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**STAND-UP FIGURE
OF J.S. RYDER FREE in this
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NEW CRICKET STORY BY "PAT" HENDREN

STARTS THIS WEEK.

THE POWER OF GUNNER! Gunner of the Fourth suddenly discovers that he has a strange and wonderful power—a power so great that in a minute he can do anything or become anything he wishes at Rookwood!



The Fluence at Rookwood!

A Rollicking Long Complete Story dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. and Peter Cuthbert Gunner of Rookwood.

By
OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver is Surprised!

"OH!" Gunner jumped. Never had a Rookwood fellow looked so startled as Peter Cuthbert Gunner did at that moment.

Yet there was nothing particularly startling in Jimmy Silver's face as he looked into Gunner's study.

Jimmy's face was rather good-looking, in fact, and very good-natured and pleasant. Certainly there was nothing about it calculated to have such an effect on a fellow who saw it suddenly.

But undoubtedly Gunner was startled. Jimmy's glance seemed to have the same effect upon him as the Gorgon's glare upon its victims.

He ejaculated "Oh!" in startled tones, jumped up out of his chair, and his hand, holding a book, was hurriedly thrust behind him.

He blinked at the captain of the Fourth, his face growing very red.

Naturally, Jimmy Silver was surprised. He was not accustomed to his glance producing that effect upon fellows.

"What on earth's the matter?" he demanded.

"M-m-matter?" stammered Gunner.

"Yes, ass! What did you jump for?"

"J-j-jump?" Peter Cuthbert Gunner began to recover himself a little. His hand, holding the book, was still behind him as he faced Jimmy Silver. But Jimmy did not notice that specially. That Gunner was hiding a book from his view naturally did not occur to him—there was no reason why Gunner should do anything of the kind.

"The—the fact is—" stammered Gunner, "I—I—you—you—that is, you startled me!"

"Well, you're a silly ass!" commented Jimmy Silver. "I suppose you didn't take me for a ghost, did you?"

Jimmy eyed him curiously. Gunner's face was still red, and he was obviously confused. If he had been smoking a cigarette, and a prefect of the Sixth had looked in, there would have been reason

for his startled confusion. As it was, Jimmy could see no reason at all. Yet Gunner certainly looked as if he had been caught—or nearly caught—in something that he wished very much to conceal.

But Jimmy was not deeply interested. Gunner was a champion ass, anyhow, and why he did things was a matter of little consequence. In his own estimation, Peter Cuthbert was a most important person. In the estimation of everybody else, his unimportance was absolutely without limit.

"W-w-what did you want?" asked Gunner.

"Nothing! I looked in to tell you that we're going down to cricket practice, and if you'd like to come, you may," said the captain of the Fourth. "You're the worst cricketer that ever was, and, if you like, I can find time to give you a little coaching."

Gunner quite recovered himself at that. He sneered.

"Coaching—from you!" he said. "I like that!"

"Well, if you like it, come along!" said Jimmy. "I'll try to put you up to a wrinkle about bowling without braining all the field."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Gunner.

"What?"

"Is there a chap at Rookwood—even in the Sixth—who bowls as I do?" demanded Gunner hotly.

"No fear! Not even in the Second!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I'll show you how to hold a bat, too, if you like."

"Talking about cricket," said Gunner, ruthlessly ignoring that kind offer, "are you going to play me in the Bagshot match?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

His laugh was echoed from the passage, where Lovell, and Raby, and Newcome grinned into the study. The Fistical Four of the Fourth seemed greatly tickled by Gunner's question.

"If you're not," said Gunner, "don't talk cricket to me! Coach me! Ha, ha! Why, I could give Bulkeley of the Sixth tips about cricket!"

"Don't be funny, old chap!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Come down and get

some practice, and try to pick up the game."

Gunner waved his hand at him. "I don't want any more of your cheek!" he said. "As a matter of fact, I'm going to play in the Bagshot match next week."

"Are the Form going to sack Jimmy and elect you skipper in his place?" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"They might do worse," said Gunner contemptuously. "In fact, they do worse already. Why the fellows keep Silver in the job I can't imagine. Sheer fathedness, I suppose. I've offered to stand for election and nobody backs me—except Dickinson minor. Dickinson minor is the only chap in the Fourth with the brains of a gnat!"

"The only chap who shares your study and has to pull your leg to keep you quiet, you mean!" grinned Raby.

"But the time will come!" said Gunner. "After I've shown the fellows what I can do in the Bagshot match you won't be able to keep me out of the team for the big fixtures, Silver!"

"But you're not in the Bagshot match!" said Newcome, staring at him.

"I'm going to be!"

"How's that?" asked Jimmy Silver curiously. "As you can't play up to Second Form style you're not likely to be picked to play for the School. How are you going to manage it?"

"There are ways and means," said Gunner mysteriously.

"Well, what are they?" asked Jimmy, really wondering whether Peter Cuthbert Gunner was wandering in his mind.

The way Gunner played cricket was really almost enough to inspire doubts of his present sanity; and his present remarks were really extraordinary.

"That's telling!" said Gunner. "I decline to explain—but if you won't do the right thing, Silver, you'll be made. I shall exert my power."

Jimmy regarded him reflectively.

"I suppose you're trying to pull my leg, somehow," he said. "If not, you'd better see a doctor, Gunner. Why they sent you to Rookwood instead of Colney Hatch is a puzzle to me. Are you coming down to practice or not?"

"I don't need the practice you fellows do. You'll find me all right on Bagshot day."

"Shall we bump him before we go?" asked Lovell, looking round at his comrades.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Not worth the trouble," he said. "Come on!"

The Fistical Four walked away down the Fourth Form passage.

Gunner shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and closed the door.

Then his hidden book came into view again. Gunner looked at it and grinned.

"My hat, that was a near thing!" he muttered. "Jolly nearly caught! If Silver had seen this—phew!"

With which mysterious observation Peter Cuthbert Gunner sat down and opened his book, and began to read and study it with a deep and absorbed attention that he never bestowed upon his lessons.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Alarming!

JIMMY SILVER looked rather thoughtful as he came out of the School House with his chums.

Gunner's manner had been so very strange that Jimmy was concerned.

It was already known that Peter Cuthbert was every conceivable kind of a duffer. In Form he was a dunce, though he despised Mr. Dalton's want of sagacity in putting him at the bottom of the class. At cricket he was a regular shriek, though he was convinced that he ought to have been played in the First Eleven on his merits. At boxing he was the last word in clumsiness, though he was always ready for a fight, and would probably have undertaken to box Jack Dempsey if given a chance. Between what Gunner could do, and what he thought he could do, there was a great gulf fixed.

Some of the fellows had wondered how a fellow could be such a duffer without being weak in the head. And Jimmy was beginning to wonder whether Gunner really was weak in the head. His manner and his remarks had been so very queer.

Dickinson minor, who had the doubtful privilege of being Gunner's study-mate in Study No. 7, was coming off the cricket ground as Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived there. Jimmy called to him. Dickinson was an inoffensive youth, who contrived to keep peace in the study by pulling Peter Cuthbert's leg to any extent that Peter Cuthbert required, which was a very great extent.

"Have you noticed anything queer about Gunner lately?" Jimmy Silver asked.

Dickinson minor grinned.

"Same as usual," he answered—"more than usual, in fact. Are you going to play him against Bagshot?"

"No jolly fear!"

"His says he's going to play; that's the latest," said Dickinson minor.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"He's not a bad chap, you know," said Dickinson, who really was rather attached to his burly study-mate. "He can't help being an ass. But he seems to think he's going to play Bagshot; he seems to think he's got some way of making you put him in the team. It's queer, I know."

"Jolly queer," said Jimmy. "He's just been talking out of his hat in a very odd way. Is he getting up to some trick or other?"

"Blessed if I know! He's got a book

that he's always reading, and he won't show it to me," said Dickinson minor. "I keep on finding him mugging into it, but he won't even let me see the title. Can't be a lesson-book, or he wouldn't want to read it. Except for that, he doesn't seem a bigger idiot than usual."

"A book!" repeated Jimmy. "Well, there's no harm in that. Come to think of it, he was hiding something when I looked into his study. If that's all, there's no harm. I thought he might have some potty idea of playing some trick about the eleven."

"Not that I know of," grinned Dickinson. "Nothing of the kind. Gunner hasn't brains enough; and, besides, there's no harm in him. Just a silly ass, you know."

Jimmy Silver nodded, and joined his chums on the chicken-ground, dismissing Gunner from his mind.

Dickinson minor went on to the School House. It was past tea-time, and Dickinson wanted his tea. Tea in Study No. 7 was always a lavish spread; that was one of Gunner's good qualities. He had heaps of money, derived from the ample profits of Gunner's World-Famous Hardware, and, in one way, at least, it was a very good thing to be Gunner's study-mate. Peter Cuthbert spent his money right royally, and Dickinson had lived on the fat of the land ever since Gunner had arrived at Rookwood. For that reason, Peter Cuthbert was a fellow to whom much could be forgiven.

There was no sign of tea when Dickinson minor came into his study, and clumped his bat down in a corner. Gunner gave a start as he came in, and slipped a book into his pocket, but that did not surprise Dickinson. He had seen Gunner do that a dozen times at least during the past week. Any other fellow acting in that way would have excited curiosity, but nobody expected Gunner to act like any other fellow. Gunner had manners and customs of his own.

"What about tea?" asked Dickinson affably.

"Tea!" said Gunner. "Is it tea-time?"

Dickinson was a little surprised at that. Gunner had a healthy appetite, and he was generally acutely conscious of meal-times.

"Well, never mind tea," said Gunner absently. "That cheeky ass Silver has just been here, Dick. He persists that he's not going to play me against Bagshot next week. Just because he's junior captain, you know."

"The captain generally decides these questions, doesn't he?" murmured Dickinson minor.

"Not where I'm concerned," said Gunner loftily. "I hope you don't look on me as an ordinary member of a fag Form, Dickinson. If the Head had any sense, I should be in the Fifth. I fully expected to be put in the Fifth when I came. You see, as the matter stands, I'm in the Fourth, but not of them. Catch on?"

"Ye-es. What about tea?"

"Fortunately," continued Gunner, "I have the power in my hands to make Silver do the right thing. I'm not going to explain to you at present, Dick; but I have power in my hands—great power."

"Have—have you, really?" said Dickinson feebly.

"Enormous power!" said Gunner impressively.

"Oh!"

"If I liked," said Gunner, "I could make the Head put me in the Fifth—or the Sixth, for that matter."

"C-c-could you?"

"Yes. I may do that, later. By Jove, I could make the governors appoint me Head of Rookwood, if I chose!"

Dickinson minor blinked at him. He was thinking about tea, but he decided to keep near the door. Gunner in this mood was a little alarming.

Gunner, deep in his own thoughts, did not notice Dickinson. He began to walk about the study in suppressed excitement.

"It's a great responsibility," he said.

"Wha-a-at is?" murmured Dickinson.

"This enormous power that is in my hands. Fancy being able to make the Head jazz across the quad by lifting my finger!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I could do it," said Gunner—"easily! Of course, I wouldn't!"

"N-n-no!" gasped Dickinson. "I—I—I shouldn't, old chap."

"Trust me not to do anything of the kind," said Gunner. "I've got a sense of responsibility, with enormous power in my hands; I am going to use it with discretion. It came quite by chance, too. I just bought that book out of curiosity, never dreaming that it would reveal this tremendous gift that I possess."

Dickinson put his hand behind him and unlatched the door. He felt safer with an avenue of retreat open.

"Now," continued the unconscious Gunner, "I've studied the matter thoroughly, and I'm fairly well satisfied. But I must make an experiment, to make assurance doubly sure. I'm going to experiment on you, old chap!"

"Eh?"

"Sit in that chair," said Gunner automatically.

Dickinson trembled. Before he could make up his mind to bolt, Gunner grabbed him by the shoulder, jerked him to the chair, and sat him into it with a bump.

"Keep quite still," said Gunner.

"Ow! Yes. A-a-anything you like, old fellow."

Dickinson watched Gunner as if fascinated. Gunner's next proceedings were still more alarming.

He raised both hands, and advanced towards Dickinson, with a steady, stony glare in his eyes, fixed on Dickinson's face.

It was too much for the alarmed junior.

With a yell of terror, Dickinson leaped out of the chair, knocking it over backwards, and sprang for the door.

He tore the door open, darted into the passage, and fled.

Gunner stood dumbfounded for a moment; then he jumped to the door and yelled:

"Dickinson! Come back, you chump! Do you hear?"

If Dickinson minor heard, he did not heed. He was vanishing down the staircase.

"The silly ass!" ejaculated Gunner. "I almost believe that chap is potty! What's the matter with him, I wonder? He didn't even know that I was going to mesmerise him. Now I can't make my experiments." Gunner frowned. "I shall have to find somebody else! It's very annoying." I can't let out the secret of my immense power, or Silver will be on his guard, and I may not be able to get him under the influence next week. It's dashed annoying! But I've got to put it to the test somehow.

And Peter Cuthbert Gunner, &c. &c. &c. very exasperated, quitted Study No. 7 in search of a victim.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Gunner Tries It On!

"HALLO, Gunner! Trot this way!" called out Jimmy Silver cheerily.

The burly figure of Peter Cuthbert Gunner appeared on the cricket-field, and Jimmy hailed him. Jimmy had been batting, and now he was taking a rest and keeping an eye on the other juniors. He concluded from Gunner's arrival that P. C. Gunner had decided on some practice after all; and Jimmy was generously prepared to help that hopeless dud master the elements of the game.

The way Gunner played cricket was, Jimmy considered, a disgrace to the Classical Fourth. It was worth some trouble to make him a little less of a dud at the great summer game.

But Gunner did not respond to the invitation in the spirit in which it was given.

"Want some coaching?" he asked.

"Fathead!"

"Offering me some?" jeered Gunner. "Teach your grandmother, Jimmy Silver!"

And Gunner walked on regardless. Evidently he had not come down for practice, after all.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders. He was not very keen on wasting his time on Gunner, anyhow. And he had plenty to do, licking his team into shape for the forthcoming Bagshot match.

Gunner sat down by the pavilion and looked about him. The cricket-field was a busy scene, and of the fellows who were standing about none paid any attention to Gunner. That youth had mightier matters than cricket in his mind. He had looked for Dickinson minor, and looked in vain. His study-mate, for reasons known to himself, did not want to meet Gunner, much as Gunner wanted to meet him. Some other victim had to be found for the wonderful experiment Peter Cuthbert was bent upon. Gunner felt that it was time he got down to business. For over a week he had been studying deeply that wonderful little book he had picked up for half-a-crown—"Mesmerism Simplified"—and by this time Gunner felt that he had the whole bag of tricks, as it were, at his finger-tips.

After a glance round him to ascertain that he was not closely observed, Gunner slipped the book from his pocket and opened it.

"Mesmerism Simplified" was its title, and it was quite a small book—not much of it for half-a-crown, unless the quality made up for the lack of quantity.

Perhaps it did. Gunner firmly believed that it did, anyhow. He had read in that little book that with a powerful personality, an iron will, and inflexible determination, it was easy to master the noble science of mesmerism, or hypnotism, and thus acquire a power which kings and emperors might envy.

The thought of being envied by kings and emperors was rather flattering to Gunner.

According to the book, he was the very fellow for it; for he had a powerful personality, an iron will, and an inflexible determination—at all events, he believed that he had.

By fixing a quelling eye upon the destined victim, and making certain passes with his hands, it was possible to give a powerful personality like Gunner's less the victim to a state of help-

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"Yarooop!"

"That's for making faces at me!" growled Raby. "Now you can go on playing the giddy ox and I'll give you another!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Gunner.

Raby walked away indignantly, and Gunner sat and blinked after him. The experiment had been a failure. Even Peter Cuthbert Gunner could not doubt that.

He scrambled up, greatly inclined to pursue Raby and exact vengeance for that prod. But he restrained his wrath. It was no time for rowing with the Fistical Four. Evidently he wanted a little more practice with the hypnotic passes, or else with the quelling glance. Raby, instead of yielding to the occult influence, had only absurdly supposed that Gunner was making faces at him!

"Let 'em wait!" gasped Gunner. "I'll show 'em! Wait till I've had just a bit more practice. I'll show 'em! When I get fairly going and wield my terrible and enormous power—"

That reflection consoled Gunner. He walked away, to put in a little more practice. He needed only a little, he was convinced of that, before he became an autocrat before whom Lenin and Trotsky might have trembled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Startling Success!

DICKINSON minor hesitated. He hung around the door of No. 7 in the Fourth, hesitating long.

He was in a most painful position. It was time for prep, and Dickinson minor hadn't even had his tea. He had missed tea in Hall while at cricket, counting on a lavish spread in his study. Missing tea was bad enough, but he couldn't miss prep. Prep had to be done in the study. And Peter Cuthbert Gunner was in the study!

Since Dickinson had fled in alarm from No. 7 he hadn't seen Gunner. But he had heard several fellows discussing the weird and extraordinary antics of Gunner near the cricket-field. What he had heard confirmed his dreadful suspicion that Gunner's brain, never really like anybody else's, had fairly taken a tumble at last.

To venture into the study in these circumstances required nerve.

So long as old Gunny only babbled and waved his hands and told fellows to go to sleep it didn't matter; but suppose he should get dangerous! That was what worried Dickinson. Suppose he got at the poker before a fellow could get out of the study?

Dickinson minor had good cause for hesitation. Belated tea and prep drew him to the study; but being shut up with Gunner was no joke, in the present state of Gunner's powerful brain.

The hapless Dickinson was still hesitating when the study door opened and Gunner looked out.

"Oh! Here you are!" he exclaimed. "H-h-ere I am," said Dickinson with a feeble smile. He backed away a pace. But Gunner, he decided, did not look dangerous. He looked very impatient, that was all.

"Wondered what on earth had become of you!" said Gunner. "Come into the study. I want you."

He stepped back into the room, and Dickinson, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, followed him in. He decided to keep the door open, but Gunner strode to it and shut it.

Dickinson felt a cold thrill run down his spine as Gunner stood with his back to the door. He debated in his mind wildly whether he should yell for help,

"Now," said Gunner.
 "W-what about tea, old chap?" murmured Dickinson. "It—it—it's late!"
 "I've had my tea."
 "I haven't—"
 "Never mind that. I want you to help me, Dickinson. I'm going to tell you the secret," said Gunner impressively. "You're going to help me with the experiment. You can have tea when we've finished; lots of stuff in the cupboard. I'm going to tell you the secret of my enormous power, old fellow!"
 "Oh, dear!" moaned Dickinson.
 "I told you I could make the Head jazz across the quad if I liked," said Gunner. "I told you I'm going to make Jimmy Silver put me in the eleven for Bagshot next week. You remember?"
 "Ye-e-es."

"You haven't guessed?" asked Gunner.

"N-n-no."
 "I've been taking up mesmerism," said Gunner. "It's called hypnotism, too. I've mastered it."

"Wha-a-a-at?"
 Dickinson minor opened his eyes.
 "By fixing a fellow with my quelling eye and making certain passes, I can reduce him to a state of unconscious helplessness," said Gunner. "That's mesmerism."

"Oh!" ejaculated Dickinson. "Then you're not mad?"

"What?" roared Gunner.
 "I—I thought—I—I mean—"
 "Don't be a fool, Dickinson! I'm going to mesmerise you now, as practice. I won't make you jump out of the window—What are you grinning at, you dummy?"

"W-w-was I grinning?"
 "Keep serious, and don't be a grinning ape," said Gunner. "This isn't a laughing matter. Why, there you go again! Fix your eyes on mine!"

"Yes, old top!" murmured Dickinson. Dickinson was feeling a great sense of relief. He didn't mind old Gunny playing the goat, if it amused him. He was only too glad that Gunner wasn't mad, as he had feared.

"Now, I'm going to put the occult influence on you," said Gunner. "I shall only make you believe you're a rabbit and run round the study on your hands and knees. You won't be hurt. Do stop grinning, for goodness' sake! There's nothing to snigger at. Now!"

Gunner began to make passes. He made passes for several minutes, and all the time his quelling eye was fixed on Dickinson.

Dickinson made heroic efforts not to laugh, or even to smile. Gunner was in deadly earnest, and it was no time for merriment. For several minutes Dickinson minor endured his ordeal, and kept a straight face.

"Sleep!" commanded Gunner at last. "Don't feel sleepy."

"Sure?"
 "Quite."

"Look here, Dickinson, you're setting yourself against the influence," said Gunner. "I don't want to row with a chum, but if you try to spoil this experiment, of course I shall jolly well lick you."

Gunner was getting cross.
 "Now, can you sleep?" he asked, after some more passes.

"No."
 "Better give it me straight," said Gunner in a tone of menace. "I don't want any fooling. What do you feel like now?"

"Hungry," said Dickinson.
 Gunner gave a snort of disgust.

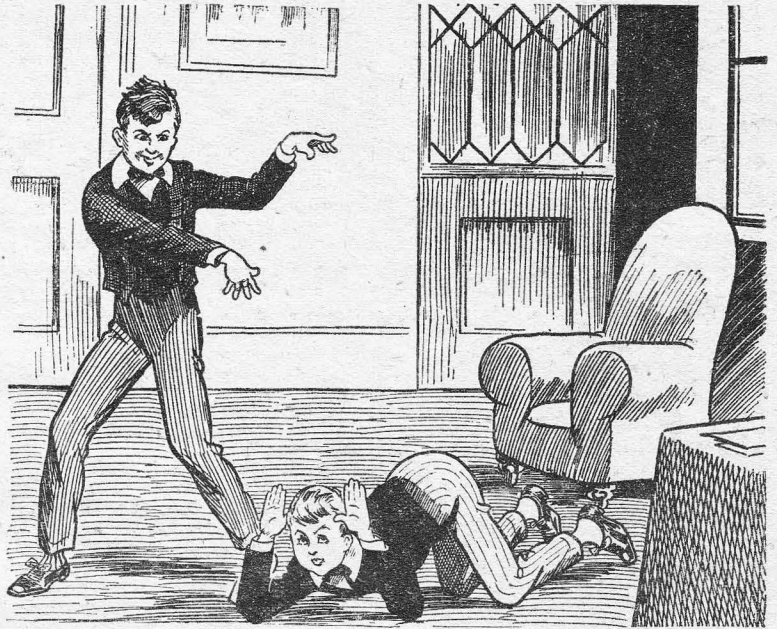
"Thinking about your blessed tea,"

while I'm trying to work an important experiment!" he exclaimed. "That's the sort of dummy you are, is it? Well, I can jolly well tell you that you won't have any tea till I've carried through my experiment successfully. Fix your eyes on mine."

"Oh dear!" said Dickinson minor. Dickinson was conscious of an aching void within. The thought of not getting his tea until Gunner had succeeded as a hypnotist was dismaying. There was only one resource—Dickinson's usual resource when he found Gunner too overpowering. Peter Cuthbert simply asked to have his leg pulled.

More passes. Gunner's quelling glance was now a deadly, stony threatening glare.

"Sleep!" said Gunner, almost ferociously.



GUNNER'S "POWER"! Dickinson minor crawled round the study on all fours. "That settles it!" said Gunner as he watched with glowing satisfaction. "I've got the power of mesmerism at last!" (See Chapter 4.)

To his delight, Dickinson minor's eyelids drooped.

"I knew I could do it!" murmured Gunner. "But the proof of the pudding's in the eating. I've actually done it now. Jolly lucky for some fellows that I've got a sense of responsibility, along with enormous and terrible power. Poor old Dickinson. He's smiling in his sleep. Wake up, Dickinson!"

Dickinson's eyes opened.
 "Now, Dickinson, you're utterly under my influence, and have no will of your own," said Gunner. "Your personality is merged in mine. There's only one will between us, and that's my will. You are a rabbit, Dickinson. Now, what are you?"

"A—a rabbit!" answered Dickinson minor.

"Go round the study on all fours." Dickinson minor dropped on his hands and knees, and went round the study thus. Gunner watched him with glowing satisfaction.

"That settles it. You can get up, Dickinson." Gunner made a series of reverse passes. "Now, come to! I command you! You're Dick! Dickinson again. The influence is off!"

Dickinson minor passed his hand over

his brow. He felt that this was the proper thing to do in the circumstances.

"Where am I?" he asked dramatically.

"In the study, old fellow," said Gunner kindly. "It's all right. You've been mesmerised, and going on all-fours. I made you believe you were a rabbit. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dickinson, glad that he could laugh at last.

"You looked no end funny, thinking you were a rabbit!" chuckled Gunner.

"D-d-d-did I?"

"You did, old fellow. How do you feel now?"

"Hungry."

"You can have your tea now, old chap. The experiment's finished. I'm satisfied."

Dickinson minor was glad that Gunner was satisfied—glad, too, that he was so easy to satisfy. He proceeded to transfer the good things from the study cupboard to the table, and to satisfy himself. He felt that he had earned his tea.

"Pile in, old chap!" said Gunner. "You've helped me in your small way, you know. The mouse and the lion over again—what? Of course, I knew that I had this great power, but now I've proved it. Just think, Dicky! Next week, when I put the influence on Jimmy Silver I'm going into the eleven for Bagshot. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Dickinson minor.

Gunner, in high feather, walked about the study, almost crowing with satisfaction. And Dickinson minor, as he made an ample tea, could only wonder what would happen when the egregious Gunner attempted to put the "influence" on Jimmy Silver!

THE END.

(You will enjoy reading next Tuesday's topping long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Gunner, of Rookwood, entitled: "Gulling Gunner!")