

CHRISTMAS AT ROOKWOOD! Rookwood School, for the first time in history does not have a breaking-up day. But the juniors, forced to stay at the school for the Christmas holidays, decide to make the best of a bad job!

The Phantom Abbot!



A Rollicking, Long Complete Story dealing with
 Jimmy Silver & Co.'s Christmas adventures at
 Rookwood School.
 By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Muffin Knows Too Much!

"O F all the silly owls—" said Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell did not finish the sentence.

Words seemed to fail him.

He kicked a cushion across the end study, plumped down in the armchair, and drove his hands deep into his trousers-pockets, and glared.

Evidently Arthur Edward Lovell was perturbed.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome did not look cheerful, either. Even Jimmy Silver, whose motto was "Keep Smiling!" failed for once to live up to his own cheery maxim.

The almost owl-like seriousness in the end study was rather surprising, too, for it was the last day of the term at Rookwood. On the morrow the school was to break up for the Christmas holidays, which was generally a joyous prospect to the Rookwooders.

"Of all the giddy chumps—" resumed Arthur Edward Lovell, finding his voice again.

"Just like a Modern!" said Raby disparagingly.

"Just!" said Newcome.

"Poor old Towle couldn't help catching the 'flu!" said Jimmy Silver, with a faint smile.

Snort from Lovell.

"He ought to have helped it! Just like a Modern ass! What right had Towle to go and catch influenza just before break-up? Of all the exasperating asses—"

"I don't suppose he caught it on purpose!" suggested Jimmy Silver mildly.

"Bother Towle!" roared Lovell. "He had no right whatever to go and catch 'flu and hand it out to other fellows. He might have kept it to himself, at least, if he liked it so much that he had to go around and collect it!"

"He might!" agreed Newcome.

"But he didn't!" said George Raby dolorously. "I hear there's a dozen fellows of the Modern side down with it."

"And six or seven Classicals," said Newcome. "Lucky it hasn't come along to this study!"

"I looked into Study No. 2 as I came along," said Lovell. "Higgs and Jones minor are down."

"In sanny?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes; Putty said so."

"Poor chaps!" said Jimmy sympathetically. "What a giddy Christmas for them—sneezing and barking."

Lovell grunted.

"Bad enough," he said. "But that's not the most serious thing. There's talk about cancelling the vacation on account of it!"

"Rot!" ejaculated Raby and Newcome together.

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful.

"Well, a lot of fellows have probably got the merry microbe disporting around them," he remarked. "It would be no joke to carry the 'flu into the four merry corners of the kingdom. I'm dashed if I want to take it home to the pater and mater, and cousin Phyllis—"

"Rot!" roared Lovell.

Lovell's opinion on that subject could be heard from one end of the Fourth Form passage to the other.

"These medical johnnies are always talking out of their hats," continued Lovell. "What do they know about it?"

"More than we do, possibly."

"Bosh! If Sawbones thinks he's going to stick me at Rookwood over Christmas, Sawbones is making a mistake. But Muffin says—"

"Oh, Muffin!" said Jimmy Silver. "Probably there's nothing in it! Tubby Muffin is always talking out of the back of his neck!"

"He says he heard Mr. Dalton ask old Greely whether he would be staying," said Lovell, "and Greely thought it would be Manders."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "If the doctor thinks we ought to hang up here over the vac, it can't be helped; but Muffin is always starting some maro's-nest. I'll wait till it's official before I begin to grouse, anyhow!"

"I'm not grouching, ass!"

"My hat! It sounded as if you were!"

"But of all the thumping idiots," continued Lovell, very emphatically for a fellow who was not grouching, "that half-baked cuckoo Towle takes the cake! Fancy catching 'flu and spreading it around! Then the other silly Moderns had to catch it, and then they had to pass it over to the Classical side. Rookwood oughtn't to have a Modern side at all. Why can't people be satisfied with Latin and Greek, without German and chemistry? Jabbering Hun lingo, and inventing fearful smells in

the lab!" Lovell snorted. "And now the Modern asses have landed us for Christmas!"

"If you're not grouching, Lovell," remarked Jimmy Silver, "for goodness' sake don't begin to grouse! For if you're like that when you're not grouching—"

"Rats!"

"I say, Jimmy!" The rotund figure, and fat face of Tubby Muffin loomed up in the doorway of the end study.

"What do you think?"

Four glares were turned upon the fat Classical.

The bearer of ill-tidings is never welcome, and the possibility that Tubby invented his ill-tidings for the sake of having something startling to say, was very exasperating.

"Think!" repeated Jimmy Silver gruffly. "I think you're a fat duffer, Muffin!"

"But I say, I've heard—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"We're booked for Christmas!" said Tubby. "Horrid, ain't it? Dr. Bolton has told the Head that the school oughtn't to break up, in the circumstances. We're going to be landed at Rookwood over the vac."

"Rot!" roared Lovell.

"It's official!" said Reginald Muffin. "I heard—"

Lovell jumped up.

"You blessed Jonah!" he exclaimed.

"Ten to one there's nothing in it! Anyhow, we'll stop your playing Jonah!"

"I say— Yaroooooh!"

"Bump him!"

"I say—"

Tubby Muffin sought to retreat—too late! Lovell and Raby and Newcome seized him, and he bumped on the floor of the end study with a mighty bump. The yell that Tubby Muffin let out might have been heard in the quadrangle.

"There, you fat idiot!" gasped Lovell.

"Yoooooop!"

"Now, are we going to be kept at Rookwood over Christmas?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooop!"

Tubby Muffin tore himself away and fled. Lovell breathed hard. Some exertion was required to bump Reginald Muffin, whose weight was considerable. But Lovell seemed to feel the better for

it. Whether the ill-tidings proved true or false, at any rate there was some satisfaction in bumping the too-eager bearer of them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Break-Up!

"ROTTEN!" That was the general verdict throughout Rookwood.

From Bulkeley, the head of the Sixth, down to the smallest and inkiest fag in the Second Form, all Rookwood agreed that it was rotten.

For Tubby Muffin's gloomy prognostications turned out to be well-founded.

The fiat had gone forth!

On break-up day there was to be no breaking-up! The school doctor and the Head had been in deep and serious consultation. Many parents had been consulted by telephone, and the upshot of it was that Rookwood School, for probably the first time in its long history, was not to break-up for Christmas.

That it was "rotten" was certain—indeed, nothing could have been more rotten.

There was grouching on all sides.

But of the crowds of fellows who groused on the last night of term, there were five or six in the sanatorium the next morning.

The epidemic was spreading!

Some of the wiser heads agreed that the doctor was right, and that it would have been folly to scatter the school all over the kingdom with the influenza germ raging at large among them.

Right or wrong, the Head had made his decision, and the Rookwooders were booked for Christmas.

Nearly a third of the school were down, anyhow, and certainly could not have gone home. Doctors and nurses were unusually in evidence at Rookwood. In the end study Jimmy Silver impressed upon his chums the strict necessity to "keep smiling."

"You see," said Jimmy oracularly, "fellows catch 'flu and things when they're not fit, when they're run down, when they're depressed, and when they're given to grouching."

"Who's given to grouching?" rapped Lovell.

"Some fellows are," said Jimmy Silver diplomatically, "and that's the way to entrap the merry microbe, who goes about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. We've got to keep cheery in this study, and set an example to the rest of the school."

"Christmas holidays all mucked up!" groused Lovell.

"We'll make it a holiday here," said Jimmy cheerily. "After all, it's something not to be in sanny along with Towle & Co.—"

"Bless Towle & Co.!"

"There won't be any lessons, of course," said Jimmy. "Hardly any masters; only one or two left to keep order. We shall have the school to ourselves, and we can have a merry time—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Theatricals, you know—"

"Rot!"

"And football—"

"Rubbish!"

"Japing the Moderns—"

"Bosh!"

"My dear chap—"

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed to be understudying Rachel of old, who mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted.

"As for keeping order," said Lovell, THE POPULAR—No. 360.

"let 'em try to keep me in order during the holidays, that's all! I'm going to do as I jolly well like in the vac."

"Mr. Manders will be in charge, I hear," said Raby.

"Manders! A blessed Modern master! A dashed science master! A blighter oozing chemicals!" snorted Lovell. "Nice sort of a master to be left in charge of the Classical side! Let him come Mandering over here, that's all!"

"The Head will be away," said Jimmy Silver, "and Mr. Dalton and Mr. Wiggins have both got the 'flu now, and have gone into sanny. We shall have to take Manders for what he is worth, Lovell."

"That's about a German mark!" said Lovell. "Let him come Mandering around the end study, and I'll give him Manders!"

And Arthur Edward Lovell stamped away, evidently wrathful. But the wrath of Arthur Edward was of no avail. Rookwood did not break-up, and the Christmas vacation found Jimmy Silver & Co. still occupying the end study, and Mr. Manders, the science master of the Modern side, in charge of the school.

Tubby Muffin, at least, found very great comfort in learning of the arrangements the Head had thoughtfully made.

Grub, Tubby announced to the interested juniors, was going to be on an unusually liberal scale, and on Christmas Day there was to be genuine Christmas fare.

Moreover, most of the fellows were expecting hampers and gifts from sympathising relatives. So far as the commissariat went, even Lovell admitted that the outlook was satisfactory.

There were no lessons that day, and the Fistical Four found solace on the football field in the afternoon, and came in to tea in the end study with ravenous appetites.

In spite of everything, they found themselves feeling cheerful. A roaring fire blazed away in the end study, contrasting with the wintry cold and mist without, and the firelight played on four bright faces round the tea-table.

Holly was stuck up round the study to give the room a Christmassy effect, and the effect was pronounced excellent. And when Putty of the Fourth looked in he was met with welcoming smiles.

Teddy Grace, better known as Putty, was always cheerful. Nobody had ever seen him look down in the dumps.

"Feeling chippy—what?" he asked.

"Topping!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Trot in, old top! We're going to discuss what to do with the vac."

"Just what I came in to speak about," said Putty.

"Sit down, old fellow."

Putty of the Fourth dropped into the armchair.

"I say—" began Lovell, rather hastily, remembering that he had left a sprig of holly in the armchair.

He had no time to finish. Putty of the Fourth reposed gracefully in the armchair for the millionth part of a second, then he leaped to his feet with a fearful yell.

"Yoooooop!"

"Why—what—" began Jimmy, in amazement.

"Ow! Ah! Yow! Woop!" howled Putty. "What born idiot has been sticking holly in that chair?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry!" gasped Lovell. "I was just going—"

"Ow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four.

Putty of the Fourth did not laugh. He did not seem to see somehow.

where the joke came in. He jerked the sprig of holly into the fire and grunted.

"Too bad!" said Jimmy Silver, smiling. "Never mind, old chap! All clear now. Sit down again."

But Putty did not accept the invitation. He leaned on the mantelpiece, apparently preferring to stand.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Great Wheeze Goes Begging!

"WERE fixed at Rookwood for Christmas!" began Putty.

"We are!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "We is! Sample this cake—"

"Thanks!" Putty of the Fourth munched cake as he continued. "I suppose you've heard that Satan finds work for idle hands to do?"

"I've heard something of the kind," admitted Jimmy Silver. "I suppose that's why you're always in hot water, Putty."

"Bow-wow! My idea is that we oughtn't to be idle this vac. We must keep the flag flying, and the home fires burning, and so on," said Putty. "Slacking around will do no good. Now, it was a Modern ass who started this influenza epidemic. My idea is to keep busy these holidays by giving the Moderns a high old time—a real merry Christmas. This is the first real chance we've had of giving the Moderns the kybosh. Now there are no masters and no lessons, we've got lots of time to put Tommy Dodd & Co. in their places."

"Hear, hear!" said the Fistical Four cheerily.

"I've thought of a wheeze!" added Putty modestly.

Lovell shook his head.

"Your wheezes ain't much good, old chap," he said kindly. "You mean well, I know. But you haven't the brains. This is the study for wheezes."

"Can it!" said Putty. "Now, my idea is this. Lots of the Moderns are down with the 'flu, but lots are up and alive and kicking. I think a specialist ought to come down from London to see them—"

"A what?" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Specialist. One of those coves with bald head and ginger whiskers, you know, who sticks a stethoscope on your chest, and says you'd better have the appendix removed, and send in a bill for a hundred guineas to your next-of-kin."

"Oh! But—"

"The Head's gone. What more natural than that he should send Dr. Bletherer, the famous specialist on chest troubles, to have a look at Rookwood? Whisper it in Tubby Muffin's hearing, and it will be all over the school in an hour. Then the Moderns won't be surprised when Dr. Bletherer arrives."

"Is there a Dr. Bletherer?" demanded Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

"There's going to be," explained Putty. "Little me, you know, with the aid of the Classical Players' property-box—bald scalp, ginger whiskers, steel eye-glasses, frock-coat, and elastic-sided boots—the whole Harley Street guy complete—what?"

Putty of the Fourth beamed on the chums of the end study, waiting for the outburst of rapturous applause that ought to have followed the enunciation of his remarkable wheeze.

But it didn't follow.

There was a dead silence in the end study, and the Fistical Four blinked at Putty.

"Call that an idea?" asked Lovell, at length.

"Yes, I jolly well do!" answered Putty

warmly. "Can't you see how ripping it is?"

Lovell shook his head.

"Blessed if I can!" he answered. "Where does the rip come in?"

"Why, I shall be able to put the Moderns through it till their eyelashes turn grey!"

"But you won't be able to do it at all."

"Why not?" hooted Putty.

"You haven't the brains, old rabbit!"

"You crass ass——"

"Order!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "The fact is, Putty, it's a topping wheeze, but it wouldn't work. You see, the part of a Harley Street specialist is rather too hefty for our amateur theatricals. We could do it all right in a comedy, but in broad daylight—wouldn't wash, old son!"

"Exactly—if this study took it in hand!" agreed Putty. "But I'm suggesting that I should play the part. That makes all the difference, you know."

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"I could do it on my head," declared Putty. "I suppose you fellows have noticed that I am a born actor——"

"We've noticed that you are a born idiot!" remarked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't I play all the most difficult parts in our private theatricals, and don't I bring down the house every time?" demanded Putty. "Look at the way the audience cheered when we had that scene of Falstaff and Pistol. I was playing Falstaff to Lovell's Pistol——"

"It was the part of Pistol they were applauding, wasn't it?" asked Lovell.

"Of course it wasn't; it was Falstaff!"

"You've got it wrong, old fellow," said Lovell, with a shake of the head. "You haven't much brains, Putty, but you've got swank enough to float a battleship. Sit down and finish the cake, old chap, and don't start wheezes on your uncles, who knew all about wheezes before you were born."

"Fathead!" Putty sat down to the cake, and continued with his mouth full. "On Christmas Eve there's going to be a merry surprise for the Moderns. A Harley Street specialist——"

"Cut it out," said Lovell. "It's too big an order for you, Putty. It would be no end of a wheeze if it would work; but it wouldn't—not in your hands, anyhow. I might try it on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Putty.

"What are you cackling at now?"

"Your little joke."

"I wasn't joking."

"Must have been," said Putty. "Now let's talk sense. I——"

Putty of the Fourth was interrupted. The door of the end study flew violently open, and Tubby Muffin came in with a tremendous rush. So rapidly did Tubby fly into the study that he crashed on the tea-table before he could halt. He stopped himself by clutching at the table with both hands, and the crockery danced.

"Oh!" gasped Tubby.

"You fat duffer!" roared Lovell.

"Wharrer you up to?"

"Ow! The gig-gig-gig——" spluttered Tubby.

"The what?"

"The gig-gig-gig——"

"Somebody arrived in a gig?" asked Jimmy Silver, in wonder.

"Nunno! The gig-gig-ghost——"

"Ghost!" yelled Raby.

"I've seen it!"

"Rot!"

"Oh dear! The Rookwood ghost!" panted Tubby, dodging round the table.

"I—I think it was after me! I saw it

in Long Corridor—ow! I just bolted in time. Oh dear!"

"What utter rot!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"I tell you I saw it!" hooted Muffin.

"Rot! Somebody playing the goat with a white sheet over his head," said Lovell.

"It—it was breathing fire and flame!"

"Bosh!"

"Let's go and have a look at Long Corridor," said Jimmy Silver. "If some ass is playing ghost, we'll jolly well squash him."

The Fistical Four left the study with Putty. Tubby Muffin, preferring to keep by the light and the fire. Long Corridor was the passage that connected the School House with the Modern side. On account of the raids between the rivals of Rookwood, the door in the corridor was kept locked, but it was not unknown for one party or the other to obtain, surreptitiously, a key to fit the lock.

Long Corridor was dark and deserted when Jimmy Silver flashed the light of his electric torch there.

"Only Muffin's silly rot!" growled Lovell. "He's scared at his own shadow. Groogh! It's cold here! Let's cut."

And the Fistical Four returned to the end study, where they gave Tubby Muffin their opinion of him at some length. But Tubby, having taken a seat at the well-spread tea-table, did not mind. He listened more or less, but did not answer; his jaws were too busy for talk. The ghost in Long Corridor had not, at all events, taken his appetite away. It is probable that that feat could not have been accomplished by all the spirits called from the vasty deep!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Ghost of Rookwood!

TOMMY DODD of the Modern Fourth sat up in bed in the dormitory in Mr. Manders' House.

It was eleven o'clock; and outside, in the quad, all was black. The old beeches groaned and swayed under the biting wind. It was a cold winter's night, and Tommy shivered as he sat up.

"You fellows awake?" he called out, in cautious tones.

There was no answer from the Modern Fourth. The whole dormitory was deep in the embrace of Morpheus.

Tommy Dodd grunted, and turned out of bed. Tommy Dodd had planned an enterprise that night, in conjunction with his chums, Tomfny Cook and Tommy Doyle. But two of the Tommies had evidently forgotten all about it.

"Wake up, you slacker!" growled Tommy Dodd, shaking Cook by the shoulder.

"Ow! Oh! Wharrer marrer?" mumbled Cook.

"Turn out!"

"Groogh! Tain't rising-bell."

"Fathead! It's eleven! Turn out, before I squeeze a sponge down the back of your neck!" said Tommy Dodd ferociously.

Tommy Dodd proceeded to Doyle's bed and shook Doyle. That youth came out of slumber with a jump.

"Leggo! What's the game? Ow!"

"You lazy sweep!" said Tommy Dodd. "Have you forgotten that we're going to make the Classical cads sit up to-night?"

Doyle rubbed his eyes, and blinked in the darkness.



WHEN THE GHOST WALKED! There was a fearful yell from Tubby Muffin. "The Ghost!" And Tubby plunged under the bedclothes. The phantom abbot walked up the dormitory with a slow and stately pace, soundless, silent. Sitting up in the long row of beds, the Classical juniors watched him with startled, fascinated eyes. (See Chapter 4.)

"Sure, it's a bit unfeeling to jape them, with Christmas just coming on, and all, and all!" he murmured. "Let's let them off!"

"Just what I was thinking," chimed in Tommy Cook heartily. "After all, those Classical bouncers ain't worth powder and shot, Doddy. Let 'em rip!"

"Faith, and I agree wid ye," said Tommy Doyle. "Never mind scaring the poor little Classicals, Doddy—Yaroooh!"

Doyle broke off with a roar as his bedclothes were whipped off. He jumped up and spluttered.

"Howly mother, av Moses! Ye silly spalpeen—"

"Turn out!" rapped Tommy Dodd.

"Look here, Doddy—" began Cook feebly.

"I'm just dipping the sponge in the jug for you, Cooky!"

"I—I'm getting up!" said Tommy Cook hastily.

And he got!

The three Tommies proceeded to dress themselves in the dark. Tommy Dodd was in a determined humour, and his faithful followers had no choice about following their leader.

"Sure, we shall be sickening for the beastly flu, turning out in the cowl like this!" grumbled Tommy Doyle.

"Didn't we arrange it all in the study this evening?" demanded Dodd.

"Yis; but—"

"But it wasn't so jolly cold in the study!" said Tommy Cook, with a shudder.

"Oh, get a move on, and you'll get warm!"

"Groooh!"

"Do you expect a sultry night just before Christmas?" asked Tommy Dodd, with sarcasm.

"Ooooooh!"

"Don't wake up the whole house!" advised Tommy Dodd. "If Mr. Manders drops on us he mayn't approve of the ghost of Rookwood taking his little walks abroad at this hour of the night! Ready?"

"Groogh! Yes!"

Tommy Dodd took a bundle from under his bed. The three juniors left the dormitory, and followed the passage in the dark, and then another passage. That brought them into Long Corridor.

"You haven't forgotten to bring the key, Doddy?" whispered Cook.

"No more than I've forgotten to bring two silly owls!" answered Tommy Dodd caustically.

The big oaken door in Long Corridor was locked. But there was a click of a key as Tommy Dodd reached it, and the heavy door swung open. The three Modern juniors passed through into the Classical precincts.

"After all, we're going to make the Classical spalpeens sit up!" remarked Doyle, taking comfort in that reflection.

"Got all the stuff in that bundle, Doddy?"

"Yes, ass!"

Tommy Dodd turned on the light of a pocket-torch, and gave it to Doyle to hold. Then he unfastened the bundle he was carrying. It contained a set of garments that looked a spotless white.

Tommy Dodd proceeded to drape himself in them. At a close view in the daylight it could have been seen that the garments were of a cheap canvas, cut rather roughly in imitation of an old-time abbot's robe and cowl. But in the shadows of night they looked quite imposing.

Tommy Dodd belted in the trailing robe and adjusted the cowl, and grinned at his comrades.

"How's that for high?" he asked.

"What price me as the phantom abbot of Rookwood?"

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"Topping!"

"I tried it on Muffin last night!" said Tommy Dodd. "The fat idiot sprinted for his life! It will answer, you bet! You fellows come along, and be ready to cover the retreat if I have to bolt!"

"Right-ho, old bird!"

The three Moderns moved on, Tommy Dodd with a swish of ghostly robes. They came out into the passage at last upon which the Classical Fourth Form dormitory opened.

"Wait here!" whispered Tommy Dodd.

"Right-ho!"

The phantom abbot of Rookwood moved on to the dormitory door, and opened it cautiously and silently.

All was dark within save for a pale glimmer of starlight at the high windows. But in the darkness the figure of the phantom abbot began to glow with a pale, strange light.

Certainly it was only caused by rubbing phosphorus on the flowing robes; but the effect was ghostly in the extreme.

Tommy Dodd swept into the dormitory.

There was a sound of steady breathing, and a deep, unmusical snore that betrayed Reginald Muffin.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a deep, hair-raising groan.

According to the legend, the phantom abbot of Rookwood was given to groaning when he prowled around the old buildings at Christmas-time. What he groaned for was not stated in the legend. But undoubtedly he was supposed to groan, so Tommy Dodd groaned deeply.

Groan!

The hair-raising sound echoed through the dormitory.

Jimmy Silver started out of slumber.

"What—what— My hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

The whole dormitory was awake the next moment. Mornington sprang up in bed with a shout.

"What the thunder—"

There was a fearful yell from Tubby Muffin.

"The ghost! The gig-gig-ghost!" And Reginald Muffin plunged under his bedclothes, and curled up there palpitating.

The phantom abbot walked up the dormitory with slow and stately pace, soundless, silent. Sitting up in the long rows of beds, the Classical juniors watched him with starting, fascinated eyes.

Even Jimmy Silver was dumbfounded.

Jimmy did not believe in ghosts, of course; anything so unhealthy as a belief in spooks was not likely to appeal to a fellow like Jimmy. But in the middle of a dark night matters seemed different somehow. Jimmy Silver sat as if frozen, staring at the fearsome apparition. Valentine Mornington, the most reckless fellow in the Fourth, sat as if rooted to his bed. Under his blankets Tubby Muffin panted and palpitated.

The ghost reached the end of the dormitory, and swung round, slow and solemn. Silently, cerily it paraded back to the door.

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver came to himself, as it were, suddenly. He reached round for his pillow, and hurled it with deadly aim.

Crash!

The ghost had just uttered a deep groan. The groan was followed by a wild yell:

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "You rotten spoofer—"

There was a chuckle from the passage outside. That yell from the ghost seemed to tickle Doyle and Cook:

"Turn out!" roared Lovell. "It's some Modern cad spoofing us!"

Morny's bolster whizzed through the air. It struck the door as the ghost departed, closing the door after him hastily. Jimmy Silver bounded out of bed.

Crash! Lovell had jumped from his bed at the same time, and in the dark he jumped fairly into Jimmy.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Strike a light, somebody!"

Oswald struck a match. Erroll held a candle-wick to it. Jimmy Silver picked himself up dazedly. Lovell was sprawling on the floor.

"What silly idiot bumped into me?" spluttered Lovell.

"You silly owl, it was you bumped into me!" gasped Jimmy.

"You frabjous chump—"

"You blithering jabberwock—"

"After the ghost!" yelled Putty.

He rushed to the door and dragged it open. But the ghost of the abbot of Rookwood was gone. From somewhere in the darkness came a chortle, and a voice:

"Sold again, you Classical duffers!"

Then there was silence.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wanted—a Wheeze!

"SLEPT well, old top?" Tommy Dodd asked that question very affably as he met Jimmy Silver in the quadrangle on the morning of Christmas Eve. And Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook smiled audibly.

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"So it was you?" he asked.

"What was me?" asked Tommy

Dodd, in mild surprise.

"Playing ghost, you fathead!" said Jimmy Silver morosely.

"Anybody been playing ghost?" asked Tommy Dodd innocently. "My dear chap, it's nerves! If you're beginning to see things, you'd better try some Pale Pills for Peaky Pippins!"

"If it was you, Dodd—" began Arthur Edward Lovell hotly.

"My dear chap, what happened?"

"Some silly owl got up as a ghost trotted along our dormitory last night—from end to end—"

"And you let him?" smiled Tommy Dodd. "Why didn't you collar him on the spot?"

"Well, we—we—we—"

"Taken by surprise," said Raby.

"Sort of flabbergasted just for a minute," said Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Frightened out of your wits, you mean! It wouldn't be safe for a ghost to walk in the Modern dorm! We would lay the ghost fast enough! Silver, old man, you'd better try those pale pills! Good for the nerves after a scare!"

And the three Tommies strolled away chuckling, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. looking rather sheepish.

"It was that gang, of course!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"They didn't scare us, of course!" said Lovell. "I wasn't scared! Just surprised for the moment—"

"Just!" agreed Jimmy.

"If those Modern duffers think they've got the laugh of us they're jolly well mistaken!" said Lovell gruffly.

"They are!" said Jimmy. "I hope the other fellows will think so."

"We weren't scared!" roared Lovell.

"Of course not, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "Not the

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legs, and then tumbled right over backwards.

Its rider escaped death by a miracle, it seemed. As the horse began to topple backwards, the man let go of the rein, kicked his feet free of the stirrups, and, pressing hard with his hands on the saddle, levered himself off, hitting the ground but a second before the horse fell. As he hit ground, the man rolled over, and the animal missed him by the fraction of an inch, it appeared.

Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill and Tom Clark were riding towards the spot. Tom had seen that the man in leaping from his horse, still retained grip of his rifle, and now he saw him lying on the ground, reloading rapidly.

"Get him, Buffalo; get——" he began. But Buffalo Bill, strangely enough, did not fire.

"My meat, or I'm a Pawnee!" the scout grated, and Tom Clark wondered what on earth the man meant. He was lying full-length of his pony, and was not more than ten yards from the other man when the latter fired. Tom cried aloud with the dread that had come upon him, then gasped with amazement. For that shot did not get Buffalo Bill. He had been watching his enemy, had seen the rifle go to the shoulder—had timed it all to a nicety; and when the rifle cracked, Buffalo Bill had sent his mount slicing at a tangent.

As he did so, he slipped from the horse's back on the side away from the marksman, and when the latter, muttering under his breath, fired again, it was at a riderless horse which he dropped in its tracks. But Buffalo Bill was leaping for him, and Tom Clark was riding down hard at him.

The man had not stayed to put more than two bullets in his rifle, for time was precious, and he had been certain of bringing down at least one of his enemies. Now he found himself with an empty gun. He sprang to his feet, clubbing the weapon, and the butt-end of it thudded into Tom Clark's horse, making the brute rear wildly, almost unseating the youngster.

Still Buffalo Bill did not fire, and in that wild moment Tom thought that

the scout had run out of ammunition, although he was not the sort of man to leave camp without having seen to such a thing as that.

Long before Tom had got his horse down again, Buffalo Bill was at the enemy. The latter swung the rifle round to strike at him, and a crack from that heavy weapon would have smashed in a man's ribs or brained him. It did neither for Cody, for the simple reason that the scout swept in under the menacing thing. His leap was like that of a puma, and carried him up so that while his legs wrapped themselves about the other's hips, his arms were locked about his neck, and the two men went to the ground.

"Kansas King—you hound!" Tom Clark heard Cody snap, and then had an explanation of Buffalo's strange behaviour.

"Gol!" the youngster exclaimed, as he sprang from his horse. "Kansas King—and Buffalo knew him!"

The Duel!

TO Tom Clark, the next few minutes were minutes of indecision and doubt. He did not know what to do to assist Buffalo Bill, and he was quickly aware that although Cody was a strong man, so was Kansas King.

Buffalo's lithe movement when he seized King had sent him in under the rascal's arms, and Kansas King, quick to realise that the rifle, instead of being of use, was an impediment to him, dropped it, and his own great arms swept about Cody, crushing the scout to him in an embrace like that of a bear.

Cody, anxious to get his enemy alive, was relying upon his own strength to subdue the man. He could have knifed him, it is true, but Buffalo had realised that Kansas King was unarmed, otherwise he would have done different from defending himself with an unloaded gun. The scout wanted a straight fight this time.

But he quickly found that it looked like being a longer fight than he had anticipated. King was in good fettle, and fit; moreover, he was in as great fear of Buffalo Bill's vengeance as he

had been of Red Hawk. When the great debacle had set in, King had swooped off, only to run up against Red Hawk and three other Indians. Looking behind, Red Hawk had recognised the paleface whom he regarded as a traitor to himself, and it was Red Hawk's intention to kill him out of hand. Kansas realised this, for he saw the gleaming tomahawk in the Indian's hand as he ran alongside. But Kansas King got in first, and finished off his three enemies, only to find himself now up against a foe as relentless as any Redskin.

In that moment he would have given much for a knife or a revolver; but Red Hawk had allowed him only the rifle, and he found himself fighting for his life with only his bare hands for weapons.

As for Buffalo Bill, he was the very incarnation of rage. His blood boiled at the realisation that this man, wearing Indian clothes, had actually been taking part in the fight against his fellow-whites.

"You're yellow, Kansas, yellow!" the scout gritted into the man's teeth; and the rogue's reply was to snap at Buffalo's nose.

He got it between his teeth and an unavoidable yelp of pain came from Cody's throat. He loosed a hand from about the man's neck, and drove a short-arm jab into the side of King's chin. To Buffalo Bill the blow administered perhaps more pain than it did to King, but it served its purpose in that it caused the latter to open his mouth, and Cody freed his nasal organ.

But next instant Kansas King had found a new weapon. It had come to him where he would find one, and a hand slipped its hold, slithered down Cody's side, and came back with a bowie knife.

Tom Clark, hovering about the battling pair, and looking for a change as they squirmed and rolled, to crack Kansas about the head, saw the glimmering steel as it flashed in the moonlight.

(Another long thrilling instalment of our powerful Wild West romance will be included in next Tuesday's special issue.)

THE PHANTOM ABBOT!

(Continued from page 22.)

least weeniest bit in the world! But very likely the fellows will think we were. We didn't collar the ghost, did we?"

"Well——"

Jimmy Silver was prepared for chipping of the subject, and he was not disappointed. All the Modern side—all who were not in the sanny—chortled over the ghost-story.

Even on the Classical side there was laughter. Fags of the Third and the Second ventured to chip even the Fistical Four. Snooks of the Second asked Jimmy Silver whether it was true that he had fainted.

Algy Silver of the Third declared to Arthur Edward Lovell that his face, when he saw the ghost, must have been worth a guinea a box.

It was quite useless for the Classical Fourth to declare that they hadn't been scared at all; and that they had guessed it was a Modern spoof; and that playing the ghost was a silly, dangerous trick, and so forth. The fact remained that the phantom abbot had walked up and down the Classical dormitory,

while the Classical Fourth sat in bed and blinked at it. And if they hadn't been scared stiff, the other fellows wanted to know why they hadn't tumbled out of bed on the spot and collared the spoofer. A question which the Classical Fourth found it very difficult to answer.

Even some of the seniors joined in pulling Jimmy Silver & Co.'s leg on the subject. Hansom of the Fifth stopped him as the juniors were going in to dinner.

"I hear you've been seeing ghosts, Silver," said the captain of the Fifth, very seriously. "You'd better not go to the pictures much, kid. It's going to the pictures makes kids frightened in the dark you know—works on their imagination, and all that."

And Hansom of the Fifth walked on, before Jimmy Silver could think of anything sufficiently offensive to be adequate as a reply.

Even Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, heard the story, and mentioned it to Jimmy, with a smiling face.

"What's this about the abbot's ghost, Silver?" he asked, after dinner. "Did you kids really fancy you saw something last night in the dormitory?"

"Nothing a silly owl playing ghost," said Jimmy. "We—we weren't scared, of course, Bulkeley."

"Oh, of course not!" said Bulkeley, with a smile. And that smile had a rather irritating effect on Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave his study-leader a rather aggressive look when Bulkeley strode away, still smiling.

"You were talking about making the Moderns sit up this Christmas, Jimmy Silver!" snorted Lovell. "Looks to me as if it's going to be a giddy boot on the other blessed foot! They're making us sit up!"

"Put it all on me!" said Jimmy, with sarcasm.

"Well, you're leader, you know!" said his three chums in chorus.

"Let's go and see Putty!" said Jimmy Silver abruptly.

"Oh, Putty's wheeze isn't any good!" said Lovell. "I saw him this morning in his study, cutting out and stitching things. But it's not good enough."

"You mentioned just now that I was leader," said Jimmy sarcastically. "If I am, follow on, and let's go and see Putty."

And Jimmy Silver led the way to Study No. 2 in the Fourth.

THE END.

(Look out for "Putty's Christmas Jape!"—a rollicking complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, in next week's Special Christmas issue.)