

STIRRING TIMES AT ROOKWOOD!

Rookwood is at a loss to explain the sudden and amazing change in the character of the tyrannical master, Mr. Manders. The Form master might have told them something had they asked, but—and thereby hangs the tale!



An Amazing, Long, Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Popular Chums of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the famous Tales of Rookwood now appearing in "The Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Discomfiting News!

"SILVER!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I mean, yes, sir!"

Jimmy Silver, with a wry face, sat down and resumed his work under the eagle eye of Mr. Manders. Mr. Bootles usually took the Fourth, but the good-natured Form master had contracted a chill, and was consequently confined to the "sanny." Mr. Manders had been called in by the Head to fill the vacant post, and already the "catty" master of the Sixth was making himself felt.

Jimmy Silver had whispered a few words to Arthur Edward Lovell, on his left, and those few words had earned for him the lines imposed above.

"Hard cheese!" murmured Lovell sympathetically.

"Lovell!"

Mr. Manders' voice rasped out like a knife-edge.

"Yes, sir!"

"You were talking!"

"Was I, sir?" said Arthur Edward meekly. "Take a hundred lines for talking in class, and two hundred lines for impertinence," snapped Mr. Manders.

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard through his nose, sat down, and wrestled with an impossible problem that had something to do with a man mowing a meadow, with a dog as helpmate.

He was not the only member of the class who had suffered at the hands of Mr. Manders. Impositions and canings had been flowing liberally and indiscriminately all the morning, and the Fourth as a whole were fed-up.

Mr. Manders' eyes roamed searchingly round the class, and the Fourth-Formers waited apprehensively for further trouble.

But at that moment a knock at the door relieved the tension. The class-room door opened, and the pageboy at Rookwood appeared. He was bearing a buff-coloured envelope in his hand, evidently a telegram. "Telegram for you, sir."

Mr. Manders snatched the telegram, and as he read the contents his face changed colour. His hands shook nervously, and a startled expression took the place of his usual sour-tempered frown.

The Fourth looked on wonderingly.

The pageboy coughed discreetly for the second time, and Mr. Manders came out of his reverie.

"That is all—there is no answer!" he growled ungraciously.

The pageboy disappeared out of the Form-room.

"Old Manders has had bad news," whispered Lovell to Jimmy Silver.

"I wonder what it is?" mused Jimmy Silver.

"Serve the beast right!" muttered Tubby Muffin.

Mr. Manders seemed far away from lessons after receiving that telegram.

The Fourth, taking advantage of his negligence, commenced to chatter among themselves, and the one topic of conversation was the telegram.

Quite a buzz of comment went the round, and the Sixth Form master made no attempt to quell this disregard of authority. Morning lessons were nearly over, and the master was seen to glance several times in the direction of the clock.

"I wonder what's upset old Mandy?" said Raby.

"Blessed if I know!" replied Jimmy Silver.

"Hark at the row!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

The "row," as Lovell expressed it, was increasing in volume. Every member of the Fourth was talking to his neighbour, and still Mr. Manders made no move.

It wanted five minutes to the hour. As a rule, Mr. Manders kept his class till the very minute of time; but on this occasion he dismissed them with a wave of the hand, and in what appeared to the Fourth an absent-mindedness very peculiar to his character.

"Boys, you may go."

The Fourth Form class-room very soon emptied, and when the last junior disappeared Mr. Manders again perused the telegram that had caused him so much consternation.

It ran:

"Meet me 12.30 without fail, stile, Coombe. Bring money.—Jack."

"What is he doing over here?" muttered Mr. Manders half to himself. And he passed a weary hand over his brow.

A few years ago he had been troubled by a younger brother, who had visited him at the school. This brother Jack had been a wastrel, and, what is worse, a thief. Mr. Manders, in his own peculiar way, held a deep affection for his brother, and had shielded him from the police, who were on his track. He had given him money, and

booked his passage across to Canada, where Jack had promised to make good.

Mr. Manders had only heard once from his brother from that time, to the effect that he was doing well in the new country.

"Twelve-thirty! Bring money!" mused Mr. Manders. "It's nearly that now. I shall have to hurry!"

A few minutes later he was striding across the quad in the direction of the gates to keep his appointment at the stile in Coombe.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Trapped!

MR. MANDERS walked swiftly in the direction of Coombe, and he glanced about him furtively several times. There was just a possibility that someone would recognise Jack as being "wanted" by the police, and it wouldn't do for a master of Rookwood School to be seen conversing with such a person. Still, there was no cause for alarm, as he hadn't encountered anyone up to now along the road to Coombe. The stile loomed up in the distance, and Mr. Manders' heart quickened as he made out the figure of a man leaning against the post.

A second glance told him that it was not his brother Jack, and he made as if to pass the stile; but the stranger intercepted him.

"Excuse me, sir," he began. "Are you Mr. Manders?"

"I am," replied the owner of that name gruffly. "Who are you?"

The stranger smiled.

"I am expecting a master from Rookwood School to keep an appointment made by telegram at this stile. Jack Manders sent that telegram, and he requested me to conduct you personally to his lodgings."

Mr. Manders bristled.

"Why hasn't my brother met me himself?" he demanded.

"Your brother thought it unwise to show himself in the neighbourhood after—"

"Enough!" interrupted Mr. Manders. "I understand perfectly. I presume that you know my brother?"

"I have that honour," said the stranger, with a flourish of his hat in good imitation of a dramatic actor.

The effect was entirely lost upon Mr. Manders.

"Then perhaps, sir, you will have the

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goodness to show me where I can find my brother?" he said coldly.

"With pleasure!"

The Sixth Form master, in company with the stranger walked in the direction of a row of tumble-down cottages lined along the dusty road on the outskirts of Coombe, and finally came to a halt in front of one of great age.

Mr. Manders sniffed as he ran a disapproving eye over the dwelling that sheltered his brother. It certainly did not look up to much, and little like the residence that Jack had chosen in his earlier days.

"Are you sure this is the place?" he demanded of the stranger.

"Quite sure," replied that worthy. "If you will come, in I will acquaint Jack of your presence."

The two men walked up the gravel path, and the stranger pushed open the rickety old door.

Mr. Manders was ushered into a barely furnished room, and was told to make himself comfortable.

He selected the only armchair the room boasted, and seated himself.

The next moment there was a startled yell from the master, and he sprawled on the floor as the chair collapsed under him. Then things happened.

The stranger darted forward, and before the astonished master could collect his wits he was handcuffed.

"Bless my soul! What does this mean?" roared Mr. Manders, in amazement.

The grinning face of the stranger looked down on him.

"It means, Manders, that you are my prisoner!"

"What?"

Mr. Manders fairly gasped. A prisoner, and captured in broad daylight. Such things only happened in novels. But it was true. His hands were securely locked together.

"How dare you! This is preposterous—reandalous!" he exclaimed heatedly. "Pray release me this instant, or I shall—"

He glanced about him wildly, and his captor watched him with an irritating smile.

"Do you happen to call to mind a boy at Rookwood, a few years ago, name of Dennis?" inquired the stranger.

Mr. Manders racked his brain for an answer; then, looking closer at his captor, he gave a start of recognition.

"Dennis—Dennis!" he mused. "Why—why, if my memory doesn't fail me, you are that person!"

The stranger smiled.

"I thought you would call me to mind," he said. "Perhaps you also remember getting me expelled for an offence I never committed?"

Mr. Manders looked uncomfortable. He recalled the Rookwood old boy, and the chain of circumstances which led up to his expulsion from the school. He also remembered that he himself had been the chief witness in that unpleasant affair.

"Well, Dennis, what do you want with me? And why am I made a prisoner in this disgraceful fashion? Where is my brother?"

"Your brother," began the Rookwood old boy, "is doing very well in Canada, where I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance."

"What!"

Mr. Manders' face was a study. "Then why have I been made the victim of this joke on your part? I presume it is a joke!" he spluttered.

"Oh, yes; it is a joke, Manders, old bird! In fact, you're the joke, or, rather, you will be!" grinned Dennis.

"Bless my soul! What do you mean? J-joke! I don't understand!"

"I have taken a great deal of trouble over you, Manders," resumed Dennis. "In fact, I have made it my business to understand you for a short while at Rookwood!"

"Understudy me! What for?" exploded the Sixth Form master.

"Well, you see, I am going to turn the tables on you. You're going to be fired from Rookwood for an offence you never committed! I happen to know that you are taking the Fourth at Rookwood whilst Footles is in the 'sanny.' Do you get on to the idea?"

Mr. Manders did not get on to the idea at all—at least, the expression on his face

did not appear at least to give one that impression.

"I—I—I—" he spluttered helplessly. The Rookwood old boy seemed to be enjoying the situation. He had seen many expressions on the face of Mr. Manders in the days gone by, but never any like this. The Sixth Form master rivalled a contortionist.

"I see that you don't quite understand me," he said, fixing Mr. Manders with his twinkling eyes; "so if you'll give me your attention for a few moments, I'll hasten to enlighten you."

"Proceed!" rapped out Mr. Manders in his bullying tone.

His courage was returning now.

"I'm going to be Manders for a few hours at Rookwood!" commenced Dennis.

"What!"

"I'm going to be Manders for a few hours at Rookwood," he repeated, "and you—you are going to stay here!"

"Bless my soul! Stay here? Never!"

The Sixth Form master could hardly believe his ears. He—a respectable schoolmaster—a prisoner, while an impostor took his place at Rookwood! It fairly took his breath away.

"I'm afraid that you will have no option!" said the Rookwood old boy. "You see, this row of cottages is in a deserted road, and this is the only house tenanted—tenanted by me for the duration of my stay as Mr. Manders, Form master at Rookwood!"

"This is scandalous!" bellowed the unfortunate master. "I've never heard of such a thing!"

"You will be chained up in here for the remainder of the day, during which time I hope to carry out my scheme," said Dennis.

"Chained?"

"Yes. You see, I don't let you roam about, or you will muck up my little game. Fairly takes your breath away, doesn't it?"

It evidently took Mr. Manders' breath away. He could only sit there and gasp.

"I shall leave you enough food to carry on with," went on his captor, quite unmoved. "And I'm going to have a good time in your place up at the school. I'm counted a very good impersonator in my own select circle, and I think I can manage the part successfully!"

"You shall suffer for this, Dennis!" exclaimed the master, somewhat recovering from his amazement. "I shall give you in charge to the police!"

"Police! I shall be miles away by the time you are back at the school! And I fancy you will have your hands full convincing the Head of your innocence!"

Dennis, with a quick movement, strode towards him, and for the second time things happened so quickly that Mr. Manders was left as one in a dream.

When he came out of that happy state, it was to find himself chained round the middle by a leathern girdle, which connected with an iron staple firmly fixed in the wall.

"Good g-gracious!" he stammered.

Then his eyes became riveted upon his captor.

Dennis was standing in front of a looking-glass, and he held a wig in his hand. The wig was identical in every feature with that of Mr. Manders' scanty mop of hair. And when the old boy carefully placed it on his head, the effect in resemblance was striking.

In features Dennis was not unlike the Sixth Form master. He had one of those faces which, with a little make-up, would pass as a very good impersonation of anyone.

True, he was young-looking, but a few deft lines with a make-up pencil soon altered that.

A touch here and there, done with the hand and eye of an artist, completed his impersonation, as far as features went.

He had Mr. Manders' sullen frown to a nicety, and when that unfortunate person saw his double, as it were, he forgot for the moment his uncomfortable position, and looked on with more than interest.

"How does that strike you, Manders?" grinned Dennis, with a perfect imitation of that master's crusty voice.

"I can see you are visibly impressed," he continued. "But wait! Wait until I have donned the cap and gown!"

He walked over to a cupboard, and foraged around. A few moments later a cap and gown came to light, and, with careful precision, he commenced to dress.

The effect was startling. He might have been the Sixth Form master's double. In height he was perhaps an inch or so taller

than Mr. Manders, but that would pass unnoticed unless the two were seen together, which was not likely to happen.

"What do you think of it now?" he asked.

"It's outrageous! It's—"

Words failed the flabbergasted master. He could only stare at his double as if he had seen a ghost.

"Keep calm, Manders!" chuckled Dennis. "I must be going now. You see this contrivance?"

He held in his hand an ordinary alarm-clock with an extra attachment.

"Well, this is connected with the patent lock with which I have fastened you. At midnight exactly this lock will automatically open, thereby releasing you from your—er—er—uncomfortable position."

This was too much for Mr. Manders. He nearly collapsed.

"Am I to understand," he said feebly, "that when the alarm strikes midnight shall be free!"

"Exactly!"

The Rookwood old boy, with another glance at his captive, swept off with his mortar-board, bowed low, and, with a dramatic "Au revoir!" was gone, leaving Mr. Manders alone with himself and his thoughts.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fourth is surprised!

"GOOD-AFTERNOON, sir!" Thus old Mack, the porter, as Mr. Manders, alias Dennis, the Rookwood old boy, swept in at the gates of Rookwood.

The bogus master greeted this friendly greeting on the part of old Mack with a frown, which was in keeping with Mr. Manders' usual method of dealing with his subordinates.

The impostor chuckled to himself as he realised that old Mack had not spotted his "make-up," and strode on towards the Classical House by way of the gym. He did not want to encounter any of the masters until he had settled down in his new role.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were punting a football about near the gym as Mr. Manders came along.

"Good shot, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver had just sent in a stinging shot at low range, which Conroy, the Colonial junior, had failed to stop. The junior footer eleven were due to play St. Jim's on the Saturday, and Jimmy Silver was getting in as much practice as he could, in order to wipe up the ground with Tom Merry & Co., as Arthur Edward Lovell expressed it.

Conroy picked up the ball ruefully, and kicked it out of goal. Mr. Manders, coming round the corner of the gym, got the full benefit of that lusty kick.

Whiz!

The ball struck him fairly in the chest, and he sat down in a puddle with a splash.

"Ow! W-what!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The faces of the juniors assumed a look of sympathy. It was very unfortunate that Mr. Manders should have happened along at such a moment. Jimmy Silver & Co. thought they were booked for trouble. They knew Mr. Manders' temper, quick to fire, and drastic in its consequences.

"Now we're in for it!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

Conroy ran to help the fallen master to his feet, his face full of concern.

"I'm sorry, sir! It was an accident! I never saw you coming!"

"Grough! Bless my soul!" grunted Mr. Manders, with an inward chuckle.

He scrambled to his feet, helped by the willing juniors. Luckily, his wig had not come apart from his natural hair, or the game would have been up instantly.

"Boy," he roared, "this is a deliberate assault—"

"I assure you, sir, that it was quite an accident!" muttered Conroy.

"We never saw you coming, sir!" chimed in Jimmy Silver.

By this time Mr. Manders had put himself to right, little the worse for his sudden descent from dignity. He was entering into the spirit of the thing wholeheartedly, and he determined to surprise the juniors. They, he knew, expected a severe inpot at the very least.

"I'm not hurt," he said. "But you must be more careful in the future! Get on with your game; in fact, I'll join in myself!" Jimmy Silver & Co. gasped in astonishment. Mr. Manders, the tyrannical master of the Sixth, had not even given them lines for sitting him in a puddle! But what was most amazing, he had actually consented to join in the footer practice! Mr. Manders, the master who hated football, or any other sport for that matter! A feather would have knocked down Jimmy Silver & Co. at that moment.

"My hat!"
 "J-join in, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver, in a dream.
 "Certainly, my boy! I've noticed that you," he continued, looking directly at the leader of the Fistical Four, "are a little slow on your feet!"

"M-mum-my feet?"
 "Yes. You don't make up your mind quick enough!"
 "M-mum-my mind!" stuttered Jimmy helplessly.
 "If you take my place in goal, I'll show you how a ball should be dribbled, and how you should shoot for goal," said the bogus Mr. Manders, enjoying the situation.

"You—you will, sir?"
 "I will!"
 Jimmy Silver walked dazedly to the goal chalked on the gym wall. Mr. Manders was going to show him—him, the captain of the junior footer eleven—how to dribble a ball, and how to wind up with a shot at goal! After that Jimmy was prepared for anything to happen.

The bogus master walked briskly over to the little group of juniors.

"What are you staring at me like that for?" he asked grimly. Raby was the recipient of that question.

"St-st-staring, sir!"
 "Bless my soul! What has come over you boys?" barked Mr. Manders. "You all seem to be afflicted with the same complaint, standing there like so many lunatics, and repeating in parrot fashion everything I say! Now, let's get on with the game!"

And Mr. Manders, suiting the action to the word, went full tilt at Conroy, who had the ball at his feet.

Crash!
 "Ow! Yow! Yaroo!"
 Conroy was a fair weight, but even he could not stand that heavy shoulder charge, specially as he was least prepared for such drastic action.

"Ow! Yow! Yowp!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Manders glared down at the prostrated junior.
 "You should be prepared for these things when you play football, my boy. Don't sit there on the ground yelling in that ridiculous fashion!"

Conroy struggled to his feet caressing his injured person. The ground by the gym was very hard, much more so than a footer-pitch would be after a frost, and he had hit it with terrific force. A gleam came into his eyes, and he silently vowed to turn the tables on Mr. Manders. The other juniors, recovering from their merriment, were dribbling the football round Mr. Manders. But the master in the role of a footballer was a great force to be reckoned with. He tackled Lovell with vigour, much to that junior's amazement, and when the little scrum broke up it was seen that Mr. Manders had the ball at his feet, and was travelling in the direction of the goal.

Conroy ran to intercept him, and, with a charge that would have sent any junior spinning, he tried to take possession. To his surprise, Mr. Manders took that charge without finching. Moreover, he continued on his course for goal as if nothing had touched him.

"Great Scott! He can play!" gasped the Colonial junior. Mr. Manders certainly could.

Leaving the junior in a tumbling heap, he took another pace forward, steadied himself, and, keeping an eye on Jimmy Silver's position between the "sticks," sent in a low ground shot which that junior, to his own utter dismay, failed to stop.

"Good shot, sir!" he gasped involuntarily.
 "Bravo!"

The juniors were bordering on a state of idocy. That Mr. Manders should not only make rings round them at dribbling, but finish up with a successful shot for goal, surprised them.

The bogus Mr. Manders smiled.
 "You want a little more coaching, my boys, and you will be quite a decent and formidable team. If you care to adopt me as your coach, I shall be pleased to devote to-morrow's half-holiday in training you."

Mr. Manders, alias Dennis, the old boy, knew inwardly that he would not be at Rookwood on the morrow. Still, his sense of humour was such that he could already imagine the real Mr. Manders' consternation when the Fourth-Formers taxed him with his promise of coaching them.

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy Silver, acting as spokesman for the juniors. "We should like you very much to coach us, and—and we think it—er—ripping of you, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "That's all right, my boys. It will be a pleasure, I assure you!"

Then the bell went for classes, and Mr. Manders, with a few hurried words, left the juniors chattering among themselves as he strode off in the direction of the Form-room.

"Well, what do you think of it, Jimmy?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I feel as if I've been dreaming!" grinned Jimmy Silver.
 "Manders a footer player, and hot stuff at that! Why, it's—it's miraculous!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "I don't know what's caused this sudden transformation," said the leader of the Fistical Four, "but I hope it's a change for good. Manders is top-hole like this! Blessed if I know what to make of it, though!"

(Continued on next page.)

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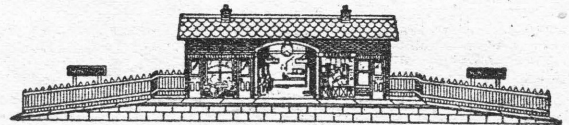
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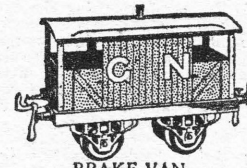
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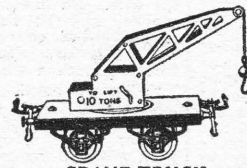
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LEAP-FROG IN THE FORM-ROOM! Just as Mr. Manders commenced to leap the line of backs, there was a rustling movement at the door, and the Head entered the form-room. He stood in petrified amazement, unable to believe the strange scene before him. (See Chapter 4.)

That was the general opinion of the juniors. And, with thoughtful faces, they strolled over to the Fourth Form class-room. Little did they dream that more surprises were in store for them in that place of learning.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Manders in a New Light!

"IT'S going fine!"
Thus Mr. Manders, alias Dennis, the Rookwood old boy, as he stood at the desk in the Fourth Form class-room. The bell had just stopped, and the Fourth-Formers were already trooping in for afternoon lessons. The juniors looked at their master intently. News goes the round very quickly amongst schoolboys, and already the exploits of Mr. Manders as a footballer had reached them by way of Tubby Muffin, the Peeping Tom of Rookwood.

There was a satisfied expression on the face of the Form master as he watched the juniors take their places. He had made an important discovery. On the desk of the real Mr. Manders he had found a list of all the juniors who had been given impositions. This was very successful to his plan of action, as he could now learn the names of the juniors.

Mr. Manders took the list in his hand and confronted his class.

"Stand up, these boys," he began. "Silver, Lovell, Muffin."

The juniors, as their names were called, rose from their places with some surprise. By the time Mr. Manders had finished the list of the delinquents half the Fourth were on their feet. Evidently the real Mr. Manders had been going strong. The bogus master quickly mastered each boy's name.

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and, reaching the end of the list, he cleared his throat.

"Boys," he commenced, "I have decided to cancel all impositions for to-day."

And, to the utter amazement of the Fourth, he tore the list in pieces and deposited them in the wastepaper-basket.

"My hat!"

"Great snakes!"

"Gee whiz!"

Such were the remarks that floated to his ears. He had intended to surprise the juniors, and he had certainly succeeded. A hubbub of conversation commenced between the surprised juniors, which he instantly quelled with a wave of the hand.

"Silence, boys! Proceed with your lessons."

The Fourth settled down to work, but the chatter which followed proved that their work was of a divided nature. Mr. Manders' generosity was the chief topic amongst them, and their Latin suffered in consequence.

Mr. Manders opened his desk and produced a volume of Livy. Finding a page with the corner turned over, he decided that that was the last page the Fourth had learned in their previous lesson. Anyway, he determined to try it, and, turning to the juniors, he held up his hand.

"Let me see. We are at Book Twenty-one, are we not, Silver?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then kindly construe."

Jimmy Silver rose from his place and construed.

The bogus Mr. Manders had forgotten most of his Latin, and it was lucky for him that it was not for him to construe, but the class. As long as he showed a sufficient air of wisdom all would be well.

Jimmy Silver was rather good at Latin, and he could have construed for ever and ever. But he would have been surprised if he had known that the Form master was

following him with envious wonder, and wishing that he could do it as well.

Jimmy Silver went on for about five minutes. Then Tubby Muffin was called upon to construe.

Tubby Muffin awkwardly stood up and commenced.

He was hopeless at Latin, and although the bogus Mr. Manders was not very much his superior in that direction, he knew enough of Book 21 to see that the fat Classical was hopelessly off the rails.

"I perceive, Muffin, that you are rather slow at Latin," he said.

Tubby Muffin blinked.

"Am I, sir?" he stammered. "You see, I can't concentrate my mind on Latin, sir. I'm nearly frozen with cold."

The latter part of Tubby's statement was quite true. His face was blue with cold. It was a very sharp winter's afternoon, and the fat junior, who did not indulge in any sports to cause a healthy circulation, was shivering with the cold.

"So you're cold, are you, Muffin?"

"Yes, sir, that's it."

"Then I'll soon get you warm," said Mr. Manders. "Stand up, boys!"

The Fourth stood up wonderingly.

"We will have half an hour at leap-frog. I feel rather chilly myself."

"Leap-frog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is he potty?"

The Fourth-Formers gasped in astonishment. This was a new side to the character of Mr. Manders. Never in the history of Rookwood had a master been known to suggest leap-frog as a means of exercise in the Form-room. They did not mind, however. Most of them hated Latin, and leap-frog would come as a welcome diversion to the afternoon's task. The majority of the juniors at that moment classified Mr. Manders as mad. They held their breath as they waited for his next words.

"Clear the desks out of the way, my boys," commanded Mr. Manders, with a twinkle in his eye.

In a moment the juniors, only too glad to leave off work of the book-learning variety, were scrambling over the desks. Laughing and talking excitedly, they jumbled all the desks into one corner, and the noise that accompanied this move could have been heard in the Modern's House.

"Line up!"

The juniors lined up for their game of leap-frog, half of them making backs for their fellows.

"Follow me!" commanded Mr. Manders. And, with a run, he commenced to leap the backs of the juniors.

Mr. Manders, with gown flying out behind his head, was half-way through the line of backs before any of the juniors had attempted to follow him. Then they entered into the spirit of the game, and, with yells of merriment, passed along the line.

The din was audible in the passage, and the Fourth-Formers quite expected an interruption in the shape of Dr. Chisholm. Still, they argued, orders were orders, and, after all, they were only carrying out their instructions.

Mr. Manders had reached the end of the line, and, taking up a stand a few yards away, bent his back in the approved leap-frog position.

The Fourth-Formers leaped over him, and they, in turn, made backs.

There was a rustling movement at the door, and Dr. Chisholm, followed by Bulkeley, the captain of the school, entered the Form-room. Both stood in petrified amazement, unable to believe their eyes.

"Your turn, sir!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Right-ho, my boy!" grinned Mr. Manders.

And he commenced to leap along the line once more.

"Boys!" roared Dr. Chisholm, raising his voice above the din. "Stop this at once! Do you hear me?"

Evidently the Fourth didn't. They were so engrossed in their game that they had not noticed the arrival of the Head.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Chisholm. "Mr. Manders, what does this mean? Cease this at once!"

"Oh, my hat! The Head!"

Jimmy Silver uttered the warning, and the juniors stood frozen to the floor. Not so Mr. Manders, however. He continued to leap the remaining back which was very disastrous for him.

At Jimmy Silver's warning cry the juniors had straightened themselves, and Arthur Edward Lovell, following their example, stood up just as Mr. Manders was about to leap his back. There was a terrific collision, and both parties descended to the floor with a bump.

"Ow-yow-yow!" "Grough-ow-yow!" moaned Mr. Manders, sitting on the floor in a most undignified position and rubbing his head.

"Mr. Manders," roared the Head angrily, "what does this mean—and what are you doing down there?"

The bogus Mr. Manders scrambled to his feet and met the stern glance of Dr. Chisholm.

"Just a little exercise, sir!" he said. "The boys were cold, and I thought a game of leap-frog would restore their circulation."

"Indeed!" said the Head dryly.

The Fourth-Formers quailed before the angry glitter in his eye. "Bulkeley," resumed the Head, "kindly take over the class from Mr. Manders."

"Very good, sir!" "I should like to speak to you in my study, Mr. Manders, at once, if you please!"

And the Head rustled majestically out of the room, leaving the juniors in the hands of Bulkeley. Mr. Manders, with inward nervousness, followed him out. This was the first time Dennis had seen Dr. Chisholm for several years. The fear and respect he had held for him in his own schooldays came back to him with a rush.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The Order of the Boot!

MR. MANDERS walked along the passage to his own quarters. Before entering the Head's sanctum he had a little plan of his own to carry out. Up till now everything had run smoothly, and as he surveyed himself in the looking-glass he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" If Dr. Chisholm could have seen the supposed Mr. Manders now, light would have dawned upon him.

The Rookwood old boy strode over to a cupboard and extracted a bottle from its recess. It contained a yellowish liquid which smelled abominably of alcohol.

Then he did a strange thing. Extracting the cork, the bogus Mr. Manders liberally soaked his clothing with the strong-smelling liquid.

"It's a pity to waste all this whisky, especially as it costs such a deal of money," he mused. "But it's in a good cause."

Good cause or not, it had the effect of surrounding him with the odour of a public-house, which, as it happened, was exactly what he wanted it to do.

"Beastly smelling stuff!" he grinned. "Still, I fancy it will do the trick. I'll kid old Chisholm that I've been drinking!" And he commenced to walk, or, rather, stagger, about the room in fair imitation of a drunken man.

"Better be getting along now." There was a knock at the door, and Dr. Chisholm stood in the study.

His eyes almost started from his head as he observed the staggering master.

"Manders, I can see that you have been drinking—drinking! You, a master at a respectable school! It is most disgraceful! Your person literally reeks of spirits, Manders! What have you to say?"

"Say—hic!—I haven't been—hic!—drinking!" muttered the bogus master.

"Don't be so utterly ridiculous, Manders!" said the Head contemptuously. "I won't have this kind of thing at Rookwood, and I'm not going to overlook your offence! I must say that I am surprised and shocked!"

"Hic! Ha, ha! Hic!" Mr. Manders was doubled-up with drunken laughter. An angry glint came into the Head's eyes, and his jaw set a little more aggressively.

"How dare you, sir, make me your subject of drunken revelry! Go! Consider yourself no longer a master of Rookwood! I won't ask for your resignation. You will leave the school at once!"

"Hic! Leave the school! Hic! Ha, ha! I don't care a—hic!—for the school! Hic!"

Dr. Chisholm crossed over to the bell-push and rang. A minute later the pageboy appeared.

"Order my car at once," said the Head. "Very good, sir."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Exit Mr. Manders!

THE Head of Rookwood eyed the delinquent Form master in grim silence.

"The car is here, sir," came the voice of the pageboy. Old Mack also appeared in the doorway with the chauffeur, and the Head beckoned to them.

"Kindly assist Mr. Manders to the car!" he commanded. "I will send his luggage on."

Mr. Manders, alias Dennis, chuckled inwardly as he heard this. Here was the finish of his little stay at Rookwood as Form master.

Mack and the chauffeur crossed over to him and grasped him firmly. Between them they propelled the drunken master out into the passage, which was crowded with seniors and juniors alike. The news had spread very quickly, and one and all had turned out to see Mr. Manders fired from Rookwood. There was no love lost between him and most of the Rookwooders.

"Here he comes!" whispered Jimmy Silver. "Great Scott!"

"Positively reeks of it!" "Drunk, by gad!"

Such were the remarks that greeted Mr. Manders' appearance in the passage.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Boys!" thundered Dr. Chisholm. "Go to your studies at once! Do you hear?" The Rookwooders felt the Head's righteous wrath in the look that accompanied his words, and none dared to disobey. They turned, and very soon the passage was emptied as they hurried off to their studies.

By this time Mack and the chauffeur had succeeded in conducting the bogus Mr. Manders to Dr. Chisholm's car, and they bundled him in unceremoniously.

Then the Head appeared, and they made way for him.

"Manders," he commenced quietly, "I can't express my feelings in adequate words, but you understand that you are never to come near Rookwood in the future. You have disgraced yourself abominably!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bogus master so far forgot his role as to burst into a youthful fit of laughter. He felt so elated with himself. Everything had gone off without a hitch.

The Head started a little as he heard that burst of merriment, but he put it down to Mr. Manders' drunkenness.

"Good—hic!—bye, old bean!" said the bogus master affectionately.

Dr. Chisholm did not respond to that friendly farewell. Instead, he issued a few instructions to his chauffeur, and the latter, starting the engine, jumped into his seat at the wheel.

The car drove off, purring gently, and the bogus Mr. Manders leaned out of the window, waving his mortarboard dramatically at the Head's receding figure until the gates were reached. Then he leaned back on the luxurious cushions with a sigh of contentment.

What a sensation would prevail at Rookwood when it became known that the Mr. Manders who had been dismissed from the school was not Mr. Manders at all, but a Rookwood old boy! Dennis could imagine the greeting Mr. Manders would receive on his arrival at Rookwood after his short captivity. His reflections were brought to an abrupt ending as the car pulled up at the station.

The chauffeur attempted to assist the master out of the car; but Dennis waved him aside, and pressed a handsome tip into his outstretched palm.

The chauffeur was too amazed to utter any words of thanks. Ten minutes before this master had been as drunk as a lord, and now he was actually walking unassisted into the station-yard! It was too much for the chauffeur, and, muttering to himself, he clambered into his seat and drove off in the direction of Rookwood.

"My eye! Wot a nerve!"

That remark escaped old Mack, the porter, as he beheld the form of Mr. Manders, who had summoned him from his lodge at one o'clock in the morning.

"Open the gates at once, Mack!" fumed Mr. Manders. "At once! Do you hear?"

"Which as 'ow I 'ear all right, Mr. Manders; but I ain't a-going to open them there gates for the likes of you! You're fired!"

"What?"

Mr. Manders' hopes sank to zero as he heard old Mack utter those last two words. Then Dennis' plan had succeeded, while he, helpless and alone, was a prisoner in a deserted cottage. The alarm-clock had gone off at twelve o'clock, and, true to Dennis' prophecy, the leathern grille which had held him captive had automatically released itself. He had hastened back to Rookwood, fearing the worst, and evidently the worst had happened.

"I says you're a-fired," repeated Mack—"fired for disgraceful conduct—namely, drunk, or, as the 'Ead would say, non compus mensis!"

"Mack open this gate at once! I command you!" rasped Mr. Manders.

"Not likely, you drunken old rascal!" replied Mack, becoming warlike at once. "Clear hout, or I'll clear you!" he threatened, waving his lusty arms.

Mr. Manders saw that it was hopeless to force an entrance in Mack's direction, and his mind set to work swiftly for the alternative. The alternative was the wall. Mr. Manders was not an athlete, but he made up his mind to scale that wall somehow. He could not stay out in the cold all night. Turning, he stamped off out of sight, while Mack, grumbling to himself, once more sought the comfort of warm sheets.

Mr. Manders walked for some distance along the school wall until he came to a spot slightly lower from the ground than the remainder of the old structure. With a leap, his hands clutched the top of the wall, and he commenced to haul himself up.

It was a very painful process, and his hands and knees suffered in consequence; but at last he sat astride the wall, triumphant—monarch of all he surveyed, so to speak. Then, lowering himself to the other side, he set off at a brisk pace in the direction of the Head's sanctum.

A light was burning in the room, from which he gathered that Dr. Chisholm was working late.

Dr. Chisholm looked up from his work in some surprise when there came a knock at his door. Wonderingly he bade the visitor enter. His eyes nearly bulged from his head when he saw that his visitor was none other than the master he had dismissed a few hours previously.

"What are you doing here, Manders?" he inquired, in a hard voice.

"I can see that you have been taken in, too," began Mr. Manders, his face working with excitement.

"What do you mean? Explain yourself!"

"I have been the victim of a very clever

plot—a plot contrived and carried out by a Rookwood old boy named Dennis."

"Indeed?"

The Head's tone was not encouraging at first, but as Mr. Manders related his experiences, starting at his receipt of the telegram, his face cleared, and the hostile expression softened down to concern. The unfortunate master told his tale with such conviction that by the time he had finished the Head began to see through the whole plot.

"So he was a Rookwood old boy, was he? Ah, I remember now! He was expelled for being found in a licensed house. A very peculiar way he has of getting his own back. I presume that was the motive?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ahem!"

Dr. Chisholm almost smiled. The humorous side of the affair struck him.

Mr. Manders was silent.

"Dear me! Have you noticed this, sir?" That question escaped Mr. Manders as he beheld an envelope on a small table near by, addressed "Dr. Chisholm, re Manders."

"How on earth did that get there?" asked the Head, puzzled.

He took the envelope, ran his thumb along the edge, and commenced reading.

It ran:

"Dear Dr. Chisholm,—It is up to me, now that I have taught Mr. Manders a lesson, to explain a few things. I wish to break the news quietly. But the master you expelled to-night was not a master at all—don't faint!—in short, it was my worthy self—Dennis, a Rookwood old boy. You may think my sense of humour somewhat peculiar, but the fact remains. Perhaps you remember expelling me from Rookwood a few years back for being found in a pub? Mr. Manders was the chief witness in that little affair, and, although I received the full sentence from yourself, I was innocent. Still, that doesn't rankle within me; it was Manders I had the grudge against. No doubt he will tell you everything, as I haven't time to write more at the moment. Don't think too hardly of me for this little escapade, doctor, but just look upon it as a schoolboy jape, and a very clever one at that—ahem!"

"My respects to Manders! Hope he doesn't bear any malice."

"ARTHUR DENNIS,
"M.A., B.A.—ahem!"

There was a twinkle in the Head's eye as he perused that peculiar epistle.

"Well, everything is explained, Manders. I think you had better get back to your duties—or, rather, your bed just now."

"Very good, sir!"

"The boys will have to be acquainted with this masquerade of young Dennis in the morning."

And Mr. Manders left Dr. Chisholm's room and tottered up to bed, where he slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Great excitement prevailed the next morning at Rookwood when it became known that Mr. Manders' place had been taken by a Rookwood old boy.

"No wonder the chap could play footer!" remarked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It dawned on them now, and, needless to say, Jimmy Silver did not approach the real Mr. Manders on the subject of coaching the junior footer team. That crusty master soon settled down into his old state, and impositions and caning became the order of the day once more. But it was a long time before Jimmy Silver & Co. forgot the amazing "Mr. Manders" who held a brief authority over them!

THE END.

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