



# STICKING UP FOR GUNNER!

A Grand Story of the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the famous Rookwood Stories in "The Boys' Friend").

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Jimmy Silver Makes Inquiries!

"By gad! Seen this?"  
Mornington of the Fourth uttered that ejaculation as he stopped before the notice-board in the hall at Rookwood.

A good many of the Classical juniors were gathered about it.

There was a new notice on the board, in the Head's writing, and it ran:

"Until further orders, school bounds are restricted to the school precincts, except by special permission."

It was signed by Dr. Chisholm.

"That's something new," remarked Erroll. "What the dickens is the whole school gated for?"

"I know!" announced Tubby Muffin triumphantly.

"Well, what do you know, podgy?" snapped Mornington.

"It's on account of that fellow Gunner."

"Who's Gunner?"

"The Head don't want us to see him," grinned Tubby. "He's an old Rookwood chap, you know, and he's gone to the bad, and the peelers are after him—"

"Oh, rats!" said Mornington, and he walked on with Erroll, leaving the fat Classical to find other listeners.

"A regular, desperate criminal, that chap, Gunner," Tubby went on, addressing Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn, the three Colonials. "A fearful character, you know, who was at Rookwood—"

"Bow-wow!" said the Colonial Co. together.

"But it's a fact, you know," said Tubby. "I heard P.-c. Boggs telling the Head, and the Head said that Gunner was a regular rotter when he was at Rookwood—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Tubby indignantly.

"I can fancy the Head describing anybody as a regular rotter—I don't think," chuckled Van Ryn.

"Well, perhaps he didn't use exactly those words," said Tubby reflectively. "He said his record wasn't good, and—"

"Muffin, you have been listening at my door!" came a sharp, stern voice close behind the fat Classical.

Tubby fairly jumped as he heard the voice of the Head.

He spun round in dismay.

"Oh, no, sir!" he gasped. "Certainly not! A— a fellow told me, sir—in—in confidence, sir—I—my hat! Where's the Head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin stared round him in astonishment. The Head was not to be seen, and there were only grinning juniors round him.

"I—I— Didn't you hear him, you fellows?" gasped Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Van Ryn.

"Oh, you rotter!" yelled Tubby, remembering that the South African junior was the possessor of the weird gift of ventriloquism. "It was you all the time."

"Lucky for you it was," said Dick Van Ryn, laughing. "The Head wouldn't be

pleased to discover that you'd been listening at his door."

"I—I didn't, really, you know—it was quite by accident, and then that beast Bulkeley came along, and took me by the ear. Bulkeley's a rotten, unfeeling beast, you know—"

"Muffin!" thundered the voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth, behind Tubby.

But Tubby did not spin round in alarm this time. He only bestowed a fat wink upon the Fourth Form ventriloquist.

"You can't take me in a second time, you know," he grinned. "I say Bulkeley's a rotten beast—yaroooh!"

Tubby broke off with a yell as Bulkeley's finger and thumb gripped his ear. It was Bulkeley, and not the ventriloquist, after all!

"What's that, Muffin?" asked the captain of Rookwood.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tubby in dismay. "Leggo my ear, Bulkeley, old chap! I—I was only saying what a splendid chap you were—"

"What?"

"And— and how we all admire you, you know, and—yarooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley walked on, leaving Tubby rubbing a crimson ear. The Colonial Co. strolled away, grinning.

"I say, Jimmy Silver—"

The Fistical Four, after looking at the notice on the board, were going out into the quad. Tubby Muffin rolled after them. He was still bent on expatiating on his startling discoveries.

Tubby prided himself on being a fellow who "knew things." It was his boast that precious little went on at Rookwood without his knowing something about it.

Which really was not very surprising, considering Tubby's methods of obtaining information.

"I say, we're all gated, you know, on account of that fellow Gunner," said Tubby, trotting along with the Fistical Four. "It's rather hard cheese, ain't it. The queer thing is that the Head don't know we know why we're gated. He, he, he! I've found out, you know."

"You want a licking for finding out!" growled Lovell. "What business is it of yours, anyway?"

"Some fellows know what's going on, and some don't," said Tubby Muffin complacently. "I'm one that does. I say, it's rather a disgrace to the school, isn't it, for an old Rookwood chap to be an awful criminal! Fancy, his coming hanging round his old school, with the bobbies after him, you know! I say, I heard the Head say— Yoooooo!"

Tubby Muffin did not mean to imply that he had heard the Head utter that remarkable ejaculation. He uttered that on his own as Lovell grasped him and sat him down in the quad.

The Fistical Four left him there; and when Tubby recovered his breath he drifted away to the Modern side to find fresh audiences.

Jimmy Silver was looking thoughtful. "Tubby's an eavesdropping little beast," he remarked, "and he's got an imagination that

would make his fortune as a war correspondent! But I think he's telling us the facts this time, or as near as the fat Prussian can get to the facts. The school bounds being drawn in shows that there's something up."

"But it's all rot!" said Lovell uneasily. "Rookwood chaps don't become criminals. Tubby's got it wrong, somehow."

"There are black sheep in every flock," said Jimmy Silver. "Must be bad specimens produced even by Rookwood. Look at Lattrey of the Fourth, for instance. He might turn out to be a burglar any day. And there's Leggett. He says he's going into the House of Commons when he grows up, and he looks capable of it. Some Rookwooders have gone to the bad, I dare say—precious few, of course, but some."

"Well, I suppose it's possible," Lovell admitted.

"The chap must have been a Modern," remarked Raby.

"No doubt about that," said Newcome. "He was a Modern, right enough, if he was a Rookwood chap at all."

Jimmy Silver reflected.

"Well, there hasn't been a Modern side at Rookwood for such a jolly long time," he remarked. "Gunner may have been here before the Modern side was instituted, when Rookwood was all Classical. But we're jolly well going to find out something about Gunner. There must be some folk about the school who remember him, as well as the Head. We can't—ahem!—very well ask the Head."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Old Mack has been here for centuries, more or less," said Jimmy. "Let's go and jaw old Mack on the subject. He will know."

The old porter of Rookwood was in his lodge, and he looked rather suspiciously at the Fistical Four when they presented themselves. Old Mack had had his rubs with those cheerful young gentlemen.

"Good-afternoon, Mack!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "How's the rheumatism?"

"None the better for your asking, Master Silver!" replied old Mack grumpily.

Jimmy coughed.

Apparently Mack was in a grumpy mood, and disinclined to listen to the voice of the charmer.

"You've been here a jolly long time, haven't you, Mack?" Jimmy went on, with polished politeness. "Quite an institution at Rookwood. The school wouldn't be the same without you, Mack."

Grunt!

"Do you remember a chap named Gunner, who was here once?" continued Jimmy, coming to the point.

The old porter looked rather sharply at him.

"Yes, I do!" he said shortly.

"Oh! There was such a chap, then?" exclaimed Newcome.

"Yes, there was."

"What sort of a chap was he, Mack?" asked Raby.

"Very like you young gentlemen," said the

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT "YOUNG COKER, OF THE SIXTH!" A SPLENDID TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS.



porter grimly. "Never had no respect for his elders."

"Oh, Mack!"

"Never had any more manners than a Prussian 'Un!"

"Oh!"

"And was always cheeky, and poking 'iself in where he wasn't asked!"

"Ahem!"

"And he was like you young gents in other ways, too," continued old Mack, beginning to relish the conversation. "He went to the bad!"

"H'm!"

"Ended up in prison, so I 'eard," said Mack. "Which I 'ope as you young gentlemen won't go and do likewise."

"Look here—"

"But I 'as my doubts," added Mack grimly.

The Fistical Four gave old Mack expressive looks. The crusty old gentleman seemed to be getting the best of that pleasant conversation.

"You grouching old fossil—" began Lovell, apparently thinking that further politeness would be wasted on Mack.

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mack, old scout, was this chap Gunner a Classical or a Modern?"

"Which I disremember," said Mack.

"Oh, Mack don't remember anything!" said Raby. "I don't suppose he remembers the reign of George the Third, though he was grown up then!"

"I was hazy!" roared Mack. Mack was a little hazy as to when King George the Third had reigned, but he knew that Raby was attributing to him an age much greater than the sixty years he owned to. "And I remember that feller Gunner well, too. He was on the Modern side, which was soon after it was instituted 'ere, and he became a solicitor arter he left. There ain't nothing wrong with my memory, wotever there may be with the manners of some folks!"

And Mack snorted, and went into his back room. The Fistical Four strolled out of the lodge, satisfied with the information they had gained.

"A Modern, you see!" grinned Lovell. "Of course, he was a Modern, if he turned out a bad lot! I think we may as well mention this to Tommy Dodd."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to look for their old rivals of the Modern side. They felt sure that Tommy Dodd would be interested to learn that Geoffrey Gunner, now a fugitive from justice, had been on the Modern side at Rookwood when he honoured the school with his presence.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

**Tommy Dodd is Equal to the Occasion!**

"WITHER bound?" asked Tommy Cook.

The Modern Fourth had just been dismissed by Mr. Manders after the chemistry class, which was known at Rookwood by the less euphonious name of "stinks."

Tommy Dodd was walking his two inseparable comrades across the quad what time the Fistical Four were pursuing their inquiries at the porter's lodge.

"Tuckshop!" said Tommy Dodd. "We're going to see the sergeant."

"Faith, and phwat do we want to see the sergeant for?" exclaimed Doyle, in surprise. "Do you want a yarn about the Boer War?"

"Follow your leader!" said Tommy Dodd autocratically. "Sergeant Kettle's an old chap, Tommy."

"Old as Methuselah, or very nearly!" agreed Doyle. "But—"

"He's been at Rookwood a thousand years or so."

"Twenty, at least," said Cook.

"He joined up again for the South African War, I've heard, and came back again. That was before our time."

"Yes, a trifle!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Well, we're going to visit the merry old sergeant, on account of his age."

"Are you off your rocker?" demanded Cook.

"Bow-wow!"

Tommy Dodd led his two companions to the school shop, which old Sergeant Kettle kept in the ancient disused clock-tower. The sergeant was there, sitting on a barrel, and THE POPULAR.—No. 138.

smoking the pipe of peace, untroubled by customers at the moment.

"Hallo, sergeant!" said Tommy Dodd genially. "I suppose you remember all the Classical chaps at Rookwood for the last twenty years or so?"

The sergeant grinned.

"Not quite, Master Dodd."

"Do you remember a Classical chap named Gunner?"

Sergeant Kettle reflected, and shook his head.

"It might be anything from fifteen to twenty years ago," urged Tommy Dodd. "I know you were away part of the time in Africa; but surely you heard of the chap, at least. He seems to have gone to the bad after he left Rookwood."

"Perhaps he wasn't a Classical intoirely?" suggested Doyle.

"Fathead!"

"But sure—"

"Of course he was a Classical!" said Tommy Dodd, unconsciously reasoning upon the same lines as the Fistical Four. "He must have been, as he turned out a bad character."

"Oh, I see! Faith, and it's a dead cert, then!" grinned Doyle.

"Classical, right enough!" said Cook. "Don't you remember a Classical chap named Gunner, sergeant?"

Sergeant Kettle shook his head again.

"No. I remember there was a young gent on the Modern side of that name—"

"The Modern side!" exclaimed the three Tommies together.

"Yes. I remember him, arter I came back from the war," said the sergeant. "He was in the Fifth then, and a regular rip! He was always in trouble for smoking or getting out of bounds, and tricks of that kind. Not a nice young gent at all. Geoffrey Gunner was the name."

The three Tommies looked at one another rather queerly. They were getting information about the old Rookwooder, but not precisely the kind they wanted.

"I heard afterwards he was arlicted to a solicitor, or something of the sort," said the sergeant. "He became a solicitor himself, and after that—"

He paused.

"Go on, sergeant!"

The sergeant hesitated.

"Look here, we've heard something about him," said Tommy Dodd. "We want to know whether it's true. Did he go on the rocks?"

"He was mixed up in a swindle, sir," said the sergeant. "Something about keeping a client's money, and losing it in spec—spec—something—"

"Speculation?"

"Yes, that's it. It was called miss—miss—miss—" The old sergeant made an effort to remember. "Miss something—"

"Misappropriation?"

"That's the word—misappropriation of funds, I think."

"Did he get to choky?"

"Yes, Master Dodd."

"My hat! Is he there now?" asked Cook.

"I s'pose he is."

"And you're sure he was a Modern?" asked Tommy Dodd, with a lingering hope that the sergeant might be mistaken on that point.

"Quite sure. I remember him well."

"Oh, rotten!" said Dodd.

The Three Tommies left the tuckshop in a decidedly dissatisfied frame of mind. They had hoped, if not taken it for granted, that Geoffrey Gunner, who had gone to the bad, had been a Classical during his Rookwood career. The discovery that he had been on the Modern side was disconcerting.

But Tommy Dodd's fertile brain was equal to the emergency.

"It's a sad case!" he said at last.

"Rotten!" agreed Doyle and Cook.

"Shocking miscarriage of justice!" continued Tommy Dodd.

"Eh—shocking what?"

"Miscarriage of justice!" said Tommy Dodd firmly. "This poor fellow—"

"What poor fellow?" howled Doyle.

"Gunner."

"He isn't a poor fellow—he's a gaol-bird!" said Cook.

"This poor fellow," said Tommy Dodd, undaunted, "is the victim of a miscarriage of justice. These things do happen, you know. There was Convict 88, or 99, or something—chap sent to prison when he was perfectly innocent—"

"Bow-wow!"

"The same thing evidently happened in the case of poor Gunner—"

"Evidently!" murmured Cook.

"Evidently!" repeated Tommy Dodd. "He never misappropriated his clients' money. I feel certain that he was incapable of doing anything of the sort."

"Oh crumbs!"

"He was found guilty on circumstantial evidence—"

"How do you know he was?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Oh!"

"Circumstantial evidence," said Tommy Dodd, nodding his head sagely. "Lots of innocent chaps in novels are sent to choky on circumstantial evidence."

"But Gunner wasn't in a novel."

"Fathead! It happens in real life sometimes. Look what old duffers judges are!" said Tommy Dodd argumentatively. "Why, Classical chaps from Rookwood become judges sometimes! I shouldn't wonder if it was a Classical chap who tried poor old Gunner, and found him guilty on circumstantial evidence!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Or very likely," continued Tommy Dodd, warming up—very likely it was some Classical sneak who misappropriated the money, and put it on to poor old Gunner!"

"Great pip!"

"How do we know there wasn't an old Rookwooder, a Classical chap, employed in the bank, or the office, or wherever it was?" said Tommy. "In the dead of night—"

"The—the what?" gasped Cook.

"The dead of night. In the dead of night he sneaked into the office, or the bank, as the case may be, and—misappropriated the tin, you know, and left poor old Gunner's hanky there, or his socks, or something, to make the fat-headed police believe that a Modern did it."

"Oh, begorra!" murmured Doyle, quite overcome by Tommy Dodd's remarkable imaginative powers.

"Draw it mild, you know!" gasped Cook.

Tommy Dodd sniffed.

"I believe it's most likely that it happened just like that," he said obstinately. "The circumstantial evidence was against poor old Gunner, and he was sent to choky. I shouldn't be surprised to hear that some Classical sneak was living in clover on the misappropriated money to this day. It would be like him."

"Like who?" howled Cook.

"Him! The Classical rotter I'm speaking about!"

"But how do you know there was a Classical chap mixed up in the bizney at all?" said Cook dazedly.

"Well, I don't know it for certain, of course," admitted Tommy Dodd. "But it looks to me very probable."

"Probable! My hat!"

"Hallo, here are those Classical worms, and they look as if they've found out something!" growled Tommy Dodd, as the Fistical Four, with smiling faces, came sauntering from the direction of the porter's lodge.

"Hallo, dear boys!" said Jimmy Silver sweetly. "We've been hearing about an old chap of your side—"

"A regular Modern specimen!" grinned Lovell.

"Merry merchant named Gunner!" chuckled Raby.

"Mind you don't follow in his footsteps!" roared Newcome. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean poor old Gunner!" said Tommy Dodd sadly.

"Poor old rats!" said Jimmy Silver. "We mean that blessed Modern who went to choky—not the only one who ought to have gone, I'll be bound!"

"You don't know the facts," said Tommy Dodd scornfully. "Wait till the facts come out before you crow! There's reason to believe that the murder—I mean the misappropriation—was committed by a Classical chap—"

"What?" ejaculated the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Who sneaked into the bank—I mean the office—"

"In the dead of night!" chimed in Doyle.

"And bagged the tin," said Tommy Dodd, "and left poor old Gunner's hanky there to throw suspicion on him."

"Gammon!" exclaimed Lovell, taken quite aback.

"And it's just what might have been expected of a Classical, I must say that!"



said Cook, loyally backing up his leader. "Just a Classical trick, and no mistake! Yah!"

And the three Tommies elevated their noses into the air disdainfully, and walked away, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. staring. The wind had been taken out of the Classical sails!

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Van Ryn Takes a Hand!**

**F**OR a day or two the chief topic of conversation among the juniors at Rookwood was that shady character, Geoffrey Gunner, once a Rookwood fellow.

The Rookwooders were keenly interested in him. They were anxious to get more particulars about him, but details were hard to get.

That he had been a solicitor, that he had misappropriated his clients' cash, and had been sent to choky for doing so was known. It was also evident that he must have escaped from that delightful resort, choky, since he was free and in the neighbourhood of the school.

Why he had come to that neighbourhood was a very interesting mystery. And the question of his guilt or his innocence was keenly debated in the junior studies.

The Classics, to a man, hadn't the slightest doubt on the subject. They maintained that he had turned out just as a Modern chap might be expected to turn out.

As a judge and jury had decided that Gunner was guilty, it might have been supposed that that question was settled.

But for the Modern juniors at Rookwood it wasn't settled at all, not in the least.

Tommy Dodd's remarkable theory that Gunner was a wronged man caught on very much, on the Modern side.

Indeed, the Moderns favoured Tommy's still more startling theory that a Classical chap had, somehow, been at the bottom of the whole business.

Tommy Dodd was eloquent on the subject. He pointed out that innocent men had been sent to prison, and had even been hanged. Such occurrences were, fortunately, rare, but it was no use denying that they had happened.

Judges weren't infallible, and all sorts of duffers served on juries, according to Tommy Dodd.

"F'rinstance," said Tommy Dodd, "when those Classical chumps over the way grow up, they'll serve on juries, you know. Well, what sort of a verdict would they give? What sort of brains would they bring to the job? Would any chap here take any notice of their giddy verdict?"

To which the Moderns replied unanimously: "No fear!"

"So, you see," said Tommy Dodd, "Gunner was as innocent as a baby. Perhaps the truth will come out some day. And, mark my words, when it does it will come out that the real criminal was a chap who was once a Classical at Rookwood, I feel sure of it."

And the Moderns duly marked his words. The Classics felt more inclined to mark his features.

Anyhow, with that attitude taken up by the Moderns, it was impossible for the Classics to "crow" on the subject. They could not "rub it in" that a Modern's natural destination was "choky," while the Moderns persisted in regarding Gunner as an unhappy victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Indeed, Tommy Dodd went so far as to declare that if Gunner turned up at Rookwood he would ask him into his study to tea as an "Old Boy" whom the Moderns would be delighted to honour.

"Cheeky asses!" growled Lovell, in the end study. Lovell was quite exasperated by the attitude of the Moderns on the subject. "The man's a blessed swindler, you know, and they're making out that he's a sort of romantic victim. I jolly well wish that the bobbies would lay him by the heels. Why, if Tommy Dodd saw him, very likely he'd turn out to be some beetle-browed villain with a face like the Kaiser!"

"Most likely!" agreed Raby.

"I know if I see the beast I'll jolly well hand him over!" said Newcome. "My opinion is that a lot of the other Moderns ought to be handed over with him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's jolly queer what he's come hanging about Rookwood for!" remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "He can't expect to get any

help here. Even the Moderns wouldn't go so far as that."

"And it's queer, too, that the bobbies don't nail him!" said Lovell. "I suppose he's skulking in the woods, but they ought to rout him out."

"Perhaps they have!" suggested Raby.

Jimmy shook his head.

"We shall know when he's caught," he replied. "Bounds will be extended again. So long as we're gated we know he's still loose. Looks as if he's a dangerous character, or the Head wouldn't be so jolly careful."

Lovell grinned.

"The cream of the joke is that the Head doesn't know we know anything about it," he remarked. "I dare say it's the talk of the village, but we're not supposed to go down to Coombe now. Lattrey went down yesterday on the quiet, and he says he heard people talking about it."

"Well, of all the chumps!" exclaimed Lovell. "If it's not on, how can it come off? Do you mean it's on a tree?"

"Ha, ha!" roared the Canadian junior. "It's not that kind of lark, fathead! It's a lark on the Moderns."

"Oh, I see! Wht sort of a lark?"

"Wait and see!" smiled Conroy.

The juniors walked out into the quadrangle.

They bent their steps in the direction of the new clock-tower on the Modern side. Round the little arched doorway that gave admittance to that edifice a number of juniors were gathered, mostly Moderns.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were there, looking somewhat excited. Tubby Muffin, the plump Classical, was there also, and he was wildly excited.

"I tell you I heard him!" he was saying.



Tommy Dodd & Co. dashed down the staircase. "Where are you, Gunner?" called out Tommy Dodd. In a moment there came a faint reply: "Here!" (See Chapter 5.)

Dick Van Ryn's cheery face looked into the study.

The South African junior was grinning. "You fellows coming?" he asked.

"Whither?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"To see a lark."

"In a cage?" asked Lovell. "Look here, Dutchy, you oughtn't to keep a lark in a cage."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Then how can we see it if it's not in a cage?" demanded Lovell. "Larks don't stand still to be looked over, do they?"

"This one will," grinned Van Ryn. "Come along with your Dutch uncle, and see."

The Fistical Four followed him from the study, Lovell looking mystified, and the other three grinning. They guessed the kind of "lark" Dick Van Ryn alluded to was not of the ornithological variety.

Pons and Conroy joined them in the passage. All three of the Colonial chumps wore smiling looks.

"Well, where's the lark?" asked Lovell.

"It hasn't come off yet," said Pons.

"What is it on?" asked the puzzled Lovell.

"On! It's not on yet," said Pons, equally puzzled.

as Jimmy Silver & Co. came up. "I heard him as plain as anything. Some other fellows did. Van Ryn and Pons must have heard him. They were standing near here."

"Rats!" said Pons.

"Well, I heard him," persisted Tubby Muffin. "I tell you I heard him plain. He was calling out."

"Gammon!" said Tommy Dodd doubtfully. "It's all rot! How could he get into the clock-tower? It's locked."

"May have been hiding in there a long time."

"Oh, piffle!"

"What on earth are you burbling about?" asked Jimmy Silver, in amazement. "Is old Mack shut up in the tower? I remember he got shut in once."

"It's Gunner!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Gunner!" yelled Van Ryn.

"Yes."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"I tell you I heard him!" shouted the fat Classical indignantly. "I was walking past

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here with Van Ryn and Pons, and I heard him call out."  
 "Tell us another."  
 "Well, I'm jolly well going to tell Mr. Bootles," said Tubby warmly. "Leggo my shoulder, Dodd. Bootles ought to know, so that he can send for the bobbies."

Tommy Dodd knitted his brows.  
 "It's all rot," he said. "But if Gunner happened to be there, he's not going to be given away. He's an innocent man!"  
 "Bow-wow!" chorused the Classics.  
 "The victim of circumstantial evidence!" roared Tommy.

"Rats!"  
 "And he's not going to be given away," said Tommy Dodd. "I suppose even you Classical rotters don't want to turn informer."

"But he can't be there," said Van Ryn. "I certainly never heard him call out."  
 "Neither did I," said Pons.

"I did," said Tubby Muffin, "and I'm going to Bootles— Yow-ow!"  
 "Stay where you are!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"I say, you know he's a swindler, you know, and a gaolbird— Yow-ow! Leave off pulling my ear, you rotter!" wailed Tubby.

"Hark!" exclaimed Tommy Cook suddenly. There was a breathless hush among the juniors as a faint voice proceeded from the oaken door of the clock tower.  
 "Help!"

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**Tommy Dodd to the Rescue!**

**H**ELP!"  
 It was plain enough. The voice was faint and low, as of a man in the last stages of hunger or exhaustion, but it was audible to every fellow there.

The Rookwood juniors looked at one another with startled faces. Tommy Dodd drew a quick, hurried breath, and stepped closer to the little door. He tapped on the thick oak with his knuckles.

"Who's that?" he breathed.

"Help!"

"Who are you?"

"My name's Gunner."

"Oh!"

"I'm starving! I'm willing to give myself up! I can't stand it any longer! For mercy's sake, let me out!"  
 "My hat!" muttered Dodd. "I—I say, keep this dark, you fellows! The poor beast's here! It would be a fearful disgrace to Rookwood for him to be arrested here! We can't give him up. He's an old Rookwood chap."

"Only a Modern!"

"Rookwood, anyway," said Tommy Dodd, unusually amicable. "It's up to us to stand by him."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell.

"He's a wronged man—"

"Bosh!"

"Anyway, he's a poor, starving beast!" pleaded Tommy Dodd. "We can't turn informers; it's not good enough for Rookwood."

"We're not going to say anything," said Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, I think I ought to go to the Head," said Tubby Muffin, swelling with importance at the idea.

"Shut up!" said Conroy.

"I tell you—"

The Australian junior took Tubby by the collar. It was settled that Tubby Muffin wasn't going to the Head.

The juniors gathered closer round the little deep doorway. Tommy Dodd tapped on the oak again.

"Gunner!" he called out cautiously.

"I'm here!" came the reply in the same faint tones, which went right to Tommy Dodd's tender heart.

"Just be patient for a few minutes, and we'll get in somehow, and bring you some grub to start with."

"Bless you, my boy!"

Tommy Dodd stepped back from the door. The juniors looked at him with very grave faces.

"I say, this is jolly serious, Doddy," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't help an escaped convict, you know!"

"It's against the law!" said Newcome, with a shake of the head.

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NEXT FRIDAY!

**"GUNNER TURNS UP!"**

A GRAND STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

"Jolly serious!" said Lovell, with the gravity of an owl.

Tommy Dodd sniffed.

"You fellows needn't have a hand in it if you're afraid!" he said disdainfully. "I'm standing by old Gunner! All I want you to do is to keep your mouths shut about it!"

"Well, we can do that!" conceded Jimmy Silver.

"That's all I want."

Tommy Dodd cut away to the porter's lodge. The juniors waited for his return in a state of considerable excitement. There had been so much discussion of the missing Gunner, that it was highly exciting to find that the hapless fugitive had actually taken refuge within the walls of Rookwood itself.

Tommy Dodd came scudding back in a few minutes.

"Got it, bedad!" exclaimed Doyle.

Tommy drew a key from his pocket, and held it up in triumph.

"Here it is! Old Mack keeps it hanging over his mantelpiece, and I cut in and bagged it. He wasn't there, thank goodness! Now it's all serene."

Tommy pushed the key into the door, with a grating sound. There was a sudden whimper of terror.

"Oh, run down at last! I am lost!"

"It's all right, Gunner!" called out Tommy Dodd hastily. "Only me, you know."

"Keep off! I will fight for my liberty! I am armed—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tommy. "I—I say, old chap, it's all serene. I'm a friend, you know. I'm coming to help you. I'm Dodd."

"Purse me if you dare!" came in hoarse tones. "I am armed and desperate!"

"Bedad!" murmured Tommy Doyle. "Mind how you open that dure, Tommy—"

But Tommy Dodd did not heed. He turned the key in the lock, and threw the oaken door wide open. There was a general scuttling back of the juniors.

They expected to see a haggard, desperate convict, probably with a revolver in his hand. But the dusky space was bare, and Tommy Dodd blinked in, without seeing a trace of the hapless refugee.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**

**Missing!**

**G**UNNER!" panted Tommy Dodd.

There was no reply.

"Poor chap!" said Tommy Dodd. "I dare say he's half off his poor old head with hunger and fright. He's bolted up the stairs."

"Lucky the door's not bolted, too!" remarked Lovell, with an attempt at humour.

"Oh, don't be funny! I'm going up."

"Mind his revolver!" exclaimed Van Ryn, in alarm. "Suppose he takes you for a bobby, and begins shooting?"

"Rats! He won't!"

"Faith, and he might intiorely!" said Tommy Doyle uneasily. "He seems to be half cracked."

"Well, I'm going to risk it."

"Where's poor old Gunner?"

"Bolted up the staircase," said Tommy

Dodd. "He's taken the alarm. I'm going after him. Come on!"

The three Tommies entered the tower, two of them, at least, feeling rather uneasy. But Tommy Dodd led the way, as brave as a lion.

"Let's go after them," said Dick Van Ryn. "They're not going to face the merry danger alone."

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

The three Colonials and the Fistical Four rushed in after the Moderns, and mounted the narrow, winding stair behind them.

"Get out!" snapped Tommy Dodd, looking back. "You classicals ain't wanted here."

"We're sharing the merry risk," said Jimmy Silver. "Can't let you Modern kids run into danger."

"There isn't any danger, fathead!"

"It may give you an awful shock to see him!" said Pons.

"Eh! Why should it?"

"Well, he may have a face like most Modern chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" roared Tommy Dodd ferociously. "This isn't a time for cackling, or a place, either."

And Tommy Dodd tramped on wrathfully up the stairs. Cook and Doyle followed him, and after them came the Classics, crowding the stairs.

No sign of the convict was seen on the staircase.

"The duffer!" muttered Cook. "He's gone out on the platform at the top. He may be seen from the quad."

"Hurry up!" said Dodd.

A little door at the back of the clock-room gave access to the open platform, surrounded by a parapet. The three Tommies emerged into the open air.

From that elevated point they had a splendid view of Rookwood and the surrounding country. But they were not thinking of views. They were thinking of the unhappy fugitive, and, to their amazement, they found that the platform was untenanted.

"Howly Moses! Where is he?" ejaculated Doyle.

Tommy Dodd looked dazed.

"My hat! He—he can't have jumped off, surely!"

"Oh, begorra!"

With dreadful doubts in their breasts as to what the desperate man might have done, the three Tommies looked over the parapet and scanned the ground below.

They saw nothing, however, but a crowd of juniors, looking upward.

"Where is he?" Jimmy Silver & Co. came through the little door. "Where is the merry convict?"

"He—he's not here!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Van Ryn.

From below, in the depths of the dusky winding staircase, came a voice.

"Help! Master Dodd, where are you?" Tommy Dodd jumped.

"Great pip! He's below!"

"How could we have passed him?" stammered Doyle.

"Must have been hidden somewhere. Come on!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. dashed down the staircase again, and the Classics followed them.

"Where are you, Gunner?" called out Tommy Dodd, halting on a landing half-way down the staircase.

"Here!" came a faint voice.

"Where?"

"Down below! Come quick! I'm fainting!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The three Moderns tore down the stairs. They were perplexed, and considerably exasperated with the elusive Mr. Gunner by this time.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Cook, as a bulky form loomed up in the open doorway on the ground floor. "Look here, Gunner! My hat! It's Mack!"

Mack glared at the Modern juniors.

"Which my key has been took!" he roared. "And 'ere it is in the door. Who took that there key, hey? Come out of there, you young vagabonds, or I'll report yer!"

"Oh, crumbs! It's all up now!" muttered Tommy Dodd.

"Come hout! Which you know well enough that you ain't allowed in there, you and your monkey tricks!" snorted old Mack.

The Moderns crowded out, in dismay,

(Continued on page 20.)

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**STICKING UP FOR GUNNER!**

(Continued from page 18.)

followed by Jimmy Silver & Co. Tommy Dodd only hoped that Mack would not detect the presence of the hidden convict. But as the old porter was dragging the door shut, the faint voice was heard again.

"Mack! Mack! Aren't you going to help me?"

"Oh, the ass, he's given himself away!" muttered Tommy Dodd. "As if old Mack will help him! Oh, the duffer!"

Mack gave a jump. "Who's that?" he ejaculated. "I'm your old pal, Gunner!"

"Gunner!" yelled Mack. "Yes, old fellow; the man who worked beside you in the stone-breaking gang at Dartmoor. You're going to help an old pal, Mack?"

"Hallo! We're learning something about Mack!" exclaimed Cook.

Mack was purple. "Which it's a lie!" he roared. "I never was at Dartmoor, and if you're Gunner, you're going to be 'anded over, you rascal! I'll 'ave you out of that in a jiffy, you see! Coming 'ere to 'ide from the peelers, wot? I'll show you!"

Mack rushed into the tower. "All up now!" said Van Ryn, touching Tommy Dodd on the elbow. "You've done your best, Tommy."

"Poor old Gunner!" said Tommy. "Still, I don't think Mack will find him,"

added the South African junior thoughtfully. "He's bound to, you ass!"

Dick Van Ryn shook his head. "Mack will be jolly clever if he does!" he remarked. "You see, there's nobody there!"

"What!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co. The "lark" had been a success, from the point of view of the Classics.

"Thanks awfully for the pleasant conversation we've had, Tommy!" said Van Ryn affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tommy Dodd stared at the South African. "Are you off your rocker, you Dutch duffer?" he exclaimed. "We haven't had any conversation!"

"Yes, we have, dear boy," grinned Van Ryn, "and it's been awfully entertaining! And next time you have a talk with a convict hidden behind a door, make sure that the merry convict isn't a ventriloquist standing beside you all the time!"

"Wha-a-at!" "Oh, begorra!" "You spoofing rotter!" yelled Cook. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Van Ryn and his comrades walked away, chuckling. The entertainment was over—for all excepting old Mack, who, in great perplexity, was still searching the interior of the clock tower.

Tommy Dodd & Co. gazed after the Rookwood ventriloquist with really extraordinary expressions on their faces.

"My—my hat!" stuttered Tommy Dodd at last. "Spoofed—spoofed all the time by that Classical beast!"

Old Mack came out of the tower with a very puzzled expression on his face. He had

found nobody there. Shaking his head very gravely, old Mack locked the door and carried away the key.

"Spoofed!" mumbled Tommy Dodd. "Oh crumbs! I—I never thought—" "Oh, badad! After him!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Squash him! Jump on him! Scalp him!"

The feelings of the three Tommies were really too deep for words. It was time for action—drastic action. They charged after the grinning Classics, and hurled themselves upon Dick Van Ryn.

"Now, you funny idiot!" "Now, you joking duffer!" "Scalp him!"

But Classical hands were laid on the three Tommies on all sides, and they were dragged off the ventriloquist and bumped on the ground. Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered away, chortling, leaving them there.

Tommy Dodd sat up.

"Oh crumbs!" "Faith, it's a howling ass ye are, Tommy!" gasped Doyle. "The Classics will be laughing us to death over this!"

"Look here—" "Of all the silly asses, you're the silly assiest!" snorted Tommy Cook.

"Why, I—I—" "Yah!"

And with that expressive remark, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle marched off, leaving Tommy Dodd speechless. And for a long time afterwards it was only necessary to whisper the name "Gunner" in Tommy Dodd's ear, in order to arouse him to a pitch of Hunnish fury.

THE END.

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