

THE FAILURE OF FERRERS LOCKE!

Amazing 'Tec' Yarns Inside!

The POPULAR

Week Ending
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No. 487.

EVERY
TUESDAY

2d



PLAYED, SIR!

CUFFY CAUSES A SENSATION!

Cuffy has no equal. But as a cricketer he is worse than a veriest novice. Small wonder, then, that there is almost a riot when he is selected to play for his House. But therein lies a tale of woe!

CLARENCE CUFFY - CRICKETER!



A ROLLICKING
LONG COMPLETE
TALE OF JIMMY
SILVER & CO., THE
CHUMS OF ROOK-
WOOD.

By
**OWEN
CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Cuffy's Request!

"MY dear Thomas—" Oh, can it!" growled Tommy Dodd. "But, dear Thomas—" persisted Clarence Cuffy mildly.

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath. But the soft answers of Clarence Cuffy of the Modern Fourth Form at Rookwood never had the effect of turning wrath away. Rather they increased it.

If there was anything that Tommy Dodd could not stand with patience it was being called "Thomas." And "Thomas," of course, was not so intensely exasperating as "Dear Thomas." Clarence Cuffy always made it "Dear Thomas." His gift for saying the wrong thing, in the wrong way, at the wrong moment, amounted almost to genius.

"Tommy" had a frivolous sound, to Cuffy's serious mind. And Cuffy never was light or frivolous. Sometimes he was comic, but that was unintentional on his part.

"My dear Thomas, I trust I am not interrupting your conversation with dear James," murmured Cuffy.

Dear James, otherwise Jimmy Silver of the Classical Fourth, grinned. Tommy Dodd scowled.

The two juniors, Classical and Modern, were talking cricket, and the talk was really of some importance, as it had reference to the match that was shortly coming off between the Modern and Classical junior sides. Interruptions from anybody were not specially wanted—least of all from Clarence Cuffy. Any conversation, indeed, was too important to be interrupted by Cuffy. Cuffy being an absolutely negligible individual whose opinions on

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any subjects were of no consequence whatever.

Tommy Dodd laid a hand on the shoulder of his inoffensive relative, and spun him half-round, so that he was facing Mr. Manders' House across the quad.

"See that doorway over there?" asked Tommy.

"Certainly, my dear Thomas. I see it quite plainly," said the surprised Cuffy. "My vision is not in the least impaired, I am thankful to say."

"Head for it, as fast as you can," said Tommy Dodd. "Run all the way and don't stop. See?"

"My dear Thomas—"

"Like me to start you with a kick?" asked Dodd.

"I should object very strongly, Thomas."

"Then hook it."

"But I have to speak to you, my dear Thomas, and though I am sorry to interrupt—"

"Look here, you burbling ass," said Tommy Dodd, in tones of intense patience, "we're talking cricket, and there's no time for you to burble. Get going. We're settling about Wednesday's match, fathead. Now cut!"

"But I want to speak to you about Wednesday's match, my dear Thomas," urged Cuffy.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tommy Dodd. "Keep to things you understand, if you understand anything. Don't talk cricket."

"But I want to play on Wednesday, Thomas."

"Eh?"

"What?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. Cuffy blinked benignly at the two astonished juniors.

"It is rather an important matter, Thomas," he said. "You see, my father is coming to Rookwood on Wednesday to see me, and he would

be so very, very pleased to see me playing for the House."

"About the only merchant who would be, I fancy!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Play you!" said Tommy Dodd dazedly. "Why, you can't play cricket! You don't even show up at games' practice. You don't know the difference between a cricket-bat and a brick-bat. Are you joking?"

"Not at all, dear Thomas. It is true that I know very little about cricket," said Cuffy modestly. "It does not interest me as a game, and to tell the truth quite frankly, I prefer marbles to—"

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

"And I have often thought, my dear Thomas, that a half-holiday might be more comfortably spent sitting in a secluded and quiet spot, playing noughts and crosses," said Cuffy.

"Nevertheless, it is my duty to please my dear father, and he wishes to see me play cricket, so I have told him that I will play on Wednesday while he is here."

"You've told him?" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, my dear Thomas. I thought I would mention the circumstance to you, so that you could put my name into the list."

Tommy Dodd stared at his relative, almost speechless.

He had always known that Clarence Cuffy was a champion duffer. It was much to the credit of Tommy Dodd that he had always stood by Cuffy, who was only a distant relative, and who certainly was not the fellow to bring any credit on him at Rookwood.

Often and often had Tommy Dodd punched fellows for pulling Cuffy's innocent leg. Often and often had he kicked Cuffy for Cuffy's own good. That Cuffy was a chump, and couldn't help being a chump, Tommy took for granted, and with great kindness of

heart he looked after the chump as much as he could, and helped to steer him through the storms and pitfalls of school life.

But that Cuffy should be chump enough to suppose that he could play for the Modern side in a House match was really surprising. There ought to have been some limit even to Cuffy's chumpiness.

But apparently Cuffy supposed that a fellow could butt into a cricket-match as unceremoniously as a fag in the Second Form could butt into a game of marbles.

Cuffy seemed surprised by Tommy Dodd's surprise. As Tommy did not speak, Clarence rattled on:

"I believe there are eleven fellows in a cricket-team, Thomas—"

"You believe?" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. I am not an unobservant fellow, my dear James, and on occasions when I have watched cricket, I have noticed that there are generally eleven fellows concerned. Besides, I have heard it spoken of."

"My only Uncle John!" murmured Jimmy.

"I have been looking at the list, Thomas, and observe that there are eleven names in it," went on Cuffy. "I do not wish to speak positively on a subject in which I am not well grounded, of course, but I have inferred from this that you have already made up the full team."

"Is he real?" asked Jimmy Silver, gazing with deep interest at Cuffy.

"If this should prove to be the case, Thomas, no doubt you will ask one of the dear boys to stand out and make room for me," went on Cuffy. "Cook or Doyle would not mind, I am sure."

"Go on!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Keep it up!"

"Or perhaps Silver would not object to your playing twelve cricketers for once," said Cuffy, looking at the captain of the Fourth. "He could also play twelve, and so it would be equally fair for both sides."

"Fan me!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"But I am willing to leave all details to you, Thomas," said Cuffy generously. "I have very little acquaintance with cricket matters; indeed, the only book I have read about such things is the 'Cricket on the Heath.'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"So arrange it as you think best, Thomas. I shall be satisfied so long as I play on Wednesday, while my dear father is here. He will be very, very pleased."

Tommy Dodd drew a deep breath.

"It's no good talking to you, Cuffy," he said slowly.

"My dear Thomas," said Cuffy anxiously, "I assure you that I am prepared to give respectful attention and all due consideration to any observations you may think it incumbent upon you to make."

"It's no good talking," repeated Tommy. "In ten years I couldn't make you understand why you can't play in the House match on Wednesday. Forget it! Drop it! Chuck it! Go away while you're safe! See?"

"But, my dear Thomas—"

"If you call me dear Thomas again I'll sit you down, hard!" roared the captain of the Modern Fourth.

"My dear Thomas—"

"That does it!"

Tommy Dodd laid both hands on the shoulders of his relative. Cuffy sat down in the quad. He sat hard.

"Whoooop!" gasped Cuffy.

"Now," said Tommy Dodd, "I'm going to count three, and then I'm going to begin kicking you, Cuffy! I'm

going to kick you so long as you stay in reach. One!"

"My dear Thomas—"

"Two!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"My dear—"

"Three!"

"My—yaroooooop!"

Tommy Dodd kept his word. Clarence Cuffy bounded up like an indiarubber ball, and ran for his life. The question of the House match had to be left over—even Cuffy could see that his relation, Thomas, was not in a mood of sweet reasonableness and was not to be argued with at present. He stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

Tommy Dodd breathed hard and deep as Clarence Cuffy vanished in the distance, yelling.

"What a merchant to plant on a chap at a public school!" he gasped. "They asked me to look after him, and take him under my wing, and keep him from harm—and now he asks me to play him in a House match when he doesn't know the difference between a cricket-ball and a fancy dress ball."

Jimmy Silver wiped his eyes.

"Born idiot!" he agreed. "Sort of runs in the family, I suppose."

"You Classical ass!" said Tommy Dodd. "He's only a distant relation of mine—practically no relation—sort of eleventh cousin ten times removed, or something."

"But the resemblance—"

"The what?"

"The resemblance—intellectually, I mean—"

Jimmy Silver had no time to get any further. Tommy Dodd rushed on him, and smote him hip and thigh; and the next minute a crowd of Rookwood fellows had an entertaining view of a Modern and a Classical junior hammering one another under the beeches in great style.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tea in the End Study!

JIMMY SILVER came up to the end study to tea on the following day a little late. Lovell and

Raby and Newcome were already there, and Jimmy hoped that they had tea ready. Jimmy had been delayed in the Form-room writing lines—a result of his encounter with Tommy Dodd under the beeches. As he came along to the end study he heard sounds of merriment within. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were roaring, apparently in possession of some great joke.

"Go it, Cuffy!" Lovell was saying, as Jimmy Silver came up, and there was another roar.

"My dear Arthur—" came the gentle tones of Clarence Cuffy of the Modern Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver looked in. His three comrades were yelling with laughter, as was Mornington of the Fourth, who was there to tea. Cuffy stood in the middle of the study, with a rather bewildered expression on his kind face, evidently at a loss to account for the merriment.

"What's the merry joke?" asked Jimmy as he came in.

"Here it is," answered Raby. "The name of it is Cuffy! The funniest thing that ever was!"

"I have been waiting for you, my dear James," said Cuffy, beaming on the captain of the Fourth. "I cannot account for this extraordinary outbreak of risibility on the part of these dear fellows. There is nothing I think, of a ludicrous nature in a cricket match—"

"There would be if you played, old bean," chuckled Mornington.

"A cricket match?" repeated Jimmy, puzzled.

"Yes. I have simply mentioned my intention of playing in the Classical side in the match on Wednesday."

"Oh, holy smoke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell and Raby and Newcome and Mornington. And Jimmy Silver joined in.

"I will explain how matters stand, my dear James," pursued Cuffy. "For some reason which I do not thoroughly comprehend, my relative, Thomas Dodd, declines to include me in the Modern team. I have argued with him very seriously, as it is impossible for me to disappoint my dear parent. But he does not seem amenable to reason—indeed, he has actually ejected me from his study, and jabbed me most brutally with the pointed end of a cricket-stump as I left."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Properly speaking, being a Modern fellow, I should play on the Modern side," continued Cuffy. "But the important point is, of course, that I should not disappoint my dear father, who has expressed a wish to see me play cricket. I have therefore decided to play in the Classical team."

"You have decided?" gasped Jimmy.

"Yes, my dear James. You see, it is the only thing to be done in the circumstances," said Cuffy.

"Oh, my hat! I rather think there's something else that can be done! For instance, if we found you in the Classical team we might drown you in the fountain—"

"Eh?"

"Or boil you in oil—"

"My dear—"

"Or bury you darkly at dead of night," continued Jimmy Silver. "If you're not insured, better keep clear."

"My dear James—"

"Sorry, old man, but there's nothing doing," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You see, cricket is cricket, and you're an ass. If you don't mind my mentioning it, you're a champion ass. In fact, in the asinine line, you're the very outside edge. See?"

"I do not quite see, my dear James. Even if I were very stupid—say, as stupid as any fellow here—"

"Eh?"

"Even in so extreme a case," said Cuffy innocently. "I should still be able to play cricket, a game that requires no intelligence, so far as I am aware. Throwing a ball at sticks set upright in the ground may be amusing, but it cannot be considered intellectual. My opinion is that a game like noughts and crosses places a far more severe strain on the intellectual powers."

"Noughts and crosses!" sobbed Lovell. "Oh, dear! Noughts—Ha, ha! And—oh, my hat, crosses!"

"So I trust, my dear James, that you will make it a point to play me in the match," said Cuffy seriously. "I should rather play as a Modern, but it is Hobson's choice with me, and I must play as a Classical, as dear Thomas will not put me in. I will do my best to win the match for you; but if it should be lost, it is not, fortunately, a matter of any great consequence."

"Go it!" gasped Mornington. "Trickle on, Cuffy! This is better than the Sixth Form Greek play on Speech Day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it arranged, my dear James?" asked Cuffy.

Jimmy Silver wiped his eyes.

"No, old ass! Run away and play noughts and crosses. Good-bye!"

Clarence Cuffy looked at the captain of the Fourth sadly, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Do you really refuse, my dear James?" he asked.

"I do, really and truly, my dear idiot," assured Jimmy Silver. "Sit down and have tea with us, and don't say anything more about cricket."

Clarence Cuffy sighed, and sat down to tea. Evidently he thought it was rather unkind of dear James to refuse him a place in the Classical junior eleven. As he had told Lovell & Co., his dear parent would have been very, very pleased, and it did not seem to occur to Cuffy that there was any other aspect to the matter.

The Fistical Four were quite pleased to entertain Cuffy at tea. They would not have been found dead, so to speak, in the same cricket team with him. But they liked old Cuffy; everybody liked him more or less. Indeed, it would have been rather ungrateful not to like Cuffy; he added a great deal to the gaiety of existence at Rookwood.

So they filled him with cakes and buns and tarts, and Clarence beamed mildly over the festive board.

"No other cup of tea, old chap?" asked Newcome.

"Thank you, my dear Newcome. I think I may venture to partake of another cup of that very refreshing beverage," assented Clarence.

"Shove some more hot water in the pot," said Lovell.

Cuffy jumped up. He was always glad to make himself useful.

"Pray allow me, my dear Newcome!" he exclaimed.

The kettle was jammed in the study fire, singing. Cuffy picked it out.

He held it in his hand for about the billionth part of a second.

In that brief space of time he made the discovery that the handle was exceedingly hot.

Then he dropped it.

Crash!

A kettle half full of boiling water crashed on the fender and rolled across the hearthrug, sputtering and streaming.

There was a fiendish yell from Valentine Mornington.

"Yarooooh!"

Morny jumped up, knocking his chair backwards, and danced on one leg, clapping the other with both hands. Apparently Morny had bagged some of the hot water with the leg he was nursing.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Dear me! Are you scalded, Mornington?" asked Cuffy, in deep concern. Mornington howled.

"Yow-ow! Oh, no! I'm doing a song and dance, that's all. Ow! Wow!"

"My dear fellow, I am so glad you are not scalded. I feared, from your sudden movement, that you were."

"Let that kettle alone, you dangerous ass!" yelled Lovell, as Cuffy stooped to pick it up.

"My dear Arthur—"

"Let it alone!"

But Cuffy did not let it alone. He caught the handle in his handkerchief, on account of the heat. Thus he was able to handle the utensil without burning his fingers. Kettle in hand, he turned to the tea-table. There was still some hot water left in the kettle, and Cuffy was ready to pour.

"Will you hold out the teapot, my dear Arthur—"

"Well, be careful, you ass!" growled

Arthur Edward Lovell, holding out the teapot.

"Certainly, my dear Arthur. I should be exceeding sorry to scald your fingers—"

"Yarooooh!"

The stream of water from the kettle missed the teapot. It did not miss Arthur Edward Lovell's fingers.

Crash!

The teapot went to the floor and smashed into some dozens of fragments.

Lovell sucked his fingers for a moment, with a look on his face that a Prussian Hun might have envied. Then, without a word, he rushed at Cuffy.

Cuffy was beginning "My dear Arthur!" but he had no time to continue. Dear Arthur was upon him like a whirlwind.

"Yoop! Oh! Ow! Whoop! Help!" roared Cuffy.

"Lovell!" shouted Jimmy.

Lovell did not heed remonstrances. His fingers were scalded. He forgot that Cuffy was a guest in the end study. Cuffy's head was in chancery, and Lovell was punching him frantically. The yells of the hapless Cuffy rang along the Fourth Form passage.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Stop him!" panted Raby.

"Leave him alone," said Mornington. "The born idiot wants it—he asked for it—he's begged for it—let him have it!"

"Yarooop! Yoop! Help! Ow!"

"Lovell!" yelled Raby.

"Let me alone!" howled Lovell. "I'm going to smash him! I'm going to pulverise him! I'm going to spifflicate him! I'm going to slaughter him! I'm going—Leggo, you silly owls, I tell you!"

Lovell's chums gassed him and dragged him off Cuffy.

"Let go!" roared Lovell, struggling.

"I've not finished yet."

"You have!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Stop it, you ass!"

"Hook it, Cuffy!" gasped Raby. Lovell was in a state of fury, and even the three found it rather hard to hold him in. Cuffy retreated to the door in great astonishment and dismay.

"My dear Arthur—" he gasped.

"Hook it, you ass!" shouted Newcome.

"Certainly, my dear fellow, but I desire to assure Arthur that it was quite by accident—"

"Get out!" yelled Jimmy.

"That I scalded his fingers, and that I regret exceedingly the anguish I have inadvertently caused him—"

Lovell broke loose at that point, and rushed at Cuffy again. Even Clarence Cuffy realised that he had better go without expressing any further regrets, and he scudded away down the corridor. Lovell, unappeased, scudded in hot pursuit.

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver.

It was ten minutes later that Arthur Edward Lovell came back to the study, breathless. He had a satisfied look, which seemed to indicate that he had overtaken the fleeing Cuffy, and left him for dead somewhere between the School House and Mr. Manders' House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Matter of Difficulty!

"NEVER!" snapped Tommy Dodd.

"I should jolly well think not!" said Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle together.

Apparently the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth were in full agreement. Certainly they expressed the same

opinion, and they expressed it emphatically.

But Tommy Dodd, with all his emphasis, had a worried look. It might almost have been opined that he expressed himself so forcibly in order to drive away a lingering uncertainty in his own mind.

"It's quite impossible," went on the captain of the Modern Fourth.

"Quite!" said Tommy Cook.

"Arrah and so it is intirely," said Tommy Doyle; "and sure only a born gossoon would have thought of such a thing, and by the same token I'll kick Cuffy agin next time I see him."

"It can't be did, and that's an end," said Tommy Dodd.

"That's an end," agreed Cook.

"All very well to say that it's an end," went on Tommy Dodd, rather unreasonably. "But it happens that old Mr. Cuffy is a very old friend of my father's, and I don't want to displease him if I can help it. He's been awfully good to me in one way or another. He's a bit of an ass, of course, but he gave me a canoe last summer."

"Good man," said Cook. "But you can't help it—and that's that!"

"If it were only that ass Cuffy himself we could kick him out of gates this afternoon," said Tommy Dodd moodily. The discussion was taking place in the recess after second lesson on Wednesday morning. "I like old Cuffy, with all his funny ways, and I don't mind kicking him hard at times, trying to kick a little sense into him. But I can't kick his father, I suppose."

"Nunno!" agreed Cook.

"I have had a letter from him, and he takes it for granted that Cuffy is playing in the match this afternoon, and tells me how pleased he is to see Clarence coming out in this way. He says he is sure that it is due to my kind care of him."

"Dear old gent!" murmured Doyle.

"It's beastly awkward," went on Tommy Dodd, in deep worry and distress. "Old Mr. Cuffy is an ass, of course, and knows as much about cricket as the man in the moon. He's really backed up Cuffy in keeping out of games, thinking the dear chap is delicate. He's about as delicate as a cart-horse, I think. Now he seems no end bucked at the idea of Cuffy playing for his House. He thinks I've taken the ass in hand, and trained the chump, and taught the fathead, and made a cricketer of the burbling idiot, and he thanks me in a very nice way for what I've done—I mean for what I haven't done and couldn't do. It's all that fathead Cuffy, of course; he took it for granted that I should play him if he asked me, and told his father he was playing."

"Let's kick him again," said Doyle.

Tommy Dodd grunted impatiently. There was solace, in a way, in kicking Clarence Cuffy; also, it was for Cuffy's good. But the present pressing problem could not be solved by the exercise of boot-leather on the person of Cuffy.

"The born burbler!" went on Tommy Dodd. "He's hurt because I can't put him in the team. He says that if I wanted to play noughts and crosses with him, any time, even if it was inconvenient, he would agree at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook and Doyle.

"And old Mr. Cuffy will be here this afternoon!" growled Tommy Dodd. "He's lurching with the Head, and after that he's going to roll down to Little Side and see us play the Classics. How am I going to tell him that Cuffy isn't playing? I can't explain to a man that his son is such a born idiot that he ought really to be put in a home for incurables, can I?"



SOME CRICKETER! Tommy Dodd drove the ball through the slips and then ran. But at the other wicket Cuffy stood like a statue. "Run, you ass!" yelled Dodd. But Clarence did not move. He had been told not to make runs, and he wasn't taking any. The ball was returned whilst Tommy Dodd was still away from his wicket. (See Chapter 5.)

Clarence, and that he's likely to get damaged in tackling the goalkeeper," suggested Cook sarcastically.

"Oh, don't be an ass! I must tell him something."

"Tell him we're keeping Cuffy in reserve for a great hop-sotch match," went on Cook, still sarcastic.

"Fathead! Of course I can't play him, but—"

"My dear Thomas!"

Clarence Cuffy ambled up and joined the three Tommies, with a cheery smile. Three separate and

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Tommy Dodd Takes the Plunge!
"THAT'S the jolly old merchant!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

Several fellows glanced round at Mr. Cuffy.

He was quite a nice-looking old gentleman. He had a round, ruddy plump face, and white hair and whiskers, and gold-rimmed glasses, and an expression of unbounded benevolence. He looked the kind of man that any fellow would have been glad to have

"Faith, and it wouldn't be polite."

"I can't knock Cuffy on the head," pursued Tommy Dodd gloomily. "He's not likely to fall down and break his leg, or anything of that kind, just to please me. In fact, if he fell down he would break somebody's else's leg, if he broke anything. That's Cuffy."

Tommy Dodd looked very glum.

The other two Tommies exchanged rather alarmed glances.

They could quite easily read their captain's inner thoughts, and they knew that he was shrinking from offending the old gentleman who was coming to Rookwood School that afternoon. That was all very well; but cricket was cricket, and the Moderns wanted to beat the Classics. Cook and Doyle were loyal chums, and they felt for Dodd in his difficulty, but they were prepared to lynch him if he threw away a House match by playing a dud in the team.

"You can't play him," said Cook curtly.

"What am I to say to Mr. Cuffy?"

"Blessed if I know! Tell him that cricket is too rough a game for dear

distinct glares were fixed on the happy Clarence.

"I trust, my dear Thomas, that you have now reconsidered your somewhat disconcerting determination," said Cuffy.

"Hark at him!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "A fellow who talks like that thinks he can play cricket!"

"My dear Thomas, I do not claim to be so expert at cricket as at noughts and crosses," said Cuffy gently. "At the latter game I think I may say, without unbecoming boastfulness, that I can hold my own. In the cricket match I can only say that I will do my best. No fellow can do more. Does it not occur to you, my dear Thomas, that you are attaching an undue importance to what is, after all, merely a somewhat frivolous form of open-air exercise?"

Tommy Dodd did not answer that question. Silently he took Clarence Cuffy by the collar, and banged his head against the wall.

Then he walked away, leaving Cuffy rubbing his head, and blinking after him sorrowfully.

for an uncle at Christmas or on a birthday. He had a tipping look—an unmistakably tipping look. Not perhaps the kind of relative that a fellow would be proud to show round Rookwood; nevertheless, a very nice and useful relative, particularly useful in time of financial scarcity.

"That's Cuffy's father," remarked Mornington. "Looks as if he might be!"

"Nice old gent," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm glad he's not going to ask me to play Cuffy. I really shouldn't like to say no to a dear old merchant like that."

Mr. Cuffy glanced towards the juniors, and they capped him respectfully. His eyes beamed at them benevolently over his gold-rimmed glasses. The juniors were in flannels, and heading for Little Side, and Mr. Cuffy seemed to be bound in the same direction. Tommy Dodd was not to be seen.

"Mr. Cuffy, I think, sir?" said Mornington.

"Just so," said Mr. Cuffy. "You are friends of my dear son, I suppose?"
 "Oh, yes! We all know Cuffy, sir," said Mornington. "A very popular fellow in the school, sir."

Mr. Cuffy beamed.
 "I am truly glad to hear you say so!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I am sure that dear Clarence would be liked everywhere. I am sure that few boys have such kind and gentle manners."
 "None at all at Rookwood, sir," said Morny. "Cuffy is the only one of his kind here."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Cuffy.
 Jimmy Silver gave the dandy of the Fourth a warning glance. It was fairly obvious that Cuffy's innocence was inherited from his father; the old gentleman was as innocent and unsuspecting as his hopeful son. Jimmy Silver had a strong objection to the old gentleman's leg being pulled. But Mornington's views on any subject seldom coincided with Jimmy Silver's.
 "We're expectin' great things of Cuffy this afternoon sir," went on Mornington. "He's comin' out in the cricket. Of course, you've been a cricketer, sir?"

"I am afraid that in my youth I somewhat neglected such games," said Mr. Cuffy. "Neither do I wish Clarence to bestow an undue portion of his time on mere games. Nevertheless, I am glad to see him figure occasionally in such pursuits—time must not be wholly given to study. Mens sana in corpore sano, what, what?"

"That's it, sir," said Mornington gravely. "But Cuffy has a natural gift for games. He's the Rookwood champion at hopscotch."

"Is he really?" asked Mr. Cuffy, looking very pleased.
 "Here's Dodd!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd came up. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on, and left Mr. Cuffy to him.

Tommy was looking, and feeling, extremely uncomfortable.

"Well, where is Clarence?" asked Mr. Cuffy cheerily. "Changing for the match—what, what?"

"H'm!"
 "I suppose it is nearly time for the kick-off?" said Mr. Cuffy, glancing at his watch.

"The kick-off!" murmured Tommy Dodd. Mr. Cuffy was apparently as well "up" in games as his son Clarence.

"Yes, yes. I am quite anxious to see Clarence playing for his school," said Mr. Cuffy.

"The House!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "It's a House match."

"Of course," said Mr. Cuffy, beaming. "I trust that Clarence is in great form, Thomas. Indeed, I should not have come to Rookwood to-day, but for the anticipated pleasure of seeing him play. Much credit is due to you, Thomas."

"Oh!"
 "I know that you have done everything you can do for Clarence," said Mr. Cuffy, beaming. "I am sure he owes it all to you, Thomas. I am very grateful."

"H'm! I—"
 "But I am delaying you," said Mr. Cuffy cheerily. "Don't let me delay you, Thomas."

"I—I—"
 "Is Clarence on the field?"

"Nunno. He—he—"
 "Go and call him, Thomas; he must not keep the game waiting," said Mr. Cuffy. "Procrastination is the thief of time. Clarence must not procrastinate."

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"B-b-but—"

"Hurry him up, my dear boy."

Mr. Cuffy waved a plump hand to Tommy Dodd, and trotted on towards the cricket-ground. Tommy Dodd stood and stared after him.

He was in the lowest of spirits.

He had intended to tell Mr. Cuffy that it was all a mistake, and that Clarence was not figuring that day in the Modern junior team. But he hadn't told him.

Tommy Dodd realised that he hadn't the heart to tell him. He simply couldn't disappoint that chubby old gentleman, who never would have understood.

But to play Cuffy—

Tommy Dodd shuddered at the thought.

All along he had felt that it would come to this, that when the crisis came his courage would fail him. And it had failed.

Tommy Dodd drove his hands deep into his pockets, and strode away towards Mr. Manders' House.

He was going to play Cuffy!

The die was cast!

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Cuffy, the Cricketer!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. blinked as Clarence Cuffy of the Modern Fourth came on Little Side in spotless white, with a bat under his arm.

The Modern cricketers did more than blink. They positively glared.

Cook rushed up to Tommy Dodd and caught him by the arm.

"Dodd, you ass—"

"Cheese it!" growled Tommy.

"You're not playing that dummy?"

"Yes."

"We'll sack you!" hissed Cook.

"We'll boot you out of the captaincy, Dodd! We'll—we'll lynch you—"

"Kick the dummy off the field!" said Towle.

"Good egg!"

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed. He had yielded under the stress of circumstances, and the stress of circumstances had not improved his temper.

"Shut up, the lot of you!" he growled. "If you're not satisfied, I'll resign after the match. At present I'm captain, and you can jolly well shut up, see?"

Mr. Cuffy was accommodated with a comfortable chair before the pavilion, whence he could watch all the wonderful performances of his hopeful son. He was too deeply interested in Clarence to note the deep gloom in the face of Tommy Dodd, or the intense irritation of the rest of the Modern team.

Tommy Dodd won the toss and elected to bat. He told his men tersely and almost savagely that he expected them to play up and beat the Classic side.

"We're carrying a passenger," said Tommy Dodd. "That's all the more reason why we should play up our hardest."

"What are we carrying a thumping passenger for?" snorted Towle.

Tommy Dodd drew a deep breath.

"If we lose this match, I shall resign the captaincy!" he said curtly. "Now pile in and don't let's have any more jaw. I'm fed-up!"

And the Modern innings started with Cook and Doyle at the wickets.

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle did their best, and their best was very good. They were exasperated with their chum, but they wanted to win; and with Cuffy on their backs, so to speak, no effort could be spared to pull the game out of the fire. And they did not want their chum to carry out his threat of resigning. With all his faults they loved him still, as it were.

The Classics went into the field, and Jimmy Silver bowled the first over. But the wickets stood through it, and there were runs. Mornington bagged Cook's wicket in the second over, and Conroy put Doyle to the rout soon afterwards. Towle was caught in the field by Putty.

Then Tommy Dodd, with a grim brow, came in to bat. It was a single innings game, and so all depended on the innings. Tommy Dodd, fortunately, was in great form, and he was nerved to do his very best, by the knowledge of the great handicap he had brought on his team by playing Cuffy.

He gave the Classical field plenty of leather-hunting, with Wadsley at the other end. The Modern fellows gathered round the field looked brighter as the runs piled up. Batsman after batsman came and went, and Tommy Dodd was still going strong.

"Bedad, and he's a broth of a boy, though a silly owl to play that dummy Cuffy!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Last man in?"

"That ass, Cuffy!"

Cuffy was last on the list. He picked up his bat with a cheery smile, and received an encouraging word from Mr. Cuffy as he left the pavilion.

"Play up, Clarence, my boy!"

"Yes, my dear father," said Cuffy. And he ambled across to the wicket and took up his stand there.

There was one ball left in the over, and Cuffy was to receive it. If only he stonewalled, thought Tommy Dodd, it would be all right. The next over would naturally come to Dodd.

But Cuffy was keen to show himself with the cricket bat, although he knew nothing whatever of the gentle art of wielding the willow. The ball came down from the bowler, a fairly simple one, and Tommy Dodd held his breath.

Cuffy, blinking from his crease, saw the little red sphere, swung his bat round to meet it, and—missed!

Crack!

Cuffy's bat hit the crease with terrific force, and as it was a particularly ancient willow, something had to go. It was the blade of the bat that went, parting company from its splice and flying like a rocket through the air. To Cuffy's astonishment he found himself a second later, with only the handle of the bat in his hand. He consoled himself with the thought, however, that his wicket was intact, even if his bat wasn't!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The field and the spectators fairly rocked with laughter, and Tommy Dodd, at his wicket, fairly howled with fury.

"Fool! Ass! Idiot!" he raved. "Can't you leave the batting to me?"

"My dear Thomas," said Cuffy, struggling to his feet, "I really think I had better do as you suggest. I fear I cannot—"

"Well, do so, ass," said Dodd. "I'll make the runs!"

A fresh bat was brought out to Cuffy, and the ball was tossed to the new bowler. Tommy Dodd prepared to meet him. Cuffy stood aside and watched his cousin deal with that little red sphere which seemed so elusive to him. Dodd set his teeth grimly, and nourished a faint hope that the game would be saved.

Even an ass like Cuffy ought to be able to keep his wicket up for a few overs, while Tommy did some more of his brilliant scoring. If Cuffy stonewalled steadily and patiently, that was all that was wanted.

The ball came down from Mornington, and Tommy drove it through the slips. Then he ran.

Cuffy didn't.

Dear Thomas had told him not to make runs; and Cuffy stood like a statue at his wicket. He regarded Tommy Dodd, as that youth came racing up the pitch, with a calm and interested eye. There was a roar round the field.

"Run, you ass!"

"You potty piffler, why don't you shift?"

"Get a move on, Cuffy!"

But Cuffy did not get a move on. He had been told not to take runs, and he wasn't taking any. He stood immovable. Tommy Dodd was within a few yards of him, red with fury. But Tommy realised that he would never make Cuffy understand in time, and he whirled round and raced back to his wicket.

Crash!

His bat was a yard off the crease when the ball came in. The wicket went to pieces, and there was a groan from the Moderns. Tommy Dodd stared at his wrecked wicket, and then he looked round at Cuffy. But he did not speak. There were no words in any dictionary, in any language, that could have done justice to the feelings of Thomas Dodd.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Caught Cuffy!

"SIXTY to beat," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "We could do it on our heads!"

Arthur Edward Lovell went in with Mornington to open the Classical innings. Tommy Dodd led his merry men into the field. Tommy Dodd's face, as a rule, was merry and bright on the playing-fields. Now it was neither merry nor bright; it was thunderous. By this time Tommy had deeply repented him that he had allowed good-nature and a kind consideration for an elderly gentleman to induce him to put the impossible Cuffy in the team. Repentance came too late, of course—the harm was done. Even the prospect of giving Cuffy a study licking after the match was only a slight consolation.

"Where do I field, my dear Thomas?" asked Cuffy mildly, as the Modern skipper placed his men.

"Anywhere you like, so long as you keep out of the way!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"But, my dear Thomas—"

"Hook it!" howled Tommy Dodd so ferociously that Clarence Cuffy hooked it without another syllable.

The Classical innings opened well.

But there were good bowlers on the Modern side, and the field was very good—with one exception. Cuffy was favoured with as much attention as the Classics could give him. But a catch from Towle in the slips put Arthur Edward Lovell out of action, and later on Tommy Dodd cleaned bowled Mornington, and after him, Erroll, and after him, Raby, in a single over, amid loud and ringing cheers from the Modern spectators.

Matters were looking up for the Modern side, and Tommy Dodd allowed himself to hope, and no longer yearned to kick Clarence Cuffy.

When the Classics were seven down for thirty runs the spirits of the Moderns rose high. From several quarters of the field ironical Classics called out to Tommy Dodd to put on Cuffy—to let Cuffy bowl. But Tommy was not likely to act on that advice. In spite of the handicap of Cuffy the Moderns were pulling ahead—till Jimmy Silver came to the wickets.

Then the runs piled up again, Jimmy adding twenty-four of his own before he was bowled by Cook. Tommy Dodd's spirits, which had risen high, were reduced almost to zero again, and again he began to think of kicking Cuffy.

"Last man in!" came the word at last.

Oswald was at the wickets, and Newcome came in to join him. Newcome had the bowling, and he was a good and reliable bat. The Classical score was at fifty-eight, and in the opinion of the Classics, all was over bar shouting.

Tommy Dodd went on to bowl, with a grim expression on his face. He sent down a careful ball, which Newcome snicked away for a single. The batsmen ran and made good before the ball came in, and the Classical fellows gave a cheer.

"One to tie, two to win!" Arthur Edward Lovell remarked to Jimmy Silver. "Oswald is good for a dozen. He's got the batting now."

Jimmy nodded.

The ball was fielded, and tossed back to Tommy Dodd. Tommy sent it down, but Oswald dealt with it easily enough. The ball rose from the willow and sailed away, and the white figures of the batsmen ran.

"Done!" grunted Tommy Doyle.

All eyes followed the flight of the ball. Then there was a yell.

"Cuffy!"

"Cuffy!" babbled Tommy Dodd.

It was amazing! It was incredible! During the innings Clarence Cuffy had grabbed after the ball several times, and had been shoved out of the way in the most unceremonious manner by the nearest fieldsmen. Now he grabbed at it again. True, it was not a difficult catch—for any fellow but Cuffy—and the flight of the ball had given even Cuffy a chance. He grabbed at it—and he held it! He did not even let it slip through his fingers as if his fingers were buttered. He held it—in his hand! He held it high and hard!

"Caught!"

"Caught, Cuffy!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Caught!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Caught, Cuffy! Oh, my hat! Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Oswald almost fell down as he saw what had happened. The Modern crowd yelled with merriment and relief. Cuffy's comrades surrounded him, laughing and cheering. Cuffy blinked at them in amazement.

"Have I done right, my dear Thomas?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes, right as rain!" gurgled Tommy Dodd. "What on earth made you catch it, Cuffy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" spluttered Clarence.

"Cuffy's won the match!" gasped Tommy Doyle.

Clarence Cuffy was marched off the field in the midst of an hilarious crowd of Moderns.

Everybody congratulated Clarence. And there was no doubt that Clarence was a fellow to be congratulated—he had had a narrow escape. For had the game been lost there was no doubt that Clarence's life would scarcely have been safe on the Modern side at Rookwood afterwards.

But, thanks to an amazing fluke, everything had turned out all right for Clarence Cuffy, the duffer, who had played his first and last cricket match.

THE END.

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