

JIMMY SILVER & CO. ARE PUZZLED BY THE CURIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF TOMMY DODD, AND DECIDE TO DROP HIS ACQUAINTANCE!



# ACCUSED BY HIS FRIEND!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Stories of Rookwood appear every Monday in the "Boys' Friend.")

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Jimmy Silver is too Good!

**J**IMMY SILVER halted suddenly. He seemed transfixed. His chums—Lovell and Raby and Newcome—stopped, too, in surprise. They stared at Jimmy, but Jimmy was not looking at them; he was staring at the window of the building the juniors were passing.

That window seemed to fascinate the captain of the Rookwood Fourth. The Fistical Four of Rookwood had just turned out of Coombe High Street into the lane, on their way back to the school from the village.

On the outskirts of Coombe was the Bird-in-Hand inn, lying well back from the road. It was a place with a most unsavoury reputation, and taboo to Rookwood fellows. But Jimmy Silver seemed to be interested in it all of a sudden.

"What are you stopping for?" demanded Lovell. "There's old Manders coming up the street. Don't let him see us hanging about here!"

But Jimmy did not move or answer. "Jimmy, you ass!"

"The utter idiot!" said Jimmy Silver at last.

"Eh? Who?"

"Tommy Dodd! Look!"

"What are you looking at?"

"That window—on the ground-floor."

Lovell & Co followed his gaze in wonder. Then they all jumped.

At the open window, in front of the public-house, a youth was standing, with a cigarette between his lips, looking out into the street. The Fistical Four were well aware that some Rookwood fellows occasionally dropped in at the Bird-in-Hand for a game of billiards—in strict secrecy, of course.

But they had never expected to see Tommy Dodd of the Fourth there.

The youth at the window glanced at the four juniors carefully. He did not seem perturbed.

As they gazed at him in astonishment he blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"My only hat!" stuttered Lovell.

"Tommy Dodd!" murmured Raby. "In that den! I'd never have thought it of him!"

"And here's old Manders coming up the street!" muttered Newcome. "He will see him! Has Dodd gone off his chump?"

Jimmy Silver glanced over his shoulder. The angular figure of Mr. Manders, the senior Modern master at Rookwood, could be seen in the distance, coming towards them from the village.

If Mr. Manders spotted one of his boys in a place like the Bird-in-Hand, it was certain that something like an earthquake would happen.

Jimmy compressed his lips. Never for a moment had he suspected Tommy Dodd of "pub-haunting," like Peele and Gower, and the other nuts of the Fourth. Tommy was a bright and healthy youth, and he seemed to live chiefly for outdoor games and for ragging the Classical juniors. It was evident that his schoolfellows had been mistaken in him.

At least, that was the only conclusion the Fistical Four could come to.

"The utter idiot!" muttered Jimmy. "If he must play the goat, he needn't give himself away like that to any passer by smoking at the window! Why, the Head himself might pass!"

"Manders will spot him!" said Lovell. "Serve him right, too! What's he doing there, playing the goat?"

Jimmy Silver waved his hand to the youth at the window.

Surprised and disgusted as he was by this unexpected discovery, Jimmy did not like the idea of Mr. Manders catching Dodd in the very act of disregarding the strictest rules of the school.

The boy at the window stared at him, as if not understanding.

"Look out, Jimmy!" muttered Lovell. "Manders has got his eye on you! He'll think you've got acquaintances in that den!"

"I've got to warn that idiot!" said Jimmy. "This means a flogging—it might mean the boot for him!"

"Stop!" yelled Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver was already running towards the inn.

He reached the open window, breathless. "Get out of sight, you fool!" he panted.

The boy with the cigarette looked down at him.

"Are you talkin' to me?" he asked.

"Yes, you ass! Manders is coming?"

"Eh?"

"Are you mad, Dodd?" shouted Jimmy, in wrath and amazement.

"Hallo! You know my name, do you?" Jimmy Silver blinked at him.

That question made him doubt whether Tommy Dodd really was in his right senses.

"Know your name?" stuttered Jimmy.

"Of course I know your name, as well as you know mine! Get out of sight, you dummy! I tell you Mr. Manders is coming along the street! When he gets past those trees he'll see you!"

"If you're not potty, perhaps you'll explain what you're talking about," said the boy in the window calmly.

"You silly idiot—"

"Oh, draw it mild! Do you want me to come out and mop you up?"

"Dodd!" A voice called from within the room. "Your shot, Doddy!"

"All serene, Joey!"

The youth turned back from the window and disappeared.

Jimmy ran back to the road.

Dodd was gone from the window now, and was safe from discovery by the Modern master, at all events.

Jimmy Silver was not so lucky. "Come on!" he said hurriedly, as he rejoined his chums.

But the sharp, acid voice of Mr. Manders rapped out from behind.

"Stop! Stop at once!"

The Classical chums stopped reluctantly.

Mr. Manders came up, his thin, acid face more acid than ever now.

Mr. Manders did not like the cheery four, and he was under the impression now that he had caught them in grave defection of duty.

"Yes, sir."

"You have just spoken to someone in that public-house?"

"I—I—" stammered Jimmy.

"Do not deny it, Silver. I saw you go up to that window, though I did not see to whom you were speaking."

Jimmy flushed red.

"I wasn't going to deny it!" he answered hotly.

"Very well. You admit it?" said Mr. Manders.

"Yes," grunted the captain of the Fourth.

"Whom were you speaking with?"

"A—a—a chap."

"Someone you know in that place?" asked Mr. Manders grimly.

"A—a fellow I know, certainly," said Jimmy. "I never expected to see him in a place like that, though."

"Then why did you speak to him?"

No answer.

"This is a very serious matter, Silver. If you were in my House I should deal with you very severely."

Jimmy was thankful that he was not in Mr. Manders' House.

"As it is," added Mr. Manders, "I shall report your conduct to your Form master. Return to Rookwood at once!"

The Classical chums looked rebellious for a moment.

A Modern master had no right to interfere with Classics, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were sticklers for their rights.

But it was evidently more judicious to obey the command, and the Fistical Four turned and walked off to Rookwood.

Mr. Manders followed them, frowning.

"Buck up!" muttered Lovell. "Let's get out of sight of that blessed old gargoye, at any rate!"

The juniors hurried, leaving Mr. Manders behind.

Jimmy Silver was not looking happy as

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they approached the gates of Rookwood School.

He had acted in a good-natured way to do Tommy Dodd a good turn, and he seemed likely to have to pay dearly for it.

"What on earth will you say to Bootles when that old Hun reports you, Jimmy?" asked Newcome.

"Blest if I know!"

"It means trouble."

"I know it does," growled Jimmy. "Bless Manders! Isn't it queer that his long nose is always where it is not wanted!"

"I—I suppose you can't explain about Tommy Dodd to Mr. Bootles," said Lovell hesitatingly.

"No. I can't give the silly idiot away, can I? It wouldn't do any good, either. Bootles wouldn't think it was my bizney to warn a silly blackguard that he was going to be spotted."

"I suppose he wouldn't!" grinned Lovell. "You're in for it, Jimmy!"

"Say something else nice and cheerful!" grunted Jimmy.

And the Fistical Four went in at the gates in a troubled mood.

It was quite certain that the captain of the Fourth was booked for trouble, and perhaps Jimmy Silver wished that he had not been quite so good-natured.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Called Over the Coals!

"SEEN Tommy?"

Two Modern juniors asked that question together as the Classical chums came in at the gates.

They were Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle of the Modern Fourth.

They were waiting at the gates for Tommy Dodd rather impatiently, as it was tea-time.

"Yes, we've seen him!" grunted Lovell. "Did he have the eggs?" asked Doyle.

"The what?"

"Eggs! I suppose you know what eggs are?" said Doyle, surprised by Lovell's surprise. "You learn that much on the Classical side, don't you?"

"Well, he didn't have any eggs when we saw him," said Lovell. "He wasn't at a place where you buy eggs, that's a cert."

"Oh, the goosoon!" said Doyle. "Sure, he was going to bring in the eggs for tea! Chap said they could be got, new laid and cheap, at Giles' farm, and Tommy went out on his bike to bag them. Where did you see him?"

"Not at Giles' farm, certainly!" said Jimmy Silver dryly.

"We saw him at the Bird-in-Hand pub, smoking a cigarette at the window of the billiard-room!" snorted Lovell.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" said Cook.

"Br-r-r!" grunted Lovell.

Mr. Manders came in sight behind; and the Fistical Four went on towards the School House, leaving the two Tommies staring.

Certainly, if Tommy Dodd had gone on the "razzle" that afternoon, he had deceived his chums on the subject.

Their belief was that he had gone to Giles' farm to purchase the harmless and necessary eggs.

Mr. Manders, instead of going to his own House, followed Jimmy Silver & Co. to the School House.

Apparently the report to their Form master was to be made at once.

It was probably a gratifying task to the acid Mr. Manders, and he did not want to put it off.

"Silver!" he rapped out, as he followed them in.

"Yes, sir?"

"Follow me to Mr. Bootles' study!"

The Modern master whisked on ahead, and the juniors followed him into the presence of the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Bootles blinked at them over his spectacles.

He was not unaccustomed to receiving complaints from Mr. Manders, and he did not look specially agreeable as the Modern master whisked in.

"I have to report these boys—at least, Silver—for a very serious act!" said Mr. Manders pompously. "Silver, under my very eyes, was speaking to some acquaintance at a low public-house in the village, Mr. Bootles!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles.

"The other boys waited in the road while he did so," said Mr. Manders. "I leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Bootles."

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"Thank you, Mr. Manders!"

Mr. Manders ought to have departed with that, but he did not.

He remained, as if loth to lose sight of his prey.

"Silver what have you to say?" asked the mild little Form master.

"I was doing no harm, sir."

"You spoke to some person in a—ah—ahem!—public-house?" asked Mr. Bootles, in his most magisterial manner.

"The place known as the Bird-in-Hand," put in Mr. Manders.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "This is very serious! You are well aware, Silver, that that exceedingly disreputable place is strictly out of bounds! To whom, pray, were you speaking?"

Jimmy Silver reddened, and hesitated.

He could not mention Tommy Dodd. All the unwritten laws of the Lower School were against sneaking.

Moreover, he had chipped in to save Tommy Dodd from punishment, not in order to wind up by giving him away.

Mr. Bootles' frown grew more severe as Jimmy failed to answer.

The Modern master broke in in acid tones.

"Doubtless some low acquaintance—probably a billiard-sharper!" he said bitterly. "It was at the window of the billiard-room. Silver appears to be on a familiar footing at the place."

"Is that the case, Silver?"

"Certainly not, sir!" answered Jimmy hotly. "Yet you have an acquaintance there."

"No, sir. I—I saw a chap at the window, and spoke to him—a fellow I knew," said Jimmy, colouring again. "I was surprised to see him there. I never thought he was that kind of chap. That's all."

"Ah, this puts a different complexion on the matter!" said Mr. Bootles, his brow clearing. "You were simply going to advise the person to leave such a place—is that it, Silver?"

"Well, yes, sir. And I was going to tell him not to show himself off at the window, if he was ass enough to be there at all," confessed Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"You have acted injudiciously, Silver, but, I think, without bad intentions. You must be more careful!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Manders' thin lips set in a tight line. He did not want the matter to end like this.

"Silver has not given the person's name," he interposed. "Unless he does so, Mr. Bootles, surely it is clear that he is not speaking the truth?"

Jimmy crimsoned.

"I am speaking the truth!" he said. "My Form master knows that I am not a liar!"

"I am sure of that!" said Mr. Bootles. "But, please, give me the name of your acquaintance, Silver. It is scarcely judicious for you to keep up such acquaintances. In fact, I feel bound to forbid you to do so!"

Jimmy ve y nearly grinned at that.

Mr. Bootles did not know that he was forbidding the captain of the Fourth to keep up the acquaintance of a junior in his own Form at Rookwood.

"His name, boy!" snapped Mr. Manders.

Jimmy did not answer.

"Come, Silver," said Mr. Bootles gently.

"You must give me the boy's name, and I must see that such an acquaintance is dropped. You must see that you cannot be allowed to keep up a friendship with a person who frequents such a place as the Bird-in-Hand—a very low resort!"

"Yes, sir; but—but—" Jimmy stammered.

"Well, Silver?"

Jimmy looked at his chums, and they looked at him.

The Fistical Four felt extremely uncomfortable; they certainly could not give the name.

"Silver refuses!" said Mr. Manders, with a curling lip. "He cannot reply! His statement is false!"

"It is not false!" said Jimmy.

"Don't contradict me, boy!"

"I will contradict anybody who says that I am a liar!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "Even the Head has no right to say that!"

Mr. Manders' eyes glistened.

"Mr. Bootles, is this the language—" he began.

"Pray leave the matter to me, sir!" said Mr. Bootles, with some asperity. "As Silver is in my Form, this matter falls within my province."

Even Mr. Manders was not proof against a

snub as plain as that, and, with a sniff, he quitted the study.

"Now, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, blinking at the junior very gravely, "I must have an answer. There is no reason why you cannot give the name of your acquaintance, if your statement is true."

"There is a reason, sir," muttered Jimmy, in great discontent.

Mr. Bootles started a little, as a light dawned upon him.

"Is it possible, Silver, that it was a Rookwood boy?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Bootles slowly. "I understand. This is more serious than I had supposed. Silver, I must ask you for a fuller explanation. I require the name of the boy!"

"It—it was a Modern, sir!" muttered Jimmy.

"It was a boy of Mr. Manders' House?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"Yes."

"Then you must give his name, to be reported to Mr. Manders."

"I can't, sir!"

"Silver!"

"I can't, sir!" repeated Jimmy doggedly. "If I gave the chap away nobody at Rookwood would speak to me again, and serve me right, too!"

"Ahem!"

Mr. Bootles hummed and hawed for a minute or two.

He was a sympathetic and kind-hearted gentleman, and he understood.

Jimmy Silver stood with a crimson face, and his chums had their eyes on the floor.

Mr. Bootles spoke at last.

"Silver, I must conclude that you were warning the boy you speak of that Mr. Manders was a hand. Is that the case?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy quietly.

"That was very wrong of you, Silver."

No reply.

"You will see yourself, Silver, that you must be punished for doing such a thing. You have prevented Mr. Manders from enforcing discipline in his own House. I shall cane you, Silver!"

Jimmy rubbed his hands in painful anticipation.

The Form master rose to his feet and selected a cane.

He said nothing more about the name of the "pub-haurter."

Perhaps he knew that Jimmy would not utter the name under any circumstances, and did not wish to be forced to inflict severe punishment with no result.

The cane swished thrice.

Then the four juniors left the study, Jimmy rubbing his hands hard.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Tommy Dodd Loses His Temper.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. did some thinking over tea in the end study.

Mornington and Erroll came in to tea with them, and the matter was confided to the two.

They were surprised at the news about Tommy Dodd, and rather inclined to be incredulous.

"If you actually saw him, of course, he—" said Erroll slowly.

"We did—all four of us!" said Raby.

"I suppose that settles it; but it's jolly queer. I never thought Tommy Dodd would go playing the riddy goat, like Peele and Gower and Towny, or Smythe of the Shell."

"But we saw him, I tell you!" grunted Lovell.

"Well, if you saw him, of course, that settles it!" said Erroll. "But it's jolly queer."

"You'll hear more of it, I fancy," remarked Mornington. "Bootles is bound to tell Manders that one of his bright specimens has been seen at that delectable resort. Mandy will be wild, and he will want to know the kid's name. Mandy doesn't allow for a fellow's sense of honour. He will go to the Head."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, I can't give Dodd's name."

"Not if the Head orders you?"

"I can't."

"Bit of a twist, arguin' with the Head," said Mornington. "It's up to Tommy Dodd to own up."

"That would see me clear, of course; but he won't do it."

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"He ought to. I'd put it to him plain, if I were you. After all, he's a decent chap, even if he has made a bad break for once. He won't want to see you flogged for refusing to answer the Head, if it comes to that."

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows in troubled thought.

After Mornington and Erroll had gone he made up his mind.

"It won't do any harm to see the chap," he said. "I'll cut across to Manders' House and see Tommy Dodd, you fellows."

"Tell him we'll smash him if he doesn't do the right thing!" snorted Lovell.

"I don't think that would make him do it," said Jimmy. "I don't think I shall ask him, either. I'll simply tell him how the matter stands, and leave it to his sense of honour. He's always played the game up to now, so far as I know."

Jimmy Silver left the end study and made his way to the Modern side.

Three cheery voices could be heard in Tommy Dodd's study when Jimmy approached the door of that apartment.

The three Tommies were at tea, and they looked very cheerful as Jimmy opened the door and glanced in upon them.

"Trot in!" said Tommy Dodd heartily. "Heard of the eggs—what?"

"The eggs!" repeated Jimmy.

"Look!" said the Modern junior, with an air of pride. "I bagged a dozen at Giles' farm—New-laid! Cheap! Giles is a Briton! I'll tell you what, Silver. If you'll own up that Modern side is top side of Rookwood, I'll stand you four of them, free, gratis, and for nothing!"

Jimmy Silver simply stared at him. To judge by Tommy's manner, he had completely forgotten the meeting at the Bird-in-Hand.

"Anything up?" asked Tommy, struck by his look.

"Yes."  
"And you've come here for advice from your Uncle Thomas? Sit down, and get it off your chest, dear boy! You don't mind if I go on with my feed, do you? I've had a bike-ride, and I'm famished!"

Jimmy Silver did not sit down.

The Modern junior's manner puzzled him, and angered him a little.

It looked like bravado on Tommy Dodd's part.

"It's about Manders," said Jimmy Silver abruptly.

"Manders been ragging you?" asked Tommy sympathetically. "Never mind; he's always ragging us, and we bear it. When I'm an Old Boy, I'm coming back to give Manders a hiding!"

"Look here, Dodd, it's a serious matter. Manders saw me speaking to you at the window of the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon, though he didn't see you. He took me to Bootles, and Bootles got it out of me that I was speaking to a Modern chap, warning him that Manders was coming. I haven't mentioned your name, and I don't intend to. But I think Manders will go nosing into the thing, and put it to the Head to make me give the name. I sha'n't do it; but if—"

Jimmy Silver paused.

He had not finished, but the extraordinary expression on Tommy Dodd's face fairly made him stop.

Tommy was blinking at him with such utter amazement that Jimmy almost doubted whether he had only dreamed that he had seen the Modern junior on that unfortunate occasion.

"Are you potty?" gasped Tommy Dodd at last.

"Eh?"  
"Sure, the silly gossoons said something of the sort to us when they came in!" said Tommy Doyle disdainfully. "I took it as a silly joke."

Jimmy's eyes flashed.

"You don't deny that you were at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon, Dodd, when I saw you there?" he exclaimed.

"Deny it!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd hotly. "I should jolly well say I do deny it! If you're not gone potty, what on earth do you mean, Jimmy Silver?"

"You—you deny it?" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Of course I do!"

"You say you weren't there?"  
"How could I be there when I was at Giles' farm, buying eggs?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "Do you think I'm the kind of fellow to go there, anyway?"

"I never thought so till now," answered Jimmy.

"You seem to be making some idiotic mistake," said Tommy Dodd, more quietly. "You've seen some fellow you took for me, I suppose."

"I saw you!"

"Fathead!"

"You've changed your clothes since you came in," said Jimmy, noting Tommy Dodd's Etons. "You were wearing a lounge-jacket there."

"Sure he hasn't changed his clothes, you gossoon," said Doyle. "We met Tommy at the gate, and he came straight to the study."

"Then he changed them before leaving the Bird-in-Hand. I suppose he keeps clothes there, then," said Jimmy Silver contemptuously. "It isn't just a fool trick he's played once; he's in the habit of going to the place."

Tommy Dodd rose to his feet.

"I've already said that I wasn't there, Silver," he said. "You may have made a mistake, taking another fellow for me."

"Have you got a twin-brother at that pub?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Of course I haven't, ass!"

"Then it was you."

"It was not me, if you saw anybody at all!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"It was you!"

"Then I'm a liar?" shouted Tommy.

"Yes, you are!" answered Jimmy Silver at once; "and about the most barefaced one I've ever come across."

Tommy Dodd whipped round the table.

"Put up your hands, you Classical cad!" he shouted. "Keep away, you fellows; leave him to me!"

Jimmy Silver put up his hands willingly enough.

It was clear now that Tommy Dodd did not intend to get him out of the scrape he had landed in.

The Modern junior's line was apparently to deny the whole occurrence, through thick and thin.

Naturally enough, that made Jimmy Silver angry.

Tommy Dodd was angry, too; whether he was lying or not, there was no doubt that his anger was genuine enough.

Cook and Doyle hastily dragged the table out of the way as the two juniors closed in strife.

There was a trampling of feet, and a gasping of breath and the sound of heavy blows in Tommy Dodd's study.

It was as fierce a fight as had ever taken place in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

**A Difficult Position!**

**S**TOP that row, you young sweeps!" Knowles of the Sixth hurled open the study door and glared in. The Modern prefect was "waxy," not without cause.

Dodd and Jimmy, in their excitement, were not aware that they were making a terrific din.

Fist fights were not supposed to take place in junior studies at Rookwood.

Knowles was head prefect on the Modern side, and there his word was law, but for once his command passed unheeded.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd had closed, and they were pomelling one another furiously, both giving much more attention to attack than to defence.

Knowles stared at them.

"Do you hear me?" he roared.

"Stop, it, ye silly spalpeens!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Can't ye hear Knowles?"

"Tommy," shouted Cook, "chuck it, you ass! Stop it, Silver, you cad!"

But the fight went on.

Cecil Knowles strode into the study, with a black brow, and grasped both the combatants by the collars.

With a powerful wrench he dragged them apart.

"Stop it!" he thundered.

"Oh!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver jerked his collar away from Knowles and stood panting.

Both the juniors were very dishevelled, both crimson and breathless, and both boiling with anger.

"You cheeky young rascals!" exclaimed Knowles. "I'll warn you for this! You seem to be the cause of it, Silver. I suppose you came here for a row."

"Let me go for the cad!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "He accuses me—"

"Shut up, you idiot!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

Angry and resentful as he was, Jimmy did not want the matter blurted out before a prefect.

That meant that Tommy Dodd's delinquency would come to light with a vengeance.

But the Modern junior did not heed.

"He accuses me of pub-haunting, and lying about it!" panted Tommy Dodd. "He says he saw me at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon."

"What!" ejaculated Knowles.

If rumour in the lower Forms spoke truth, Cecil Knowles himself was not quite a stranger in the delectable precincts of the Bird-in-Hand.

But if Knowles allowed himself relaxations of that kind, he certainly did not believe in allowing anything of the kind to juniors.

"He says he saw me there!" howled Tommy. "It's a lie!"

"Do you say so, Silver?" Jimmy did not answer.

Tommy Dodd had betrayed himself out of sheer bravado, so far as Jimmy Silver could see, but Jimmy did not want to confirm it.

He was the stern, severe prefect at once.

"He daren't say it again!" shouted Tommy. "He said it before; these fellows heard him! He knows it's a lie!"

Jimmy's eyes blazed.

"If you want me to speak out, Dodd—" he exclaimed.

"I want you to own up that you lied!" snorted Tommy. "You dare not repeat before Knowles what you said to me!"

"If you put it like that, I'm bound to speak out!" said Jimmy. "I did see you at the window of the Bird-in-Hand billiard-room this afternoon. You were standing there smoking a cigarette, and I warned you that Manders was coming."

"My hat!" exclaimed Knowles, in astonishment.

"It's a lie intirely!" exclaimed Doyle hotly. "Tommy went to Giles' farm for eggs, Knowles."

"And there's the eggs on the table!" exclaimed Cook.

"I've no doubt he went to the farm afterwards, as he intended to tell lies about where he'd been!" said Jimmy Silver scornfully.

"Come with me to Mr. Manders, both of you!" said Knowles sharply. "One of you is lying, that's plain enough!"

"It's that Classical cad!"

"It's that Modern worm!"

"Shut up, and come along!" snapped Knowles.

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He strode from the study, and Jimmy and Dodd, exchanging glares of mutual scorn and defiance, followed him to Mr. Manders' quarters.

Mr. Manders fixed a grim look on Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Bootles was in the study with him, and the Form master had just informed him of what he had learned from the Classical junior.

The information did not please Mr. Manders; he was not at all willing to find that the real delinquent was in his own House.

"Well, Knowles, why have you brought these juniors to me?" he asked snappishly.

The prefect explained.

Mr. Manders set his lips tightly.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Then it was Dodd whose name Silver refused to give me!"

"Dodd denies it, sir," said Knowles, at once. "It was Dodd who told me Silver accused him. Silver tried to keep him from speaking, but Dodd insisted upon having it out. It looks as if Silver has invented the story."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Not at all!" snapped Mr. Manders. "That is my own impression exactly."

"Really, Mr. Manders—"

"Really, Mr. Bootles—"

Knowles left the study.

The two masters looked at one another very sharply, but they restrained their acrimony.

Both were in a state of great annoyance, but they felt that a dispute in the presence of junior boys would not do.

"Now, Silver!" ground out Mr. Manders, "you accuse Dodd of having been present in the public-house billiard-room this afternoon?"

"I don't accuse him," answered Jimmy steadily. "I never meant to give his name, even if the Head flogged me for refusing! Dodd brought it all out himself, and so I'm bound to speak out. I did see him there, and spoke to him there."

"You deny it, Dodd?"

"Every word, sir!" answered Tommy instantly.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles, in great perplexity.

Both the juniors looked so indignant that it was difficult to decide between the two, but it was very evident that both could not be stating the facts.

"Where were you this afternoon, Dodd?" asked Mr. Manders, as kindly as he could speak.

"I biked over to Giles' farm for eggs, sir."

"Did you go anywhere near the Bird-in-Hand?"

"Not within half a mile of it, sir."

"That settles the matter to my mind!" said Mr. Manders acidly. "Silver has sought to throw this imputation upon Dodd, in order to cover up his own disgraceful connections!"

"That's not true!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, sir!" thundered the Modern master.

"Kindly be more careful how you speak, Silver," murmured Mr. Bootles. "Dodd, could you prove, if necessary, that you were at Giles' farm?"

"Mr. Giles would tell you so, sir, and so would Mrs. Giles."

"What do you say to that, Silver?"

"I suppose Dodd went there, sir, after I'd seen him, or before."

"How long were you absent, Dodd?"

"I think about two hours, sir. I stayed about the farm a bit; there was no hurry to get back," answered Dodd.

"And you are positive, Silver, that you saw Dodd at the place you mention?"

"Quite, sir!"

"Dear me! It is really a most difficult matter to decide," said the Form master.

"What is your opinion Mr. Manders?"

"I have already stated it, sir, and I do not depart from it one iota!" answered Mr. Manders. "Silver is guilty of falsehood."

"I cannot think so."

"Then you judge Dodd to be guilty?"

"That follows," answered Mr. Bootles quietly.

"Dodd has my support," said Mr. Manders.

"I will defend him against this unjust imputation in the presence of the Head."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Not at all, Dodd. You are under your THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

Housemaster's protection," said Mr. Manders. "As for that wicked and unscrupulous boy—"

"Mr. Bootles, am I to listen to that?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver passionately. "I have told the truth, because Dodd forced me to!"

"I believe you, Silver," said Mr. Bootles. "Come with me. Mr. Manders, it is clear that we differ on this matter, and it had better be left to Dr. Chisholm to judge."

"I agree with you, Mr. Bootles."

"Very well! Come with me, Silver."

And Mr. Bootles whisked away, followed by the Classical junior, who exchanged a final glance of defiance with the Modern as he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
Not Proven!

THE Lower School was in a buzz of excitement that evening.

The affair of Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver was on every tongue.

Every fellow knew that there had been quite a scene in the Head's study, with Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd face to face, and Mr. Bootles and Mr. Manders present.

There had been no decision. Between the two juniors it was difficult for the Headmaster to decide.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome had been called in to support Jimmy Silver, and they had corroborated his statement.

That was evidence enough for the Classical side.

But the Head had telephoned to Giles' farm, and obtained Mr. Giles' evidence that Tommy Dodd assuredly had been there that afternoon, and had been about the farm for some time, at least.

True, Tommy could have squeezed the time for a visit to the Bird-in-Hand as well; but, in that case, he must have cycled very fast to cover the distance in the time he had left.

Then it came out that Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood while out that afternoon, had passed Dodd on the road, and he bore witness that when he saw him Dodd was pedalling along in a leisurely way.

Altogether, the whole affair was very perplexing.

That the Fistical Four were speaking falsely was incredible.

Moreover, there was the self-evident fact that they had not wanted the story to be known at all, and gave their evidence before the Head very reluctantly.

If they were wrong it was because they were mistaken—honestly mistaken, as even Tommy Dodd had to admit when he was cool.

There hardly seemed room for a mistake, and the weight of evidence was against Tommy Dodd; but the Head did not find him guilty.

The junior's denials were so strenuous, his indignation seemed so sincere, that the Head could not help giving him the benefit of the doubt—such doubt as there was. The matter ended, therefore, in a sort of verdict of "Not proven," which was unsatisfactory to all parties concerned.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were glad enough that Tommy had escaped the "chopper," so far as that went.

They would have been very sorry to have been instrumental in getting him flogged. But it was not pleasant to be set down as either false witnesses or reckless accusers.

Naturally, the Moderns backed Tommy as one man.

The Classics were equally assured that Jimmy Silver was in the right.

There was endless arguing on the subject, and a good many scraps.

By the next day a new bitterness had crept into the old rivalry between Classical and Modern in the Lower School.

When Jimmy Silver & Co. came in after football practice they met Tubby Muffin in the doorway.

The fat Classical was grinning.

"I've spotted him, Jimmy!" he announced. And two or three fellows looked round.

"Eh! What's that?" asked Jimmy, not very good-humouredly.

"I've spotted that Modern cad!" grinned Tubby. "I'm a witness!"

"What's that?" chimed in Dick Oswald.

"Whom have you spotted, Tubby?"

"Tommy Dodd, at the Bird-in-Hand!" chortled Tubby.

There was a buzz at once, and the Classical juniors gathered round Tubby, who swelled with importance.

"Where did you see him?" exclaimed Conroy.

"I was down in Coombe after lessons," explained Tubby, with another chortle. "So I thought to myself, if he was there yesterday, he might be there to-day, so I went down the lane beside the pub, you know, to look for him. And there he was, sitting on the veranda at the back."

"Dodd was?" exclaimed Van Ryn.

"Tommy Dodd, as large as life!" grinned Tubby Muffin. "He was smoking cigarettes and drinking lemonade."

"Great Scott!"

"And he was playing cards with Joey Hook, the bookie," added Tubby Muffin. "I wasn't six yards from him. He looked round suddenly, and saw me, and pitched something at me, and I cleared."

"Well, that settles it, if it wanted settlin'!" remarked Mornington.

"Shall I go to Bootles, Jimmy?" asked Tubby.

"No, you young ass! Of course not!"

"But Dodd says you've been lying about him."

"Let him!" said Jimmy. "You don't want to have a hand in getting a chap sacked from Rookwood. Keep a still tongue, Tubby."

"That's right enough," said Oswald. "But we shall know what to think of the cad now, anyway!"

It was not long before Tubby Muffin's story spread to the Modern side.

But it did not find much credence there. Tommy Dodd denied it point-blank—as the Classics fully expected he would.

His chums took his word without question, and agreed that Tubby had been put up to it by Classical plotters.

But some of the Modern fellows looked rather queerly at Tommy Dodd afterwards—they knew very well that Jimmy Silver was not the fellow to put anybody up to making false statements.

Tommy Dodd was rather under a cloud on his own side of Rookwood now.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.  
Caught in the Act!

ON Saturday afternoon Bulkeley of the Sixth crossed over to Mr. Manders' House with a thoughtful frown on his brow.

He proceeded to Knowles' study, and found the Modern prefect there.

Knowles met him with a look of cold surprise.

But Bulkeley smiled good-naturedly as he entered the room.

"Have you some time to spare this afternoon, Knowles?" he asked.

"I'm going to play footer. But what is it?"

"About that affair of Silver and Dodd."

"Well?"

"I was going to suggest that we should go together, and make sure," said Bulkeley.

"If he goes there, we can catch him in the act, and make an end of the matter."

"And if he doesn't?"

"That will leave us where we are, of course. But it's up to the prefects to take some trouble to settle the wretched affair; in fact, the Head has asked me to do what I can to find out the truth."

"Mr. Manders has said the same to me," said Knowles, with a nod.

"Well, the only way I can think of is to keep an eye on the place," said Bulkeley.

"Will you come?"

"No," said Knowles coolly. "I won't come, thanks!"

Bulkeley flushed.

"Very well; I'll go alone," he said shortly. And he went.

Knowles strolled away to Big Side. He was very pleased to have administered a snub to Bulkeley; but, to do Knowles justice, he believed that Tommy Dodd was quite innocent. His dislike of Jimmy Silver & Co. made him ready to believe any ill of those lively young gentlemen.

Bulkeley was not looking happy as he walked down the lane towards Coombe.

He was giving up an afternoon when he would have preferred to be on the footer-ground, and the task he had set himself was a distasteful one.



But he had his duty to do. Bulkeley glanced at the Bird-in-Hand as he came in sight of the place. He had intended to take a seat somewhere in the fields, with a book, and keep an eye on the place.

As it happened, that was not necessary. For, even as he glanced at the inn, he caught sight of a man and a boy at the window of the billiard-room.

Bulkeley stopped, and stared. The boy was not in Etons, certainly. He was wearing a rather elegant lounge-jacket of light grey.

But in every other respect he was Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth.

He had his hands in his pockets, and a cigarette between his lips, as he stood by the open window, chatting with Mr. Joey Hook, bookmaker and sharper.

"My only hat!" muttered Bulkeley, in astonishment.

The utter recklessness of the junior astonished him.

Bulkeley knitted his brows, and strode towards the inn.

Tommy Dodd would be marched back to Rookwood by the scruff of his neck, and straight into the presence of the Head, that was Bulkeley's intention.

But as he came striding up to the window, the boy within caught sight of him, and disappeared from view in a moment.

When Bulkeley reached the window he found Mr. Hook leaning on the sill, gazing out over his cigar with a placid face.

"Afternoon, sir!" said Mr. Hook affably.

"There is a boy named Dodd in this house, who belongs to Rookwood School," said Bulkeley. "I have come to take him away."

"No feller belonging to Rookwood School is 'ere, sir."

"I saw him at the window."

"You're dreaming, sir."

"Will you tell him I am here and waiting for him?"

"Ow can I when there ain't sich a person on the premises?"

Bulkeley's eyes gleamed. He turned away.

It came into his mind that while he was kept in talk there Tommy Dodd was probably cutting across the fields at top-speed for Rookwood, with the intention of establishing an "alibi" there.

With a grim brow, Bulkeley strode away towards the school.

He strode fast enough, but he was well aware that if Dodd had fled across the fields he was at the school before this.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the quad when he came in, and he stopped to speak to them.

"Has Dodd come in, Silver?" he called out.

"Haven't seen him, Bulkeley," answered Jimmy Silver. "Not since dinner, anyway."

"I am sorry, Silver, that I doubted your statement about Dodd," said the Rookwood captain. "I have just discovered him myself at the public-house."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy.

Bulkeley walked on towards Mr. Manders' House, leaving the Fistical Four with very serious faces.

Bulkeley went into Mr. Manders' House, and met Knowles in the hall.

Knowles gave him a sarcastic look.

"Hallo, you're back early!" he said.

"Made any discoveries?"

"Yes"

"Good!" Knowles closed one eye at his chum Frampton. "You ought to be a detective, Bulkeley."

"Never mind that. Have you seen Dodd?"

"Yes; he's fagging in my study. Do you want him?"

"I want to take him to the Head."

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Knowles.

"I found him at the public-house."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Knowles. "Is that a joke?"

"It's hardly a matter for joking," said Bulkeley, with a frown. "It means expulsion for Dodd."

"I hardly think so," yawned Knowles. "Dash it all, Bulkeley, if you're serious, this is too thick. I can understand a fellow, even a prefect, backing up his own House, but this won't do. Think again."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily. "But never mind what you mean; it's Dodd I want."

He strode on to Knowles' study.

The Modern prefect followed him there with a sardonic grin on his face.

Tommy Dodd was in the study, kneeling at the fire and making toast

NEXT TUESDAY!

"TOMMY DODD'S DOUBLE!"



**CAUGHT IN THE ACT!** Bulkeley glanced at the Bird-in-Hand, and he caught sight of a man and a boy at the window of the billiards-room. He stopped and stared. Although the boy was not in Etons, the captain saw at once it was Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth! (See Chapter 6.)

He turned a ruddy face round at the sound of footsteps.

"Nearly ready, Knowles— Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"You will follow me to the Head, Dodd," said Bulkeley sternly.

"Certainly, if you like," said Tommy Dodd, with a look of wonder. "Is anything up, Bulkeley?"

"Hold on," said Knowles grimly. "Let's have this out. Are you going to tell the Head, Bulkeley, that you've seen Dodd at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon?"

"Naturally."

"What!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Dodd, do you deny having been out of gates this afternoon?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Yes, rather!" answered the junior.

"You uphold him in denying it, Knowles?"

"Certainly!"

"Be careful, Knowles! I repeat that I saw Dodd at the Bird-in-Hand, with my own eyes, less than half an hour ago."

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"Tell that to the Head," he answered. "I will swear that half an hour ago I sent Dodd to my study to get my tea ready, and that he's been here ever since."

"You will tell the Head a barefaced falsehood rather than allow a fellow in your House to be punished for his rascality!"

exclaimed Bulkeley.

"No. I'll tell him that you've plotted with a gang of juniors to disgrace a Modern kid because you're up against our side of Rookwood!" said Knowles venomously.

"Bulkeley—" began Tommy Dodd.

"Hold your tongue!" said Bulkeley roughly. His eyes gleamed at Knowles. "Knowles, I shall not enter into bandying words with you before the Head; to Dr. Chisholm your word is as good as mine. If you hold to

what you have just said, I will not see a Rookwood prefect perjuring himself. I shall not make the report at present, at any rate."

And with a clouded brow Bulkeley strode away into the quadrangle.

He passed Jimmy Silver & Co. without glancing at them.

"Dodd's not with him," murmured Lovell.

"But if Bulkeley actually saw him, Dodd can't wriggle out of it this time."

But apparently Dodd had "wriggled" out of it, for he was not taken before the Head.

There was much speculation on the Classical side, and on the Modern side, too.

What Bulkeley had said to the Fistical Four was known, and even on the Modern side Bulkeley's word was known to be as good as gold, and taken without question.

Knowles was rather liked for standing up for a Modern junior, but even the Moderns' opinion of his truthfulness was not a flattering one.

As for Tommy Dodd, he found himself looked at oddly and coldly on all sides.

His denial counted for nothing against Bulkeley's word.

His nearest chums, Cook and Doyle, stood by him loyally, though perhaps with much inward uneasiness.

But the rest of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, Classical and Modern, gave Tommy Dodd the "marble eye" in the grimmest way.

Tommy Dodd was under a cloud, and even in the faces of his own chums he could read the dark doubts which they vainly tried to hide.

THE END.

(See page 24 for particulars of next week's fine stories.)

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A GRAND TALE OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL. BY OWEN CONQUEST.