

**THAT ASS GUNNER!** It's just like Peter Cuthbert Gunner to imagine he can start a rebellion entirely on his own. But he learns to his cost that it doesn't pay to play the silly goat!

# GUNNER PLAYS the GOAT!

by  
**OWEN CONQUEST**

A ROLLICKING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Gunner Is not Satisfied!

"I'M not satisfied!" Gunner of the Fourth made that statement.

He made it seriously, indeed solemnly, as if it mattered very much indeed.

That was where Jimmy Silver & Co. did not agree with him. They did not see that it mattered at all.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were busy in the end study, in the quarters of the Classical Fourth, when Gunner's burly form loomed up in the doorway.

Recently there had been trouble in Rookwood School. The Classical Fourth had been in rebellion. It was over—and all was well that ended well. But much time had been wasted. Lessons had been very seriously neglected.

Probably the juniors would not have worried very much about that. Many of them would have been willing to cut classes for the whole term, and would have borne the loss with great fortitude. Mr. Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth, took a different view. His idea was to make up for lost time.

Mr. Dalton being an extremely popular master, the Classical Fourth agreed to give him his head, as Arthur Edward Lovell expressed it—all the more willingly because Mr. Dalton had to be given his head, anyway. "Dicky" Dalton was a good-natured and kind-hearted young gentleman; but he most assuredly was not a young gentleman to be argued with.

Hence the unusual care and attention that Jimmy Silver, Raby, Newcome, and Lovell were giving to their work that evening in the end study.

Then Peter Cuthbert Gunner blew in. Lovell waved an impatient hand at him; Raby pointed with his pen to the door. Jimmy Silver and Newcome did not even look up. They had no time for Gunner.

"I'm not satisfied! As you're captain of the Fourth, Silver, I thought I'd speak to you before taking action," explained Gunner.

Jimmy Silver looked up at that in some exasperation. Gunner was a big and burly fellow, lofty in his ways, but very good-natured. His chief weakness was that Nature had rather overlooked him in the matter of brains. He had an excellent opinion of himself; but upon what he founded it was a secret known only to Gunner. Nobody else had ever been able to see anything to admire in Peter

Cuthbert. Jimmy rather liked him, in a way, but he did not enjoy his society or his conversation. As Putty of the Fourth put it, Peter very soon began to pall.

"Can't you see we're busy, Gunner?" said Jimmy Silver, as patiently as he could. "Have you done your prep?"

"No!"

"Go and do it, then!"

"I'm not doing any!" explained Gunner.

"Dicky will scalp you to-morrow!"

"That's what I've come here to talk about," said Gunner. "I'm not satisfied! We've had a rebellion in the Classical Fourth—"

"That's ancient history now."

"We've put the Head in his place," said Gunner.

"Not exactly," said Jimmy, with a smile. "We've had trouble with the Head; and, as a matter of fact, we've been jolly lucky to come through as well as we have. What we've got to do now is to play up and show that we didn't kick over the traces simply to dodge classes."

"Didn't we?" asked Gunner.

"No, you ass!"

"The fact remains," continued Gunner, unheeding, "that we did cut classes and prep, and had a jolly good time. As we came out winners, we ought to have something to show for it. We've proved to the Head that the Fourth Form won't stand any rot. Well, Dr. Chisholm will think twice before he rouses us again!"

"Fathead!"

"If he does, we'll beat him again. See?"

"Good-bye, Gunner!"

"Mind, I'm no slacker. I'm willing to do some prep. I rather like old Dalton. If he's keen on it, I'll do some prep for him. My idea is to cut it down to three lines."

"Are you wound up?" asked Newcome.

"Then there's third hour," said Gunner. "First and second hours are bad enough. I think third hour ought



to be cut out, giving us a bit of extra holiday every day."

"Ask Dicky Dalton!" grinned Raby.

"We'll agree if he does!"

"We can make him."

"Fathead!"

"What we've done once we can do again!" explained Gunner. "We've proved that we can hold our own. I'm prepared for another barring-out—any number of 'em!"

Jimmy Silver fixed his eyes on Gunner.

"Now, look here, you dummy!" said Jimmy. "I'll try to be patient with you, because you're an ass and can't help it. We backed up against the Head because we were in the right. Even so, I'm not feeling at all sure that the Rookwood rebellion was the right thing. Anyway, it's over now. It's ended well for all parties. The Head thinks he's put us in our place, and we think we've put him in his place, and everybody's satisfied. Now we've got to pile in and show that we're not slackers. Kicking up a shindy for the sake of slacking is quite a different matter. See? We should get it in the neck, and we should deserve it. Understand?"

"Rot!" said Gunner.

The Fistical Four rose to their feet. They were fed-up with Gunner.

Four pairs of hands were laid out Peter Cuthbert.

Almost before he knew what was happening to him, Peter Cuthbert Gunner was lifted and swung through the doorway of the end study.

Bump!

Gunner roared as he landed.

"Now run off!" said Jimmy Silver.

Gunner did not run off.

He leaped to his feet and charged back into the end study like a bull.

Gunner was a heavy and hefty fellow, and the four juniors in the doorway staggered back under his charge.

But it was only for a moment. Then they rallied and collared Gunner again.

"Carry him home!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo, you rotters!" roared Gunner, struggling wildly in the grasp of the Fistical Four.

"This way!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked down the passage with Gunner. Gunner's arms and legs thrashed the air wildly as they went. Lovell kicked open the door of Study No. 7, which belonged to Gunner and Dickinson minor.

The latter was in the study at prep. He looked up in astonishment as Gunner came home in this remarkable manner.

"Leggo!" howled Gunner. "I'll smash you! I'll lick you all round! I'll—I'll— Yoocoooooooooop!"

Bump! Crash!

Gunner was landed on the carpet. The armchair was tilted over him, and Lovell grabbed up the hearthrug and slammed it over his head. Then the Fistical Four retired, leaving Peter Cuthbert Gunner to sort himself out at his leisure.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Gunner Tries it on!

**M**ANY of the Classical Fourth of Rookwood wore smiles as they turned up in the Form-room the following morning.

Many smiling glances were turned on Gunner.

All the Fourth knew that Gunner was going to give trouble. Some kind fellows had argued with him, trying to point out to him the error of his ways. But Gunner was impervious to argument. It was seldom that Gunner got an idea into his head. But when he had got one there it stuck.

Gunner's opinion was that, after a successful rebellion, the Classical Fourth ought to have something to show for it. It had always been his opinion that the study of the classics was "rot." Therefore, it seemed to Gunner as clear as the sun at noon-day that as an outcome of the successful rebellion there ought to be more freedom for the Fourth, more liberty, and less work—much less. Gunner was prepared to rebel once more to gain his point. Nobody else in the Fourth was willing, but that did not matter to Gunner.

How a fellow could be such an ass as Gunner was a mystery in the Classical Fourth. But there it was.

That morning Gunner was going to stand up for his rights, as he described it. Mr. Dalton was to be shown that he could not handle a Form that had carried through a successful revolt—that, at all events, he could not handle Gunner.

Gunner felt himself the centre of attention, and he carried his head a little higher than usual. He fairly swaggered into the Form-room. He brought his books down on his desk with a slam that rang through the room like a gunshot.

Mr. Dalton gave him a glance, but made no remark. Gunner grinned at the juniors. He was beginning.

A little later Gunner let the lid of his desk fall with a terrific bang. Mr. Dalton jumped.

"Gunner!" he rapped out.

"Hallo!" said Gunner.

There was a suppressed chuckle among the juniors. They wondered how Richard Dalton would like being answered in that manner by a Fourth-Former.

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Mr. Dalton's look indicated that he did not like it at all.

"What did you say, Gunner?" he exclaimed.

"Hallo!" repeated Gunner.

"What do you mean by that, Gunner?"

"Just what I say, sir!" answered Gunner affably.

"You will take fifty lines for impertinence, Gunner!"

"Shall I, sir?"

"Another word, and I shall cane you!"

Gunner eyed him, and opened his mouth, but on second thoughts he did not utter another word.

Jimmy Silver & Co. went through their construe with success. Hard work in the study told, and Mr. Dalton was pleased with them; and they were glad to have pleased him. Other fellows were following the example of the Fistical Four. Most of the Fourth realised that, after the recent trouble in the school, it was up to them to be very careful, and to show that they understood that law and order were not mere trifles light as air.

That was where Peter Cuthbert Gunner, in his obtuse self-satisfaction, differed from the rest of the Form. Even slackers like Peele and Gower and Tubby Muffin were on their best behaviour. Gunner was determined to be on his worst.

"Gunner, you will go on where Mornington left off!"

"Sorry, sir!" said Gunner.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton impatiently.

"Can't go on!"

"You cannot go on?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton in a terrifying voice.

"You see, I haven't done any prep," said Gunner.

"And why have you done no preparation, Gunner?"

"Hadh't the time, sir!"

"You had not the time for preparation?" asked the master of the Fourth, almost dazedly.

"No. I was playing passage football last night most of the time!" explained Gunner.

"You are well aware, Gunner, that football in the passages is strictly forbidden!"

"Oh, quite so!" said Gunner. "I believe that's the rule. I'm not taking much notice of rules!"

"Well, upon my word!" said the astonished Form master. "I really begin to believe, Gunner, that you must be ill!"

"What rot!"

"Eh?"

"Bosh!" said Gunner.

The Classical Fourth sat almost petrified. It was really unnerving to listen to Gunner, and to see him rushing upon his doom in this manner.

There was deep silence in the Form-room for some moments. Then Mr. Dalton, with quite an extraordinary expression on his face, picked up his cane.

"Stand out before the class, Gunner!" he said.

"Shan't!"

"D-d-d-did you say 'shan't'?" stutered Mr. Dalton.

"Just that, old man!"

"Gunner, old man—" breathed Dickinson minor, in deep anxiety.

"Shut up!" said Gunner.

"Gunner, you ass—" whispered Jimmy Silver.

"Cheese it, Silver!"

"I command you, Gunner, to stand out before the class!" said Mr. Dalton in a deep voice.

"Rats!"

"Are you in your right senses, Gunner?"

"Oh, come off, Dicky Dalton!" said Gunner derisively. "Once for all, chuck it! We've jolly well beaten the Head once, and we're ready for another barring-out if you're looking for trouble! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Then Mr. Dalton understood. He realised that it was the late rebellion at Rookwood that had got into Gunner's head, as it were, and that accounted for his present amazing line of action.

"I think I understand, Gunner," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "You seem to be a very obtuse and unreflecting boy!"

"Draw it mild!" said Gunner.

"I am compelled to deal with you severely!" said Mr. Dalton.

And with that he dropped a hand on Gunner's shoulder with a grip like that of a vice, and hooked him out before the class. Gunner was big and heavy, and he was rather astonished by the ease with which Richard Dalton hooked him out. He came down on the Form-room floor with a clatter of boots and stood rather unsteadily, hardly knowing what had happened.

"Now hold out your hand, Gunner!" said Mr. Dalton.

"Ow!" gasped Gunner.

"Do you hear me?"

Gunner turned to the staring Fourth. "Back up, you fellows!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "Do as you're told, and don't play the goat, you born idiot!"

"Back up, I tell you!" howled Gunner.

Apparently the rebel expected general support in the lately rebellious Fourth Form.

He did not receive any. What he received was a cut of the cane across his broad shoulders which made him skip and yell.

"Yaroooh!"

"Now will you hold out your hand, Gunner, or shall I take you to the head-master for a flogging?" asked Mr. Dalton quietly.

Almost unconsciously Gunner's hand came out.

Swish!

"Ow!"

"Now go back to your place, Gunner, and kindly behave yourself!" said Mr. Dalton.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner went back to his place, and for the rest of the morning Peter Cuthbert behaved himself.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Gunner Means Business!

**T**HAT'S GUNNY'S fist!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"The silly ass!" growled Jimmy Silver.

Some of the fellows laughed. Some of them frowned as they looked at a paper stuck on the wall of the junior Common-room, written in Peter Cuthbert Gunner's well-known sprawling "fist." Gunner evidently was still "going it." The notice ran:

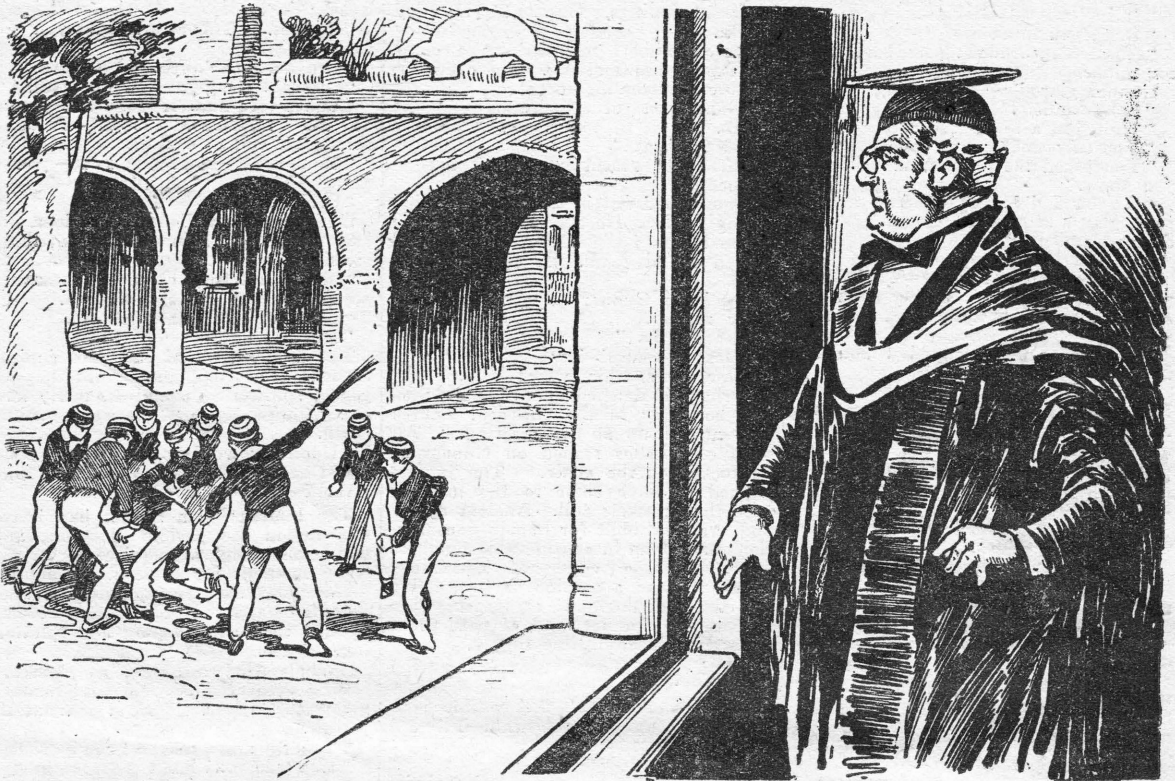
### "ATTENTION!"

"A form meeting will be held at seven precisely in this room to discuss Standing Up for the rites of the Forth.

"The chair will be taken by the undersigned:

"P. C. GUNNER."

Gunner of the Fourth, apparently, could not understand why it was that



**SEEN FROM THE WINDOW!** As Dr. Chisholm watched from the window of his library, Gunner, in the grasp of strong hands, was bent over in a handy position for a flogging. Then Jimmy Silver took the Head's birch and commenced operations on the hapless victim. The Head gazed at the scene in amazed silence. (See Chapter 6.)

he was not backed up in his new campaign. When Jimmy Silver had led the Classical Fourth rebellion the fellows had followed him almost as one man. Gunner was a greater leader than "Uncle James." He was fully conscious of the fact, and often said so. Why, therefore, the fellows did not rise to follow him, was a mystery to P. C. Gunner. Doubtless, he hoped to get that little matter set right by calling a Form meeting. Gunner had no right whatever to call a meeting of the Form, but that was a trifling circumstance, to which Peter Cuthbert paid no regard. Gunner, like the Israelites of old, when there was no King in Israel, did that which was right in his own eyes, and was satisfied.

"The cheeky ass!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Calling a Form meeting, that frabjous ass! Who's Gunner, I'd like to know?"

"Nobody!" remarked Mornington. "Less than nobody!" said Lovell. "He won't get anybody to his fat-headed meeting."

"Why not?" remarked Putty, of the Fourth. "Let's come! It will be entertaining."

"What rot!" grunted Lovell. "Nothing entertaining in hearing Gunner talk cheeky rot!"

"No; but there will be some entertainment in ragging the dear man," said Putty. "Might bring him to his senses. He's going the right way to bag a flogging, if not the sack! He will get off cheaper with a Form ragging."

Lovell grinned. "Good!" he agreed.

And quite a number of the Classical Fourth, having grinned over Gunner's notice, decided to attend the meeting for the harmless and necessary purpose of ragging Peter Cuthbert Gunner.

Meanwhile, Peter Cuthbert was in his study—No. 7 in the Fourth—sitting at

the study table, with a pen in his hand, and a deep frown of thought on his brow. His study-mate, Dickinson minor, glanced at him occasionally, with a suppressed grin. Whenever Gunner happened to look up, however, Dickinson minor was grave—very grave, indeed. Gunner was not to be grinned at in his own study, whatever might happen in other studies. Gunner had a punch that was not to be considered a trifle, and he was always ready to introduce that punch into any argument in the study.

Gunner was covering the sheet of impot paper before him with sprawling writing and original orthography. He was not at work. It was not Latin prose or French trans. It was the speech that Gunner was to deliver at the Form meeting, and Gunner was taking great pains with it.

Gunner's powerful intellect moved slowly, almost reluctantly, and he found the composition of his speech a somewhat laborious matter. But he got on with it. Towards seven o'clock Dickinson minor had got out his books for prep. Then Gunner deigned to bestow a word on Lim.

"Don't begin that!" he said.

"We've got our prep to do, you know," hinted Dickinson.

"I shall want you at the meeting."

"I—I say, Gunny, old man, the fellows won't come, you know," said Dickinson. "Hadn't you better chuck it up? What's the good of playing the goat?"

Gunner stared at him.

"Do you call it playing the goat?" he asked.

"Well, isn't it?" asked Dickinson minor

Gunner rose to his feet and pushed back his cuffs in a businesslike way. Dickinson minor viewed these preparations with some alarm.

"Where will you have it?" inquired Gunner.

"I—I say, old chap—"

"Are you backing me up at the meeting or not?"

"Yes. Of—of course. I—I meant to all along, you know," mumbled the hapless Dickinson. It was not all pleasure to be Gunner's study-mate, and Dickinson minor had to walk warily.

"Oh; that's all right, then!" said Gunner. "Now, if you've done talking rot, young Dickinson, I'll read this to you. It's the speech I'm going to deliver at the meeting. Give me your opinion. I don't want flattery. I want just frank criticism."

"I—I'm sure it's top-hole," said Dickinson, looking at the lengthy composition in dismay. "I—I think I'd rather hear it along with the other fellows at the meeting, Gunner."

"Listen!" said Gunner, unheeding. Dickinson minor suppressed a groan and listened.

"Gentlemen of Rookwood." That's how it begins," said Gunner. "Rather a good beginning, what?"

"Oh, fine!"

"Well, I think it's rather fine myself," said Gunner. "But, mind, I don't want any flattery. I want candid criticism. If you see any faults in this speech, tell me so plainly. See?"

"I—I see."

"Gentlemen of Rookwood," went on Gunner, "after the recent revolt of the Fourth Form, in which the tyranny of the Head was fairly knocked out, I propose that, having vindicated our independence, we refuse to knuckle under any longer to masters or prefects, or even the Head himself! I offer myself as leader, and, though I say it myself, I think a better leader could scarcely be found within the ancient and time-honoured walls of this school. Rather eloquent—what?"

"Is it?" gasped Dickinson.

"Don't you think so?"

"A bit long-winded!" hinted Dickinson minor.

Gunner glared at him.

"Long-winded!"

"Well, just a little."

"You silly ass!"

"You asked me for candid criticism, you know."

"I know I did; but I didn't ask you to display a silly and ignorant jealousy of my eloquence."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So you think it's long-winded, do you?" asked Gunner, laying down his manuscript, and pushing back his cuffs again.

Dickinson minor dodged round the table.

"Nunno; not at all! Oh, no! Fine! Like-like Cicero—only better—much better!"

"Well, I'm glad you can see it, on second thoughts," said Gunner, mollified. "Second thoughts are best, you know, Dickinson."

"I—I know!" gasped Dickinson. He quite realised that.

"I'll get on with it," said Gunner, taking up the paper again. "Listen carefully, and stop me anywhere where you think it could be improved. No flattery, as I said before—only honest criticism."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Dickinson minor.

He did not interrupt Gunner with any more criticism; only with an occasional ejaculation of "Fine!" or "Ripping!" It was the safest way of dealing with Peter Cuthbert.

"There!" said Gunner, when he had finished—it seemed a long time to Dickinson minor. "That will make them sit up and take notice, I think."

"Bound to!" gasped Dickinson. "You—you ought to be in the House of Commons, Gunner."

"They don't often get a speech like this in the House of Commons," said Gunner contemptuously. "Clap-trap, mostly—nothing like this. Now, it's close on seven—let's get going."

Gunner folded his manuscript and put it into his pocket, and led Dickinson minor from the study. Dickinson followed him helplessly.

He was anxious about his prep; but it was no use saying so to Gunner—Gunner was going to be the leader of a rebellion against prep. He did not expect to find a single fellow at the meeting in the Common-room, but to his surprise—though not to Gunner's—the room was crowded. There was nothing surprising in that circumstance to Gunner; it was exactly as it should be, in his opinion.

There was a shout as Gunner of the Fourth came in with his reluctant supporter.

"Here he is! Go it, Gunner!"

And Peter Cuthbert Gunner went it!

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Putting it Plain!

**J**IMMY SILVER & CO. had gathered in great spirits for Gunner's meeting. It was time for prep; but they felt that even prep could be delayed a little while they dealt with Gunner. Gunner was not likely to detain them long. Peter Cuthbert, indeed, intended to make a speech lasting half an hour at least. He expected the Classical Fourth to listen to it. But Gunner often expected things that never came off.

"Go it, Gunner!" shouted Putty of the Fourth.

"On the ball!" chuckled Mornington. THE POPULAR.—No. 484.

"Your innings, Gunner!" chortled Lovell.

Peter Cuthbert mounted on a chair to address the meeting. He drew his manuscript from his pocket.

"Gentlemen of Rookwood—" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"After the recent revolt of the— Yoooooop!"

Gunner had not in the least intended to say that. He said it as an apple whizzed across the Common-room and landed on his chin. It landed quite hard.

The burly Gunner staggered, and the chair rocked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!" roared Lovell.

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

Perhaps it dawned upon Gunner then why so many of the Classical Fourth had turned up at the meeting. All sorts of missiles rained on Gunner as he rocked on the chair. The juniors seemed to have come to the meeting with their pockets full. Ancient apples and oranges, unfit for human consumption, turned up in considerable numbers—two or three eggs—not new-laid—joined in, and a cushion or two. Five or six pea-shooters at least were directed on Gunner, and of peas there seemed an inexhaustible supply.

"Ow! Oh! Yoop! Stoppit!" roared Gunner. "You silly asses—you frabjous owls! Oh, my hat! I'll wallop you. Lovell—I'll scrag you, Oswald—I'll—I'll give— Yarooooop!"

Bump!

Gunner came down off the chair. He sat on the floor with a mighty concussion. He struggled up gasping with wrath, to find himself in the grasp of many hands.

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

Gunner's oration, still undelivered, was crumpled up and jammed down the back of his neck. Then he was bumped, and the roar of Peter Cuthbert Gunner rang far beyond the confines of the Common-room.

"Is that enough, Gunner?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Are you going to give up playing the giddy ox?"

"Yow-ow-whoop!"

"Rebellions are off!" explained Jimmy Silver, "and if ever the Fourth goes in for a barring-out, it won't pick the biggest ass in the Form for leader! Got that?"

"Grooogh!"

"Now are you going to toe the line?"

"Ow! No! Never!" gasped Gunner.

"Put his head in the coalbox!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'll—I'll—" gasped Gunner.

"Stoppit! I—I—I'll— Oh, my hat!"

Gug-gug-gug-gug-gug!"

Gunner was upended, and his head vanished among coals. When it was withdrawn, the change in Gunner's aspect was startling. His face had gone into the coalbox crimson with

wrath; it came out black as the ace of spades. There was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh! Gug-gug! Ow! Oooch!"

Gunner tore himself loose, and glared at the hilarious Fourth - Formers through a veil of coal-dust.

"You—you—ow! You—you—grooogh—"

"Collar him!"

Gunner made a dive for the door. He had given up the idea of addressing the meeting now. It was clear, even to Gunner, that his eloquence was not popular in the Classical Fourth.

"After him!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole mob of hilarious juniors rushed after Gunner. That hapless youth, spluttering coal-dust, fairly flew along the passage. There was a sudden crash.

"Upon my word!" Mr. Dalton staggered back as Gunner crashed into him.

"What—what—what—"

The Fourth Form master had heard the din in the juniors' quarters, and had come along to inquire—at an unlucky moment for himself. Gunner's blind charge sent him spinning. Gunner himself staggered back, and reeled against the wall, gasping and spluttering.

"What—what—what—" Richard Dalton recovered himself, and made a grasp at Gunner. "Boy! What do you mean?"

"Grooogh!"

"Who are you?"

"Oooch!"

"How dare you go about the school with a blackened face!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "Are you out of your senses?"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"You are Gunner, I think—though I do not recognise you in that disgusting state. What foolish trick is this?"

"Groooooooggh!" spluttered Gunner.

"Ow!"

"Will you give me an intelligible answer, boy, or will you not?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton angrily.

"Groogh! M-m-my mouth's full of coal-dust!" gasped Gunner. "Leggo! Oh dear!"

"Disgusting! How dare you?"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Dalton glanced along the passage. There had been a sound of hurried retreat as he collared Gunner; the pursuers had vanished as if by magic. It dawned upon the Fourth Form master that there had been a ragging, and that it was not for some weird jape that Gunner had blackened his face with coal-dust.

"What is the meaning of this, Gunner?" asked the young master.

"Ow! I'll 'smash them!" gasped Gunner. "I—I'm chook-chook-chooking with coal-dust! Groogh! Leggo my collar!"

Instead of letting go Gunner's collar, Mr. Dalton marched him back into the junior Common-room. That room was quite vacant now—the Classical Fourth had vanished. But on the wall was Gunner's notice convening the meeting.

Mr. Dalton looked at it, and then he understood.

"You utterly stupid boy!" he said. "It appears that your Form-fellows have shown you their opinion of your obstinate folly, in this—this rather drastic manner. Go and clean yourself at once, Gunner."

"Grooogh!"

Gunner staggered away, still spluttering, and Mr. Dalton walked back to his study, smiling. For a long time Gunner of the Fourth was busy in the bath-

#### A Pageant of Empire.

Readers of the POPULAR who are interested in acting will like to hear of a topping little playlet, "A PAGEANT OF EMPIRE," with a stirring song, which can be obtained from Samuel French, Ltd., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W., price one shilling per copy, postage one penny.

There are parts for sixteen to twenty-four characters, and no elaborate scenery is needed.

It is especially suitable for acting on Empire Day, but it can be played at any other time as well.

room. When he came to Study No. 7, newly swept and garnished, but still a little dusty about the hair, he found Dickinson minor at prep. Dickinson sagely suppressed a grin as he looked at him.

"Hard cheese, old chap," murmured Dickinson. "The fellows don't seem to cotton to the wheeze! Better chuck it up, what?"

"You silly ass!"

"You're not going on?" exclaimed Dickinson.

"Of course I am!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Dickinson. And he gave it up. Peter Cuthbert Gunner was a sticker.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**

**Gunner Going Strong!**

**J**IMMY SILVER & CO. smiled when they met Gunner the next day. Gunner did not smile—he was thoughtful and morose.

Gunner simply couldn't understand it. The fellows had followed Jimmy Silver's lead in a school rebellion; and that rebellion had been more or less of a success. Yet they refused to rise and follow Gunner—a much greater man. Their refusal had been emphatic and unmistakable—several aches and pains still lingered on Gunner's burly person to remind him of it. Instead of becoming a popular leader, Gunner could not help realising that he had become quite unpopular.

But Peter Cuthbert was sticking it. The demonstration in the Common-room would have been enough for any ordinary fellow. But Gunner of the Fourth was not an ordinary fellow.

Through the morning he was in a thoughtful mood; but his thoughts were not bestowed on his lessons. So Mr. Dalton found, and more than once that morning Gunner was in trouble. A hundred lines, and a rap from a pointer, did not make Gunner more attentive to instruction; they added fuel to the fire of rebellion. Third hour that morning was devoted to French, under Monsieur Monceau.

When the juniors had drifted into the class-room where Mossoo awaited them, Peter Cuthbert Gunner did not join in the drill. With grim determination in his rugged face, Gunner walked away.

Jimmy Silver noticed his retreat, and shouted after him.

"Gunner!"

The rebel of the Fourth glanced back. "No. 2 class-room, French!" called out Jimmy Silver, under the impression that Gunner was unaware of the arrangement of the time-table.

"I know all that," said Gunner. "You funks can go in for third hour if you like! Not me!"

And Gunner stalked away, regardless.

"At it again!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "Gunner didn't have enough yesterday. We shall have to give him some more."

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips. Jimmy was annoyed by the antics of Peter Cuthbert; he felt that, after the late trouble in the school, it was up to all the fellows to toe the line with especial care.

"Mossoo mayn't miss him," remarked Raby. "He often doesn't miss a chap."

"That's all very well," said Jimmy Silver. "But if he does miss him, he will report him to Mr. Dalton, and there will be a row. We don't want Mr. Dalton to think we're a lot of troublesome asses who don't know how to behave themselves. Gunner's going to toe the line with the rest."

"He's clearing off," said Newcome. "Come on!" answered Jimmy. And he broke into a trot after Gunner. His comrades trotted after him, grinning.

Gunner, strolling loftily under the beeches, with his hands in his pockets, was enjoying the morning air, and admiring his own independence. He found himself suddenly surrounded by the Fistical Four.

"Time for class, Gunner," said the captain of the Fourth.

Gunner laughed. "Hadn't you funky duffers better cut in?" he jeered. "Mossoo may whack you if you're late."

"You're coming," explained Jimmy. "I'm not!"

"Would you rather walk, or be carried?"

"Look here—" roared Gunner. "Oh, collar the silly ass!" said Lovell. "No time to waste listening to his chin-wag!"

Gunner jumped back and put up his hands.

"Hands off! I— Oh!"

The Fistical Four rushed him over without ceremony.

The Fistical Four took an arm and a leg each. Then they walked off towards the School House. As Gunner's arms and legs went with them, Gunner, naturally, had to go also.

No. 2 class-room had a door opening on the quadrangle. Round that door a crowd of Fourth, Classics and Moderns, had gathered, and they watched Gunner's arrival with shouts of laughter.

"Will you let go, you rotters?" roared Gunner. "I tell you I'm not going in for third hour. Do you hear me, you beasts?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trot him in," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

Gunner was trotted in. The Fistical Four landed him in the middle of the class-room, and Gunner roared as he touched the floor. He did not touch it gently.

Monsieur Monceau was in the room, and he stared at the scene in great astonishment.

"Mon Dieu!" he ejaculated. "Vat is all zis, Silvain?"

"Yaroooh!" roared Gunner.

Gunner staggered to his feet. He glared at Jimmy Silver & Co., and made a rush for the open door on the sunny quad. Mornington put out a foot just in time.

Crash!

Gunner was down again on his hands and knees. Monsieur Monceau held up his hands in horror.

"Gunnair!" he exclaimed. The hapless Peter Cuthbert staggered ap.

"Mes garçons, take your places!" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau. "Gunnair, you vill sit down viz yourself at vonce!"

"I shan't!" roared Gunner. "Comment!"

"Rats!"

"Zat boy, is he outside of ze senses?" ejaculated Mossoo. "Vat is it zat you mean, Gunnair? If you take not ze place at zis moment zat I command you, I send you to ze headmaster!"

"Send me, and be blowed!" said Gunner. "What do I care for the Head? We've beaten him once, and can do it again!"

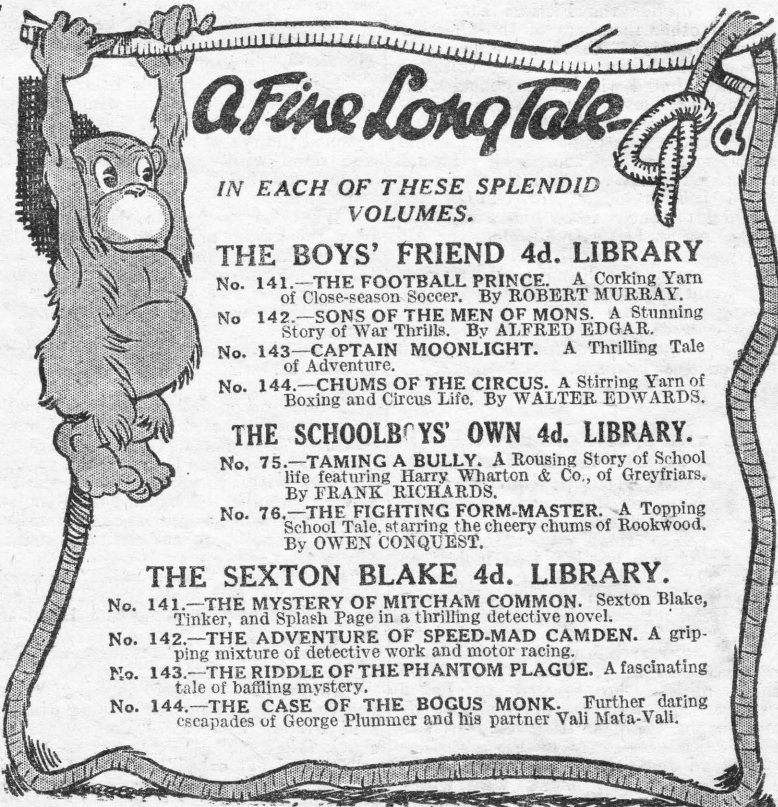
"You silly ass!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Shut up!"

"Zat is enoff, Gunnair!" said Monsieur Monceau. "I vill write vun note, and you vill take him to Dr. Chisholm."

"Br-r-r!" grunted Gunner.

Monsieur Monceau indited a note, folded, it, and handed it to Gunner. Then he pointed to the door.

"Allez-vous-en!" he said severely.



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Gunner snorted, and tramped out of the class-room. But he did not go to the Sixth Form-room to deliver Mossoo's note to the Head. He coolly walked out into the quadrangle and tossed the note into the fountain. Five minutes later Jimmy Silver, glancing through the open door on the quad, saw Gunner strolling under the beeches again. Peter Cuthbert was not beaten yet.

Jimmy's eyes gleamed. Monsieur Monceau either did not notice, or affected not to notice, that Gunner did not rejoin the class. He was a pacific little gentleman, keen to avoid trouble, and to follow the line of least resistance. When the juniors came out after French, Gunner met them with a triumphant grin.

"If you fellows had the pluck to follow my lead we'd jolly well run the show to please ourselves," he said. "Now, who's backing me up in cutting class this afternoon?"

"So you're thinking of cutting class this afternoon?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Certainly! After we've had a barring-out and beaten the Head to the wide we should be silly asses not to have something to show for it!" said Gunner scornfully. "No more 'Yes, sir!' and 'Please, sir!' for me! Not much!"

"You'll get a Head's flogging next!" said Lovell.

"Snort!—from Gunner.

"I shouldn't stand it! We cheeked the Head as much as we liked when the barring-out was on!"

"The barring-out's over, fathead—over and done with!"

"Let's have another," said Gunner. "Back me up, and we'll jolly well make the Head cringe—and Dicky Dalton, too!"

Evidently it was useless to reason with Gunner. But Jimmy Silver had given up the idea of reasoning with him. He was thinking of more drastic measures.

After dinner the Fistical Four and several other members of the Classical Fourth were in consultation on the subject of Gunner. The consultation was punctuated with many chuckles. It was followed by a surreptitious visit of Putty of the Fourth to the Head's study, and Putty came away from that apartment with something hidden under his jacket. And then six or seven juniors looked for Gunner and found him, and walked him away to a quiet spot in Little Quad. Gunner did not want to walk with them willingly, but as Lovell and Rawson held an arm each, and Jimmy Silver walked behind, letting out his foot occasionally, Gunner went. Under the library wall in Little Quad the juniors halted and proceeded to business.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Surprise for the Head!

**D**R. CHISHOLM, the reverend Head of Rookwood, laid down his book and frowned.

The Head was seated in the library, near a window that looked on Little Quad. The window was partly open in the warm spring afternoon. The Head's glance had fallen on a number of juniors who came through the old stone arch from Big Quad, most of them laughing, with a fellow in their midst who seemed to be a prisoner, and who was not laughing by any means. And in the hand of one of the juniors—Putty of the Fourth—the Head recognised his own birch! That dreaded instrument, with which no junior ever desired to make close

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acquaintance, had evidently been taken from the Head's study—an act almost amounting to sacrilege in Dr. Chisholm's eyes.

He frowned portentously.

The rebellion at Rookwood had ended—it was all over. But the Head had not forgotten it. He was not quite satisfied—like Gunner, though in a rather different way. The Head was a strict disciplinarian; any opposition to authority roused his deepest wrath. And in the late rebellion in the school the Classical Fourth had undoubtedly thrown all regard for constituted authority to the winds.

Mr. Dalton believed that he had his rather unruly Form well in hand now. The Head hoped so, but he did not quite believe so. It was his opinion that after such a lawless outbreak the juniors would take a long time to settle down—if they ever settled down at all. He fully expected fresh trouble in the Fourth—insubordination and impertinence—perhaps even a new outbreak of rebellion. He had a suspicious eye upon Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth and ringleader in the late revolt.

And now it seemed to the Head that his worst forebodings were realised. This mob of juniors came trooping into Little Quad—seeking, evidently, a secluded spot. They stopped by the library wall, with not the slightest suspicion that at a window near by the headmaster sat with his stern eyes upon them. And one of them actually held the headmaster's birch in his hand. Dark suspicion and wrath gathered on the Head's brow. Probably these unruly young rascals were planning a fresh rebellion. At all events, mischief was clearly afoot. Only one circumstance puzzled the Head—the fact that Gunner of the Fourth was a prisoner in the hands of the rest. That circumstance decided the Head not to intervene for the moment, but to watch what should transpire.

The mob of juniors halted, and Gunner stood in the centre of a ring. He stood and glared.

"Now, Gunner, there's been a rebellion in this school," began Jimmy, blissfully unconscious that every word reached the ear of authority. "It's over and done with. You don't seem to understand that."

"Yah!"

"What we've got to do now is to play the game, and play up generally, and let Mr. Dalton and the Head see that we're not a silly mob of kids who don't understand that there must be such a thing as authority in a school."

"Rats!"

Dr. Chisholm gave a start. This was not at all what he had expected to hear.

"Every other fellow in the Fourth understands that," resumed Jimmy Silver. "You don't, Gunner! You've been cheeking Mr. Dalton; you've cut a class with Mossoo; you've jawed about another barring-out—you've made yourself a nuisance generally. You're planning to cut class again this afternoon."

"So I jolly well will!" roared Gunner. "If you funks would back me up we'd jolly well bring the Head to his knees!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Dr. Chisholm.

"That's the sort of footling tripe you've been talking for a long time," said Jimmy Silver. "You've got to chuck it! See?"

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Gunner.

"You're going the way to get a Head's flogging. You won't be happy when you get it. So we're going to

give you a sample to show you what it's like."

"Leggo!" howled Gunner.

"Bend him over!"

The Head stared on from his window, petrified. Gunner, in the grasp of strong hands, was bent over in a handy position for flogging. Jimmy Silver took the birch from Putty.

Whack!

"Whooop!" roared Gunner.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow!"

"I want your word of honour to chuck up this footling rot and to toe the line like the rest of us," said the captain of the Fourth cheerily.

"You've got to promise."

"Never!" yelled Gunner.

Whack, whack, whack!

Jimmy Silver proceeded to lay on the birch. He felt that it was up to him not to spare the rod. This might save Gunner from a Head's flogging, or even the "sack." For Gunner's own sake he had to be dealt with drastically. And the whole Classical Fourth were fed up with Gunner and his stunts, anyhow.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Gunner's yells rang far and wide. The Head, almost paralysed with astonishment, blinked on the scene from his window. But he was not wrathful now. Indeed, he smiled.

"Are you going to promise, Gunner?"

"Yow! No! Wow!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Whooop! Hold on!" yelled Gunner. "I—I—Ow! Wow! I'll promise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You promise to stop playing the goat, to stop cheeking Dicky Dalton, and cutting class, and talking out of your hat generally?" demanded Jimmy Silver categorically.

"Ow! Yes! Wow!"

"Honour bright?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ow! Yes! Honour bright!"

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now kick him out!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Gunner was kicked out. He departed sprawling, a sadder if not a wiser Gunner.

"Now get that giddy birch back to the Head's study before it's missed," said Jimmy Silver. "I think Gunner's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd of juniors walked, grinning, back to Big Quad. And the Head of Rookwood gazed after them from his window in the library, still astonished, but with a smile on his face. All his misgivings were set at rest now. Evidently there was not going to be another rebellion at Rookwood.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner gave it up. He talked no more of rebellions and barring-outs. Possibly the birching in Little Quad had made him realise what it would be like to be "hoisted" for an infraction from the Head. Gunner's brain worked slowly, but it worked more or less. And it was quite clear to him now that he never would be leader in a revolt of the Fourth. He gave up the idea; and Jimmy Silver & Co. were not surprised. But Jimmy was rather surprised when, the next time he encountered the Head, that stately old gentleman gave him a kind nod and a smile. He realised that somehow or other he had got into the Head's good books, and he wondered why.

THE END.

(There will be another rollicking long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, next week, entitled: "GUNNER AGAIN!")