

THE ROOKWOOD BARRING-IN!

By
OWEN CONQUEST

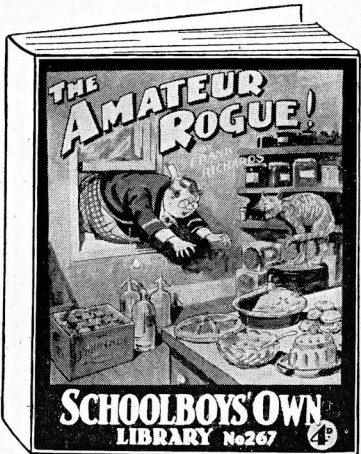


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THE ROOKWOOD BARRING-IN!

By OWEN CONQUEST



A tyrant of the worst type is Mr. Scroop. But Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, soon show their new headmaster where he gets off!

CHAPTER 1.

Not Wanted!

MORNINGTON of the Fourth Form at Rookwood knocked at the door of the end study, and came in.

There were seven juniors crowded in the study, and there was a loud buzz of voices raised in heated argument.

Mornington entered unnoticed.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the owners of the study, were all speaking at once; and so were Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle, their visitors from the Modern side.

The four Classics and the three Moderns were apparently trying to carry conviction by putting on steam

in argument, but none of them looked like being convinced.

The subject was cricket—cricket in general, and the St. Jim's match in particular.

Jimmy Silver, as junior captain, was monarch of all he surveyed when it came to making up the team for that great match. But Jimmy was scrupulously fair. His own side—the Classical side—was represented in the eleven by six places. Five Modern juniors were in.

Tommy Dodd's opinion was that five Classics would have been enough, if not too much, and that the sixth place belonged, almost by the laws of Nature, to a Modern.

To this contention the Fistical Four replied, with emphasis:

"Fathead!"

"Modern ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Chump!"

And the three Tommies simultaneously delivered their opinion of the Fistical Four:

"Silly cuckoos!"

"Silly chumps!"

"Yah!"

Mornington frowned impatiently. Not the slightest notice had been taken of his entrance. The Rookwood juniors were too busy slanging one another. Mornington was not accustomed to being passed unnoticed—at all events, he had not been accustomed to it before he came to Rookwood. Since coming there, he had had a good many experiences that he was not accustomed to.

His frowns passed as unnoticed as his entering. Neither Classics nor Moderns had any eyes for him.

"I don't mind you four being in the eleven," said Tommy Dodd. "I admit you can play."

"Thank you for nothing!" said Jimmy Silver.

"And Oswald, he's a good man; and so is Rawson. But you can't put in both Oswald and Rawson. The sixth place belongs to the Modern side."

"Rats!"

"Of course, you're captain," said Tommy Dodd.

"Just remembered that?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"But a cricket captain ought to have some sense," said Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, he ought!" said Tommy Doyle. "And a skipper with the sense of a bunny-rabbit would play six Moderns out of eleven. You see, we want to bate St. Jim's."

"That's it," said Tommy Cook. "If it wasn't an important match, it wouldn't matter so much. But we want to beat St. Jim's, and how we do that with Classical duffers crowding good players out of the team?"

"Silly ass!"

"Look here——"

"I'm putting in you three, and Towle, and Lacy," said Jimmy Silver. "Can't do better than that, and you can go and eat coke, you Modern duffers!"

"Look here, you chump——"

"I am waitin' to speak to you!" rapped out Mornington, quite losing patience at last.

"Wait, then, you Classical ass!" snapped Tommy Dodd, without looking round.

"Oh, join in the chorus, Mornington!" said Jimmy Silver. "Go ahead, kid. I shan't hear a word you say, with these duffers burbling. But go ahead!"

"It's about the cricket."

"What the thump do you know about cricket?" exclaimed Lovell, in astonishment.

"I am takin' up cricket."

"How good of you to come and tell us!" said Raby. "Good-bye!"

"Don't give me any impertinence!"

"Ha, ha! I'd give you a thick ear for two pins!" chuckled Raby. "Buzz off, you young ass, and don't play the giddy ox!"

"I want to speak to you, Silver. It is important," said Mornington, taking no further notice of Raby.

"Go ahead!"

"Yes, let's hear your views on cricket," said Tommy Dodd sarcastically. "They're bound to be interesting."

The Rookwood juniors all looked at Mornington, and grinned. Mornington had not shown any predilection for cricket before. He was a slacker, and much given to swank, and about the last fellow at Rookwood to make a good cricketer. This new departure rather amused Jimmy Silver & Co.

"I have had a letter from my guardian," explained Mornington. "You may be aware that my guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, is a governor of Rookwood."

"Can't say I was aware of it," yawned Jimmy Silver; "and I don't care twopence, anyway."

"You may be made to care!" growled Mornington.

"By gum!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Go ahead!" said Tommy Dodd encouragingly. "I'll have a bob each way on Sir Rupert Stacpoole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My guardian wishes me to take up cricket."

"Well, that shows his sense. Better than hanging about smoking cigarettes and betting on geegees—your usual game."

"That is my business."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Quite so! It's all your business, if you come to that, and I'm bothered if I can see what you're telling me about it for."

"I have come to you because you are junior cricket captain. I desire to play in the eleven."

"Go hon!"

"I wish to play against St. Jim's in the next match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Classicals and Moderns roared.

Mornington stared angrily at the merry juniors. Apparently he did not see anything extraordinary in his request.

"I have told you what I wish," he said angrily. "I am not used to having my remarks treated in this way."

"You'll get used to it in time," said Jimmy Silver blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you play me, or will you not?"

"Not!" said Jimmy promptly.

"Sir Rupert Stacpoole wishes it," said Mornington, evidently under the impression that the mere wish of a member of the governing body would clinch the matter, and that Jimmy Silver had nothing left but to bow down and obey, with proper meekness.

But Jimmy Silver only chortled.

"Lemme see," he remarked. "I believe this chap Stacpoole is a member of the House of Commons, isn't he? A rather prominent politician?"

"Yes."

"Well, drop him a line, and tell him

—"

"Yes?" said Mornington.

"Tell him to stick to politics and not to bother about things he doesn't understand, like cricket."

"What?"

"That's all," said Jimmy. "Give him my kind regards when you write. Good-bye!"

Mornington glared at the captain of the Fourth. He made a stride towards Jimmy Silver with his hands clenched. But he paused. He had tried that kind of thing with Jimmy before, with painful results to himself.

"You will not play me?" he exclaimed.

"Nix."

"You dare to disregard a governor of the school?"

"Yes; I think I can screw up enough courage for that if the governor's ass enough to meddle in our cricket affairs," said Jimmy.

"I shall ask him to speak to the Head."

"Right-ho!"

"You will be punished."

"Ha, ha!"

The juniors laughed merrily. Morn-

ington's idea that he could "carry on" in the Fourth Form at Rookwood as he had done at home never ceased to tickle them.

"This chap ought to be on the cinema," said Tommy Dodd. "He's wasted at Rookwood."

"He was born to be a funny merchant," admitted Jimmy Silver. "He gets richer every day. Run away and play, Mornington!"

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"Then you will not let me enter the cricket?" he explained.

"Oh, yes! I'd be glad to see you turn up at practice," said Jimmy Silver good-naturedly. "I'd give you some coaching, if you liked."

"You can do that when I ask it," said Mornington arrogantly.

"Very well, I'll leave it till then," said Jimmy, unmoved.

"You will not play me?"

"No, you ass! If you show on the cricket ground that you're better than a chap in the eleven, you'll be given his place. Not till then."

"Very well. I shall take no further notice of your team, but shall raise an eleven myself, captain it myself, and run it quite independently," said Mornington.

"Ha, ha!"

"I shall issue challenges, and fix up matches, and my eleven will be regarded as the junior eleven of Rookwood. You will not be allowed to stop me."

"Bless your little heart, I don't want to stop you!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Go ahead! I'll be jolly glad to see you playing a decent game, instead of slacking and smoking and dodging off to the races on a half-holiday. But you can't call yourself the Rookwood junior eleven. That's us."

"I shall do so!"

"Oh, all right! Do so, and be blowed!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now, run away—your face worries me!"

"You shall suffer for your imperti-

nence," said Mornington, between his teeth. "My guardian——"

"Oh, bless your guardian!"

"He has great influence with the Head——"

"Bow-wow!"

"He is chairman of the governors, and can——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I shall report your insolence to him——"

Jimmy Silver jumped up, quite out of patience.

"Report away!" he said. "Report at the same time that I chucked you out of my study on your neck!"

"Hand off! I—— Ah! Oh!"

Mornington went spinning through the doorway.

He landed in the passage with a bump.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver slammed the door.

Mornington did not return. In the end study the argument was resumed, and the juniors soon forgot all about him. The argument was warm, and it seemed to consist, chiefly of "Fat-head!" "Duffer!" "Classical ass!" "Modern worm!" "Yah!"

CHAPTER 2.

Mornington's New Wheeze!

"A NYTHING wrong?" Townsend of the Fourth asked that question as Mornington came into his study. Townsend and Topham, the dandies of the Fourth, were there. Rawson, the scholarship boy, who shared the study with them, was out. Rawson seldom stayed in the study excepting to work. He did not find the society of the elegant slackers of Rookwood at all congenial.

That something was wrong was evident from Mornington's frowning brow, and the dusty state of his jacket. Towny and Topy had heard a bump along the passage, too.

"Yes!" snapped Mornington.

"Sorry!" said Townsend politely.

"Have a smoke, old chap!"

Mornington accepted a cigarette.

"I want you fellows to back me up," he said, as he blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Any old thing!" said Topham. "If it's another run down to the races, though, you can excuse me. It panned out rather badly last time."

"It isn't that. It's cricket!"

"Oh, gad!"

"I've decided to take up cricket," said Mornington. "My guardian wants me to. He's rather a decent old chap, and always lets me do exactly as I like, and I'd like to please him."

"Oh, quite!" said Townsend, rather surprised. He had never supposed that Mornington wanted to please anybody but himself.

"Silver won't give me a place in the eleven."

"Ahem! Won't he?"

"No. I'm goin' to raise a new eleven and knock Jimmy Silver's team out," said Mornington. "I'm goin' to make it the junior eleven of Rookwood."

"Oh, gad!"

"Smythe of the Shell tried knockin' out Silver's team just before you came to Rookwood," said Topham. "It didn't work."

"Smythe's a silly ass!"

"Well, yes. But how are you goin' to do it?"

"Pick out the best cricketers I can find, and go ahead."

"But—but will they play for you?"

Mornington raised his eyebrows.

"I suppose so. I'll pay 'em."

"Pay them!" repeated Townsend.

"Yaas!"

"You—you'll offer fellows money to play for you?" exclaimed Topham, his eyes opening wide.

"That's the idea."

"My word!"

"I shall get a good team together, I think—selected from both Classics

and Moderns," said Mornington. "I shall captain it myself."

"But—but can you captain a team?"

"Of course I can!"

"I mean, have you tried?"

"Oh, yaas! At home I've played sometimes, when we had a cricket week. I was considered rather good."

"H'm!"

"Anyway, I'm goin' to try. I've got pots of money, and that's the chief thing. I'll put you fellows in my team for a start, and then go round lookin' for recruits."

"You want me to captain the team?"

"Don't be an ass, Townsend. I've told you I'm skipper."

"Well, I suppose I could play for you," said Townsend, with a grin. "You'll play, too, Topsy, and start the ball rollin'."

"Oh, certainly!" said Topham.

"That's all right!" said Mornington. "You two, to begin with. I'll soon make up the eleven, I think. I think I shall be able to bag some of Silver's men, by offerin' good terms."

"Money, do you mean?"

"Yaas!"

Townsend said no more. He had never dreamed that even this purse-proud "bounder" could be duffer enough to entertain such an idea. But he did not care to quarrel with the wealthy Mornington—his friendship was too valuable for that. He left it to Mornington to discover his mistake for himself. He did not think it would take long.

Mornington left the study, to begin at once with his recruiting. Townsend and Topham looked at one another and grinned.

"Of all the asses——" said Townsend.

"Of all the chumps——" said Topham.

"I fancy Morny's goin' to meet with a surprise."

"What-ho! Ha, ha!"

Mornington did not let the grass grow under his feet. He looked in at Flynn's

study. Flynn was a reserve for the junior eleven, and often played in the matches. He was a good cricketer. He had had some "rubs" with Mornington, but it suited Mornny to forget all about that now.

"Hallo!" said Flynn cheerily enough. "If you've come to tay, you're too late!"

"I haven't come to tea," said Mornington haughtily. His "spreads" in his own study were superb, and he looked with a disdainful eye upon the usual "feeds" of the Rookwood juniors. "I'm makin' up a cricket eleven, and I'd like you to play for me."

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn grinned.

"Thank ye!" he said. "I'm booked!"

"You're not playing for the junior eleven?"

"Sure, I play sometimes, and I'm always in reserve."

"I can offer you better terms than Silver."

Flynn looked puzzled.

"Faith, and I don't understand ye!" he said. "What terms are ye spakin' of intirely?"

"I'm goin' to pay my men."

"Oh, howly mother av Moses!"

"I shall pay a retainin' fee of five shillin's a week, and a guinea for each match," said Mornington. "If you like to put your name down, here's five bob in advance."

Flynn jumped up.

"Is it yer dirty money ye're offerin' me, ye spalpeen?" he roared. "Do ye think Paddy Flynn wants your money?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders. "You're pretty hard up, I believe," he said. "I'll make the terms a bit better if you like. I've got plenty of tin."

"Ye may have plenty of tin, but ye're short of sinse and manners," said Flynn contemptuously. "Get along wid ye!"

"Look here, will you play in my eleven?"

"I wouldn't be found dead in it at all, at all!"

"You silly fool——"

"Phwat!"

"You silly, cheeky fathead—— Yaroooooh!"

Mornington found himself on the floor before he could finish, hardly knowing how he had got there.

Flynn danced round him, with brandished fists.

"Do ye want any more?" he roared. "If ye do, jump up and have it!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Ye thafe of the worruld! Ye cad-dish, rotten, purse-proud, ill-mannered spalpeen!"

Mornington struggled to his feet. He made a rush at Flynn, and was met by a drive on the chest which knocked him clean through the doorway.

He did not come back again.

Painfully he picked himself up and limped away. Flynn snorted after him, and slammed the door. He was greatly inclined to mop up the passage with him, but he generously refrained.

"The thafe of the worruld!" murmured Flynn. "Afther offering me his dirty money, bedad! Br-r-r-r!"

Mornington's recruiting work had not started well.

CHAPTER 3.

Recruits Wanted!

THAT evening there were many smiles and chuckles among the Classical Fourth of Rookwood School.

Mornington's stated intention of raising a new junior eleven, and putting Jimmy Silver's eleven entirely in the shade, was productive of endless mirth.

Mornington had appeared on the cricket ground a few times, but his performances there had not impressed the Rookwood fellows with his prowess as a cricketer.

His chief idea seemed to be to take up a swanking attitude at the wicket and to be bowled out first or second ball.

How he would captain an eleven if he got one together was a puzzle; and how he would get one together at all was a greater puzzle.

His own friends were mostly willing to join in the scheme, simply because they had their own reasons for keeping in with him. Mornington, with his endless supplies of cash, was a horn of plenty to needy fellows who were not too particular where their supplies came from.

Most of the "nuts" made it a great point to be on good terms with him, and they submitted to his dictatorial tones, and his almost insufferable arrogance, for what his friendship was worth to them.

Most of them would have played in his team, not with any idea of winning matches, but simply in order not to part with their horn of plenty.

The difficulty was, that that kind of fellow wasn't worth much as a cricketer.

It was useless to take into the field eleven fellows who would be bowled without taking runs. Mornington did not wish to provide a procession to and from the pavilion for the amusement of a laughing crowd.

For that reason he did not ask Smythe & Co, of the Shell to join his team. He knew what Adolphus Smythe's cricket was like—very like his own, as a matter of fact, though he did not realise that.

Peele of the Fourth put his name down; but that day Mornington's team consisted of only three beside himself, and he could not lay the flattering unction to his soul that they were three of the best.

But he was far from being discouraged.

He had always found that "money made the mare go." He had been flattered and fooled to any extent for his wealth's sake, and he fully expected the Rookwood fellows to be influenced in the same way.

Flynn, certainly, was a bad begin-

ning. But he was convinced that Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was an exception.

That evening a notice appeared on the board in the handwriting of Mornington. It was read with many chortles by the Classical Juniors.

Fellows gathered before that notice, to chuckle and grin, as if Mornington were a humorist who was labouring solely for their entertainment.

The notice ran, in a very elegant hand, and with capitals here and there to add to the effect:

"NOTICE!

"Mornington, of the Fourth Form, is raising a new Junior Eleven, which will be the official Junior Eleven of Rookwood.

"Cricketers desiring to play in Mornington's team are requested to apply to Study No. 4. Generous terms to good players.

"(Signed) MORNINGTON, Captain."

"Sure, it takes the cake!" said Flynn. "The silly spalpeen is going to offer fellows money to play for him."

"Out-and-out cad!" said Oswald.

"Purse-proud boulder!" commented Jones minor.

"I wonder how many applicants there will be?" grinned Rawson. "I don't think there will be a rush."

"Ha, ha!"

"By gum, I'm on this!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin, the fat boy of the Fourth. "This is where I come in! Generous terms to good cricketers! Well, I'm a good cricketer, ain't I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going to see Mornington," said Muffin defiantly. "I'm going to play for him, and some of you fellows will open your eyes when you see me bowling."

"Duck our heads, more likely," chuckled Rawson.

"Oh, rats!"

Tubby rushed away at once to Study No. 4.

He found Mornington there, yawning over his prep. Mornington had a study to himself, most luxuriously appointed at his own expense. He enjoyed many luxuries that were denied to the other fellows.

He stared at Tubby far from politely when the fat Classical came in.

"What do you want, you young raga-muffin?" he asked.

"I'm your man!" said Tubby.

"What?"

"I'm going to join your team."

"You young ass!"

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Tubby indignantly. "Ain't you advertising for cricketers? I'm a jolly good cricketer!"

"I'm makin' up an eleven, not a raree-show!" growled Mornington. "Run away and don't be an ass!"

Tubby glared at him indignantly.

"I tell you I'm a first-rate cricketer. Look here, if you're going to make up an eleven, you'll want somebody. Decent fellows won't have anything to do with you, you know—I—I mean other decent fellows. They'd feel insulted at your offering 'em money. I happen to be stoney, so—"

"Buzz off!"

"You'd better take me in," urged Tubby. "You can't get any of the good cricketers; they wouldn't touch your team with a barge-pole, you know. Besides, most of the chaps can't stand a swanking cad. I can."

"Get out!" shouted Mornington.

"You'd better think it over," said Tubby anxiously. "What are those generous terms you are offering?"

"Five shillin's a week, and a guinea a match," said Mornington. "But you're no good, you fat fool. Clear off!"

"Well, I can play quite as well as you can, you know. I've seen the fellows simply splitting their sides when you've been batting. Here, I say, leggo my car!" yelled Tubby.

Mornington did not let go. Tubby's painful truths had not pleased him. He

twisted poor Tubby's ear till the unfortunate Muffin yelled in anguish.

"Yow-ow-wow! Leggo, you bully! I'll kick you! Yarocoop! Help!"

"Hallo, what's the row?" said Jimmy Silver's voice, and he looked into the study. "Who's committing homicide here?" Jimmy's brow darkened as he saw Tubby wriggling in Mornington's grip. "Let that kid alone at once, you bullying cad!"

"Mind your own business!" shouted Mornington.

"Let him go!"

"I won't!"

"Then you'll be made to!" said Jimmy Silver coolly, and he advanced on Mornington with his hands up.

Mornington gave him a glare of defiance, and gave Tubby's ear another cruel twist, eliciting a wild yell from Tubby Muffin.

The next instant Jimmy Silver's grip was on Mornington.

The weedy, seedy slacker was an infant in Jimmy Silver's powerful hands. Jimmy whirled him off his feet, and swung him down on the study table, sending books and papers and ink-pot flying far and wide.

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Tubby. "Give him a hiding, Silver! I was only offering to play cricket for the cad, and he went for me like a tiger! Groooh!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Mornington, struggling furiously.

Jimmy's strong grip pinned him down to the table.

"Not just yet," said Jimmy. "You've got to learn not to bully little chaps like Tubby, my son. Tubby, take hold of his ears, and twist them. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Wouldn't I just!" grinned Tubby.

"Oh! Ah! Yarocoh!" roared Mornington, as Tubby grasped his ears, one in either hand, and twisted them with great vim.

"How do you like it yourself, you beast?" chuckled Tubby.

"Go it, Tubby!"

"I'm going it."

"Yow-ow-ow! Stoppit! Oh, dear! How dare you touch me! Let me go!"

"That's enough, Tubby."

"Hadh't I better give him some more?" asked Tubby anxiously. "I ain't tired yet, Jimmy Silver!"

"Ha, ha! No, that will do."

"Well, just one more twlst!"

"Yaroooop!"

"Chuck it!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now cut off, Tubby, before I let him go!"

"Oh, rather!" said Tubby promptly; and he vanished.

Jimmy whirled Mornington off the table, pitched him into a corner, and walked out of the study.

He left him panting with rage, and rubbing his ears. His ears—his own lordly ears—had been pulled!

Mornington was almost more astonished than enraged. It seemed really like a bad dream. It was scarcely credible that his ears had really been pulled. But they had.

CHAPTER 4.

Tommy Dodd's Reply!

TOMMY DODD & CO. were chatting in the quadrangle, after morning lessons the next day, when Mornington came up.

The three Tommies greeted him with a smile.

They had heard all about his notice on the board, and they were greatly interested in the progress of his new eleven.

"Getting on rippingly with the cricket?" asked Tommy Dodd affably. "Is the new eleven blooming like a rose?"

"I should like you fellows to play for me," said Mornington, constraining himself to speak civilly.

Tommy Dodd shook his head sadly.

"We're booked," he said, in a sorrowful tone, "otherwise we should jump at the chance—simply jump at it—I don't think!"

"I know you're in Silver's eleven now. I want you to leave him!"

"Not exactly Silver's eleven. It's the School Junior Eleven, and Silver happens to be the skipper!"

"Well, will you leave it, and play for my team?" said Mornington. "I'll make it worth your while!"

"You'll shed the light of yer countenance on us, and allow us to call you Morny?" asked Tommy Doyle, with great seriousness.

"You'll let us swank about knowing you?" asked Tommy Cook. "You'll allow us to refer to you as our friend?"

Mornington scowled. He was no fool, and he knew when his leg was being pulled.

"Look here, come to business. You don't make anythin' out of cricket. I'm offerin' you a chance to make somethin' decent out of it!"

"Money, of course?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Yaas."

Cook and Doyle made a movement, but Tommy Dodd signed to them to be quiet.

"How much?" he asked blandly.

"Five shillin's a week regular, and a guinea for each match."

"That's jolly generous!"

"I can afford to be generous," said Mornington loftily. "I've plenty of tin!"

"Yes, I've noticed that," assented Tommy Dodd. "You don't hide your light under a bushel where money's concerned."

"Well, will you accept the offer?"

Tommy Dodd smiled at his chums.

"Will we accept it, dear boys?" he asked. "Will we? It's so ripping of him to offer to pay us for our services."

"The rotten cad——" began Cook.

"Look here, give me your answer—yes or no!" snapped Mornington. "I've no time to waste on you!"

"That's where we differ," said Tommy Dodd cheerily. "We've got some time to waste on you, just to teach you not to be a howling cad, dear boy. Collar him!"

"Hands off!"

"Duck him in the fountain!" said Tommy Dodd. "A ducking will cool him. He looks rather heated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the grasp of the three laughing Moderns, Mornington was rushed to the fountain in Little Quad, his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

Splash!

"Gerrrooogh!"

The three Tommies sauntered away, leaving their victim to wriggle out of the big granite basin.

He wriggled out, streaming with water, puffing and blowing, and red with rage.

He shook a dripping fist after the three Tommies, and dashed away towards the School House. Townsend and Topham met him in full career, and stared at him.

"Ye gods!" said Topham.

"Been getting wet?" said Townsend—rather a superfluous question.

Mornington was drenched.

"It's those Modern cads!" gasped Mornington. "I'm goin' to Bootles about it!"

"Yes, do," said Townsend.

Mornington rushed into the House, leaving his dear friends grinning.

Morny never received much sympathy from his dear friends in his little mishaps. Indeed, they might have been suspected of enjoying them.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, jumped up in amazement as Mornington dashed into his study, drenched and dripping.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "What—what does this mean? What—what?"

"I—I—"

"Go and change your clothes at once! You will catch cold! You careless boy, you are spoiling my carpet!"

"I tell you, sir—"

"Go and change your clothes!"

"But I—"

"Will you obey me?" thundered Mr. Bootles. "Change your clothes immediately, and take a hundred lines for

coming into my study in that state! Go!"

The Form-master pushed the drenched junior out of the study.

Mornington, panting with rage, hurried away to the Fourth-Form dormitory. He was beginning to shiver, and his teeth were chattering.

In the dormitory he tore off his drenched clothes and rubbed himself down with a towel furiously. Four faces looked in at the doorway while he was so engaged.

Mornington glared at the Fistical Four, and went on rubbing.

Jimmy Silver gave him a quiet look.

"I hear you're going to Bootles to sneak about the Modern chaps, Mornington?" he said.

"Mind your own business!"

"This is the business of all the Fourth. You insulted the Modern kids, though you're too utter a cad to understand that, and you deserve all you've got! You won't sneak about them!"

"I shall do as I choose!" panted Morny.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"That's so; I can't prevent you from sneaking if you choose. But I promise you, honour bright, a Form licking if you do. You've had that once before, and you know what it's like!"

"You rotter!"

"Nuff said. If Tommy Dodd is called up on the carpet, you get a Form licking. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away without another word.

Mornington finished rubbing himself dry, and changed his clothes, and left the dormitory. But he did not go to Mr. Bootles' study. He knew by painful experience what a Form licking was like, and he didn't want to repeat the experience.

The three Tommies were not called "on the carpet," neither were they approached with any more of Mornington's generous offers. Places in his eleven were no longer open to those three humorous youths.

CHAPTER 5.

Challenge Not Accepted!

DURING the next few days Jimmy Silver noted with a humorous eye the progress of Mornington as a cricket captain.

Mornington was at least in deadly earnest.

Unfortunately for him, the fellows who could play cricket were generally fellows who were inclined to knock him down for offering them money for their services.

It soon became clear, even to him, that if he raised an eleven at all, it would be an eleven "of sorts."

But he did not give in.

He had said that he would raise an eleven, and he was determined to carry out his words. And there were fellows on both sides of Rookwood who were amenable to the cash argument, though they were not much in the cricket line.

Leggett of the Modern side was an early recruit. Leggett didn't care for cricket, but he cared a great deal for money. For want of better material, Mornington accepted Leggett, which brought his team to the number of five, including himself.

Then he accepted the services of Selwyn and Chesney of the Shell, those two members of the Giddy Goats' Society having been hard hit on a late race, and in need of cash. Dickinson minor joined up next, and then Hooker. They took the cricket part of the arrangement as a joke, but the cash came in very useful to them. Wegg of the Third came in next.

The team then numbered ten, but an eleventh man was sought in vain on both sides of Rookwood.

At last Mornington accepted the services of Tubby Muffin, that plump youth forgiving and forgetting for the sake of cash in hand.

The eleven was then complete.

The first time it went down to practice half Rookwood went to watch it. There were shouts of laughter as a reward for the efforts of Mornington's team.

The Fistical Four almost wept as they watched.

The cricket was a sight, as Jimmy Silver remarked, for gods and men and little fishes.

Half the team were grinning, quite conscious of the show they made, few of them taking it seriously.

But it was an eleven, at all events. Morny had carried out his threat so far.

Winning matches with such an eleven was quite a different matter.

Mornington, however, had a high idea of his powers as a skipper, and did not despair of licking his team into shape.

As a matter of fact, he required a good deal of licking into shape himself before he was fit to appear in a cricket match. Of that, however, he was quite unaware.

The eleven having been formed, and having had some practice, he looked out for fresh worlds to conquer.

His idea of claiming to be the junior eleven of Rookwood, and of sending out challenges to neighbouring teams, was still in his head. But he felt that, as a preliminary step, it was up to the new eleven to beat Jimmy Silver & Co. on the cricket-field.

Had Morny known even a little about the great game of cricket, he would have known that his sorry team had no chance of beating Jimmy Silver & Co.

But ignorance, as the poet has remarked, is bliss. Mornington's idea seemed to be that with first-rate leadership—his leadership—the team would give a very good account of themselves.

Hence he lost no time in issuing a challenge to Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were discussing the forthcoming match with St. Jim's one evening in the end study, when Snooks of the Second arrived, with a letter in his hand and a grin on his face.

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Lovell.

"Letter from Mornington," said Snooks, grinning.

"Put it in the fire."

"Don't you want to read it?"

"No, thanks!"

"Mornington's given me a tanner to bring this," said Snooks.

"Well, you've earned your tanner. Chuck it in the fire."

Snooks chortled, and threw the letter into the fire, and departed from the study, still chortling.

About ten minutes later Mornington came in, with a frowning brow.

"I sent you a letter, Silver!" he exclaimed.

"Did you?" yawned Jimmy. "Why couldn't you come and bring your message yourself, you thumping ass?"

"It was a written challenge."

"You can send as many as you like, dear boy. They'll all go the same way."

"I challenge you to meet my team on the cricket-field!" exclaimed Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be so jolly funny!" urged Raby. "Cricket isn't really a laughing matter. Run away and learn the difference between a bat and a bowler, and then begin to talk cricket."

"I intend to beat your team, and take my place as junior captain of Rookwood, Silver!" exclaimed Morny arrogantly.

The Fistical Four roared.

"You are afraid to meet me?"

"Simply trembling," said Jimmy Silver blandly. "Do I look pale, Lovell?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington looked at the four hilarious juniors with knitted brows and gleaming eyes.

"Do you refuse my challenge?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!"

"And why?"

"Rather too funny to meet a team like yours," grinned Jimmy Silver. "We're not exactly anxious to make the junior eleven the laughing-stock of the school by playing a set of silly dummies."

"I will force you to meet me!"

"Go hon! Are you going to lick us

all round?" asked Newcome sarcastically.

Mornington swung out of the study and slammed the door. The Fistical Four chuckled loud and long. But they were not done with Mornington and his challenge yet.

CHAPTER 6.

Mornington Has His Way!

"SEEN the notice, Jimmy?" Dick Oswald asked the question as Jimmy Silver came downstairs.

"Anything on?" asked Jimmy. "I haven't seen it."

"Another notice from Mornington, bedad!" said Flynn.

"Oh, bother Mornington!"

"But it's about you."

Jimmy Silver grunted, and walked over to the notice-board. But he opened his eyes as he read the paper there, in Mornington's elegant hand. It ran:

"NOTICE TO ALL ROOKWOOD!

"J. Silver having refused the challenge of Mornington's eleven to a match, he is hereby denounced to all the school as a coward and no cricketer. Mornington's eleven is prepared to meet Silver's eleven on any half-holiday when Silver's eleven can pluck up enough courage.

"MORNINGTON."

Jimmy Silver frowned.

He jerked the notice from the board, and tore it into pieces, and walked away with a moody brow.

Ten minutes later another paper, in the same strain, was pinned up on the board. Then Jimmy Silver went to look for Mornington.

He found him in the Common-room, with some of his eleven. They grinned at Jimmy Silver.

"Plucked up your courage yet, Silver?" asked Chesney.

"Screw it up and try your luck," advised Leggett.

"I've got a bone to pick with you, Mornington," said Jimmy Silver angrily. "You've called me names in your precious notice!"

"I've stated the facts," said Mornington calmly.

"Well, if you put that paper on the board again you'll get a licking!" said the captain of the Fourth angrily. "I've had enough of your rot!"

"I shall put it on again, in stronger language, unless you accept the challenge, or admit that you're a humbug and an impostor," said Mornington coolly.

"What?" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Humbug and impostor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands. Mornington put his hands behind him.

"I'm not goin' to fight you," he said. "I've fought you before, and you've licked me. I own up to that. But at cricket I can lick you, if you don't sneak out of the match. And you're a funk if you refuse."

Jimmy Silver paused.

He could not punch a fellow who put his hands behind him, and there was, as he had to admit, a certain amount of reason in Mornington's new attitude. The fellow really fancied that he could beat the junior eleven, absurd as it was.

"Look here," said Jimmy, more calmly. "I can't meet your eleven, because I can't make the junior eleven look silly asses by playing such a match. I won't lick you, though. You can go on playing the giddy ox till you're black in the face."

And Jimmy stalked away.

The next morning there was a new notice on the board, couched in the stronger language Mornington had referred to. It ran:

"Members of the junior eleven are advised to chuck a skipper who is afraid to meet a team that can make rings round him. Mornington, the new junior skipper, is prepared to accept them in his team.

"Don't stick to a funk!

"(Signed) MORNINGTON."

Jimmy Silver snorted at the sight of that notice, and the other fellows grinned, wondering what the captain of the Fourth would do.

Jimmy Silver went out into the quad, looking moody. He felt that this kind of thing could not be allowed to go on; but there seemed no way of stopping it, save by playing Mornington's ridiculous team.

And that Jimmy was determined never to do. As for "hammering" Morny, that was easy enough; but quite useless. Mornington was a swanker and a duffer, and several other things, but he had pluck and determination, and any amount of hammering would not have stopped him.

Tommy Dodd joined Jimmy Silver in the quad, with a grin on his face.

"Seen the new notice?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Jimmy Silver.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing!"

"It ought to be stopped," said Tommy.

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"I've got an idea," pursued the Modern junior.

"Go and boil it!" said Jimmy ungraciously. "I've got no use for Modern ideas!"

"You ought to be glad to hear it, considering that you never have an idea of your own," urged Tommy Dodd.

"Look here, you Modern ass——"

"But it's really a good wheeze," said Tommy Dodd. "It will put the stopper on that silly ass Mornington."

"Well, get it off your chest!"

"Play them!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Fathead!" howled Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "I'm not going to play them. They can't play cricket. I'm not going to make the eleven look a set of funny idiots, playing cricket with those thumping duffers!"

"That's the only way to stop Mornington's rot!"

"Well, I'm not going to do it!"

"I haven't told you the wheeze yet."

"Br-r-r! You're jolly long-winded

about it!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Can't you explain instead of jawing?"

Tommy Dodd proceeded to explain.

Jimmy Silver's face gradually cleared as he listened. He grinned—and then burst into a laugh.

Then he gave Tommy Dodd a hearty thump on the shoulder.

"Good for you!" he exclaimed. "Topping! How the dickens did a Modern ass come to think of a wheeze like that?"

"Well, we've got all the brains in Rookwood on our side, you know," said Tommy Dodd modestly.

"Bow-wow! But we'll do it!" said Jimmy laughing. "I'll go and tell Mornington at once that his challenge is accepted."

Mornington was lounging in the quadrangle with Townsend and Topham. He gave Jimmy a supercilious smile as he came up.

"Plucked up courage yet?" grinned Topham.

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes; just got it to the sticking-point," he said calmly. "Your challenge is accepted, Mornington. I'll play you on Saturday afternoon!"

"Good!" said Mornington. "Look out for a licking!"

"Yes, I won't fail to do that," said Jimmy. "I shall make my will before I meet your team. A chap playing your lot will be in danger of dying of laughing."

And Jimmy walked away in high good-humour, leaving Morny satisfied, too, though his friends were looking rather dubious. For in Mornington's team, he himself was the only individual who imagined that the new eleven had the slightest ghost of a chance.

The news soon spread that Mornington's challenge had been accepted, and Jimmy Silver was assailed by Lovell and Raby and Newcome and Oswald and Rawson in a body. They looked in-

clined to "mop up" their leader on the spot.

"What are you playing at?" roared Lovell wrathfully. "You're going to take out our eleven to be cackled at, playing that set of weird cuckoos."

"You awful ass!" said Raby. "You've let Mornington bamboozle you into playing his one-eyed team! You fathead!"

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy Silver soothingly, "and put your money on your Uncle James! Uncle James knows what he's about!"

"Fathead!" said Rawson. "We shall look a lot of duffers playing them. They hardly know one end of a bat from the other!"

"Quite so!"

"Hark at him!" gasped Lovell. "Quite so! And he's asking us to play them. Well, I'm standing out!"

"Quite so!" said Jimmy, unmoved. "I'm leaving you out, Lovell!"

"You can leave me out, too!" growled Raby.

"Me, too!" said Newcome.

"I'm going to," said Jimmy.

"Make a clean sweep, and leave us all out," said Rawson sarcastically.

"Just what I'm going to do!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I'm playing Tommy Dodd—it was his idea."

"And who are you playing besides Tommy Dodd?" demanded Oswald.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Nobody!" he said serenely.

His chums stared blankly for a moment. Then the "wheeze" burst upon them, and they yelled.

CHAPTER 7.

A Remarkable Match!

MORNINGTON led his merry men to the cricket-ground on Saturday afternoon with a lofty stride.

He was in high feather.

He had forced Jimmy Silver to accept his challenge—or he believed he had—and, with his marvellous powers of

leadership, he was going to lead his scratch eleven to distinguished victory. That was how he looked at it. His team looked at it in a rather different light. They felt that they were going like lambs to the slaughter.

Stumps were pitched at two o'clock. Mornington & Co. were quite ready. Promptly as two rang out from the clock-tower on the Modern side, Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd came down the field in flannels, with their bats under their arms.

Lovell and Raby and the rest came after them, but not in flannels. They gathered with the other spectators on the ground. There were a good many spectators; the Rookwood juniors took the affair humorously, and they did not wish to miss the entertaining sight of Mornington's eleven playing cricket.

"Ready?" asked Mornington, as Jimmy Silver came up, smiling.

"Quite!"

"Your team isn't here," said Townsend.

"Yes it is!"

"Where?"

"Here," said Jimmy Silver, tapping Tommy Dodd on the shoulder. "Here's my team!"

"Dodd? But the rest?" asked Mornington, puzzled.

"There isn't any rest," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "I'm playing nine men short!"

"Nine men short!" yelled Mornington.

"Yes."

"You silly ass, you can't—you shan't—"

"I can please myself, I suppose?" said Jimmy Silver. "All my other men are crooked—they saw you playing cricket yesterday, and it was too much for them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you're going to play the fool——" began Mornington furiously.

"Exactly—or, to be more correct,

eleven fools!" said Jimmy Silver agreeably.

Some of the new eleven grinned sheepishly. Some of them, at least, knew that Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd could have played the heads off the whole team, twice over.

Mornington was red with anger.

The crowd had caught on, now, and there was a roar of laughter all round the cricket-field. The idea of a team of two playing a cricket-match struck the Rookwood fellows as comic.

"I won't play you, on those terms," shouted Mornington.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"You can play us on those terms or not at all," he said. "I can bring any team I choose into the field, I suppose? If you beat my team, you're the junior eleven of Rookwood."

"Certainly!" said Tommy Dodd, with a grin. "Beat us, and you can swank no end. There's a temptation for you, Morny!"

Townsend pressed Mornington's arm.

"Play them, you ass!" he whispered. "We might pull it off, and lick them—we might, on those terms. If they're licked, they're licked."

Mornington calmed down. He realised that a victory was a victory, and would count as such, even though brought about simply by Jimmy Silver's sense of humour.

"Mind you stick to that," he said "You can play any team you like; but when you're beaten, you're beaten!"

"Right as rain!"

"And then we're the acknowledged junior team of Rookwood?"

"Certainly, so far as I'm concerned—when you've beaten us!" said Jimmy Silver sweetly.

"Then it's a go!"

"Good! We're ready to begin when you are!"

The two skippers tossed for innings. Mornington had the luck, and he elected to bat first.

He opened the innings with Selwyn of the Shell. Jimmy Silver went on to

bowl against Mornington. Tommy Dodd went into the field. The sight of a single fieldsman doing all the fielding on his own made the Rookwooders roar. But Mornington's team were looking on with revived hopes. That they could have beaten Jimmy Silver's eleven they did not think for a moment; but they believed they had a chance of beating a team of two. At all events, they hoped so.

"Go it, Jimmy!" sang out Lovell.

Jimmy Silver, the champion junior bowler of Rookwood, could have caused anxiety even to such bats as Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth. It was child's play to him to mow down wickets like Mornington's.

The ball came down to Morny, who swiped at it, intending it to be a "sixer."

It wasn't a "sixer." For his bat did not touch the ball at all, but described a circle in the air, and he very nearly sat down on the wicket. But the wicket was already down, the bails scattered far and wide.

"How's that?" chirruped Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha! Out!"

"What price ducks' eggs?" shrieked Snooks of the Second.

Mornington glared at his wrecked wicket, and glared along the pitch at the smiling Jimmy. He gripped the cane handle of the bat, as if he would have liked to lay it about the captain of the Fourth—as was indeed the case. Then he walked off with a black brow, and Townsend came in.

Townsend meant to do his best. Only a little luck was required to beat a team of two.

But there was no luck for Towny. A ball, hot as a bullet from a rifle, knocked his wicket to pieces in a twinkling. There was a laugh from the crowd, and Townsend went out with pink cheeks.

After Townsend came Topham, Wegg, Chesney, and Leggett in turn. Each of them stayed long enough at

the wicket to have his stumps knocked over.

"The double hat trick!" grinned Lovell. "Oh, my hat! Good old Jimmy!"

"Well bowled, Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd, in the field, had his hands in his pockets. His hands were not wanted; he knew that the duffers would never score a hit against Jimmy Silver's bowling. Indeed, he was laughing too heartily to make catches, even if they had come his way.

"Over!" grinned the umpire.

The "field" crossed over.

Tommy Dodd took the ball at the other end, and Jimmy Silver went into the field, smiling serenely.

Mornington, with a face which Raby likened to that of a demon in a pantomime, stood looking on from the pavilion. It was a single-innings match, so his chances of distinguishing himself as a batsman were gone for ever. The victory he had promised himself was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. His feelings were Hunnish as he looked on.

Tommy Dodd gave Selwyn a fast ball, which Selwyn played in vain. It curled under his bat and knocked his middle stump out of the ground.

"Man in!" chortled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin came in. His leg stump was neatly lifted away by the next ball, and Tubby grinned and rolled away. He had earned his guinea easily, and that was all the cheerful Tubby cared about.

Peele was the next victim, clean bowled. Then came Dickinson minor, sharing his fate, leaving Hooker at the bowler's end, not out.

The innings was over.

"All down for nix!" chuckled Lovell, as the score went up—a big, round 0. Mornington's face was a study.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd came off the field lounging carelessly, and smiling sweetly.

"Nothing wanted to tie, and one to win," grinned Oswald. "Poor old Mornington! Look at his chivvy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're ready for our Innings, Mornington, when you're ready to go into the field," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Buck up! You may make a draw of it yet, if we do no better than you've done."

Tommy Dodd exploded into a cachinnation, at the idea of such a "draw."

Mornington clenched his fist; but he unclenched it again, and nodded sullenly, and led his merry men into the field.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd went to the wickets, watched with great glee by a grinning crowd. More than half Rookwood had gathered to watch that amazing match, and there were loud chortles on all sides.

Townsend was put on to bowl, against Tommy Dodd. Towny did his best—his very best.

But a dozen Townies could not have taken Tommy Dodd's wicket.

The Modern junior smiled, and knocked away the ball. The field went racing, and the two batsmen crossed the pitch.

The ball came in minutes too late. The batsmen could have taken another run if they had wanted it. But they didn't want it.

The match was won.

There was a roar of laughter over the victory. Mornington shook his fist at Jimmy Silver, and strode off the field, followed by yells of merriment. Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd strolled off, after that very brief innings.

"Looks like a win for us, what?" smiled Jimmy Silver. "Terrific game—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington strode away, his brow black and his eyes glinting. Even he had never been made to look so utterly ridiculous before. After him went his team. There was a guinea due to each of that remarkable collection of cricketers, and they meant that he

should pay up. There was a sound of loud voices and scuffling in Mornington's study shortly afterwards, which looked as if he had some intention of "bilking" his cricketers. If so, he was persuaded to do otherwise—for the players came away with their cash, and Mornington was left to sort himself out, in a very dusty and breathless state.

It was the first and last appearance of Mornington's eleven in the field. Only on that solitary occasion did it dawn, in all its glory, upon Rookwood. Then, laughed out of existence, it disappeared. But it was a long while before Rookwood ceased to chuckle over the freak match.

CHAPTER 8. Not Wanted!

THE bright May sun shone in at the windows of the Fourth-Form room at Rookwood. Jimmy Silver glanced towards the sunny windows many times with an expression of great satisfaction.

It was a beautiful day; the weather perfect for cricket. Jimmy Silver was in high spirits.

It was Wednesday, a half-holiday, and that afternoon St. Jim's were coming over for the match with Rookwood Juniors.

Jimmy Silver had reason to feel very "chippy."

His team, selected with great care from the cricketers on both sides of Rookwood, Classical and Modern, was in great form. The St. Jim's match was one of the hardest fights of the season, and Jimmy Silver liked a well-fought game. And the weather was ideal.

Hence the cheery smile that dwelt on Jimmy Silver's pleasant face, even while Mr. Bootles was waxing sarcastic over his construing.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, his

chums, shared his high spirits. So did Tommy Dodd & Co., the heroes of the Modern side. So did every fellow who was playing in the match that afternoon.

And, curiously enough, Mornington and his friends, the slackers of the Fourth, seemed remarkably cheery, too, though as far as cricket was concerned they were hopelessly "out of it."

Smiles were exchanged among Mornington, Townsend, Topham & Co., and sometimes they glanced at Jimmy Silver and winked at one another.

Something seemed to be "on" among the "nuts" of the Fourth, as Jimmy Silver might have noticed had he been less occupied with his own affairs.

But Jimmy had no eyes or thoughts for the nuts of Rookwood now. Least of all had he a thought to waste upon the sullen, arrogant Mornington. Mornington was not looking so sullen as usual now, but his smile had something sardonic in it.

Mr. Bootles found his class somewhat trying that morning.

In such weather, and with such a prospect for the afternoon, the Rookwood Fourth found the class-room intolerably stuffy and boresome, and they would gladly have dispensed with the valuable knowledge their Form-master was imparting to them.

But everything comes to an end at last; and so did morning lessons that day—to the relief of the Fourth, and probably of their master as well.

The juniors streamed out of the Form-room in great spirits.

"That's over, thank goodness!" said Jimmy Silver. "I thought Bootles would be detaining some of us once or twice. But he's a brick! The way Mornington construed was enough to make a hippopotamus weep."

"What is the beggar grinning about?" asked Lovell.

"Is he grinning?" said Jimmy carelessly.

"He's been grinning like a singed

cat all the morning," said Raby. "He's got something in his mind."

"Sure, it's some dirty trick he's got in his head," said Flynn. "I know that look on his chivvy."

"Oh, blow Mornington!" said Jimmy Silver. "Let's have half an hour at the nets before dinner. St. Jim's will be here early this afternoon."

"Good egg!"

"Hold on a minute, Silver!" exclaimed Mornington, coming quickly towards the captain of the Fourth. "I want a word with you."

"Buck up, then!"

"I've asked you to play me against St. Jim's this afternoon."

"My hat! You're not beginning that again, are you?" said Jimmy Silver in a tone of patient remonstrance.

"Yes. I'm going to play."

Jimmy grinned.

"What are you going to play—the giddy ox?"

"I'm going to play cricket against St. Jim's. You can't deny that I've been stickin' to practice, and I'm in pretty good form."

"You're improving," admitted Jimmy Silver. "Nothing like form for the eleven, though."

"I'm goin' to play!" said Mornington coolly.

"Whether I like it or not?" asked Jimmy, grinning.

Mornington nodded.

"Yes, if you put it like that."

"Well, I don't quite see how you'll manage it," said Jimmy. "If you come on the field you'll be kicked off."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders as Jimmy looked at him in a puzzled way. Townsend and Topham were grinning.

"If you don't choose to play me, you'll be made to," explained Mornington.

"My hat! How will you work that?" asked Jimmy, more surprised than angry.

"You know my guardian, Sir Rupert.

Stacpoole, is chairman of the governing body of Rookwood—"

Jimmy Silver yawned portentously.

"Yes; you've told us often enough. We're fed-up with the noble baronet. Fed-up to the chin!"

"He has influence with the Head

"We've had that, too, lots of times. Put on a new record."

Mornington flushed angrily.

"Very well! You can play me of your own choice, or you can be ordered to do it, just as you like," he said.

"Ordered to do it?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"The Head."

"Rats!"

"Look here, I've had enough of this cheek!" exclaimed Lovell wrathfully.

"Get out of the way, Mornington!"

"I tell you—"

Lovell did not wait to be told. He took Mornington by the collar and swung him out of the way.

He went reeling along the passage, and collapsed against the wall with a gasp.

The Fistical Four went out, grinning, into the quadfangle.

"What the dickens do you stand that cheeky rotter's jaw for, Jimmy?" exclaimed Lovell.

"No law against jawing," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "He can jaw himself purple in the face if he likes. It won't make any difference."

"I suppose that was only gas, all he was saying?" remarked Newcome.

"I suppose so," said Jimmy, laughing. "The Head isn't likely to take a hand in junior cricket arrangements. The silly ass is so full of swank that he doesn't know what he's talking about!"

"Towny and Topsy seemed to think there was something in it," remarked Raby thoughtfully.

"Pair of silly asses!" said Jimmy. "Let's get down to the cricket."

The Fistical Four dismissed Mornington from their minds. But they were destined to be reminded shortly of him. There was a surprise in store for Jimmy Silver.

CHAPTER 9.

By Order!

"SILVER!"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, called to Jimmy as the juniors were leaving the dining-room after dinner.

"Step into my study, please," said Mr. Bootles.

"Certainly, sir!" said Jimmy, wondering what was the matter.

He followed the Form-master into his study.

Mr. Bootles sat down and coughed his little cough, and blinked at the captain of the Fourth over his glasses.

"I understand, Silver, that you are—ahem!—playing a cricket match, or something of the sort, this afternoon."

"Something of the sort, sir," smiled Jimmy. "I mean, yes, sir. We're playing a visiting team from St. Jim's."

"Dr. Chisholm has spoken to me on this subject."

"It's very kind of the Head to take an interest in our cricket matches, sir," said Jimmy, in surprise.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles. "Yes—exactly. The fact is, the Head has received a communication from a governor of Rookwood—in short, from Sir Rupert Stacpoole, the chairman of the governing board."

Jimmy Silver started a little.

"You may be aware, Silver, that Sir Rupert is the guardian of one of your Form-fellows—Mornington, in fact."

"Mornington's told us so, sir."

"Precisely. It is Sir Rupert's wish this his ward should—er—take up cricket and—and football, and so on," said Mr. Bootles rather vaguely. Mr. Bootles' knowledge of games was not extensive. "It appears that he has re-

ceived complaints from his ward that—that, in short, Mornington is not allowed to take part in the games."

Jimmy's eyes glistened.

"Mornington is a duffer at cricket, sir," he said. "He can take part in the practice as much as he likes, and if he would stick to it he could share in practice matches. He's not good enough form to be put in the regular fixtures."

"However, Sir Rupert has made a very special request to the Head," said Mr. Bootles. "He regards Mornington as being passed over. The Head does not dictate to you in this matter, Silver. He realises that juniors have rights of their own, and that cricket is not a suitable matter for direct interference by the headmaster. For this reason he does not care to exert his authority. He does not wish, however, to refuse Sir Rupert Stacpoole. He would be glad if you would allow Mornington to play in the match this afternoon at Sir Rupert's request."

Jimmy set his lips.

A request from his headmaster was tantamount to a command.

But a junior had his rights, and Jimmy Silver, as cricket captain, had his duties as well as his rights to consider.

The St. Jim's match would be touch-and-go, anyway. Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, were always a hard nut to crack. Playing even one "duffer" in the Rookwood team would be throwing away victory. A single wicket lost for nothing would make all the difference between victory and defeat.

It was not easy for a junior in the Fourth Form to refuse a request from his headmaster, conveyed through his Form-master. But Jimmy felt that he had no choice in the matter.

"You will oblige the Head in this little matter," added Mr. Bootles. "I may add—er—that I am very much obliged to you, Silver. You may go."

Jimmy Silver did not stir.

"Excuse me, sir," he said quietly

and respectfully, but very firmly, "I can't play Mornington this afternoon."

"What—what!"

"Mornington's no good, sir. I can't take my eleven out to be licked by St. Jim's because that clumsy duffer wants to play."

Mr. Bootles looked hard at the junior.

"I am not an authority upon cricket," he said. "I know little of the—er—game. But I suppose that one boy is much the same as another."

"Not quite, sir," said Jimmy. "Mornington is an ass at cricket. I think he would make a pretty good bat if he stuck to practice, but he doesn't. He would be only a passenger in the team. I can't face the fellows and tell them that I'm playing a duffer like that against a strong team."

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"I trust, Silver, that you have no intention of refusing to accede to a special request from your headmaster."

"I've got no choice, sir."

There was a pause.

"You surprise me, Silver," said Mr. Bootles at last.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"The fact is, Silver, that a junior cannot be allowed to refuse his headmaster's request," said Mr. Bootles, somewhat sharply. "I hoped to see you consent without demur."

"I can't, sir."

"You must!"

Jimmy set his lips.

"I cannot go to Dr. Chisholm and tell him that you have refused to meet his express wishes. I therefore order you, Silver, to play Mornington in the cricket match this afternoon. I am sorry to have to do this, but there is no alternative."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Nobody has a right to order me to do that, sir," he said quietly.

"Silver."

"Any of the fellows would tell you so, sir."

"Enough! I am sorry to have to

give you this order, but I expect to see it carried out. You may go, Silver."

There was no more to be said.

Jimmy Silver quitted the study, his eyes gleaming under his knitted brows. Mornington had scored, after all. Jimmy Silver had received his orders. It remained to be seen whether those orders would be obeyed.

CHAPTER 10.

His Lordship in Luck!

"**H**OWLY Moses! What's the matter intorely?"

"What's the row, Jimmy?"

asked Lovell.

"Not detained?" exclaimed Lovell anxiously.

Jimmy Silver's look, as he came out into the quad, drew his chums around him at once. It was easy to see that something untoward had happened. Never had the captain of the Fourth looked so furious.

"What the dickens is it?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Give it a name, Jimmy."

"I'm ordered to play Mornington this afternoon."

"What!"

"Rot!"

"Gammon!"

"Piffle!"

"Bootles has ordered me, from the Head!"

"Great Scott!"

There was a howl of astonishment from the juniors.

For the headmaster to interfere in cricket matches, which concerned only the fellows themselves, was unheard-of. The Rookwood juniors looked at Jimmy Silver in blank astonishment.

"Ordered to play Mornington!" gasped Lovell. "It's impossible."

"So that's what the cad was grinning at!" exclaimed Raby. "That's what he's been keeping up his sleeve!"

"Ordered!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Ordered! What right has the Head to give orders about cricket?"

"Or Bootles either?"

"Shame!"

"Rotten!"

"We jolly well won't stand it!"

"The cad shan't be played! We'll scrag him instead."

Voices were rising in wrath. Interference with the sacred rights of the junior cricket club was simply intolerable.

Jimmy Silver smiled bitterly.

"The rotter has been complaining to his guardian that he's left out of junior cricket. I suppose he hasn't mentioned that he's a slacker and a cad. Old Stacpoole has put it to the Head."

"Blow old Stacpoole!"

"He's chairman of the governors, and, of course, he has a lot of influence with the Head," said Jimmy. "I was asked to play the cad, and refused. Then Bootles ordered me to do it."

"Shame!"

"Like his cheek!"

"The Head has no right to interfere in our business," exclaimed Lovell passionately. "We're not going to stand it. If you play that cad, Jimmy Silver, we'll scrag you!"

"I leave it to the team," said Jimmy. "I won't play him of my own accord. But a Form-master's order is an order, and, if you don't like it, you know what it means."

"A flogging, perhaps," said Tommy Dodd, with a whistle.

"It's a rotten shame!"

"The Head don't understand much about our little games," said Jimmy. "I dare say he thinks it doesn't matter who's played, and who isn't played, and he may believe there's a set made against Mornington. I don't suppose he thinks it's of much consequence whether we beat St. Jim's or not. Same with Bootles—what he doesn't know about cricket would fill books."

"Silly asses!" said Lovell.

"It's rotten!" said Tommy Dodd. "But you'll have to play him, Jimmy. It will be carrying a passenger in the team, that's all."

"All!" exclaimed Lovell furiously. "It means a licking for us. St. Jim's don't have passengers in their teams."

"I'd refuse fast enough," said Jimmy, "only—only——"

"Only what?" growled Lovell.

"It isn't only the licking—though that's not pleasant. But if Mornington is left out now, he's cad enough to go straight to Bootles and tell him."

"Let him!"

"But what would Bootles do?"

"Blow Bootles!"

"Fathead! He would come down to the ground, and order us to play Mornington there. We should have to do it, or stop the match."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Pretty scene before the St. Jim's chaps!" grunted Rawson.

"We couldn't stand that," said Tommy Dodd, with a shake of the head. "There's no way out; you've got to play the cad, Jimmy!"

Lovell clenched his fists furiously.

"The rotter! I'll smash him for this."

"Here he comes," said Oswald.

Mornington walked up to the group with Townsend and Topham. The two latter were grinning gleefully. The nuts of the Fourth were very pleased to see Jimmy Silver & Co. "dished" in this way.

Mornington wore an arrogant smile.

His view was that Jimmy Silver & Co. had been brought to reason at last, and that they had been made to knuckle under, which was quite right and proper in his lordly eyes.

The black looks cast at him by the juniors did not affect him in the least. He fixed his eyes upon the captain of the Fourth with a supercilious expression.

"You've heard from Bootles?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You know you've got to play me?"

"Bootles says so," said Jimmy very quietly.

"You might as well have made up your mind to it without givin' me the trouble of puttin' the screw on," said Mornington insolently.

"You cad!" shouted Lovell.

"Rotter!"

"Outsider!"

"Scrag him!"

"Sure, the thafe of the worruld ought to be scragged intoirely!" yelled Flynn. "Collar the baste!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's no good. And there's Bootles at his window!"

But Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was not to be denied.

He rushed at Mornington, hitting out right and left.

Mornington was fairly swept off his feet, and he went to the ground with a crash. Townsend and Topham backed away, but Flynn was not finished yet. Townsend caught his hard knuckles on his nose, and joined Mornington on the ground, and Topham went reeling from a terrific uppercut on the chin.

"Bravo, Paddy!" chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out! Cave!"

Flynn danced round his fallen foes, brandishing his fists, careless of the fact that Mr. Bootles had thrown up his window.

"Gerrup and have some more, ye thafe of the worruld!" roared Flynn.

"Gerrup and be licked, ye spalpeen!"

"Flynn!"

Mr. Bootles' voice was like thunder. Patrick O'Donovan Flynn ceased suddenly his excited war-dance.

"'Yis, sorr?"

"How dare you, Flynn!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

"Oh, sorr——"

"Go into the House! You will remain indoors till tea-time, and take two hundred lines!"

"Howly mother av Moses!" ejacu-

lated Flynn, in dismay. "Sure, I was only lickin' a rotten spalpeen, sorr——"

"Obey me at once, Flynn!"

"'Yis, sorr!" groaned Flynn.

And he went disconsolately into the house.

"Let there be no more of this!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, frowning at the juniors. "Any further interference with Mornington will be punished severely!"

Slam!

Mr. Bootles closed the window.

The juniors looked at one another, and dispersed quietly.

Mornington picked himself up, gasping for breath. Townsend and Top-ham rose, panting and dusty.

"The beast!" groaned Townsend.

"Ow! My chin!" murmured Top-ham.

Mornington laughed sardonically.

"It's nothin'! They've got to toe the line!"

Which was cold comfort, however, to the nuts of the Fourth, whose noses and chins felt decidedly out of gear.

CHAPTER 11.

Rawson to the Rescue!

THERE was dismay and fury among the Rookwood junior cricketers.

But there was no help.

Furious as they were, they felt that they had to "toe the line."

Jimmy Silver would have stood out at any risk; but there was no possibility of standing out.

Mornington, left out of the team, would have gone to Mr. Bootles at once, and the Form-master would have stepped in.

The juniors, naturally enough, shrank from having a "scene" in the presence of the visitors from St. Jim's. Moreover, the game would have been stopped, for if Jimmy had still persisted in disobeying, he would have been ordered into the House. It was impossible to resist.

With gloomy looks and gleaming eyes, the youthful cricketers made up their minds that they had to "stand it."

The keenness with which they had looked forward to the match was gone now.

With such a "passenger" in the team, they had little hope of beating St. Jim's; a straw was enough to turn the balance between the two elevens, and Mornington was something more than a straw in the scale.

Everybody agreed that it was "rotten," but everybody had to agree also that there was no help for it.

The time was getting close, too, for the arrival of Tom Merry & Co. from St. Jim's. The Pistical Four and the three Tommies stood in a gloomy group on the cricket ground, waiting for the arrival of the Saints. They were feeling inclined to "scrag" Mornington, but even that consolation was denied them. Rawson came up to the group, with a thoughtful look on his rugged face.

"You're leaving somebody out to put that cad in, Jimmy?" he said.

Jimmy nodded.

"Must leave out a Classical as you're putting a Classical in," remarked Tommy Dodd casually.

"I'm leaving out Lacy," said Jimmy Silver.

"But he's a Modern."

"Can't be helped."

"Now, look here, Jimmy Silver——"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Jimmy peevishly. "Bad enough without jaw. Blessed if you ain't like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. Don't worry!"

"I've got an idea," said Rawson, in his quiet, stolid way. "Leave me out."

"That's a good idea," said the three Tommies at once.

"We want Rawson," said Jimmy. "Rawson's a better bat than Lacy."

"I tell you——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Look here——"

"You don't want to be left out, I suppose, Rawson?" said Jimmy Silver crossly. "It's bad enough without my own team turning tail."

Rawson shook his head.

"I'd better play," he said; "but I've got an idea. I think I could persuade Mornington not to be such a rotten cad."

"Bow-wow!"

"I think I could," said Rawson. "I needn't go into particulars. But I think I could do it, if you leave me out of the team."

Jimmy Silver stared at him.

"You think you could persuade Mornington not to shove himself into the team?" he exclaimed.

"I think so."

"What utter rot," said Tommy Dodd. "He's simply bent on it. He's chortling with glee over getting us into a fix."

"I know that. But I might be able to do it."

"I don't see how," said Jimmy. "But if you think you could make Mornington act decently, you're welcome to try. But you needn't stand out of the team to do that."

"I should have to keep him company this afternoon," said Rawson.

"Look here, what are you driving at? You're not pally with Mornington?"

"No. He doesn't like scholarship kids," said Rawson, with a grin. "But I might get pally with him for once, and he might prefer my company this afternoon to playing in the match."

"You're talking out of your hat!"

"Well, leave it to me," said Rawson. "Fill my place, and if Mornington doesn't claim his place, put another man in."

"I'll do that fast enough. I can't play Flynn; he's detained. Jones minor would do very well. But——"

"I really think I could persuade Mornington," said Rawson. "Leave it to me. I can be very eloquent sometimes."

"Well, if you can do it you're a giddy

jewell!" said Tommy Dodd. "But I'll bet ten to one in doughnuts that you can't!"

Rawson smiled, and walked away.

"Blessed if I understand Rawson," said Jimmy Silver peevishly. "He could talk like a Member of Parliament at election time, till he was high and dry, but Mornington wouldn't take any notice."

"Well, I wish him luck," said Tommy Dodd. "Where is Mornington now?"

Jimmy's lip curled.

"They're having a smoke in their study," he said. "Ripping way of getting ready for a cricket match! Of course, the fool's wicket will go down first ball. It will be like playing a man short."

"Against a team like St. Jim's—rotten!"

"Br-r-r!" growled Jimmy discontentedly.

There was a shout from the direction of the gates.

"Here they come!"

St. Jim's had arrived.

CHAPTER 12.

Looking After Morny!

RAWSON looked into Flynn's study. The Irish junior was seated dolefully at his table, writing lines.

He was "gated" for the afternoon; and, worse than that, ordered to remain indoors, which meant that he could not go down to the cricket-ground to watch the match. It was hard lines upon Patrick O'Donovan Flynn, and his chubby face was very dismal. He gave Rawson a disconsolate look.

"St. Jim's come yet?" he asked.

"Not yet. Are you busy?"

"I'm doing lines!" groaned Flynn.

"Two hundred lines for punching that spalpeen. Sure, it's rotten!"

"Will you come and help me?"

"Phwat's the game?"

"I'm going to persuade Mornington not to play."

"Arrah, and ye can't do it intoirely."

"I think I can, if you'll lend a hand." Flynn jumped up.

"I'm your man! But ye can't do it."

"Come along," said Rawson.

He strode away to Townsend's study, followed by the astonished Flynn. There was a haze of smoke in the study when Rawson threw open the door.

Mornington and Townsend and Topham were there, enjoying a smoke after lunch, and in great good-humour.

Jimmy Silver had been completely "downed" this time, and great was the satisfaction of the nuts of the Fourth.

Mornington looked insolently at the two juniors in the doorway.

"Hallo! Is it time to get on the field?" he said lazily. "I'll come when I've finished my cigarette."

"Don't hurry," said Townsend, grinning. "Let Jimmy Silver wait. He dare not play without you."

"I'm not goin' to hurry, dear boy," said Mornington. "Go and tell Silver I'm coming along soon, Rawson."

Rawson did not reply. He pushed Flynn into the study, and closed the door and locked it. Then he put the key into his pocket.

The three nuts watched that proceeding in great astonishment.

"What the dickens are you doin' with our key?" exclaimed Topham. "Open that door at once, you outsider!"

"I'm an insider now," said Rawson cheerfully. "This is my study, I believe, as well as yours."

Mornington rose, and threw the stump of his cigarette into the grate.

"I'll be off now," he said. "You fellows had better come down and see the match."

"I don't know about the match; but Jimmy Silver's face will be worth watchin'," chuckled Townsend.

"You're not going just yet," said Rawson. "I've got something to say to you, Mornington."

"Keep it to yourself," said Mornington, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't care to chat with beggarly scholarship bouncers!"

"You've got to hear it, all the same."

"Let me pass!"

"You've shoved yourself into the team by using your guardian's influence with the Head," continued Rawson. "You know it's a dirty trick."

"Let me pass, confound you!"

"You know—or ought to know—that it may lose Rookwood the match."

"Will you let me pass?" shouted Mornington, clenching his fists. His savage temper was rising; but he hesitated to attack the burly Rawson.

"No," said Rawson calmly. "I haven't finished yet. I want you to promise me not to shove yourself into the team."

Mornington laughed savagely.

"Well, I'm not goin' to do anythin' of the sort. Now let me pass, you cad!"

"You're going to play?"

"Yaas!"

"Although you know the whole team is against it, and you may lose us the match?"

"Will you get out of the way?"

"Hardly," said Rawson. "I've given you a chance of doing the decent thing. You've refused."

"Sure, the baste hasn't any decency in him!" said Flynn. "I could have told ye it was no good, Rawson, darling!"

"But it is some good," said Rawson.

"As Mornington refuses to do the decent thing, he's going to stay here and keep me company this afternoon."

"What!" yelled Mornington.

"Getting deaf?" asked Rawson pleasantly. "You're going to stay here and keep me company this afternoon."

"You utter fool! I shall do nothin' of the sort."

"We shall see!"

"Will you let me pass?" shrieked Mornington passionately.

"No!"

"Then I'll knock you flyin'!"

"Go ahead!"

Flynn burst into a roar. Rawson's plan dawned upon him at last. He gave the scholarship junior a terrific thump on the shoulder.

"Sure, it's a broth av a boy ye are!" yelled Flynn. "Hurray! We'll keep the spalpeens here safe and sound. You look after that cad, and I'll look after these two."

"That's the game," said Rawson.

Mornington clenched his hands convulsively. This high-handed proceeding on the part of the scholarship junior took him completely by surprise. He had expected Jimmy Silver to try every means of getting out of the fix. But he had not looked for this.

"Look here, you can't do it!" exclaimed Townsend. "Do you think you're goin' to keep us shut up in this study all the afternoon?"

"Exactly."

"We won't stay here!" shouted Topham.

"Good! Get out, if you can."

"Faith, and ye're welcome to thry!" chortled Flynn. "Are ye spollin' for a fight, Towny, dear boy?"

"Keep off, you wild Irish idiot!" gasped Townsend, jumping up and dodging round the table.

"Do you want an up-and-a-downer, Topy?"

"Leave me alone, you beast!"

"Sure, it's as paccable as lambs they are, the dear boys!" chortled Flynn. "They won't give us any throuble."

"I'll yell out of the window if you don't open that door!" shouted Townsend desperately.

"Will ye intoirly?" said Flynn, planting himself at the window. "Come and thry! Sure, I'll give ye something to yell for!"

Mornington glared at his chums.

"Back me up!" he shouted. "Rush that low brute, and get the key!"

"Rush away!" said Rawson.

Mornington sprang at him like a tiger. In a second they had closed, and were struggling fiercely.

Townsend and Topham made a movement to back up Morny.

Flynn chipped in promptly.

The athletic Irish junior was more than a match for the two weedy, seedy slackers of the Fourth. He fairly hurled himself upon them, and gripped each of them by the collar.

Crack!

Townsend's head came in contact with Topham's with a resounding concussion.

"Yaroo!"

"Whooop!"

"Leggo, you beast!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawson and Mornington were rolling on the floor. Mornington was fighting like a tiger. But he had no chance against the burly Rawson.

He went over on his back, and Rawson's knee was planted on his chest. Mornington glared up at him, with speechless fury in his face.

"Kape him down!" grinned Flynn.

"I'm looking after these spalpeens. Are you going to be peaceable, me bhoyos?"

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

"You're tearing my collar!" shrieked Townsend.

"Faith, and ye're lucky it's hot yere neck!"

"I give in!" roared Topham. "Let go!"

Flynn swung the two unhappy nuts into the corner of the study, where they collapsed, gasping for breath.

"Kape there, thin," said Flynn.

"You can sit on the floor, and sure if ye get up wan instant, I'll knock ye down agin!"

"Oh, you beast!" mumbled Townsend.

"Oh, you rotter!" groaned Topham.

But they did not get up. Flynn sat on the table, ready to pounce upon them if they did. The two slackers decided that discretion was the better part of valour. They remained where they were.

Mornington, who did not want for pickup, whatever his other failings, was struggling under Rawson's heavy knee.

But he could not displace that knee. He was pinned down as helplessly as a moth on a pin.

"Will you let me go?" shrieked Mornington breathlessly.

"No fear!"

"I—I'll smash you!"

Rawson laughed.

"You beggarly workhouse hound, how dare you touch me?"

"Faith, and it's civil and polite he is!" grinned Flynn. "Rub his napper in the carpet, me boy!"

"Help!" shrieked Mornington.

Rawson jerked out Mornny's handkerchief and jammed it into his lordship's mouth. Mornington's yells died away in a gurgle. He tore at the handkerchief with his hands; but his wrists were grasped, and held tightly together.

"Are you going to be quiet?" said Rawson coolly.

"Gerrooh!" gurgled Mornington.

"Then I'll tie your hands."

"Yurrrgh!"

Rawson jerked off Mornington's necktie. In spite of the new junior's frantic struggles, he bound it round his wrists, fastening them together.

"Will you keep quiet now? Nod your head if you mean yes."

Mornington did not nod his head. Evidently he did not mean yes. His eyes flamed at Rawson.

"Throw me your necktie, Townsend," said Rawson.

"Look here, you're not goin' to have my necktie——"

"I give you one second!"

Townsend, with a furious look, jerked off his necktie, and hurled it to Rawson. Mornington's ankles were dragged together and bound with it.

Then Rawson rose to his feet.

"That settles Mornington," he remarked. "He won't give us any more worry."

"Jimmy Silver put you up to this!" exclaimed Topham furiously.

"Jimmy Silver doesn't know a word about it," said Rawson. "I told him I'd try to persuade Mornington to

stand out. That's all. I've persuaded him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Flynn. "Ye have, intoirely!"

"We've got to waste an afternoon on them, Flynn," said Rawson. "You don't mind?"

"Divil a bit—it's delighted I am! Besides, I can do my lines here. I'll borrow some of yere impot paper, if ye don't mind, Towny."

Townsend only snorted by way of response.

"Kape in that corner," said Flynn. "If ye move, ye'll have me on yere necks! Thanks for the impot paper!"

"Look here——"

"Don't jaw while I'm writin' me lines, bedad!"

"We're not goin' to stick here——"

"Well, get up, if you like. You know what you'll get if you do!"

Townsend and Topham did not get up. Now that Mornington was tied up, the struggle would have been two against two, and it was more hopeless than ever. Towny and Topy had to grin and bear it. Flynn cheerfully proceeded to write his lines. Rawson sat down at the table to work at Greek. On the floor Mornington lay, writhing in his bonds, his face black with rage. But his teeth had been drawn, and he was powerless now.

About ten minutes later hurried steps came along the passage, and the door was tried from the outside.

"You fellows comin'?" called out Peele of the Fourth. "St. Jim's are here, and they'll be beginnin' without you, Mornny! What the dickens is the door locked for?"

Flynn gripped Townsend by the neck with his left hand, and clenched his right under Towny's terrified eyes.

"Tell him ye're not comin'," he said: "and if there's any trouble, sure I'll make mincemeat of ye!"

Townsend gasped.

"We're not comin', Peele!" he called out.

"My hat! Isn't Mornington comin'?"

"No!" gasped Townsend.

"Why not? They'll be playin' with-out him? Why don't you let me in?" called out the mystified Peele.

Flynn's grip closed tighter on Townsend, and his big fist pressed on Towny's unhappy nose.

"Can't let you in!" gasped Town-send. "We're busy—a—a little game! You cut along and—and see the match."

"Bridge?" asked Peele, through the keyhole.

"Ye-es."

"Then I'll make a fourth. I don't care for watchin' the match."

Topham made a movement, but Raw-son's eye was on him, and Rawson's heavy fist was ready. Topham re-mained silent.

"Can't let you in," said Townsend. "Cut along."

"Look here, don't you want me?"

"No!"

"Well, you pig!" said Peele, in dis-gust. "Go and eat coke!"

And he kicked the door and stalked away angrily.

"Oh, you rotters!" mumbled Town-send.

Flynn chuckled.

"Sure, it's a broth av a bhoy ye are," he said. "And if anybody else comes, Towny, ye'll answer in the same way, or it's a wreck ye'll be!"

"Hang you!"

Flynn sat down to his lines again, and Rawson to his Greek. Down at the cricket-ground the match was going on merrily. But it was not a merry afternoon to the nuts of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 13.

The St. Jim's Match!

TOM MERRY & CO. had arrived, and Jimmy Silver greeted them as cheerfully as he could.

Jimmy had little faith in Rawson's "persuasion," and he did not believe for a moment that Mornington would fail to appear and claim his place in the team. He was, of course, unaware

of the drastic measures Rawson in-tended to use.

St. Jim's were in great form, as Jimmy could tell at a glance. Rook-wood would have had their hands full, anyway. With a duffer instead of a good man in the team, the game was up, though Jimmy intended to put up the hardest fight he could.

But, to his surprise, Mornington did not appear on the scene.

The two elevens were ready, and Jimmy tossed for choice of innings with Tom Merry, and won the toss.

Still Mornington was absent.

Jimmy's spirits began to rise.

Was it possible that Rawson had suc-ceeded, after all—that Mornington had a rag of decency left, and had fore-borne to "muck up" the match?

Lovell pressed Jimmy's arm.

"Bug up!" he said. "Mornington isn't here. That's no fault of yours. Begin without the beast!"

Jimmy nodded.

"We bat first," he said, in the hope of getting the innings over, at least, before Mornington came on the scene.

The St. Jim's fellows went into the field.

Mr. Bootles came down on the cricket ground, with a genial nod to the juniors. He beckoned to the captain of the Fourth.

"You are—er—playing Mornington, Silver?" he asked.

"I've put him in the team, sir," said Jimmy quietly, repressing his feelings. "He hasn't turned up yet. I suppose I'm not to go and hunt for him, and bring him here by his neck?"

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"Ahem! Certainly not, Silver. If it is open to him to play if he comes—"

"It is, sir."

"Then he must please himself. Per-haps you had better send him word, however, as he may not be aware you are beginning."

"Very well, sir." Jimmy turned to Raby. "Raby, cut off, and see if you can see Mornington, will you? Say we're beginning."

"Certainly," said Raby.

"You fellows mind waiting a minute?" asked Jimmy. "One of my men hasn't come down yet."

"All serene," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Wait as long as you like."

Raby ran to the School House, with a grin on his face. He ran in, and put his head into Mr. Bootles' study—which, of course, was empty—and said:

"Are you here, Mornington?"

Naturally, there was no reply.

Raby looked round the study solemnly, to north, south, east, and west. Then he departed, and hurried back to the cricket-field.

"Seen him?" asked Jimmy.

"No. I looked on every side," said Raby.

"Then we must begin without him."

"Dear me," said Mr. Bootles, "this is very, very careless of Mornington, after— Ahem! However, it is his own affair!"

And the Form-master, feeling that he had done quite enough, walked back to the House.

"Where did you look for him?" asked Jimmy Silver, meeting Raby's eyes.

"In Bootles' study," said Raby demurely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver felt much more cheerful now. He went on to open the innings with Tommy Dodd. Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's bowled the first over.

Fatty Wynn was in great form, but so was Jimmy Silver. That match started well, with 10 for the first over.

Rookwood fellows were crowded round the ground, some of them wondering why Mornington was not there. As Mornington was certain to be last man in, he was not wanted yet. Only Peele took the trouble to give him a call, with the result that Peele came back in a bad temper, after his rebuff at the study door.

Jimmy Silver's spirits were rising all

through the innings. 25 runs came off his own bat before he was caught out by Figgins of St. Jim's.

Tommy Dodd added 10, and Lovell 11, and Tommy Cook 10. Wickets fell at a good rate, but there was not a single duck's egg. Every batsman knocked up a few runs, and the score stood at 70 when the word was passed:

"Last man in!"

Last man in should have been Mornington.

But Mornington was conspicuous by his absence.

Jones minor went on to bat.

Fatty Wynn knocked away his wicket for 8, and the innings came to an end, 78 all down.

"Not so bad!" said Jimmy Silver. "What a ripping stroke of luck that Mornington wasn't here! Rawson's not here either. How the dickens did he manage to persuade the beast to keep off the grass?"

Tommy Dodd chuckled.

"He's done it," he said. "Perhaps he did more than persuade him—may have taken him by the neck."

Jimmy Silver burst into a laugh.

"I never thought of that."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Tommy Doyle. "More power to his elbow, bedad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he can't bat now," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Rawson ought to have a prize medal, anyway. Good luck to him!"

St. Jim's opened their innings.

Tom Merry & Co. were good batsmen; but Jimmy Silver had been hard at practice of late, and his bowling had been brought really to a pitch of perfection.

Tom Merry was dismissed with 2, and D'Arcy, much to his surprise, was sent bootless away with a duck's egg to his credit.

The innings was fast, and the last wicket fell with the score at 60.

The afternoon was not half over yet. On the first innings, Rookwood was an easy winner; but there was plenty of

time to finish. And still Mornington was conspicuous by his absence.

That he was either staying away of his own accord, or was being kept away somehow by Tom Rawson, was by this time abundantly clear, and Jimmy Silver ceased to think about him at all. He dismissed him from his mind, and devoted all his thoughts to the game.

In the second Rookwood innings the luck was not so good.

Fatty Wynn was in tremendous form, and he performed the hat-trick amid cheers from the crowd. Jack Blake also put in some good bowling.

The last wicket went down at 50.

The Rookwood total was 128 for the two innings. St. Jim's had 68 in hand. They looked quite confident when they commenced their second innings.

And their confidence seemed well-founded.

Tom Merry seemed to have "got on" to Jimmy Silver's bowling, and Jimmy did not succeed in touching his wicket.

Before Tom Merry was caught out by Tommy Dodd, he had knocked up 40 for his side, and the Saints looked jubilant.

For, meanwhile, 20 more had been piled up for three wickets, so that St. Jim's wanted only 8 to tie, 9 to win, with seven wickets in hand.

"For goodness' sake, pile in, Jimmy!" said Raby. "They'll mop us off the earth at this rate, with wickets to spare!"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and went on to bowl again, with the expression of a fellow who was prepared to do or die.

What followed elicited loud cheers from the Rookwood crowd.

Wynn of St. Jim's was dismissed with a duck's egg, and Herries followed him, and then Lowther and Kerr. Four wickets for four balls made the Rookwooders yell, and changed the aspect of the game once more. Manners was the next to go. Talbot of St. Jim's was keeping his end up well, but in the next over he was caught out by Newcome.

"Last man in!"

Figgins and Noble were last at the wickets. 8 to tie and 9 to win, with Jimmy Silver bowling again!

But the mighty Figgins lifted the ball away for 4, and cut away the next for 2, and St. Jim's hopes rose again.

"Bai Jove, 3 to win!" said D'Arcy, looking on from the pavilion. "Figgay will do it all right, you know."

"Right as rain!" said Tom Merry; but he watched anxiously, all the same. The match was touch-and-go now.

Figgins had no chance with the rest of the over. The field crossed, and the bowling came to Noble from Tommy Dodd. Tommy Dodd was doing his level best, and so was the batsman. A single run was the result for the over.

"Only 2 to win!" said Jimmy Silver, as the field crossed for the last over. They all knew it would be the last over. "Look out for catches!"

Jimmy delivered his next ball to Noble, who had the batting again after the single.

The Cornstalk junior let himself go at it.

The ball whizzed away, and the batsman ran.

"Licked!" muttered the Rookwood fellows.

Then there was a yell:

"Tommy Dodd! Good old Tommy!"

Tommy Dodd was on the ball.

He was backing away now, his hands raised, his eyes fixed upon the ball as it came—floating down gently, as it seemed—into his outspread palms.

Click!

Then all Rookwood roared.

"Caught! Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Good man!"

"Bravo, Tommy Dodd!"

Tommy Dodd grinned, and tossed up the leather, and caught it again as it came down straight as a rule.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Rookwood wins! Hurray!"

Rookwood had won! And, as Jimmy remarked very humorously, it was Mornington who had won the match for Rookwood—by staying away!

CHAPTER 14.

After the Match!

L OUD cheers ringing from the cricket-field reached the School House and floated in at the window of Rawson's study. The sun was sinking behind the old beeches.

"That's the finish!" said Rawson. He rose and stepped to the window. A merry crowd was in the quadrangle below.

Rawson shouted down:
"Game over, Oswald?"
Oswald looked up, grinning.
"Yes, over and won! Won by a run!"

"Hurray!"
"Mornington didn't turn up!" called out Oswald. "That's what won the match for us."

Rawson grinned.
"Lucky Mornington didn't turn up, then."

"Yes, rather! Hurray!"
"Faith, and it's a win for us, and, sure, it's us that have done it intirely!" said Flynn. "The afternoon hasn't been wasted, bedad! And I've done me lines, too. Hurray!"

"Now let us go, you rotters!" mumbled Townsend.

Rawson unlocked the study door.
"You can go as fast as you like," he said. "Buzz off!"

Townsend and Topham were glad to go. They were quite fed up with sitting on the study carpet. They hurried away, to pour their tale of woe and wrong into the sympathetic ears of their nutty friends.

Rawson stooped over Mornington and released him. Mornington, cramped, furious, panting with rage, staggered to his feet. He shook his fist at the scholarship junior.

"I'll make you suffer for this!" he said, between his teeth, striding from the study.

Rawson and Flynn went to see Tom Merry & Co. off. The St. Jim's party had a train to catch, but they had time for a hurried refreshment. The brake rolled away with Tom Merry & Co. on

board, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came back into the quadrangle in high good-humour.

Jimmy clapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"How did you do it?" he demanded. Before Rawson could reply, Bulkeley of the Sixth came out, and beckoned to him.

"Mr. Bootles wants you," he said. "Flynn, too!"

"Right-ho!" said Rawson. The two delinquents proceeded to Mr. Bootles' study, where they found the Form-master looking astounded, and Mornington white with rage. He had duly reported the whole occurrence to the master of the Fourth. Mr. Bootles had his cane in his hand.

"I have received a most astounding complaint from Mornington, Rawson," he said. "He declares you kept him by force in your study, and prevented him from playing in the cricket match."

"Yes, sir," said Rawson quietly. "Ahem! Why did you do this, Rawson?"

"To keep Mornington from losing the match for us, sir."

"It was Silver put him up to it, Mr. Bootles!" hissed Mornington.

"Did you act upon Silver's instructions, Rawson?"

"No, sir!"
"Was Silver aware of your action?"

"No, sir!"
"It's a lie!" yelled Mornington.

Mr. Bootles frowned.
"Mornington, you must not use such expressions in my presence! Take fifty lines!"

"I—I—I——" gasped Mornington.

"Rawson's assurance is quite enough for me. Silver had nothing to do with it!"

"I—I tell you——"
"Silence! Rawson, I shall cane you—and you also, Flynn. Mornington, you may go!"

"But I—I——"

"Leave my study!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

And Mornington left it.

Mr. Bootles' manner was a sufficient indication what he thought of the sneak, but he could not pass over the matter. Rawson and Flynn were duly caned.

In the passage, they exchanged a grin.

Jimmy Silver & Co. swooped down upon them, eager for an explanation. There was a roar of laughter as Rawson explained the methods of "persuasion" he had used with the obstinate junior.

Jimmy thumped him on the back ecstatically.

"Good man! Who'd have thought it! You've saved the match for us! But you've been licked!"

"That's nothing—it wasn't very bad," grinned Rawson. "Bootles doesn't think much more of that cad than we do, and he laid it on softly."

"Good man!"

There was a feed in the end study after that in celebration of the victory over St. Jim's, and of the defeat of Mornington. His knavish tricks had been frustrated, and he suffered a raging at the hands of the Classics for having sneaked to the Form-master. At the celebration in Jimmy Silver's study, Rawson and Flynn had the place of honour. They had not played in the match, but it was agreed on all hands that they had won the match with St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 15.

Jimmy Silver's Eleven!

JIMMY SILVER stopped before the notice-board at Rookwood and pinned up the paper he carried in his hand in a prominent position.

It was an important paper.

For it contained the list of the junior cricket eleven, who, on the morrow, were to visit Bagshot School, and inflict dire defeat and confusion upon the ancient rivals of Rookwood.

There was a rush of the juniors to read the list.

Most of the names contained in it could be guessed in advance, but there

was a chance that any fellow might find his name there.

"Jolly good team!" remarked Tommy Dodd, of the Modern side, finding written there his own name, and the names of his two special chums, Cook and Doyle. "A few more Moderns would improve it. But it's jolly good."

"Wants a few more Classical names," remarked Dick Oswald. "But it's jolly good, all the same. My name's there."

"And mine, intoiirely," remarked Flynn. "Jimmy Silver's the best captain we've iver had in the Fourth. Smythe used to lave me out."

"Glad you're all satisfied," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"I'm not satisfied," said Dickinson minor. "What have you left me out for, Jimmy Silver?"

"Sorry, old chap; but we want to beat Bagshot," said Jimmy affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a jolly good list," remarked Lovell. "I think we shall give Bagshot the kybosh this time. I suppose Bootles isn't likely to chip in again and ask us to play that slacker Mornington?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"No fear. That's all over, for one thing. I've spoken to Bulkeley about that, and he's chipped in."

"Good old Bulkeley!"

"Mornington expects to play," remarked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him expect! He won't play."

"He's been telling chaps that he's in the Bagshot match."

"No law against that," said Jimmy. "He can tell chaps that he's going to be Head of Rookwood, if he likes."

"Here he comes!" said Lovell, with a grin.

Mornington of the Fourth came up to the notice-board. Townsend and Topham and Peele were with him. The nuts of the Fourth glanced at the cricket list, and Mornington frowned darkly and turned to Jimmy Silver.

"You've left my name out," he said sharply.

Jimmy nodded.
 "Why is that?" demanded Mornington.

"Because you're left out yourself, my dear man."

"I've told you that I expect to be played."

"Go hon!"

"The best thing you can do is to put my name in at once," said Mornington. "I decline to be left out, and it will save you trouble in the long run."

Jimmy Silver looked grimly at the dandy of Rookwood.

Nobody but Mornington would have dreamed of taking such a tone with the captain of the Fourth.

But Mornington was not quite like the other fellows.

His wealth loomed largely in his own eyes, and in the eyes of fellows like Townsend & Co. His uncle and guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, was chairman of the governing board of Rookwood. Mornington was ambitious to shine among the cricketers, but his ambition did not cause him to stick to practice or exert himself in any way; and Jimmy Silver was the last fellow in the world to play a slacker if he could help it.

But for the fact that a couple of juniors had locked Mornington in a study, and kept him out of the last match, the result would have been disastrous for the junior eleven.

Jimmy Silver did not mean to run that risk a second time.

He explained the matter to Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of the school, and Bulkeley had "taken a hand" promptly enough.

Bulkeley had interviewed the Head on the subject, and there was no danger of a repetition of the Head's request to Jimmy Silver.

Mornington was evidently unaware of the new state of affairs.

Evidently he considered that he had only to state his wishes in order to have them assented to.

"You hear me?" he said. "You'll put my name down in that list at once, Jimmy Silver."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Lovell. "Shall I mop up the passage with him, Jimmy?"

"Bump him intirely!" said Flynn.
 "Do you hear me, Silver?" snapped Mornington.

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes, dear boy."

"Well, what do you say?"

"Rats!"

"Wha-at!"

"R-A-T-S—rats!" said Jimmy. "Isn't that plain enough?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington set his teeth.

"Well, you'll get an order from the Head," he said. "You'll find that you can't do as you please."

Jimmy Silver smiled, and turned away. Mornington turned away also, to make his way to the Head's study. But before he had taken two steps, several pairs of hands were laid upon him. He swung round savagely, and glared at the grinning faces of Lovell and Raby and Newcome and Tommy Dodd.

"Let me go!" he shouted.

"You're going to be bumped for your cheek," said Lovell coolly. "Up with him!"

"Let go! Help!"

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yaroo!"

"Cave!" ejaculated Rawson, of the Fourth, and the juniors scudded away as Mr. Bootles came out of his study.

Mornington was left sitting on the floor, gasping.

Mr. Bootles stared at him.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, peering at Mornington over his glasses. "Who is that? Mornington—ha! Whatever are you doing on the floor, Mornington?"

Mornington staggered to his feet, crimson with anger.

"I've been ragged!" he gasped. "Lovell and—"

"That will do, Mornington. I am sorry to see that you cannot live on

better terms with your Form-fellows," said Mr. Bootles severely. "You are concerned in incessant disturbances, Mornington. I fear that it is the insolence of your manners that is the cause of it. I advise you, Mornington, to mend your ways, and to cease to exasperate your schoolfellows by ill-founded arrogances. You will do well to bear this in mind, Mornington."

Mr. Bootles rustled on, leaving Mornington almost stuttering with rage.

CHAPTER 16.

A Surprise for Mornington!

TAP!

Dr. Chisholm laid down his pen. "Come in!"

Mornington of the Fourth entered the Head's study.

He was still looking somewhat red and flustered, and was evidently in a savage temper. Only Mornington, of all the fellows at Rookwood, would have ventured to show signs of temper in the august presence of the Head.

Dr. Chisholm noted the knitted brows and gleaming eyes of the dandy of the Fourth, and he frowned.

"Well?" he said sharply. "What is it, Mornington?"

"I wish to speak to you, sir."

"Kindly be brief."

The cold, severe glance of the Head somewhat abashed Mornington. His gaze dropped a little, and his voice was quieter as he went on:

"I have been left out of the cricket again, sir."

The Head made a gesture.

"That is a matter that concerns only the junior cricket club. You may go."

"My guardian asked you——"

"Listen to me, Mornington," said the Head quietly. "Sir Rupert Stacpoole wrote to me on the matter, and I did not care to disoblige a governor of Rookwood, and for that reason I uttered a word on your behalf. Since then I have received further information on the subject. I have learned the particulars from Bulkeley. It is a matter that en-

tirely concerns the cricket club, and I understand that you are omitted from the playing eleven because your play is not up to the standard required, and because you refuse to attend the necessary practice. I cannot interfere in the matter again."

"But——"

"I recommend you to attend more constantly on the playing-fields, and make yourself useful as a cricketer, and in that case I have no doubt you will have as much chance as the others of playing for the school," said the Head. "The matter, however, does not concern me. You may go!"

Mornington did not stir.

"Am I to be left out, then?" he exclaimed.

"That depends on the captain of your club, I presume."

"He dislikes me."

"Probably you have given him reason, if that is the case," said the Head dryly. "I have received very unfavourable reports of you from your Form-master, Mornington. It appears that you treat the other boys with insolence, and an assumption of superiority. You cannot expect that to make you popular. I advise you to mend your manners."

"I—I——"

"And how you have wasted enough of my time. Leave my study."

The Head took up his pen again. But Mornington did not go.

"Do you hear me, boy?" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm, in surprise and anger.

"Yes, sir."

"Leave my study at once!"

"I'm going to play in the Bagshot match," said Mornington doggedly. "I want you to tell Jimmy Silver so, sir."

"Boy!"

Mornington stood his ground, unabashed now by the glare the Head of Rookwood bestowed upon him.

There was a thunderous pause.

"It is due, I suppose, to your extraordinary training that you dare to speak to your headmaster with such unexampled insolence!" said the Head at

last. "If you think that such insolence can be tolerated, Mornington, you are mistaken." Dr. Chisholm took up his cane. "Hold out your hand!"

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"I won't be caned, sir. I shall write to my guardian. He is chairman of the governors, and he will not allow——"

The Head rose.

"Hold out your hand immediately, Mornington, or I shall administer a public flogging!" he exclaimed.

Mornington hesitated a moment, and then his hand came slowly out.

Swish!

"Now the other hand!" thundered the Head.

Swish!

Mornington squeezed his hands together, his face pale with pain and rage.

The Head pointed to the door with the cane,

"Go!" he said.

Mornington went, almost choking.

Townsend & Co. were waiting for him in the passage with rather anxious looks. Although it suited the nuts of the Fourth to chum with Mornington, they could have little liking for him, and they were never without a certain amount of uneasiness lest his insolence should land him, and themselves, in some serious scrape. Nobody else would have dared to "beard the lion in his den" as Mornington had done. The nuts were not surprised to see him come forth squeezing his hands and mumbling.

"Well?" said Townsend.

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"I've been licked."

"Well, what the dickens did you expect?" said Peele. "You can't check the Head, you know, and I'll be bound you checked him. What about the cricket?"

"The Head won't interfere again."

"Couldn't expect him to," said Townsend. "Nothin' doin', of course."

"He doesn't seem to understand that I can give him trouble about it," said

Mornington. "My guardian will back me up."

The three nuts grinned at one another. They did not have so much faith as Mornington in the influence of his guardian.

"You can cackle!" growled Mornington. "I know what I'm talkin' about. Sir Rupert doesn't like the Head. As a matter of fact, he would be glad to get him into the bad books of the governors. He has a friend he would like to see Head of Rookwood, if Dr. Chisholm were gone. I know he's thought of workin' it already."

"Pheew!" said Topham.

"Anyway, you're out of the Bagshot match," said Townsend. "Let's have a jolly afternoon to-morrow instead. There are races at High Coombe."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Never mind the races. I suppose I'm out of the cricket—owin' to Jimmy Silver. He's been one too many for me. But I'll get even. Jimmy Silver is goin' to be out of it, too."

"How the dickens——"

"You know what they did with me when the St. Jim's match was on?"

"Locked you in Rawson's study," grinned Townsend. "Us, too, the rotters! But you can't work that on Jimmy Silver. A study wouldn't hold him."

"I'm not thinking of a study." Mornington lowered his voice. "What about the old tower? There's Sergeant Kettle's tuckshop on the ground floor, but the rooms above are never used and never entered. A fellow shoved in there would never be found—till we chose."

"My hat! But how would you get Jimmy Silver there?"

"Four of us could handle him, I suppose."

"But—but we should be seen getting him there——"

"Not after dark."

"But after dark, the match will be over."

"I'm thinking of to-night."

"Great Scott!"

"You—you're dotty!" said Peele, aghast. "You couldn't keep the chap there all night. He'd be missed."

"Well, what about it?"

"There'd be a row—a search—no end of a fuss."

"I don't care."

"You may not," said Townsend. "But I do. I'm not going to get myself sacked from Rookwood to please you, Mornington."

"So you are a funk!" sneered Mornington.

"I haven't an uncle on the board of governors to see me through," said Peele, with a sneer. "If I had, I might risk it."

"There's no risk. Silver wouldn't give our names."

"He might have to."

The three nuts looked at one another. But they shook their heads.

"Too jolly risky," said Peele. "It would be a flogging at least."

"Then I'll do it alone," said Mornington, and he turned his back on his companions, and walked away.

Townsend & Co. looked at one another uneasily.

"What the dickens has he got in his head?" muttered Towny.

"Blessed if I know," said Topham. "But I know one thing, and that is—I'm going to keep clear of it!"

To which Towny and Peele heartily agreed.

CHAPTER 17.

Caught Mapping!

THE Fistical Four sat down to tea in the end study in great spirits.

They were looking forward to the cricket match on the morrow, and Jimmy, who was very pleased with the form his team had shown of late, fully expected to "mop up" the Bagshot ground with the Bagshot team.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were equally confident.

They had dreaded a repetition of the trick Mornington had played on them on the occasion of the St. Jim's match.

But Mornington had come to the end of his tether; there was a limit, evidently, to the influence of his guardian at Rookwood.

The careless and swanking slacker would have been sufficient, if he had been played, to reduce the chances of the Rookwood team to zero.

The danger was over, however, and the Fistical Four rejoiced accordingly.

"Of course, we wouldn't have stood it," Lovell remarked. "If the Head had chipped in a second time, there would have been trouble."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Jolly sure of that!" he replied.

"The whole club would have gone on strike, I think. But the Head didn't savvy. Mornington's guardian gave him the impression that a set was made against the silly ass, and that he wasn't given a fair chance. Now Bulkeley's spoken to the Head it's all right. The Head means well," added Jimmy tolerantly. The captain of the Fourth felt that he could make allowances for a headmaster.

"Mornington is ratty about it," grinned Raby. "He was looking like a Hun when I saw him last."

"Let him!" said Jimmy serenely.

"The silly duffer!" remarked Newcome. "He can't play cricket for toffee. Blessed if I think he cares twopence whether Rookwood wins or loses, so long as he can swank at the wicket."

"Well, he won't swank at the wicket this time," said Jimmy Silver sententiously. "No room for slacking asses in the Rookwood junior eleven."

"Hear, hear!"

After tea, as there was plenty of light, the Fistical Four walked down to Little Side for some batting. Mornington & Co. stood looking on, the latter decidedly sour in appearance.

In the dusk the chums of the Fourth walked back to the School House. They were chatting on the steps after calling-over, when Mornington came up.

The Fistical Four looked at him rather grimly.

They were prepared for some more

insolence from the dandy of the Fourth, and quite ready to roll him in the quad at the first word.

But, as it happened, Mornington was quite civil for once.

"Tommy Dodd wants to speak to you, Silver," he said carelessly.

"Where is he?"

"In the tuckshop."

"Well, I suppose he can come here?" said Jimmy.

"Time we got on to our prep," remarked Lovell, as eight rang out from the clock-tower. "Don't waste time on that Modern Bounder, Jimmy!"

"Well, it won't take me long to run across," said Jimmy, a little puzzled, but always obliging.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome went up to the end study, while Jimmy Silver ran across the dusky quadrangle.

The school shop, which was kept by Sergeant Kettle on the ground floor of the old, disused clock-tower, was closing. The sergeant was about to lock the door when Jimmy came up.

"Hallo! Is Tommy Dodd here, sergeant?" asked Jimmy.

"No, Master Silver."

"The ass! He sent for me."

"Well, he ain't here, Master Silver," said Sergeant Kettle, and he retired into the shop and closed the door and locked it.

Jimmy Silver looked round wrathfully at Mornington, who had followed him from the house.

"Have you been pulling my leg?" he demanded. "Dodd isn't here."

The next moment Jimmy uttered a gasp of amazement.

"What the dickens— Hands off! My hat!"

Crash!

Mornington had sprung at him like a tiger.

Jimmy Silver was not often taken by surprise, but the attack was utterly unexpected, and he went down in a heap, with Mornington on top of him.

He lay on his back on the ground in the deep dusk, with the dandy of the Fourth kneeling on his chest.

He glared up at Mornington.

"Get up, you silly chump! By gum, I'll smash you! Lemme gerrup!"

Mornington did not move. He had grasped Jimmy's hands, and he held him by the wrists in spite of his struggles.

From round the corner of the tuckshop a junior ran quickly and silently, and a sack was thrown over Jimmy Silver's head as he lay prostrate.

So quickly was it done that Jimmy did not catch a glimpse of his new assailant, and, indeed, did not know what was coming until the sack was over his head.

He struggled furiously.

But he was at a disadvantage, and two strong pairs of hands were grasping him. He struggled in vain.

"Quick!" panted Mornington.

The young rascal had chosen his moment well.

The quadrangle was dark, and there was no one near the tuckshop, and Sergeant Kettle had retired into the back room.

Jimmy Silver, more amazed than angry, struggled in the hands of the two assailants.

But the second assailant ran a loose cord round his wrists as Mornington held them, and it was drawn tight and knotted.

Then Jimmy was helpless.

Another cord was knotted round his ankles, and then the sack was pulled close over his face, stifling the shout he tried to utter.

Then he was lifted and rushed away in the darkness.

He felt himself being carried into a building, and up stone steps, upon which he bumped several times.

He was set down at last.

"Good!" It was Mornington's voice. "You can cut. He hasn't seen you."

Jimmy heard departing footsteps.

A match scratched, and the sack was pulled from over his face. He blinked in the light of a candle.

In utter amazement, he stared at Mornington.

He opened his lips to speak, and as he did so, a folded handkerchief was thrust into his mouth, and Mornington proceeded to tie it there safely, winding a string round and round his head.

Then he rose to his feet, and looked down on Jimmy Silver with a mocking grin.

CHAPTER 18.

Kidnapped!

JIMMY SILVER stared up blankly at Mornington.

He was lost in amazement.

He lay upon the stone floor of a small room, with a tiny window open to the starry sky.

He knew where he was.

Part of the ground floor of the ancient clock-tower of Rookwood was occupied by the school shop, but the greater part of the dilapidated old building was untenanted. Sometimes the fellows climbed the crazy old stairs to investigate the deserted place, and to view the country from the high window; but it was seldom. The climb up the stairs was hard work, for the spiral stair contained over a hundred steps. Sometimes the place was not visited for weeks together, or even for a whole term. The door at the foot of the spiral stair was generally kept locked, and old Mack, the porter, had the key; but he would part with it for a moderate tip.

Mornington had evidently obtained the key from the porter, and chosen this out-of-the-way spot as a hiding-place for his prisoner.

But Jimmy could not understand.

It was not uncommon for Moderns and Classics at Rookwood to raid one another in this way.

But why Mornington should take the trouble to kidnap Jimmy Silver was a mystery. Jimmy could not be kept there long, at all events, as he would have to turn up on the Classical side at bed-time. And it was quite certain that he would hammer Mornington

without mercy if he were kept a prisoner in the old clock-tower for a couple of hours.

He was far from divining, as yet, the thoughts that were in the mind of the reckless young rascal.

Mornington was breathing hard after his exertions. Smoking and slacking did not make it easy for him to carry Jimmy Silver's weight up a hundred steps, even with the assistance of his unknown companion.

He was gasping, in fact, and for some minutes he could not speak. Neither could Jimmy, for the excellent reason that the gag choked back any sound but the faintest mumble.

Mornington found his voice at last, however.

"Well, here you are!" he remarked.

Jimmy could not speak, but his look was eloquent. But the dandy of the Fourth only grinned at his expression.

"You wonder why I've taken all this trouble?" grinned Mornington.

Jimmy nodded.

"I'm goin' to make terms with you. Play me in the team to-morrow, and I'll let you go. Nod your head if you mean yes."

Jimmy Silver did not nod his head. Evidently he did not mean yes.

"Don't be an obstinate ass!" urged Mornington. "You'll find it pretty cold to stay here, though it's a summer's night. I've brought this old sack for you to lie on, but it won't be comfy."

Jimmy Silver's eyes opened wide.

For the first time it occurred to him that Mornington intended to leave him there a prisoner for the night.

It was scarcely credible that the dandy of the Fourth could be so brutal and so reckless; but Jimmy's heart sank.

He knew Mornington's fixed belief that, whatever he did, his uncle, the governor, would be able to see him through.

Jimmy knew that, in that, he miscalculated; but Mornington did not know it.

"You're going to play me, or you won't play yourself," said Mornington. "You can take your choice. Both or neither. If you nod your head, I'll take it as your word of honour that you'll put me in the team."

Jimmy's head remained motionless.

"Still obstinate!" grinned Mornington. "I'll come and see you before brekker, and I think you may have changed your mind by then."

Jimmy strove to speak, but only a mumble came forth.

"I've borrowed the key from Mack," went on Mornington. "I shall lock the door below, and tell Mack I've mislaid the key. He won't be able to make a fuss, as he's not supposed to lend it to us. Nobody can come here—if anybody wanted to, which isn't likely. You can't get out of this room—the door opens outwards, and I'm going to wedge it with a chunk of wood. You can't call for help—you're gagged. You'll have a bad night if you stay here."

Jimmy Silver's look was expressive.

He no longer doubted that the dandy of the Fourth intended to carry out his threat, and the prospect of a night, bound and gagged, at the top of the old tower, was dismaying enough.

But Jimmy Silver did not intend to surrender.

"You think I shall get licked for this," continued Mornington, grinning. "Well, you can lick me, though I shall put up a fight, I think. As for the lead, he dare not flog me. He would have the governors down on him."

Jimmy shook his head.

Mornington laughed.

"Well, I'm risking it," he said. "You'll see. But if you still want to get off, you've only to agree to play me in the Bagshot match. You see, I'm determined. Now, do the sensible thing."

Jimmy's eyes burned, but he made no sign of assent.

Mornington waited a minute; then he shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and went to the door.

Thud!

The heavy oaken door closed. Mornington had taken the candle with him, and Jimmy Silver was in darkness, save for the faint glimmer of starlight at the little window. He could hear a scraping sound as Mornington drove a wedge of wood under the door.

Even if he could have released himself from the knotted cords, he was a prisoner in the tower now.

Faintly, Mornington's retreating footsteps died away on the long spiral stair.

Silence at last.

He was gone!

Jimmy Silver, stretched on the sack on the stone floor, writhed in his bonds, struggling to free himself, till his wrists ached, and the skin was abraded and torn. But he could not get free.

Outside the old tower, Mornington closed the big, heavy door, and locked it, and slipped the key into his pocket.

Then, with perfect calmness, the rascal of Rookwood strolled away to the School House.

Townsend & Co. were chatting in the hall, and they looked curiously at Mornington as he came in.

"Hallo! Been for a stroll with Leggett?" asked Peele.

"Leggett! That modern bounder! No!"

"I saw you talking to him a while ago," said Peele.

"Just a word or two," said Mornington carelessly. "He was tryin' to lend me money, as a matter of fact."

"Seen anythin' of Jimmy Silver?"

Mornington smiled.

"By gad! I shouldn't notice Jimmy Silver if I saw him," he said. "Nearly half-past eight—time I got on with my prep. Ta-ta!"

He went to his study.

Townsend and Topham and Peele exchanged curious glances. But they did not speak on the subject that was uppermost in their minds. They went to their preparation, content to mind

their own business with great strictness.

Rawson of the Fourth noticed that they were grinning, however, as they came into the study they shared with him. But Rawson was not on speaking terms with the nuts of the Fourth, and he did not inquire what amused them.

It was close on bed-time when Mornington looked into the study.

"Finished, you chaps?" he drawled.

"Yaas," said Townsend.

"Come along to my study and have a smoke. By the way, Silver's out."

"Out—at this time!" exclaimed Rawson, looking up.

"Yaas. Queer, ain't it? Seen anything of him?"

"Not since cricket practice."

"Jolly queer," said Townsend.

The nuts of the Fourth followed Mornington to his study. Rawson, with a somewhat worried look, went to the end study to speak to Jimmy Silver's chums.

CHAPTER 19.

Missing!

"SEEN Jimmy?"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome asked that question together as Tom Rawson came into the end study.

The Fistical Three had finished their preparation, and they were surprised by the absence of their study leader.

Dawson shook his head.

"I've just heard that he hasn't come in," he said. "It's bed-time in half an hour. Hasn't he done his prep?"

"No; he hasn't been in. Better look for him, I think," said Raby.

"Can't have gone out of bounds, anyway."

"Oh, no! He went to speak to Tommy Dodd. Those Modern bounders have been larking with him, most likely."

"They wouldn't make him miss his prep," said Rawson.

"Well, he's missed it."

The four juniors left the study and the House, and crossed to the Modern side. They found the three Tommies chatting on the staircase. The Moderns looked at them in surprise.

"Hallo! Time you Classical kids were in bed," said Tommy Dodd severely. "What are you doing over here at this time of night?"

"Where's Jimmy Silver?" asked Lovell.

"Blessed if I know."

"Lost, stolen, or strayed?" grinned Tommy Cook.

"Look here, he came to speak to you in the tuckshop about eight, and we haven't seen him since," said Lovell warmly. "He's missed his prep, and that means a row with Bootles in the morning. What have you done with him?"

"My dear chap, we haven't eaten him for supper," said Tommy Dodd. "And he didn't come to see me in the tuckshop. I haven't been there since tea."

"You sent him a message——"

"Blessed if I did!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Raby. "Mornington brought him a message from you."

"Mornington was rotting, then. I never sent any message. Perhaps the nuts have been larking with the august Jimmy."

Lovell gave a snort.

"We'll jolly soon teach 'em manners if they have," he said. "Come on, you chaps. Jimmy's not here!"

The four Classicals crossed the quadrangle again, and repaired to Mornington's study on the Classic side. They found Mornington, Townsend, Topham, and Peele, smoking cigarettes. Mornington regarded them with an insolent smile as they came in.

"I don't remember askin' you into my study," he drawled.

"Where's Jimmy Silver?" demanded Lovell.

Mornington raised his eyebrows.

"How the dickens should I know?" he asked.

"You gave him a spoof message from Tommy Dodd."

Mornington laughed.

"Yaas. I was pullin' his leg."

"Haven't you seen him since?"

"Of course not!"

"Then you don't know where he is?"

"Haven't the slightest idea."

He yawned as he made that reply.

Lovell & Co. looked puzzled. They did not see any reason why Mornington should be lying. Evidently Jimmy was not in the study. They left it, leaving the nuts grinning as soon as the door was closed.

"Well, this beats the band," said Lovell. "Where on earth can Jimmy be? He can't have gone out."

"Let's ask the sergeant."

Sergeant Kettle was in his back room, smoking his evening pipe, when the juniors knocked at his door. He stared at them as he opened it.

"Shop's closed long ago," he grunted. "Be hoff!"

"We're not after jam-tarts," growled Lovell. "Have you seen anything of Jimmy Silver?"

The sergeant nodded.

"He came just as I was closing the shop, and asked for Master Dodd," he said. "Master Dodd wasn't here."

"Where did Jimmy go then?"

"I don't know!"

"Anybody with him?" asked Rawson.

"Not that I see. I was locking up."

The juniors left the sergeant, greatly puzzled. They returned to the house, and inquired right and left for Jimmy Silver. But no one had seen him. It was close on bed-time now.

"Well, what the dickens!" exclaimed Lovell. "Jimmy must be somewhere. What the dickens is he playing hide-and-seek for like this?"

"Bed-time, you kids," said Bulkeley, coming along the passage.

The Classical Fourth went to their dormitory.

Lovell & Co. had a hope that Jimmy might turn up there for bed. But the captain of the Fourth was not in the dormitory.

Bulkeley came in to see lights out, and he noticed Jimmy's absence at once.

"Isn't Silver here?" he exclaimed.

"We don't know where he is," said Lovell, with a worried look. "We haven't seen him all the evening."

"He seems to have disappeared intirely," remarked Flynn.

Bulkeley looked astonished.

"What nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"Has he gone out?"

"I don't think so!"

"Well, turn in. I'll look for Master Jimmy!" said the captain of Rookwood grimly.

The Classical Fourth turned in, and Bulkeley left the dormitory. He repaired to Mr. Bootles' study, to inform him that Jimmy Silver had not turned up for bed, and that his Form-fellows did not know where he was.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "This is extraordinary!"

"I can't understand it, sir," said Bulkeley. "I find that nobody's seen him since eight o'clock."

"Please ask the prefects to look for him, Bulkeley."

"Yes, sir!"

Bulkeley left the study. He returned in a quarter of an hour.

"Silver can't be found, sir."

Mr. Bootles jumped up.

"You have looked for him?"

"Yes, sir. He isn't in the school—unless he is hiding away somewhere."

"Surely he would not do such a foolish thing, Bulkeley."

"Well, I suppose not, sir. Unless he's doing that, he must have gone out without permission, and has not returned."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"What is to be done, sir?"

"Send him to me immediately he returns, Bulkeley."

"Very well, sir."

The captain of Rookwood returned to his study. But Jimmy Silver did not return, and at half-past ten Bulkeley visited Mr. Bootles again.

"Has not Silver returned?" asked the Fourth Form master, as the captain of Rookwood came in.

"No, sir."

"Very well, Bulkeley. You may go to bed; I will speak to the Head on the subject."

Mr. Bootles, very much surprised and somewhat alarmed, went at once to the Head's study. Dr. Chisholm's brow contracted as he heard the Form-master's report.

"The boy has broken bounds, undoubtedly," he said. "Something has occurred to prevent his return."

"Some accident, sir?" said Mr. Bootles.

"Probably. I will telephone to the police-station immediately."

The Head went to the telephone at once. He rang up the police-station; but there was no news from that quarter. No accident had happened to a schoolboy in the neighbourhood of Coombe, so far as the police were aware.

The Head laid down the receiver, his look grimmer than ever.

"What is to be done, sir?" asked Mr. Bootles helplessly.

"There is nothing to be done until morning, unless the boy returns," said the Head. "I can hardly believe that he has run away from school. I fear that some accident has happened. The police have promised to do all they can."

"I shall remain up," said Mr. Bootles.

"If you do not mind——"

"Certainly not. 'I am very anxious.'"

Mr. Bootles remained up, in his study. He was anxious and flurried.

By midnight, however, he was fast asleep in his armchair, and he did not waken till the rising-bell was pealing out over Rookwood.

Mr. Bootles started up, and rubbed his eyes.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "I—I think I must have fallen asleep. Yes, undoubtedly I must have fallen asleep. It is—bless my soul!—morning. Dear me!"

He rubbed his eyes again, and yawned, and left his study. Three anxious-looking juniors came downstairs—Lovell and Raby and Newcome. They had been awake before rising-bell.

"Has Silver come back, sir?" asked Lovell.

"I—I fear not!" said Mr. Bootles, suppressing a heavy yawn. "I have waited up for him, but he has not come back, apparently. It is extraordinary!"

"There's been an accident," said Raby. "Jimmy must have gone out."

"I shall inquire of the police," said Mr. Bootles.

The Form-master telephoned to the police station. But still there was no news of Jimmy Silver.

At breakfast, there was only one thought in the minds of the Rookwood fellows. The whole school, Classical and Modern, was buzzing with the news.

What had become of Jimmy Silver?

The Head was seen to be looking very anxious. Angry as he was at Jimmy Silver's supposed absence without leave, his anger was not so great as his anxiety.

The only possible supposition was that an accident had happened to the junior outside the walls of Rookwood, and prevented his return.

The Rookwood fellows went into the Form-rooms as usual that morning; but there was much more thought given to the missing junior than to the lessons.

During the morning, the police-inspector from Coombe called upon the Head. He had no news, but he took

a description of Jimmy Silver, and promised that every effort should be made to find the missing lad.

After morning lessons, the juniors came eagerly out of the Form-rooms, hoping to hear news of Jimmy.

But there was no news.

The captain of the Fourth was still missing.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were looking lugubrious. At dinner they ate hardly anything. Their anxiety for their missing chum was intense.

After dinner Tommy Dodd came up, as the three were discussing the matter dismally in the quadrangle. Tommy was looking concerned. In spite of his many rows and rags with Jimmy, he had a real liking for the captain of the Fourth.

"Not heard anything of Jimmy?" he asked.

Lovell shook his head.

"What about the Bagshot match?"

Lovell snorted.

"Blow the Bagshot match! I'm not thinking of cricket."

"Well, they're expecting us," said Tommy Dodd awkwardly.

"We're going out to look for Jimmy this afternoon," said Raby. "You'd better take a team over, Tommy"

"Well, I'll do it, if you like. We're bound to play the match, or else send an excuse, and it's rather late for that," said Tommy Dodd.

And so it was settled. Lovell & Co., keen cricketers as they were, had no mind for cricket that afternoon. They had resolved to spend the afternoon in a search for their missing chum. Little did they dream how near at hand he was.

CHAPTER 20.

Sergeant Kettle Makes a Discovery!

"**Y**OU'LL want some players, I suppose?"

Tommy Dodd glared at Mornington as the dandy of the Fourth asked that question.

"Not your sort," he said, with a sniff.

"There's a lot of fellows standin' out—Rawson and Oswald, as well as Lovell and Raby and Newcome," said Mornington. "They're goin' out huntin' for Silver."

"I know that."

"Well, I'm willin' to play, if you like."

"But I'm not willing," said Tommy Dodd tersely. "Go and eat coke!"

And he turned his back on Mornington.

The team that departed for Bagshot School was mostly composed of Modern fellows. Quite a crowd of the Classical juniors had resolved to spend the afternoon searching for Jimmy Silver.

Mornington strode away idly after speaking to Tommy Dodd, and sauntered round the tuckshop to the door of the staircase of the old tower.

He inserted the key and unlocked the door, and disappeared within.

Townsend had observed him from a distance, and he turned a somewhat scared look on his chums.

"Morny's got him shut up right enough," he whispered.

"The silly ass!" said Peele. "He'll be flogged for this. Mind, we don't know anythin' about it—not a word."

"Not a syllable," said Topham. "It's a rotten trick, too; the poor beggar must be hungry by this time."

Townsend shivered a little as he thought of the night the imprisoned junior had passed in the lonely room at the summit of the tower.

"It's rotten!" he muttered. "But we can't say anythin'. It's rather thick, even for Morny. He's a regular hooligan. Serve him right if he's sacked. I wonder who helped him? He couldn't have handled Silver alone."

"Leggett, of course," said Peele. "Leggett would play any mean trick for half-a-quad. It was Leggett."

"Sorry for him, then, when Silver gets out," said Topham.

Mornington mounted the spiral staircase, unfastened the door at the top, and entered the little room.

Jimmy Silver lay on the sacking on the floor.

His face was deadly pale.

He had slept little in the night. His limbs were cramped by his bonds, and he was faint with hunger and want of sleep. His eyes burned as they turned on the rascal of Rookwood.

Mornington regarded him with a mocking smile.

"It's time to start for the match," he remarked. "They're sending over a team, with Tommy Dodd as skipper."

A faint mumble came from Jimmy Silver. He had gnawed away part of the gag, but still he could not speak.

"Would you like to be let loose?" smiled Mornington. "There's still time, you know!"

Jimmy nodded.

"Will you play me if I let you loose?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Still obstinate!" grinned Mornington. "You are a sticker, and no mistake. But I'm rather a sticker, too."

Jimmy mumbled.

"For the last time, you know. I'm willin' to let you loose, and go over with the team to Bagshot."

Jimmy did not trouble to shake his head. But his look was enough.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and left the little room, carefully fastening the door after him.

He descended the staircase, and left the tower, turning the key in the lock. Then he strolled away and joined Townsend & Co.

"Comin' out for the afternoon?" he said lazily.

"Not with you," said Townsend tersely.

Mornington raised his eyebrows.

"Why not?"

"Look here, we'd rather not be seen speakin' to you at present," said Townsend. "We don't want to get into a row when it all comes out."

"Gettin' funky?" grinned Mornington.

"We've had nothin' to do with it, mind," said Topham.

Mornington laughed.

"I'm not goin' to drag you into it, he said contemptuously. "If it comes out, I can face the music on my own."

"The chap who helped you——"

"Silver didn't see him—that's all right."

"And you won't mention his name?"

"I've promised not to."

"Look here, when are you goin' to let the poor beggar out?" demanded Townsend abruptly. "We can't let this go on."

"Not till it's too late for him to play in the Bagshot match."

"Well, that won't be long!" said Peele. "The team's startin' now. And if you don't mind, Morny, we'd rather not have your company this afternoon."

"Just as you like," said Mornington indifferently.

He sauntered away.

Townsend & Co. joined the crowd of fellows who were going to hunt for Jimmy Silver. That seemed to Townsend the best way of keeping up appearances. In spite of Mornington's assurances, the nuts could not help feeling uneasy.

It was not till five o'clock was striking from the clock-tower on the Modern side that Mornington entered the old tower again. He nodded coolly to Jimmy Silver as he entered the room at the top of the staircase.

"Time's up!" he remarked, as he took the gnawed gag from the junior's mouth. "You can get out now."

Jimmy could not speak, his lips were numbed. Mornington cut through the cords that bound him.

Jimmy made an effort to rise, but sank back on the sacking, with a cry of pain. His limbs were cramped and icy cold.

"By gad, you look bad!" said Mornington, with a touch of remorse. "Of course, I didn't intend to hurt you, Silver. By gad, you look as if you're goin' to be ill. Let me help you down."

"Let me alone, you rotter!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Don't you want my help?"

"No."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders and left him. Jimmy made another effort to rise, but sank back helplessly. He realised that he was going to be ill. His limbs felt like lead, and his head was burning. Mornington had not reflected on the probable results of his dastardly action. The results were to be more serious than he had dreamed.

Jimmy lay helplessly on the sacking, unable to rise now that he was free. Mornington was gone, but even had he been there Jimmy would have refused his help.

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy. "I feel awfully queer! I suppose this means the sanatorium for me. The silly ass!"

Again and again he strove to rise, but he could not. He felt as weak as a baby. But he could use his voice now, and he called for help.

His voice was faint at first, and did not reach beyond the walls of the little room. But it became stronger.

It seemed an age to Jimmy Silver before he heard steps on the staircase, and the bronzed old face of Sergeant Kettle looked in.

"Now, then, wot's this 'ere little game?" said the sergeant gruffly.

Then, as he caught sight of Jimmy Silver, he uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Master Silver! You here!"

"Help me out!" said Jimmy faintly.

The sergeant did not ask any more questions. He picked up the junior in his strong arms, and carried him downstairs.

There was a shout from the fellows in the quadrangle, as the burly sergeant was seen crossing to the School House, with the missing junior in his arms.

Mr. Bootles met them at the doorway, blinking with astonishment.

"Silver!" he exclaimed.

The Head came hastily out of his

study. He had seen the sergeant with his burden from the study window.

"Silver! Where did you find the boy, sergeant?"

"At the top of the old tower, sir," said Sergeant Kettle.

"Good heavens! Silver, what were you doing there?"

"I—I couldn't help it, sir!" faltered Jimmy faintly.

"He'd been tied up, sir," said the sergeant. "There was the cords 'lyin' around him, and he's been tied up, and cut loose again. Isn't that so, Master Silver?"

"Yes!" faltered Jimmy.

The Head's brow was like a thundercloud.

"Have you been all night, and all the morning, in that place, Silver?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!"

"A prisoner—bound?"

"Yes, sir!"

"This is monstrous! Who did this?"

Jimmy was silent. Much as he had suffered at Mornington's hands, he was not inclined to betray the rascal of Rookwood.

"You hear me, Silver? Tell me at once who was guilty of this outrage?" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm.

"I—I'd rather not, sir!" faltered Jimmy.

"What!"

"One word, sir!" interposed Mr. Bootles. "Whoever placed Silver there must have obtained the key from the porter."

"Ah! Kindly call Mack here, Mr. Bootles. Sergeant, take Silver up to the dormitory. Go to bed at once, Silver, and I will telephone for the doctor."

The sergeant carried Jimmy upstairs. In a few minutes he was in bed, with blankets piled on him, and a hot-water bottle at his feet. And in a few minutes more he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER 21.

Flogged!

ROOKWOOD was in an uproar.

The news of the sergeant's discovery spread like wildfire.

"Who did it?" exclaimed Lovell, with blazing eyes, as the chums of the Fourth went downstairs again. "The Moderns, what!"

"Impossible!" said Rawson. "They wouldn't play such a dirty trick!"

"But it was somebody——"

"It's bound to come out. Mack will know who had the key of the tower."

Mack, the porter, was at that moment in the Head's study, being questioned by Dr. Chisholm. He had little to say, but that little was very much to the point. Mornington had asked for the key of the tower, and had not returned it. Mack had supposed that, as a new boy, he wished to explore the place. The Head dismissed him and sent for Mornington.

Mornington entered the study calmly enough.

The storm had burst, and he had expected it. He was ready to face the music now, with plenty of nerve. He faced the Head calmly.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked.

"I sent for you, Mornington. You have been guilty of an astounding outrage!"

"Indeed, sir!"

"Do you deny that you placed Silver of the Fourth, bound hand and foot, in the old tower, and left him there, without food, for a whole night?" thundered the Head.

"No, sir!"

"You—you admit it?" ejaculated the Head.

"Yes, sir!"

"Mornington!"

"You asked me, sir," said Mornington calmly.

"I—I hardly know how to speak to you!" gasped the Head. "Are you in your right senses, boy?"

"I think so, sir!"

"Why did you do this wicked and brutal thing, Mornington?"

"I did not mean to hurt Silver, sir. I am sorry if he is ill. I only meant to keep him out of the Bagshot match, as he refused to play me."

"Good heavens! For so trifling a motive you have been guilty of this dastardly outrage?"

"That was my motive, sir."

"You understand, of course, that your punishment will be severe!"

"I hope not, sir."

"What!"

"My uncle——"

Dr Chisholm raised his hand.

"Silence! Do you dream for one moment that even a governor of Rookwood could stand between you and the just punishment for your dastardly outrage? Only in consideration of your training, or want of training, I refrain from expelling you in disgrace from the school. You will be flogged!" thundered the Head. "To-morrow morning, in the presence of the whole school, I shall administer the severest flogging that has ever been administered at Rookwood. Now go!"

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"I will not be flogged! I——"

"Go!" thundered the Head.

And Mornington went.

The next morning, after prayers, all Rookwood was assembled to witness the punishment of the culprit.

Grim faces looked at Mornington as he entered the hall, with Bulkeley's hand on his shoulder.

Jimmy Silver was with the rest of the Fourth.

He was still pale and weak, but a good night's rest had done wonders for him, and he had luckily escaped a spell in the sanatorium.

The thrashing that Mornington received was, without doubt, the severest the Head had ever dealt out to a junior at Rookwood. When at length he was set down he staggered from Big Hall without a word.

The Rookwood fellows crowded out. They looked grimly at Mornington, who was gasping on the settee in the passage and groaning with pain. He gave them a fierce look.

"This isn't the end of it!" he panted. "I've been flogged—"

"You asked for it, and you've got it," said Lovell, "and if you hadn't had enough, you cad, I'd smash you now!"

"This isn't the end! I'll have him sacked! I'll have him turned out of Rookwood! There'll be a new Head here soon!" hissed Mornington.

"Silly ass!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the juniors, grinning at Mornington's wild threat, passed on.

But they were destined to be reminded later of that threat.

CHAPTER 22.

Startling News!

MUFFIN of the Fourth burst into the Common-room on the Classical side of Rookwood breathless with excitement.

"Heard the news, you chaps?" gasped Muffin. "The Head's going!"

"What?"

"The Head!"

"Going!"

Muffin of the Fourth had succeeded in making a sensation.

The Classical juniors gathered round him on all sides.

"He's going!" repeated Muffin. "I've just heard Mr. Bootles tell Bulkeley so. Bootles looked awfully bothered, and old Bulkeley looked quite down in the mouth, you know. The Head's going!"

"Resigned?" asked Lovell.

"No; sacked!"

Muffin of the Fourth liked to cause a sensation. He looked round triumphantly as he made that statement. There was no doubt that it caused a sensation. The idea that Dr. Chisholm, the revered Head of Rookwood, could possibly be "sacked" had never entered the minds of the Rookwood fellows. To them the Head had seemed

a permanent institution, like the ancient beeches in the quad or the grey old walls of Rookwood itself.

"Sacked!" yelled Flynn.

"The Head sacked!" ejaculated Raby.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Spoof!"

"Bonnet him!" said Newcome.

"He's pulling our leg! Bonnet him!"

"Here, I say, hold on!" exclaimed Muffin, in alarm. "It's true—honest Injun! Bootles told Bulkeley so!"

"Did he use the word 'sacked'?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Well, not exactly that word," said Muffin cautiously. "But that's what he meant. He said that the governing board had requested the Head to resign, on account or having administered unjustifiably severe punishment to a certain Rookwood boy. You know Bootles puts in long words. But he meant 'sacked'."

"Gammon!" said Oswald.

"Well, you'll jolly soon see!" said Muffin. "The Head's going this evening—soon, I think. Bootles is going to the station with him. The new Head's coming this evening, too, and the School will be handed over to him. Chap named Scroop, selected by the governors to take the Head's place. I wonder what he'll be like? The Head's rather a beast in some things, but we might go farther and fare worse."

"We might," agreed Jimmy Silver. "This is jolly bad news, if it's true! The Head's a jolly good chap—for a headmaster!"

"But they wouldn't sack the Head for licking a chap," said Lovell. "It must be all rot! Besides, who's the chap?"

"Mornington! Mornington was flogged!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver started a little.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "You remember Mornington's gas when he was flogged. He said the Head would have to go. His uncle's chairman of the

governors. Mornington's had a hand in this!"

"The uncle must be as big a cad as the nephew, in that case!" growled Lovell.

"Let's go and see Mornington. He may know all about it," said Oswald. "If he's had a hand in it we'll scrag him!"

"Good egg!"

Mornington was not in the Common-room. There was a rush to his study in the Fourth Form passage.

The juniors had little doubt that Mornington knew something about the exciting event. His uncle, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, was chairman of the governing board, and the dandy of the Fourth had openly declared that the Head would have to go for administering that flogging. The juniors had grinned at the threat. But it really looked now as if Mornington had known what he was talking about.

Jimmy Silver tapped at his door and opened it.

There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the study.

Morny & Co. were enjoying themselves after their own fashion. Townsend and Topham of the Fourth and Smythe and Howard of the Shell were in the study. The nuts of Rookwood were all smoking. They were also chatting and smiling, as if over something very entertaining. Mornington looked at the crowd of juniors in the doorway with an insolent smile.

"So you fellows have heard," grinned Townsend.

And the nuts chuckled in chorus. This example of the power of their pal "bucked" the nuts very much. Mornington was a great man in the eyes of his pals that day.

"We've heard," said Jimmy Silver. "Muffin says the Head's going."

Mornington nodded.

"He's goin', right enough!"

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Yaas."

"Well, what do you know?" demanded Lovell.

"I know that Dr. Chisholm's sacked," said Mornington coolly. "I told you it would come. He's sacked for floggin' me."

"You asked for that flogging," said Jimmy Silver.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I said I'd make him sorry for it, and I have," he retorted. "But you needn't mind; the next Head will be a change for the better. I know Scoop."

"Oh, you know him?"

"Old friend of mine," yawned Mornington.

"What a rippin' time we're goin' to have!" chortled Topham. "Morny's old friend won't come down heavy on Morny's pals."

"You can rely on that," said Mornington. "Some cads who have been up against me can look out for squalls, though. I haven't forgotten!"

Jimmy Silver looked steadily at the dandy of the Fourth.

"I don't know whether you're passing, or whether you're telling the truth for once," he said. "But you're bragging of having got the Head sacked, and that's enough. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, I suggest showing these rotters what we think of them."

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar the smoky beasts!" shouted Lovell.

"Hands off!" yelled Mornington, starting to his feet. "Mind, I'll have you flogged when Scoop comes! I'll have you sacked—yaroooooh!"

He had no time for more.

The indignant juniors swarmed into the study, and the Giddy Goats of Rookwood were collared without ceremony. Townsend gave a dreadful gurgle as his cigarette went into his mouth. Mornington descended upon his expensive study carpet with a resounding bump. Smythe made a spring for the door, and tripped over Raby's feet and rolled over.

The next few minutes seemed to



"Stop! Stop!" shouted Mr. Scroop, catching sight of the cricketing party and speeding across the platform in an attempt to board the moving train. "Come back!" In his excitement, the new headmaster of Rookwood collided with the porter. Bump! "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co. from the carriage window.

the unfortunate nuts like a dozen earthquakes rolled into one.

When Jimmy Silver & Co. streamed out of the study they left five gasping and dishevelled fellows sprawling on the floor, amid overturned furniture and scattered cigarettes.

Mornington sat up and panted.

He had been looking forward to a great time under the reign of his old friend, the new Head of Rookwood. This was not a very promising beginning.

"Oh, gad!" groaned Adolphus Synthe, sitting up feebly. "Oh, gad! Yow-ow-wow! Oh, the beasts! Yow!"

"Grooogh!" moaned Townsend.

"Never mind!" said Mornington, between his teeth. "Wait till Scroop comes! They'll change their tune then! Let 'em wait!"

But the nuts only groaned. Even the prospect of dire vengeance in the near future could not quite console them.

CHAPTER 23.

Under a Cloud!

MR. BOOTLES, the master of the Fourth, wore a worried look as Jimmy Silver entered his study a little later. Jimmy noted it at once. The Form-master passed his hand over his brow, and looked inquiringly at the captain of the Fourth.

"Yes, yes, what is it, Silver—what, what?" said Mr. Bootles.

"If you please, sir, we've heard some very surprising news," said Jimmy Silver respectfully. "Is it true that the Head is going?"

"Yes, Silver. The whole school will know it shortly," said Mr. Bootles, with a sigh. "You must not suppose, however, that any blame attaches to Dr. Chisholm. Neither is his resignation permanent, I trust and believe. The fact is, there is a misapprehension on the part of the governors."

"Is that all, sir?" asked Jimmy, relieved.

"It is, however, of a somewhat

serious nature," said Mr. Bootles. "It appears that Mornington, who was flogged recently, complained to his guardian, and paid him a visit shortly afterwards to repeat his complaints. Sir Rupert Stacpoole took a serious view of the matter, and called a meeting of the governors. I understand that there was a prolonged discussion, and the result was that the Head was called upon to resign his post here while an inquiry is held. Meanwhile, a temporary headmaster will take his place. I hope and believe that the matter will be settled in a satisfactory way. Meanwhile, the Head is leaving."

"To-day, sir?"

"Yes; very shortly. The new headmaster arrives to-day," said Mr. Bootles. "You may acquaint your Form-fellows with these details, Silver."

And Mr. Bootles made a gesture of dismissal.

Jimmy Silver left the study, with knitted brows.

It was clear now that the departure of the Head was Mornington's work; that he had been successful in carrying out his threat.

Jimmy knew that several members of the governing board were absent abroad. It was probable that the few who remained, and who had constituted the meeting, were friends of the chairman, and under his influence. Doubtless the most had been made of Mornington's flogging; which had certainly been severe, though not a whit more severe than he had deserved.

Jimmy could understand the pain and humiliation the governors' decision must have caused to the Head. True, his resignation was only temporary, and the chances were that he would be reinstated in all honour. But he was going now, under a cloud, after many years of good service at the old school.

The juniors, naturally, did not come much in contact with the Head, and he was a somewhat awful personage in their eyes. But they knew him as a just, if somewhat severe, master. The

bare idea of his being "sacked" by the influence of the cad of Rookwood made them boil with indignation.

A crowd of fellows were awaiting Jimmy at the end of the passage, eager for news.

"Well, what does Bootles say?" asked a dozen voices.

"It's true," said Jimmy. And he explained what the Fourth Form master had told him.

"It's rotten!" said Lovell. "So it was that cad that's done it? We'll make him sit up for it!"

"He's more likely to make us sit up, if a friend of his is going to be head-master," said Rawson.

"That's swank, most likely."

"More likely true. His uncle's appointed the man, most likely. And it's clear that Mornington knows him."

"It's a rotten shame!"

"Who's coming to the station to see the Head off?" asked Jimmy Silver. "I think it's up to us to let him know we're sorry he's going."

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll give him three cheers on the platform," said Jimmy. "Then he'll know that we're sorry to lose him."

"Good egg!"

Jimmy's idea was acted upon at once. Jimmy cut over to the Modern side to apprise Tommy Dodd & Co. of the idea. The Modern juniors entered into it heartily.

Quite an army of Rookwood juniors marched out of the gates. The car had come round, to the Head's house to take him to the station, and it was clear that his departure would not be long delayed.

There were fifty or sixty juniors in the crowd that marched into Coombe and took up a position outside the little station.

The nuts of Rookwood were not among them. But Mornington and his friends were in a very small minority.

The buzz of a motor-car was heard in the old village street.

"Here he comes!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Now, you cheer when I raise my hand. All together, mind."

"Right-ho!"

The car stopped outside the station. Jimmy Silver ran forward to open the door, and the Head stepped out.

Dr. Chisholm was looking a little pale and harassed. He seemed surprised at the sight of the crowd of Rookwood juniors.

"What does this mean?" he said.

Mr. Bootles, who followed him from the car, blinked at the juniors in astonishment.

"It's a— a send-off, sir," said Jimmy Silver, hesitating a little. "We're all sorry you're going, sir. We hope you'll soon come back."

The Head smiled slightly.

"Thank you, Silver! Thank you all, my boys!"

He passed into the station with Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy raised his hand.

A thunderous cheer broke forth, awakening every echo of the old street.

Dr. Chisholm started, and frowned a little. Then he smiled and raised his hat to the Rookwood crowd, and disappeared into the station. And another tremendous cheer followed him in.

CHAPTER 24.

The New Head!

"WHAT is all this?"

A man had stepped from the station entrance as the Rookwood juniors delivered their last salvo of cheering.

The Rookwooders had not noticed him until he spoke.

He was a tall, thin man, with a soft hat and a buttoned black coat that made him look taller and thinner. His face was hard and cold, with small eyes like points of steel, and a very square jaw.

He looked over the Rookwood crowd with a frowning brow.

Jimmy Silver stared at him.

The question, from a perfect stranger, seemed to Jimmy to savour of impertinence.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"To all of you. You are Rookwood boys, I presume?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then what does this unseemly crowd and disturbance mean?"

"I don't quite see what it matters to you, sir," said Jimmy Silver, puzzled and annoyed.

"What!"

"What the dickens business is it of yours?" demanded Lovell, more bluntly.

"I am your headmaster!" thundered the stranger.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Great Scott!"

"You—you are Mr. Scroop!" exclaimed Raby.

"I am Mr. Scroop!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," stammered Jimmy. "Of course, I didn't know you."

Jimmy was dismayed.

The hard, cold face and metallic eyes of the new headmaster were not reassuring. Mr. Scroop looked as if he would have made a first-rate slave-driver. But he was not very prepossessing as a headmaster for Rookwood.

Evidently he had arrived in the train which was to bear away the former headmaster.

The two gentlemen had not encountered, however. Dr. Chisholm had not cared to remain to hand over the school to his successor. He had left that task to Mr. Manders, the senior master.

Mr. Bootles came out of the station, looking decidedly glum.

He, too, was unaware so far of the arrival of the new Head. He did not glance at Mr. Scroop till that gentleman's loud and disagreeable voice drew his attention.

"If this is an example of the manners of Rookwood, I can see that I shall have much to alter there," said Mr. Scroop. "What do you mean by

gathering in a disorderly crowd in the street and making this disturbance?"

"We weren't making a disturbance, sir," said Jimmy Silver:

"Then what were you doing?"

"Seeing our headmaster off."

"Indeed! That is no excuse for disorderly behaviour. Every boy here will take a hundred lines."

"Oh!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Mr. Bootles, approaching the stranger. "Am I to understand——"

Mr. Scroop looked at him sharply.

"Are you a Rookwood master?"

"I am master of the Fourth Form."

"I am your new headmaster. Are any of the boys of your Form in this disorderly crowd?"

Mr. Bootles seemed almost "floored" by the grim and uncompromising manner of the new Head.

"Ye-es," he said feebly. "A large number of my Form are here, Mr. Scroop."

"Then I cannot compliment you on the state of discipline of your Form."

"Indeed!"

"No, sir. Your name——"

"I am Mr. Bootles."

"Very well, Mr. Bootles, I shall expect a change in the behaviour of the Fourth Form."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bootles again, more dryly than before.

"Yes, indeed. I understand that Dr. Chisholm has gone?"

"He has just left by train."

"A most extraordinary proceeding!" snapped Mr. Scroop. "I should have expected him to remain at the school until I arrived!"

"Indeed!"

"Mr. Bootles, kindly see that these boys return to the school at once, and that they perform the tasks I have already set them!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Scroop turned away, and a deep groan from the crowd of juniors followed him. He swung back with a frowning brow.

"What—what is this? Who made that sound?"

Silence.

"So this is how the boys of your Form are instructed to treat their headmaster, Mr. Bootles?"

"Really, sir—"

"I shall make a change," said the new Head grimly. "Every boy here has his imposition doubled. Now go!"

The juniors went.

They marched home to Rookwood in a savage frame of mind.

They had not expected the new Head to equal their old headmaster, but he had come as a most unpleasant surprise to them.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had certainly done no harm in seeing their headmaster off at the station, but they returned to Rookwood the richer by two hundred lines each.

No wonder there were dark looks among them, and a considerable amount of growling.

Mr. Bootles walked with the juniors, with a very unhappy expression on his face.

The Fourth Form master had been on agreeable terms of friendship with the Head of Rookwood. That pleasant relationship was evidently at an end.

There was not likely to be anything agreeable in his connection with the new headmaster.

The party arrived at Rookwood, and Mr. Bootles went at once into his study. The juniors gathered in groups to discuss the new situation.

Mornington and his friends were lounging in the doorway of the School House. In spite of the recent ragging, they seemed to be in great spirits.

Jimmy Silver looked at Mornington darkly.

Mornington was there to await the arrival of the new headmaster. The story of what had happened at the station soon spread through the school, and fellows gathered round to see the new Head when he came in.

Mr. Scroop came in the car which

had taken Dr. Chisholm to the station.

The car stopped outside the School House, and all eyes were fixed upon the tall, thin figure of the new Head as he alighted.

"Oh, my hat! What a chivvy!" murmured Dickinson minor.

"Blessed gargoyle!" murmured Hooker.

Those remarks were not loud enough for the new Head to hear, however. The juniors "capped" him very respectfully as he came up the steps.

The frown that seemed habitual to Mr. Scroop's brow was still lingering there.

It cleared a little, however, at the sight of Mornington, who approached the new Head with a confident smile.

"Ah, it is you, Mornington!" said Mr. Scroop, shaking hands with the junior. "I am glad to see you!"

He passed on into the house, without so much as a nod to anyone else.

Mornington looked triumphantly at his friends.

"What was I tellin' you?" he remarked.

"Hooray for us!" grinned Smythe of the Shell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked disgusted.

Mornington's boast that the new Head was his old friend was evidently not "swank," after all.

The dandy of the Fourth was looking forward to a "good time." Doubtless his expectation was well founded.

"We're going to celebrate this!" grinned Mornington. "Nothin' to be afraid of now, my infants!"

The Fistical Four went to the end study to write their lines in a mood of dismay. They could foresee that a change was to come over the old school under the rule of Mornington's old friend, Mr. Scroop. And they were right.

CHAPTER 25.

Caught in the Act!

BEFORE the new headmaster had been a couple of days at Rookwood the chums of the Fourth found all their forebodings fulfilled.

Matters had changed under the new Head with a vengeance.

Lovell remarked that Mr. Scroop ought to have been born a Prussian, and that he must have been born in England by mistake.

Nothing, certainly, could have been more Prussian than the methods of the new Head.

The Rookwooders were not long in discovering that Mr. Scroop was a tyrant, who delighted in the exercise of tyranny.

He had his own ideas about school discipline, and his ideas were worthy of a Prussian pedagogue.

At Rookwood canings were not common, and floggings were of a very rare occurrence; but Mr. Scroop had changed all that.

On his second day at the school there was a flogging, the victim being Flynn of the Fourth, who had unfortunately landed a cricket-ball through the Head's study window.

Certainly, Dr. Chisholm would have administered punishment in such a case, but a flogging was out of all proportion to the fault.

The Rookwood fellows realised that it behoved them to be very careful indeed, and to give no excuse to the tyrant, who was evidently on the lookout for excuses to administer severe punishment.

On more than one occasion the new Head stepped into the Form-rooms and took the management of the class out of the hands of the Form-masters. On such occasions faults were certain to be found and punishments to be administered.

The masters chafed under this interference as much as the pupils did.

Mr. Manders, of the Modern side, was the only master who appeared to

pull well with the new Head. He was a man after Mr. Scroop's own heart.

While Jimmy Silver & Co. were "minding their p's and q's" with unusual care, it was curious that Mornington was more reckless than ever.

The cad of the Fourth had always been reckless, and under Dr. Chisholm's rule his recklessness had brought him some severe punishments. But whatever restraint the fear of punishment had exercised was gone now.

The little smoking-parties in his study had been held "under the rose"; but now the dandy of the Fourth seemed quite careless of discovery.

His friends, relying upon his influence with the Head, became almost as reckless as himself.

Jimmy Silver & Co. observed it, and wondered what would come of it.

Although Mornington was the Head's favourite, it hardly seemed possible that Mr. Scroop could allow him to defy the rules of the school with impunity.

It was on the third day after the new Head's arrival that the matter was put to the test.

A select party of the Giddy Goats were celebrating in Mornington's study. They were "keeping it up" in unusual style, and the smell of tobacco penetrated from the study into the passage. Voices could be heard from the study, making such remarks as "Your deal!" or "Nap!"

"Those silly asses will find themselves in trouble if a prefect happens to come along!" grunted Lovell, as he passed the door with Jimmy Silver.

"I wonder!" said Jimmy.

"Suppose Bulkeley came up——"

"Mornington knows he might," said Jimmy Silver. "He's counting on the Head protecting him!"

"Scroop couldn't be such a rotter!"

"I don't know."

"My hat!" murmured Lovell, looking back as they reached the end

study. "Blessed if Bulkeley isn't there!"

"Phew!"

The captain of Rookwood was coming along the passage. He stopped as he was passing the door of Mornington's study. Mornington's voice came floating from within:

"Let's make it poker. I'm tired of nap—a kid's game!"

Bulkeley seemed rooted to the floor.

He sniffed.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed.

"Now look out for the fireworks," murmured Lovell.

Bulkeley seized the door-handle and flung the door open, and strode into the study. The room was hazy with smoke.

Mornington and Townsend and Topham were seated round the table, with cigarettes in their lips and cards in their hands.

Townsend and Topham dropped the cards as if they had become suddenly red-hot at the sight of the captain of the school.

Mornington went on dealing with perfect calmness.

Rascal as he was, the dandy of the Fourth had an iron nerve.

Bulkeley stared grimly at the three juniors.

"Card-playing," he ejaculated, "and smoking! Well?"

"Take a hand?" asked Mornington affably.

"What!"

"Give Bulkeley a chair, Towny."

Townsend did not move.

Bulkeley's face became crimson with anger. He strode towards Mornington, grasped him by the collar, and whipped him out of his chair.

"Hands off!" shouted Mornington.

"You'll come with me!" said Bulkeley. "I'll take you to your Form-master. You two young rascals follow me!"

"Yes, Bulkeley!" gasped Topham.

"Let go!" yelled Mornington. "I'll kick your shins, Bulkeley!"

"Will you?" said the Rookwood captain grimly.

He jerked the Fourth Former out of the study.

Mornington struggled fiercely in the doorway and the passage. Bulkeley uttered a sharp exclamation as a heel hacked his shin.

"By Jove!"

He shook the junior like a rat till his teeth almost rattled. Then, with a grip like iron on his collar, he marched him forcibly away to Mr. Bootles' study, followed by Townsend and Topham.

CHAPTER 26.

Mornington's Influence!

MR. BOOTLES started to his feet as the breathless, furious junior was bundled into his study. Bulkeley released him there, and Mornington stood panting.

"Bless my soul! What is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"I thought I had better bring this young rascal to you, sir," said the prefect. "I have found him gambling and smoking in his study."

"Goodness gracious!"

"If—if you please, sir, it—it was only a lark," stammered Townsend.

"We—we're sorry, sir!" mumbled Topham.

Towny and Topy found that they lacked the nerve to go through the ordeal now that the test had come. But Mornington was not troubled with want of nerve. He met Mr. Bootles' horrified eyes coolly.

"Mornington!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "This is—is—is outrageous—infamous! What have you to say, you wretched boy?"

"I appeal to the Head, sir!"

"What!"

"I appeal to the Head!"

Mr. Bootles blinked at him.

Any fellow had a right to appeal to the Head if he liked, though as it generally meant a severer punishment,

it was a right not often exercised. But Mornington knew what he was doing.

"You appeal to the Head!" repeated Mr. Bootles. "Very well! Bulkeley, will you take this wretched boy to Mr. Scroop's study?"

"Certainly, sir," said Bulkeley. "Come with me, Mornington."

"I'll come," said Mornington coolly. "But you can keep your paws off me. I won't stand that."

The captain of Rookwood did not reply, but he fastened a grip on Mornington's collar again.

"Come!" he said briefly.

Mornington was marched out of the study, and Townsend and Topham brought up the rear again. A hundred pairs of eyes watched them on the way to the Head's study.

"They've done it this time!" remarked Rawson.

"Fairly done it!" said Flynn. "Sure, the baste flogged me for breakin' his window! They're booked!"

"Another flogging!" grunted Oswald. "We shall be getting one every day at this rate."

"Sure; they've asked for it."

"They've asked for it, but they won't get it," said Jimmy Silver. "Mornington knew what he was about when he appealed to the Head."

"But the Head can't let him off!" exclaimed Oswald.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders. "We shall see what we shall see!" he remarked oracularly.

Bulkeley arrived at the Head's study, watched from a distance by an interested crowd.

"Wait here!" he said.

He tapped at the door and entered, leaving the three delinquents waiting in the passage. Townsend and Topham were pale with fright.

"We're in for it!" groaned Townsend.

"Flogged, by gad!" groaned Topham.

"You've got us into this, Mornington, you fool!"

Mornington laughed contemptuously.

"It will be all serene," he said. "You've simply got to deny everything."

"The Head won't take our word against a prefect's."

"Ten to one he does, in quids," said Mornington.

"But—but he can't!"

"But he will!" said his lordship coolly. "Keep a stiff upper lip, and he like a trooper, and you're all right."

Bulkeley had entered the study, and the Head greeted him with a cold look. There was no love lost between the tyrant of Rookwood and the captain of the school.

"What is it, Bulkeley?" asked Mr. Scroop icily.

Bulkeley had not handed in sufficient reports for punishment to please the New Head. The Sixth-Former had no intention whatever of lending his aid to the tyrant in that way. On this occasion, however, he had no choice about the matter; he was bound to make his report when the matter was serious.

"I have a report to make, sir," said Bulkeley. "Three juniors smoking and gambling in a study. Mr. Bootles has referred the matter to you."

Mr. Scroop's hard face relaxed a little.

"Quite right, Bulkeley—quite right. I have thought that you were somewhat lax in these matters, but I am glad to see that I was mistaken. Undoubtedly this is a matter for me to deal with. Call them in."

The New Head selected a cane.

Bulkeley stepped to the door.

"You may come in," he said.

The three juniors entered—Mornington cool and self-possessed, and Townsend and Topham with their knees knocking together.

Mr. Scroop started a little at the sight of Mornington, and laid the cane on the desk.

"Are these the boys, Bulkeley?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir—Mornington, Townsend, and Topham."

"What have you to say, Mornington?" asked Mr. Scroop, in his kindest tone.

"Bulkeley is mistaken, sir," said Mornington calmly.

"Mistaken!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "Why, you impudent young rascal, I found you with the cards in your hand——"

"Kindly allow Mornington to finish, Bulkeley."

The prefect bit his lip.

"Now, Mornington——"

"As a matter of fact, sir," said Mornington calmly, "we were playing a game for—for nuts. Sort of Christmas game, sir. Towny and Topy will bear me out."

Townsend and Topham gasped. On the table in Morny's study, the money they had been playing for was still lying.

A falsehood that could immediately be discovered did not seem much use to the two juniors. But they followed Mornington's lead.

"Yes, sir," said Topham.

"Just so, sir," faltered Townsend.

Mr. Scroop frowned, but his brow was directed towards the astonished captain of Rookwood.

"You appear to have made a very serious mistake, Bulkeley," he said coldly.

"I, sir!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "These juniors were gambling and smoking."

"They deny it."

"Is their denial to be taken against my word, sir?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"I intend to be perfectly just, if that is what you mean. There is no harm in a game for nuts."

"They were playing for money. The money is still there, if you would care to step as far as their study, sir."

"It seems to me hardly worth while. I have great faith in Mornington."

"They were smoking, too!" said Bulkeley.

"Is that the case, Mornington?"

"Not at all, sir. Bulkeley is mistaken."

"Really, Bulkeley——"

"How could I be mistaken in such a matter?" exclaimed the amazed prefect.

"Besides, they smell of tobacco now, and their fingers are stained."

"We've been doing some chemistry, sir," said Mornington calmly. "That's where the stains came from."

Towny and Topy blinked at one another. What use there was in a palpable falsehood of that kind, they could not see. But they saw soon. Mr. Scroop was determined to believe what he had already intended to believe. It was evident that Mornington's influence with the new Head was unbounded.

"I accept your assurance, Mornington," said Mr. Scroop. "You may go. Bulkeley, I trust you will be more careful on another occasion."

Bulkeley gasped.

"If you do not choose to punish them, sir, I have no more to say," he stuttered. "It is in your hands, of course."

"Exactly. You may go."

Bulkeley went without another word. The three nuts grinned as he strode away down the passage with knitted brows.

"Well, what did I tell you?" smiled Mornington.

Townsend and Topham, completely reassured now, chuckled gleefully. Mornington looked vauntingly at Jimmy Silver & Co. as he passed them.

"Not licked, you see," he remarked.

"I see," said Jimmy grimly.

The three nuts went on their way rejoicing. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" said Lovell. "Looks to me as if we'd better all pal on with Morny, and then we can do as we like! My word!"

CHAPTER 27.

His Lordship Has His Way!

"THE Head, by Jove!"

Lovell made the remark in tones of surprise.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the Rookwood juniors were crowding

Little Side. The Classics and Moderns were to meet on the cricket-field, and stumps were already pitched. Mornington and his friends were standing in a group before the pavilion, looking on. The "nuts" of Rookwood were not represented in either team. There was no room for slackers in either the Classical or Modern eleven.

The juniors were surprised to see the new Head coming down to the cricket-field. Mr. Scroop had shown no sign, so far, of being interested in the great game.

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "Coming to watch the match! More sense than I gave him credit for, by George!"

"Well, it's rather a compliment to junior teams," remarked Oswald. "Dr. Chisholm didn't often honour our matches."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Flynn. "More likely he's going to chip in, though, and worry us. More like him intirely."

"Well, our consciences are clear for once," said Jimmy, laughing. "Even the Head can't have anything against us this afternoon. Ready, Tommy?"

"Quite," said Tommy Dodd, producing a penny.

The juniors "capped" the new Head as he arrived on the scene. It was necessary to show respect, even if they did not feel very much. They could see that Mr. Scroop had something to say to them, and they wondered what it was. Mornington and the nuts were exchanging glances and smiles.

"Ah, you are playing cricket this afternoon!" said the Head, in a more genial tone than the juniors were accustomed to hear from him.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"You are playing, Mornington?"

"No, sir," said Mornington. "I'm not in the team."

The Head frowned.

"Really, Mornington, I am surprised at this! Your guardian is specially desirous that you should take a share in outdoor sports."

"It isn't my fault, sir. I'm not allowed in the team."

"Nonsense! Who is captain here?"

"I am, sir," said Jimmy Silver very quietly.

"Put Mornington into the team. Why have you left him out?"

"He is no good, sir," said Jimmy. "Chap can't play for the side unless he keeps to practice and gets into form."

"Don't be impertinent, Silver! You will play Mornington, by my order," said the Head.

Jimmy's lips set obstinately.

This was a barefaced invasion of his rights, and Jimmy was not disposed to surrender his rights to anyone, even the headmaster himself.

The favouritism the new Head had shown to Mornington could not have been carried further. It seemed to Jimmy Silver that the limit had been reached.

"You hear me, Silver?" said Mr. Scroop, as the captain of the Fourth did not reply.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, do as I tell you."

"Excuse me, sir. I can't play Mornington."

"What!"

"It's impossible, sir! He's a rotten cricketer, and I can't throw the match away."

Jimmy's tone was very quiet, and very determined. The cricketers looked on in silence.

Mr. Scroop flushed deeply.

"Do you mean that you disobey me, Silver?"

"Nunno, sir. Only a cricket captain has the right to select his own eleven. I'd put Mornington in if he were any good. But he's no good at all."

Mr. Scroop pointed to the School House.

"Go indoors at once, Silver. You will take five hundred lines of Virgil, and write them out before tea."

Jimmy did not move for a moment. But resistance was hopeless, and he turned on his heel and walked away towards the House.

Lovell & Co. exchanged furious looks. The Moderns looked on in grim silence. Mr. Scroop gave the juniors a sour glance, and spoke to Mornington. "Mornington, you will take Silver's place in the eleven, and act as captain."

"Yes, sir," said Mornington.

"Then I jolly well won't play, for one!" broke out Lovell hotly.

"I shall make a few changes in the team," grinned Mornington, as the Head moved away and sat down in a cane chair before the pavilion. "Lovell and Raby and Newcome can clear off. They won't be wanted. You too, Oswald."

"We should, anyway!" said Raby disdainfully.

"Yes, rather!" said Oswald emphatically.

"You've got no choice about it," sneered Mornington. "Towny, I shall want you, and Topsy and Peele and Smythe and Howard. The rest of the team will do."

"Sure, and ye can make another change!" growled Flynn. "I'm not playin' for ye, ye swankin' spalpeen!"

"Same here!" said Jones minor. "Put in another silly idiot like yourself, Mornington. I'm sticking to Jimmy Silver!"

"And I!"

"Me, too!"

"Come on, all of you!" exclaimed Lovell.

And the whole team walked off the field in a body.

Mornington looked nonplussed for a moment. Not a single member of the Classical eleven was willing to play under his lead. But he shrugged his shoulders.

"Let them go," said Townsend. "You can easily make up a team from your own friends, Morny."

"You bet!" said Mornington. "I'll do it, too! Tracy and Selwyn and Chesney and Beaufort and Muffin."

"We're on!" grinned Tracy.

"Now we'll toss, Dodd," said Mornington,

Tommy Dodd put the penny back into his pocket, looking Mornington up and down with a glance of contempt that made even Mornington flush a little.

"Do you think we're going to waste an afternoon playing such a team of fumbling duffers?" said Tommy Dodd. "Not much!"

"The game's off," said Tommy Cook.

"Come on!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Let's go out on the river. We'll play Jimmy Silver's team another time."

The Modern eleven walked off.

Mornington stood rooted to the ground, his face crimson with anger.

The Head's interference had effectually "quashed" Jimmy Silver & Co. But that was not of much benefit if there was to be no match at all.

But Tommy Dodd had counted without the Head.

Mr. Scroop had not heard all that had passed, but he could see, and he rose to his feet as the Moderns walked away.

"Dodd!" he called out.

The Modern captain halted and turned round.

"Yes, sir."

"Where are you going?"

"We're going on the river this afternoon, sir."

"You came here to play cricket?"

"Yes, but—"

"You will play the match as arranged, Dodd. Not a word. I think I have made you understand that I brook no impertinence."

Mornington smiled.

The Moderns came back slowly. There was fierce rebellion in their breasts, but direct disobedience to the Head's commands was not to be thought of—not yet, at all events. The habit of discipline was strong, and the Rookwood fellows had not yet reached the breaking-point.

In silence, but with bitter anger in his face, Tommy Dodd tossed for innings with Mornington. Only the presence of the Head prevented him from planting his fist full in the mocking face of the cad of the Fourth.

"You bat first," said Mornington,

Tommy Dodd nodded without speaking. Mornington and his precious eleven went into the field. Tommy Dodd's face cleared as he exchanged a few whispered words with his men.

Then there was an outbreak of grinning among the Modern cricketers.

The Moderns were forced to play in the match. But there is an old proverb that it is possible to take a horse to water, but not to make him drink.

The match had to be played, but Tommy Dodd had his own ideas as to how it was to be played.

CHAPTER 28.

Very Entertaining Cricket!

TOMMY DODD opened the innings with Doyle

The Head remained in his seat before the pavilion. Apparently he intended to watch the cricket. Tommy Dodd & Co. were inwardly resolved that he should see some cricket worth watching.

Mornington went on to bowl the first over. The fellows round the field, wondering how that curious match would turn out, looked on with keen interest. There was not a bowler in Mornington's team capable of taking Tommy Dodd's wicket, and the two Tommies could have remained at the wickets all the afternoon if they had so chosen. As it happened, they did not choose.

Mornington sent down the ball, and it missed Tommy's wicket by a foot. But the wicket went down—floored by Tommy Dodd's bat.

"Hit wicket!" ejaculated Jobson of the Fifth. "Clumsy young ass! Out!"

Jobson was umpire at that end. Tommy Dodd smiled at him, and went to the pavilion. Tommy Cook took his place, exchanging a grin with him as he came in.

Townsend fielded the ball, and Mornington bowled again.

This time the ball came nearer to the mark, and knocked out the leg

stump. Tommy Cook watched it do so with an air of polite interest. He did not make a movement with the bat.

"How's that?" called out Mornington.

"Out!" said Jobson.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Tommy Cook.

Tommy Doyle, at the other end of the pitch, gave a chortle.

Cook took away his bat, and Lacy came in.

Mornington sent the ball whizzing down again. It was a ball that a fag in the Second Form could have played with ease. But Lacy did not play it. He held his bat well out of the way, and watched his wicket go down with a cheery smile.

"Out!"

"My hat!" said Lacy, laughing.

He returned to the pavilion. Towle of the Fourth yawned, and came in next.

Mornington's eyes were glittering now.

He had been delighted at taking Tommy Dodd's wicket so easily. His pleasure had been mixed with doubt when Cook's wicket fell. But there was no more doubt in the case of Lacy's wicket. He understood that the Moderns were simply pulling his leg. He had insisted upon playing the match against their will. The Head's authority compelled them to play. But nothing could compel them to play seriously.

Mornington gritted his teeth, and bowled to Towle. He had already performed the hat-trick; but he was not pleased with it, and the crowd were laughing instead of cheering. All the Rookwood fellows understood the Moderns' little game by this time.

Crash! Towle's wicket went down, without Towle making the slightest effort to defend it. Towle blinked at Jobson.

"Is that out, Jobby?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes!" chortled Jobson.

Towle walked off the pitch. Four wickets had fallen in five minutes, and the bowler ought to have been distinctly pleased. But he wasn't! His face was crimson with rage. The

shouts of laughter from the onlookers added to his fury.

Price of the Fourth came in next, grinning. Mornington shouted to him along the pitch:

"Keep your wicket up! Don't play the giddy goat, Price!"

Price looked at him coolly.

"Are you batting or bowling?" he asked.

"Bowling, you fathead!"

"Well, keep to your bowling, and leave me to bat my own way," said Price, and he clumped down his bat a yard off the crease.

"You're not looking after your wicket!" shouted Mornington, almost beside himself with anger and chagrin.

"Whose wicket is it?" demanded Price. "I suppose I can do as I like with my own wicket, can't I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington bowled, with a savage scowl. As Price's bat was nowhere in the way, the wicket went down, the balls scattered.

"Out!" chortled Jobson. "Ha, ha!"

"Awful luck—what?" said Price, with a grin. "That bowler's a terror, isn't he? Did you ever see wickets go down like that before? They ought to put Morny in the First Eleven, they ought really."

Another batsman came in, and in playing Mornington's last ball, knocked his own balls off. The bowler had taken six wickets for the over. But he did not look pleased. The field did not look pleased, either. As the match was reduced to a farce, there was not much satisfaction in playing it out.

The field crossed over, however, and Townsend took up the bowling from the other end. At the first ball, Tommy Doyle's wicket went into pieces, and Tommy came off with a broad grin.

"Sure, it's a terror ye are intirely," he called to Townsend, as he passed. "Ye're as deadly a bowler at Morny, bedad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Man in!" chortled Tommy Dodd.

The Head was looking on, puzzled.

He did not know much about cricket, but he knew that this was a very odd cricket match. The shouts of laughter from the crowd round the field would have told him as much.

Man after man went in, each of them going out in turn to the first ball. The Modern eleven were all down for nothing in the space of fifteen minutes. As it was a single-innings match, the rival team had not much to do to secure a victory. But they were not looking happy about it. It was no great pleasure to be "guyed" in this manner by the merry Moderns.

"Come on," said Tommy Dodd. "We field now. We shall have to buck up awfully hard if we're not going to be beaten hollow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Moderns went into the field.

"Dash it all, it's no good battin'," growled Townsend. "They're only foolin' us, and the whole school's cacklin'!"

Mornington ground his teeth.

"I'll make them sorry for it, somehow!" he muttered.

"Field's waiting, Mornington!" called out Jobson of the Fifth.

Mornington grunted, and came in with Smythe. Mornington took the bowling from the pavilion end. Tommy Dodd went on to bowl, and trundled the ball down under-arm in the easiest possible manner. Mornington sulkily cut it away, and the batsmen ran.

The ball had been knocked fairly to Tommy Cook's feet at mid-wicket. He picked it up in a leisurely way. The batsmen were crossing the pitch, and either wicket was at Cook's mercy. He calculated carefully, and threw in the ball, missing the batsman's wicket by a couple of yards. The batsmen made good, and the run was secured amid a howl of laughter.

"Congratulations, Morny," yawned Tommy Dodd. "You've beaten us—beat us to the wide. All in twenty minutes, too! Wonderful performance!"

"Marvellous!" said Tommy Cook solemnly. "Winning a match with all

the wickets in hand like that—marvellous!”

“You spoofin’ cads!” hissed Mornington.

Tommy Dodd looked surprised and pained.

“My dear chap, what do you want? You’ve beaten us at cricket, and you’ve still got the afternoon before you to smoke and play nap. What more do you want?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Mornington snapped his teeth, and stepped suddenly towards Tommy Dodd, and struck him full in the face.

Tommy staggered back for a moment.

But it was only for a moment. The next, his right shot out, straight from the shoulder, and Mornington, with a yell, rolled over in the grass.

CHAPTER 29.

A Roland for an Oliver!

“DODD!”

Tommy Dodd had forgotten the Head. He remembered him as the harsh, angry voice thundered out.

“Dodd! How dare you?”

Mornington sat up stupidly, blinking and rubbing his nose. Tommy Dodd faced the new Head coolly.

“You saw what he did, sir,” he said quietly.

“Don’t bandy words with me,” said Mr. Scroop harshly. “Follow me at once!”

He strode away towards the School House.

Tommy Dodd hesitated.

He understood that he was going to be caned severely. If Mornington had been caned also, Tommy would have had nothing to complain of. But Mornington, evidently, was to go unpunished; Tommy was to take the punishment for the two. He clenched his hands, and stood where he was.

“Better go,” whispered Cook, with rather a scared look.

Tommy Dodd paused, a long pause.

Then, with slow and reluctant steps, he followed Mr. Scroop to the house.

The juniors watched him go, with grim faces. Mornington staggered to his feet, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. His nose was streaming red.

Tommy Dodd’s friends waited for him to emerge from the Head’s study. They heard the swishing of a cane from that dreaded apartment, but no sound from Tommy. When the junior came out at last, his face was pale, and his lips tightly set.

“Had it bad?” said Tommy Doyle sympathetically.

Dodd nodded without speaking.

He went away to his study; he wanted to be alone after that licking. Tough as Tommy Dodd was, he had had as much as he could stand.

There were black looks among the juniors that afternoon. Tommy Dodd was shut up in his study, and Jimmy Silver was grinding out lines in the Fourth Form room. Mornington was in his study with his friends, and with a swollen nose. The nuts of Rookwood were enjoying themselves in their own peculiar way, and the atmosphere of the study resembled that of a tap-room.

Jimmy Silver came into the end study at tea-time, looking tired and gloomy. His chums had tea ready for him.

“Nice afternoon?” groaned Jimmy.

“Oh, ripping!” said Lovell dismally.

“I say, we shan’t be able to stand this, you know.”

“How did the match go?”

Lovell & Co. grinned, and Jimmy Silver laughed when he heard the story of the cricket match. Tommy Dodd came into the study while the Fistical Four were having their tea. He was still looking pale.

“Hallo, you Modern boulder!” said Jimmy Silver.

“I want to speak to you fellows,” said Tommy Dodd. “We’re not going to stand this much longer. The cricket’s mucked up for the season if that brute is going to interfere with the matches.”

“Looks like it!” growled Raby.

"I've been licked for knocking Mornington down, though he punched me first. It's rotten favouritism, of course. If this goes on, something will have to go."

"Can't back up against the Head," said Newcome doubtfully.

"We backed up against Manders once," said Jimmy Silver. "And the Head is worse than Manders—ten times worse. Mornington's got influence with him, and he's using it like a cad. But we can put a stop to that."

"How?"

"By making an example of Mornington."

"The Head will chip in again."

"Let him! Tommy's had a licking on Mornington's account. That's got to be squared. Mornington's going to have a licking for every one he gets for other chaps."

"Hear, hear!"

"That may stop him," said Jimmy Silver. "If it doesn't, we'll try something else. If you fellows have finished tea we'll go and see him. Bring a stump."

"Good egg!" said Tommy Dodd. "I'm on."

Most of the Fourth Form were "on" when they heard what was toward.

After tea nearly all the Fourth Form presented themselves at Mornington's study door. Jimmy Silver kicked the door open and marched in.

"Dodd's been licked, Mornington," he said abruptly.

Mornington smiled.

"He'll get licked again if he's cheeky!" he remarked. "And so will the rest of you. The sooner you understand that you've got to toe the line the better it will be for you!"

"Yes, rather!" chortled Townsend.

"Dodd's licking is going to be passed on to you, Mornington," said Jimmy. "That's going to happen every time. See?"

"If you touch me——"

"Collar him!"

Mornington jumped up, and was immediately collared and flung across the

table. There was a crash of crockery-ware, and loud exclamations from Townsend and Topham and Peele as they crowded back out of the way.

"Help!" yelled Mornington. "Rescue!"

"Look here——" began Townsend.

"Kick those rotters out!" said Jimmy Silver.

The three nuts were promptly bundled into the passage, and kicked along to the stairs, where they were glad to take to their heels.

Mornington did not escape so easily.

Half a dozen pairs of hands pinned him down, face downwards, across the table, and Jimmy Silver grasped the cricket stump.

"How many did the Head give you, Dobby?" he asked.

"Eight!"

"Then there's eight for Morny."

"Let me go!" shrieked Mornington. "If you dare——"

Whack!

"Yow-ow! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Mornington struggled and kicked furiously. But he was held fast, and the cricket stump rose and fell with mathematical precision.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The strokes were well laid on. A flogging would not have been much more severe than the strokes of the cricket stump wielded by Jimmy Silver's powerful arm.

"That's the lot," said Jimmy cheerily.

"Now, Mornington, you've had a licking for Tommy Dodd's. Now you're going to have five hundred lines, to make up for mine. See?"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the delighted juniors.

Mornington rolled off the table, white with rage.

"I won't!" he shrieked.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll be given two hours," he said.

"We'll come back then, and if the lines are not written you'll have a flogging—same as would have happened to me if I hadn't done my lines. I give you

my word on that! Come on, you fellows!"

The juniors left the study, Jimmy locking the door on the outside and taking away the key.

For two hours, the dandy of the Fourth remained locked in his study. When that space of time had elapsed, the Fistical Four returned. Whether Mornington had written his imposition—imposed by Jimmy Silver—they did not know, but they knew what he would get if he hadn't!

Mornington knew it, too!

On the table lay sheets and sheets of impot-paper, covered with scrawling lines.

He gave Jimmy Silver & Co. a look of bitter hatred.

Jimmy counted the pages.

"Not quite done," he said—"twenty more lines, Mornington."

"Hang you!"

"Are you going to finish them?"

"Hang you! Yes!"

And finish them Mornington did.

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver, taking up the pages. "This will do to light the study fire with. And remember, my pippin, that every time you sneak to the Head you're going to get as good as you give—impot for impot, licking for licking!"

And Mornington was left to himself.

CHAPTER 30.

Down on Their Luck!

"GATED!"

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth uttered that word in a tone of intense exasperation. And Lovell, Raby, and Newcome echoed in a sort of chorus:

"Gated, by gum!"

And Tommy Dodd chimed in:

"What the merry thunder is going to be done?"

That was a puzzle which exercised severely the brains of the chums of Rookwood School.

What, indeed, was going to be done?

The cricket committee, meeting in the Common-room on the Classical side of Rookwood, tackled the question hopelessly. It really did not seem that there was anything to be done. Or, rather, as Tommy Dodd suggested, with a feeble attempt at humour, they themselves were going to be done.

It was the day before the date of the match with Rylcombe Grammar School. The Grammar School match was a new fixture for Rookwood juniors, and, naturally, it was a very important matter in their eyes.

Jimmy Silver had planned to take over eleven of the best, and begin that fixture by "mopping-up" the Grammarians on their own ground. The junior cricketers had looked forward to Wednesday afternoon with great keenness.

And now the fiat had gone forth—gated!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were ordered to remain within gates for Wednesday. The match with the Grammar School was "off."

How the dickens was the matter to be explained to the Grammarians? That was one difficulty. Certainly they couldn't tell Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe, that there was a new Head at Rookwood, that the new Head was a beast, that he had a favourite, Mornington of the Fourth, and that he was "down" on Jimmy Silver & Co. because they were "down" on Mornington.

For the credit of Rookwood they couldn't explain all that to the Grammar School fellows.

Some excuse, perhaps, might be thought of, and the match scratched or postponed. But that wasn't the only trouble. For the cricketers did not want to scratch or postpone the match. They wanted to play it.

That was the real difficulty. How was the match to be played at Rylcombe when the junior cricketers were gated at Rookwood?

It was a problem that was too much even for Jimmy Silver, who was

generally quite equal to an emergency.

"Gated!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "It's the real limit! Of course, it's all through that cad Mornington!"

"All through old Scroop's rotten favouritism!" grunted Tommy Dodd.

"What right has even a headmaster to interfere in junior cricket?" demanded Lovell. "That's what I want to know!"

"Echo answers none!" said Raby. "But old Scroop interferes, all the same. I wish Dr. Chisholm were back."

"No good wishing!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "The old Head's gone, and the new Head's come, and we've got to deal with him. Mornington's his favourite, and he does whatever Mornington wants. We've licked Morny, to bring him to reason, and the result is that we're all gated for Wednesday. Now, what's to be done?"

"Lick Mornington again!" suggested Lovell.

"Well, that would be some satisfaction; but it wouldn't make any difference to the gating."

"Oh, it's rotten!"

The door of the Common-room opened, and a very elegant junior stepped in. It was Mornington of the Fourth. Grim looks were cast upon him by the junior cricket committee. Mornington was the cause of all the trouble.

"Get out!" growled Jimmy Silver. "This meeting's private!"

Mornington did not get out. He sauntered cheerfully in.

"I've got something to say to you fellows," he remarked.

"We don't want to hear it!" snapped Lovell.

"You're in rather a fix," went on Mornington, unheeding. "The match is comin' off to-morrow, an' you're gated. You've asked for it, and you've got it. I can get you out of the fix if you like."

Lovell had risen to his feet, with the intention of kicking Mornington out of the Common-room. Now he sat down again. The cricketers looked at one another rather hopefully. They knew

the extent of Mornington's influence with the Head, and they knew that he could undo the harm he had done, if he chose.

"Well, you can run on," said Jimmy Silver.

"Mr. Scroop will let you off if I ask him," pursued Mornington. "In fact, it was a hint from me that made him gate you."

"Gammon!" said Newcome.

"You can believe it or not, as you like," said Mornington, with a shrug of the shoulder. "You ought to know by this time that I can do anythin' I like with the Head."

"Pretty state of affairs in a school like Rookwood!" snorted Tommy Dodd.

"Well, that's how it is," said Mornington coolly. "Scroop, if you want to know, is a sort of dependent on my uncle who's chairman of the governors, and my uncle got him the post here. My uncle backs me up in everythin', and Scroop hasn't much choice about the matter. Besides, he's not fool enough to quarrel with a rich fellow with influential connections."

The juniors stared at Mornington in utter disgust.

They knew that what he said was true enough. The New Head of Rookwood was a very different man from the former Head.

But that Mornington should boast openly of his influence over the Head—a thing that certainly did neither of them credit—jarred on the nerves of Jimmy Silver & Co.

"I'm not going to stand that fellow's jaw," said Lovell, rising again. "He's a disgrace to Rookwood, and so is Scroop. I can punch this cad, if I can't punch Scroop."

Jimmy jerked him back into his chair. "Shut up a minute, Lovell! Go on, Mornington. When you've finished bragging, let's hear what you've got to say!"

"I wasn't braggin'—only explainin' how the matter stands," said Mornington coolly. "If I ask the Head to let you off, he'll do it."

"We don't want to be under an obligation to a sneaking worm!" howled Lovell.

"We want to play Rylcombe," said Jimmy Silver. "Let Mornington finish. Do you mean to say you're going to be decent for once, Mornington?"

"I'll get you off to-morrow, if you like."

"Well, we like, if that's all!"

"On conditions, of course!"

"Name them!" said Jimmy quietly.

"That I captain the team that goes to Rylcombe——"

"I'm going to smash him!" roared Lovell. "Let go my arm, Jimmy, you silly ass!"

"Hold on a minute! Anything else, Mornington?"

"And that three, at least, of my friends play in the eleven," said Mornington. "Say Townsend, Topham and Smythe."

"Is that all?"

"Yaas. What do you say?"

"I've nothing to say, excepting that you're a bigger cad and worm than I took you for!" said Jimmy Silver. "But I leave it to the committee to decide. What do you fellows say?"

And with one voice the committee replied:

"Kick him out!"

Jimmy Silver released Lovell's arm, and Arthur Edward Lovell jumped up like a jack-in-the-box. He made a rush at Mornington.

"Now, you cad!"

"Hands off! I—— Oh! Ah! Ugh!"

For about a minute there was a wild and whirling scene in the Common-room. Lovell and Mornington looked somewhat like a huge catherine-wheel, chiefly composed of flying arms and legs.

Then there was a heavy bump in the passage, and a yell from Mornington as he landed on the floor.

Lovell slammed the door.

The deliberations of the junior cricket committee continued without any further interruption from Mornington.

CHAPTER 31.

In the Lion's Den!

TAP!

It was a very respectful knock at the door of the Head's study.

Mr. Scroop, the new Head of Rookwood, looked up irritably.

The new Head was not a good-tempered gentleman. His reign at Rookwood had been signalised chiefly by heavy and continual punishments.

Mornington did very much as he liked. His friends, too, found his protection very valuable; but the rest of the school knew Mr. Scroop as a hard and unfeeling tyrant.

All Rookwood had noted that favouritism, and resented it. But there was no help. The Head's word was law.

It was useless for the prefects to report Mornington, even for the most outrageous breaches of the rules.

The Head simply pooh-poohed the reports. Indeed, he had spoken very sharply to Bulkeley and Neville and the other prefects, and told them quite plainly that he was satisfied with Mornington's conduct, and did not wish to hear anything to his detriment.

Reports were not made after that, and Mornington did pretty much as he liked, though Bulkeley sometimes took the law into his own hands, and "licked" the unruly junior on occasion. But that was soon put a stop to.

The new Head interfered, and positively forbade the prefects to cane Mornington under any circumstances whatever.

All Rookwood—with the exception of Mornington & Co.—longed for the return of Dr. Chisholm. But Mornington & Co. basked in the sunshine of Mr. Scroop's favour.

A good many fellows found it ex-

pedient to chum with Mornington, under the peculiar circumstances.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not of that kind.

They went on their way regardless, so to speak, and treated Mornington as of old—as a slacker, a cad, and a sneak, and did not take the trouble to disguise their opinion of him in the least.

"Come in!" snapped the Head.

Jimmy Silver opened the study door, and came in, followed by Lovell and Tommy Dodd.

The new Head knitted his brows as he looked at them.

All three of the juniors had come under his frown before. All three had shared in the severe punishments handed out by Mr. Scroop since his coming to Rookwood.

They came into the study somewhat nervously.

It was Jimmy Silver's idea to come in a deputation to the Head, but his comrades could not help feeling that it was very much like venturing into the lion's den. It was a case of daring to be a Daniel.

The grim look of the new Head made them feel more uneasy still, but they faced him with all the firmness they could muster.

"Well?" said Mr. Scroop.

"May we speak to you, sir?" said Jimmy Silver. "We've come as a deputation from the Lower School."

"Nonsense!"

"It's about the cricket, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Ahem! We're gated for to-morrow, sir, and we have to go to Rylcombe to play in a rather important match. The whole cricket club, sir, would be very grateful if you would allow us to go."

"Probably," said Mr. Scroop. "But you are not punished without reason. When you have learned a proper respect for your headmaster, then you may ask favours. Have you anything else to say?"

"We—we'd like to go, sir," faltered Tommy Dodd.

"Very good," said Mr. Scroop. "You

know why you are punished. A set has been made against a very worthy lad—Mornington, of your Form. This injustice I cannot permit!"

The juniors were silent.

It was impossible to argue with the Head, neither could they impart to him their true opinion of his favouritism. It was useless to explain to him that Mornington was a slacker, and no cricketer; he knew that already

"If you choose to act more reasonably and justly, I may consider the matter," the Head went on. "It is the desire of Mornington's uncle, the chairman of the governors, that Mornington should take a prominent part in the school games. I see no reason to disappoint him."

"That depends on Mornington, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We can't be expected to lose matches by playing a lazy slacker!"

"Don't argue with me, boy! Now, listen! I will withdraw my order, and allow you to proceed to Rylcombe for the cricket-match to-morrow, on condition that you play Mornington and at least three of his friends in the eleven!"

The juniors did not answer. It was Mornington's proposition over again. They had answered Mornington in a way they could not venture to answer the Head.

Mr. Scroop's steely eyes glittered at them.

"Well?" he snapped.

"We can't do that, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"What! You refuse?"

"It would simply mean throwing the match away, sir. We'd rather not play it than make ourselves look fools!"

"So you refuse? Very well! You will remain within gates to-morrow," said Mr. Scroop. "However, it is not my wish that the regular matches should fall through. I intend that the fixtures shall be met, for the sake of the school's playing record. I shall therefore entrust to Mornington the task of

raising a junior eleven for this match!"

The juniors started.

"Mornington will select a team, and take it over to Rylcombe to-morrow afternoon," said Mr. Scroop. "The former junior eleven will remain within gates. You may go!"

The juniors went without a word! Their feelings were too deep for words!

CHAPTER 32.

The Worm Turns!

"WHAT luck?"

A score of voices asked that question as the deputation came back into the junior Common-room.

The faces of the deputation were a sufficient indication of the result of their mission, however.

"N G, of course!" said Rawson.

"N blessed G!" said Lovell.

"Sure, and we all knew it was no good," remarked Flynn. "The Head's a baste, and we're dished!"

"That isn't all," said Jimmy Silver, his voice quivering with anger. "The whole eleven's gated for to-morrow, and Mornington is going to take over a team to play Rylcombe—our fixture!"

"What!"

"Rats!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's the Head's decision!" said Jimmy savagely. "We're out of it—out of the cricket—and Mornington has bagged our fixture!"

"Oh, the rotten cur!" said Oswald.

"The match is a goner, of course. You know the way those slacking duffers play cricket! It will be an eleven like the old one, when Smythe of the Shell was skipper! The Grammar School fellows will simply howl!"

"Blessed if I don't wish we'd never made the fixture!" groaned Tommy Dodd.

"We won't stand it!" howled Raby.

"Something's got to be done!"

"Something is going to be done,"

said Jimmy Silver, his eyes gleaming. "The Head's gone too far. It's the limit!"

"What can we do?" said Oswald.

"Shut the door," said Jimmy. "Don't let any of Mornington's pals get on to it!"

"You've got a wheeze?" asked Lovell.

"Yes."

"Hooray!"

Lovell closed the door. The juniors, Classical and Modern, gathered eagerly round Jimmy Silver. Classicals and Moderns were at one now.

All minor differences were sunk. All junior Rookwood felt bound to stand shoulder to shoulder against the cad of the Fourth and the unjust head-master.

"Well, go it, Jimmy!"

"Pile in, Uncle James!"

"It's got to be kept dark, of course," said Jimmy Silver. "If Mornington guessed, we should be dished in advance!"

"That's all right! Go it!"

"Well, my idea is to play the match all the same."

"Phew!"

"We shall have to break bounds. That will be justified under the circumstances."

"Quite! But it means trouble," said Tommy Cook doubtfully.

"I suppose you fellows are game to face the music afterwards?"

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll back you up, Jimmy!"

"But—but Mornington's taking an eleven over to Rylcombe," said Tommy Doyle. "Sure we can't send two elevens for one match!"

"That's the important point—Mornington's team of slacking duffers can't be allowed to represent Rookwood. We're not going to be disgraced because Mornington's a cad and the Head's a beast!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Mornington's eleven are going to be stopped on the road—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And the real eleven is going over instead!"

"Phew!"

"There'll be the dickens to pay afterwards," said Towle.

"That's understood," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "We've got to go through it, unless we can think of a dodge later. As a matter of fact, I'm a good deal inclined to back up against Scroop. We backed up against Manders once, and beat him. And Scroop's worse."

"I—I say, that's jolly serious!" said Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"This state of affairs can't last for ever," he said. "If there was real trouble in the school, it might make the governors let us have our Head back, instead of that rotter Scroop!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But never mind that now," said Jimmy Silver. "My idea is to see about the Rylcombe match first, and trust to luck afterwards. I further suggest that, after it's over, and the Head's down on us, we should all refuse to be flogged."

"Oh!"

"If it's lines, we'll do 'em. If it's an ordinary licking, we'll take it. If it's a flogging, we all stand together and refuse."

"Bravo!"

"Hear, hear!"

Townsend of the Fourth opened the door and looked in, wondering what was on. A cushion promptly smote him on the nose, and hurled him forth again, and he disappeared with a wild yell.

The excited juniors were not in a mood for gentle measures with the followers of Mornington. Raby closed the door again.

"Well, it's agreed?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking round.

"Nem con," said Lovell.

"Hear, hear!"

"But what's the programme?" asked Newcome.

"We shall have to think out the programme. But the point that's settled

is that Mornington's eleven won't be allowed to go to Rylcombe, and that the real eleven will go in its place."

"Hear, hear!"

And with that the meeting broke up.

The Fistical Four retired to the end study with the three Tommies from the Modern Side to discuss ways and means.

The minds of the juniors were made up.

Injustice could be carried to a certain point, but beyond the limit there was certain to be resistance. And the limit had been reached.

Meanwhile, Mornington and his merry men were rejoicing.

Mornington had already selected his team.

It was such a team as had represented Rookwood juniors in the days when Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was junior skipper.

It consisted of Mornington himself, Townsend and Topham and Peele of the Fourth, and Smythe, Tracy, Howard, Selwyn, Chesney, Beaufort of the Shell, and Lacy from the Modern side. All but Lacy were Classics, and members of the select society known as the Giddy Goats.

As "giddy goats" they were perhaps quite up to the mark, but as cricketers they left very much to be desired.

Some of the old eleven watched them at practice on Little Side, and grinned as they watched them.

Duffers at the wicket, duffers at bowling, and duffers in the field—such was the verdict on Mornington's eleven. But what they lacked in knowledge of the game they made up—to their own satisfaction, at least—in swagger.

The new eleven were quite satisfied of their ability to uphold the colours of Rookwood on the cricket-field at Rylcombe Grammar School.

But—if Jimmy Silver's little scheme was a success—the nuts of Rookwood was not likely to get nearly so far as Rylcombe on the morrow. But that was a dead secret so far.

CHAPTER 23.

Jimmy Silver Takes the Law Into His Own Hands!

THERE was a round score of Rookwood juniors under detention on the following afternoon.

But the detained juniors did not look so glum as was usual for fellows under detention to look.

There was, on the other hand, a great deal of suppressed excitement, and Jimmy Silver & Co., in fact, were looking forward to a very exciting afternoon.

Immediately after dinner three or four fellows who were not detained, but who were in the scheme, left Rookwood with the cricket-bags belonging to the team. Jimmy Silver & Co. waited.

Mornington and his men made their preparations in great spirits, with many grins and chuckles directed towards the old eleven—which the cricketers took with unexpected quietness.

"Sorry you're not comin', Silver, dear boy," Smythe of the Shell remarked to Jimmy. "If you weren't detained, by gad, you could come over with us and see some real cricket!"

"Yes, ard lines, isn't it?" said Jimmy pleasantly. "It would be as good as going to the cinema to see you play cricket, Smythey. When are you starting?"

"Two!" said Smythe, with a sniff.

"Train, I suppose?"

"Nothin' of the sort," said Adolphus loftily. "We're havin' a car."

"Quite in your style, Smythey," said Jimmy Silver affably. "But it's quicker by train than by car, as a matter of fact, you know."

"More comfy in a car, dear boy, and we're startin' early," said Adolphus. "Sorry you can't come—you will be a cheery little beast, you know!"

Adolphus walked away with his nose in the air, and Jimmy Silver smiled. Five minutes later a score of detained juniors were walking calmly down to the gates. Old Mack, the porter, came hurriedly out of the lodge.

"Master Silver! Master Silver!"

"Hallo!" said Jimmy.

"You ain't to go out of gates," said Mack. "'Ead's orders!"

"Sorry!" said Jimmy politely. "We've got rather an important appointment. See you later, Mack."

"Look 'ere—"

"Ta-ta!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Which I shall 'ave to report yer."

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors sauntered on, leaving old Mack scratching his nose. However he ambled away to the Head's house to report, as in duty bound. But by the time that report was made Jimmy Silver & Co. were far out of sight of Rookwood. They were out of the reach of Mr. Scroop until they returned to the school—and many things were to happen before then.

"Well, what's the programme now?" asked Cook, as Jimmy called a halt in the road.

"Halt!" said Jimmy. "We wait here for the car."

"And stop it?" asked Lovell.

"Of course."

"And then—"

"Then we collar the cricketers."

"Good egg!"

"And shut 'em up in the barn," said Tommy Dodd, with a chuckle. "You Classical bounders remember how we shut you up there once—"

"Never mind that," said Jimmy Silver. "It's Mornington & Co. who are going to be shut up now. Half a dozen chaps will stay with them to look after them there, and see that they don't get away. Rather a dull job, but it can't be helped."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Jones minor. "I'm on, for one."

"It's all in the game," said Lovell. "The eleven have to go to Rylcombe. What price bagging the car?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Can't be did! This isn't a jape—it's serious bizney! And the chauffeur would have to be argued with. We take the train to Rylcombe."

"How are we going to stop the car?"

"Easy enough. We're going to wheel that old cart out of the field into the middle of the road. The car will have to stop. We can't block the road yet, though. One of you shin up a tree, and give the word when Mornington's crowd are coming."

"Good!"

Newcome "shinned" up a tree to a high branch, and kept watch in the direction of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. seized the old cart, and wheeled it with some difficulty as far as the hedge, ready to be run out into the road.

Then they waited.

A quarter of an hour later there was a whistle from Newcome from the leafy tree overhead.

"Here they come!" called out Newcome.

Jimmy Silver jumped up from the grassy bank.

"Pile in!" he said.

The juniors seized the cart, and ran it out into the road through a big gap in the hedge—not without some damage to the hedge. That could not be helped, however.

The car was in sight now, buzzing along gaily from the direction of the school, crowded with the slackers' eleven.

The chauffeur slowed down at the sight of the cart standing in the middle of the road. Jimmy Silver & Co. were in cover so far.

Mornington rose in the car.

"What are you stoppin' for, Williams?" he snapped.

"Road's blocked, sir," said the chauffeur.

"By gad! What silly ass left that cart in the road?" growled Mornington. "Get down and shift it, Williams."

"Yes, sir."

The chauffeur descended from his seat, and stepped towards the cart.

There was a shout from Jimmy Silver.

"Pile in!"

Twenty Rookwood juniors rushed out from behind the hedges.

Mornington and his companions stared at them blankly as they surrounded the motor-car.

"What the dickens——" ejaculated Mornington.

"Look here, no larks!" exclaimed Smythe, in alarm.

"Get out!"

"By gad! What?"

"Get out of the car!"

"We won't!" yelled Mornington furiously.

"Turn them out!" said Jimmy concisely.

The Rookwood juniors swarmed into the big car. Mornington struck out furiously, and Lovell caught his knuckle on the nose. Lovell gave a roar of wrath, and hit out promptly in return, and Mornington went spinning into the road.

Smythe and Townsend and the rest were bundled after them, yelling.

The odds were heavily on Jimmy Silver's side, but they were hardly needed. The slackers of Rookwood were not famous as fighting-men.

With the exception of Mornington, they hardly resisted the overwhelming attack.

Mornington picked himself up in the road, and charged back at the car. He was collared by Tommy Dodd and Newcome, and held a prisoner.

The rest of the party were collared, and they gasped for breath in the grasp of the Rookwood cricketers.

"What does this mean?" shrieked Mornington. "What's your little game?"

"By gad, you know!" gasped Adolphus. "You'll be licked for this, you know!"

"We're chancing that," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "At present you're coming for a little walk with us."

"I won't!" yelled Mornington.

"We'll see! Chauffeur!"

"Yessir?" gasped the chauffeur, who looked on at the scene in utter amazement.

"Take that car back; it's not wanted!"

"Don't go, Williams!" yelled Mornington.

The chauffeur hesitated.

"Sorry if we have hurt you, chauffeur," said Jimmy Silver politely. "But you've got to take that car back. I give you one minute before we duck you in the ditch!"

"I—I say——" stammered the unfortunate Williams.

"Don't go!" yelled Mornington. "I order you—— Yaroooh—grooogh—ooogh!"

Mornington's remark were brought to a sudden close by Lovell, who jammed a thick turf into his mouth. Mornington gasped and gurgled, but he was incapable of speech.

"Time's up, chauffeur!" said Jimmy Silver. "Collar him, you chaps!"

Half a dozen determined juniors gathered round the chauffeur.

"Old on!" exclaimed Williams. "I'm goin'!"

"Buck up, then! We begin throwing clods in half a minute!" said Jimmy.

"Give a man a chance!" gasped the chauffeur.

He fairly jumped into the driving-seat, and backed the car, and turned in the road. The big car whirled round, and the chauffeur fairly made it fly as the juniors stooped for clods.

The motor-car disappeared in a cloud of dust towards Rookwood.

"By gad!" murmured Adolphus Smythe feebly. "By gad! Cheeky young scoundrels! Oh, dear!"

"You'll get into trouble for this!" murmured Townsend.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver, without taking notice of the remarks of the nuts of Rookwood. "Shove that cart back, some of you; and the rest bring that gang of rotters along!"

Half a dozen of the juniors shoved the cart back into the field to clear the road. The nuts of Rookwood, each with an iron grip on his arm or his collar, were marched away across the fields.

CHAPTER 34.

Prisoners of War!

MORNINGTON spat out the fragments of the turf, and gasped for breath. Lovell and Tommy Dodd had hold of his arms, and he had no choice about accompanying them. He struggled every now and then, and his arms were promptly twisted till he ceased. There was no time to stand upon ceremony with Mornington.

The rest of the nuts went quietly, in a dazed state of astonishment. A few minutes ago they had been rejoicing in their triumph over Jimmy Silver & Co. The tables were turned now with a vengeance.

True, a condign punishment doubtless awaited the raiders—later. But that prospect, satisfactory as it was in its way, was of no use to the captured nuts now.

They crossed the field, and were led by a footpath through the wood.

"Where the dickens are you takin' us, you silly asses?" mumbled Adolphus Smythe at last.

"Where you will be safe!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" hissed Mornington. "You'll be flogged all round for this!"

"Go hon!"

The party proceeded by a solitary footpath through the wood, and emerged on the farther side, into another field, where the old barn stood. It was a spot the juniors knew well—the Fistical Four had once been shut up there by the Moderns on a celebrated occasion. On that occasion they had escaped; but Jimmy Silver & Co. did not mean to leave Mornington a chance of escape.

The captured cricketers were marched into the barn. It was an ancient and disused building, seldom or never visited.

"You're not goin' to keep us here!" hissed Mornington.

"Your mistake!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "We are!"

"We are—we is!" chuckled Lovell.

Jimmy pointed to the ladder that led into the old loft.

"Up you go!" he said.

"Look here, we——"

"Kick them up!" said Jimmy.

It would probably have been difficult to kick the slackers of Rookwood up an almost perpendicular ladder. But a few kicks, as it happened, were sufficient. Adolphus Smythe no sooner felt Lovell's heavy boot clumping upon him than he made a rush for the ladder and bolted into the loft.

His comrades followed him fast, only a few kicks behind being required to accelerate their movements.

Mornington was the last, and he refused to mount the ladder. Lovell exercised his boots upon him in vain; Mornington was obstinate.

"Blessed mule!" said Lovell, gasping. "You take a turn, Dodd! Your boots are bigger than mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him the frog's-march!" said Jimmy Silver. "Say when, Morny!"

It did not take Mornington long to "say when," after the frog's-march had started.

"Let me go!" he shrieked. "I'll go up!"

"Up you go, then!"

Mornington bounded to the ladder, and clambered up.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell grasped the ladder after he had joined the rest of the party in the loft, and dragged it away. From the opening above a dozen savage faces looked down on them. But black looks did not affect the cheery Jimmy.

"Now, you're to stay here, Hooker, and three or four more; and see that they don't get out!"

"Right you are!"

"Oh, you rotters!" howled Mornington from the loft.

Jimmy waved his hand to him.

"Ta-ta, dear boy! We're going to beat Rylcombe! That's ever so much better than you going there collecting up lickings, isn't it?"

Mornington almost choked.

"Y-you're going to Rylcombe!" he stuttered.

"Certainly! It's our fixture, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you——"

Words failed Mornington, and he shook his fist furiously from the loft.

Jimmy Silver & Co laughed, and walked out of the barn. Hooker and Jones minor and several more juniors remained, to keep an eye on the prisoners above, not that there was much chance of the nuts escaping.

The Rookwood cricketers, in high spirits, made their way to Coombe station. The consequences of their action were dismissed from their minds for the time. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

Dickinson minor was waiting at the station with the cricket bags, as previously arranged.

The cricketers had ten minutes to wait for a train.

That ten minutes was rather an anxious period. They knew that their breaking detention must be known to Mr. Scroop long since.

But it was extremely unlikely that he would guess the astounding "wheeze" Jimmy Silver had planned for the afternoon, and so he was not at all likely to look for them at the railway station.

Dickinson minor, however, kept watch at the station entrance, ready to give warning if the tyrant of Rookwood should come in sight.

"Here's the train!" said Jimmy Silver at last, with a sigh of relief.

The train rolled in, and stopped. At the same moment Dickinson minor's scared face was seen staring through the gate on to the platform.

"Cave!" he gasped. "Scroop!"

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a momentary hesitation on the part of the cricketers. But Jimmy Silver did not hesitate. He rushed for the train.

"Pile in!" he shouted.

Doors flew open, and passengers tumbled out, and cricketers tumbled in.

Cricketers and cricket-bags vanished into the train.

Doors slammed, and the guard waved his flag.

The engine snorted. With the first snort of the engine, came rushing feet on the platform. Mr. Snoop had arrived.

Probably he had caught a glimpse of the cricketing party as he ran for the platform. At all events, it was clear that he knew they were in the train. He sped across the platform, waving his arms wildly.

"Stop! Stop! Come back!" he shouted.

Some of the juniors looked a little scared. Jimmy Silver grinned. The train was already in motion, and it was scarcely possible to obey, even if the juniors had wanted to.

"Stop!" shrieked the new Head furiously.

"Stand back, there!" roared the guard.

The train was gathering speed.

The Head rushed forward, apparently to attempt to hurl himself into the train. The porter caught him by the shoulder and swung him back.

Looking from the train windows, the juniors saw the porter and the Head collapse together on the platform. Then the train rushed on, and the station vanished behind.

CHAPTER 35.

The Grammarian Match!

"RYLCOMBE!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. collected up their bags and alighted from the train in the old-fashioned Sussex station.

The journey had been rapid, and the cricketers had arrived. They were in high spirits, in spite of their narrow escape at Coombe.

They had no fear of Mr. Scroop following them. The Head knew nothing of the capture of Mornington's

team, and so he could not possibly have had any idea that the juniors were going to the Grammar School to play the match. He undoubtedly regarded their escapade simply as ordinary breaking bounds. But, as Jimmy remarked, even in the unlikely event of the Head tumbling, there wasn't another train for an hour.

The Rookwood cricketers poured out of the station, a merry party of fourteen in all.

Outside, a brake was waiting, with Gordon Gay and Wootton major of the Grammar School waiting in it.

"Hallo! Here you are!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, as he shook hands with Jimmy Silver. "I thought you were coming by an earlier train!"

"Sorry if we've kept you waiting, Gay!"

"Oh, not at all! Lots of time!"

The cricketers clambered into the brake, and the driver started for the Grammar School. The latter was not far from Rylcombe, and the party soon arrived.

The cricket ground at Rylcombe Grammar School was pretty well crowded when Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared on the scene. The Rookwood match excited a good deal of interest in the school. There were also several fellows over from St. Jim's to see the match—old acquaintances of the Rookwooders. Tom Merry and Blake of St. Jim's were there, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And D'Arcy especially told Jimmy Silver that he was "vewy glad" to see him again, and hoped to see some "wippin' cwicket."

"So you will," said Jimmy cheerily.

"Though he came mighty near seeing some jolly bad cricket," grinned Lovell, "if Mornington & Co. had come—what?"

And the Rookwood cricketers chuckled.

"Mind, we've got to beat Rylcombe," said Jimmy Silver. "Perhaps the Head will look over it if we tell him that we've won a tremendous victory."

"Perhaps!" grinned Lovell. "I don't think!"

"Anyway, it will be a consolation for the licking we're going to get," remarked Tommy Dodd.

Stumps were already pitched, and the Grammarians were ready. Jimmy Silver tossed for innings with Gordon Gay, and the latter won the toss. The Grammarians went in to bat, and Jimmy led his team into the field.

Gordon Gay opened the innings with Frank Monk. Jimmy Silver took the first over for Rookwood.

Jimmy's bowling was something of a surprise to the Grammar School. Jimmy was the champion junior bowler of Rookwood, and never had his hand seemed so cunning. The contrast between Jimmy's bowling and what Mornington's bowlers would have put up made the Rookwooders chuckle to think of it. They felt more than justified in the drastic measures they had adopted.

Gordon Gay's wicket went down for 3, and Frank Monk was dismissed for 2. In the second over Tommy Dodd accounted for Wootton minor's wicket.

It was a good beginning for Rookwood.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked to Tom Merry and Blake. "Bai Jove, you know, I should weally find it wathah hard to play that bowlin' myself."

And D'Arcy's chums grinned and agreed that he would.

But the Grammarian batsmen were good stuff, and though the wickets continued to fall at a good rate, runs did not fail to pile up.

The innings closed for 50. As Tommy Dodd remarked, it wouldn't have closed at all if the Grammarians had been playing Mornington and his egregious eleven.

The Rookwood innings began, and Gordon Gay & Co soon showed that they, too, knew something about bowling. After an hour's play, Rookwood were all down for 60.

There was a pause for ginger-beer and cake, during which Jimmy Silver

cast several anxious glances towards the school gates.

If Mr. Scroop guessed the object of the escapade of that afternoon, there was ample time for him to have reached the Grammar School at Rylcombe.

But he did not appear, and Jimmy was relieved. He had had a lingering doubt, but it was gone now. Mornington & Co. were still safe in the barn, guarded by Hooker and his comrades; and doubtless the Head had gone back to Rookwood, to fume and wait for the delinquents to turn up. Probably he was planning drastic punishments for the whole party.

But that did not worry the Rookwooders at present. The business in hand was to beat the Grammarians, and they devoted all their thoughts to that object.

In the second innings the Grammarians went ahead.

Gordon Gay proved impregnable at the wicket, in spite of Jimmy Silver's best bowling. He was second man in, and he was not out at the finish, with 40 runs to his own score. The total for the innings was 90.

"You'll have to buck up, deah boys," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked to Jimmy Silver.

The sun was sinking towards the west now, but there was ample time to finish. Jimmy Silver opened the second innings with Tommy Dodd.

Then bad luck befell the Rookwooders.

Gordon Gay was at the top of his form with the ball. Tommy Dodd was dismissed, and Tommy Cook followed him, and then Lovell, all within the limits of a single over.

There were loud cheers from the Grammar School crowd to greet the hat-trick.

"Looks wathah wocky for Wookwood," remarked D'Arcy. "I am wathah sowwy I can't go on and give them a hand and level things up a bit. This is where one of my centuwies would come in useful—what?"

"But what price one of your duck's-eggs?" asked Tom Merry.

To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy replied with disdainful emphasis:

"Wats!"

The Rookwooders were certainly down on their luck. As with the case of the celebrated Raven's unhappy master, misfortune followed fast and followed faster. Jimmy Silver held his fortress, but at the other end there were falling wickets galore. Dick Oswald was dismissed for 3, and Flynn scored only 2. Five wickets were down when the score was at 12.

The Grammarians exchanged smiles.

Jimmy Silver was looking grim.

"At this rate," he said to himself, "Mornington might as well have come."

Rookwood wanted 80 in the second innings to tie with Rylcombe, and it certainly looked as if they would never get them. It looked still less like getting them when two duck's-eggs were scored in succession. Seven down for 12.

"Oh, bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

Then Tommy Doyle came in. The Modern junior did better. The two batsmen accounted for 15 runs between them before Tommy was out to a catch by Gordon Gay. Towle was next man in.

Then Jimmy Silver made the running, and the figure leaped to 40. Towle added 5 before he was stumped by Wootton minor. Then the word passed round:

"Last man in!"

Tom Rawson was last man.

Rawson was not a brilliant cricketer, but he was a solid, steady player, who could always be depended on to keep his end up. Rawson was a scholarship fellow and poor, and Mornington would never have dreamed of playing him. But Jimmy Silver was decidedly glad to have Rawson at the other end for a last attempt to pull the game out of the fire.

He gave Rawson almost an implor-

ing look as he passed him on his way in.

"Stick it out, old chap, for goodness' sake!" he said.

Rawson nodded.

"Right-ho, Jimmy! I know what's wanted. Rely on me."

And he went to his wicket.

The over was not yet finished, and Gay was bowling. He finished the over to Rawson. No runs came from it, but the wicket remained intact.

Rawson knew what he could do, and what he was wanted to do. What was wanted was steady stone-walling to give Jimmy Silver a chance to make the running. And Rawson provided what was wanted.

The bowling came to Jimmy Silver again from Wootton major. Jimmy let himself go at it, knocking it far and wide. Twelve for the over brought the Rookwood figure up to 57.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy sagely. "Wookwood may dwag the game out of the fish, aftah all, you know. Lucky for them I'm not bowlin'—what?"

"Jolly lucky—for Rylcombe!" agreed Blake.

"Wats!"

In the next over Rawson stole a single run and gave the bowling to Jimmy Silver again. Jimmy was in great form, and his hitting powers had never been so displayed.

Two 4's, and then a 3, and then Rawson stonewalled again with quiet imperturbability.

Lovell rubbed his hands.

"Eleven more to tie!" he grinned. "We'll do it yet! Isn't Rawson a giddy treasure? If he tried to make the running we should be booked!"

"But he won't!" said Tommy Dodd. "And it looks as if Jimmy will make all the running we want! Good old Jimmy!"

Another 4 when the ball came to Jimmy Silver, and then a 3. Seventy-six—and Rawson like a tower of strength

receiving the bowling. Four more to tie!

But the most tempting ball did not tempt Rawson to hit out. He knew what he could do, and he did it.

Down came the ball again to Jimmy Silver, and clack! went the willow on the leather, and the leather flew. Rawson made a motion to run, but Jimmy Silver waved him back. There was no need to run. And a yell from the Rookwood fellows announced that the scores had tied.

"Bai Jove! It's a dwaw, anyway!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Draw be blowed!" said Lovell. "It's a win!"

And Lovell was right.

Jimmy Silver smiled as he hooked away the next ball. The batsmen ran a single, and there was a roar.

"Well done, Jimmy!"

Gordon Gay clapped Jimmy Silver on the shoulder as the field came off.

"Jolly near thing!" he said heartily. "But you've done it. Congrats!"

Jimmy Silver had indeed "done it," and his comrades almost hugged him as he came back to the pavilion, looking a little flushed, but still fresh.

CHAPTER 36.

Facing the Music!

GORDON GAY and CO. and the St. Jim's fellows saw the Rookwood party off at the station.

They parted in great spirits.

But in the train, as it bore them homeward to Coombe, the Rookwood cricketers looked rather graver.

The match had been won—they had done their duty to the Rookwood Junior Cricket Club. Looking at the matter most impartially, they could not blame themselves, not in the least. But the time had come now to pay the piper. And the thought of the cold, hard face of the new Head was not pleasant.

"Perhaps we've been rather asses, after all," Towle remarked.

"Rot!" said Tommy Dodd.

"I wonder what the Grammarians would have thought if they'd known what we were going home to?" remarked Lovell.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"It was best not to tell them. No need to worry anybody else with our troubles. We've agreed on the programme. If it's lines or a caning, we take it quietly; but we won't be flogged!"

"N-no!" said Towle rather dubiously.

"We've got to stand together," said Jimmy. "Keep smiling!"

And Jimmy Silver, at least, did keep smiling.

But the party looked decidedly serious by the time they arrived at Coombe and alighted from the train.

In the dusk of the summer evening they walked to the old barn, at the door of which they found Hooker and Jones minor and the rest waiting for them.

"All serene?" asked Jimmy.

"Right as rain!" said Hooker. "The bounders are still in the loft, raging. They've been saying things."

"Emphatic things!" grinned Jones minor.

"Mornington offered us a quid each to let them out," said Hooker. "After about an hour he raised it to a fiver. I don't know whether he'd have kept to it. We didn't give him a chance, anyway."

"There's some things even bloated millionaires can't do," said Jones. "Morny's still in the loft—fivers and all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How did the match go?"

"Won, of course!"

"Well, that's lucky! Morny would have chucked it away. But, by gum, what a thumping licking we're going to have!" said Jones minor, rubbing his hands in painful anticipation.

Jimmy Silver & Co. entered the barn. Mornington's furious face looked down

at him from the opening above. Mornington had not spent a happy afternoon.

The ladder was reared up to the opening.

"You can come down!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Mornington was the first down. The rest of the nuts followed him. They looked rather a dusty crew after their sojourn in the old loft. It was not the cleanest of retreats.

Mornington shook his fist savagely in Jimmy Silver's smiling face. His voice was husky with rage as he spoke.

"You hound, I'll make you smart for this!"

Jimmy smiled cheerily.

"Like to take your jacket off and lick me here and now?" he asked.

"You're going to be flogged!"

"Perhaps!" said Jimmy.

"I'll have you expelled!" hissed Mornington. "A flogging all round for the rest, and expulsion for you, Jimmy Silver!"

"Thanks awfully!"

"You—you hound! Yow-ow!"

"Better language, please!" said Jimmy, taking Mornington by the ear. "Out you go! You're in a hurry to sneak, I can see!"

And the powerful propulsion of Jimmy Silver's boot helped Mornington out of the barn.

Smythe & Co. followed him out without speaking. They did not like the looks of the cricketers. But they were looking forward to vengeance.

They had spent that fine summer's afternoon cooped up in the dusty loft. And their only consolation was the flogging that was to be awarded to the raiders.

They hurried away to Rookwood, muttering vengeance, followed at a more leisurely pace by Jimmy Silver & Co.

Mornington broke into a run, anxious to arrive at Rookwood and lay his tale of wrongs and grievances before the Head.

Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered down

the leafy lane, and arrived at Rookwood a few minutes before old Mack came out to close the gates. The Rookwood porter looked at them grimly.

"I'm afraid there's trouble for you, Master Silver," he said, not unsympathetically. Even the crusty old porter liked Jimmy Silver. "You're all to report yourselves to the 'Ead at once."

"We've been looking forward to that pleasure, Mack, old chap!" said Jimmy affably.

The school porter shook his head and closed the gates. The juniors, with grave faces, crossed to the School House.

"Now to face the giddy music!" said Tommy Dodd.

"I—I suppose he can't flog the lot of us!" muttered Towle.

"He's not going to flog any of us!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "We've stood up for our rights, and done nothing to be flogged for."

"H'm!"

"All serene, Jimmy, we're backing you up!" said Lovell. "March on, you beggars, and keep your peckers up!"

The juniors entered the House. Bulkeley of the Sixth met them in the hall, and gave them a curious glance.

"You're wanted in the Head's study," he said.

"We're going there, Bulkeley."

"Where have you been?" asked the captain of Rookwood.

"Rylcombe. We had a fixture there, you know."

Bulkeley stared.

"I understand Mornington was going there with a team——"

"We decided we had better go, for the credit of Rookwood, you know."

"Then—then what became of Mornington?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"He had a fancy for staying in a loft over a barn for the afternoon," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "No accounting for tastes, you know."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bulkeley. "I'm afraid there's going to be trouble for you, Silver. Mornington is with the Head now. I'm sorry."

Jimmy Silver nodded, and led his flock on to the Head's study. Bulkeley was sorry for the delinquents, and probably did not blame them very much; but he was powerless to help them.

Jimmy Silver tapped at the Head's door.

"Come in!"

It was a sharp, snapping voice within. The captain of the Fourth entered, followed by nearly a score of juniors, all quiet and grave. They all felt that a crisis was at hand.

Mr. Scroop was seated at the Head's desk. Mornington stood before the desk, his face flushed, and his eyes gleaming. Evidently he had just made his report to Mr. Scroop of the events of the afternoon.

The new Head's glance turned upon the juniors with a glitter like cold steel in his eyes.

"So you have returned," he said, in a grinding voice.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy Silver respectfully.

"Where have you been?"

"We felt that we couldn't fail Rylcombe, sir, after arranging a fixture," said Jimmy Silver. "So we've played the match."

"And—and won it, sir," murmured Towle.

"You have been to Rylcombe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You confined Mornington and his friends in a building, and kept them prisoners there, after my orders to you, and prevented them from going to Rylcombe to play in the match?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. "We felt that we couldn't let Mornington take the fixture out of our hands, as—"

"Enough!"

Jimmy Silver was silent.

It was useless to speak. From the Head's point of view, the delinquents were in the wrong; and nothing they could have said would have persuaded him to look at the matter from their point of view.

"You have nothing to say?" said Mr. Scroop.

"Only that we—we don't think we have done wrong, sir, under the circumstances," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

The Head smiled grimly.

"I do not agree with you upon that point, Silver. You have disobeyed my commands, and you have treated Mornington, the nephew of a governor of the school, in the most outrageous manner—"

"It was his own fault, sir."

"He asked for it," growled Lovell.

Mornington looked at the Co. with gleaming eyes. It was his turn now.

"Don't bandy words with me, Silver!" said the Head harshly. "I shall make an example of you—all of you! Every boy who broke bounds this afternoon will be severely flogged—severely and publicly."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

It had come.

The Rookwood juniors all looked at Jimmy. It was for their leader to lead. And the captain of the Fourth was not found wanting.

"If you please, sir," said Jimmy, very quietly. "If you gave us lines—"

"You have heard my decision, Silver."

"If you decided to cane us, sir—"

"You will be flogged!" said the Head, in a voice of thunder.

Jimmy Silver's lips set.

"We don't think we deserve to be flogged, sir," he said.

Mr. Scroop started to his feet.

"Leave my study at once!"

"Very well, sir!" Jimmy paused a moment, and his comrades hung on his words. "I think it only right to tell you, sir, that we don't think we ought to be flogged, and—"

"Leave my study this instant!" thundered the Head.

"We shall not be flogged, sir."

"What?"

"We shall refuse to be flogged!"

Mr. Scroop sank back in his chair, staring blankly at the juniors. Before he could recover from his astonishment,

Jimmy Silver & Co. crowded out of the study.

Mornington followed them out, a sneer upon his lips.

"You're booked now!" he said, between his teeth. "You— Oh!"

Jimmy Silver hit out, without a word, and Mornington rolled on the floor. Without a glance at him, Jimmy Silver walked on. The juniors returned to their own quarters. In the Common-room, they looked at one another grimly.

Jimmy Silver broke the silence.

"It's war now!" he said.

"War, and no mistake!" said Lovell. "Well, we backed up against Manders. We can back up against Scroop. Shoulder to shoulder!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. went to bed that night in a grim mood.

On the morrow the tug-of-war was to come. And how it was to end, there was no one at Rookwood who could foretell.

CHAPTER 37.

The Tyrant of Rookwood!

THERE was intense excitement in Rookwood School.

The sunshine of the summer morning streamed down into the old quadrangle, and it streamed upon excited groups of juniors, deep in whispered discussion.

Near the School House stood the Fistical Four, of the Fourth—Jimmy Silver and Lovell, and Raby and Newcome. They were surrounded by a throng of juniors.

Something was evidently "up" at Rookwood.

It was not one of the incessant "rags" between Classics and Moderns, for it was to be observed that Classics and Moderns seemed on the best of terms.

Tommy Dodd & Co., the heroes of the Modern side, were in the group surrounding the Fistical Four, and buzzing

applause to the remarks Jimmy Silver was making—which proved conclusively that something very unusual was in the wind.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, came out of the House with a grim and harassed expression on his good-natured face.

He beckoned to Jimmy Silver & Co.

"It's time you were in Hall!" he called out.

Jimmy Silver and his comrades exchanged quick glances.

"I'm sorry for this, Silver," said Bulkeley, kindly enough. "But it's the Head's orders, and it can't be helped!"

"I rather think it can be helped, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver, in his quiet way.

Bulkeley frowned.

"I hope you're not thinking of any rot, Silver. The school is in a ferment now. You had better take it quietly."

Jimmy shook his head.

"We can't take our flogging quietly, Bulkeley. We've sworn a solemn swear not to take it at all!"

"You young ass!"

"We're not standing it!" broke out Lovell hotly. "You know as well as we do, Bulkeley, that Scroop's in the wrong!"

"You must not speak of your headmaster as Scroop!" said Bulkeley sternly.

Lovell grunted.

"He isn't our headmaster!—Dr. Chisholm's our headmaster!"

"Dr. Chisholm is away, and Mr. Scroop is in his place," said Bulkeley. "I hope it won't last long—I will say that myself. But while he is here you must obey him, the same as our old Head!"

"In reason, yes," said Jimmy Silver. "But there's a limit!"

"And Scroop's the limit," said Tommy Dodd emphatically. "We're all in this, Bulkeley. We're not taking the flogging!"

"Never!"

Bulkeley looked grimly at the juniors.

They were excited, and they were determined. Matters had been going from bad to worse ever since the new Head had come to Rookwood, and it really looked as if there was to be an outbreak at last.

Mr. Scroop, hard and cold and tyrannical, did not understand it; but Bulkeley could see it only too well.

The captain of Rookwood turned back into the House, leaving the juniors in excited discussion. Jimmy Silver was expounding his plans for the coming revolt, amid murmurs of applause from his comrades. The minds of the Rookwooders were made up.

Bulkeley proceeded slowly to the Head's study, and tapped at the door. The harsh voice of Mr. Scroop made him enter.

The new Head of Rookwood gave the captain of the school an unpleasant look as he stepped into the study. He knew that Bulkeley disapproved of the new regime he had introduced in the old school.

"Are the boys assembled in Hall?" he asked.

"Not yet, sir."

"I gave Mr. Bootles distinct orders to assemble the school immediately after prayers!" snapped the Head.

"May I speak a word, sir?" asked Bulkeley quietly. "I'm afraid there is going to be trouble."

"Nonsense!"

"There are twenty juniors sentenced to flogging, sir. It is a thing that has never happened before at Rookwood!"

"It will happen again, and perhaps frequently, unless the boys learn respect for constituted authority!" snapped Mr. Scroop. "I shall bring them to their senses!"

"The boys do not consider the punishment deserved, sir."

"Does that mean that you share their insubordinate views, Bulkeley?"

"To some extent, sir, I sympathise with them," said the captain of Rookwood. "I feel it my duty to say so.

The trouble arose from your interference in the concerns of the juniors—a thing Dr. Chisholm would never have done!"

"Bulkeley!"

"You have made a favourite of Mornington, the most unpopular boy in the Lower School, sir," went on Bulkeley. "The juniors naturally resent it. You deposed Silver from being junior cricket captain, and installed Mornington in his place. Such a thing is unheard-of! Now Silver and his friends are to be flogged because they disregard an order which was—I will speak plainly—unjust and indefensible!"

Mr. Scroop stared blankly at the captain of Rookwood. He had never listened to such plain speaking since his arrival at the school.

"Bulkeley!" he gasped. "How dare you!"

"I feel bound to speak out, sir. Since you came here there have been punishments after punishments, interference after interference, and the school is almost in a state of revolt. If the floggings to-day are persisted in, there will be an outbreak. I am convinced of that. I felt it my duty to warn you in time!"

Mr. Scroop's thin, hard face was almost purple with rage. He rose to his feet.

"Leave my study, Bulkeley! You are no longer a prefect! Another word and I will flog you!"

Bulkeley started.

"Flog me?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you—head of the Sixth as you are!"

"You would not flog me," said Bulkeley coolly. "I should not allow you to do so, Mr. Scroop!"

"What? What?"

"You heard what I said!"

Mr. Scroop clenched his hands, and advanced towards Bulkeley as if he would attack the captain of Rookwood on the spot.

Bulkeley's hands involuntarily clenched also, and he stood firm, his

eyes gleaming contempt. The head-master paused.

Bulkeley's temper was rising, and the tyrant of Rookwood realised that it would not do. The big Sixth Former could have knocked him across the study, and he was in a humour to do it.

Mr. Scroop pointed to the door.

"Leave my study!" he said thickly.

Bulkeley turned on his heel, and strode out of the study.

He had done his best, but he had not improved matters. Like most weak natures, Mr. Scroop was made only more obstinate by opposition.

He was determined to go on in his own way. But how he was to deal with the storm when he had raised it was a matter he did not pause to consider.

CHAPTER 38.

On the Warpath!

"**H**EAR, hear!"

Jimmy Silver, mounted upon the steps of the fountain in the quad, was addressing Rookwood generally, and loud cheers punctuated his remarks.

Mornington, the cause of all the trouble, stood looking on from a distance, with his friends, the Rookwood nuts. Townsend and Topham and the rest were looking a little alarmed.

Secure in the favour of the Head, Mornington & Co. had never doubted that they held the upper hand, and that Jimmy Silver would have to "toe the line"; but they were uneasy now.

If there were an outbreak against the Head's authority, what then? The rebels would be risking floggings and expulsion; but if they were ready to run that risk, there was nothing to stop them. And, in that case, Mornington & Co. were likely to find themselves in very hot water.

"It's all gas!" said Mornington contemptuously. "They'll knuckle under fast enough!"

"I don't know," said Townsend

dubiously. "Jimmy Silver was leader of a barring-out once, when old Manders was left in charge!"

"Scroop will bring him to his senses! What they want are floggings, and plenty of 'em!" said Mornington. "That's what they're going to get!"

"They say they won't be flogged," said Topham.

"Gas!" said Mornington scornfully.

But Mornington's friends did not share his views. Jimmy Silver was not given to "gas," and they were well aware of it.

The crowd round Jimmy was thickening. Not only the Fourth Form, Classics and Moderns, but the Shell, the Third, and the Second were well represented there. Even some of the Fifth, seniors as they were, had joined the throng.

The Sixth, certainly, were too lofty and dignified to join in anything of the kind. But it was well known that even the Sixth were restive under Mr. Scroop's rule, and that he had no sympathisers in the top Form, excepting among a few bullies like Knowles and Catesby.

Jimmy Silver had not acted without thinking. He knew that in case of a rebellion Mr. Scroop would be backed up only by the masters, whose position compelled them to uphold authority. And even the masters would be acting against the grain in supporting Mr. Scroop's tyranny.

There was hardly a fellow at Rookwood who had not some grievance against the new Head.

Lines and lickings had fallen like leaves in Vallombrosa ever since Mr. Scroop had come to Rookwood.

The new Head did not leave the Forms to their Form-masters. He was accustomed to constant interference, which made the masters resentful and the pupils furious.

Instead of the general supervision Dr. Chisholm had exercised, there was an incessant meddling, worrying interference, petty restrictions, and continual punishments. And—to put the

lid on, so to speak—Mornington of the Fourth was exempted from all the unpleasantness that had fallen to the lot of the rest. Tyranny alone would have been bad enough; but tyranny and favouritism combined were the limit.

Twenty floggings ordered for one morning had fairly made Rookwood gasp. Everybody but Mr. Scroop could see that trouble was certain to follow.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, came out while Jimmy Silver's speech was in progress. With a worried brow, he came towards the group, frowning a little as he heard Jimmy's fiery words.

"Gentlemen and fellow-Rookwooders, we're not standing it! We want our own headmaster back!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Scroop is a meddling ass——"

"Bravo!"

"And a rotten tyrant!"

Loud applause.

"Nobody's going to be flogged this morning! Nobody's going to be flogged again by Scroop! We all stand together in that!"

"Shoulder to shoulder!" roared Lovell.

"We've stood enough from that tyrant——"

"Too much!"

"And we're not standing any more. I look to all Rookwood to back me up in standing up for the rights of Rookwood!"

Thunders of applause.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

"Gentlemen, a select committee has been formed to carry on the war," said Jimmy Silver. "The Ginger Group of Rookwood——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Ginger Group has laid its plans!"

"A barring-out, bedad!" roared Flynn.

Jimmy shook his head.

"Not a barring-out—a barring-in," he replied.

"Phwat?"

"What the dickens——"

"A which?"

"The plans are laid, and will be carried out," said Jimmy Silver. "I won't go into particulars, as there are spies about." He made a gesture towards the group of nuts. "But all's ready—quite ready. If Scroop keeps on as he's started, there's going to be trouble!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Boys!" Mr. Bootles strove to make his voice heard. "Boys! You have been directed to assemble in Hall. Kindly go into Hall at once."

There was a buzz among the juniors. But Jimmy Silver jumped down from the step of the fountain at once.

"Certainly, sir!" he said.

"I trust, Silver, that—that there will be no recklessness," said Mr. Bootles, eyeing the captain of the Fourth. "You must be aware that—that the discipline of the school must be maintained. Kindly be quite orderly."

"Yes, sir. Order, you fellows!"

Mr. Bootles, somewhat relieved, and judiciously affecting not to have heard Jimmy Silver's fiery remarks, went back into the house. The juniors followed him in a buzzing crowd.

"You're toeing the line, after all," remarked Mornington, with a sneering smile at the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy gave him a scornful glance.

"We are obeying Mr. Bootles," he said. "Bootles has a right to be obeyed. We shall not obey Scroop."

"Gas!" said Mornington.

"Sure I'm fed-up with that spalpeen!" exclaimed Flynn. "Take him into Hall wid ye, bhoys—with the frog's-march for the howling rotter!"

"Hurray!"

Flynn's suggestion caught on at once. A dozen juniors laid hands upon Mornington.

He was whirled off his feet and frog's-marched into Hall, with loud yells from Mornington, and shouts of laughter from the rest.

"There, you rotter!" said Lovell, as Mornington was sent sprawling in the

middle of the hall, "that's what we think of you!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, hurrying to the spot. "Order! My dear lads, I beg of you to keep order! The Head is about to enter."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

Mornington staggered to his feet, dishevelled, and panting, and furious.

"Go to your place, Mornington!" said Mr. Bootles coldly.

He had no liking for the Head's favourite.

"I—I—I——"

"Silence! Go to your place!"

Mornington savagely fell into the ranks of the Fourth.

All Rookwood was assembled in Hall, from the high and mighty Sixth down to the Second.

There was a buzz of anticipation. Mr. Bootles and Mr. Manders and the other masters did their best to obtain silence. But it was impossible. The Rookwood fellows were already out of hand.

The buzz increased as the upper door opened, and the new Head came in, with rustling gown and frowning face. Sergeant Kettle followed him in. The old sergeant's business was to "hoist" the offenders for the floggings, and he had an extensive task that morning—quite a shipping order, as Raby humorously remarked. The expression on the old sergeant's bronzed face did not seem to indicate that he had any relish for his task.

All eyes were fixed upon the Head.

"Silence!" rapped out Knowles of the Sixth.

"Go and eat coke, Knowles!" came a voice from the Fourth, followed by a laugh, and the Modern prefect turned pink.

"Silence—silence!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in distress.

And there was something like silence at last.

CHAPTER 39.

Rebellion at Rookwood!

MR. SCROOP looked over the assembled school, with a glitter in his steely eyes.

There was no sign of yielding in his hard face.

The sentence was to be carried out—if Mr. Scroop could carry it out. It had not yet dawned upon him that, perhaps he could not.

"Silence!" His voice was harsh and threatening. "Boys, you have been assembled to witness the punishment of a number of incorrigible offenders—"

"Rats!"

"What! What! Who said that?" shouted Mr. Scroop.

"Yah!"

There was a chuckle in the crowded hall, and Mr. Scroop's face was thunderous.

"Mr. Bootles! It was a boy in your Form who called out."

"Bless my soul!"

"Find that boy at once and send him here!"

"Really, sir, I did not observe——"

"I expect a Form-master to use his eyes and his ears, Mr. Bootles."

The Fourth Form master crimsoned to the very ears.

"Sir!"

"I repeat, Mr. Bootles, that I expect you to use your eyes and your ears. A boy in your Form has addressed disrespectful words to me. Send him to me at once!"

"Mr. Scroop!"

"You are wasting time, Mr. Bootles. I cannot help suspecting that you are deliberately shielding the offender."

"I have not been accustomed to being addressed in this manner, Mr. Scroop," exclaimed the Fourth Form master.

"You will become accustomed to it, sir, unless you maintain better discipline in your Form!" snapped the Head.

"Indeed! You are mistaken, sir," gasped Mr. Bootles, his gentle nature

roused to resistance at last. "I decline absolutely to submit to such intemperate language, sir!"

"Bravo!" sang out Lovell.

"You are encouraging these young rascals in insubordination!" exclaimed Mr. Scroop. "I shall hold you to account for this, Mr. Bootles."

"You will do nothing of the sort, sir!" retorted Mr. Bootles, with spirit. "I resign my position here, sir, and refuse to take any further orders from you! As you are not satisfied, sir, with my management of my Form, I leave the Fourth Form in your hands, sir!"

And Mr. Bootles, with his eyes gleaming and his ears burning, marched directly out of Hall.

"Hurray!" roared the Fourth Form, with one voice, the thunderous roar following Mr. Bootles from the hall.

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Scroop.

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

"Bravo!"

"Hip, hip!"

Mr. Scroop shouted for silence in vain. Not for several minutes did the roar die away.

The new Head stood gesticulating, and almost purple in the face. His voice was heard again as the roar died away—chiefly for want of breath.

"How dare you! This insolence shall be severely punished! I will maintain order in this school, or I will know the reason why! Bulkeley—Neville—Knowles—I expect the prefects to keep junior boys in order."

"I am no longer a prefect, sir," said Bulkeley coolly. "For that reason—and others—I decline to interfere."

"Silence, Bulkeley!"

"Very well, sir!"

"Knowles, kindly read out the list of names of boys sentenced to flogging, and send them forward."

"Certainly, sir!"

Knowles read out the list.

It was a long list. Silver, Raby, Newcome, Lovell, Dodd, Cook, Doyle, Flynn, Oswald, Rawson, Towle, Hooker, Jones minor, Dickinson minor, and half a dozen others.

The reading of the list was punctuated with jeers from the Fourth Formers, and some of the names could hardly be heard.

"The boys named will go forward," said Knowles as he finished.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

Twenty juniors marched up the hall with Jimmy Silver at their head.

They did not look like delinquents going to punishment, however.

They sauntered up the hall, with their hands in their pockets, and smiles on their faces.

Discipline was evidently at an end.

If Mr. Scroop had had a little more perception, he would have observed it, and might yet have retreated from the position he had taken up. But no thought of retreat was in his mind so far.

The culprits stood in a crowd before the Head, meeting his steely glance with cool recklessness.

"You will be flogged first, Silver," said Mr. Scroop. "Take him up, sergeant!"

"Yessir!" mumbled Sergeant Kettle.

"We're not going to be flogged, sir," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Take him up!" roared Mr. Scroop.

The sergeant advanced towards Jimmy Silver. He blinked hesitatingly at the captain of the Fourth.

"Now, Master Silver," he said persuasively.

Jimmy shook his head.

"Nothing doing, sergeant," he said cheerily.

"Now, you know——"

"Take him up, sergeant! Do you hear?"

"Werry well, sir!" The sergeant came on. "I shall 'ave to use force, Master Silver!"

"Better not!" advised Jimmy. "We don't want to hurt you, sergeant. You're a good old sort, you know. But we're not taking any!"

Sergeant Kettle laid his hands on Jimmy. The next moment five or six pairs of hands were laid on him, and

he was whirled away from Jimmy Silver, and bumped on the floor.

"Ow-wow!" gasped the sergeant.

The Head stood rooted to the floor. Evidently he had not expected this, though everyone else in Big Hall had looked for it.

"What!" he gasped. "Bulkeley—Neville—Knowles—assist the sergeant!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth looked at the Head, and then, without speaking, walked out of the hall. Neville, after a moment's hesitation, followed him. The rest of the Sixth looked uneasily at one another. But none offered to interfere. Even Knowles did not come forward. He realised that it would not do.

"Will you obey me?" thundered the Head. "Knowles, help the sergeant at once! Catesby—Frampton—I order you!"

The three Modern prefects, thus called on by name, came reluctantly forward.

Sergeant Kettle staggered up.

He was not much hurt, but he was winded. He gasped and blinked at the young rebels, in a state of great uncertainty.

"Now, look here—" began Knowles.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want to hurt you, Knowles, but you'd better mind your own business!"

"You cheeky young sweep—"

"Dry up, Knowles!"

"Shut up!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Kick him out of Hall!" roared Lovell.

"Hurray!"

"Back up, Fourth!"

There was a rush for Knowles. He was unpopular, and his unpopularity stood him in very ill stead now. He was collared by a dozen pairs of hands, and, struggling furiously, he was rushed out of the hall, and pitched out of the big doorway.

Catesby and Frampton promptly

retreated into the ranks of the Sixth. They did not want any.

Mr. Scroop seemed petrified.

"Boys!" he thundered. "How dare you! Every boy taking part in this shall be severely flogged!" Mr. Scroop's mind was still running on punishments. He could not realise that the time of punishments was past.

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Yah!"

Such were the replies of the Fourth Formers.

Almost beside himself with rage, Mr. Scroop made a rush at the juniors, brandishing the birch. His blows fell right and left, and there was a chorus of wild yells.

But the rebels were quite out of hand now.

"Collar him!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Bump him!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Catesby, aghast. "Bump the Head! I'm getting out of this!"

The Head was struggling and lashing amid a wild crowd of juniors. He disappeared from sight among them. His birch was dragged away, his gown rent into rags. He rolled on the floor utterly breathless. It was such a scene as had never before been enacted in the old Hall of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 40.

Barred-In!

"GROOGH!"

Mr. Scroop sprawled on the floor, and spluttered and gasped.

Some of the Sixth ran forward—not sympathising with Mr. Scroop in the least—but feeling that they were called upon to interfere. Some of them walked out of the hall, feeling that it was no business of theirs.

"Stop this!" exclaimed Frampton. "Don't touch the Head! How dare you! Yaroooh—leggo—yooop!"

Frampton went spinning. The blood of the rebels was up now, and they did not stand on ceremony with seniors who "chipped in."

"Clear the hall!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Seniors and masters outside!"

"Hurray!"

"Boys!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "Boys! Let go my gown, Lovell! Release me at once, Rawson! Goodness gracious! Oh, dear! Yah!"

There was a wild and whirling scene in Big Hall.

A hundred fellows at least were backing up Jimmy Silver & Co., and they held possession of the hall.

Mornington and his friends had already cleared off. Most of the seniors had slipped out. They were powerless to stop the riot, and they did not mean to join in. Mr. Scroop had raised the hurricane, and it was left to him to rule it if he could. Apparently he couldn't.

The new Head still sat on the floor. A dozen juniors were dancing a triumphant war-dance round him, and the new Head was blinking at them, breathless, enraged, and astounded.

Mr. Manders was rushed out of Hall, and the other masters followed him—hustled a little, and rather hurriedly.

In a very few minutes the hall was cleared of all but Jimmy Silver's partisans. The ancient oak rafters rang with triumphant cheers.

It was time for lessons in the Form-rooms. But nothing was less likely than lessons that morning at Rookwood.

Mr. Scroop staggered to his feet at last.

His hard face had become pale. He realised that he had raised a storm he could not quell.

His only thought now was to get away from the raging crowd of revolted schoolboys, leaving the riot to deal with itself.

But he was not to escape so easily.

As he made a stumbling rush for the

upper door, he was surrounded by the rebels and hustled back.

"Let me pass!" shrieked Mr. Scroop.

"Stand where you are!"

"Silver, how dare you!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What? What? You dare address me—your headmaster—"

"You're not our Head!" said Jimmy Silver coolly. "We don't recognise you as the Head of Rookwood."

"You—you insolent—"

"Dr. Chisholm's our head," said Lovell.

"Lovell! I— Let me pass!" shrieked Mr. Scroop.

"You won't pass!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "We don't want to handle you, Mr. Scroop. But you'll get handled if you don't keep where you are, and that's flat!"

Mr. Scroop made a furious rush.

He was hustled back and plumped on the floor. This time he stayed there.

"Keep an eye on him!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You bet!"

The Fistical Four, leaving Mr. Scroop to gasp, proceeded to the upper door, which was closed. Jimmy Silver produced a screwdriver, a gimlet, and a number of long screws.

Taking turns with the screwdriver, the juniors screwed up the door.

Mr. Scroop watched that proceeding in blank amazement.

The upper door having been secured, the Fistical Four returned. Jimmy's voice called the rebels together, and they marched out of Hall.

Mr. Scroop rushed after them.

The big oaken door at the lower end of the hall slammed in his face.

The rebels crowded outside it. Two or three of them held it shut, while Jimmy Silver bored deep holes with the gimlet and Lovell drove in screws.

The wood was hard, and the screws were long, and it was not an easy task; but it was accomplished at last.

Both doors of Big Hall were

securely screwed up now; and Mr. Scroop, the new Head of Rookwood, was a helpless prisoner—screwed in.

His voice could be heard raging on the inner side of the heavy door.

"That job's done," said Jimmy Silver, in a tone of satisfaction.

"But—but what's the little game?" exclaimed Tommy Cook.

"A barring-in!" said Jimmy coolly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's rather better than a barring-out, in this case," said Jimmy. "We had a barring-out once, against old Manders. We were prisoners while we were barring him out. This time the giddy tyrant is a prisoner, and we're barring him in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Mr. Scroop was beating furiously on the door.

"Let me out!" he shrieked. "Do you hear me? Let me out!"

Jimmy scooped to the keyhole.

"Hallo, Scroop!" he called through.

"What? What?"

"You're barred in. You won't be let out till you come to terms," said Jimmy Silver, with perfect coolness.

"You young scoundrel—"

"Better language, please."

"I—I—I will— You shall be flogged—expelled! I—I—" Mr. Scroop stuttered with fury.

"I'll talk to you when you're calmer," said Jimmy Silver. "When you want to discuss terms, you can show a white flag from the window."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of rage from the imprisoned headmaster was the only response.

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "What a wheeze! A barring-out is nothing to this! Now we're monarchs of all we survey!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good-bye, Scroopey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors trooped off, laughing and cheering. But Jimmy Silver's work was not done yet. He posted fellows to watch the windows, lest the im-

prisoned Head should attempt to escape that way. It was not likely, as the hall windows were very high from the ground. But the captain of the Fourth left nothing to chance. Then the ladder was borrowed from the wood-shed, and the rebels made a round of the hall windows, putting a screw into each.

Mr. Scroop's face appeared at a window as they finished. He had dragged a table to the window, and mounted on it. His face was flattened against the glass, and he looked out. The juniors burst into a laugh at the sight of him. The new Head had fallen from his high estate with a vengeance.

Jimmy Silver waved his hand to him.

"Coming to terms yet?" he called out.

Crash!

Mr. Scroop's elbow smashed through a pane of glass. Then his voice could be heard.

"Let me out instantly!"

"Rats!"

"You shall all be expelled for this!"

"The whole giddy school!" grinned Lovell. "There won't be any Rookwood left if we're all expelled, cocky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you— I—I— Let me out at once! I—I will send for the police!"

"You can't," said Jimmy Silver coolly, "and it wouldn't be any use if you could. Rookwood fellows never shall be slaves!"

"Hurrah!"

And the triumphant rebels marched off, leaving the new Head to rave and gesticulate at the window.

CHAPTER 41.

Mornington Has Bad Luck!

IT was an eventful morning at Rookwood.

Lessons were not to be thought of.

The rebels paraded the quadrangle,

or adjourned to the playing-fields, at their own sweet will.

Mr. Bootles remained in his study, in a very perturbed frame of mind. As he had resigned his position as a master, he had no right to interfere. Neither would his interference have been allowed. Bulkeley was equally nonplussed. As captain of Rookwood, he felt that it was up to him to do something. But Mr. Scroop himself had deposed him from his position as a prefect. His authority was gone.

The Sixth generally looked to Bulkeley for guidance, and Bulkeley gave no lead. He was, as a matter of fact, as fed up with Mr. Scroop as the juniors were. The new Head's reckless tyranny had brought about this state of affairs, and it was for the Head to put an end to it if he could.

Bulkeley simply went into the Sixth-Form room as usual, and the rest followed him. The Fifth also went in to lessons. But the juniors held high holiday. They were in a reckless mood, and quite prepared to measure strength with the seniors, if the latter chipped in. But civil war at Rookwood was averted by Bulkeley taking the matter quietly.

Mr. Manders, the Modern master, made one attempt to release the Head. But he was hustled away unceremoniously, and after that he felt it best to keep on the Modern side.

It was a curious state of affairs, and it was certain that it could not last—though how it was to end was a puzzle to Jimmy Silver himself.

What was certain was that Jimmy Silver & Co. would never give in. They were done with the new Head.

"The governors will have to take a hand in the game," said Tommy Dodd sagely. "Somebody will let them know. And they'll have sense enough to see that our old Head will have to come back. It's the finish for Scroop, anyway."

"Hallo, here's Bootles!" said Jimmy Silver. "Give him a cheer!"

Mr. Bootles was seen crossing the

quad towards the gates in his hat and coat. The Rookwood Rebels gave him a ringing cheer, which made Mr. Bootles' ears turn pink, but of which he took no notice. He walked out of the gates.

"Gone for the peelers!" suggested Towle.

"Rats! Gone to wire to the Head, more likely."

"Blow the peelers!" said Jimmy Silver independently. "They can't interfere with us in the school. We're all right."

"Right as rain!" agreed Lovell. "Who says dinner?"

The juniors went into the dining-hall to dinner. It was served as usual. The seniors were at their tables, and some of them looked very queerly at the young rebels. Bulkeley made no sign.

Mornington was at the Fourth Form table, looking very grim. He had been ragged several times that morning by excited juniors, and ducked in the fountain once. With the Head barred in, the Head's favourite was not likely to find much mercy.

His comrades, the nuts of Rookwood, had come in for a share of the juniors' attentions. Townsend and Smythe & Co. were tired of it. They showed a very different manner towards his lordship now. While the new Head was all-powerful and Mornington was his favourite, Morny's friendship had been a boon and a blessing. But now that his friendship exposed his friends to raggings and hustlings, the matter was changed.

The nuts of Rookwood looked very coldly on their former leader, and Mornington found himself generally avoided.

Avoided by his former friends, and scorned and disliked by the rebels, his lordship found himself in an exceedingly uncomfortable position. He evidently did not enjoy it in the least.

His hope was that Mr. Scroop would obtain his liberty and regain his

authority. But without help that did not seem likely. All the morning Mr. Scroop had raged in the screwed-up Hall like a lion in his den. Only Mr. Manders had made an attempt to help him, and Mr. Manders had failed.

The juniors were still busy with their dinner when Mornington left the table and strolled out of the dining-hall. He sauntered carelessly down the passage, but he quickened his pace as soon as he was in the quad, and ran towards the windows of the hall.

Mr. Scroop was looking out through the broken pane, with a face that was white with rage and chagrin. He had been surveying the deserted quad, and his face brightened at the sight of Mornington.

Mornington placed his finger to his lips.

He ran across the quad, and disappeared in the direction of the woodshed. In a few minutes he came back bearing the ladder.

The ladder was reared against the window, and Mornington mounted quickly.

"They're all at dinner, sir," he said hurriedly. "You can get out before they know. Then you can call in the police and deal with the rotters."

"The police!" muttered Mr. Scroop, with a haggard look.

He was doubtful whether police assistance would be any use to him. But of one thing he was quite assured—that a headmaster who required the help of the police to keep order in the school had not long to remain at Rookwood.

"Get out of the window, sir."

"How can I get out?" growled Mr. Scroop. "The window is screwed fast!"

"That pane's big enough——"

"I shall cut myself!"

"Isn't it worth risking, to get out before those young ruffians come back!" exclaimed Mornington impatiently. "You can't stick in there all day, I suppose?"

Mornington's manner to his head-

master was far from respectful. But Mr. Scroop did not seem to resent it.

"I—I will try," he muttered.

It was not easy for a large, middle-aged gentleman to squeeze himself through the space of a pane of glass, even a large pane. And the jagged edges of the glass did not look inviting.

Mr. Scroop put his head through, and drew it back again.

"Quick!" exclaimed Mornington. "They may be out any minute!"

"The glass——"

"Chance it, sir!"

"I do not intend to cut myself to pieces!" snarled Mr. Scroop. "Break away the rest of the glass."

"They'll hear it——"

"Do as I tell you!" snapped Mr. Scroop. "I will not have my orders disputed by you, at all events, Mornington!"

Mornington gritted his teeth, but he obeyed. He ran down the ladder and picked up a stone, and hastily ascended again. With blows from the stone he smashed out the remainder of the large pane, to leave a clear space for the headmaster to crawl through.

Smash! Smash! Smash!

"Hallo!" Jimmy Silver looked out of the House, and in a moment he was dashing towards the spot. "Come on, fellows!"

The rebels swarmed after him. They thronged round the ladder, and Mornington glared down at them, furiously.

"So that's the little game!" grinned Jimmy Silver, swarming up the ladder after Mornington.

"I'll brain you if you come near me!" hissed Mornington, gripping the stone hard.

Jimmy Silver caught his wrist.

"Let go that stone!"

"I won't!"

Jimmy compressed his grip, and the stone dropped to the ground, with a howl of pain from Mornington.

"Now get in at that window!" said Jimmy.

"What?"

"You're so fond of your precious Head, you can keep him company!" said Jimmy Silver coolly. "Tumble in!"

"I won't!" yelled Mornington.

"You will—and sharp!" said Jimmy. "In you go!"

Mornington grappled with him and struggled furiously, reckless of the height of the ladder. But he was no match for Jimmy Silver.

His head and shoulders were forced through the opening by main strength, and Jimmy seized his thrashing legs.

"In you go!"

There was a shout of laughter from below. The rebels of Rookwood were watching the scene with great enjoyment.

"Yaroo!" roared Mornington, as he went in head first. "Hold on! Leggo! Oh, my hat! I shall fall! Catch me, Mr. Scroop! Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington clutched hold desperately of the Head, standing on the table within. His legs slid in at the window, and his weight dragged Mr. Scroop over, and he sat down violently on the table, with Mornington sprawling over him. His clenched hand struck savagely at Mornington, and the junior rolled off to the floor with a howl.

Jimmy Silver grinned and slid down the ladder.

"The dear friends are falling out!" he remarked. "Get this ladder back to the wood-shed and lock it up. They can keep each other company for a bit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ladder was rushed away. Mornington's face appeared at the window after a few minutes convulsed with rage. He shook his fist at the juniors below, and a roar of laughter answered him.

Mornington's attempt at rescue had been a failure, and the only result was that he was barred-in as well as Mr. Scroop!

CHAPTER 42.

No Surrender!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. arrived under the window of Mr. Scroop's prison, and Jimmy tossed up a stone to draw attention.

The savage face of Mr. Scroop looked out.

"Have you come to your senses?" he exclaimed fiercely.

"The question is—have you come to yours?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you young hound——"

"Naughty!" said Jimmy, wagging his forefinger reprovingly at the Head.

Mr. Scroop seemed to choke.

"We don't want to starve you," explained Jimmy. "You can have some bread and cheese if you like. Say the word."

Mr. Scroop spluttered, but he calmed down. As a matter of fact, he was very hungry. It was humiliating to accept bread and cheese as a favour from the young rebels whom he longed

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to flog. But the only alternative was to miss his lunch entirely. There was no escape for the barred-in master.

"Well?" said Jimmy.

"You may bring it!" gasped Mr. Scroop.

Jimmy cut across to the tuckshop and made up a bundle of bread and cheese, and returned with it.

"Catch, cocky!" he called out.

Whether the headmaster liked being addressed as "cocky" by a junior in the Fourth or not, he was glad to "catch." He disappeared from the window with the bundle.

"Sing out when you want to come to terms!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Scroop reappeared at the window.

"What do you want?" he said, between his teeth. "This ridiculous situation has lasted long enough. I—I will pardon you if—if——"

The juniors grinned. Mr. Scroop was climbing down with a vengeance. Not that the rebels believed that he would keep his word, if he could help it.

"Sorry, sir, that isn't enough," said Jimmy Silver politely. "We want our Head back."

"That is nothing to do with me."

"It's a lot to do with us," said Jimmy cheerfully. "We're not giving in till our Head comes back. You're barred in, sir, till you're prepared to clear out of Rookwood for good. In for a penny, in for a pound, you know."

"What!"

"You see, we tried to stand you, and you wouldn't let us. Now you've got to go!"

"Hear, hear!"

Mr. Scroop shook a furious fist at the juniors, and disappeared from the window again.

"My only hat!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "How is this going to end?"

"Look after the present, and let the future take care of itself," said Jimmy Silver, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Our Head will have to come back,

that's all. We're not standing that outsider. Hallo! Who's that?"

"Great Scott! It's the chairman of the governors!"

"Morny's uncle, by gum!"

A tall, white-whiskered gentleman, in an eyeglass, alighted from a car at the gates of Rookwood. He strode towards the School House with a frowning brow. The juniors, some of whom knew him by sight, watched him stride up. They could guess now that Mornington had somehow communicated with his uncle that morning, before he was imprisoned in Big Hall with the Head. But the frowns of Sir Rupert Stacpoole did not terrify the rebels of Rookwood.

"Ha!" exclaimed the baronet.

"Where's my nephew?"

"In the boot-room, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"In the boot-room!" exclaimed Sir Rupert. "My nephew?"

"Yes. I suppose you're the boot-boy's uncle, sir?" said Jimmy Silver, with polite innocence.

"I am Mornington's uncle!" thundered the baronet.

"My mistake!" said Jimmy. "Morny's in Hall! Screwed in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Screwed in!" gasped Sir Rupert.

"Exactly! Would you like to speak to him? Morny!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Show a leg, you lubber! Here's nunky!"

Mornington's face appeared at the window. It lighted up at the sight of Sir Rupert Stacpoole.

"I'm glad you've come, uncle!" he exclaimed.

"I ordered the car immediately I received your wire!" gasped the baronet. "What does this state of affairs mean?"

Mornington gave Jimmy Silver & Co. a venomous look. He felt that he had the upper hand at last.

"There's a rebellion here, uncle. The Head is screwed in here with me. Jimmy Silver is responsible for it."

"Good heavens!" stuttered Sir Rupert.

"We're all responsible, sir," said Lovell coolly. "And we're sticking together, too!"

"Release Mr. Scroop and my nephew at once!" shouted Sir Rupert.

"Rats!"

"Wha-a-at! You—you insolent young rascals, do you know that I am chairman of the governors?" shouted Sir Rupert. "You shall all be expelled for this! I will have a clean sweep made here!"

"You won't interfere with us," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "We want our Head back. No lessons till Dr. Chisholm comes back. Rookwood fellows never shall be slaves!"

"I command you to release my nephew at once!"

"Bow-wow!"

"What!" shrieked Sir Rupert.

"B-O-W-W-O-W!" said Jimmy Silver. "Bow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The baronet gazed speechlessly at Jimmy Silver. He grasped his cane, and raised it in the air. Tommy Dodd jerked it away from him, and sent it spinning across the quad.

Then the juniors walked away, leaving Sir Rupert Stacpoole gasping. Mornington and Mr. Scroop looked out of the window, gasping, too.

"Great Scott!" stuttered Sir Rupert at last. "Mr. Scroop, is this the way you keep order and discipline in the school? I recommended you for the post, sir, supposing that you were fit for it, by gad! I come here, and find the place like a den of wild beasts, sir. I am treated with disrespect—I, by gad! If this is the way you manage Rookwood, Mr. Scroop, the sooner you go the better!"

"I have been assaulted—screwed in this room——"

"Bah! Dr. Chisholm was never assaulted and screwed in a room!" snorted the baronet. "The young rascals want flogging——"

"Twenty floggings were ordered for this morning, and then——"

"Twenty!" shouted Sir Rupert. "By gad, is that the way you manage a school? I'll warrant that Dr. Chisholm has never administered twenty floggings in his life, sir, but Rookwood was never out of hand while he was here. By gad, it's a good thing, I think, that the governors have decided to send him back, though I opposed it. A good thing, by gad, from what I see!"

Mornington jumped.

"Is Dr. Chisholm coming back?" he shouted.

"Yes."

"But—but you——" stammered Mornington, in dismay.

His uncle cut him short.

"The governors have investigated the matter, and Dr. Chisholm has satisfied them. It appears that he flogged you, my boy, where many a headmaster would have expelled you into the bargain. I stood by you, but it was a meeting of the whole body of governors, and the majority were for retaining Dr. Chisholm's services. I have resigned the chairmanship."

"Oh, gad!" muttered Mornington.

"And I am dashed if I am sorry now," fumed Sir Rupert. "A pretty state to find Rookwood in, upon my word! Mr. Scroop, I made a mistake in sending you here, I can see that. Do you mean to tell me that these young rascals would have dared to screw Dr. Chisholm in his Hall? You know they would not. You cannot manage boys, sir, and the sooner you understand it the better."

Mr. Scroop did not speak. Perhaps his feelings were too deep to find expression in words. Mornington's face was the picture of rage and dismay. The Head of Rookwood was coming back, and Mornington's day was done. He had been the new Head's favourite, but he knew how the old Head regarded him.

Sir Rupert Stacpoole fumed under the window. Apparently he had come to Rookwood to restore order by

the terror of his glance, so to speak; but he found that the task was beyond his powers. Bulkeley of the Sixth came out of the house, and the baronet called to him.

"Is that you, Bulkeley? Come here, sir! I understand that you are head prefect! Why have you allowed this riot to go on?"

"I am no longer a prefect, sir," said Bulkeley quietly. "Mr. Scroop decided that I should be a prefect no longer."

"By gad! Why?"

"Because I could not approve of cruelty and injustice, sir," said Bulkeley. "The juniors are out of hand now, but I shall explain to Dr. Chisholm, when he returns, that they were driven to it by tyranny. It will be my duty to do so."

"Good gad!" muttered the baronet.

"Order would be restored at once if Dr. Chisholm returned," said Bulkeley. "Unless that happens, I cannot and shall not interfere. Mr. Scroop has chosen to throw the school into this state, and it is his business, not mine."

And Bulkeley walked on.

"Uncle, you are not goin'!" called out Mornington, as the baronet turned away.

Sir Rupert gave a snort.

"I can do no good here," he said. "Dr. Chisholm is, I believe, on his way. I can do nothing with these rebellious young rascals! If you do not choose to remain at Rookwood, you can come home with me."

Mornington hesitated.

"Come, make up your mind," snapped his uncle. "If you choose to come, you can come, and you will be sent to another school. Mind, I am beginning to think that you were in the wrong all along the line, and not in the right, as I supposed. But I give you your choice in the matter. Come if you choose."

"I'll come!" said Mornington.

He dropped from the window. There was a buzz from the juniors in

the quad as Mornington was seen walking to the gates beside his uncle.

"Going, by gum!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"Good-bye, Morny!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "Shall I say good-bye for you at the Bird-in-Hand?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington scowled, and stepped into the car beside his uncle. A minute more, and he was gone.

"Good riddance!" said Jimmy Silver heartily. "We ought to give the old sport three cheers for that!"

And the rebels of Rookwood laughed and cheered heartily.

CHAPTER 43.

All Sereus!

HERE'S Bootles!"

"My hat! And the Head!" A taxicab turned in at the gates of Rookwood, with the two gentlemen seated in it. It rolled up the drive to the School House.

There was a loud cheer in the quadrangle.

Dr. Chisholm had returned!

Exactly what the Head would think of the rebellion at Rookwood, and the barring-in, Jimmy Silver & Co. could not guess. But they meant to make it clear that their old and revered headmaster was welcome. Thunderous cheers followed the taxi as it rolled on.

Dr. Chisholm smiled slightly.

He had left Rookwood under a cloud, but the decision of the governing board had fully vindicated him. He had returned in all honour. Mr. Bootles' hurried visit, and his explanation of the state of affairs at Rookwood School, had hastened his return. And certainly the Head had come at the right moment.

He alighted at the School House door, where Bulkeley met him.

"We're all very glad to see you

back, sir," said the captain of Rookwood.

"I am glad to be back, Bulkeley," said Dr. Chisholm, shaking hands with the Sixth-Former. "I am sorry to hear from Mr. Bootles that there has been disorder during my absence."

"It's very unfortunate, sir!"

"Surely you, Bulkeley, should have exerted your influence——"

Bulkeley coloured.

"I could do nothing, sir. The juniors are to blame, of course, but not very much to blame. Twenty floggings in one morning could not be expected to pass quietly, especially when the whole school knew they were undeserved."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Twenty! I am afraid that Mr. Scroop has been—ahem!—somewhat injudicious. Where is he now?"

"In Hall, sir," said Bulkeley, rather awkwardly.

"I—ahem!—think the doors are fastened," murmured Mr. Bootles, "and—and that Mr. Scroop is, in fact—ahem!—a—a sort of prisoner, sir."

Dr. Chisholm frowned.

"Dear me! That is very serious! Will you see that he is released at once, Bulkeley?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Can I lend you a screwdriver, Bulkeley?" asked Jimmy Silver sweetly. "I happen to have one in my pocket."

"Thanks!" said Bulkeley, grinning.

Dr. Chisholm looked severely at the crowd of juniors.

"Lessons are not yet over!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch. "What are you juniors doing out of the Form-rooms?"

"Ahem!"

"You—you see, sir!"

"Things are rather upset to-day, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver. "Shall we go in to lessons, sir?"

"Certainly! At once!"

"Very good, sir!"

With wonderful obedience, the

juniors marched into the School House. Order was restored. The rebellion had been against Mr. Scroop and his tyrannical methods, and with the return of the Head it died a natural death.

Mr. Bootles looked rather oddly at his class as he came into the Fourth Form room to take them for the last lesson.

After what had happened during the day the Fourth Form master expected to find his class in a restive state.

But he was agreeably disappointed.

The Fourth Form, Classical and Modern, were as good as gold, and as meek as little lambs. Jimmy Silver knew what he was about, and his influence was all on the side of the restoration of order. The Rebels of Rookwood wanted to make it clear that they had been in the right, and they were very careful not to place themselves in the wrong.

Last lesson in the Form-rooms went off like clock-work, much to the relief of the masters.

Before the lessons concluded Mr. Scroop had been released, and he had driven away in the taxi in which Dr. Chisholm had arrived. When the juniors came out of the Form-rooms the tyrant of Rookwood was gone.

Dr. Chisholm resumed his old place at Rookwood, and for several days the juniors were on their very best behaviour. It was understood that there was to be an inquiry into the outbreak, and that justice would be done. But the Head was a judicious gentleman, and he knew when it was wisest to forget, and apparently the whole matter passed from his memory. And as the rebels of Rookwood were not called to account, justice was indeed done. Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite satisfied on that point.

WHEN THE EARTH QUAKES!

MANY and various are the forces of Nature; but of these, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are probably the most terrifying. Imagine a towering mountain with streams of molten rock pouring down its sides, and vast lumps of rock and cinders hurtling from its summit into the sky! Imagine also the surrounding country heaving and rolling like a turbulent sea! This is the sort of thing that is sometimes experienced in countries where earthquakes are not uncommon.

The Movement of Mountains!

What is the cause of earthquakes? Many ideas have been put forward by professors of science, and one of the latest is that the cause is the movement of mountains. Many people seem to have the idea that an earthquake or volcanic eruption is the earth "letting off steam," as it were, but the "moving mountain" theory is totally different.

Those who uphold it say that mountains, like icebergs, have only a small portion of their bulk exposed to the air, the rest being beneath the surface of the earth. The mountain is, in fact, "floating" on the earth just as a berg floats on the sea. And, as its upper part gets worn away by wind and rain, it tends more and more to move upwards, and at last it does so, cracking the earth's crust around it, and so causing an earthquake.

When the Strata Slips.

Another cause of earthquakes, it is said, is the folding of the earth's crust. With great suddenness the strata crumples inwards, and by doing so dislocates the earth above, and, if there is

a town near at hand, leads to terrible destruction.

A similar cause is the slipping of the strata. Sometimes it happens that there is a crack in the earth's crust, and the crust on one side of the crack slips slightly, causing frightful damage. It is not, however, necessary for the slip to be a large one to cause an earthquake. It is the suddenness with which it takes place that does the damage.

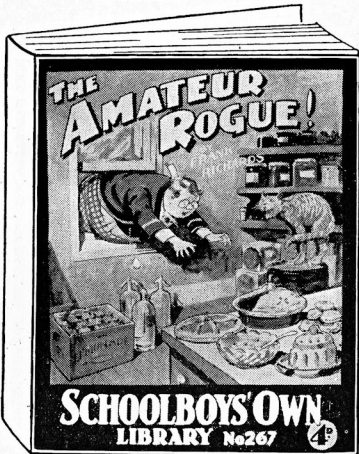
If you balance a pencil upright on a table, and strike the table with your fist, the vibration, though only slight, is quite sufficient to make the pencil fall over. It is the rapidity with which the table vibrates that causes the pencil to fall.

Subterranean Explosion.

The cause of an earthquake near the coast is often the sudden generation of steam beneath the strata, caused by the sea-water leaking through the earth and gaining entry to a batholith or reservoir of molten rock. If you've ever seen water poured into molten lead you will understand this better. When once the water comes into contact with the white-hot lava there's a frightful subterranean explosion which shakes the earth, cracks the strata, and if there's a town above, much damage is done.

Volcanic eruptions can be as terrible as earthquakes. Sometimes a mountain explodes, causing atmospheric waves which sweep round the world and back again. Indeed, when the volcanic island of Krakatoa exploded, the waves encircled the earth as many as seven times!

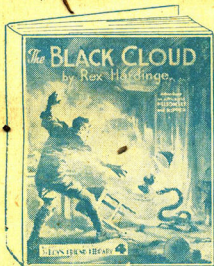
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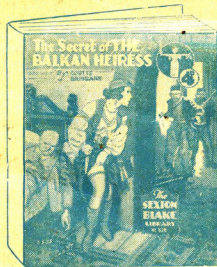
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