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"TOMMY DODD'S DOUBLE."

A Fine Story of Rookwood School.
By OWEN CONQUEST.

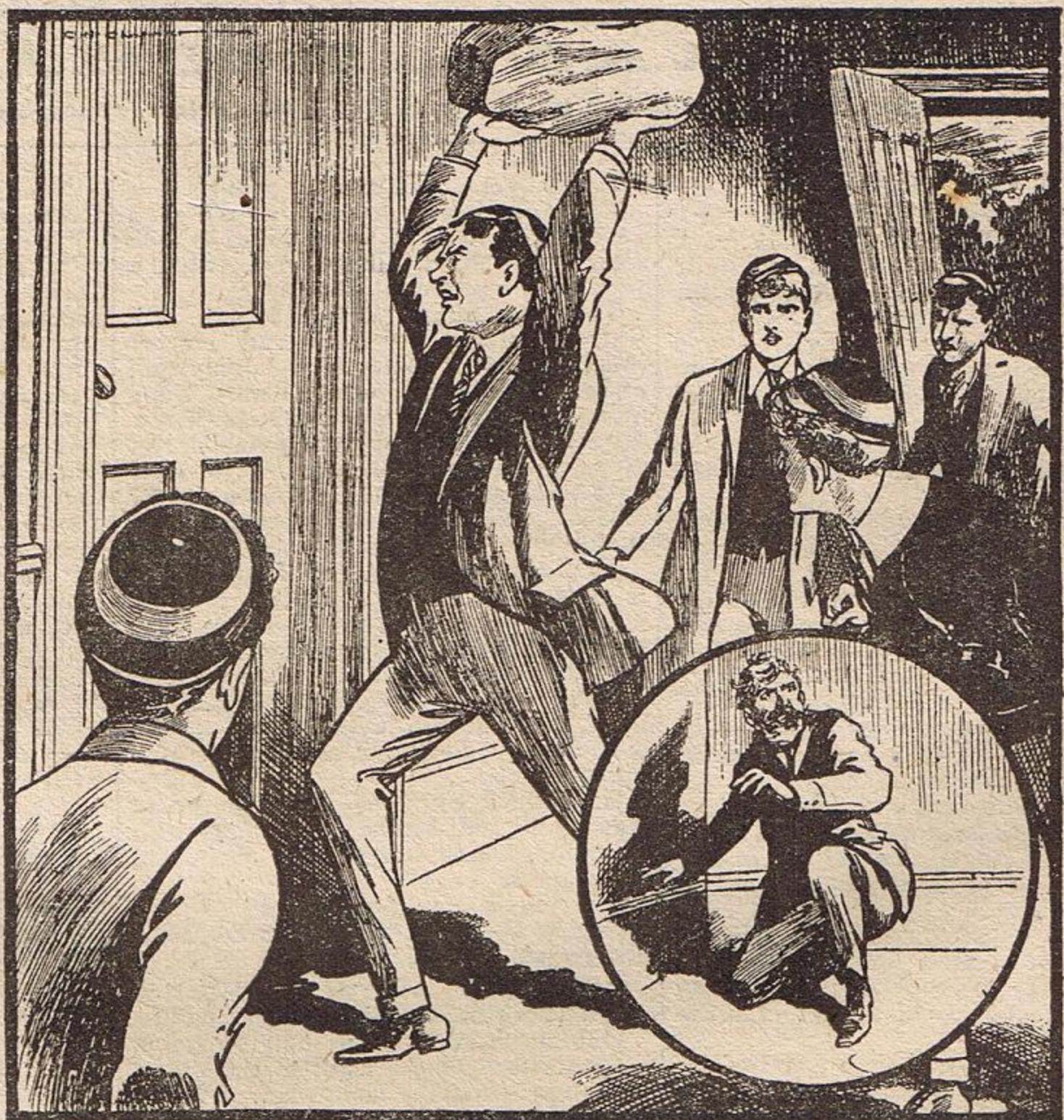
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A STIRRING TALE OF REAL SCHOOLBOYS! AN AMAZING DISCOVERY IS MADE AND TOMMY DODD'S "BLACK" CHARACTER IS CLEARED!

TOMMY DODD'S DOUBLE!



A Grand Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Under a Cloud.

"PUB-HAUNTER!"

It was Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, who squeaked out that unpleasant remark.

Tommy was walking in the quadrangle, at Rookwood, with a moody frown on his brow, and his hands driven deep into his pockets. He was thinking, and his expression showed that his thoughts were not pleasant ones.

He started out of his grim reverie as Tubby Muffin squeaked.

Tubby grinned at him. "What's the odds?" he proceeded. "Have you had a hundred up with Joey Hook lately? He, he, he!"

The Modern junior stared grimly at Tubby. "You fat rascal!" he said, between his teeth. "What do you mean?"

Tubby gave a fat chuckle. "Pub-haunter!" he said agreeably. "Yah! When did you last go to the Bird-in-Hand? He, he, he!"

Tommy Dodd strode towards him, his eyes gleaming.

The fat Classical promptly beat a retreat. Of late Tommy Dodd had been rather under a cloud in the Fourth Form, at Rookwood, and indeed there were few beside his own chums—Cook and Doyle—who did not believe that Tommy had taken to shady ways.

But being chipped on the subject in the quad by the fat and egregious Tubby was rather too much.

Tommy Dodd's look was quite Hunnish as he made for Tubby Muffin, and the fat grin died off Tubby's face as he fled.

Apparently he had not expected Dodd to cut up rusty at his agreeable remarks, but Tommy was cutting up very rusty indeed.

"Stop, you fat rotter!" panted Tommy Dodd.

He rushed in pursuit. Tubby Muffin did not stop. He was as likely to stop as if a wild Hun had been after him.

But the fat and tubby youth was no runner, and Tommy Dodd gained on him at every step.

Tubby blinked round, and saw Tommy's hand outstretched, and gave a gasp of affright.

He dodged through the archway into Little Quad, with Tommy only a yard behind. There was a collision and a roar as Tubby came charging through the shadowy archway.

On the other side, in Little Quad, the Fistical Four of the Fourth were standing in a group, talking football.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not see Tubby till he arrived, and Tubby did not see them till he crashed into them.

Jimmy Silver received the full shock of Tubby's portly person, and sat down with a howl.

Lovell staggered back on one side, and

Raby on the other, and Newcome just succeeded in dodging the charge.

Tubby reeled back from the shock and sat down.

"Ow!" he gasped. "You fat idiot!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Where are you running to?"

"Yaroo! Help! Rescue!" yelled Tubby. Tommy Dodd was upon him in a moment. He grasped Tubby Muffin by the collar, and rolled him over on the ground.

Tubby yelled dolorously, as, with Dodd's iron grip on the back of his neck, his fat face was rubbed in the mud.

"Groogh! Hoogh! Yoogh! Help! Rescue!" spluttered Tubby.

The Classical chums stared at the scene in amazement for a moment.

Then they rushed to the rescue. The Fistical Four were not likely to look on idly while a Classical was thus handled by a Modern.

They grasped Tommy Dodd on all sides and dragged him off.

"You Modern rotter!" shouted Lovell. "What are you up to? If you're spoiling for a fight, here's four to choose from!"

Tubby Muffin sat up and roared. His podgy face was almost unrecognisable from the mud in which Dodd had rubbed it.

"Gerrogh!" spluttered Tubby. "Oh dear! Keep him off! Oh crumbs!"

Tommy Dodd struggled in the grasp of the Classicals.

He was so enraged that he did not seem to care for the fact that they were four to one, and they found it rather difficult to hold him.

"Let me get at him!" he roared. "You're not getting at him at present, my pippin!" said Jimmy Silver coolly. "What's he done, anyway?"

"Yow-ow-ow! I only called him a pub-haunter!" wailed Tubby Muffin. "He is a pub-haunter, ain't he? Yow-ow-ow!"

"You hear him?" panted Tommy Dodd. "Let me go! I'll smash the fat beast!"

Jimmy Silver tightened his grip on the enraged Modern.

"You won't do any smashing," he said. "I don't see that Tubby need howl it at you, certainly, but what he says is true. You are a pub-haunter and a smoky black-guard, Tommy Dodd!"

"What?" panted Tommy. "What's the good of telling whoppers?" demanded Lovell. "Haven't all four of us seen you smoking at the window of the Bird-in-Hand? Hasn't Bulkeley of the Sixth caught you there?"

"It's a lie!" "Oh, rats! You know it's true."

"Every word of it!" howled Tubby Muffin, scrambling up, and keeping at a safe distance. "You're a pub-haunting rotter, Tommy Dodd! You go to the Bird-in-Hand to smoke and play billiards and back horses! Everybody at Rookwood knows it. Yah!"

"Will you let me go?" hissed Tommy Dodd. "No," said Raby. "You're not going to touch Tubby for telling you the truth! If you don't like it, don't do it."

"Rescue!" roared Tommy Dodd, as Doyle and Cook of the Modern Fourth came out of the library. Towie followed them out.

The three Moderns rushed across at once. They did not stop to ask for explanations. It was enough for them to see a fellow-Modern struggling with Classicals.

They rushed into the fray at once. Tommy Dodd had to be released then, and the Fistical Four were engaged at once in a terrific combat with the four Moderns.

Tubby Muffin looked on.

But as Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, appeared in sight, Tubby discreetly dodged through the archway into Big Quad and disappeared.

The fighting juniors did not see the Form master, however. They were too busily engaged for that.

Mr. Bootles strode upon the scene, with his eyes gleaming wrath over his spectacles.

"Boys!" he shouted. "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Bootles!"

The combat ceased. Eight crimson and dishevelled juniors blinked at Mr. Bootles, panting and still furious.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the master of the Fourth angrily. "How dare you fight like—like hooligans!"

"Those Classical cads—"

"Those Modern worms—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Bootles. "I have no doubt you are all equally to blame! You will follow me to my study, and I shall cane you all!"

"Oh!"

Mr. Bootles whisked away, and the rival juniors, exchanging glares of defiance, followed him across the quadrangle.

In Mr. Bootles' study a few minutes later there was a sound of steady swishing that lasted several minutes.

When it was over, eight juniors limped away, squeezing their hands, and not feeling at present inclined for any further scrapping.

But they glared at one another as they parted, their wrath unappeased.

The old rivalry of the juniors of Rookwood was growing bitter, and the bitterness that had crept into it was due to the strange stories that were afloat concerning Tommy Dodd.

That unfortunate youth was under a cloud, and there were few juniors at Rookwood, even on his own side of the school, who did not believe that the accusation against him was true, and the angry indignation he displayed was looked upon as so much camouflage.

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NEXT TUESDAY!

"JOKER OR THIEF?"

A GRAND TALE OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL. BY OWEN CONQUEST.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Spotted!

"WHAT was it all about intirely?" Tommy Doyle asked that question as the four Modern juniors moved away towards Mr. Manders' House, looking grim and discomfited.

Tommy Dodd grunted. "That fat cad Muffin yelled at me, and I bumped him!" he answered. "Those Classical cads stood up for him! He called me a pub-haunter!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Towle, with a change of expression.

Tommy Dodd glared at Towle, while Cook and Doyle looked still more uncomfortable.

"Perhaps you agree with him, Towle?" said Dodd, in a dangerous tone.

"I don't hold with allowing Classicals to slang Modern chaps," said Towle, "But, all the same—"

"Well, what?"

"Oh, don't glare at me!" said Towle independently. "Bump the Classicals as much as you like for calling you names, and I'll help you; but among ourselves we know what we know."

"And what do you know?" demanded Tommy Dodd fiercely.

"We know that Jimmy Silver & Co. say that they saw you at the Bird-in-Hand with Joey Hook, the billiard-sharper!" retorted Towle.

"It's a lie!"

"And we know," continued Towle, "that Jimmy Silver isn't a liar! What's the good of giving us that?"

Tommy Dodd clenched his hand.

"And it's not only that crowd—it's Bulkeley!" said Towle. "He fairly caught you there—it's pretty well known! He'd have reported you to the Head, only our prefect—Knowles—stood by you!"

"I was fagging for Knowles in his study when Bulkeley said he saw me at that pub!" said Tommy Dodd, between his teeth.

"We know Knowles said so!"

"Do you think our head-prefect would tell lies to get a Fourth Form chap out of a scrape?"

"I think Knowles would do anything that he thought was up against Bulkeley!" answered Towle.

"So you believe that I'm a pub-haunter, do you?"

"Of course I do, as you are one!"

Tommy Dodd clenched his fists and advanced on Towle.

"You won't tell me so without putting up your hands!" he said.

"Anybody else will tell you so!" retorted Towle. "I'll back you up against the Classicals, but I'm not going to pretend that I believe you when I don't! Nobody else believes you, either! You've been seen at the place more than once! If you don't like being called a pub-haunter, don't be one!"

"You lying rotter—"

"Easy does it!" murmured Tommy Cook, catching Dodd by the arm. "No good scrapping on our own side, Tommy! Keep that for the Classicals!"

"Do you think I'm going to let Towle or any other cad doubt my word?" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Cad yourself!" said Towle. "You're disgracing the Form, and you know it! And I can't see what you're putting on steam for—it's only humbug!"

Tommy Dodd would have rushed on him, but the other Tommies held him back.

Towle shrugged his shoulders, and walked away by himself.

Dodd gave his chums a look of passionate anger.

"What are you stopping me for?" he panted.

"No good scrapping. You can't fight every fellow on the Modern side, as well as the Classicals," said Cook.

"Perhaps you believe Jimmy Silver's lies?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd fiercely.

"They're not lies," said Cook. "Jimmy Silver must have made a mistake, I suppose. It's queer that the four of them made the same mistake, and then Bulkeley of the Sixth goes and makes the same mistake. You don't blame fellows for believing it."

"Does that mean that you believe it?" said Tommy, between his teeth.

"No," said Cook slowly. "I don't believe it—I can't. But if you weren't my pal,

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Tommy, I should believe it fast enough on the evidence."

Tommy Dodd breathed hard.

"Put it to yourself, Tommy," said Doyle.

"If you heard that story about another chap, backed up by Bulkeley of the Sixth and Jimmy Silver as eye-witnesses, wouldn't you believe it?"

Tommy started.

It had not occurred to him to look at the matter in that light before, and he was startled.

"Suppose it was Lacy or Leggett or Towle, and you heard the yarn, with such witnesses to prove it?" said Doyle. "What then?"

Tommy Dodd did not answer.

But his silence was as good as an answer.

"You see," said Doyle. "It's no good getting your rag out. We don't believe it; we know you too well. But—but it bates me intirely! I can't understand it at all, at all!"

"It's not true!" said Tommy Dodd at last. "I've never been to the Bird-in-Hand, I don't know Joey Hook except by sight, and I never smoke, or play the fool with billiards or races! You fellows know I don't!"

"We—we know, of course!"

"I don't believe you half believe, me!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"We—we do!" said Cook. "We're bound to. But it's jolly queer!"

"Awfully queer!" said Doyle.

Tommy Dodd gave a lowering look.

It was plain enough that it was only their chummy loyalty that made them cling to their faith in him.

On the evidence alone they would have found him guilty, as the rest of Rookwood did.

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"There must be some chap like you in Coombe," said Cook at last, though with hesitation, for he realised how wild such a theory sounded—"some other fellow who's like you to look at, Tommy. Some low cad, of course, or he wouldn't be hobnobbing with that gang at the Bird-in-Hand."

"It's not possible!" growled Dodd.

"Is there anybody—a relation, for instance—who's just like you that you know of?"

"Do you mean to imply that I've got a relation who'd hang round in pubs with Joey Hook?" snorted Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, don't get your wool off!" exclaimed Cook impatiently. "Be reasonable! Some fellow was seen at that pub, and it was either you or a fellow who looked like you. That's certain. Have you got any relation just like you?"

Tommy Dodd sniffed.

"I've got a cousin who's like me," he answered—"my cousin Ralph. He's at school in the North of England, a good hundred and fifty miles from here."

"Well, it can't be him, then. Anybody else?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, it's queer!" said Doyle. "But it's no good getting wild, Tommy darling! The fellows can't help thinking as they do."

"I know I won't speak to anybody who believes such a thing of me!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Then you won't speak to anybody at Rookwood excepting us?"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Tommy.

He swung away, leaving his chums by themselves.

His face was dark and gloomy as he went out at the gates alone, not feeling in a humour for his chums' company just then.

As a reasonable fellow, Tommy Dodd could hardly help admitting that the evidence against him was strong, and that fellows could not be blamed for giving ear to it.

But he was not in a reasonable mood just then.

Innocent or guilty, he was intensely exasperated; and, like the prophet of old, he said to himself that he did well to be angry.

Cook and Doyle exchanged glances, and then followed their chum slowly.

They still clung to their faith in their pal; but they admitted to themselves that they believed in him for no better reason than that he was their pal.

Against any other fellow, they knew, they would have accepted such evidence without hesitation.

That knowledge made them feel extremely uncomfortable, for it amounted to admitting that they were deceiving themselves, knowing all the time that Tommy Dodd was guilty.

Tommy Dodd was out of sight when they came out of the gates, and they walked slowly along towards Coombe, wondering where Dodd had gone to.

Both of them glanced at the Bird-in-Hand public-house as they came in sight of that unsavoury building.

That delectable resort was the quarters of Joey Hook, with whom Dodd was supposed to be on a friendly footing.

As they glanced over the fence which ran by the footpath beside the inn both the juniors started violently.

Some distance from them, in the inn garden, a fat and puffy man was standing, with a pipe in his mouth, in conversation with a junior in an overcoat.

"Tommy!" gasped Cook.

"Tommy Dodd!" said Doyle, in wonder and disgust.

They stared at the junior in the inn garden as if they could scarcely believe their eyes.

He was a dozen yards from them, and they could see every feature with perfect distinctness in the wintry sunshine in the garden.

"The thafe of the worruld!" ejaculated Doyle. "That's why he left us in a huff—to sneak off here without our knowin'! He's put on an overcoat to hide his Etous, the rotter!"

"And taken off his Rookwood cap, too!" said Cook.

"The sneaking thafe!" exclaimed Doyle, with breathless indignation. "And we were sticking to him against all Rookwood, and he was pulling our leg all the toime!"

The Irish junior ran towards the fence, and waved his hand to the two talkers in the garden.

"Dodd, ye rotter!" he roared.

Joey Hook glanced round with a start, and the boy with him removed a cigarette from his lips and stared at Doyle.

"Hallo!" he answered.

"Ye thafe of the worruld, we've spotted you now!" roared Doyle. "We know the kind of spalpeen ye are now, bad cess to yez!"

"Hallo! Is that chap potty?"

"Bedad, and I've a good mind to come in to yez, and mop up the ground wid yez intirely!" shouted Doyle.

"My hat!"

"Come away, Tommy!" said Cook, dragging his chum by the arm. "We're not going to kick up a shindy in a pub, you ass!"

"Sure, and I'll—"

"Come away!"

Cook dragged his excited chum away, and Doyle calmed down as they left the spot.

Angry as he was, Tommy Doyle realised that it would not do to kick up a shindy in a pub, as his chum expressed it.

"But we know him now, intirely!" he said. "The rotter! The awful spoofer! What he's doing is bad enough; but to tell us lies—"

Cook looked very troubled.

"I'd never have believed it!" he said.

"Sure, we knew it was thrue, though we wouldn't belave it!" answered Doyle. "I'm done with Tommy Dodd now, for one!"

And Tommy Cook nodded assent to that.

The happy circle of the three Tommies of Rookwood was split up now with a vengeance!

(Continued on page 17.)

Meet the Cheery CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD above! They're Fine PALS!

Tommy Dodd's Double.

(Continued from page 12.)

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Outside!

DUSK was falling when Tommy Dodd came in at the gates of Rookwood, looking tired and dispirited. He went straight to Mr. Manders' House, and entered his study.

He found Cook and Doyle there, and the table showed that they had had their tea without waiting for him.

Tommy Dodd glanced at it. "You might have given a chap a few minutes!" he remarked gruffly.

His study-mates looked uncomfortable, and neither of them answered.

"I'm sorry I marched off in a huff this afternoon," added Tommy, with an effort. "I was feeling rather ratty."

No answer. "I suppose that's enough for a fellow to say, isn't it?" demanded Tommy Dodd, his anger beginning to rise again.

"No need to say anything that I know of," said Cook. "In fact, the less you have to say to us the better!"

"What?" "Don't I speak plain English?" inquired Tommy Cook sarcastically. "I'll say it once again if you like! The less you have to say to us the better! Got it now?"

Tommy Dodd stared at him blankly. "So you're siding with the rest against me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—now we know!" "Now you know what?" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Now we know the kind of rotter ye are intirely!" exclaimed Doyle. "Ye're not going to thry and brazen it out now, are yez?"

"Brazen what out?" "Faith, and I think it's potty ye are intirely! Didn't I spake to yez when we saw you there not more than an hour ago?"

"Where?" shrieked Tommy Dodd. "You know where—at that pub, talking to Joey Hook in the garden!"

Tommy Dodd panted. "You say you saw me there an hour ago?"

"You know we did!" "It's a lie!"

"Oh, don't play the goat! Doyle called to you over the fence, and you answered him!" said Cook. "What's the good of lying now?"

"I've been on the moor—not within a mile of the Bird-in-Hand!"

"Cheese it! What's the good?" "You don't believe me?"

"Of course not! We believe our own eyes!" "I don't know what this game means!"

said Tommy Dodd. "I never expected you two fellows to join in it against me! You're lying, both of you—lying like rotters—and if you don't swallow your own words this minute I'll give you something else to swallow! You first, Cook!"

"Come on, if you like!" said Cook disdainfully.

Tommy Dodd came on like a hurricane. There was a terrific scrap in the study, and it finished with Tommy Cook on his back on the rug, gasping for breath.

Whether Tommy Dodd had taken to shady ways or not, it was clear that he was as good a fighting-man as ever.

He turned savagely on Doyle. "Your turn now!" he snapped.

"I'm your man," said Tommy quietly. And they went at it hammer and tongs.

Tommy Cook rose to his feet, dabbing his nose.

He had had much the worst of it, and he looked on glumly while Tommy Doyle was getting the worst of it, too.

Doyle finished on the carpet. Tommy Dodd was pretty well spent by that time, and he showed signs of severe damage.

"Now what do you say?" he gasped. Doyle rose rather painfully to his feet.

"I'll tell ye what we say!" he answered, gasping. "We say that we won't have a pub-haunting, lying rotter in this study, and you can hop it, Tommy Dodd!"

"I say the same!" exclaimed Cook. "Out you go!"

"Put me out!" sneered Tommy Dodd.

"We'll jolly soon do that!" And they did.

Tommy Dodd, resisting fiercely, was bumped into the passage, and the door of the study slammed on him.

The next moment it was flung furiously open, and Tommy Dodd rushed in again.

He was collared at once by his exasperated study-mates, and hurled forth with a crash. The door closed once more.

It did not open again. Even Tommy Dodd was "done" by that time.

His best friends had turned upon him, and in all Rookwood the once popular Tommy had not a friend to stand by him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The Marble Eye.

"BY gum!" It was the following day, and Tommy Dodd, after leaving Mr. Manders' science class, had stopped at the letter-rack and found a letter there.

The other two Tommies were coming along the passage, but they were not with Tommy Dodd.

Since the scrap in the study the previous day they had not spoken.

All the Lower School knew that Tommy's two best chums had done with him now, and were against him with the rest.

The unfortunate Tommy was little better than an outcast in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Naturally, the fact that Cook and Doyle had abandoned him clinched the matter for the other fellows. Anyone who had any doubts gave them up now.

It was quite certain that Tommy's own pals would not have turned against him unless they had proof positive.

Tommy Dodd stopped, with his open letter in his hand, and he uttered that sudden ejaculation as he read it.

Evidently there was news in the letter—startling news, to judge by Tommy Dodd's expression.

"By gum!" he repeated. "Missing, by gum! So that's it?"

Cook and Doyle glanced at him and paused. Tommy Dodd was speaking to himself, in sheer surprise at the contents of the letter, whatever they were, and he was not looking at them.

But the moody, troubled look that had haunted Dodd's face for the last day or two was gone now, and he seemed to be elated by what he was reading in the letter, as well as surprised.

He turned suddenly to Cook and Doyle. "You silly idiots!" he said.

"What?" exclaimed Tommy Cook. "You crass asses!"

"Look here—" "You think you saw me at the Bird-in-Hand yesterday!" snapped Tommy Dodd.

"We don't think we did; we know we did!" answered Cook. "You can't stuff us up any more about it, Tommy Dodd. We know you now."

"You believe that, do you?" "Certainly!"

"And you won't take my word that I wasn't there?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, glowering at them.

"No fear! Not against our own eyesight!" "Keep your opinion, then!" said Tommy Dodd savagely. "Keep it, and be hanged to you! I could prove it if I liked!"

"I'd like to see you do it!" answered Cook, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, you won't see me do it! You can go and eat coke! I'll prove it to you fast enough—when you come to me and tell me you are sorry for having acted like suspicious cads!" said Tommy Dodd fiercely.

"That's as good as saying never." "Well, you go your way, and I'll go mine! I don't want to speak to fellows who can't take my word!"

With that Tommy Dodd turned on his heel and walked out into the quadrangle.

Cook and Doyle looked at one another. "Phwat does he mean, intirely?" muttered Doyle. "It looks to me as if he's going potty!"

"Blest if he doesn't look like it!" agreed Cook. "He's denying things that everybody knows to be true! What's he doing it for?"

"He says he could prove it if he liked." "Piffle!"

"Well, it must be piffle," said Tommy Doyle thoughtfully. "I know I'm not going to speak to him again till he owns up that he's played the giddy ox, and told lies about it!"

"Same here!" Tommy Dodd, as he walked in the quadrangle, found himself left severely alone on all sides.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Prefects on the Track.

"SILVER!" "Yes, Bulkeley?"

"Cut across to Mr. Manders' House, Silver, and ask Knowles if he will step into my study after tea."

"Right-ho!" Jimmy Silver went out again into the dusky quadrangle, and crossed over to the Modern side on his errand.

In the hall, as he went in, he observed Tommy Dodd, with a look of moody anger on his face.

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were going up the staircase without a look at their former chum.

Towle was going along the passage, and he gave Tommy Dodd a look, but it was a look of supreme disdain.

Leggett of the Modern Fourth was hovering near Dodd, and he was looking quite friendly; but Leggett was a cad of the first water, and Tommy Dodd took no notice of him, as was his custom.

"Doddy, old chap—" Leggett was saying as Jimmy Silver came in.

Tommy Dodd deliberately turned his back on him, leaving him with a furious face, and by that movement came face to face with Jimmy.

He gave Jimmy Silver a dark look. "What do you want here?" he grunted.

"Message for Knowles!" answered Jimmy cheerfully. He was passing on, but he paused. "Tommy Dodd, old scout!"

"Well?" snapped Tommy. "'Tain't my bizney, of course," said Jimmy Silver, in a low voice, "but—but you're in pretty hot water all round. The game isn't worth the candle, is it? You used to be a decent chap enough. In the name of common-sense, old scout, why don't you chuck playing the goat?"

"I don't chuck it because I haven't started it, you thumping chump!"

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "If you're keeping that up, it's not much good my saying anything, of course."

"Hold on a minute!" said Tommy Dodd, as he was turning away. "You're a silly fool, Jimmy Silver, but I admit that you can't help that. I'm not the fellow you saw at the Bird-in-Hand, and I can prove it!"

Jimmy looked rather troubled. "Oh, I'm not going to tell you any lies!" sneered Tommy Dodd. "I'm not the chap, and I could prove it if I liked. I've got a letter in my pocket that would prove it right up to the hilt, if I cared to show it."

"Why don't you, then?" asked Jimmy, in astonishment.

"Because I don't choose to!" said Tommy Dodd doggedly. "You've chosen to believe I'm a liar and a pub-haunting cad, and my own pals have turned against me. Well, I'm not going to say a word! When you've got the decency to admit that you were mistaken, then I'll prove it."

Jimmy Silver looked at him hard. "If I thought I was mistaken I'd admit it fast enough," he said. "But I don't think so, you know. I saw you there. I heard that rotter Hook address you by your own name—"

"Am I the only fellow named Dodd in the country, do you think?" sneered Tommy.

"I suppose there are some hundreds," said Jimmy Silver; "but they're not exactly like you to look at, I suppose."

"One of them is!" Jimmy Silver started.

"Tommy Dodd! Do you mean to say you know for a fact that there's a fellow in Coombe just like you, and with the same name, who's been taken for you?"

"Too thick, isn't it?" jeered Tommy. "Well, it sounds rather thick. But if you prove it—"

"You'd believe it, then?" "Yes, if you proved it."

"But you won't take my word!" Jimmy shook his head. "I can't!" he answered. "It's too steep!"

"Then you can go and eat coke!" said Tommy Dodd. And he turned and stalked away.

Jimmy Silver went on to Knowles' study, and tapped at the door.

Cecil Knowles, the head prefect of the

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Do You Know Jimmy? Jimmy Who? Read Next Week's Rookwood Yarn!

Modern side, gave him a sharp look as he entered.

"Bulkeley would like to speak to you if you'll come in after tea, Knowles," said the junior.

"I'll come," said Knowles laconically.

Jimmy Silver returned to the School House with that reply.

Then, after delivering it to George Bulkeley, he went up to the end study to tea.

There he related to Lovell & Co. what Tommy Dodd had said to him in Mr. Manders' House.

"What rot!" was Arthur Edward Lovell's comment. "Half a dozen fellows have seen Dodd at that pub! Why, I've heard Peel and Smythe, of the Shell, complaining because he's so reckless about it, that a prefect might go there for him any day, and it makes it unsafe for any other shady cad to go there for a flutter. Smythe is quite indignant about it. He's kept away from the place for a week because of Tommy Dodd."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"But Doddy admits the fellow being there," he answered. "Only he says it wasn't he, but another fellow like him."

"Rot!" said Lovell tersely. "About the lamest yarn I've ever heard!"

And Raby and Newcome nodded assent.

While the Fistical Four were at prep after tea Cecil Knowles sauntered over from the Modern side, and looked into Bulkeley's study.

"Come in!" said the captain of Rookwood. "Squat down, Knowles. I want to speak to you about Tommy Dodd."

Knowles yawned.

"There seems to be a lot of talk about that kid," he said. "I'm convinced that there's nothing in it."

"Nearly every junior in the school seems to think there's something in it," said Bulkeley quietly. "The Head's had Dodd before him, and he doesn't know what to make of it all. He's asked me specially to do what I can, in concert with you. The thing's growing into a regular scandal!"

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"You told me you'd seen him at that pub a few days since," he remarked. "I know that he was fagging for me at the time, and he could hardly have dodged out of my study and back again."

"He must have done so, Knowles, for I certainly saw him."

"A mistake, my dear fellow!" said Knowles blandly. "It really wasn't possible."

Bulkeley bit his lip.

"Well, I've seen the Head," he went on, "and the Head's view is that Dodd should be kept under observation. If he should leave the school at forbidden hours, for instance—"

"He doesn't!"

"If he does, he should be looked for. As a prefect on the Modern side, it's for you to keep an eye open for that. From what I've ascertained, Dodd has been seen at that pub half the evenings this week."

"Impossible!"

"I've been making inquiries, and it seems to be the fact," said Bulkeley quietly. "Will you keep yourself posted as to whether he disappears in the evening, and let me know? It's the Head's request."

"Oh, I'll do that, certainly! Rely on me!"

"That's all I want."

Knowles nodded, and strolled out.

He hardly disguised his belief that Bulkeley was prejudiced against Tommy Dodd, because the latter was a Modern, and Bulkeley certainly held the opinion that Knowles was stretching a point very considerably in Dodd's favour, for the same reason.

But Knowles, though not specially dutiful as a prefect, had some sense of the duties of that position, and he did not neglect to carry out the wishes of the Head.

Later in the evening he looked in at the junior study in Mr. Manders' House, which was shared by the three Tommies.

He found Cook and Doyle there, but Tommy Dodd was absent.

"Where's Dodd?" asked Knowles abruptly.

"Sure, and I don't know," answered Doyle.

"Has he gone out?" asked Knowles suspiciously.

"He's gone out of the study."

"You don't know where he's gone?"

"No."

Knowles looked at them very sharply, and left the study.

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He looked into the other Modern junior studies, Shell and Fourth, but no one knew where Tommy Dodd was.

That was not surprising, as Tommy Dodd, not being on speaking terms with his old friends, was not likely to acquaint them with his movements.

But it certainly was odd that he was not to be found in Mr. Manders' House at all, and Knowles looked for him for a quarter of an hour in vain.

He was very suspicious indeed by that time, and, after some reflection, he crossed over to the School House to speak to Bulkeley.

"Dodd doesn't seem to be in the house," he announced. "Of course, he may be in the quad, or about the place somewhere—perhaps with some of the Classics."

Bulkeley shook his head.

"He's not on visiting terms with any of the Classical juniors," he said. "He's getting the cold shoulder on both sides of the school. I fancy it's pretty clear where he is."

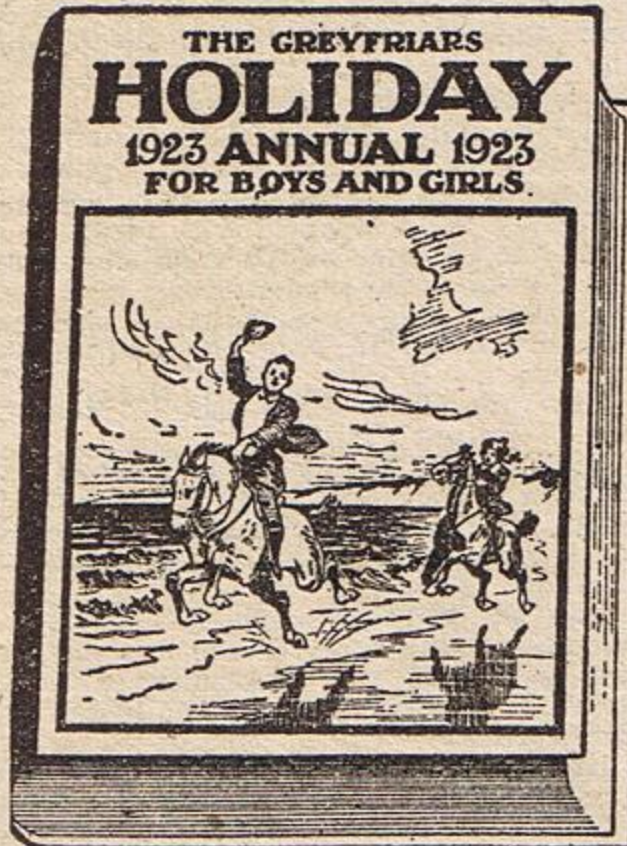
Knowles knitted his brows.

"I'm willing to come with you if the Head asked it," he said.

"Then we'll go," said Bulkeley. "I haven't

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the slightest doubt where we shall find him, Knowles."

"I'll admit that I'm wrong when we do find him," answered the Modern prefect tartly.

Bulkeley nodded without speaking, and the two prefects left the School House together.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Strange Story.

"COME in!" sang out Jimmy Silver, as a tap came at the door of the end study.

He expected to see Mornington, or Erroll, or some other Classical fellow, when the door opened.

To his surprise, it was Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth who came in.

Tommy's face flushed as he caught the surprised looks the Fistical Four turned upon him.

Lovell turned back to his work grimly. He had nothing to say to the hero of sportive exploits at the Bird-in-Hand.

"Come in!" said Jimmy Silver, hesitating. "What is it—something about footer, Dodd?"

"No," said Tommy, in a low voice.

"Well?"

"I—I've been thinking," said Tommy Dodd, his colour deepening. "I—I've been tramping about a bit in the quad, thinking it out, and I've made up my mind. I'm going to tell you the facts."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"About time you owned up, I think," grunted Lovell.

Tommy Dodd did not reply to that.

"I had a letter this morning from my pater," he said. "It let in a lot of light on what's happened lately. I didn't mean to tell a soul. But—but I won't speak to Cook and Doyle. They were my pals, and ought to have trusted me; but there's no reason why you fellows should, I suppose. I dare say you've a right to ask for proofs. Under the circumstances, its natural enough you should have taken that fellow at Coombe for me."

"What fellow?"

"Read that!" was Tommy Dodd's answer. "That part I've marked."

He tossed a folded letter on the table. The Fistical Four, in great surprise, read the paragraph marked with pencil.

It ran:

"I did not intend to acquaint you with the foolish action of your cousin Ralph, but it has occurred to me that he may communicate with you, and in that case you must inform me at once. Ralph has done very badly at Low Moor, and has had the folly to run away from school. I am, however, afraid that he would have been expelled had he remained. He has been guilty of breaking bounds at night, betting on horses, and consorting with low characters, and it had come to his headmaster's knowledge. His present whereabouts are not known, and his parents are naturally very anxious. If you should hear anything of him, please write to me at once."

Jimmy Silver looked at Tommy Dodd.

"Well?" he said.

"My cousin, Ralph Dodd, has bolted from the school," said Tommy. "I thought he was at school up in the North, or I should have known at once who was that fellow at Coombe. He's as like me as a twin brother, but we're on bad terms; we never got on together. He was always a bit of a worm. Now that I know he's left school, and gone off on his own, I know that he must be that chap at Coombe. That's all."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"He's been spoiled," continued Tommy Dodd. "He has lots of money from his father, who makes a fool of him. I don't know what's brought him into this neighbourhood. I shouldn't wonder if he's been rotter enough to plant himself near here to give me trouble because we're so much alike. He's played tricks like that before, before I came to Rookwood. We never did pull together. I haven't seen the fellow at Coombe, but it must be Ralph. There can't be another chap so like me. Now do you understand?"

The Fistical Four looked very hard at Tommy Dodd.

His colour deepened to crimson.

"Don't you believe me now?" he exclaimed, panting.

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Yes, I do, for one!" he exclaimed. "Dash it all, it's a queer yarn, Tommy, but I do believe it, every word! I was surprised at your turning out to be a silly fool like Peele or Gower, and I do believe you, old chap!"

"I—I'm glad you do!" said Tommy Dodd, his face softening. "It's easy enough to prove, for that matter. The fellow is plainly putting up at the Bird-in-Hand. I dare say he was recommended to Joey Hook by some other rascal he knew at his old school. Now I've thought it out, I don't blame you fellows for what you believed. It's only my own pals—" Tommy's voice faltered.

"Well, it's jolly steep!" said Lovell. "But if Jimmy believes it, I do. I'll tell you what, Tommy Dodd; let's go down to-morrow and rout that fellow out."

The door of the end study was burst open suddenly, and Tubby Muffin rushed in, breathless with excitement.

"They've got him!" he yelled.

"You fat duffer, what are you burbling about?"

"They've got him—they've got Tommy Dodd!" spluttered Tubby, not observing the Modern junior in the study, for the moment. "Bulkeley and Knowles, you know—they've caught him in the Bird-in-Hand, and brought him home. He, he, he!"

"What?" yelled the Fistical Four together. "They've got him! Come on! Why—what—how—who—" Tubby Muffin's jaw dropped as his eyes fell on Tommy Dodd. "Why—you—how—Tommy Dodd! B-b-but you're downstairs!" babbled the astounded Tubby.

"My only hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Have they collared a fellow who doesn't

belong to Rookwood at all, and brought him here?"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Raby. There was a rush from the study at once. Tubby Muffin followed the juniors, his round eyes open wide with amazement.

As they crowded down the staircase Jimmy Silver & Co. beheld a strange scene in the hall below.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Two of Them.

BULKELEY and Knowles had returned. They had entered the School House, with a boy of about fifteen walking between them, with a sullen, savage face.

Mr. Bootles had come out of his study, and a crowd of fellows—juniors and seniors—had gathered round.

Mr. Bootles peered at the delinquent over his glasses.

"Bless my soul!" he said. "It is Dodd! Where did you find him, Bulkeley?"

"Look here—" began the sullen-looking junior.

"Silence, Dodd!"

"We found him at the Bird-in-Hand public-house, sir," said Bulkeley quietly. "Knowles and I were there together, meaning to inquire, but we saw him at once. He was in the billiard-room, playing billiards with a man named Hook, and the French windows were open."

"Bless my soul!"

There was a rustle in the corridor, and the crowd parted respectfully as Dr. Chisholm came up.

He signed to Bulkeley to continue.

"We stepped in," went on the captain of Rookwood. "The man Hook wanted to interfere, but we pushed him away. He—ahem—fell down. We took Dodd, and made him come out."

"He told us he wasn't Dodd of the Fourth," said Knowles. "He seems really to be a little wrong in his head, sir. He wanted to make us believe that he was not a Rookwood fellow at all."

"Bless my soul! Absurd!"

"Stand forward, Dodd!" came the Head's voice.

The two prefects released the junior, who stepped forward, with a sulky, sneering expression on his face.

The Rookwooders looked at him in wonder. Certainly the culprit, caught red-handed, as it were, did not look alarmed.

"You've no right to bring me here!" he said. "I don't belong to this school!"

"What!" exclaimed the Head.

"I suppose you're mistaking me for Tommy Dodd," went on the junior. "Well, I'm not Tommy Dodd! Now let me get out!"

"How dare you, Dodd?" said the Head thunderously.

"I tell you I'm not Tommy Dodd!" shouted the junior savagely. "If you want to know, I'm his cousin, and my name's Ralph Dodd! Now I'm going!"

He turned towards the door; but Bulkeley's hand dropped on his shoulder with a grip of iron.

He struggled for a moment, giving the captain of Rookwood a furious look; but Bulkeley's grip hardened, and he was quiet.

"Dodd—" began the Head.

There was a hurried scuttling of footsteps on the big staircase, and a murmur of voices that grew to a roar.

Dr. Chisholm turned his head angrily at the interruption, and then stared, dumb.

For, hurrying down the staircase, followed by Jimmy Silver & Co., was Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth!

The Head stared at Tommy Dodd on the staircase, and then at the sullen junior before him, dumbfounded.

But for the difference of clothes the two juniors were exactly alike; and it was clear enough now that the newcomer's tale was true.

"Dodd!" stammered the Head.

"Tommy Dodd!" stuttered Bulkeley dazedly.

"Dodd!" said Knowles, with a grin. "I think I was right, after all, Bulkeley. Dodd was indoors all the time, and this fellow—"

Tommy Dodd hurried through the amazed crowd in the Hall.

"Here I am, sir!" he exclaimed. "Everybody can see now that it's not as they supposed. I haven't been out of gates this evening."

"Dodd," gasped the Head, "who—who is this boy?"



TWO DODDS!—The Head stared at Tommy Dodd, and then at the sullen junior before him. But for the difference of clothes the two juniors were exactly alike. "Here I am, sir!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Everybody can see now that it's not as they supposed." (See Chapter 7.)

Tommy Dodd gave the sullen newcomer a glance of the strongest disfavour.

"He's my cousin Ralph, sir," he said. "I heard from my father this morning that he had run away from school, and was missing; and then I guessed who it was that had been seen at the public-house."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Ralph Dodd broke into a sullen laugh.

"Well, now you can see it's a mistake, you can let me go!" he sneered. "I suppose you can see now that I'm not Tommy Dodd, and don't belong to Rookwood! Let me go, hang you!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Dodd, you say that this boy has run away from the school he belongs to?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case, he will be detained here till he can be handed over to his parents!"

"I won't!" yelled Ralph Dodd furiously. "I—I— Let me go! Let go!"

"Kindly take charge of him for the present, Bulkeley."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Dodd," said Dr. Chisholm, with a kindly look at the Modern junior, "I am very glad that your name has been cleared in this way! I am sure that your schoolfellows will do you justice now."

"Thank you, sir!" faltered Tommy Dodd. Dr. Chisholm swept away, following Bulkeley and his unwilling charge.

There was no more freedom to "play the goat" for the reckless fellow from Low Moor.

The roof of Rookwood was to shelter him that night, and on the morrow he was to be handed over to his father's charge, which was certainly the best thing that could have happened to him.

There were congratulations on all sides for Tommy Dodd, and requests for pardon for having doubted him.

Tommy Dodd answered cheerfully enough; but there were two fellows whom he did not answer, and they were Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle.

He went to his study in Mr. Manders' House without a word or a look to his former chums.

But he had not been there many minutes when the two Tommies came in.

Dodd looked at them grimly.

"Sure, we're sorry, Tommy darling!" murmured Doyle.

"How were we to know?" said Tommy Cook pleadingly.

Grunt!

"We take it all back!"

Grunt!

"We're really sorry, Tommy!"

Grunt!

"Tain't like you to bear malice, Tommy, old sport!" murmured Cook. "We ought to have believed you, and we own up!"

Grunt, but less formidable! Tommy Dodd was softening.

"Tommy, old chap—"

"You bumped me out of the study!" said Tommy Dodd.

"You can bump us out, if you like!" said Cook. "Honest Injun! And we won't raise a finger!"

"Honest Injun!" repeated Tommy Doyle solemnly.

Tommy Dodd burst into a laugh.

"Oh, I suppose you couldn't help being duffers!" he said. "It's all right, and I'm jolly glad it's ended all right, too! I say, there was a remittance in my pater's letter this morning! What about something for supper? The tuckshop isn't closed yet."

"Sure, it's a broth av a bhoys ye are, Tommy!"

The three Tommies were united again. And when Jimmy Silver & Co. met them the next day the three were walking, with linked arms, in the quad, evidently on the chummiest terms once more—which the Fistical Four were very glad to see.

THE END.

(A dramatic story of the Rookwooders in THE POPULAR next Tuesday is entitled "Joker or Thief?" by Owen Conquest.)

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