

TOPPING BUMPER CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

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The POPULAR 2d

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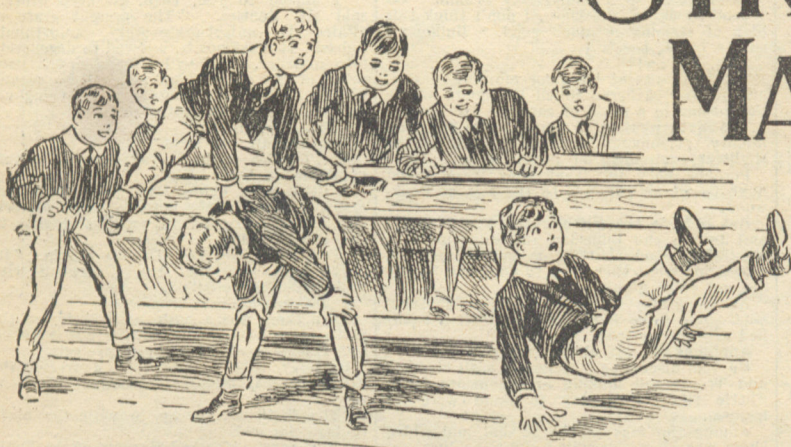
FRANK RICHARDS & CO. COME INTO CLASS "IN COSTUME!"

(An amusing incident in one of our four long complete school stories.)

THE SCHOOL WITHOUT MASTERS!—Dealing further with the amazing state of affairs at Rookwood when the masters defied the Head!



The STRIKE of the MASTERS!



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Staff on Strike.

WHAT larks!" That was the general feeling at Rookwood School—in the Lower Forms, at least.

The great men of the Sixth, perhaps, took the matter with proper seriousness. Perhaps the Fifth saw that there was a serious side to it.

But the juniors did not seem to see anything serious about it at all. Their opinion, freely expressed, was that it was a tremendous lark.

Certainly, the state of affairs at Rookwood was unprecedented.

Masters on strike!
"Who," as Lovell of the Fourth remarked, "had ever heard of such a thing?"

"Nobody had!"
"It's a corker!" said Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth. "A regular corker! What's the Head going to do? That's the question?"

"All right for the Sixth!" remarked Mornington. "The Head takes the Sixth. But who's going to take the rest?"

And Tubby Muffin chirruped joyously:
"There won't be any lessons! There can't be! Fancy that!"

Which was not an unpleasant prospect to most of the juniors.

Lessons, as Lovell observed sagely, could be overdone. Lovell declared that, if he ever became Head of a public school, he would see that more time was devoted to footer than to lessons—a view that found much favour in the Fourth Form.

There was much excitement in Rookwood when the news became generally known that the whole staff had struck, and the fellows went to bed that night in an excited frame of mind.

Discussion ran on in the dormitories for a good hour after lights-out.

For there was no doubt about the state of affairs.

The masters of Rookwood had met in solemn session in the Masters' Room, and had delivered their ultimatum to the Head. And at least a dozen juniors, in various corners and recesses, had been witnesses of the scene in the corridor when Dr. Chisholm had come out of his study and met his indignant staff.

Opinions were a little divided as to where the blame lay.

But opinions were not divided on one point—that it was a great lark.

All the juniors, at least, agreed on that. The rising-bell in the morning awakened an expectant school.

In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth discussion and speculation commenced the minute the juniors were out of bed.

"It was French this afternoon," said Raby. "There won't be any French. Mossos was one of the gang."

"And the Moderns won't get any German!"
"And we sha'n't have to construe!" said Tubby Muffin brightly. "Booties, of course, will be on strike with the rest, as he's the cause of all the trouble. How jolly lucky I didn't do any prep last evening! It would have been wasted if I had! Fancy that!"

"There'll be prayers this morning," observed Oswald. "The Head takes prayers."

"But nothing after prayers!" said Muffin jubilantly.

"Hurrah!"

"There'll be some brekker, I hope?" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"We might get up a punt-about this morning," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell thoughtfully. "No good going into the Form-room if there isn't any master! The Head can't want us to make one another construe, can he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I say, I'm not going to get up yet," said Tubby Muffin, rolling back into bed. "If the masters can go on strike, so can we. Nothing to get up for, is there?"

"Bulkeley may come up and go on strike, too—with his ashplant!" remarked Raby.

"Oh, bother Bulkeley! I wish the prefects would go on strike, too!" said Tubby Muffin plaintively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Anyway, I'm not getting up. What's the good?"

"Don't be a slacker," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm not slacking—I'm going on strike," explained Tubby Muffin. "What's the sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

And Reginald Muffin laid his head on the pillow and closed his fat eyelids once more.

A strike of the masters, if it led to an extra nap for Tubby, was an excellent thing in the eyes of the fat Classical.

"Better turn out, Tubby!" called out Jimmy Silver, when the Fistical Four were ready to go down.

Snore!

Jimmy Silver & Co. went down, and Tubby Muffin was left in bed.

But a few minutes after the rest of the Fourth were down, Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the dormitory.

The captain of Rookwood had his ashplant under his arm.

He fixed his eyes sternly on Tubby Muffin's bed.

"Muffin!"

Snore!

Tubby Muffin was sleeping with one eye open, as a matter of fact, and that eye was

Here we have another Story of Rookwood School and popular Jimmy Silver & Co. Yarns of Rookwood appear every week in the "Boys' Friend."
They are written by
OWEN CONQUEST.

fixed rather uneasily on Bulkeley as the Sixth-Former came into the dormitory.

Bulkeley let the ashplant slide down into his hand, and as he did so Tubby Muffin awakened very suddenly and sat up in bed.

"I—I say, Bulkeley—"
"Why aren't you down?" demanded Bulkeley.

"I—I— The fact is, I'm not going to do any lessons to-day. Masters on strike, you know."

"I see!" Bulkeley nodded. "You're going on strike, too—what?"

"That's it!" said Tubby brightly. "Just the idea! I'm not going to get up till about ten or eleven—see?"

"I see!" assented Bulkeley. "Now I'm going on strike!"

"Are you really, Bulkeley?"

"Certainly!"
Swish, swish!

"Yaroooh!" roared Tubby Muffin, as the ashplant caught his fat shoulders. "Yoop! Leave off! I say, you beast—Yaroooh! Leave off, can't you? Yoop! I'm getting up, ain't I?"

Bump!
Tubby Muffin rolled out of bed on the opposite side so hurriedly that he was mixed up in the bedclothes, and landed on the floor in a heap.

He rolled there and roared.
"Feel like getting up now, Muffin?" asked Bulkeley genially.

"Yaroooh! Yes! Ow!"
"You don't feel like an extra nap?"

"Nunno! Yow-ow-ow!"
"If you do, turn in," said Bulkeley cheerily. "I don't mind laying into you again with this stick. It's good exercise, in fact."

"Yow! I don't want a nap! I—I want to gerrup! Oh dear!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I—I really meant to say, Bulkeley, that I wouldn't stay in bed for—for anything!"

"That's better! I expect to see you down in five minutes, Muffin. If you're not, I'm coming back."

"Ow!"
The captain of Rookwood tucked his ashplant under his arm and quitted the dormitory.

"Oh dear!" mumbled Tubby Muffin. "Awful rotter—Ow! Wow!"

Tubby Muffin's ablutions did not take him long that morning.

He was down well within the five minutes. And in that short space of time he had also made a firm resolve that, whatever the staff of Rookwood School might do, he would not follow their example of going on strike.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Expectant.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. came into breakfast after a run in the keen, fresh air of the quadrangle.

They looked forward at once to see whether Mr. Bootles was in the dining-room.

That day, Mr. Bootles the master of the Fourth Form, was to leave Rookwood—or was to have left Rookwood, for it was by no means certain now that he would go.

The juniors were glad to see him in the room.

He was looking troubled and harassed, but at least he was not gone yet, and that was satisfactory.

Mr. Bootles took his place at the head of the Fourth Form table as usual.

It was plain enough to the juniors that he was in a perplexed and worried frame of mind.

He was under sentence of dismissal from his post, and in those circumstances it was difficult to see how he could remain at the school.

But there were other circumstances that had to be considered.

Nearly the whole staff had supported Mr. Bootles in his difference with the Head, and led by Mr. Greeley, the master of the Fifth, they had declined to serve their chief any longer unless the dismissal of Mr. Bootles was cancelled.

How the school would get on without masters was a problem.

Mr. Manders and another master on the Modern side, had declined to have anything to do with the strike.

They were, as the juniors put it, black-legging!

But practically the whole staff were acting in concert, and unless the Head yielded, the state of affairs at Rookwood was certain to be very extraordinary indeed.

The sympathy of the juniors was with Mr. Bootles, with few exceptions.

For Mr. Bootles had incurred the wrath of the Head by standing between Jimmy Silver of the Fourth and an unjust punishment.

That Jimmy had not committed the fault ascribed to him had been proved, and the Head had acknowledged it; and he was glad, doubtless, that an unjust punishment had not been administered.

But he could not forgive Mr. Bootles for his intervention.

The dismissal held good, and poor Mr. Bootles had packed to go, when his colleagues took up the matter in solemn session.

At the breakfast-table the Classical Fourth were very good indeed.

There was no chattering or whispering, no shying of bread bullets; they did not, in fact, take any advantage of Mr. Bootles' preoccupation.

They wanted the little gentleman to understand that they were backing him up.

Whether Mr. Bootles understood, it was a question, however; he was probably not thinking about the juniors at all.

Jimmy Silver glanced at the other tables, noting the looks of the other masters present.

Mr. Greeley of the Fifth was looking grim and stern.

That stout and important gentleman was the leader of the strike, and there were certainly no signs of surrender in his severe face.

Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Bohun did not look happy, and they were very quiet indeed.

The other masters were not to be seen.

Breakfast passed off in an atmosphere of subdued thunder.

Even the juniors, though they still regarded the masters' strike as a "lark," realised that it had its serious aspect.

After breakfast, when the chapel bells began to ring, the juniors headed for chapel, with a great curiosity to see the Head.

Somewhat to their disappointment, Dr. Chisholm presented his usual aspect.

Perhaps his lips were a little tighter than usual, but that was all.

Certainly he showed no sign of being in a worried frame of mind.

"The Head's a hard case!" Arthur Edward Lovell remarked, as they came away from chapel. "Hard as a steel. He won't give in."

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"I don't think the masters will, either," remarked Newcome.

"Goodness knows what will happen, then."

"It's a case of the irresistible force brought to bear upon the giddy immovable object," remarked Jimmy Silver. "I wonder if there's going to be any lessons?"

"Are you going in to lessons, Tubby?" chuckled Lovell.

"I—I think so," said Tubby Muffin. "On second thoughts, you know, I don't think this idea of striking is much good. Bulkeley's such a beast, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hour was at hand for morning classes, and fellows gathered round the doors of the Form-room in a state of subdued excitement.

The Sixth went in as usual; those high and mighty personages declined to show the slightest excitement or perturbation.

Perhaps they felt that they were called upon to set an example to the rest of Rookwood.

But outside the Fifth Form-room Hansom and Jobson and Lumsden and some more of the Fifth stood chatting in low voices, and wondering what they were to do if Mr. Greeley did not come along.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was chatting with some more Shell fellows, with a satisfied grin on his face.

Adolphus did not object to a day off.

He was discussing "geegees" with Howard and Tracy, and making arrangements for a "little run" that day if there were no lessons.

Among the fags of the Second and Third there was open chirruping and chuckling.

Algy Silver, Jimmy's cousin in the Third, was starting a punt-about in the Third Form-room with a cushion for a footer.

Evidently the seriousness of the position was quite lost upon that lively young gentleman.

The Fourth Form made it a point not to be noisy like the fags; something was due to the dashed dignity of the Form, as Townsend put it.

They waited—some of them in the Form-room, and some outside.

It was past the time for beginning, but not a master had put in an appearance so far.

The strike was taking effect.

The Second Form were playing leap-frog along the passage now.

It was a symptom of what was to come.

Peele of the Fourth came in from the quad, grinning.

He looked as if he had news.

"Anythin' goin' on?" asked Mornington.

"Yes—the Head!" grinned Peele.

"What about the Head?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I've just seen him through his study window. Marchin' up an' down his study like a giddy Grenadier on sentry-go!" chuckled Peele. "He doesn't know what to do, of course. I saw Knowles come into his study an' go out. The Head knows what's goin' on, and he doesn't know what to do! Ha, ha!"

"Poor old Head!" grinned Conroy.

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows.

"It's a rotten state of affairs, and no good for Rookwood!" he said. "The Head ought to let up on poor old Bootles, and make an end of it."

"He can't give in!" said Mornington, with a shake of the head.

"Well, I don't see how he can," admitted Jimmy. "He oughtn't to have let it go as far as this. It's got to end somehow."

"Here comes Bootles!" murmured Lovell.

Mr. Bootles was observed, with a troubled brow, approaching along the passage.

From the Third Form-room came a continuous uproar.

And the Second Form fags were growing more and more lively with their leap-frog.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Substitutes.

AHUSH fell on the juniors as Mr. Bootles came up.

"We're ready for lessons, sir," said Jimmy Silver respectfully. "Shall we go into the Form-room?"

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"I have not come to take the Form, Silver,

I am sorry to say. I am leaving Rookwood to-day—"

"Oh, sir!"

"I should like, however, to make an appeal to you," said the Form master. "You are no longer my pupils, and I have no right to give orders to you, but I am sure you will regard my wishes—"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said a dozen voices.

"I appeal to you, then, to keep order," said Mr. Bootles. "The present state of affairs is unfortunate—very unfortunate indeed. It must not be allowed to degenerate into disorder. You will remember the good name of the school, and you will be careful not to be led into disorder or anything unseemly. I hope and trust so."

"Certainly, sir!"

"That is all, my boys."

Mr. Bootles walked away, leaving a buzz of discussion behind him.

A little later Tubby Muffin, who had been scouting, brought the news that the prefects had left the Sixth Form-room, and gone to the Head's study.

"Prefects!" said Lovell, with a grin. "Do they think they can run Rookwood with prefects? My word!"

There was another long wait.

Then there was a lush, as Bulkeley of the Sixth came along, with Neville and Carthew and Lonsdale, all Sixth Form prefects.

Bulkeley, with a grave face, addressed the Fifth-Formers, who were lounging about at ease.

"The Fifth are to go in with the Sixth to-day," he said.

"Who says so?" asked Hansom of the Fifth.

"Head's orders."

"Oh, all right!"

"What about little us?" murmured Lovell.

It was clear now that an attempt was to be made to "carry on" with the prefects, as masters were not available.

Lonsdale went into the Second Form-room, and with a considerable amount of cuffing the fags of that Form were reduced to order.

Bulkeley took charge of the Third, probably the most unruly of all the Forms; and even the great Bulkeley did not find it very easy to get the Third Form into an orderly state.

Neville looked after the Shell.

Adolphus Smythe's cigarette disappeared as if by magic, still unlighted, at the sight of the prefects.

The Shell went in quite meekly with Neville.

It was Mark Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, and the most unpopular prefect at Rookwood, who was assigned to the Fourth.

There was a slight grin on Carthew's face as he came up to the group outside the door of the Fourth Form-room.

The juniors eyed him rather grimly.

The Fistical Four, especially, had their rubs with Mark Carthew, and it was not with pleasant feelings that they discovered that the Sixth Form bully was to take their Form master's place.

"Now then!" rapped out Carthew. "Get in! You've wasted enough time, you idle young rascals!"

"What are we to get in for, if there's nothing doing?" asked Lovell.

"Don't answer me, Lovell! I'm taking you to-day, and if there's any rot in this Form, I'm sorry for you, that's all!"

And Carthew made a significant movement with his ashplant.

"So you're going to give us lessons?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"That's it!"

"We shall go ahead like steam, and no mistake!" said Jimmy sarcastically.

"No cheek, Silver, I warn you! Go to your places!"

The Fourth-Formers exchanged looks, and in silence they went into the Form-rooms and sat down at their desks.

Carthew followed them with a grin.

The bully of the Sixth was plainly pleased with his new authority, and it was pretty clear that he was going to exercise it to the utmost limit.

From the looks of the Fourth, it was pretty clear, too, that if Carthew carried his authority too far there would be trouble.

But the juniors were not unmindful of Mr. Bootles' appeal, and lessons in the Fourth Form-room began quietly, though with a subdued atmosphere of thunder.

(Continued on page 16.)



THE STRIKE OF THE MASTERS.

(Continued from page 12.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"A Little Brief Authority," and the Result.

"A RMA virumque cano—"
 "Construe!"
 "The Army, the man, and the dog—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tubby Muffin was not reflecting credit upon the instruction he had received from his Form master.
 A howl of irrepressible laughter from the Classical Fourth greeted his unique rendering of P. Vergilius Maro.
 Poor Tubby was not really at his best. He could have done better than that, but for Mark Carthew's bullying manner, which made him so nervous that he hardly knew what he was saying.
 "Silence!" thundered Carthew.
 The laughter died away, but the juniors were still grinning.
 "Muffin!"
 "Ye-es, Carthew."
 "Is that how you construe in this Form?"
 "Ye-es, please."
 "I'm not surprised at it," said the prefect sarcastically.

"This—this isn't where we left off with Mr. Bootles, you know, Carthew," ventured Tubby Muffin.
 "So you forget all that's gone before every time you make a step forward—is that it?"
 "Exactly!" gasped Tubby.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Silence! Muffin, come out here!"
 "I—I say, Carthew, what for?" stammered Tubby Muffin.
 The question was quite unnecessary, for Carthew of the Sixth was taking Mr. Bootles' cane from the desk.
 It was abundantly clear what the unfortunate Tubby was to come out for.
 "Do you hear me, Muffin?"
 "Ye-es."
 "Do you want me to fetch you?" demanded Carthew.
 "Nunno!" gasped Tubby.
 The fat Classical came out very reluctantly before the Form.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on grimly. Jimmy had been the first to construe, and he knew that Carthew had tried to catch him, but Jimmy was well up in the Form work, and was not to be caught.
 The Classical Fourth were well on in the "Æneid," and Jimmy had gone on in the right place; but Carthew, on his own account, had turned back to the beginning.
 More than one fellow in the Fourth had a suspicion of his reason.
 Carthew was a prefect of the Sixth, and was supposed to know Virgil inside out, so to speak; but there was more supposition than reality about that.

He found it easier to deal with the beginning of the "Æneid," which, of course, everybody knew more or less by heart.
 It was quite possible that some keen scholar like Erroll or Rawson would have caught Carthew himself "out" if the prefect had not taken that precaution.
 Naturally, that suspicion did not increase the respect of the juniors for the fellow who was placed over them instead of Mr. Bootles.
 In the First Book the dunce of the Sixth was sure of his ground, but so were most of the Fourth, and he had little chance of coming down on fellows like Jimmy Silver or Mornington or Lovell.

Hence, as Jimmy felt sure, he had picked on Tubby Muffin; and even Tubby would have construed "Arms and the man I sing"
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if the bully of the Sixth had not made him nervous and confused.

Mark Carthew's object, in fact, was not so much to impart instruction to the Classical Fourth as to find some opening for exercising his new authority.

He "fancied" himself in a Form master's place, and he meant to let the Fourth understand that he was monarch of all he surveyed in the Form-room.

But Carthew of the Sixth, in the character of amateur Hun, was likely to find trouble before long.

He swished the Form master's cane in the air, with an evident satisfaction in hearing the swish of it.

The sound was not so gratifying to Tubby Muffin.

That plump youth eyed Carthew very uneasily, and looked inclined to bolt back to his place.

"Hold out your hand, Muffin!"
 "I—I say, Carthew—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Carthew, in his most bullying manner.

Having found a victim and an excuse, the bully of the Sixth was not to be denied.

Jimmy Silver, with knitted brows, started up in his place.

He was head of the Form, and he felt called upon to speak up for the unlucky Muffin.

"Carthew!" he called out.
 The prefect spun round.

"Silence, Silver!"
 "I was going to say—"

"Hold your tongue!"
 "I'm bound to speak," answered Jimmy

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steadily. "Mr. Bootles never caned a chap for a mistake in his construe."

"Perhaps that's the reason why you seem such a set of dunces," said Carthew with a sneer. "My methods are different, as you will see."

Carthew spoke of his "methods" as if he had been a Form master for a couple of years at least.

He was, in fact, swelling with importance, and was not in a humour to brook the slightest contradiction.

"But—" began Jimmy again determinedly.

"Another word, Silver, and I will cane you as well as Muffin!"

"You have no right to cane Muffin," said Jimmy Silver. "He wouldn't have blundered as he did if you hadn't scared him."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lovell.

Carthew fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver.

He had been unable to catch the captain of the Fourth in his construe; but Jimmy had placed himself in his hands now. He had the excuse he wanted.

"Stand out here, Silver!" he said. Jimmy hesitated a moment.

He was strongly inclined to refuse, but he remembered Mr. Bootles' appeal, and the fact that the bully was, after all, placed there in authority by the Head.

His hesitation was only momentary. He rose and came out before the class.

"Wait your turn!" said Carthew grimly.

"Hold out your hand, Muffin! If I have to

tell you again, it will be the worse for you!"

Tubby Muffin's fat hand came out in a very gingerly manner.

Swish!
 "Yaroooh!"

"Silence! Go back to your place!"

Tubby Muffin, with an expression of deep anguish, squeezed his hand under his fat arm and limped back to his Form.

He had, however, escaped more cheaply than Carthew had intended, for, had not a second victim offered, the bully of the Sixth would certainly not have let Tubby off with one cut.

Carthew turned to Jimmy Silver with a glitter in his eyes.

"You have interfered and disobeyed orders, Silver!" he said. "Mr. Bootles may have allowed that kind of thing, but I don't! Hold out your hand!"

Again Jimmy hesitated.

"Do you hear me?" rapped out Carthew.

Again Jimmy was on the point of resistance, and again he restrained himself.

He held out his hand.
 Swish!

It was a cruel cut, and it made Jimmy catch his breath.

Lovell's eyes glittered, and he half rose. But he sat down again.

There was a murmur in the Fourth.

Jimmy had set his teeth to keep back a cry of pain.

"Now the other hand!" said Carthew grimly.

Jimmy looked him steadily in the face, and did not move.

He had had enough, and he did not intend to have any more—from Mark Carthew, at least.

"You hear me, Silver?"
 "I hear you."

"Will you hold out your hand?"
 "No!"

"Wha-at?"
 "That's enough!" said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"I'm not taking any more, Carthew!"

A loud murmur came from the Fourth.

It was clear enough that the Classical juniors were in sympathy with the captain of the Form, and ready to back him up.

Carthew stared blankly at Jimmy Silver.

Like most bullies, he did not know where to stop, and, having provoked resistance, he did not quite know how to deal with it.

"Will you hold out your other hand?" he repeated.

"No, I won't!"
 "Do you want me to lay the cane about you?"

"I shall kick your shins if you do!"
 "Bravo!" chirruped Lovell.

Carthew panted.

"Silver! You—you— Go to the Head, at once! I will write you a note to take to Dr. Chisholm, and he will deal with you!"

Jimmy Silver turned on his heel and walked back to his place.

There he sat down.

"Silver! You are to go to the Head!" shouted Carthew.

Jimmy Silver did not move.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Fourth Breaks Out.

THERE was a breathless pause in the Form-room.

Jimmy Silver sat tight, with his steady eyes fixed upon the prefect.

The juniors round him were quivering with excitement.

Trouble had threatened from the moment Mark Carthew had taken charge of the Fourth, and now it had broken out.

Carthew stood with the cane gripped in his hand, his eyes blazing at the captain of the Fourth.

"Silver!" he panted at last. "This means a flogging for you! I order you to take a note to the Head in the Sixth Form-room!"

Jimmy did not answer.

"Will you go?"
 "No!"

"Don't go, Jimmy!" called out several voices.

"I don't mean to!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Silence!" thundered Carthew.

"Rats!"
 "Wha-a-at?"

"Rats to you, old sport!" said Mornington coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew's face was crimson with rage. He had made a mess of his Form-mastership already, and he had no idea at all how to deal with the situation he had created.

He decided on drastic measures, and strode towards the Form.

Tubby Muffin was chuckling, a fat chuckle, greatly delighted to see Carthew taken down; but he ceased all of a sudden as the prefect turned on him.

Probably Carthew was selecting him as the easiest victim, in the hope of striking terror to the Fourth by the sight of condign punishment.

"What are you laughing at, Muffin?" he asked in a grinding voice.

"I—I wasn't laughing, Carthew!" gasped Tubby in dismay. "Not a bit! I—I was—was crying— Yarrooh!"

The cane sang on Tubby's fat shoulders. He uttered a yell that rang through the Form-room.

Carthew gripped the fat Classical by the collar and swung him out from his desk.

Then he laid on the cane.

Tubby Muffin struggled and howled wildly. But Carthew had miscalculated, if he had supposed that the sight of that thrashing would reduce the juniors to obedience.

It had the reverse effect.

The cane had fallen thrice on the howling Tubby, when Jimmy Silver jumped up and ran out of his place.

He grasped the prefect's arm and dragged it back.

"Stop that, you bully!" he said between his teeth.

"Let go my arm!" shrieked Carthew.

"Let Muffin alone, then!"

Carthew released Tubby Muffin and turned furiously on Jimmy. The cane lashed out with savage force.

There was a rush of Lovell, Raby, and Newcome to the aid of their leader.

They charged into Carthew, and sent him spinning.

Erroll and Mornington, Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons, were only a moment behind them.

Carthew sprawled on the floor of the Form-room, with the excited juniors round him.

"Kick him out!" shouted Conroy.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah! Turn him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rotters!" yelled Carthew, as the juniors seized him on all sides. "I'll smash you! I'll call in the Head! I'll—I'll— Yarrooh! Leggo! Oh crumbs!"

"Bump him!"

"Hurrah!"

Bumping a prefect was a form of amusement that was not, under ordinary circumstances, indulged in at Rookwood.

Perhaps for that reason, among others, the Classical Fourth were not inclined to let the present opportunity pass.

Seven or eight pairs of hands were on the infuriated prefect, and his struggles were quite unavailing.

He was swept off the floor, yelling, and he came down again with a smite that made him yell still louder.

"Give him another!"

"Ha, ha! Bump him!"

"Give him jip!" howled Tubby Muffin.

"Lemme gerrat him! I'll jump on him! Let me jump on the beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Help!"

The door opened.

Mr. Bootles, in his overcoat, with his umbrella on his arm, looked into the Form-room, with distended eyes behind his glasses.

The "sacked" master had been about to leave when the uproar from the Fourth Form-room reached his ears.

It had drawn Mr. Bootles to the spot.

"Boys!" stuttered the little gentleman, in horror. "Silver—Erroll—Conroy! My dear boys—"

"Oh, my hat! Bootles!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. released Carthew suddenly.

The prefect lay on his back on the floor and roared.

The juniors turned crimson faces towards their horrified Form master.

True, Mr. Bootles was no longer their master, and he had no authority there, but old habits were strong.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"What does this riot mean?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.



A SHOCK FOR BOOTLES! Mr. Bootles looked into the Form-room. "Boys!" stuttered the "sacked" master in horror. "Silver—Erroll—Conroy! My dear boys—" "Oh, my hat! Bootles!" Jimmy Silver & Co. released Carthew suddenly and turned crimson faces towards their horrified master. (See Chapter 5.)

"We can't stand that rotten bully, sir," said Mornington coolly.

"Mornington!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Carthew. "I'll go to the Head! Yow-ow-ow! You young demons, just you wait a minute or two!"

The breathless and dishevelled prefect staggered out of the Form-room.

"Carthew!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "One moment, Carthew—"

"Don't speak to me!" panted Carthew. "You are not a master here now, Mr. Bootles, and you needn't interfere."

"What! Carthew, this impertinence is—"

"Oh, rot!" snapped Carthew rudely.

Mr. Bootles stood quite dazed by that reply.

But from somewhere in the Fourth a Latin dictionary whizzed through the air, and it landed on the side of Carthew's head in the doorway.

The juniors were not disposed to see their Form master insulted, whether he was sacked or not.

Carthew uttered a fiendish yell, and went staggering into the passage.

"Well hit!" yelled Lovell. "Right on the wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew spun back in the doorway with a face like a demon, as if about to rush at the juniors.

A regular fusillade met him.

Books and inkpots whizzed through the air, and under the volley Carthew fairly turned tail and bolted, streaked with ink.

A roar of laughter followed him.

"Boys!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, almost wringing his hands in dismay at such a scene in the Form-room. "My dear boys, do not—"

"Order!" called out Jimmy Silver. "Remember Mr. Bootles is here, you fellows! Order!"

"Right you are!" said Conroy. "Sit down, you chaps. Shall—shall we go on with Virgil, sir?"

"Yes, yes! Certainly!" stammered Mr. Bootles.

He picked up the book Carthew had laid on the desk, and the Classical Fourth sat down in a very quiet and orderly way.

It seemed to Mr. Bootles the best method of quietening the tumult.

In a very few minutes the Form-room presented its old aspect, with the exception

that the Form master was in his overcoat, and had an umbrella hanging on his arm.

But within five minutes the door was flung open, and the Head of Rookwood strode in, with rustling gown, with the ink-splashed face of Mark Carthew scowling behind him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Trouble With the Third.

DR. CHISHOLM'S face was pale with anger.

A hush fell on the juniors as the Head's angry glance swept over them.

The next moment, however, the Head observed Mr. Bootles, and he transferred his attention to the Form master.

Mr. Bootles coloured under his grim gaze.

"You here, Mr. Bootles!" exclaimed the Head angrily.

"Really, sir—"

"You have no right in this Form-room! Have I not spoken plainly enough, Mr. Bootles, in informing you that your services are no longer required in this school?" rapped out the Head.

Mr. Bootles crimsoned.

"I came here because the Form-room was in an uproar!" he exclaimed. "I have interfered to restore order, Dr. Chisholm, and I have done so. Now that I have done it I am ready to retire."

And Mr. Bootles, trembling with wrath and indignation, laid down his book and whisked to the door.

"Good-bye, sir!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, Silver!" thundered the Head.

Jimmy bit his lip.

Like most of the Rookwooders, he had a great respect for the Head, but the stern old gentleman was running the risk of losing it now.

"And now," resumed the Head, when Mr. Bootles was gone, "what does this riot mean? I placed Carthew of the Sixth Form in charge of this class. In disobeying him you have disobeyed me!"

"He's a rotten bully, sir!" said Mornington.

"How dare you use such expressions to me, Mornington?"

"It's the truth, sir!"

"You have taken advantage of the present unusual state of affairs to break out in riot!" exclaimed the Head.

"It's not like that, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"We—"

Something MUST Be Done! The Rookwood Masters' Rebellion Cannot Go On!



"Don't contradict me, Silver!"
 "But, sir—"
 "Silence! I shall punish every boy here!" said the Head. "Give me a cane, Carthew."
 Carthew, with a glitter in his eyes, handed Mr. Bootles' cane to the Head.
 "You may go to the Sixth Form-room, Carthew," added the Head. "I will place another prefect in charge of the Fourth Form."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Carthew.
 The Head made a gesture of dismissal, and Carthew left the Form-room.

He was "sacked" from his new position already.
 The Head intended to punish the juniors for their outbreak, but he had tact enough to send away the prefect who had been unable to keep order in the Form.

The next ten minutes were not enjoyable to the Fourth.

They had to file before the Head and take a cut each, and Dr. Chisholm did not lay the cane on lightly.

The juniors were looking grim, some of them sullen, when they went back to their places.

Dr. Chisholm laid down the cane.
 "I shall send Bulkeley to take charge of this Form," he said. "If there is any further trouble, very severe measures will be taken."

"There won't be any trouble with Bulkeley, sir; he's not a rotten bully!" said Mornington.

The Head did not appear to hear that remark.

He left the Form-room, and in a few minutes Bulkeley of the Sixth came in.

Another prefect had been placed in charge of the Third, leaving the captain of Rookwood free to deal with the Classical Fourth.

Bulkeley's methods were very different from Carthew's, and the remainder of the morning passed off quietly enough.

Bulkeley was too popular for the juniors to wish to give him any trouble, though they were in a restive mood.

Some of them were rubbing their hands as they came out of the Form-room at twelve o'clock.

"What a merry mornin'!" remarked Valentine Mornington, with a laugh. "The Head was in a rare wax."

Lovell gave a snort.
 "They can't run a school on prefects!" he said. "It's all rot! Bulkeley can handle the Fourth, simply because we like the old chap, and don't want to worry him. I'll bet you there's been trouble in the Third."

Jimmy Silver was of the same opinion, and he looked for his cousin, Algy of the Third, to learn how matters had gone on that morning.

He found the usually cheery Algy scowling in the corridor, and squeezing his hands—an occupation that was also Grant's and Wegg's.

"Trouble?" asked Jimmy.
 Algy Silver grunted.
 "Of course! What did you expect? Did you think the Third Form could be run by a blessed prefect?" he inquired.

"But old Bulkeley—"
 "We were willing to go easy with old Bulkeley, so long as he didn't want to make us work," said Algy, in an injured tone. "Of course, we weren't going to work without a Form-master. He cut up rusty. And in the middle of the morning Bulkeley was called away—"

"He came to take us!" grinned Raby.
 "And they sent in Knowles instead," said Algy resentfully. "Knowles—a Modern prefect—a worm of a Modern, you know. They actually thought that Classicals were going to be run by a Modern! I don't know why they made old Chisholm Head of Rookwood. It wasn't for his brains."

"Ow-ow!" remarked Grant.
 "Wooop!" murmured Wegg, rubbing his grubby hands.

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"You've been ragging?" asked Jimmy.
 "What do you think?" answered his cousin, with a grunt. "We weren't goin' to stand Knowles. He's a bully—nearly as bad as Carthew—and he's a Modern. I shied an ink-ball at him—"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "Of course, he laid into me with the pointer," groaned Algy. "He's been givin' us the pointer most of the mornin'. I don't know whether that's what the Head thinks we're sent to Rookwood for. I thought we'd come here to learn things."

"Well, Knowles could teach you the rot you learn in the Third, if you'd let him," remarked Newcome.

"Catch us letting Knowles teach us anything!"

"It's all rot!" said Wegg, in a very injured tone. "There ain't any masters, and there oughtn't to be any lessons. I don't call it fair play."

"Why should we pull with Knowles, when the Head himself can't pull with his giddy staff?" said Grant.

"That's what I say," agreed Algy Silver. "I know jolly well I'm goin' to make Knowles' life a burden, so long as he's lookin' after the Third. Ow! My hands!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away in a thoughtful mood.

There was no doubt that discipline was already considerably relaxed, and that the school without masters would be the scene of strange happenings if something was not done soon.

"Hallo, there go Bootles' goods and chattels!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, with a nod towards the gates.

Old Mack, the porter, was taking out the trap, with several trunks and boxes stacked in it.

Mr. Bootles, in hat and coat, was to be seen in the old stone gateway, in company with Mr. Greely of the Fifth.

The Fourth Form master had not gone yet, but he was evidently going at last.

"Let's go and say good-bye to him," said Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"
 The Fistical Four walked quickly down to the gates, glad of the chance of saying good-bye to their Form master before he went.

Mr. Greely was speaking as they came up, and they could not help bearing the words of the Fifth Form master.

"The Coombe Arms, then," said Mr. Greely. "Well—very well! You will engage a sufficiency of accommodation for—"

"Yes, certainly. But—"

"If matters remain as they are, the whole staff will be leaving Rookwood," said Mr. Greely. "We do not intend, however, to disperse—not yet, at all events. My idea is to wait at hand, a return to common-sense on the part of Dr. Chisholm, or the intervention of the governing body."

"Quite so; but—"

"At the Coombe Arms we can remain till matters are clearer," said Mr. Greely. "The Head, I believe, has been telephoning and telegraphing to various agencies all day, with the view of engaging a new staff without delay, but—"

The Fistical Four walked away, and Mr. Greely's voice was no longer heard.

Neither of the masters had observed them, and they gave up their intention of saying good-bye to Mr. Bootles just then.

"A new staff!" murmured Lovell. "Fancy a new set of masters at Rookwood, with the old set putting up at the inn in the village, looking on! Can the Head get a new lot in so quick as all that? And isn't that what's called blacklegging?"

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

The masters' strike at Rookwood might be a tremendous lark, in some of its aspects, but Jimmy realised that it was not for the

good of the old school, and he would have been very glad to see it at an amicable end.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
 Mischief Brewing.

THE RE was an interview that evening between Mr. Greely and the Head.

Probably the Fifth Form master was making a last attempt to reach some accommodation.

If so, the attempt was a failure, for during the evening there was a general exodus of the staff from the school.

On the Modern side Mr. Manders and another master remained, but on the Classical side there was not one.

Even the French master had thrown in his lot with his English confreres.

The staff had very serious and grave faces, and Mr. Greely a decidedly irritated expression.

The gates of Rookwood closed behind them. Most of the school knew that the departed masters had taken up their quarters at the village inn, which looked as if they did not believe that they had looked their last on Rookwood.

There, apparently, they were to wait till the strike had its effect, and the headmaster came to reason.

But there was no sign about Dr. Chisholm of any intention of coming to reason.

In public his face was as calm, severe, and unemotional as usual.

In private, probably, he felt the trouble that had fallen upon him and the school; in public he betrayed nothing of what he thought or felt.

The school was without masters pending the arrival of a new staff, and a new staff for such a school as Rookwood was not to be gathered at a moment's notice.

Meanwhile, it was necessary to "carry on" by the aid of the Sixth Form prefects, who did their best in the unprecedented emergency.

But that evening there were growing signs that the rule of the prefects would not long remain undisputed.

Some of the fellows alluded to them openly as "blacklegs."

That, when it came to the ears of the prefects, naturally caused great wrath, and the liberal use of the official asphalt, which, in turn, excited indignation and restiveness.

The next day the Forms went into class as usual, with the prefects in charge.

In the Classical Fourth all was quiet.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were attached to "old Bulkeley," and did not want to worry him.

Bulkeley's personal popularity carried him through.

But it was different with the other Forms. Knowles of the Modern Sixth was in charge of the Third, and there was trouble with that lively Form.

During the morning, the Fourth heard an uproar proceeding from the quarters of the Third, and grinned at one another.

They guessed that Cecil Knowles was having a lively time.

When the juniors were dismissed, Jimmy Silver & Co. went along to the Third Form-room, and, to their surprise, found the door locked—a crowd of fags roaring with laughter outside, and someone inside hammering furiously on the door.

"What's the row?" asked Jimmy Silver.
 Thump, thump, thump! came from within the Form room.

"Only Knowles!" grinned Algy Silver. "We've looked him in!"

"My only hat!"
 "Knowles was a bit too fresh," explained Grant of the Third. "We're going to leave him there."

(Continued on page 26.)



Next Week's Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. Will Thrill You!



"I can't see without glasses. I must send home for one of my spare pairs," he said.

Harry Lestrade made no reply. He had been in time to see his cousin, who must have just left the castle, standing in the drive. Courtney had been savagely shaking his fist towards his room, and, though he was not near enough to see, the boy sensed that there had been murder in his cousin's eyes.

Six Days to the Grand National!

THE great crowd that was pouring from the ground of Brighton and Hove Albion was eagerly buying papers from the newsboys who hovered about the exits.

For it was semi-final day, and, naturally, as football enthusiasts, they were anxious to learn how the great game between the contestants, the Wessex Wanderers and Barnsley, had stood at half-time.

Harry Lestrade's team had been drawn against Barnsley on the latter's ground, and, as Barnsley had been going great guns all through the season, there were many who had predicted that the Wanderers would meet their Waterloo.

The blurred announcement under "Half-Time Scores" in the "Stop Press" column of the newspapers was not exciting, however. It just left everyone guessing as to what the result of the game would be, for it read, "Barnsley 0—Wessex Wanderers 0," showing that neither team had contrived to score up to the time of the interval.

It was Romford Rovers who had been playing in the League match that had been taking place here against Brighton-to-day, and, after a drawn game, in the dressing-room Austin Courtney was hurriedly changing.

He, too, was anxious to get out and buy a paper. He hoped fervently that Wessex Wanderers would be soundly trounced, and

that his cousin's brilliance on the footer-field would be brought to a check.

Leaving his team-mates still in the process of dressing, Austin Courtney quitted the enclosure.

He almost snatched a paper from the hand of one of the boys, giving him the necessary coin. He frowned, then sighed with relief, as he looked in the "Stop Press" column.

At least, the Wanderers had not been ahead at half-time, and the end of play might see them defeated.

Courtney suddenly felt his shoulder tapped. He swung about, and uttered an ejaculation of surprise as he found Jem Newbold confronting him.

"You!" he exclaimed. "What has brought you to Hove?"

Jem Newbold shrugged his shoulders.

"What else but to see you, Mr. Courtney?" he answered, a trifle grimly. "I have been on the look-out for a chance to find and have a straight talk with you. You read, of course, the result of my appearance before the F.A.?"

Courtney nodded. "Yes," he admitted. "You were suspended for life. But one could hardly expect anything else, in view of the way you bungled matters and left evidence against yourself."

Newbold's face went ugly. His hands clenched, and he put his lips near Courtney's ear.

"The thing is, what are you going to do about it?" he demanded. "My living's gone, and I have you, and you alone, to thank. You promised to make me well off for life if you came into your uncle's fortune, but the way things are going on now you look as though you are likely to be an 'also ran.' Remember that I could still make things confoundedly unpleasant if I wrote to the Football Association and disclosed what I have up till now kept back—that when I fooled with those lemons at Romford I did so at your instigation."

Courtney looked him straight in the eyes.

"Look here, my friend, I am not the kind of man to submit to threats and blackmail!" he snapped. "If you had acted with a little more discretion, the drugging of the Wessex players would never have been brought home to you, so you can hardly blame me for all your troubles. Still, we'll not quarrel. I may need your help again, and the promise I made you about giving you a thousand a year still stands if my cousin can be put out of the contest between us. Whether that will be immediately necessary depends on the result of the semi-final this afternoon. If his side wins I shall be so behind that I dare take no risks as to how his horse, Tearing Haste II, and mine, Fast and Free, finish in the Grand National next Friday."

"I'll help you in anything that will get one back on that whelp, Lestrade," Jem Newbold returned, his voice full of a venomous hatred. "But I'll tell you candidly that you have got to look after me, Courtney, or, as sure as I live, I'll blow the gaff. I want some money now. I am almost broke."

With a gesture of impatience, Courtney took a wallet from his pocket, extracted a banknote, and slipped it into his hand.

"There's twenty pounds, which will keep you going for awhile," he said. "Now walk into Brighton with me, and we'll see what happens up at Barnsley."

It was almost in silence that they tramped into the well-known seaside resort. The match between the Romford Rovers and Brighton and Hove Albion had finished somewhat early, and it was not until they had killed time by discussing a meal and a pot of tea in one of the restaurants on the front that they heard the newsboys shouting "Football results!"

(You must not miss next week's long instalment of our amazing sporting serial—Harry Lestrade on the Warpath Again.)

THE STRIKE OF THE MASTERS! (Continued from page 18.)

Thump, thump! "Cave! Here comes the Head!" called out Oswald of the Fourth.

There was a sudden soughing off of the fags.

The Fourth-Formers vanished also, leaving a clear field for the Head.

Dr. Chisholm's brow was like thunder, as he came up to the door.

Thump, thump!

"Let me out, you young scoundrels!" roared the Modern prefect within.

"Knowles!"

"Oh, it is you, sir! I've been locked in, sir. Those fags—"

"I will see that you are released, Knowles."

It was some time before the key was found and the prefect released.

Shortly afterwards, there was a painful scene in the Third Form-room, with fags holding out reluctant hands, and the Head wielding the cane.

In the afternoon Bulkeley returned to the Third; it was pretty clear that Knowles could not handle them.

Knowles was bestowed upon the Classical Fourth.

And the moment Knowles stepped into the Fourth Form-room the juniors exchanged glances that told that their thoughts were of war.

Knowles was unusually good-tempered that afternoon; perhaps he had had enough trouble, and did not want any more.

But an angelic temper would not have saved him from trouble.

The Classics were "up against" a Modern, anyway—and Knowles had not Bulkeley's popularity to see him through.

And the feeling was growing in the Form that the prefect was acting the part of a "blackleg."

Knowles was systematically worried by his

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hopeful pupils, till at last his temper failed him.

Then he brought the cane into play.

And then there was a volley of grammars, dictionaries, and exercise books from the Fourth, smiting Knowles right and left and covering the floor of the Form-room like a snowstorm.

"You young rotters!" howled Knowles. "You—you disorderly little beasts, you—you—you—"

"Clear off!" called out Mornington.

"You've no business here! We want Bootles!"

"Silence! Order!"

"We want Bootles!" roared the Fourth.

And that cry was taken up as a slogan, and chanted at Knowles, and his voice was drowned in the roar.

"We want Bootles! We want Bootles!" Knowles stood panting for breath, and quite at a loss. He beat a retreat from the Form-room at last.

"He's gone for the Head!" murmured Lovell.

"Look out for squalls!" grinned Mornington.

In a few minutes Dr. Chisholm entered the Form-room, with a brow like thunder.

"Silence!" he exclaimed, as the buzz of voices did not cease at his entrance.

"We want Bootles!"

"What!"

"We want Bootles!" came in a shout.

The Head stood transfixed for a moment. It was the first expression of opinion from the Fourth that had reached his ears, and it probably came as a surprise to him.

"How dare you!" he panted at last.

"Silence! Silence! The next boy who speaks will be flogged!"

There was silence then.

The Head's glance swept over the class, flashing; but it did not find there the usual awed submissiveness.

"I shall take this class for the remainder of the day!" said Dr. Chisholm, in a grinding voice. "I warn you to let me hear no more insolence!"

How the Fifth and the Sixth got on, on

their "lonesome," the juniors did not know; probably they spent the afternoon chatting.

The Head was tied to the Fourth.

And there certainly was exemplary order in that Form—while the Head was there.

The Head was probably as glad as the juniors when the time came to dismiss the Form.

He had a harrassed look as he rustled away.

With all his grim determination of character, he was not finding it an easy task to run Rookwood "on his own."

Jimmy Silver & Co. were smiling as they strolled into the dusky quadrangle.

"It can't last!" said Lovell sapiently. "I don't say I wholly approve of masters going on strike! It's setting a bad example to us nice boys. But the Head's too stiff by half. We want Bootles."

"We do—we does!" said Jimmy. "Bootles has got pushed out because he stood up for little me! It's up to us to stand up for him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And when the new masters come," said Jimmy, "I think there's going to be trouble. We're not going to see Bootles ousted. Perhaps, when our giddy new master has dealt with us a bit, the Head will be glad to call Bootles home—what!"

And the chortle that followed indicated that Jimmy Silver's chums thought it very probable.

THE END.

THE STRIKE BREAKERS

appear at Rookwood—

you must read all about

them in next week's

:: :: POPULAR :: ::

Another Four Long Complete School Stories Next Week!