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Gee! **THE RIO KID** is sure
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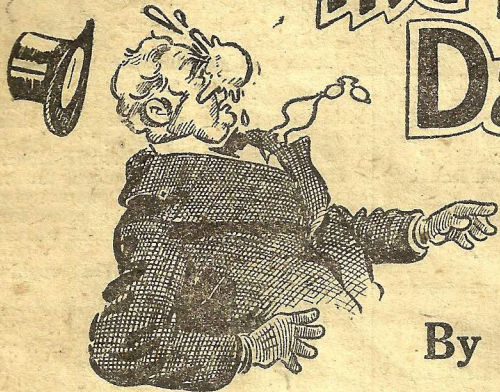
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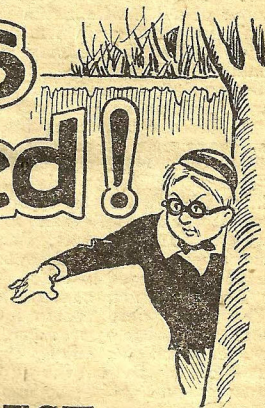
**HIGH ABOVE ANY OTHER
WESTERN YARNS!**

BUCKING UP CUFFY' Tommy Dodd comes to the conclusion that his cousin, Clarence Cuffy, wants bucking up, and taught not to be a howling duffer. He tries to reform him—with surprising and disastrous results!

The Duffer's Dark Deed!



A Rollicking Long Complete
Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co.,
of Rookwood,



By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Cuffy Requires Bucking Up!

YOU ass!"

"Thomas!"

"You duffer!"

"My dear Thomas!"

"You—you mooncaif!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd in tones of deep exasperation.

Clarence Cuffy of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood gazed at Tommy Dodd more in sorrow than in anger. Tommy Dodd stared at Clarence Cuffy more in anger than in sorrow.

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle looked on, grinning. Dodd of the Fourth had been talking steadily for ten minutes and he was still eloquent.

The three Tommies were sitting in judgment on Clarence Cuffy. On the study table lay a cricket stump—upon which Cuffy's glance every now and then lingered uneasily. Cuffy was apprehensive of that cricket stump. He had a suspicion that he would shortly feel the weight of it, applied to his person, and he did not like the idea at all. He was sorry to have displeased his dear relative Thomas. But he realised that he would be sorrier still when the cricket stump was introduced into the discussion.

It was just then that Jimmy Silver of the Classical Fourth arrived in Tommy Dodd's study. He had come over about football matters; and he arrived to find Clarence Cuffy on the carpet, and the three Tommies holding a sort of court martial over him.

"Hallo! Trouble in the happy family?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he put a smiling face in at the doorway.

"Buzz off, you Classical bounder!" answered Tommy Dodd. "We're busy just now."

"What about the match this afternoon?"

Tommy Dodd jerked his thumb towards the study window. Past that window snowflakes were steadily falling. Rookwood, from end to end, was white with snow.

"Football's off, ass!" said Tommy Dodd. "I suppose we can't play in a foot of snow."

"Not quite," assented Jimmy Silver.

"But I thought I was a duffer."

would be coming over to ask," said Tommy Dodd politely. "I was right, you see."

Jimmy Silver shook snow from his coat, and crossed over to the study fire to warm his hands. The three Tommies eyed him for a moment and then turned their attention to Clarence Cuffy again. That hapless youth was standing first on one leg and then on the other, and obviously longing to escape from the study.

Clarence Cuffy was quite celebrated at Rookwood—as a duffer. There were, of course, other duffers at Rookwood. Gunner of the Classical Fourth was an obstreperous duffer. Tubby Muffin was a fatuous duffer. Flynn was an excitable duffer. But Clarence Cuffy was the duffer unequalled—the duffer who was certain to "duff" under any conceivable circumstances. And as he was a distant relative of Tommy Dodd's, and as Tommy had been requested by his people to keep a friendly and fatherly eye on Clarence, and steer him through the shoals and rocks of school life, Tommy felt it considerably.

Tommy had kept an eye on Clarence. More than once he had licked him for his own good. Often and often he had kicked him, but he had never been able to kick any "horse-sense" into Clarence.

In the frequent alarums and excursions between the Modern and Classical juniors at Rookwood Cuffy was a source of weakness to Tommy Dodd & Co. He was a flaw in their armour. It was easy for anybody to pull his leg. He believed anything that was told him, with a simple and touching faith. He was meek and mild and inoffensive, though on occasions he had shown great audacity—on the principle, apparently, of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. And Tommy Dodd was fed-up.

"You crass, burbling, frabjous jabber-wock!" said Tommy Dodd, growing more and more eloquent. "What sort of a frabjous dummy do you call yourself, anyhow?"

"My dear Thomas—" said Cuffy feebly.

"If you call me dear Thomas again I'll punch you!" roared Tommy Dodd ferociously.

"My dear—"

"Don't you try to talk like a duffer."

"I can't help it, Tommy."

"Thomas fathead!" said Clarence Cuffy, anxious to oblige.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook and Doyle, and Jimmy Silver contributed a chuckle. Tommy Dodd stared at Cuffy in wrath.

Tommy turned a baleful eye on Jimmy Silver.

"All serene, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "What's old Cuffy done this time?"

"What hasn't he done?" snorted Tommy Dodd. "He goes around looking for chances to let down the Modern side. He's a bigger fool than any you've got in the Classical Fourth—and that's saying a lot. One of your rotters, Peele, caught him in the eye with a snowball, right in the doorway of our House. And what do you think this frabjous dummy did?"

"Give it up!" said Jimmy.

"He told Peele he was a bad boy!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jimmy.

Clarence Cuffy looked surprised and pained.

"But Peele was a bad boy, Thomas," he remonstrated.

"Hark at him!" howled Dodd.

"I am sure that my remark to Peele was moderation itself," said Cuffy. "I might have called him names—only my dear grandfather has warned me never to call names. I might have punched his head, as I admit I was tempted to do, but I have promised my dear Aunt Belinda to avoid fustical encounters with rough boys. I might have projected a snowball at him, Thomas, but Mr. Manders has forbidden us to hurl snowballs anywhere near the House. In the circumstances, Thomas, I felt that I could not do less than tell Peele plainly that I considered him a bad boy."

The juniors in Tommy Dodd's study gazed at Cuffy as he thus unburdened his soul. They found it difficult to believe that Clarence Cuffy really was a human being at all. He seemed far too good to be true.

"That's Cuffy!" growled Tommy Dodd. "I've japed him and kicked him and licked him, but he goes on doing it."

"My dear Thomas,"

"I'm prepared to

apologise to him for having called him a bad boy," said Cuffy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you born duffer!" said Tommy Dodd. "It's no good talking to you. I'm going to give you the cricket stump!"

"My dear Thomas—"

"Put him across the table!"

"Oh dear!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle rose to their feet and seized the hapless Cuffy. He was swung across the study table, face down. Tommy Dodd picked up the cricket-stump. Cuffy's apprehensions, on the score of that stump, were about to be realised.

Whack!

"Ow!" gasped Cuffy.

Whack!

"Whoop!"

"Now," said Tommy Dodd, "I'm going to give you a chance, Cuffy. You're a born idiot, and a howling duffer, and a meek-and-mild chump, and a burbling idiot, and a lot of things like that. It's no good trying to make you understand sense. But you—"

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

"But you can understand that," said Tommy Dodd. "Can you?"

"My dear Thomas—"

Whack!

"Can you understand that?" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Ow! Yes—oh, yes! Ow!"

"Good! Now you're to get across the quad when you leave here, and you're to make up a big snowball—big and hard—and you're to bung it right in the eye of the first chap who comes out of the School House—see?"

"Oh dear! But why, my dear Thomas, should I make an unprovoked assault upon some person who has never given me offence— Yaroooh!"

Whack!

"Never mind about all that," said Tommy Dodd. "You're to do it! If you don't, I shall give you two dozen like that!"

Whack!

"Whoop!"

"And then some more like that!"

Whack!

"Oh dear! Ow! Yaroooh!"

"Got it at last!" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Are you going to do just as I've told you, or do you want some more bucking up?"

"Ow! No! Yes! Certainly!"

"Good! Let him slide!"

Clarence Cuffy slid off the table. He stood twisting and writhing, apparently feeling severely the effect of the cricket-stump. Still he regarded Tommy Dodd more in sorrow than in anger, for Cuffy was a forgiving youth, and evidently he was greatly astonished by the command he had received.

"Now, go ahead!" growled Dodd.

"My dear Thomas, I have been directed by my dear father to act on your advice," said Cuffy meekly. "I shall do so, though I fail to understand—"

"That's all right; you're not expected to understand. That would be asking too much of a brain like yours!" said Tommy Dodd sarcastically. "I'm not so unreasonable as all that. Wait outside the School House, and as soon as you see a chivvy coming out at the door, bung a snowball right at it, and bolt. See?"

"Yes, Thomas!"

"Now cut!"

And Clarence Cuffy "cut."

Having sent Cuffy like a lamb to the slaughter, so to speak, Tommy Dodd recovered his good humour.

"No footer this afternoon," he re-

marked. "Like to hang on and try some of our baked chestnuts, you Classical ass?"

"Certainly, you Modern duffer!" answered Jimmy Silver.

And Jimmy Silver sat on the table, and helped the Modern chums to dispose of baked chestnuts amicably—what time Clarence Cuffy sallied forth from Mr. Manders' house to distinguish himself as a warrior, as commanded by his guide, philosopher, and friend.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Cross!

DR. CHISHOLM, the Head of Rookwood, glanced from a window in the School House, and grunted—if a headmaster and a Doctor of Divinity could be supposed to grunt. At all events, he uttered a sound that was suspiciously like a grunt as he surveyed the weather.

It was still snowing. Roofs and walls and trees were clad in white. The quadrangle was a sheet of white, thick and soft, the gleaming surface only broken by footprints on the paths. In the distance, among the old beeches, a number of fellows were snowballing. Since the breaking of a window on a recent occasion, snowbal-

IN NEXT TUESDAY'S ISSUE:—

"THE HERO OF THE HOUR!"

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

Another Grand Story of the Chums of Rookwood.

ling near the houses had been forbidden. Some of the Rookwooders seemed to be enjoying the snow, but Dr. Chisholm had reached an age when a heavy snowfall no longer gave him any cause for satisfaction. He did not like it at all; and he was a somewhat testy gentleman, liable to be sharp in temper when things happened that he did not like.

And he had to go out.

"Look out!"

"Cave!"

It was a yell in the corridor as the Head was spotted. There was a scamper of escaping juniors.

Dr. Chisholm frowned.

Leapfrog in the corridor was one of the many youthful relaxations that were against the rules.

"Lovell!" thundered the Head.

"Oh!"

"Come here!"

Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth reluctantly came there! His comrades, Raby and Newcome, had fortunately dodged round corners, and Mornington and Rawson and Flynn had scaped up the staircase. Lovell was caught.

The Head fixed a stern eye upon him.

"What were you doing, Lovell?"

"D-d-doing, sir?" stammered Lovell.

"Yes. Answer me!"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"Were you playing leapfrog in the corridors?" thundered the Head.

Lovell quaked.

"Ye-es, sir!"

"You will take two hundred lines of Virgil."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I shall speak to your Form master!"

The Head waved a majestic hand, and Arthur Edward Lovell bolted. Dr. Chisholm continued his progress, and dropped in at Mr. Dalton's study on his way. The master of the Fourth rose respectfully to his feet as the august presence dawned upon him.

"Mr. Dalton! I have given Lovell of your Form two hundred lines of Virgil for playing leapfrog in the corridors!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"Very well, sir!" said Mr. Dalton.

"You will see that this imposition is duly handed in!"

"Oh, quite so!"

"I do not approve of this—this horse-play—I may say hooliganism—in the House, Mr. Dalton!"

The Head would not have said "hooliganism" if it had not been snowing. There was no logical connection, certainly, between a snowfall and leapfrog in the corridors. But in his present humour the Head was regardless of logic. He was annoyed, and when the Head of Rookwood was annoyed, he had, like other great men in authority, a way of passing the annoyance on.

"Certainly not, sir!" assented Mr. Dalton.

The Head paused. It was still snowing; but, really, there was no more that he could say to Mr. Dalton.

"Very good," he said at last, and stalked jauntily from the Fourth Form master's study.

Mr. Dalton breathed a little more freely when he was gone. He respected the Head. He had a well-paid and agreeable post at Rookwood; he liked the boys, and they liked him; but sometimes he found circumstances a little trying.

Dr. Chisholm, having reduced the Fourth Form master to a very serious frame of mind, sallied forth, like Alexander, in search of fresh worlds to conquer.

He progressed the length of the corridor and paused in the doorway and glanced out. He paused in the porch, and glanced again. But it was still snowing. With a frowning brow, Dr. Chisholm descended the steps of the School House.

Whiz!

Crash!

"Oh!"

A huge, hard snowball smashed on the majestic nose of the Head of Rookwood, and he staggered under the shock, and sat down on the steps.

And Clarence Cuffy fled wildly through falling snowflakes, greatly excited with his success, and feeling greatly pleased that he had succeeded so well in carrying out the instructions of his guide, philosopher, and friend, Tommy Dodd.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Awful!

OH! Dr. Chisholm sat and spluttered.

"Oh! Oh dear! Oh!"

It was greatly to the doctor's credit that he said only "Oh dear!" Many old gentlemen, in similar circumstances, would have said something much more expressive.

"Oh! Ah! Oh dear! Upon my word! Groooh!"

The doctor sat in snow on the step, with snow smothering his august face and trickling over his chin. He was more astounded than hurt. Indeed, for some moments he did not realise what had happened. That anyone would or could hurl a snowball at him was too amazing to be believed, till conviction forced itself upon his mind. He had been snowballed—he, the Head of Rookwood School, had been fairly bowled over by a well-aimed snowball—he, Dr. Chisholm, was actually sitting on a snowy, slippery step, where he had been landed by the shock. It was incredible, but true!

The doctor staggered up, and his foot slipping in the snow, sat down again. A junior came scudding through the snowflakes and jumped to his rescue. It was Arthur Edward Lovell. He gripped the doctor's arm and helped him to his feet. Dr. Chisholm stood unsteadily.

He glared at Lovell.

"It was you—"

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Lovell.

"You hurled that snowball?"

"Oh! No, no! Certainly not!" gasped Lovell. "I—I saw you fall, sir, and ran to help you."

Dr. Chisholm breathed hard.

"We shall see!" he gasped.

Tubby Muffin ran officiously out of the house, picked up the doctor's hat and restored it to him. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, came hurriedly out, and offered the doctor his arm. Plump and portly Mr. Greely was quite concerned. He had heard the Head's wild spluttering, and looked out of his study window, and had rushed immediately to the rescue.

"Pray take my arm, sir!" he exclaimed. "Lean on me, Dr. Chisholm! Your foot slipped, I suppose, sir?"

Dr. Chisholm leaned on his arm.

"My foot did not slip!" he snapped.

"But—but you fell, sir."

"I was struck down!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Struck down by a missile, sir!" snorted the Head. "A snowball was hurled at me by some boy in the quadrangle, and I was struck down!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Greely, quite aghast.

He helped the Head up the steps, and in the hall Dr. Chisholm rubbed his face with his handkerchief. His face was quite white with concentrated anger.

A number of fellows gathered round, and several masters arrived on the spot. The news of this unprecedented happening was spreading through Rookwood like wildfire. Fellows looked at one another in consternation; even Putty of the Fourth did not, for the moment, see anything humorous in the occurrence. For it was the "sack" for somebody; that much was certain.

"An accident, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, hurrying up, as the doctor wiped the snow from his face.

"No, sir!" said the Head. "An assault!"

"Is it possible?"

"Some boy hurled a snowball at me—"

"Upon my word!"

"You saw the culprit, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Mooney of the Shell.

"I did not observe him," said the Head. "I think he was in hiding behind the tree at a short distance from the door."

"But—but surely it was an accident, sir!" said Mr. Dalton anxiously. "No boy in his senses could deliberately

snowball you, Dr. Chisholm. The snowball must have been aimed at someone else. It must have struck you by accident!"

The Head's eyes gleamed at Mr. Dalton.

"I repeat that it was no accident, Mr. Dalton! The missile was deliberately aimed at me and struck me full in the face. The boy must have been in hiding behind the tree, or I should have seen him, and I did not see him. I shall, of course, expel the young ruffian from the school."

"Of course, sir!" said Mr. Greely. "If I might make a suggestion, sir, I should suggest administering a severe flogging before sending him forth in disgrace from Rookwood."

Dr. Chisholm glanced almost graciously at Mr. Greely.

"Quite so!" he said.

"But if the boy was not seen—"

said Mr. Dalton.

"He must be discovered, and at once," said the Head. "Lovell!"

Arthur Edward Lovell came unwillingly forward. He was looking rather scared. Certainly he had not hurled the snowball, but he felt like Daniel going into the lions' den as he came forward to face the steely eyes of his headmaster.

"Lovell! You were close at hand!"

"I—I saw you fall, sir!" stammered Lovell, wishing that he had not, in the kindness of his heart, sprinted so promptly to his headmaster's assistance.

"Did you throw the snowball?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"If not, you must have seen who threw it."

Silence.

"I cannot believe that Lovell—" began Mr. Dalton.

The Head signed to him sharply to be silent, and Mr. Dalton, with a slightly flushed face, held his peace.

"Lovell!" The Head fixed his eyes upon the scared junior. "You were certainly close at hand. If you did not throw the snowball yourself, you undoubtedly saw the person who threw it. Who was it?"

Arthur Edward Lovell wriggled uncomfortably.

"I—I didn't see his face, sir!" he gasped.

"But you saw him?"

"I—I—I saw somebody in cover behind the tree with a snowball, sir!" stammered Lovell. "I—I was going to give him jip—"

"What!"

"I—I mean I was going to bung a snowball at him, sir, when—when you came out!" stammered Lovell. "Then I—"

"Then you saw him hurl the snowball at me?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Very good! His name!" The Head's voice deepened. "You did not see his face, but you know who it was!"

"I—I shouldn't like to—to swear to him, without having seen his face, sir!" said the hapless Lovell.

Thunder gathered on the Head's brow.

"His name!" he rapped out.

The fellows standing round were looking rather scared now. Dr. Chisholm was in a deadly "wax," they could see that; all the more deadly because his anger was cold and concentrated. It was up to Lovell, according to the Lower School code, not to give the offender away. But to refuse to answer the angry headmaster required a stronger nerve than most Rookwood fellows possessed.

"May I make a suggestion, sir?" said Mr. Dalton, breaking the terrifying silence.

"If you know the name of the

culprit, Mr. Dalton, you may state it!" snapped the Head.

"Very few of the boys are out of the House now, sir. Those who are out of doors might be questioned."

The Head fixed his eyes on Lovell again. Perhaps the terrified expression on Lovell's face disarmed him a little. Perhaps he, too, realised that this scene was hardly consistent with his dignity.

"Very good, Mr. Dalton!" he said. "As you make the suggestion, I will leave it to you to act upon it. Kindly bring the offender, when found, to my study."

And the Head strolled away—to telephone to the vicar at Coombe that he could not, after all, keep his appointment. After the shock he had received, he did not feel equal to it; and, moreover, he was anxious to lose no time in dealing with the temerarious youth who had snowballed him.

There was a buzz as the Head disappeared.

"Somebody's asked for the sack!" said Mornington.

"And he will jolly well get what he asked for, and serve him jolly well right!" remarked Townsend.

"Was it you, Lovell?" grinned Péele.

"No, it wasn't!" snapped Lovell.

"Who was it?" asked Gower.

"Find out!"

Mr. Dalton's deep voice was heard.

"All Lower boys will go to their Form-rooms at once! No one is to leave the House. Bulkeley, perhaps you will kindly send in the boys who are now in the quadrangle."

"Certainly, sir!"

The investigation was beginning.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

MR. DALTON lost no time. It was clear, since Lovell's statement, that the attack on the Head had been a deliberate one, not an accidental shot by some careless marksman. Such a flagrant breach of discipline was deserving of condign punishment, in the opinion of all Rookwood, masters and boys included, Mr. Dalton hoped fervently that the offender was not a member of his Form; but, in any case, he intended to do his best to discover him and bring him to justice.

A dozen scared-looking fellows, who had been snowballing among the beeches, were rounded up by Bulkeley of the Sixth, and marched into the School House. There were both Classicals and Moderns in the crowd. They were questioned at once, but they were cleared by one another's evidence. Not one of them had been near the House when the attack was made on the Head. They had not even seen the unprecedented occurrence. They were sent into their Form-rooms, and then Mr. Dalton and the prefects called the roll of the Forms. Upon which it transpired that Jimmy Silver of the Fourth was out of the School House—the only Classical junior missing.

"Silver!" repeated Mr. Dalton, when Bulkeley of the Sixth reported that Jimmy was not with the Fourth.

"Silver, sir," said Bulkeley. "I have asked his friends, and they say he went over to Mr. Manders' house to speak to Dodd some little time ago."

"He must be brought here at once."

"I will fetch him, sir!"

"Pray do so!"

Mr. Dalton waited, with a corrugated brow, for Jimmy Silver to arrive. It was scarcely credible that the captain of the Fourth had snowballed the Head; but it was certain that it was Jimmy

unless a Modern fellow had been the offender. Arthur Edward Lovell's reluctance to name the culprit seemed to take on a new significance now—Jimmy Silver was his best chum.

Jimmy Silver arrived in a few minutes with Bulkeley, in a state of wonder.

The prefect had told him nothing, only that his Form master wanted him in the School House. Jimmy had left the baked chestnuts unfinished in Tommy Dodd's study, and hurried back with Bulkeley, feeling rather uneasy. He did not know what had happened, but he felt that there was trouble in the air.

Bulkeley marched him into Mr. Dalton's study.

"Silver"—the Fourth Form master fixed a troubled glance on Jimmy—"an attack has been made on the headmaster."

"Indeed, sir!"
"As Dr. Chisholm was leaving the School House some boy, concealed by the tree, hurled a snowball at him—"

"What?"
Jimmy Silver fairly jumped.
"A—a—a snowball at Dr. Chisholm?" he babbled.

"Yes. I see you know something of the occurrence, Silver."

"I—I—I—"
"Was it you, Silver?"
"I, sir?" Jimmy jumped again. "No, sir! I'm not ass enough, I hope, to hiff a snowball at my headmaster."

"You know who it was?"

Jimmy collected himself. Certainly he had a very strong suspicion, after the little scene he had witnessed in Tommy Dodd's study. It seemed incredible that even Clarence Cuffy, the champion duffer of Rookwood, could be so champion a duffer as this. Tommy Dodd,

of course, had not meant anything of the kind. But if the Head had been the first person to emerge from the School House after Cuffy arrived on the spot it would be like Cuffy to carry out his instructions—very like Cuffy!

Still, Jimmy could not say that he knew who the culprit was. He suspected, but assuredly he did not know.

"Answer me, Silver!" said Mr. Dalton sharply.

"I—I don't know, sir," faltered Jimmy.

"Have you been in the Modern House, Silver?"

"Yes, sir. I've been in Dodd's study ever since I went over, twenty minutes ago, and I saw nothing of it, of course. I've only just learned from you that it happened."

"It is quite clear, nevertheless, that you know something of the occurrence, Silver."

Jimmy was silent.
"I—I might suspect somebody, sir," he stammered at last.

"Was it Lovell?"
Another jump from Jimmy.
"Lovell! Oh, no, sir!"
"You appear to know who it was not, at all events," said Mr. Dalton dryly. "Bulkeley, will you kindly bring Lovell here?"

Arthur Edward was brought to the Form master's study. He exchanged a glum look with Jimmy as he came in.

"Lovell, you saw the attack on the Head. Was it Silver who threw the snowball at Dr. Chisholm?"

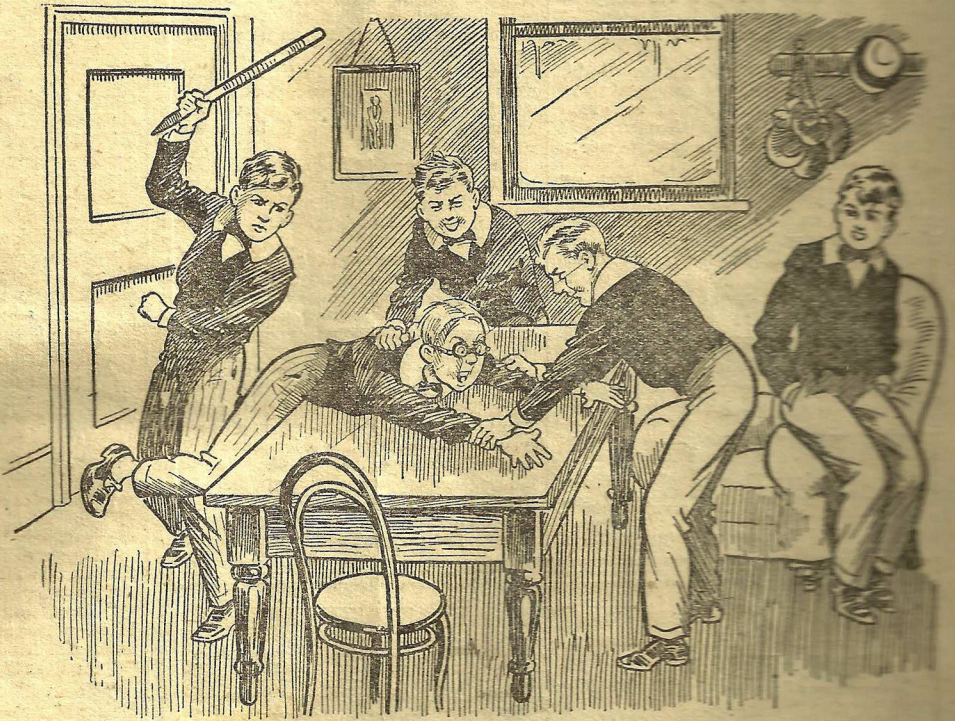
"Jimmy?" said Lovell in astonishment. "Oh, no, sir! Certainly not! It wasn't a Classical chap at all."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. He looked relieved, and so did Bulkeley of the Sixth. Neither of them wanted an expulsion on the Classical side.

Lovell. "Perhaps he wants to be sent home. He just laid in wait for the Head and let him have it slap bang on the bris! I spotted him, and thought he was in ambush for a Classical chap. Never dreamed he was waiting for the Head. When he let the Head have it, you could have knocked me down with a coke-hammer!"

"He wasn't waiting for the Head!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "Just waiting for anyone to come out, that was all. Any old thing would have done! It happened to be the Head. What on earth will Dodd do?"

"Dodd!" repeated Lovell.
Jimmy Silver explained how Tommy Dodd had laid his stern commands upon the meek and mild Cuffy, backed up by the cricket-stump. Lovell stared at him blankly, and then burst into a snarl.



FORCING HIS ARGUMENT HOME! Cuffy was flung across the table, and Tommy Dodd got to work with a cricket stump. Whack! Whack! "Now," said Tommy. "You're a born idiot, and this is the only way to make you understand." Whack! "You've got to give up being a fool, and a howling duffer. See?" Whack! (See Chapter 1.)

"You are sure it was a Modern boy, Lovell?"

Lovell wriggled uncomfortably.
"Well, sir, his cap—"

"Quite so. As you did not see his face I cannot ask you to name him," said Mr. Dalton, much to Lovell's relief, and confirming that junior's opinion that Dicky Dalton was a brick. "You may go now. I must see Mr. Manders about this."

The two juniors left the study, and Mr. Dalton donned hat and coat to visit Mr. Manders' house. In the corridor, Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell looked at one another.

"You saw the born idiot do it!" breathed Jimmy.

Lovell nodded.
"That fatted—that chump—that dummy—"

"Well, I didn't see his face," said Lovell. "But, of course, I know who it was. Nobody else at Rookwood has such big ears and such spindle shanks."

"That crass idiot, Cuffy—"
"Of course. He must be mad," said

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Dalton, passing on his way to the door, gave the juniors a stern glance. It was not a time for laughter, as Mr. Dalton's opinion. But Arthur Edward simply couldn't help it. He became quite crimson with efforts to suppress his merriment till Mr. Dalton was gone, and then he burst out again.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

And when the circumstances were related in the Fourth Form passage that passage rang with hilarity from end to end. It was a serious matter—an awfully serious matter—but the juniors fairly howled over Cuffy's latest.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
A Surprise for Mr. Manders!

CLARENCE CUFFY came rather breathlessly into Tommy Dodd's study on the Modern side. The three Tommies had finished the baked chestnuts, and were discussing what was to be done with the half-holiday, not knowing as yet what an

exciting half-holiday it was going to be. They turned grinning glances on Cuffy as he came in.

"Done it?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, my dear Thomas."

"Oh, good!" said Tommy heartily.

"You're improving, Cuffy."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, my dear Thomas," said Cuffy meekly. "My dear father always told me to follow your advice, as you know so much more about school customs than I. I waited behind the tree near the School House door with a very large snowball—"

"Good for ye!" said Tommy Doyle.

"And biffed it at the first chap who came out?" asked Cook.

"Yes, with all the force of my arm," said Cuffy. "It smashed right on his nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clarence Cuffy blinked dubiously at the three Tommies.

"You think I have done right?" he asked.

"Quite sure of it," said Tommy Dodd, laughing. "Did you get away safely?"

"Yes. I am sure I was not seen even. However, to make sure, I dodged round the House and came in by the back door," said Cuffy.

"My hat! No need for all that," said Tommy.

"Well, I was afraid that the Head might be angry."

"What rot! Think the Head takes any notice of a chap biffing a snowball on a fellow's boko?" said Tommy Dodd derisively.

"But it was the Head."

"What?"

"The Head!"

The three Tommies gazed at Clarence Cuffy as if his mild glance hypnotised them.

"The Head!" said Tommy Dodd faintly.

"Yes, my dear Thomas. He was the first person to leave the School House after I arrived there."

"The Head!" groaned Tommy Cook.

Clarence looked disturbed.

"I am sure, my dear Thomas, that I carried out your instructions with absolute exactitude," he said. "Did you not say that I was to hurl a snowball at the face of the first person who came out of the School House?"

"You—you—you—you— shrieking idiot!" raved Tommy Dodd. "I meant the first fellow—any Lower School fellow."

"Oh dear! Why did you not say so, my dear Thomas?" exclaimed Cuffy, in distress.

"You—you— Did you think I meant the Head?" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"I thought you meant what you said, my dear Thomas. I was quite unaware that you made any distinction of persons. I am quite, quite sure that you did not say so."

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle sat overwhelmed with dismay. Tommy Dodd rose to his feet, with a deadly look on his face.

He did not speak further. Words were wasted on Clarence Cuffy. Instead of words, which were futile, Tommy Dodd proceeded to actions, which were effective.

He fell upon Clarence Cuffy and smote him hip and thigh.

Bang! Punch! Biff! Bang!

"Oh dear! Yaroooh! Oh, my dear Thomas! Yooop!"

Cuffy, grieved and astonished, fled from the study. Tommy Dodd let out a boot behind him, and Clarence received it as a parting gift, and disappeared into the passage on all-fours. He reposed there about the millionth part of a second, then he was fleeing down the stairs for his life.

In Tommy Dodd's study, the three Tommies gazed at one another in speechless dismay. Clarence Cuffy reached the lower hall of Mr. Manders' House, crimson and breathless. He was hurt, and he was astonished and bewildered. Having carried out so exactly the instructions of his dear rela-

tive Thomas, he had expected, at least, a few words of commendation. Instead of which, he had been smitten right and left and booted out of the study. He realised dismally that there was no understanding Thomas, he was so unreasonable. Exact obedience to his instructions, evidently, failed to please Thomas.

Clarence stopped to take breath at the foot of the staircase near the door of Mr. Manders' study. Mr. Manders' door was partly open, and his sharp, acid voice could be heard, a little louder than usual.

"Nonsense!"

"My dear sir—" This was Mr. Dalton's quiet voice.

"I repeat—nonsense!" said the Modern master angrily. "I refuse to believe for one moment that a boy belonging to my House was guilty of such outrageous conduct."

"Lovell states—"

"I care nothing for what Lovell states. Lovell is a Classical boy in your Form, Mr. Dalton. I regard it as unmanly of him to accuse another boy!"

"Lovell has accused no one, sir!" said Mr. Dalton sharply. "He saw the occurrence, but has named no one. He simply states that he knew the boy to be a Modern, as he was wearing a Modern cap."

Mr. Manders sniffed angrily.

"Stuff and nonsense! Possibly a Classical boy may have put on a Modern cap, in order to bring discredit upon my House. I admit the possibility."

"I think it is my turn to say 'Nonsense!' now, sir," said Mr. Dalton.

"You may say what you like! I decline to admit for one moment that any boy in my House would be guilty of an assault upon the headmaster. Such an action, sir, is much more in accordance with Classical ways. No doubt you will find the boy in your own Form, and in your own House—probably Silver or Mornington."

"If you decline to make an investigation in this House, Mr. Manders, I—"

"I most assuredly decline!"

"Very well; I must acquaint the Head with your decision, and leave the matter in his hands."

"Oh dear!" murmured Cuffy.

"You will do as you think best, Mr. Dalton," said the Modern master angrily. "I am convinced that the delinquent was no Modern boy. Boys in this House, Mr. Dalton, do not hurl snowballs at their headmaster. On the Classical side matters are, I believe, different."

"It is useless to bandy words, Mr. Manders. I think—"

"Nonsense!"

Tap!

Clarence Cuffy looked into the study. "Pray excuse my interrupting you, sir," he said mildly. "But I think I ought to tell you—"

"You know something of this occurrence, Cuffy?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Can you name the culprit?" demanded Mr. Manders.

"Yes, sir!"

"Were you a witness to what happened?"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Manders shot a triumphant glare at Mr. Dalton. He had not the slightest doubt that Cuffy was going to name a Classical. Certainly it was unlikely that a Modern would give away a Modern fellow; and that Cuffy himself was the culprit, naturally, never crossed Mr. Manders' mind.

"Very good!" said Mr. Manders. "I presume, Mr. Dalton, that the word of

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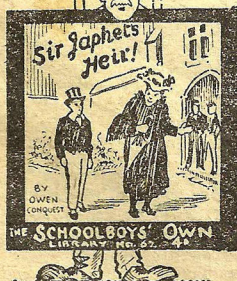
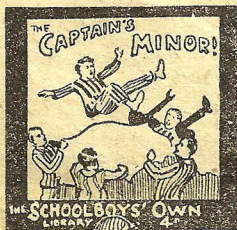
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Cuffy is of equal value with the word of Lovell, a Classical boy?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Dalton. "Of more value, in my opinion!" said Mr. Manders. "I regard Lovell's statement as utterly unfounded—as, in fact, a base insinuation. I rely completely upon Cuffy's word, and I will maintain before the Head that his evidence is beyond question. Cuffy, who was it?"

"Me, sir!"
"Eh?"
"I mean, it was I, sir!" amended Cuffy. "In the haste of the moment, sir, I inadvertently spoke ungrammatically!"

"Wha—a at!"
Mr. Manders stared at Cuffy. He really looked as if he could have bitten Clarence at that moment. Mr. Dalton tried hard not to smile, and he avoided catching Mr. Manders' eye.

"I am sorry, sir," pursued the innocent Cuffy. "It appears that I have unintentionally committed a serious infraction of the rules. I fear that I acted after inadequate reflection in neglecting to follow the advice, often impressed upon me by my dear grandfather, to think twice, if not thrice, before acting once. Nevertheless—Whoop!"

Smack!
Mr. Manders did not stop to pick up his cane. He hurled himself at Clarence Cuffy and smote.

"I—I—I had better take Cuffy to the Head!" gasped Mr. Dalton.

He caught the hapless youth by the shoulder, and whisked him out of the study, rescuing him from the exasperated Mr. Manders. From the window above, the three Tommies saw Clarence marched away through the snowflakes, with Mr. Dalton's hand on his shoulder. Tommy Dodd groaned deeply.

"It's up to me!" he mumbled.
"Sure, and it is!" assented Tommy Doyle.

"Put some exercise-books in your bags, old man!" said Tommy Cook sympathetically.

And having taken that harmless and necessary precaution, Tommy Dodd sprinted across to the School House.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Also for Tommy Dodd!

DR. CHISHOLM took up his birch. Clarence Cuffy stood before him, with downcast face, Mr. Dalton standing a little farther back. The Fourth Form master had explained, and Tupper had been sent hurriedly to summon the sergeant. The expression on the Head's face was unnerving.

"You confess, Cuffy?" His voice was deep.
"Yes, sir!" quavered Cuffy.

"You deliberately hurled that snowball at me?"

"Yes, sir!"
"Enough! I shall flog you, Cuffy—"
"Ow!"
"And you will be immediately sent away from the school!"

"Oh dear!"
"Take him up, sergeant!"
There was a knock at the Head's door, and Tommy Dodd, his face red with haste, burst in without waiting to be bidden. Dr. Chisholm gave him a basilisk look.

"Dodd! How dare you—"
"Excuse me, sir!" panted Tommy Dodd. "I—I had to come!"

"Nonsense!"
"I—I can explain, sir!"
"There is nothing to explain, Dodd; the facts are known now. Cuffy has confessed."

"Yes, sir; but—but it wasn't as you think, sir!" stammered Tommy Dodd. "Cuffy's only a silly ass, sir, and—"

"What?"
"Only a burbling jabberwock, sir!" stuttered Dodd incoherently.

"A—a—a what?"
"A fatheaded handersnatch, I mean, sir! That is, I—I mean—it—it was all my fault, sir!"

"What! Were you a party to this outrage?" thundered the Head.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped the unhappy Tommy, with a jump. "I—I never dreamed that Cuffy would be such an idiot—such a horn jackass, sir!"

"My dear Thomas," said Cuffy reproachfully, "is it not somewhat unfeeling, indeed, reprehensible, to apply such epithets to me, when I only carried out your instructions with rigid exactitude!"

"Dodd's instructions!" exclaimed the Head. "Bless my soul! This boy Cuffy is in your Form, Mr. Dalton. He is, I think, simple!"

"Very simple, sir," said Mr. Dalton. "If it should prove that he has only been the catspaw of a more designing boy—" The Head fixed a terrifying look on Tommy Dodd. "Dodd! You instructed Cuffy—"

"Yes, sir; no, sir—that is—" stammered Tommy.

"Explain yourself at once."
It was not easy for Tommy Dodd to explain, with the Head's steely eyes penetrating him almost like a pair of gimlets. But in fragments, gasping and incoherent, he got the story out.

"Of course, I never meant him to hiff a snowball at a master, especially the Head!" said Tommy Dodd, with almost tearful earnestness. "When he told me what he'd done, sir, I jolly well punched him—"

"My dear Thomas—"
"Silence, Cuffy!" exclaimed the

Head. "Do you consider it possible, Mr. Dalton, that this boy Cuffy is so great a fool as he would appear from this?"

Mr. Dalton coughed.
"Certainly he is not very bright, sir," he answered. "I have no doubt that the matter is as Dodd states."

"I shall not flog you, Cuffy, and you will not be sent away from Rookwood."

"Thank you, sir!" said Cuffy meekly. "I will leave Cuffy to you, Mr. Dalton. No doubt you will cane him severely."

"Certainly."
"As for you, Dodd, I accept your explanation, and I am glad to learn that the outrageous assault committed upon me was not intentional. You are not wholly responsible for Cuffy's cross folly, but you are very considerably to blame. I shall flog you."

The Head picked up his birch again.
"Take him up, sergeant!"

Jimmy Silver & Co., and most of the Lower School of Rookwood, agreed that Tommy Dodd had played up like a little man. They sympathised with him deeply when he crawled away from the Head's study. Tommy Dodd spent most of the half holiday groaning in his study. It was not till supper that he began to look like his old cheery self; that Cook and Doyle were able to tempt him out of his melancholy with some specially good things they had brought in from the tuck-shop. While the three Tommies were at supper, Clarence Cuffy looked in.

"My dear Thomas—"

Tommy Dodd reached for a cushion. "Your advice this afternoon, Thomas, turned out somewhat unfortunately," said Cuffy. "Nevertheless, although you have considerably shaken my faith in your judgment, I am prepared to listen to any further counsel you wish to give me. If there is anything more I can do, I—"

Crash!
The cushion whizzed, and Clarence Cuffy flew backwards through the doorway. There was a crash as he landed in the passage.

Tommy Dodd kicked the study door shut.

Clarence did not come back. He was a mild and forgiving youth; but the limit was reached. He resolved never, never to ask any advice from dear Thomas. And dear Thomas was still more firmly resolved never, never to give him any. He was done with bucking up Cuffy.

THE END.

(There will be another splendid long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, next week, entitled: "The Hero of The Hour!")



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