

STIRRING SCENES AT ROOKWOOD! If Mr. Manders had not tried to make himself so unpleasant to Jimmy Silver & Co., they would not have plotted with Putty Grace a scheme for getting their own back on the unpopular master!



Mrs. Manders Looks In!

A Rollicking, Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s adventures at Rookwood during the vacation.

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the well-known tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every Monday.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Manders Comes Down Heavy!

"**N**ONSENSE!"

"But, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Manders rapped out the word in his most unpleasant tone. And Mr. Manders' voice could be very unpleasant indeed.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood silent, in deep wrath.

The Fistical Four were in their own study, the end study in the passage sacred to the Classical Fourth at Rookwood. Properly speaking, Mr. Manders had no business there at all, Mr. Manders being a master on the Modern side.

But he was there.

And, unfortunately, Mr. Manders was there with authority.

For all Rookwood had been detained at school over the Christmas vacation, owing to an outbreak of influenza, and Mr. Manders was the master left in charge.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had been busy. Costumes of varied colours, rivalling Joseph's celebrated coat, were lying on the table, or scattered round the study. Putty of the Fourth was giving the last touches to a costume he was to wear in a feminine part in a forthcoming comedy, Putty Grace being specially skilled in such parts. Lovell was sewing a doublet, with an occasional howl as the needle found a wrong destination. Raby and Newcome were patching, Jimmy Silver was cutting out. But everything came to a stop as the frowning face and long, reddened nose of Mr. Manders loomed in the doorway.

"Nonsense! Rubbish!" said Mr. Manders.

He glanced with a disapproving eye over the preparations for theatrical business in the study.

"Utter nonsense!" he repeated. "A

sheer waste of time—a nonsensical waste of time!"

"It's holiday-time, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver.

"Don't argue with me, Silver."

"But, sir—" burst out Lovell.

"If you are impertinent, Lovell, I shall cane you!"

Arthur Edward breathed hard, and held his peace. Mr. Manders had the upper hand, and was quite ruthless in using it.

"I have never approved of this play-acting nonsense," said Mr. Manders. "In fact I disapprove of it most strongly."

Mr. Manders raised a long, thin hand.

"Put all that rubbish away!" he said. "I distinctly forbid you to indulge in any of this foolish play-acting while you are under my charge. Remember that my orders are to be obeyed."

With that, Mr. Manders turned and whisked out of the end study.

He left five-juniors there in an almost homicidal frame of mind.

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at one another, almost bereft of the power of speech. Mr. Manders, as temporary Head, had been unpleasant enough all the time. But this was the limit!

"The awful cad!" breathed Lovell.

"He's got no right to chip in," said Teddy Grace hotly. "Even if we have to stay at Rookwood because of that dashed flu, it's our Christmas holiday all the same."

"Of course it is," said Raby.

"He'll be starting holiday lessons next," said Lovell savagely. "I know he'd like to."

"The awful rotter!"

"It's his corns!" said Jimmy Silver. "I know his corns hurt him when there's a frost."

"Blow his corns!" roared Lovell.

"Tommy Dodd's caught it, on the Modern side, this morning," said

Jimmy. "He's been licked for sliding down the banisters."

"Manders can mop up the whole Modern side, for all I care. But he's not going to bother us!" howled Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy, we're going to give our comedy all the same."

Jimmy shook his head.

"Can't be done, old top! Manders would march in and stop it."

"We could chuck him out!"

Jimmy laughed.

"Chucking out masters is more easily said than done, old fellow. Besides, the prefects would back him up."

"Blow the prefects!"

"The Sixth—"

"Bless the Sixth!"

"We've got to toe the line," said Jimmy, with a sigh. "Can't be helped. Keep smiling."

"Oh, rats! Why can't Manders catch the flu, and go into sanny?" said Lovell, in great exasperation. "Mr. Dalton and Mr. Greely have got it. Why can't Manders get it? It's not fair!"

Putty Grace laid down his costume, in which he was to have distinguished himself on the histrionic boards.

"It's rotten!" he said. "First a crowd of asses get the flu, then a blessed doctor orders the whole dashed school to stay up over the vac; then the Head mizzles, and leaves that—that bony old bounder in charge. I'm fed-up with Manders!"

"But what are we going to do?" asked Raby. "All our trouble for nothing, Jimmy?"

"Looks like it. The only thing we can do is to take it out of the Manders bird, somehow."

"I'd got my costume so topping," said Putty, with a sigh. "As a new and improved edition of Charley's aunt, it couldn't be beaten. And—and

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now I sha'n't be able to wear it. Bother Manders!"

"We'll make him sorry for himself, somehow!" said Jimmy Silver savagely.

Valentine Mornington looked into the study.

"What did Manders want?" he asked.

"Stopped what he calls the play-acting," said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"The comedy is off."

"Oh, gad!"

"We're not going to stand it!" bawled Lovell.

At which there was a general shuffling of shoulders. The unfortunate thing was, that Jimmy Silver & Co. had to stand it; and their only solace was the forming of wild and wrathful plans for making Mr. Manders "sit up" in his turn!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver's Idea!

"PUTTY, old man!"

Jimmy Silver looked into Study No. 2 that evening.

Putty of the Fourth was alone there, looking rather dismal. Jones minor and Higgs were down with flu; Tubby Muffin was ranging the passages and studies seeking what he might devour, so Putty had the study to himself. Jimmy found him packing up the rather striking costume he was to have worn as "Smith minor's aunt" in the comedy that was not to come off.

"Well?" said Putty dismally.

"Feeling fed-up, old bean?"

"I've been thinking," said Jimmy, coming into the study and closing the door. "We're not taking this lying down, Putty."

"The Manders bird? Just give me a chance to get at 'his nibs'!" said Putty vengefully. "I'd make him hop! Just his rotten temper and his corns—he likes to see long faces round him."

"You were going to play in those glad rags," said Jimmy, glancing at the folded costume. "You're jolly clever in female parts, Putty."

Putty of the Fourth bowed.

"Will half-a-crown do?" he asked.

"Fathead!" said Jimmy, laughing. "I mean business. You had the nerve to get yourself up as a girl once, and take me in—"

"Guilty, my lord!"

"And that trick you played on the Moderns on Christmas Eve was jolly good—making yourself up as a doctor, and ragging them—"

"Old man, you're bursting with compliments," said Putty. "If you're short of tin, I'll make it five bob."

"Ass! I've been thinking it over," said Jimmy. "I'm a pretty good actor myself, but I own up that you can beat me hollow. I've thought of a stunt; and after what you did on Christmas Eve I believe that you could do it. But it would want tons of nerve."

"I'm not short of nerve!" grinned Putty. "If it's up against the Manders bird, give it a name and count me in."

"That's it," said Jimmy.

"Then I'm on. What's the stunt?"

"Manders is a giddy old bachelor," said Jimmy.

"A dashed crusty old bachelor," said Putty. "I dare say that's why he's so crusty and corny. But what about that?"

"Suppose his wife turned up at Rookwood?"

"Eh?"

"Catch on?" asked Jimmy.

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"Not quite!" said Putty, with a stare.

"You're not suggesting that Manders is a sort of giddy Bluebeard, with wives tucked away in odd corners, are you?"

"Ha, ha! No! But suppose a sort of 'Charley's Aunt' lady turned up and claimed him as her long-lost husband. It would give Manders no end of a jump."

"I think it would! But what—"

Putty broke off short as Jimmy pointed to the costume on the table, and he understood.

There was a yell from Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He rushed at the captain of the Fourth, seized him, and waltzed him round the study table in the exuberance of his delight.

"Hurrah!" he yelled. "Jimmy, what woke up your brain like that, after it long rest? Hurrah!"

"Leggo, you ass!"

"Hip-pip!"

Putty waltzed the breathless Jimmy round the table till they crashed into the armchair, and the impromptu dance came to a sudden stop.

"You silly owl!" roared Jimmy Silver, as he sprawled over the armchair.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Putty. "My dear chap, I was only showing my appreciation. Why, it's the stunt of the season! It's the catch of the term. It—it—it's great!"

The door opened, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked in, with Mornington and Erroll, and several more juniors. Putty's exuberant delight had been audible all along the Fourth Form passage.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Lovell.

"Gone off his rocker?" inquired Morny.

Putty wiped his eyes.

"Come in, my infants, and hear the biggest stunt that ever stunted," he said. "Shut the door! And keep your heads shut when you're out of this study. It would mean the sack for somebody if it came out!"

"But what—" asked Erroll, puzzled.

"Have you ever seen Mrs. Manders?" asked Putty.

"Eh! There isn't a Mrs. Manders, is there?"

"There's going to be!"

Mornington tapped his forehead.

"Quite off!" he remarked.

"Wait and see," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Do you really think you'd have the nerve, Putty?"

"Fathead! I could do it asleep!" said Putty. "Just watch me rehearse the part! What's Manders' front name, by the way?"

"Roger."

"Then you watch what Roger is going to see to-morrow."

Putty whipped the costume off the table.

He tucked up his trousers, and whipped off his jacket, and slipped into the dress. With marvellous rapidity he adjusted the rather striking skirt and bodice, the striped stockings and the shoes. He turned his face to the glass, and a golden wig appeared on his head as if by magic, and then with both hands he dabbed at his face in rapid "make-up."

His swiftness was remarkable, and the result more remarkable still.

When he turned towards the staring juniors again Putty of the Fourth had utterly disappeared.

There was not a vestige of likeness to that hilarious junior left.

He looked like, a lady of about thirty, dressed in a way that would have been youthful for one at twenty.

Not a feature seemed the same now that the skilful "make-up" had been applied by Putty's masterly hand.

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly blinked at him.

The metamorphosis had taken place under their own eyes; but they could scarcely believe that it was Putty who stood before them.

And when he spoke his voice was unrecognisable; it was now high-pitched and decidedly feminine.

"What are you little boys looking at?" asked Putty. "Can you tell me where to find my dear Roger?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, top-hole!" yelled Mornington.

"But—but you'd never have the nerve to tackle Manders like that!"

"Wouldn't I just!" grinned Putty!

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Oswald of the Fourth came in.

"I say—" he began. Then he stopped suddenly, as his eyes fell on the startling apparition in the study. "Why, what—what—" Oswald stared.

"My dear little boy," said Putty, "can you tell me where to find my dear Roger? He is a master at this school."

"Who—what—" stammered Oswald.

"Roger Manders—my dear, dear husband—"

"Oh!" gasped Oswald. "You—you'll find him on the Modern side, ma'am. I—I didn't know he was married, ma'am—"

Mrs. Manders pressed a little handkerchief to her eyes.

"He has deserted me!" she sobbed.

"But—but I forgive him! Take me to my dear Roger, you kind little boy!"

"Certainly, ma'am!" said Oswald.

"This way!"

Astonished as he was at finding Mrs. Manders in Putty's study, Oswald evidently took her for granted. He opened the door for the lady. Then there was a yell from Jimmy Silver & Co. They could not restrain it any longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks, Oswald, old top!" said Putty, in his natural voice. "I won't visit dear old Roger just at present."

Oswald jumped.

"Eh! What? Where's Putty? Why, you—you—you—"

Oswald fairly broke down in his amazement, and almost gibbered at Putty.

The study rang with merriment.

"Don't you fellows think it will do?" grinned Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"You—you're not going to—" stammered Oswald.

"You bet!"

"Oh, my hat! Manders will boil you in oil if he finds out!"

"But he won't, old top!" said Putty serenely. "But mind! Not a word outside this study! This stunt has got to be kept dark!"

There was no doubt on that point. And Jimmy Silver & Co. preserved the secret with the most sedulous secrecy—till the morning, when "Mrs. Manders" was to visit her dear Roger as a sort of New Year's surprise!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mrs. Manders Calls on Roger!

MRS. MANDERS stared out glumly into the Rookwood quadrangle on New Year's Eve.

He was not in a happy mood. He seldom was! True, there was a certain amount of satisfaction in filling, temporarily, the headmaster's place at Rookwood School.

But it was, after all, holiday time. He could not make his power felt as he could have done in term time. More than once he had been tempted to re-introduce lessons—to prevent the Rookwood fellows wasting their time as he regarded it. But even Mr. Manders stopped short at that; and having to stop short annoyed him.

And in spite of the fact that they had to pass their Christmas holiday at the school, far from the home fires, most of the Rookwooders kept up a seasonable cheerfulness.

That, somehow, annoyed Mr. Manders. Generally in a snappy and morose temper himself, he disliked seeing happy faces round him. Indeed, he really seemed to take cheerfulness as a sort of personal injury to himself.

He frowned into the misty quad from his study window. He could see Jimmy Silver & Co. there. The Fistical Four were marching along arm in arm, and smiling. Tommy Dodd, and Cook, and Doyle, the Moderns, met them in the quad, and smiled, too. From the distance Mr. Manders thought he could hear the cheery call:

"Happy New Year, old bean!"

Possibly Mr. Manders wanted the New Year to be a happy one. But he did not look as if he did.

The merry laughter ringing on the frosty air annoyed him. Those idle juniors would be much better engaged in the Form-room, he considered, even in the Yuletide vacation!

Mr. Manders frowned, and bit his thin lip, and wrinkled his brows, and considered that question afresh—wondering whether he could venture upon so unpopular a step. Certainly that would put an end to the cheery brightness of Jimmy Silver & Co.—which, to the science master's mind, seemed a consummation devoutly to be wished!

A twinge from his favourite corn caught him, and Mr. Manders started and suppressed a yelp. He frowned still more darkly at the happy group in the quadrangle. A thought came into his mind, too, of what had happened on Christmas Eve—when a gentleman supposed to be a Harley Street specialist had called on him, and scared him almost out of his wits with alarm for his health.

That gentleman had vanished into thin air; he had not been heard of since. All Mr. Manders knew was that he had been "spoofed" by some person unknown.

He wondered whether any of the Rookwood juniors had knowledge of the spoiler—though certainly it did not cross his mind that Putty of the Fourth had played the part.

They were looking towards his study, and laughing—now! Yes, actually they were laughing—while they looked at his study! Of course, they could not



MRS. MANDERS HITS OUT! Mr. Manders made a rush for the doorway. But it was packed with juniors, and they did not stir. Behind him came the avenging Amelia. Whack! The umbrella came down on the master's mortar-board. There was a terrific yell from Mr. Manders, and he chased round the study again. (See Chapter 4.)

see him—he was well back from the window! But they were laughing at him—Mr. Manders felt sure of that! Perhaps they were thinking of that Christmas Eve spoof; perhaps they were planning some more impertinence. He had stopped their precious comedy, anyhow!

Even Mr. Manders could not descend upon the merry juniors simply because they were laughing in the quadrangle. He fumed; but he had to consume his own smoke, as it were. But his attention was suddenly called to the distant gates, of which he had a partial view from his window.

A female figure was standing before old Mack's lodge, and old Mack was in his doorway. Mr. Manders blinked at that female figure. It was not tall, but it was striking. The lady wore an old-fashioned bonnet, which did not conceal an abundance of yellow curls—probably imitation.

Certainly they did not match the face, which was not beautiful, and looked thirty at least. In figure she resembled a dumpling. And beneath a short skirt showed striped stockings that caught what sunshine there was and reflected it finely. In the lady's hand was an umbrella of the gamp variety.

"Nonsense!" grumbled Mr. Manders. "What does Mack wish to have his foolish-looking aunt or sister here for on New Year's Day? Nonsense!"

And Mr. Manders frowned disapprovingly.

He would probably have jumped if he could have heard what the lady in the bonnet was saying that moment to the astonished Mack.

"Is my husband indoors, my good man?"

Mack looked at her.

"What is his name, ma'am?" he asked.

"Mr. Roger Manders."

"Wot!" stuttered Mack.

"Is he at home?"

Mack blinked.

"Ma'am, Mr. Manders is at 'ome certingly!" he stammered. "But—but

are you sure you ain't making a mistake, ma'am? Mr. Manders ain't married, ma'am."

"Has he never mentioned me?" asked Mrs. Manders tearfully.

"Not hever, ma'am, certingly!" The lady wiped her eyes, and Mack was touched. "I'll take you to Mr. Manders' 'ouse, ma'am, if you wish," he said. "But, reely, I feel struck all of a 'eap! Never knowed that Mr. Manders was a married gentleman!"

"Thank you so much!" said the lady gratefully. "You have such a kind face! I feel comforted already!"

Old Mack almost blushed.

He was not accustomed to compliments.

"Master Silver!" he called out.

Jimmy came up, so did his chums. They all capped the lady in the bonnet very respectfully.

"P'r'aps you wouldn't mind showing this 'ere lady to Mr. Manders' 'ouse!" said Old Mack. "I can't leave my lodge jest now."

"Pleased!" said Jimmy.

"You are a good boy!" said Mrs. Manders. "Are you one of my husband's pupils?"

"Eh! Oh! Your—your husband, ma'am?"

"Roger Manders."

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, jumped almost clear of the ground.

"My only hat! I—I beg your pardon, ma'am! Are you—are you Mrs. Manders?"

"Yes, my dear little boy."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Please come this way, madam!" said Jimmy Silver, with great gravity.

Mrs. Manders accompanied the captain of the Fourth, and Lovell & Co. exchanged little grins. Tommy Dodd stood gasping. Everybody at Rookwood had always supposed Mr. Manders to be a bachelor. Indeed, it would have been hard to make any Rookwooder believe that there existed any lady so wanting in taste as to accept Mr. Manders if he did propose. And now—

"Mrs. Manders!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Oh Jerusalem artichokes! Mrs. Manders! The old—old—old rip!"

"The ould spalpeen!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle indignantly. "Takin' us all in—takin' the Head in! The Head doesn't know!"

"He will!" chuckled Tommy Cook. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "All Rookwood will know now! Sly old dog, Manders—what?"

The news spread like wildfire. Perhaps some fellows knew already! In amazingly short time nearly everybody at Rookwood seemed to know that Mr. Manders' wife—hitherto unacknowledged—had arrived.

Before Mrs. Manders—who walked rather slowly—had reached the house under Jimmy Silver's guidance—the quadrangle was swarming with eager, excited fellows. There was astonishment on all sides. Only Tubby Muffin declared that he had suspected something of the kind all along.

The amazing news was buzzed up and down and round about. It interested everybody. It was clear that Mr. Manders had been guilty of deception in posing as a bachelor at Rookwood.

Fellows wondered blissfully whether he would get the sack for this. They sincerely hoped so! Bulkeley of the Sixth heard loud and excited comments through his study window, and he came out into the quad, frowning.

"What's all this?" he demanded. "Mrs. Manders!" howled Smythe of the Shell. "Ha, ha! Old Manders' better half has come home!"

"Don't talk such nonsense, Smythe!" exclaimed the Rookwood captain sharply.

"There she is!" said Smythe, pointing.

Bulkeley stared at the female figure that Jimmy Silver was guiding to Mr. Manders' house. He almost fell down. "That—that Mrs. Manders! Impossible!"

"Looks more like Charley's Aunt—what?" chuckled Townsend, of the Fourth. "But all the fellows are sayin'—"

"Stuff!" said Bulkeley.

The Sixth-Former crossed the quad at a run, intending to get to the bottom of this at once. He interposed just as Mrs. Manders and her kind guide reached the doorway of their destination.

"Excuse me, madam!" began Bulkeley.

"Yes, little boy!"

There was a chuckle from the numerous crowd gathering round, and Bulkeley coloured. He was not exactly a little boy!

"You—you have called to see someone, madam?"

"Yes—my husband."

"But—but you do not mean Mr. Manders?"

"I am Mrs. Manders."

Bulkeley looked bewildered.

"But, madam, it—it has always been—been supposed—"

"My dear little boy, I am an unhappy deserted wife!" said Mrs. Manders, applying her ready handkerchief to her eyes. "Cruel—cruel Roger has abandoned me. But I hope that his hard heart may be softened by Christmas, and I have come to beg him to do me justice. If he denies me, I shall appeal to the headmaster—"

"Dr. Chisholm is away, madam. But—but—"

"Where is my husband?"

"Oh dear! Are you—are you sure, ma'am—quite sure—"

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"My husband! He is there!"

Mrs. Manders stretched out her hands towards Mr. Manders' study window.

Mr. Manders had watched the female figure advancing towards his house with astonishment and annoyance. He had noted with still greater surprise the sudden swarming of the quadrangle with excited and hilarious juniors.

This general hilarity was not to be tolerated. Mr. Manders came to his study window, and threw it up. He intended to address the swarming Rookwooders, and demand to know what the scene meant. Instead of which he found himself addressed by the female in the bonnet.

"Roger!"

Mr. Manders jumped.

"Roger, are you not glad to see your own dear Amelia?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Dear Roger, I forgive you everything if you will do what is right!" sobbed Amelia.

Mr. Manders blinked from the window, his lean jaw dropping in his utter astonishment.

"Woman," he gasped, "what—what do you mean? Are you mad? Have you been drinking? Who are you?"

Amelia sobbed.

"Oh, Roger!"

"How dare you call me by my Christian name!" thundered Mr. Manders greatly scandalised.

"My only husband—"

"What?" yelled Mr. Manders.

"Can you be so cruel to your little wife?"

Mr. Manders spluttered. From the crowd of Rookwooders, their tender hearts touched by Amelia's sobs, came a yell:

"Shame!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Mr. Manders!

MR. MANDERS clutched the window-frame and glared. He wondered dizzily whether he was dreaming. A hundred contemptuous and accusing faces looked at him from the quadrangle. Evidently the sympathy of Rookwood was on the side of Amelia.

Amelia's sobs were loud and long.

"Poor soul!" said Topham of the Fourth in a loud whisper. "It's simply shameful!"

"Rotten!" said Mornington.

"What an utter brute!" said Townsend. "I wonder he's got the neck to face us."

"Or her, poor woman!" said Howard of the Shell.

"Shame!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Woman, you are either mad or intoxicated! Go away at once!"

"Roger!"

"Shame!" yelled the juniors.

"Bulkeley, oblige me by conducting this—this female to—the gates, and asking Mack to turn her out!"

George Bulkeley's eyes glinted.

"I shall do nothing of the sort, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What? What?"

"This lady claims to be Mrs. Manders, sir! It is your business to deal with her, not mine!"

"Do you mean to say that you are stupid enough to believe such an absurd story?" shouted Mr. Manders. "I have never seen the woman before in my life!"

"Oh, Roger!"

"She knows you, at all events, sir," said Bulkeley dryly.

"Woman, go-go!" roared Mr.

Manders.

"Dearest Roger—"

"I deny the whole story! I have never seen the woman—"

Mr. Manders almost babbled in his wild excitement and exasperation. "It is a trick—a plot—"

"Roger!" wailed Amelia.

"Are you quite sure of what you state, madam?" asked Hansom of the Fifth. "It—it isn't some other Mr. Manders—"

"That may be the explanation!" gasped the Modern master.

Amelia sobbed.

"I would know my dear Roger anywhere!" she exclaimed. "Gentlemen, I appeal to you all! My Roger has a scar on his neck—over the right shoulder!"

"That does it!" said Talboys of the Fifth.

Mr. Manders almost fainted.

He had a scar on his neck, now hidden by his collar. Nearly all Rookwood knew he had it. They had seen it often enough in the summer, when Mr. Manders sometimes had charge of the swimmers at "ducker." How did this woman know, if she was not what she claimed to be?

There was condemnation in every face.

Bulkeley gave the Modern master an icy look.

"Do you still deny it, sir?" he asked.

"Yes—yes—yes!" foamed Mr. Manders. "It is a trick—a falsehood—a plot—a scheme to obtain money from me—"

He spluttered.

"Shame!" roared all Rookwood.

"Take me to him!" said Amelia tearfully. "Face to face he will not venture to deny his own lawfully wedded wife! Take me to Roger!"

"This way, ma'am!" said Jimmy Silver, choking down his emotions.

A crowd followed Mrs. Manders into the house. The Rookwood fellows wanted to see the meeting, and they wanted to see fair play. Old Manders was just the man to be a wife-beater, Tommy Dodd remarked to Cook. If he tried anything like that the Rookwooders were ready to lynch him. A swarm followed in the wake of Jimmy Silver and Mrs. Manders.

In his study Mr. Manders stood almost petrified.

Some dreadful woman—a woman he had never even seen before, so far as he knew—was claiming him as her husband! It seemed like some awful dream—some frightful nightmare. He almost wondered whether he was dreaming this. But the tramp of many feet approaching his study door told him that it was grim reality.

"Roger!"

As he heard that terrifying voice outside, Mr. Manders made a jump to the door to turn the key. But the door flew open. Amelia flew into the study with arms outstretched.

"Roger!" she shrieked.

Mr. Manders jumped back.

"Woman, begone!" he spluttered.

"I—I do not know you! I am not your wife—I mean, your husband! I—I—I—"

"Roger, be kind to your little Amelia, and all shall be forgiven!"

"Go away!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Take her away! Oh, heavens!"

"Roger!"

Amelia flew at him, her arms outspread. Mr. Manders dodged desperately round the study table.

"Help!" he shrieked.

"Roger, kiss your little Amelia!"

"Yaroooh! Go away! Help!"
Mr. Manders fled round the table, and Amelia pursued him. There was a roar from the passage.

"Go it, Mrs. Manders!"

"Give him the broly!"

Apparently that was Amelia's intention. The old poet has told us of the fury of a woman scorned. Amelia reached across the table with her umbrella as Mr. Manders fled, and there was a loud whack.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roger, stop!"

"Woman, leave my study! Help!"

"Here we go round the mulberry bush!" chortled Lovell, in the passage.

"Help!" yelled Mr. Manders. "Call the police! Oh, heavens, the woman is mad! Help!"

He made a rush for the doorway. But it was blocked with juniors, and they did not stir. Behind him came the avenging Amelia.

Whack!

The umbrella came down on Mr. Manders' mortar-board. There was a terrific yell from the Modern master.

"Now, Roger—"

"Do the decent thing, Mr. Manders!" shouted Lovell. "Own up!"

"Give him jip, ma'am!"

Mr. Manders chased round the study again. After him went the lady in the bonnet, with swiping umbrella.

"Woman, calm yourself!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "I—I will do—do anything you wish! I—I will— Oh, heavens! For goodness' sake, ma'am, calm yourself! Bless my soul! I beg of you—I beseech—"

"Will you admit the truth before these gentlemen?" demanded Mrs. Manders, stopping in her wild career.

"Will you acknowledge your wronged wife?"

"Oh, dear!"

Mr. Manders mopped his streaming brow.

He turned to the door and glared at the juniors.

"Go!" he thundered. "How dare you press into my study in this way? Go at once, or I will flog you all! I desire to see this—this lady alone! Go!"

"He's going to own up!" said Hansom of the Fifth.

"Best thing the old rip can do!"

"Here, clear off!" called out Bulkeley.

"Now then—"

The Rookwood captain drove the crowd along the passage.

Mr. Manders, with his back to the door, turned a venomous eye on the lady in the bonnet. As he faced her his hands were behind him, feeling for the key in the lock. Unseen by Amelia, he extracted the key.

"Now, madam—" he said.

"You are going to own up and do justice, Roger?" wailed Amelia. "Refuse, and I leave you for ever!"

"Why, that's just what the old rip wants!" murmured Topham, down the passage.

But apparently it was not what Mr. Manders wanted. He had had time to collect his thoughts a little now. Back into his mind had come the "spoo" of Christmas Eve. This was another trick! Mr. Manders was not clever, but he was cunning.

"Madam, you have come here calling yourself Mrs. Manders!" he said. "You shall have every opportunity of proving your claim!"

With that, Mr. Manders whipped out of the study and slammed the door. He jammed the key into the outside of the lock and turned it.

The Bounder's Chum!

(Continued from page 6.)

"It's a rotten trick! As captain of the Remove, I think it's up to me to chip in, and I'll do so if you choose."

"No, no!" said Tom hastily. "I don't want that. If you don't mind my working in your study, I can manage all right."

"All serene, then," said Harry.

But the captain of the Remove was frowning as he joined his chums and went down to Little Side.

Redwing settled down cheerfully enough with his books in Study No. 1. His own study was impossible, owing to Snoop and Stott; the Bounder's study was barred by Skinner; and the Form-room was not available this time. Skinner had calmly asked Mr. Quelch's permission to use the Form-room for a rehearsal, and the Remove master had unsuspectingly granted permission, little dreaming of Harold Skinner's real object.

But in Study No. 1—which belonged to Wharton and Nugent—Tom felt that he was safe from interruption. The Bounder looked in as Tom was beginning work.

"Getting at it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Yes. I'm quite snug here," answered Tom, with a smile.

"Good! I believe you had rather a shock yesterday, Redwing, when you saw me in your study with that crew."

Mrs. Manders Looks In!

(Continued from previous column.)

From the lips of Amelia, in the study, dropped a rather unfeminine expression: "Oh crumbs!"

"Knowles!" shouted Mr. Manders to the Modern prefect, who was in the crowded passage. "Knowles, go to the telephone at once! Ring up Coombe Police Station! Ask them to send a constable here immediately!"

"Yes, sir!" said Knowles.

Knowles hurried away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. They drifted out of the house. They had no chance at Mr. Manders' study, with the door locked and the key in Mr. Manders' pocket.

In the quad the chums of the Fourth stared at one another in blank and utter dismay. At the window of Mr. Manders' study they caught a glimpse of a dismayed face under golden locks and a bonnet.

"Great pip!" gasped Lovell. "She—he—Putty's locked in, and a bobby coming from Coombe—"

"It's all comin' out!" stuttered Newcome. "Poor old Putty! Oh, my only hat! What will happen now?"

That was a question that the Fistical Four could not answer. What was going to happen now could only be imagined in horrid surmises. Putty of the Fourth had played his little game—and played it well. But it was only too evident now that he had played it once too often!

THE END.

(Don't miss "The Disappearing Lady!" next week's grand long tale of the Rookwood Chums.)

Tom's face clouded a little.

"It's not my business, Smithy," he answered. "I haven't thought about it."

"I'm going to explain, all the same," said Vernon-Smith. "I won all Skinner's money, and offered it back to him to change out of my study. He refused. That was my game."

"Oh, I see!"

"You don't approve?" grinned the Bounder.

"I—I don't think it was a good idea, Smithy. That kind of thing isn't good enough for you. I know you were doing it for my sake, though."

"But you wish I hadn't?"

Redwing was silent.

He would not appear to be setting up in judgment upon his chum; but it was not possible for his real thoughts to escape the keen-eyed Bounder. Vernon-Smith laughed rather harshly.

"You're a more particular chap than I am, Redwing," he said, with a suspicion of a sneer in his tone. "I'm afraid I don't quite come up to the Hawkscliff standard in some respects."

"Smithy, old chap," said Redwing, greatly pained, "I—I—"

"I've seen the longshoremen sitting on the boats playing pitch and toss," said the Bounder. "You never did anything so naughty, of course?"

Redwing did not answer, but the expression on his face made the Bounder's mood change.

"Don't mind me, kid!" he exclaimed.

"Anybody in the Remove could have told you I had a bitter tongue, if you'd cared to hear it. The fact is, that cad Skinner is getting on my nerves. But I'm going to down him. I know a way. Pile in with your work! I'll give you a look in after the match."

"Right-ho, Smithy!" said Tom.

The Bounder left the study, and Redwing settled down to work.

By the time the footer match had started on Little Side, Skinner & Co. were ready for business. But they were rather puzzled at first. Redwing was not to be found in his own study, or in Smithy's, and the Form-room was drawn blank.

"He must be chuckin' swotting for the afternoon," said Stott. "Watching the footer after all, very likely."

Skinner shook his head.

"He's swotting right enough," he answered. "He's dodged into some other study, that's all. Look for him along the passage."

"What a game!" chortled Stott.

The trio began at the upper end of the passage, but they drew blank until they came to Study No. 1. There they found Redwing at work.

"Hallo! Run to earth!" grinned Stott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you're swotting in Wharton's study!" grinned Skinner.

Tom Redwing rose to his feet.

"Yes. Get out!"

"Perhaps you'll put us out!" sneered Skinner.

"I don't know whether I could handle the three of you," said Redwing, "but I'll try if you don't clear!"

He picked up the poker, and advanced towards the trio. Skinner & Co. promptly backed into the passage, and Redwing shut the door after them. And for an hour at least, there was quiet for the Bounder's Chum.

THE END.

(Look out for next Tuesday's splendid long story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, entitled—"Foil'd At The Finish!")

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