took good care to drive back myself, sir, young Master Lovell worritin' me all the time to let him drive—"

"Enough—enough!" interrupted Mr. Manders.

"As you are here, well and good. I require you to take into custody an impudent and unprincipled female, who has come here calling herself Mrs. Manders—"

"My heye!" said Mr. Boggs.

"I didn't know you was married, sir!"

"I am not!" roared Mr. Manders.

"This unprincipled female called herself Mrs. Manders without the slightest claim to the title. You are to take her into custody, to be charged with—"

with violence, and—and assault and battery, and—and blackmail, and—and felonious intentions, and—and—"

"That will do to go on with, sir," said Mr. Boggs.

"Where is this here female, sir?"

"In the house, somewhere. I locked her in my study, but she has smashed the door, and escaped."

"Oh, 'eavens!" said Mr. Boggs.

"I will order a general search to be made. You will assist in it, constable. Take her into custody immediately you see her!"

"Yes, sir!"

The search was commenced at once.

All the Modern Sixth were called upon by Mr. Manders to join in it.

There was plenty of evidence that Mrs. Manders had not yet quitted the house, and Mr. Manders had all the doors locked to cut off the unprincipled female's escape.

Then a dozen Sixth-Formers and Mr. Manders and P.-c. Boggs

OVERHEARD AT ROOKWOOD!

Tubby Muffin had a nervous breakdown shortly after Christmas. The doctor attributed the indisposition of our one and only Tubby to brain strain and over work. Still doctors do not know everything. . . . Uncle James contemplates a new wheeze for keeping the slackers up to concert pitch. Nothing will extract the secret from Sickle Silver. There is a rod in pickle, or out of it, for Messrs. Peele & Co.!

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