

THE FOURTH FORM AT ROOKWOOD!

by
OWEN CONQUEST



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BRIDGE-BUILDING BRAIN-WAVES!

WHEN a big bridge is being built the engineers always make a start from each side of the gap to be spanned, gradually building out towards the middle, where the two halves meet and are joined.

It is one of the greatest marvels of modern engineering that a bridge can be built in this way, for, although the span is often over a thousand feet, the two halves must join up exactly, not even half an inch out! But it is not always possible to carry out the job without a hitch—and then the engineer has a chance to show his real worth.

Heat Joins a Bridge!

In the building of the Forth Bridge, Scotland, for instance, an extraordinary snag arose when the two halves of the last span, meeting 150 feet above the river, had been completed. For it was found that the girders did not quite meet; there was a gap of an inch in the middle of the bridge, so that the two halves could not be bolted together.

Then one of the engineers in charge of the job had a brain-wave. "Wait till midday to-morrow," he said. "By that time the sun will have heated the steel and made it expand, when the gap will be closed."

That is exactly what happened—but only on one side of the bridge. For on the other, a breeze which sprang up cooled the steel, preventing the necessary expansion.

The engineer suddenly had another idea. Ordering his men to collect piles of wood shavings and oily rags, he had the stuff piled into bonfires all along the girders. Gradually, as the heat of the fires expanded the metal, the gap

in the middle closed, until finally the bolts could be tightened home, and the mighty 1,700-ft. span of the bridge was complete!

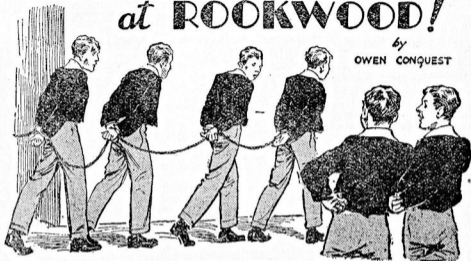
Ice Does the Trick!

The engineers who built the Eads Bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis, U.S.A., had a different kind of trouble to contend with. In their case, the last girder of the central span could not be fitted in, as it was found to be two inches too long. Colonel Flad, the engineer-in-charge, racked his brains for a solution to the trouble. Then, in a flash of inspiration, he ordered the bridge girders to be wrapped in cloths and boxed in wooden troughs, into which were rammed fifteen tons of ice. As the steelwork cooled, the girders contracted, and the gap between them grew. But not until another forty-five tons of ice had been sent for and packed around the girders did the gap open wide enough for the misfit girder to be slid home.

Hell Gate Bridge, U.S.A., was another nightmare for its builders. It was designed to be the biggest arch bridge in the world, with a 997-ft span, carrying four railway tracks. To support the weight of this mighty structure, tremendous foundations had to be dug out at either side. But when boring started at one end, it was found that, a hundred feet below the surface, the sub-strata of rock was split by a great fissure, which had filled up in some past age with soft red clay. It was impossible to erect bridge foundations on such material, and at first it seemed as if a new site for the bridge would have to be found. That would be so expensive, however, that it was practically unthinkable; so finally, at great risk, the chasm was bridged over with a solid concrete arch a hundred feet below ground. How successfully the job was done can be gauged from the fact that since it was built in 1916 till the present day, Hell Gate Bridge has carried heavier traffic than any other in the world.

The **FOURTH FORM** at **ROOKWOOD!**

by
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A tip-top yarn, featuring **JIMMY SILVER & Co.**, the Cheery Chums of Rookwood, in a series of lively school adventures.

CHAPTER 1.

Astounding News!

"**JIMMY!**"
Tubby Muffin of the Classical Fourth, came into the junior Common-room, with a letter in his hand.

There was an excited expression upon Tubby Muffin's podgy face as he called out to the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver was talking football with Lovell and Raby and Newcome near the fire, and he turned a very deaf ear.

He could guess what Tubby Muffin wanted, without being told. Tubby was the best customer at the school shop. He had the largest appetite at Rookwood, but one of the smallest allowances—and a large appetite and a

small allowance did not "hit it off" together.

Hence Tubby had developed into a deadly borrower, and as Jimmy Silver was one of the best-natured fellows in the Fourth, Jimmy was a frequent victim.

Fellows who were better provided with money than Jimmy did not make Tubby half so many loans. Mornington, who rolled in money, would give him a cuff instead of a loan. Tubby would not have minded if he had received a loan along with the cuff, but the cuff by itself was no use to him. Townsend and Topham and Peele, and the other nuts, had plenty of "tin" to expend on secret cigarettes, but none whatever for Tubby.

But Jimmy was growing fed-up.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome had been fed up for some time. Tubby never by any chance repaid a loan—though he was always going to, when something turned up. Something never did turn up.

So Jimmy Silver continued to discuss the offside rule with his chums, and Tubby Muffin shouted unheeded:

"Jimmy—Jimmy—Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy did not turn his head.

"Where's that silly ass, Silver!" exclaimed Tubby, looking round the Common-room. "I thought the silly fathead was here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that, you cheeky oyster?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, looking round at last.

"Oh, I didn't see you, old chap!" said Tubby affably. "I was just asking where my old pal Jimmy was——"

"I'll old pal you!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Cut off! You had half my allowance last week, and this week I want it myself. Nothing doing."

"I'm going to settle that, Jimmy."

"Has something turned up?" asked Jimmy sarcastically.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're going to settle up a loan?" yelled Lovell. "Draw it mild, Tubby! Let's see the tin."

"I haven't got it yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' you never will have, you spingin' tub," said Townsend. "You owe me two bob from last term!"

"And me half-a-crown!" said Topham.

"The fat bounder owes me nearly a quid," growled Lovell, "and all gone in grub! I'm done with him for one!"

"I'm not after your rotten bobs, Lovell," said Tubby Muffin disdainfully. "I want Jimmy Silver to read this letter for me, and give me his advice. It's an awfully surprising letter."

"Oh," said Jimmy Silver, quite taken aback, "I'll do that! But, really, Tubby,

you must go easy and leave a chap some of his tin for himself, you know."

"I'm going to settle up shortly all round," said the fat Classical. "You just read that letter, Jimmy. It's a big surprise. I always knew my uncle Joshua was rich—I've told you chaps lots of times——"

"About a hundred times," said Rawson.

"Begorra, it's nearer a million, I should say!" remarked Flynn.

"Has Uncle Josh died and left you a fortune?" queried Mornington, in tones of great sarcasm.

"Well, it looks like it," said Tubby. "That's what the letter means, if it means anything. It quite knocked me over."

"By gad!"

"You want me to read this?" asked Jimmy, as Tubby shoved the letter into his hand.

"Yes; and tell me what you think of it. Read it out. I don't mind the fellows hearing!" said Tubby.

"Right-ho!"

The Classical juniors gathered round with some interest.

If Tubby had been left a fortune, it was quite an interesting matter—for there was hardly a fellow in the Fourth to whom Tubby Muffin did not owe some amount, larger or smaller. He was supposed even to have extracted a loan from Leggett of the Modern Fourth, the meanest fellow at Rookwood, such was his skill.

The impecunious Tubby as the possessor of a handsome fortune would be quite a remarkable Tubby—more especially as nobody had ever believed in his wealthy Uncle Joshua. Uncle Joshua certainly existed, for he had visited Tubby at Rookwood; but he did not look like a millionaire, and none of his fabled "quids" ever came Tubby's way.

"Go it, Jimmy!" said Van Ryn. Van Ryn, as Tubby's study-mate, was one of his chief victims, and he had quite a large financial interest in Tubby's inheritance—if it was a fact.

Jimmy, with growing surprise in his

face, read out the letter. It was typed from beginning to end, and certainly looked very businesslike. It ran:

"Law Buildings,
Chancery Lane, London.

"Sir,—We beg to inform you that our valued client, Mr. Joshua Muffin, died suddenly on Saturday morning. By his will you are left sole heir to his estate, amounting, so far as can be at present ascertained, to approximately £600,000. The estate will remain in the hands of the appointed trustees until you reach the age of twenty-one; but, meanwhile, an allowance of £500 per annum will be paid to you, under our late client's instructions. Your presence will be required at a latter stage in the proceedings, on what date we shall duly inform you. Meanwhile, we remain, yours to command,

"H. Hook,
"For Messrs. Hook & Crook,
"Solicitors.

"Master Reginald Muffin,
"Rookwood School."

CHAPTER 2.
Very Popular!

"GREAT pip!"
"Six hundred thousand quids!"

"Five hundred a year!"

"Tubby! My hat!"

It was a regular chorus in the Common-room. Every eye was fixed upon Tubby Muffin. The startling news almost took away the breath of the Rookwood juniors.

Tubby, the most impecunious fellow in the school, the happy possessor of six hundred thousand pounds!

It was staggering!

And only that day Tubby had been seeking, in vain, to raise a loan of two-pence or threepence from fellows he had tired out with his importunities.

Not even two-pence had been forthcoming for Tubby, and he had been compelled to go without anything to

eat between meals—an awful experience for Tubby.

He was not likely to ask in vain for twopences now.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "I congratulate you, Tubby!"

"Congratulations, old chap!" said Townsend, clapping Tubby on the shoulder in the heartiest possible manner. It was wonderful to see the change in Towny. The good Towny was already thinking of initiating Tubby into the mysteries of nap and banker and bridge. Tubby would be able to afford it out of five hundred a year.

"Jolly glad to hear it, Tubby," said Topham, with equal heartiness. "I remember seeing your old uncle, old Uncle Joshua, and I thought he looked like a—a millionaire——"

"Why, you said he looked like an old-clothes man," said Flynn, with a stare. "Sure I heard ye."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Topham turned very red. He regretted that unfortunate remark now. Had he only known that Uncle Joshua Muffin would "cut up" like this he certainly wouldn't have said he looked like anything but a prince, or a duke, at the very least.

"By gad, you'll be able to settle up all round now, Tubby," said Peele. "Don't worry about that trifle you owe me, though. That can wait."

"I say, Jimmy Silver, that means that I'm going to be rich, doesn't it?" asked Tubby anxiously.

Jimmy nodded and smiled.

"It seems so, Tubby. According to that, you're going to be jolly rich."

"That will be ripping, won't it?"

"It will, rather. You'll be the most popular fellow at Rookwood," chuckled Lovell. "You're a nice chap, Tubby."

"Eh?"

"I always loved you like a brother, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we mustn't call you Tubby any longer, either. Now I come to think of it, you are really a slim, elegant chap!"

"Graceful!" grinned Raby.

"Beau Brummell, only more so!" chuckled Newcome.

"I say, don't you make fun of me, you know," said Tubby. "I'm not going to swank because I'm rich, like Mornington."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're richer than Mornington now," grinned Rawson. "We shall have two of 'em."

Mornington scowled, and stalked out of the Common-room. Morny's wealth had been even more oppressive in the Fourth than Tubby's impecuniousness. Certainly, Tubby couldn't very well be more proud of his cash than Mornington had been. But, to do Tubby justice, he showed no signs of "swank" so far.

"I say, don't you fellows think this will make any difference to me," said Tubby. "I'm going to settle up all round, as soon as I get my money."

"Hear, hear!"

"And anybody who's ever lent me any money can come to me for a loan whenever he likes," said Tubby liberally.

"Bravo!"

"I'm going to subscribe to the sports club, and stand a new set of goalposts and nets to the Form!"

"Hurrah!"

"And as soon as I get the first money from the lawyers, there's going to be a ripping feed for all the Fourth!"

"Good old Tubby!"

There was no doubt that Tubby Muffin was going to be popular.

Jimmy Silver & Co. and all the decent fellows had to admit that Tubby wasn't spoiled, so far, by great wealth. He offered a very striking and favourable contrast to Mornington. And fellows who were not quite so decent were certain to "make up" to Tubby for his money.

Five hundred a year was a stunning allowance for a junior schoolboy. Certainly the Head would probably have something to say about that; but, at all events, it was quite assured that Tubby would always have plenty of money—more than even Mornington.

Towny & Co. were quite affectionate to him already.

Mornington had stalked off; but his dear pals did not follow him. They saw no great necessity for flattering and conciliating Mornington now.

Tubby reigned in his stead.

Tubby was richer, and Tubby was a much easier fellow to get on with, much easier to make something out of. Towny & Co. were quite prepared to install the fat Classical as leader of their aristocratic and elegant set, if it came to that.

After all, they considered, Tubby wasn't a bad chap, and in their select company he would tone down a little. Come to think of it, Tubby really was quite a little gentleman, in his way. Six hundred thousand pounds made a marvellous difference in Towny & Co.'s estimation of Tubby.

Leggett of the Fourth came into the Common-room, and he glanced at the excited group inquiringly.

"Anything on?" he asked.

"Tubby's come into a fortune," said Rawson.

"My hat! Congratulations, Tubby, old chap," said Leggett, with a rather peculiar look at the fat Classical.

"You can buzz off, Leggett," said Townsend, before Tubby could reply. "We don't want any Modern rotters here."

"Well, Muffin owes me six bob," said Leggett surlily. "If he's come into a fortune, he can square."

"He hasn't got the money yet, fat-head. Might be weeks. It's only the lawyer's letter telling him about it," said Topham. "Tubby won't be hard up, though. Tubby's got friends."

"I dare say he has—now," sneered Leggett.

"If you mean to insinuate——" said Topham hotly.

"Oh, I haven't come here to rag," said Leggett. "I want my six bob, Tubby."

Tubby Muffin sniffed.

"I dare say I can borrow six bob,

and settle with you, Leggett," he said. "Jimmy Silver, can you lend me six bob?"

"Nothing doing," said Jimmy. "Let Leggett wait."

"I say, Lovell——"

"Can't be done."

"Never mind about those chaps, Tubby," said Townsend. "I'll lend you six bob with pleasure—half-a-quad, if you like."

"I say, you're awfully good," said Tubby.

"Not at all, old chap. I suppose a fellow can always borrow half-a-quad of a pal," said Townsend.

"Pals already!" murmured Lovell, with a grin.

Tubby Muffin's podgy fingers closed greedily on the ten-shilling note Townsend handed him. He seemed scarcely able to believe in his good luck.

"You'll have lots of those soon, Tubby," remarked Towny indulgently.

"Ye-es, of course. Come along to the tuckshop."

"You haven't settled with me," said Leggett grimly.

"Oh, rats! Change that, then," said Tubby loftily.

Leggett took the ten-shilling note, and handed Tubby four shillings change. Then he walked away grinning, evidently in a very satisfied frame of mind. Townsend slipped his arm through Tubby's.

"Come up to my study to tea, old chap."

"Oh, do!" said Topham hospitably.

"I don't mind if I do, as you're so pressing," said Tubby cheerily. Only the previous day, Tubby Muffin had been kicked out of Towny's study for presenting himself there at tea-time. But by-gones were by-gones.

Tubby Muffin walked out of the Common-room with his arms linked in Townsend's and Topham's on either side of him. Jimmy Silver grinned. Tubby's inheritance was working wonders already; and there seemed to be no doubt that the Falstaff of Rookwood was booked for a very good time.

CHAPTER 3.

Quite Nutty!

RAWSON growled.

Rawson, the scholarship junior, had the honour of sharing a study with Townsend and Topham, the youths who were of the nuts nutty. They did not pull very well together. Towny and Topy regarded Rawson with lofty disdain, because he didn't pay any fees, because his books were bought out of his scholarship allowance, because he was the son of a working carpenter, because he didn't wear expensive neckties, and didn't care twopence about neckties, anyway, and for many reasons of the same sort. Rawson reciprocated their feelings with a still more hearty contempt, because Towny and Topy were dandies and slackers, and smokers, and dabblers in Turf matters, and fumbling footballers, and duffers generally, with a slight tincture of roguery.

With such feelings towards one another, naturally they did not pull well together in the study. But, as a rule, there was peace. Rawson was a burly fellow, and could knock Towny and Topy's heads together, if he liked, Towny and Topy being quite helpless in the matter.

Rawson had laid down, as a rule, that there wasn't to be any smoking in the study when he was there. He didn't like it. Moreover, if a master or prefect had found it going on, Rawson might have been punished along with the real delinquents, which, naturally, Rawson considered "not good enough."

Towny and Topy regarded that rule as a piece of sheer cheek on Rawson's part. But Rawson did not mind how they regarded it, so long as they did not transgress it. Whenever they did, Rawson acted promptly and drastically.

Hence Rawson's ominous growl as he came into his study this evening. For the room was quite hazy with smoke. Towny and Topy and Peele were there, with Tubby Muffin. All four of them had cigarettes going, and there were

cards on the table. Tea was over, and Townsend & Co. were indulging in one of their little games with Tubby Muffin.

They looked up irritably as Rawson came in.

"Look here, you can't do your prep here," said Townsend. "Go into the end study for once, Rawson."

Rawson growled again.

He was annoyed and he was angry. Tubby Muffin was a fat little rascal, quite unscrupulous as a borrower, and much given to spoofing in one way and another. But he had never hitherto shown signs of joining the nutty brigade.

His pocket-money went in more tuck than was good for him, but never in cigarettes or nap or banker or on "gee-gees." His terrific inheritance, announced in the lawyer's letter, had made a great difference. He had been taken under the wing of the nuts, and he was learning his new lesson—and he seemed an apt pupil.

Tubby, not yet being in possession of his fortune, was playing for IOU's. The previous day Townsend would have chortled at the idea of accepting an IOU from Tubby. But a fellow with five hundred a year pocket-money coming along shortly was evidently to be relied upon. Tubby would be able to settle up a few quids.

Indeed, Townsend & Co. had tacitly arranged that by the time Tubby's money came along he should have quite a large sum to settle in the way of IOU's.

Tubby gave Rawson a fat grin. The young rascal did not seem to be in the least ashamed of himself. He was enjoying himself. His admission to the noble circle of the nuts flattered him immensely.

"No, don't go, Rawson!" he said. "You come in and take a hand. Have a fag, old chap?"

Rawson snorted.

"We don't want Rawson!" muttered Topham.

"Well, he can take a hand if he

likes," said Townsend, who did not quite like Rawson's look. "I don't mind bein' pally."

"Yes, come on, Rawson!" said Peele anxiously.

"You rotters!" roared Rawson.

"Oh, shut up!"

"What would you look like if a prefect came down on you?"

"Are you going to bring one here, you rotten sneak?" sneered Townsend.

Rawson clenched his big fists.

"I'm not, and you know I'm not! But I'm going to put a stop to this kind of thing in my study."

"Mind your own bizney!" snapped Topham.

"Muffin, you fat fool——"

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Tubby.

"How much have you lost?" asked Rawson.

"Only a couple of pounds," said Muffin quite cheerfully. "I don't mind."

"A couple of pounds!" ejaculated Rawson, aghast.

"That's nothin' to Tubby!" said Peele. "He's not a sneakin', poverty-stricken scholarship bounder!"

"Well, if you're going to welsh Tubby, you're not going to welsh him in my study!" growled Rawson.

"You rotten, insinuat' cad! We're not welshin' him!" exclaimed Townsend indignantly. "Do you think it isn't a fair game?"

"Yes, ring off, Rawson!" said Tubby Muffin. "I always was a bit of a sport, you know, and this is a jolly good game. I'm learning it."

"Hands off, you cad!" roared Townsend.

Rawson did not trouble to say anything further. He strode to the table, grasped at the cards, and pitched them into the fire. A couple of packets of cigarettes followed.

Then he took Peele by the shoulders, jerked him out of his chair, and propelled him to the doorway.

"You're not wanted here," he said.

Peele stood in the passage quivering with rage.

Townsend and Topham jumped up, their eyes blazing. Tubby Muffin sat blinking in his chair.

"You interferin' hound!" yelled Topham.

"Collar him!" shrieked Peele from the doorway.

Towny & Co. weren't fighting-men, and they disliked the idea of a scrap with the burly Rawson. But they were three to one, and they were enraged to boiling-point.

They took their courage in both hands, so to speak, and closed in on the scholarship junior with clenched fists.

Rawson put up his hands at once.

"Come on!" he said grimly.

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Tubby Muffin. His career as a "sport" was opening rather stormily.

"Down the cad!" panted Townsend.

Rawson hit out—hard. The three nuts dodged him, and Rawson followed them up, still hitting. Peele slipped behind him and caught him round the neck while he was engaged with Townsend and Topham, and Rawson reeled back under his weight. Townsend and Topham hurled themselves on him at once, and Rawson went to the floor with the three juniors piling on him.

"Now we'll give the interferin' cad a lesson!" panted Topham.

"Hallo! Fair play, you chaps!" said a voice in the doorway, as Jimmy Silver looked in.

"Get out, hang you!"

Jimmy Silver did not get out—he got in. He caught Peele and Topham by their collars, and dragged them off Rawson.

Rawson pitched Townsend off into the fender, and staggered to his feet.

"Now come on!" he roared. "Two at a time, if you like!"

But Townsend & Co. did not want any more.

CHAPTER 4.

Tubby Goes the Pace!

JIMMY SILVER smiled serenely at the furious nuts.

"What's the merry trouble?" he asked. "I'll hold anybody's jacket. Don't all speak at once!"

"I'm not goin' to fight the cad!" mumbled Townsend, crawling out of the fender. "I decline to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Not unless you're three to one!" snorted Rawson. "You can see what's on, Jimmy." He pointed to the scattered cards on the floor. "They're teaching that fat fool to gamble, and it's not going on in my study!"

Jimmy Silver's face became very grim.

He picked up what were left of the cards and tossed them into the fire. The nuts did not make a movement to stop him.

"You rotters!" said Jimmy. "Tubby, you fat duffer, haven't you any more sense than that?"

"Oh, you let me alone!" said Tubby independently. "I suppose I can do as I like, Jimmy Silver?"

"That's where you make a little mistake," said Jimmy. "You can't!"

"Look here—"

"Come along to my study, you chaps," said Peele. "We can't stay here with these rowdy hooligans."

"Right-ho! Come on, Tubby!"

Jimmy Silver took Muffin by the collar.

"Tubby's coming with me," he remarked.

"Leggo!" howled Muffin.

"Let Tubby alone, you bully!" snarled Townsend.

Jimmy Silver made a step towards Townsend, still holding Tubby with one hand. Towny stepped hastily out into the passage.

Rawson opened the window, and waved a newspaper to clear off the smoke. The three nuts, in a savage mood, went down the passage, leaving Tubby Muffin in the hands of the captain of the Fourth.

"Come on, Tubby!" said Jimmy.

"I—I say——"

"Kim on!"

Jimmy Silver marched the fat Classical out of the room and down the passage to Study No. 3. He tapped at the door and led Tubby in.

Van Ryn and Pons, the two Colonial juniors, were there, and they looked up from their prep in surprise at the sight of Tubby Muffin wriggling in the grasp of Jimmy Silver.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Pons.

"I've brought this fat idiot home," explained Jimmy. "Have you got a cricket-stump in the study?"

"Yes," grinned Van Ryn.

"Now Tubby's come into his money he's starting as a giddy blade," said Jimmy. "Towny & Co. are teaching him to play nap. I recommend a good dose of cricket-stump, well laid on. There's your prize idiot!"

And Jimmy Silver sat Tubby Muffin down on the carpet with a bump, and left the study.

"Yow-ow-ow!" gasped Tubby.

"You fat duffer!" said Van Ryn severely. "So you're taking up that rot, are you?"

"Why shouldn't I?" gasped Muffin. "It doesn't cost me anything. I'm only playing for IOU's, you know."

"You'll have to square the IOU's when your money comes," said Pons.

"Eh? Oh, yes; that's all right!"

"Don't you know it's wrong?" demanded Van Ryn.

"Well, a chap must be a bit of a sport, you know," said Tubby fatuously. "The fact is, I'm rather a goey chap, you know."

"A—a what?"

"Goey!" said Tubby, scrambling to his feet. "I'm all there, you know. A bit of a knowing blade—what?"

Van Ryn and Pons looked at him, almost dazedly. The idea of the fat, podgy glutton of the Fourth setting up as a goey chap and a knowing blade, took away their breath for a moment. Then there was a roar in the study.

"You can cackle," said Tubby loftily. "You're rather slow, you chaps. I suppose you don't see much life in the Colonies."

"Well, I've seen fellows blagging in South Africa," said Van Ryn. "I can't say I've taken a hand in it."

"Same here," grinned Pons. "We're going to be slow, Tubby, and you'd better go slow, too. Blagging is barred in this study."

"I'm going to do as I like," said Tubby. "A fellow's his own master!"

"I suppose we shall want that cricket-stump," said Van Ryn thoughtfully.

"I—I say——"

"Tubby, old chap," said Pons, "you can't help being a greedy little beast, but there's no need for you to be a blackguard. You'll get yourself into trouble at this rate."

"Oh, I'm pretty knowing!" said Tubby. "I shall be all right."

"You fat idiot!" roared Van Ryn.

"Don't you call me names!" said Tubby. "You can be slow-coaches, if you like, but I'm going the pace a bit!"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"I'm going to have a jolly good time, so long as it lasts!"

"Well, six hundred thousand pounds will last a long time, even at nap and banker!" grinned the South African junior. "But you'd better think better of it, Tubby. Don't be a silly ass, you know!"

"Oh, rats!" retorted Tubby.

Van Ryn rose to his feet, and Tubby whipped out of the study at once. The South African junior sat down again.

"Ought we to lick him for his own good, Pons?" he asked.

The Canadian laughed.

"Might try it," he said. "But I fancy it's no good. His money won't do him much good, at this rate. Fat duffer!"

The Colonial chums went on with their prep. Meanwhile, Tubby Muffin made his way to Study No. 4—the apartment belonging to Peele and Gower and Mornington.

He found his friends there, and they welcomed him with open arms.

Mornington was not there. Townsend & Co. sat down to resume their interrupted game. Tubby was soon in full flow of goey enjoyment, and losing IOU's at a great rate. Prep was postponed while the more important business of winning Tubby Muffin's IOU's was carried through.

The door opened suddenly, and Mornington came in.

He scowled at the sight of Tubby Muffin.

"Come an' take a hand, Morny," said Peele.

"What's that fat fool doin' here?" growled Mornington.

"Playin' nap."

"Get out, Muffin!"

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Tubby.

"Don't move, Reginald," said Peele quietly.

"Reginald!" yelled Mornington.

"My name's Reginald," said Tubby loftily. "My friends call me Reginald."

"Not Tubby any longer!" said Mornington sarcastically. "Look here, you chaps, if you're going to suck up to that fat fool for his money, you needn't expect me to join in it! I don't want his rotten money! And I don't want the fat beast in my study, an' that's flat!"

"And I don't care twopence what you want!" retorted Peele. "It's my study, and Gower's too, and we can have a friend if we like!"

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Gower warmly.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Townsend. "You're not the only giddy pebble on the beach, Morny. You think you are, but it's a mistake!"

"Quite a mistake!" chortled Topham.

Mornington simply glared at his nutty friends. As a matter of fact, Morny's overbearing manners and customs did not endear him to his friends, though they found it worth while to cultivate him. They were quite pleased to show him, for once in a way, that he was

not the only pebble on the beach, as Townsend expressed it.

Tubby grinned with great satisfaction at Mornington. He had never dreamed of being placed on an equal footing with the dandy of the Fourth. But there he was—more highly prized by the nuts of Rookwood than the great Morny himself!

"I'm not standin' this!" panted Mornington at last. "I don't want that fat cad in my study, an' he's goin' out!"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Shut up, Morny!"

"Yes, shut up!" said Tubby Muffin. "You talk too much, Morny!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"You're a cheeky cad!" said Tubby independently. "Nobody here cares for your dashed airs and graces, I can tell you!"

Mornington stared at him speechlessly. This from Tubby Muffin—the fat bounder who would have been delighted, only a few hours before, if the aristocratic Morny had bestowed the slightest nod of recognition upon him!

"Sit down and take a hand in the game, or clear off!" pursued Tubby, amid encouraging chuckles from the nuts. "If you can't behave like a gentleman, get out of the study!"

"Bravo, Tubby—I mean Reginald!" said Peele.

"Right on the wicket!" said Townsend heartily.

Mornington strode fiercely towards Tubby Muffin, and grasped him, with the intention of ejecting him forcibly from the room.

The bare idea of that fat, podgy "bounder" being set up in opposition to himself exasperated the dandy of the Fourth. He intended to make it quite clear that Tubby's coming wealth did not make any difference to his estimation of the fat Classical, at all events.

"Leggo!" roared Tubby indignantly.

"Hands off, Morny!" exclaimed Townsend, jumping up.

Towny & Co. exchanged glances, and

Mornington, to his surprise and rage, was grasped on all sides and hustled to the door. He went into the passage with a rush, and Peele closed the door after him, and locked it.

"Rather a come-down for Morny!" grinned Townsend. "Let's get on with the game!"

"Your deal, Reginald!"

Reginald dealt.

Mornington bestowed several savage kicks on the door; but it was not opened, and he gave it up at last. Mornington, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

CHAPTER 5.

Tubby the Nut!

TUBBY MUFFIN was an object of great interest in the Fourth Form the next day. In fact, all the Lower School at Rookwood took a great interest in Tubby.

The news of the letter from Messrs. Hook and Crook had spread.

It was very soon clear that Tubby the greedy cadger, and Tubby the prospective possessor of six hundred thousand pounds, were two quite different personages.

Fellows who had never wasted a word of civility upon him were remarkably civil now.

Even the great Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was quite pally.

Six hundred thousand pounds really made a tremendous difference. As Adolphus confided to his chums, Howard and Tracy, he was certainly a fat little bouncer, but now he was gilt-edged, a fellow could stand him. Howard and Tracy heartily agreed, and they not only stood Tubby, but became quite pally with him.

Tubby Muffin basked in the sunshine of prosperity.

Jimmy Silver & Co. regarded him with considerable amusement and some

compassion. They did not want any of Tubby's money; but they felt a little concerned about the duffer, who was developing all the worst traits in his character at the very first opportunity.

In twenty-four hours Tubby Muffin had become a blade of the blades.

The mysteries of nap and banker were no longer mysteries to him, and the number of I O U's he had lost to Towny, Topy, Peele, Gower, and other fellows of the same kidney could hardly be computed.

But Tubby had some winnings, too, and as his winnings were in cash there was an unaccustomed jingle of money in Tubby's pockets.

Moreover, as he was so soon to be in possession of more money than he could possibly spend, his kind friends were quite willing to make him small loans, and even large ones.

Tubby had always been the best customer at the tuckshop, but the amount he spent there now made old Sergeant Kettle open his eyes.

The old sergeant had never been very pleased to see Tubby, who generally tried to obtain credit for an uncertain period. But Tubby had plenty of ready money now, and, besides, his new friends were prepared to stand treat.

He owed Townsend & Co. more than five pounds each already between loans and losses at banker, and he did not seem to mind at all—neither did the nuts mind at all. Out of his whacking allowance Tubby would be able to settle up without even missing the money.

It was a little odd that Leggett of the Modern Fourth did not join the circle of admiring friends round Tubby.

Leggett was the meanest fellow in the school, and he had any amount of "soft soap" to expend upon fellows better off than himself. He would flatter and toady to fellows he never expected to get anything from, simply because they were well off. Yet he did not trouble about flattering Tubby, and did not even seek his society at all.

Towny, Toppo & Co. were certainly better fellows than Leggett, yet what they did Leggett appeared to disdain to do. It was odd enough, and it caused some remarks among the juniors.

But while Tubby Muffin showed an unexpected predilection to vicious amusements, it could not be said that his new wealth caused him to "swank" in the least. It had to be admitted that he was not purseproud, like Mornington; which was all the more to his credit, because he had not been accustomed to wealth like Morny.

Van Ryn and Pons, after some cogitation, decided that it was their duty to make an attempt to save Tubby from the downward path as a blade and a goer; and, having come to that decision, they gave him a licking in the study, as a warning. They felt that it was the least they could do for their study-mate.

But it did not cure Tubby.

He went on his own way regardless, and the Colonial chums gave up the matter in disgust.

Jimmy Silver gave him good advice, which had just as little effect. Even Tommy Dodd of the Modern side took the trouble to "jaw" Tubby; and Tubby only sniffed with contempt, and told Tommy Dodd he was "slow."

Meanwhile, Mornington was chafing savagely.

His dear friends were delighted at the opportunity of putting him in his place, as they called it, and they ostentatiously made much of Tubby, and let Mornington like it or lump it, as he preferred.

On the next half-holiday, when Mornington proposed a little party out, his friends were otherwise engaged; they were going out with Tubby. They offered to take him along on the strict understanding that he was civil to Reginald.

Mornington sniffed and declined.

He went down to football practice instead, and undoubtedly was much the better for it.

Tubby Muffin, for the first time in

his career, had the pleasure of an afternoon out with the nuts, expenses paid, and learned the great game of billiards at the Bird-in-Hand, losing a fresh crop of I O U's in the process.

He was looking rather seedy when he came in with his pals. Jimmy Silver met him in the Fourth Form passage and gave him a grim look.

"Had a good time, Tubby?" he asked.

"Oh, rippin'!" said Tubby. Being now a wealthy person of consequence, Tubby had begun to drop his final g's in the nutty manner. "Toppin', in fact. You should come, Silver. I wouldn't mind seein' you through."

"You fat duffer!" said Jimmy. "By the way, have you answered that letter?"

"Eh? What letter?"

"The lawyer's letter. It's three days since you had it."

"I—I'm going to," said Tubby hastily. "I quite forgot. No hurry."

Jimmy gave him a very curious look.

"You shouldn't let business matters slide, Tubby," he said.

"You see, my time's full up," said Tubby loftily. "When a fellow has so many engagements—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy.

Tubby Muffin snorted and rolled away. He was not feeling very well after that rippin' and toppin' afternoon. The quantity of pastry he had consumed did not quite agree with the cigarettes. He was looking quite pasty and yellow in the study that evening, and did not join Peel & Co. in Study No. 3.

"Hallo! Staying in this evening?" grinned Van Ryn, when Tubby sat down to prep. "This is an unexpected honour."

"Grooh!" was all Tubby replied.

After prep, however, he lighted a cigarette. Van Ryn and Pons stared at him for a moment, and then they seized him and shoved the cigarette down his back. Reginald did not smoke in that study again.

CHAPTER 6.
Dark Doubts!

TOMMY DODD dropped into the end study the following evening. Tommy Dodd was rubbing his hands, and there was a curious expression on his face.

"Hallo! Been through it?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yow! Yes."

"Never mind. Keep smiling."

Tommy Dodd did not smile; he snorted.

"It's old Manders," he growled. "I shall scalp old Manders one of these days. Have any of you Classical duffers been larking on the Modern side?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Not guilty, my lord. What's happened?"

"Manders says somebody's been meddling with his typewriter," growled Tommy Dodd. "He says it's been used. He put it down to me, because he wanted to cane somebody, I suppose."

"Hard cheese!" said Lovell.

"As it happens, it wasn't me," grunted Tommy Dodd. "I have used his rotten old typer once or twice, but not this time. By the way, have you fellows heard anything more about Tubby's fortune?"

The Fistical Four chuckled.

"Only Tubby's painting the town red," said Raby. "He's no end of a nut now. Towny's introduced him to his tailor, and seems to have lent him enough to settle with him. Tubby's quite a dandy."

"And a goey blade!" grinned Newcome. "Van Ryn says he was sick in the study last night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he hasn't even got the tin yet," said Jimmy Silver. "Goodness knows what he'll be like when he does get it. He's doing it all on borrowed money at present."

"When he gets it!" said Tommy Dodd thoughtfully.

"Well, I suppose it will come along in a few weeks," said Jimmy. "There's a lot for the lawyers to go through—probate and death duties, and all that."

"He will have a bill to settle when it does come," grinned Lovell. "Half the Fourth have got his I O U's now. I hear he's lost ten pounds to Towny at banker."

"And he's put poor old Morny's nose out of joint. Morny is quite small beer these days."

"I suppose the money will come," remarked Tommy Dodd.

"Eh? Why shouldn't it?"

"There'd be a howl in the Fourth if it didn't," grinned Lovell. "But it's bound to come all right, as his uncle left it to him."

"I saw his uncle once," said Tommy. "He didn't look like a rich man."

"No; appearances are deceptive sometimes."

"Perhaps."

"Look here, Doddy, what are you getting at?" asked Jimmy Silver. "You don't think there's any doubt about Tubby's fortune, do you?"

"It's queer," said the Modern junior—"queer that his people haven't been to see him about it, or haven't sent for him to come home. An inheritance of over half a million doesn't generally pass off so quietly, does it?"

"Well, yes, it is rather queer."

"I didn't see the letter," said Tommy Dodd. "I understand that it was typewritten."

"Yes; business letters mostly are," said Jimmy, with a stare. "What about it?"

"Was it written on business paper?"

"Typing paper," said Jimmy.

"Ordinary paper."

"Without a business heading?" Jimmy thought for a moment.

"The address was on it," he said. "I remember, it was typed, like the rest."

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"Do solicitors write letters on plain

paper and type the address at the top?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know. I've never had a letter from a solicitor," said Jimmy. "I suppose they usually use business paper, with the name of the firm printed at the top, when I come to think of it."

"I fancy they do."

"But Tubby had the letter right enough," said Lovell.

"Yes, and Manders has been kicking up a row because somebody has been using his typer this week," said Tommy Dodd.

The Fistical Four jumped.

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"You—you think——"

"Well, I know what a spoofer Tubby is," said Tommy Dodd. "He was so hard up he was getting desperate. You remember how he spoofed the school once, pretending to go dumb, to get out of lessons. Somebody has been using Manders' typer, and you say that letter wasn't on business paper, and Tubby's people don't seem to be taking any interest in his terrific inheritance——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "I shouldn't wonder. What a merry surprise for Towny & Co.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Tubby isn't deep enough!" gasped Raby.

"Somebody else helped him, I should say. There's a fellow on our side deep enough and mean enough, and he could get at Manders' typer if he liked. He's the only cad at Rookwood who hasn't sucked up to Tubby for his money, too, and Tubby has paid him a debt with the money he's borrowed on the strength of that letter."

"Looks like a trick, I must say!" said Jimmy Silver. "Leggett, of course. I wondered why he wasn't buttering Tubby. He butters Smythe no end; and Smythe wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole. I—I say, if it's spoof it ought to be stopped."

"No business of ours!" said Lovell. "There's no proof, anyway, and very

likely it's genuine enough. But if it's spoof, what a surprise for Tubby's pals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four roared at the idea. When they came to think of it, there did seem to be some little irregularities in the matter, surprising enough when such a sum as six hundred thousand pounds was involved. Tommy Dodd returned to the Modern side in a thoughtful mood. He passed Tubby Muffin and Leggett in the quad, and Tubby was speaking in a loud, complaining voice.

"Look here, Leggett, you've had enough—two bob yesterday and three to-day——"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Leggett fiercely, as he caught sight of Tommy Dodd.

Tommy came up to them with a grim look.

"So you're getting money out of Tubby, Leggett?" he said.

"He owes me a trifle," said Leggett sullenly. "Tubby can afford to settle up now."

"Do you owe Leggett anything, Tubby?"

"No, I don't!" said Tubby Muffin promptly. "I—I mean, yes, I do! It's all right, Tommy Dodd. You needn't chip in!"

Tommy Dodd walked on. He was pretty certain about the matter now, and it looked as if Leggett was making a profit out of the transaction. But there was no proof, and Tommy did not see what he could do in the matter.

CHAPTER 7.

A Very Surprising Visitor!

MORNINGTON joined Townsend & Co. after dinner on Saturday. Mornington was looking very morose. His aristocratic nose had been put very much out of joint by Tubby's great popularity with the nuts.

To be cut by a fellow he despised

thoroughly was a bitter blow to the conceit of the dandy of the Fourth, and his determination to have nothing to do with Tubby divided him from his friends, and he was beginning to feel lonely.

"You fellows comin' out?" he asked. "Oh, we're goin' out!" said Townsend airily. "Takin' a little run into the country. Like to come? You can if you like."

Mornington set his teeth hard.

Hitherto he had arranged such little excursions, and the other fellows had been glad to be included in his party. Now he could "come if he liked."

"That fat rotter comin'?" he asked.

"Reginald is comin', certainly!"

"Couldn't leave Reggie out!" said Topham blandly. "Reggie's a regular sport. We get on famously with Reggie!"

Mornington sneered.

"How much does he owe you?" he asked.

"Oh, he owes us a trifle!" said Townsend, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I've lent him a quid or two, an' he owes me about twelve pounds. I've got his I O U's, too!"

"He owes me ten for banker!" said Peele. "What does it matter? He will be able to settle up without missin' it!"

"You seem to be doin' pretty well out of the fat fool!" sneered Mornington.

"Makin' hay while the sun shines!" said Topham. "Why shouldn't we?"

"No reason why you shouldn't, if you're willin' to toady to a fat bounder like that!" said Mornington scornfully.

"Well, we're not goin' to toady to you, anyway, Morny!" said Townsend tartly. "Reggie's a bit better bred than you, if you come to that. Not always sneerin' at a fellow, an' talkin' as if he's the lord of creation!"

"Well, I won't come if he does!" snapped Mornington.

"Don't, then!" said Townsend.

Mornington walked away, pale with

anger. He left the nuts grinning. It was easy to "draw" the overbearing Mornington, and his friends found an undiminished pleasure and amusement in "drawing" him.

The nuts of the Fourth were waiting for Tubby on the School House steps, when the telegraph-boy from the village came up.

"Master Muffin?" he said.

"Hallo! Telegram for Tubby!" remarked Peele. "Somethin' about the money, I expect. Where's Tubby? Seen Tubby, Jimmy Silver?"

Jimmy came out at that moment with his overcoat on over his footer rig.

"Passed him on the stairs!" said Jimmy. "Hallo, Tubby! You're wanted!"

"Comin'!" called back Tubby.

"Telegram for you, Reginald!" said Townsend, as the fat Classical came out. "Let's hear if it's good news!"

"For me!" said Tubby, looking puzzled.

"Most likely from the lawyer johnny!" remarked Peele. "Open it, an' let's see if it's good news, Tubby!"

"But it can't be—ahem!—I mean, give it to me!" said Tubby Muffin hastily.

He took the telegram, and opened it slowly.

Jimmy Silver paused on the steps, and several fellows gathered round. All the Fourth were interested in Tubby's huge inheritance.

The fat Classical looked at the telegram, and his fat jaw dropped.

The expression that came over his face was simply extraordinary.

His eyes became glued on the telegram, and his podgy face became quite pale. His fat hands shook.

The juniors exchanged significant glances. It was evidently very bad news that Tubby had received.

There was terror in his fat face. There was no mistaking his expression. The telegram, whatever it contained, had scared Tubby Muffin.

"Anything wrong, Tubby?" Jimmy asked.

"Oh, dear!"

"Mistake about the money, after all?" asked Townsend quickly and suspiciously.

"Nunno!"

"Is it about your fortune?" demanded Peele.

Tubby gasped.

"No."

"It's not from the lawyer?"

"The—the lawyer? Oh, no!"

"Oh, that's all right, then!" said Townsend, greatly relieved.

"Bad news from home, Tubby?" asked Lovell. "Cheer up, old chap! What's gone wrong? Nobody ill, I hope?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Anythin' a chap can do, Reggie?" asked Peele.

Tubby stared at him pathetically.

"Oh, dear! Nunno! Oh, dear!"

"If it's bad news, you can tell your own pals!" said Townsend. "We're awfully sorry, you know! Pater ill?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, it can't be so bad!" said Topham. "Buck up, Reggie! We're ready to start when you are!"

Tubby jumped.

"I—I—I can't go out this afternoon!" he stammered.

"Somebody coming to see you?" asked Gower.

"Ye-e-es!"

"Oh! A blessed relation?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"What rotten luck!" said Townsend. "Knocks our little run on the head. But it isn't so serious as all that, Tubby. No need to look as if a bomb was goin' to drop on your napper!"

"Let's see the telegram!" said Peele inquisitively.

Tubby Muffin hastily crumpled the telegram in his fat hand, and shoved it into his pocket.

"You—you fellows go out, all the same!" he said. "I shall have to stay in, as it happens. You—you go out!"

Townsend winked at his friends, and shook his head.

"No fear! We shouldn't enjoy ourselves without you, Reggie. We'll stay in and help you entertain your relation!"

"Certainly we will!" said Topham heartily.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Tubby Muffin.

"Is it your pater?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Tubby shook his head.

"What's the matter with you? Nothing so jolly bad in having a relation come to see you, is there?" asked the captain of the Fourth.

Tubby Muffin groaned dismally.

"Oh, dear! I—I never thought of this!" he groaned. "I—I hadn't any idea he would come down this term!"

"Who?" asked Raby.

"Oh, dear!"

"Never mind, Tubby! If it's some gargoyle of an uncle with a face like a walrus we'll help you to stand him!" said Townsend consolingly. "When is he comin'?"

Another dismal groan from Tubby.

"He says he'll be here soon after his telegram. No time to wire him not to come, or anything! Oh, dear!"

"We'll meet him at the station, if you like, and put him in a good temper," said Townsend encouragingly. "What train is he comin' by?"

"He—he—he says the two o'clock."

"Why, that's in long ago! That telegram's taken some time getting here from the village. Might be here any minute."

"Hallo! Here's somebody!" murmured Lovell, glancing towards the gates.

An old gentleman in rusty black was coming very sedately across the quadrangle. The juniors looked at him fixedly. Some of them had seen him before. He came up to the School House steps, and gave the juniors a nod and a smile, and held out his hand to the dismayed Tubby, who took it mechanically.

"Got my telegram, Reggie? I found

I could run down, and I wired so that you would not be going out. How are you, my boy? Glad to see your old uncle—what?"

And Tubby mumbled, in an expiring voice:

"Ye-e-e-es, Uncle Joshua!"

CHAPTER 8.

The Fall of Tubby Muffin!

UNCLE JOSHUA!

The name was repeated in a buzz by the astounded juniors. Townsend's face was a study. Uncle Joshua.

Mr. Muffin, quite unaware of the terrific sensation his arrival caused, smiled to Tubby, and passed on into the House.

"I will see you again after I have called upon the Head, Reggie," he said benignly.

And he disappeared into the House.

Tubby Muffin stood rooted to the steps.

The moment Mr. Muffin had disappeared there was a roar. Townsend grasped the fat Classical by the arm.

"What does this mean?" he hissed. "That's your Uncle Joshua!"

"Oh dear!"

"Then he's not dead?" said Topham dazedly.

"Don't look like it, does he?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

After his talk with Tommy Dodd, Jimmy was not so surprised as the other fellows to see Tubby's Uncle Joshua still in the flesh.

"Quite lively for a dear departed!" chortled Lovell. "Where's that six hundred thousand pounds, Tubby?"

"Oh, where, and oh, where can it be?" chanted Raby.

"You spoofin' villain!" yelled Peele.

"I—I say—"

"What does it mean?" shrieked Townsend. "If he ain't dead, he can't have left you a fortune in his will."

"Looks as if he could leave a fortune, doesn't he?" sneered Gower. "I

should think he'd buy a new hat out of it first!"

"Have you been spoofing us?" roared Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lovell. "Fancy Uncle Joshua walking in only a week after he's died and left Tubby his fortune! You should have made it some other uncle who doesn't come down to Rookwood, Tubby!"

"You! Ow, ow! Leggo!" howled Tubby, as Townsend shook him fiercely. "It—it was only a j-j-joke, you know!"

"You wrote that letter yourself?" shrieked Townsend.

"Nunno! I—I didn't!"

"Who did, then?"

"It was only a j-joke! I—I read about a chap in the paper who had a fortune left him," groaned Tubby. "He had a letter from a solicitor about it, and—and thought how ripping it would be—"

"You swindlin' rascal!"

"And—and I asked Leggett about it, and he offered to write the letter on old Manders' typewriter!" groaned Tubby. "It was only a j-j-joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fistical Four.

"Spoofed!" ejaculated Flynn. "Well, of all the thaves of the worruld!"

"You owe me two quids!" panted Townsend. "You thievin' young scoundrel, give me my quids back!"

"I—I can't! I've spent them—you know I have!"

"And your dashed IOU's!" howled Topham. "What are they worth?"

"Waste paper fetches something!" remarked Lovell. "You can sell 'em by weight, Topy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Scrag him!" yelled Townsend, almost beside himself with rage as he realised how he had been taken in—taken in as much by his own greedy rascality as by Tubby Muffin's extraordinary scheme for raising the wind.

"Pulverise him! Jump on him!"

"Yow! Ow! Help!"

"Hands off!" Jimmy Silver chipped

in at once. "Let Tubby alone—while his uncle's here, at any rate!"

"Stand back, hang you! He's swindled us!" choked Townsend.

Jimmy shoved the exasperated Townsend back, and his chums closed round the unfortunate Tubby.

"Serves you right!" said Jimmy. "You wanted to swindle him, and you've got what you deserved! If you hadn't been swindling rascals Tubby couldn't have had a red cent out of you!"

"Why, you—you—you——"

"And it was Leggett more than Tubby. You can go for Leggett, if you like!"

"Go for him, and welcome!" chimed in Tommy Dodd. "He's been squeezing some of your money out of Tubby! Go and scalp him!"

"I—I say it was only a j-j-joke!" wailed Tubby Muffin. "I—I thought the fellows would lend me a few bob, that was all! I—I didn't know Towny would become pally and insist on lending me quids——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Townsend & Co. simply raged; but the Fistical Four stood by Tubby, and they had to leave the fat Classical alone. They rushed off to the Modern side to interview Leggett. They simply had to wreak their vengeance upon somebody, and Leggett, after all, was the more culpable of the two young rascals.

They found Leggett in his study, and for a quarter of an hour pandemonium reigned in Leggett's study, and when Townsend & Co. departed they felt that they had had their money's worth. Leggett, as he groaned over his injuries, felt that they had had a good deal more than their money's worth.

The Rookwood Fourth howled with laughter over the outcome of Tubby Muffin's great inheritance. It had been "spoo!" from beginning to end, and Uncle Joshua's unexpected visit to the school had given it away; and Tubby, who had lived for a week like a pig in

clover was in clover no longer, though in other respects he had not changed. The fellows who had lent Tubby money in anticipation of future benefits did not join in the merriment, but everybody else agreed that Townsend & Co. had received what they deserved.

Tubby was no longer a member of the noble society of the blades. His career as a nutty nut had come to a sudden end. He was the impecunious Tubby once more—the borrower of six-pences—and his limited means did not run to cigarettes and banker. Which was all the better for Tubby, though for some time he looked quite dismal about it, while the rest of the Fourth chortled without limit over the idea of Tubby being immensely rich!

CHAPTER 9.

Looking for Leggett!

"HALT!"

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood rapped out the command.

Jimmy Silver & Co. halted.

Not that the Classical Co.—the Fistical Four of the Fourth—cared twopence, or any other sum, larger or smaller, for Tommy Dodd. But the Fistical Four were just entering Mr. Manders' House on the Modern Side at Rookwood, and a scrap in the doorway would have brought Mr. Manders on the scene, with unpleasant results for all concerned.

So Tommy Dodd's command was obeyed, though Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome indulged in quite a chorus of sniffs and snorts, expressive of the utmost contempt for Tommy Dodd and the whole Modern side of Rookwood.

Dodd and Cook and Doyle lined up in the doorway. They were masters of the situation.

"Good!" said Tommy Dodd approvingly. "Little boys should always obey orders!"

"Fathead!"

"What do you spalpeens want on the respectable side of Rookwood!" demanded Tommy Doyle. "Is it ather thick ears ye are?"

"No larks!" growled Jimmy Silver. "We're after Leggett."

"And we're going to scalp him!" said Lovell. "And if you silly asses chip in we'll scalp you, too."

"Go ahead!" said Tommy Dodd cheerily.

"Oh, rush them, and chance Manders!" said Raby.

But Jimmy Silver shook his head. He had chanced Manders before, and the result had been disagreeable.

"Don't play the giddy ox now, Doddy," he said. "We want to see Leggett. He's been up to his tricks again, and we want to talk to him."

"Leggett's rather a worm," agreed Tommy Dodd. "More suitable to the Classical side, really——"

"Why, you cheeky ass——" began Newcome.

"Shush! Tell us what the trouble is," suggested Tommy Dodd. "Classical fatheads ain't allowed here on the war-path. What's Leggett been doing?"

"Same old game!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Sneaking! He told Carthew who put the gum in his slippers."

"Naughty to play tricks on a prefect!" said Tommy Dodd, with a shake of the head. "You Classical kids haven't any manners! But we'll talk to Leggett about it. Know where he is?"

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Lovell. "Isn't he here?"

"No, fathead!"

"Somewhere out of doors," grinned Tommy Cook.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the Fistical Four turned away in disgust, to pursue the search for Leggett of the Modern Fourth.

Leggett was a most unpopular youth, as much upon his own side as upon the Classical side. One of his agreeable customs was to lend money among the juniors at interest. Another was

to tell tales to prefects who were mean enough to listen to them.

At this very moment Oswald of the Classical Fourth was rubbing his hands dolorously in his study, the painful result of Leggett's having informed Carthew of the Sixth who had put the gum in his slippers. And the Fistical Four put off footer practice for a time while they looked for Leggett, to impress upon him that sneaking was barred in the Fourth.

"There he is!" exclaimed Newcome suddenly.

He caught sight of Leggett's weedy form under the beeches in the quadrangle.

"Collar the cad!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. made a rush. Leggett made a rush, too, in the opposite direction, streaking for the gates. He could guess what he had to expect, and he was anxious to avoid a meeting.

"Stop, you rotter!" roared Jimmy Silver.

But Leggett did not stop. He was running for his life, and he put up a speed that would have done him credit on the footer-field—a place Leggett never visited if he could help it.

The Fistical Four dashed in pursuit. "Stop him!" yelled Jimmy Silver, as he sighted Tubby Muffin near the gates.

Tubby Muffin blinked round, and went spinning as Leggett crashed into him. Leggett gave a howl, and staggered, but he ran on. The next moment the Fistical Four were tumbling over Tubby.

"Yow-ow-wooop!" came from Tubby Muffin. "Gerroff! Yow-ow-ow!"

"You fat duffer!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Keep your silly elbow out of my eye, Lovell, you chump!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The Classical juniors scrambled up, and rushed out of the gates, leaving Tubby Muffin roaring. They had no time to waste on the fat Classical.

"Where is he?" gasped Lovell, as they rushed out.

"The rotter—there he is!"

Leggett was streaking across a field.

"After him!" said Jimmy.

"What about footer?"

"Oh, let it wait! We told Oswald we'd bump the cad for sneaking about him. Come on!"

"But——"

"Bow-wow! Come on!"

Jimmy Silver led the way, and the Co. followed. Leggett had a good start, and he was going like the wind; but he had not the staying-power of the Fistical Four. Smoking in the study and sticking about the quad did not produce stamina. Leggett began to slacken, and the four Classics gained on him at every stride.

The Modern junior looked back over his shoulder savagely.

"Stop, you cad!" shouted Lovell. "You're wasting our time!"

Leggett darted on, with a heartless indifference to the fact that he was wasting Lovell's time. He dashed into the footpath through Coombe Wood, in the hope of giving the pursuers the slip among the trees.

But as he rushed under the trees, half a dozen juniors in Bagshot caps suddenly closed round him and held him.

"Halt!"

"Lemme go!" yelled Leggett, struggling frantically. "Pankley, old chap, let go!"

"Rats!" said Pankley.

"They're after me!"

"Eh? Who are?"

"Jimmy Silver—and——"

"Good egg!" said Cecil Pankley, the great leader of the Fourth Form of Bagshot School. "Let 'em all come! All hands stand ready to repel boarders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Bagshot Bounders lined up on the footpath to receive Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Rookwood's Rivals!

CECIL PANKLEY was grinning.

The heroes of Bagshot were on the war-path that afternoon, looking for any stray members of the rival school who might come their way. There were six of them, and they were glad to see Jimmy Silver & Co. The last encounter between the rival juniors had been a Rookwood victory, and Pankley & Co. were anxious to wipe out their defeat.

Leggett reeled against a tree, quite out of breath. He had no intention of taking part in the coming tussle. Any other Modern at Rookwood would have backed up the Classics against the outside enemy; but Leggett was not patriotic, and he was never a fighting-man if he could help it. In his mean nature there was as much dislike for Tommy Dodd & Co. as for the Fistical Four, and he would have been glad to see either party, or both, soundly licked by the Bagshot fellows.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came on at a run. But they stopped at the sight of six Bagshot juniors in battle array.

"Bagshot rotters!" growled Lovell.

"Come on!" said Pankley invitingly. "What a happy meeting!"

"So glad to see you!" chortled Poole.

"So charmed!" grinned Putter.

Jimmy Silver held up his hand.

"Pax!" he said. "We're looking for that sneak. We're going to bump him. Don't you chip in."

"Sneak, is he?" said Pankley, with a disparaging look at Leggett. He had seen something of that agreeable youth before. "All serene! You can bump him and then we'll bump you!"

"I—I say," panted Leggett. "Keep them off, Pankley. You're six to four; you can lick them——"

"Get out of the way, you Bagshot asses!"

"Halt!"

"Rats!"

The Fistical Four came on with a rush. They had no time to waste arguing with Pankley & Co., with the football waiting for them at Rookwood. In a moment more there was a terrific scrap raging under the trees.

Leggett looked on with a grin.

The odds were on the Bagshot side. The Fistical Four never counted odds; but odds told, all the same.

Jimmy Silver went down into the grass with two foes sprawling over him. Lovell and Pankley rolled on the ground in a loving embrace. Raby and Poole were at close quarters, and slogging terrifically. And Newcome was struggling in the grasp of two pairs of hands. And Leggett, feeling that his time had come, chipped in—not on the Rookwood side. He grasped Raby by the back of the collar, and dragged him down, and Poole fell on him, and remained sitting on him.

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Raby.

"Sit on 'em!" yelled Pankley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four were still resisting manfully, but the odds were too heavy, especially with Leggett's help on the enemy's side. They were pinned down, and sat upon emphatically.

Leggett grinned down at them.

"You rotter!" panted Jimmy Silver. "You'll get something for this!"

"Then I may as well take it out in advance," grinned Leggett, and he stooped and took hold of Jimmy's nose.

"Tweak!"

"Gurr!"

"Here, chuck that!" growled Pankley. "Knock that cad over, somebody!"

"I'm backing you up!" howled Leggett indignantly.

"Well, don't."

"The fellow's a rotter!" growled Poole.

Jimmy Silver & Co. struggled furiously to free themselves.

"Rescue, Rookwood!" bawled Jimmy, in the hope that other Rookwooders might be in the wood.

There was an answering shout, and

a crash in the bushes, and Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn of the Fourth came dashing up.

"Rescue!" yelled Lovell.

"Pile in!" yelled Conroy.

Leggett took to his heels at once. Pankley & Co. jumped up in hot haste. Instead of being the raggers, they were in danger now of being the ragged. Flynn and Rawson came in sight from the fields, and Pankley wisely decided to beat a strategic retreat.

"Hook it!" said Pankley tersely.

And the Bagshot party dashed away down the footpath, in the direction taken by Leggett.

Jimmy Silver sat up and gasped.

"Collar the rotters!"

"They're gone," grinned Conroy.

"Let's get after them!" said Newcome.

"Oh, blow 'em!" said Jimmy Silver.

"There's the footer waiting. We shall have to let Leggett keep."

The Rookwooders returned towards the school. Pankley & Co. were already at a distance. But the Bagshot Bounders slacked down when they found they were not pursued.

"There's that Rookwood worm!" said Poole, pointing to Leggett, who was panting on ahead. "Let's give him what we didn't give Silver."

"Good idea!" said Putter.

But Pankley shook his head. There was a gleam in Pankley's eyes, which told that some great thought was working in Pankley's brain.

"No rags!" he said. "I've got an idea. That funny merchant is going to be made useful. Here, you Leggett!"

Leggett was quickly overtaken. He eyed the Bagshot Bounders very uneasily. But Cecil Pankley's manner was quite reassuring.

"I helped you, you know," stammered Leggett.

"We know you did, you worm!" growled Poole. "Precious rotter, too, to do it!"

"Shurrup!" said Pankley. "Don't

I keep on telling you I've got a scheme, and Leggett's going to help?"

"I'll do anything you like," said Leggett eagerly. "I'd jolly well like to see you down those rotters!"

"I thought as much," said Pankley, with a curl of the lip. "I've heard about you, Leggett. You're a sneak —"

"Look here——"

"And a money-grubbing rotter——"

"I——"

"You'd do anything for money," said Pankley. "You lend chaps bobs at a penny a week interest, and so on."

"Why shouldn't I?" said Leggett sullenly.

"Why shouldn't you, if you're that kind of worm?" agreed Pankley. "Well, I've got some bobs in my pocket, and if you do exactly as I tell you, those bobs are yours! Savvy?"

Leggett's eyes glistened.

"I'm your man!" he said.

"Then lend me your ears."

And Pankley proceeded to unfold the wonderful scheme that had come into his fertile brain; and as he proceeded, there were loud chuckles from the Bagshot Bounders, and a grin dawned on Leggett's sallow face.

CHAPTER 11.

A Message from Bagshot!

B UZZZZ!

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles.

The master of the Fourth put down his book, and rose as the telephone bell buzzed. He took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Yes?"

"Is that Rookwood School?"

"Yes."

"Please excuse me for troubling you, sir. I should take it as a great favour if I could be allowed to speak to Silver of the Fourth Form."

"What—what?"

"Silver of the Fourth, sir. It's very important."

"Really, juniors do not use the telephone," said Mr. Bootles crossly. "Kindly tell me who you are."

"My name's Pankley, sir; old friend of Jimmy Silver's. I've got an important message for him."

Mr. Bootles grunted.

"In that case, I will call in Silver," he said.

"Thank you very much, sir!"

Mr. Bootles was a good-natured gentleman. Cecil Pankley was well aware of that, or he would hardly have ventured to ring him up on the telephone to speak to Jimmy Silver.

The Form-master crossed to the door, opened it, and called to a junior in the passage.

"Oswald, kindly request Silver to come here at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

Oswald ran off. Jimmy Silver was fortunately near at hand, and he presented himself in Mr. Bootles' study in less than two minutes.

"Some friend of yours asks to speak to you on the telephone, Silver," said Mr. Bootles majestically. "You may speak to him; but kindly understand that this incident must not be taken as a precedent."

"Certainly, sir," said Jimmy.

He took up the receiver.

"Hallo! What's wanted?"

"Is that Silver?"

"Yes, I'm Jimmy Silver. Who's speaking?"

"Pankley."

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"I'm speaking from Tupper's study," went on Pankley. "Tupper's out. Is your merry Form-master present?"

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"Then he can hear all you say?"

"Yes."

There was a chuckle on the wires.

"Then you'd better be careful what you say, fathead! I've rung you up to give you a message. You Rookwood duffers have a fatheaded idea that you can go one better than Bagshot—what?"

"Br-r-r!" said Jimmy.

In Mr. Bootles' presence, Jimmy could not venture to tell Pankley what he thought of him. Pankley could say what he liked; but Jimmy couldn't—by a long way.

"Well, we're going to give you the kybosh this time," went on Pankley. "I'm telling you about it, so that you'll know exactly what to expect."

"Thanks!" said Jimmy sarcastically.

"Not at all. We're going to make you sit up, in your own quarters."

Jimmy opened his lips to reply, and closed them again. He remembered that Mr. Bootles was present.

"We're going to rag you bald-headed in your own show," went on Pankley. "You'll find my name written up in your study soon."

"Rats!"

"We're going to rag your study; and the same to Tommy Dodd. We're going to give you a high old time; and if you catch us in the act, we'll own up that you're top school."

"You're welcome to try," said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Oh, you're all asleep at Rookwood. You know; you won't catch us!" said Pankley, with a chuckle.

"You silly, cheeky ass——"

"Silver!"

"Ahem! Yes, sir!"

"You appear to be holding a very curious conversation on the telephone," said Mr. Bootles severely.

"Ahem!"

"I hardly think, Silver, that it is a matter of sufficient importance for you to continue."

"Very well, sir."

"Still there, fathead?" went on Pankley's cheerful voice. "Look out for us; not that it's much good you sleepy Rookwood fatheads looking out. You're going to get it in the neck this time. You——"

Jimmy Silver replaced the receiver on the hooks, and Pankley's voice became suddenly inaudible.

Mr. Bootles gave him a somewhat

severe glance, and the captain of the Fourth left the study rather hurriedly.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome met him as he came away.

"Anything up?" asked Lovell.

"That cheeky rotter Pankley," said Jimmy Silver, breathing hard.

"My hat! He had the nerve to ring you up on Bootles' phone!" exclaimed Raby.

"Yes, the cheeky worm!"

"What did he have to say?"

Jimmy repeated Pankley's message.

"Swank!" said Lovell. "He won't dare to come here. My hat! If he does, we'll give him a coat of treacle and soot!"

"I suppose it's swank," agreed Jimmy. "But we'll keep an eye open for him, all the same."

"Oh, it's all rot!" said Newcome confidently. "How could they get in here without being spotted? If we ever find Pankley's name written up in our study, you can use my head for a footer."

The Fistical Four discussed Pankley's defiant message, and they all came to the same conclusion—that it was Bagshot "swank." But Jimmy knew Pankley of old, and he wondered whether that enterprising youth had some remarkable "wheeze" in his mind. He determined, at all events, to keep one eye very carefully open for Cecil Pankley.

There were many derisive chuckles among the Rookwood Fourth when Pankley's message became known. Nobody had the least expectation of seeing any of the Bagshot Bounders within the walls of Rookwood. It would be easy enough, perhaps, for Pankley & Co. to come; but it would not be so easy for them to get away again. As for the end study being ragged by the enemy, that was simply impossible.

Jimmy Silver & Co. dismissed the matter from their minds, and went up to the end study to tea. After tea they paid a visit to the Modern side. Leggett of the Fourth still remained

to be dealt with; and as it was now past locking-up, it was certain that Leggett could be found.

"Looking for Leggett?" grinned Tommy Dodd, as they came into Mr. Manders' House.

"Yes. Where is the rotter?"

"In his study. He had an awful time with the Bagshot Bounders, according to his own account," said Tommy Dodd. "You can see him if you like. I'll come up with you."

Tommy Dodd led the way. Leggett was found in his study. He gave a deep groan as the juniors entered.

"Well, what's that thumping row about?" asked Lovell.

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Leggett dismally. "I—I'm aching all over. I've been ragged. The rotters bumped me, and made me run the gauntlet—yow-ow-ow!—and chased me across the field. Oh, dear!"

"Serve you jolly well right," said Jimmy Silver unsympathetically. "You backed them up, you rotter!"

"They don't seem to have been grateful for Leggett's backing," grinned Tommy Dodd.

"The rotters!" groaned Leggett. "Oh! I'm hurt! Oh, dear! I've a jolly good mind to complain to the Head! Ow!"

"Oh, don't be a rotten sneak, if you can help it!" said Jimmy contemptuously. "You were going to get a ragging, anyway; we were going to slaughter you for sneaking about Oswald. They've only saved us the trouble."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"The miserable beast looks as if he's had enough," growled Lovell.

"Oh, dear! My ribs!" groaned Leggett. "I—I believe I've got a bone fractured!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "I don't suppose they hurt you much; but you're as soft as putty. Anyway, what you got serves you jolly well right."

And the Fistical Four stalked out of the study. They did not feel justified in bestowing the intended ragging upon Leggett, after he had been so severely handled by the Bagshot Bounders.

They would have changed their minds if they could have seen Leggett of the Fourth when he was left alone.

As soon as the door had closed on the Fistical Four and Tommy Dodd, all signs of suffering vanished from Leggett's face.

He grinned.

"Silly chumps!" he murmured.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not see Leggett's derisive grin, and did not hear his complimentary remark; and so naturally they did not guess that Leggett's sufferings at the hands of the Bagshot Bounders existed only in his own fertile imagination; and that his tale of woe was, in fact, "spooof," only designed to save him from his just punishment.

CHAPTER 12.

The Unseen Hand!

"GREAT pip!"

Jimmy Silver jumped almost clear of the floor, in his astonishment.

He was the first to come up to the study to start prep that evening. There had been a rehearsal of the Rookwood Players, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had been very busy for some time.

Jimmy entered the study, and stumbled over a chair, and then lighted the gas. And as the light showed up the study to his eyes, he fairly jumped.

The end study presented a truly remarkable appearance.

The table was upside down, and the chairs were overturned. The bookcase was wide open, and the books and papers scattered about the room. The fender had been piled on the table, the hearthrug on the fender, and the clock

and fireirons on the hearthrug. Cinders and ashes covered the carpet.

And on the looking-glass, daubed in ink, was an inscription in big capitals:

"WITH KIND REGARDS!
"CECIL PANKLEY."

Jimmy Silver stared at that inscription as if mesmerised.

Cecil Pankley!

Jimmy could scarcely believe his eyes. Pankley had evidently kept his word; in spite of Jimmy's resolution to keep one eye carefully open.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Jimmy.

Then Lovell and Raby and Newcome arrived. They stared at the disordered study, and stared at Jimmy Silver.

"What on earth have you been up to, Jimmy?" demanded Lovell.

"I?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, fathead! What have you done this for?"

"You silly ass!" roared Jimmy, exasperated. "Do you think I've done it, you burbling jabberwock? Look at the glass, dummy!"

"My hat! Pankley!" yelled Lovell.

"Pankley!" echoed Raby and Newcome.

"The Bagshot Bounders!" said Lovell dazedly. "They've been here—just as Jimmy said they would! Oh, crumbs!"

The Fistical Four were simply dumb-founded.

They could only blink at the wreckage, and at the mocking inscription on the looking-glass. Jimmy Silver was the first to recover himself.

"They've been here!" he exclaimed. "I suppose they sneaked in somehow while we were rehearsing downstairs. They mayn't be gone yet."

"Can't see 'em here," said Lovell.

"Fathead, I know they're not here! But they mayn't have got out of the school yet. Look at that ink; it's hardy dry!"

The thought that the invaders might be still within the reach of vengeance

awoke the Classical chums to action at once. They rushed out of the end study to give the alarm.

"Bagshot Bounders!" roared Lovell.

"Back up, Rookwood!"

That yell in the Fourth Form passage was enough to make all the Classical Fourth turn out in hot haste. Fellows came tearing from their studies. Even Mornington came dashing out—even Tubby Muffin.

"Bagshot Bounders here!" exclaimed Conroy.

"They've been in our study!" panted Jimmy Silver. "They've wrecked it!"

"Great Scott!"

There was a rush to look into the end study.

"Kind regards from Pankley!" chuckled Conroy. "My hat! You've been fairly done in the eye this time, Jimmy!"

"Oh, don't jaw! Help us to look for the rotters!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"They can't be outside yet!" exclaimed Oswald. "They didn't come downstairs—I know that. I've been in the hall!"

"Back window, most likely," said Van Ryn.

"How could they get into a back window?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Look for tracks!" grinned Higgs.

"Here's a chance for you merry scouts!"

"Silly ass! How can we pick up tracks on linoleum?" snorted Lovell.

"I don't know," said Pons quickly. "I should say they must have tramped out some of those ashes with them. The floor's smothered."

"Good egg! Have a look round, anyway," said Jimmy Silver.

The Canadian junior's suggestion was a good one. Jimmy Silver had trodden in the ashes, but there were other marks of boots, though not clear footprints. It was more than possible that the intruder—or intruders—had taken away ashes on their boots, and left traces of their flight. The Classical

juniors scattered up and down the passage to look for "signs."

There was a shout from Pons in a few minutes.

"This way!"

The juniors rushed to join the Canadian.

Pons was kneeling on the floor, with a lighted match in his hand, in the passage that led to the Modern quarters.

On the floor could be seen quite clearly several patches of ash, evidently left there by a boot.

"Pons's found it!" exclaimed Van Ryn. "How many of them, Pons?"

The Canadian junior looked up.

"Only one," he said. "Pankley himself, of course. He's got away by this passage, through the Modern side!"

"But—but he couldn't!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The door's kept locked!"

"Let's see, anyway!"

The juniors rushed along the passage, which was unlighted. It was a long and irregular passage which led into Mr. Manders' House, but, owing to the fact that it had been used for "raids" by the rivals of Rookwood, the door giving admission to the Modern side was now always kept closed and locked. The passage at that point was entirely closed by the big, heavy door, the key of which was in the possession of Mr. Manders.

True, Tommy Dodd had once found a key to that door, and opened it to carry out a raid on the Classical Fourth dormitory. The lock was a big, strong one, but of a common design, and any Rookwood fellow might have opened it by getting a big bunch of keys, and trying them on the lock in turn.

But that Pankley could have done so was almost incredible. How could the Bagshot fellow know anything about that door at all?

Lovell struck matches, and Jimmy Silver tried the door. It was locked and fast.

"Can't have passed this way," said Jimmy.

"More likely dodged into the side passage because somebody was coming," said Rawson. "He couldn't get out this way!"

"Well, that's very likely, of course," admitted Pons.

"Come on!"

The Classics rushed back to the Fourth-Form passage. That passage, and all the studies and the box-room and the upper staircase, were searched by excited juniors.

But there was no trace of the Bagshot Bounders to be discovered.

Even the Canadian's keen eyes failed to discover any further "sign."

The enemy had vanished.

"The rotter's got away!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "Dropped out of the window, perhaps, though it's a jolly good drop!"

"Anyway, he's gone, and we've got our prep to do," said Oswald.

And the disappointed Classics dispersed to their studies.

"Rather a come-down for the mighty Uncle James!" chortled Mornington. "Time you retired from business, Jimmy Silver!"

"High time!" chuckled Townsend. "Fancy lettin' the Bagshot Bounders come and rag your study! I'm surprised at you, Jimmy Silver!"

"The Fourth want a new captain, in my opinion!" grinned Topham.

Jimmy Silver went into his study, and slammed the door. He did not want any more opinions from the nuts of the Fourth.

It was indeed a "come-down" for the Fistical Four, accustomed to being monarchs of all they surveyed—on the Classical side, at least. The enemy had invaded their own sacred quarters. He had ragged their study, and left his sign-manual for them to stare at.

And though all the Fourth were exasperated, they were all inclined to

join Mornington & Co. in "chipping" the Fistical Four on the subject. For the present, at least, that famous Co. had to hide their diminished heads.

CHAPTER 13.

The Moderns' Turn!

"H A, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. seemed to be enjoying themselves.

They roared, and they yelled.

It was after morning lessons on the following day, and the three Tommies lingered in the quadrangle to see Jimmy Silver & Co. when they came out.

And the three Tommies appeared to fall into hysterics at the sight of the Classical chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tommy Doyle. "Here they are intirely! Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at their Modern rivals grimly. They knew the cause of the merriment. All the Lower School of Rookwood was chortling by this time about the way the end study had been invaded and ragged.

"Had any more visitors?" gasped Tommy Dodd, wiping his eyes. "Any more kind regards from your old pal Panky?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Lovell.

"Well, it isn't fair to cackle at them," said Tommy Cook considerably. "They can't help being howling duffers. The Classicals are all howling duffers. You'd better leave Bagshot to the Moderns after this, Silver!"

"Leave 'em to us!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "I've told you lots of times that you're not up to their weight!"

"We couldn't help Pankley sneaking into our study, could we?" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Of course you couldn't!" agreed Tommy Dodd. "We could, but you

couldn't! The Classical side in this school is played out!"

"Why didn't you stop him?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"How could we stop him when we never saw him, you Modern ass?" roared Raby.

"How could you?" grinned Tommy Dodd. "We should have seen him if he'd come to our side; but you couldn't! The Classical side knew better than come to the Modern side, though!"

"Poor Uncle James! It's time for Uncle James to sing small!" chuckled Cook. "Unfortunate old Uncle James! I advise Uncle James to chuck up being captain of the Fourth!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stalked away in great wrath. The laugh was against them now, and they quite expected the Moderns to make the most of it. There was not a Modern junior at Rookwood who wasn't quite sure that if the intrusive Pankley had invaded the Modern side, he would have been caught red-handed and punished severely for his sins.

The Moderns chuckled over it without limit. They had always maintained that the Classical side was played out, and here was proof of their oft-repeated assertion. And they did not mean to let it rest.

And Jimmy Silver really had nothing to say. He could not deny that Pankley had coolly told him he was coming, and that he had come. After that decidedly cheeky warning on the telephone, Pankley had fulfilled his boast. It was not "Bagshot swank," after all!

How Pankley had got in and out of Rookwood without being spotted was a mystery—a mystery that Jimmy Silver strove in vain to decide. But evidently he had done it, and the Fistical Four had had their colours lowered in their own stronghold.

"Poor old Jimmy Silver!" said Tommy Dodd, as the three Moderns sauntered away to their own House. "Fancy being done in the eye like that:

Even the Classics are chortling at him!"

"I wish Panky had tackled us!" grinned Doyle. "Faith, we'd have made an example of the bastel!"

"He's got too much sense," said Tommy Dodd serenely. "He knows he wouldn't have any chance on our side!" Tommy opened his study door. "I'd just like to catch him ragging our quarters, that's all! Oh, my only summer hat!"

Tommy Dodd stood transfixed on the threshold of his study. His eyes almost started from his head.

Cook and Doyle stood rooted to the floor.

They stared dazedly into the study.

The study table was standing on end, and the fender was leaning against it. The chairs were piled on it. The cupboard door was open, and the contents of the cupboard had been dragged out and scattered over the floor. Upset ink and treacle formed a pool on the carpet.

And on the leg of an upturned chair was stuck a card, and on the card, in huge capitals, staring the amazed Moderns in the face, was the message:

"GO AND EAT COKE!

"C. PANKLEY."

Tommy Dodd felt as if his head were turning round.

The enemy had been there.

In broad daylight—with the quadrangle swarming with Rookwood fellows—the Bagshot Bounder had come, and Tommy Dodd's own study was ragged, and Pankley's mocking message stared him in the face.

"G-g-g-great pip!" stuttered Tommy.

"Pip-pip-Pankley!" mumbled Cook.

"The thafe of the worru'd—he's been here in our study!" gasped Doyle.

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed. He rushed across the study and opened the window and glared out into the quadrangle.

"Towle!" he yelled.

Towle of the Fourth looked up.

"Hallo!"

"Pankley's been here! Tell all the fellows, and get to the gates and stop him!"

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Towle.

"Buck up, you ass!"

Towle rushed off. The news spread like wildfire among the juniors. Classics as well as Moderns were wildly excited. Jimmy Silver & Co. had gone down to Little Side to punt a ball about before dinner; but they left the football ground at once.

Some of the juniors posted themselves at the gates to cut off Pankley's escape if he was not yet gone. Others searched the quad and Little Quad for him, and the abbey ruins. Meanwhile, the three Tommies sought him up and down the House. But they found him not.

The juniors had been nearly all downstairs, or out-of-doors. Pankley apparently had come and gone unseen. The Tommies had found only one Modern junior in his study. It was Leggett. Leggett had come in immediately after morning lessons, and he was found in his study wrinkling his brows over an account-book—doubtless calculating the losses and gains on some of his financial transactions. He looked up irritably as the three Tommies burst into his study.

"Have you seen him?" panted Tommy Dodd.

"Eh? Seen whom?"

"Pankley!"

"Of course I haven't," said Leggett peevishly. "How the thunder could I see Pankley? I can't see a mile and a half."

"He's been here, fathead!" howled Tommy Cook.

Leggett grinned.

"He's paid Jimmy Silver another visit, has he? He, he, he!"

"Stop your silly he-he-heing, you ass!

He's paid us a visit!" growled Tommy Dodd. "He's mucked up my study!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Leggett.

"You seem to be the only chap indoors at the time; didn't you see anything of him?"

"Not a sign! Never thought of anything of the kind, of course!"

"Didn't you hear him, you ass?"

"I heard somebody pass my door," said Leggett, "about a quarter of an hour ago. I never thought anything about it. Supposed it was one of the fellows, of course!"

"Oh, you're a silly chump!" said Tommy Dodd, somewhat unreasonably. And the Modern chums hurried out of the study to seek further.

But search was in vain. Pankley was not to be discovered. He seemed to have vanished into thin air. Tommy Dodd & Co. came out into the quadrangle, looking decidedly savage, and they were greeted with smiles by the Fistical Four. It was Jimmy Silver & Co's turn to smile now.

"Caught him?" chuckled Jimmy.

"No, ass!"

"He seems to have visited the Modern side, after all!" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Tommy Dodd crossly. "I'm going after him! He must have come on a bike to get here after lessons, unless he missed morning lessons. We might run him down on the road."

"Safe in by this time, I should say," said Lovell.

"Oh, rats!"

The three Tommies rushed for their bicycles. Jimmy Silver & Co. followed them. There was a bare chance of catching Pankley on the road, and making him suffer for his sins. It was worth trying. Seven bicycles were rushed out at the gates of Rookwood, and seven juniors pedalled away in the direction of Bagshot School as if their lives depended on it.

CHAPTER 14.

Too Thick!

"THERE'S Bagshot!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwooders had ridden hard; the ground fairly flew under their wheels. They arrived in sight of the gates of Bagshot; but there was no sign of the elusive Pankley on the road.

They slackened down outside the gates. There was a yell from the high brick wall by the road. Pankley, Putter and Poole were seated in a row there, watching the Rookwood cyclists with wide grins.

"Hallo!" shouted Pankley. "Looking for trouble? Come in!"

The Rookwooders jumped off their machines. They glared at up Pankley & Co. The three Bagshot fellows were high out of reach, and they smiled down on their exasperated foes in the most irritating way.

"So you've got back, you rotter!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Got back!" repeated Pankley.

"I wish I'd caught you in my study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bagshot trio yelled.

"I wish I'd caught you in mine!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Jump down here and I'll mop up the road with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankley. "Did you find your study a little bit disturbed?"

"You cheeky rotter!"

"Did you find a message from Bagshot?"

"Come down and be mopped up!" roared Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co. did not come down. But Pankley extracted an apple from his pocket, and, with accurate aim, knocked Tommy Dodd's cap off. Tommy Dodd gave a roar of wrath.

"Good-bye, dear boys!" smiled Pankley. "You can expect another visit soon. And, if you catch me, I'll let you eat me!"

And the Bagshot Bounders dropped

down inside the school wall and vanished.

"Let's go in after them?" suggested Lovell recklessly. "The gates are open."

"Fathead!" growled Jimmy Silver. "If you want a scrap with fifty to seven, you can have my whack as well as your own. Let's get back. We shall be late for dinner, anyway."

And the disappointed Rookwooders remounted their machines and rode back to Rookwood in a decidedly exasperated mood.

They arrived late for dinner, and had the pleasure of receiving fifty lines each. Which did not improve their tempers.

Afternoon lessons that day were a worry to the heroes of Rookwood. They were thinking out ways and means of avenging their defeat upon the Bagshot Bounders. And lessons at such a time, as Lovell said, were a little too thick. But lessons had to be done, as well as a considerable number of lines awarded for inattention.

Mr. Bootles knew nothing about the war that raged between Rookwood and Bagshot. And, if he had known, certainly he would not have approved of warlike plans being laid in hours supposed to be devoted to lessons. Lines fell very thickly that afternoon.

There was one comfort for Jimmy Silver & Co. The Moderns shared in the defeat now. They had been equally "dished" by the astute Pankley. There were no more merry remarks from Tommy Dodd & Co.

But on the Classical side Mornington and his friends made the most of the matter. As a rule, the nuts of the Fourth were too lofty and nutty to take part in the warfare between the rival schools. But they did not lose the opportunity of "chipping" the Fistical Fourth with their defeat.

Indeed, Mornington proposed in the Common-room that a new Form captain should be selected for the Fourth, as Jimmy Silver was evidently—according to Morny—no good. But

the dandy of the Fourth found very few backers for that proposition. "Uncle James" star was not yet on the wane.

And at tea-time Mornington had something else to think about. When the juniors came in to tea there was a yell from Peele, who had gone into Study No. 4.

"My hat! Look here, Morny!"

"What's the row?" asked Mornington, coming along to the study.

"Look!" yelled Peele.

Mornington looked into the study, and jumped.

"By gad, they've been here!"

"Hallo! You had a turn?" chuckled Jimmy Silver, joining them. "My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classical juniors gathered round the study doorway, and there was a yell of laughter. Mornington was pale with rage.

The dandy of the Fourth had an extensive wardrobe—three times as extensive as any other junior at Rookwood. He kept a good many of his things in the study, in a large chest under the window. The clothes-chest had been opened, and a sacrilegious hand had dragged out Morny's finery.

Fancy waistcoats, high collars, beautiful neckties of all hues and in great number, purple silk socks, flowery braces, evening clothes of the most elegant cut, dancing-shoes—in fact, a tremendous supply of elegant articles that would have delighted a tailor's heart—had been yanked out mercilessly and scattered about.

Some of them were tied round the coal-scuttle, some tied in knots, others smothered with ashes, others draped in festoons on the gas-bracket. The study seemed full of clothes.

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

A card was pinned to a pair of elegant trousers, with the now familiar inscription on it:

"WITH KIND REGARDS!
"CECIL PANKLEY."

"My hat! What a lot of clobber!" yelled Lovell. "Are you going in for the tailoring bizney, Morny?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rotters!" panted Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Peele. "It's too bad! It's a shame! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too rotten!" chuckled Gower. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Peele and Gower had no belongings of that kind in the study, and they had not suffered. But Mornington was furious.

"Shut up cackling!" he snarled. "There's nothing funny in this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled. It was up against Rookwood; but it was funny, and Morny's rage only made it funnier.

The dandy of the Fourth snatched up a cricket-bat and started looking for Pankley. If he had found the Bagshot junior certainly there would have been some damage done.

But he did not find him.

As on previous occasions, the ragger had vanished without leaving a trace behind.

The juniors went in to tea, grinning, but very much puzzled.

How had the Bagshot junior got in and out of Rookwood unseen and unmolested? It was a puzzle they had to give up. Jones minor suggested that there was a secret passage somewhere—a suggestion which was received with sniffs. It was quite possible that there were secret passages behind the ancient walls of Rookwood, but it was scarcely possible that a Bagshot fellow knew anything about them when the Rookwoods themselves did not.

It was the boast of the Fistical Four that the end study never was beaten; but they had to confess themselves beaten this time.

How did Pankley do it?

And where was it going to end, too? It really seemed that they were at the

mercy of their elusive enemy, who could do just as he liked in their quarters with impunity.

"The awful rotter may come-along again this evening," said Jimmy Silver as he sat down to tea in the end study. "How on earth does he do it? How can he get away from Bagshot, even, just as he likes? It beats me."

"Hallo! What the thunder is this in the teapot?" growled Lovell, who was about to make the tea.

Then he gave a yell.

"Look here!"

He held up the teapot. The spout was blocked with sealing-wax, and on the side of it were chalked the initials, "C. P."

"Cecil Pankley!" said Jimmy Silver, with a deep breath.

"Pankley again!"

"I'm getting fed-up with this!" snorted Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy Silver, it's up to you to stop him, or we'll give you the sack!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy crossly.

The Fistical Four had tea in a somewhat excited frame of mind. When Jimmy opened the door to come out afterwards he simply staggered: On the outside of the door—visible as soon as he pulled it open—were chalked the words:

"HOME FOR IDIOTS.

"Yours truly,

"CECIL PANKLEY."

The Fistical Four looked at one another aghast. The chalked inscription had certainly not been there when they entered the study. It had been chalked there while they were at tea.

"He—he—he's still in the House!" babbled Raby.

Jimmy Silver panted.

"Conroy," he called out as he sighted the Australian junior in the passage, "have you seen anybody here—anybody from Bagshot?"

"Of course not!" said Conroy, in surprise.

"Look at this!"

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Conroy.

"He's been here again!" roared Lovell. "I tell you I'm fed up, Jimmy Silver! Something's got to be done!"

"Looks as if we're going to be done," grinned Conroy.

Jimmy Silver looked at the Cornstalk rather suspiciously.

"I suppose this isn't one of your little jokes?" he asked.

Conroy stared.

"Mine! No, ass!"

"Blessed if I see how Pankley could come here without being seen," said Jimmy. "I know you're a funny merchant, Conroy——"

"Honour bright!" said Conroy, laughing.

"Well, it beats me!"

Lovell shook a warning finger at Jimmy Silver.

"It's up to you!" he said. "Great leaders have to lead, or they get left on the beach. We don't want any blessed wait-and-see leaders in the Fourth. It's up to you, Jimmy Silver, and if you don't put a stop to Panky's hanky-panky you're going to get a study licking!"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and Newcome heartily.

Jimmy Silver did not reply. His brows were wrinkled, and he was evidently in deep thought.

"Do you hear?" demanded Lovell.

"Eh?" said Jimmy, waking up, as it were. "Don't jaw, old chap! I'm thinking."

"Time you did!" said Lovell sarcastically. "You'd better think out a way of nobbling Panky, or you're going through it, Uncle James. See?"

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy.

And he walked away, deep in thought. A new idea had come into Jimmy Silver's mind, and he was thinking—thinking very hard.

CHAPTER 15.

Uncle James Keeps an Eye Open!

"WHERE'S that ass Silver?"
"Where's that fathead Jimmy?"

"Where has he got to, the chump?"

It was a meeting of the Classical Players in the Common-room—a very important meeting. The players had to discuss a forthcoming play, which was to knock into a cocked hat the efforts of the Moderns in the amateur dramatic line. And Jimmy Silver, the leading spirit of the Classical Players, was missing. Everybody had turned up, but Jimmy Silver hadn't.

Mornington & Co. were there. Morny was ambitious of taking the lead in the Classical Players out of Jimmy Silver's hands, and the nuts backed him up cordially. Nearly all the Classical Fourth belonged to that honourable society, and they were all there—excepting Jimmy Silver.

Lovell ran up to the study to look for Jimmy, but he was not there. He looked up and down and round about, but there was no Jimmy. And he returned to the Common-room grunting.

"Hasn't he turned up?" he asked.

"No. Can't you find him?" asked Conroy.

"The silly ass has disappeared!" growled Lovell. "We shall have to get on without him."

"We can do that easily enough!" sneered Mornington.

"I move that Morny takes the chair," said Townsend.

"I second it!" said Topham at once.

"Oh, take the chair and be blowed!" growled Lovell.

And Mornington took Jimmy Silver's accustomed place, and the proceedings proceeded, so to speak, without the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver, as a matter of fact, was not far away. It had not occurred to Lovell to look for him in the unlighted upper passage which led to the Modern quarters. Had he looked there, however, he would not have spotted Jimmy

Silver, who was in cover in a deep alcove in the old stone wall.

Jimmy Silver had been thinking hard, and the result of his cogitations had led him to cut the Players' meeting, without giving notice of his intention, and to station himself in that alcove on the watch. The passage, which was seldom or never used, was unlighted, and Jimmy was invisible; but from where he stood he could hear any footsteps that came along the Fourth Form corridor or along the passage from the Modern side.

Jimmy Silver was on the watch, though, if his comrades had known it, they would have wondered what he was watching for.

He waited with cool patience, as became a Boy Scout. His patient was rewarded at last.

There was a faint sound in the distance.

Click!

Jimmy Silver started slightly, and his eyes gleamed.

He knew what that sound was. It was the click of a key turning in a lock, and it came from the great door far down the passage, towards the Modern quarters. The door had been unlocked.

Jimmy Silver stood still, listening.

Faintly, along the dark passage, came the sound of cautious footfalls. They passed the alcove where Jimmy Silver stood, so close that he could have touched the unseen form by stretching out his hand. But he did not move.

The footfalls passed on—into the Fourth Form passage.

They died away.

Then Jimmy Silver stirred. On tiptoe he crept along the passage, and peered round the corner.

A figure, momentarily visible, disappeared into the end study, and the door closed behind it.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

He did not go towards the end study. He knew that the mysterious raider was there. But he turned away down

the passage and hurried silently to the stairs. A few moments later he threw open the door of the Common-room.

"Hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Newcome.

"You're too late, Silver!", sneered Mornington. "We're gettin' on nicely without you, thanks!"

Jimmy did not even look at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said. "He's here!"

"Who's here?" exclaimed Conroy.

"The merry raider!"

"Great Scott! Pankley!"

"You've been watching for him?" exclaimed Lovell, comprehending.

"Exactly! He's in the end study now. Don't make a row, but come on, and we'll catch him fairly in the act."

"Look here, this is a meetin'—" began Mornington.

But nobody heeded Mornington. He was left to preside over empty chairs. The Classical Fourth streamed after Jimmy Silver and swarmed up the staircase. There was a glimmer of light under the door of the end study as they reached the Fourth Form passage.

"He's there!" breathed Lovell.

"You bet! Quiet! Don't alarm him till we've fairly cornered him."

"He seems to know the right time to come, when the coast's clear," said Oswald.

"He does!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "He do! You'll soon see why."

On tiptoe, with bated breath and grinning faces, the Fourth Formers trod lightly down the passage to the end study.

Within that study the sound of a movement could be heard. The raider was fairly cornered at last.

Jimmy Silver turned the handle of the door, and as he turned it he heard a gasp within. He hurled the door wide open.

"Caught!" yelled Lovell, rushing in. "Now, Pankley, you rotter— Why — Oh— My hat! Leggett!"

For the fellow who stood in the study with a pale, startled face and bulging eyes, was not Pankley of Bagshot. It was Leggett of the Rookwood Fourth!

CHAPTER 16.

No Luck for Leggett!

LEGGETT!

The whole crowd of Classicals yelled out the name in astonishment.

Leggett's face was pale.

He had already been at work. The study was in the process of being thoroughly ragged. Soot and ashes were scattered over the carpet and the furniture, and on the wall was daubed, in large inky letters:

"DOWN WITH ROOKWOOD!

"Signed) CECIL PANKLEY."

But it was evident that the impertinent message had not been inscribed there by Pankley of Bagshot. It was the work of Leggett of the Fourth.

The Classical juniors simply gasped at the truth dawned on them.

"Leggett!" stuttered Conroy. "The cad! It was Leggett all the time!"

Jimmy Silver nodded cheerfully.

"Yes; Leggett all the time! And now he's bowled out!"

"I—I—I——" stammered Leggett helplessly.

His voice died away. He had, in fact, nothing to say. He could not expect the Rookwood juniors to disbelieve the evidence of their own eyes.

"Leggett!" said Oswald. "That accounts——"

"That accounts!" said Jimmy Silver, with a nod. "That accounts for the merry raider getting in and out without being seen. Panky hasn't been here at all. He's put up Leggett to playing these tricks on us in his name. Just as easy for Leggy to chalk up Pankley's name as his own."

"The awful worm!" exclaimed Lovell

indignantly. "Playing Pankley's game against us!"

"Exactly!"

"And you knew, Jimmy Silver?"

"No, I didn't know," said Jimmy. "I was fairly fogged at first. But it came into my head that Pankley simply couldn't have got in and out as he seemed to do, unless he's a blessed magician, and I asked Conroy if he'd chalked on my door, and that put it into my head that it was a Rookwood chap all the time. I thought of Leggett, because he's the only chap at Rookwood who's cad enough to help the enemy against his own school. But I wasn't sure, and I watched. But when I heard the door in the passage unlock I was pretty certain it was Leggett, and then I saw him dodge into this study, and there you are!"

"I—I—I—— It was only a j-j-joke!" mumbled Leggett.

Jimmy Silver interrupted him scornfully.

"You fixed this up with Panky the other day, and your yarn about being ragged was only some of your lies!" he said. "I dare say Pankley paid you something to do it—you wouldn't do it for nothing! No wonder Panky cackled at us when we chased off to Bagshot to-day; he hadn't been here at all. It was a traitor in the camp. Jolly deep of Panky, I must say!"

"And jolly mean of Leggett!" said Raby. "What have you got to say, you worm?"

"No need for him to say anything," grinned Jimmy Silver. "He's caught in the act, and now he's going to pay the piper!"

Leggett made a rush for the door. He was surrounded at once, and angry hands grasped him on all sides. The juniors did not blame Pankley of Bagshot for using the rascal of Rookwood in this great wheeze against them, but Leggett's conduct was the very limit. There was no room in the Rookwood Fourth for a traitor in the camp.

"I—I say—— Leggo! I—I——"

Leggett gasped with terror. "I—I didn't mean— Leggo! It was only a joke!"

"Now, how much did he give you, you rotter?" demanded Lovell.

"Nothin! I—, Yaroooh!"

Bump! Bump!

"Now, how much did he give you?"

"Yow! Ow! Five bob!" groaned Leggett. "He was going—ow!—to give me another half-crown—yow, ow!—if it came off all right! Yooop! Leggo!"

"You'll send that five bob back!" said Jimmy Silver. "You can do that to-morrow. And now, you're going to be rolled in the soot you've scraped out of the chimney! Roll him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next ten minutes were like a fearful nightmare to the cad of Rookwood. He was bumped, and he was rolled in soot, and soot was rubbed into his neck and his hair, and Lovell added the ink and the gum with a liberal hand.

Leggett's yells died away in gasps and mumbles, and when he was finally kicked out of the study, to crawl away to his own quarters, his feelings could not be described in words. There was no doubt that he had earned Pankley's five bob—more than earned that moderate sum.

The next day Pankley received a letter at Bagshot. It contained a postal order for five shillings, and a message in Jimmy Silver's handwriting:

"Try again!"

And the great Pankley had to confess that his great wheeze, after all, had not been such a howling success as he had anticipated.

Pankley was not likely to "try again" in the same way. Leggett, after escaping from the Classics, found still more drastic treatment at the hands of the Moderns, and the number of bumps, shoves, kicks and

cuffs that the rascal of Rookwood received could hardly be counted; and whether the punishment did him good or not, it certainly cured him of any desire to play again the part of a traitor in the camp.

CHAPTER 17.

Morny Has His Way!

"O H, rot!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Morny's offered—"

"Blow Morny!"

"All right, blow him, if you like!" said Lovell resignedly. "But it would look better to agree, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver grunted.

He was not pleased.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and half the Lower School, Moderns and Classics, were joining in a "hare and hounds" run across country. There had been considerable preparations overnight for that run, and "scent" had been provided in great quantities, old exercises and newspapers and disused school-books being torn up for the purpose.

Jimmy Silver was one of the hares; that was settled. Mornington of the Fourth had offered to be the other.

And Jimmy Silver did not like the idea.

He could not pull with Mornington, and, as junior football skipper, it had been his duty to keep the dandy of the Fourth out of the eleven. Most of the fellows agreed with Jimmy in that. Mornington was altogether too unreliable a fellow, though he could play a first-class game when he liked. It depended on his temper whether he liked, and his temper was very uncertain.

But it could not be denied that Mornington was as good a runner as Jimmy Silver himself—that he had a pace and an endurance almost unequalled in the Fourth Form, which was all the more remarkable, because he took very little trouble to keep himself fit. And Jimmy Silver's chums felt that it was an ungracious position for Jimmy to be

"down" on Morny whenever he put himself forward in any way.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome did not like Morny any more than Jimmy did, but they did not want the fellows to think that Jimmy was determined to keep his rival in the background in every possible way, which Morny & Co. declared to be Jimmy's intention.

"Why can't he run with the hounds?" growled Jimmy. "He knows I don't want him."

"I dare say that's why he's offered," grinned Raby. "Still, I don't see anything against it. He can sprint."

"And you needn't talk to him, you know," said Newcome. "You can save all your wind for running; you'll need it, with us after you."

Another grunt from Jimmy Silver.

"Better agree, Jimmy," urged Lovell. "Towny and Topy and that set are singing out that you're jealous of Morny and want to keep him in the shade——"

"Bless Towny and Topy! What have they got to do with it, anyway? They won't run in the pack."

"Bless 'em, if you like. But——"

"Oh, I'll agree!" said Jimmy. "Anything for a quiet life. But I can tell you this—there'll very likely be a scrap as well as a paperchase this afternoon. I shan't stand any of Morny's tricks."

"I don't see what tricks he can play in a paperchase."

"That's because you're an ass, old chap. You can depend on it that if Morny runs as a hare, he will make up his mind to be the only hare that gets home, and he'll play any rotten trick to leave me behind."

"I say, Jimmy, that's a bit suspicious, you know! Morny isn't such a cad as all that."

"Oh, all right!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "Wait and see!"

"Don't begin punching him till he shows the cloven hoof, anyway," said Raby, laughing. "I really think you're a bit too suspicious this time, Jimmy."

"Oh, rats! It's settled, then. Morny runs with me."

"I'll tell him," said Lovell.

"Tell him to go to Jericho at the same time," said Jimmy crossly.

Lovell grinned, and quitted the end study. He went along to Study No. 4, where Mornington of the Fourth was found, with his study-mates, Peele and Gower. Townsend and Topham were also in the study, and Smythe and Tracy of the Shell. The nuts of Rookwood were discussing the paperchase when Lovell locked in.

"Hallo!" said Mornington, looking at Lovell. "Has the Great Panjandrum decided?"

"You're to run," said Lovell curtly.

"Hear, hear!" said Smythe of the Shell. "Chance for you to get into the limelight, Morny."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know whether the hares will get home," he said. "I expect I shall have to dawdle for Jimmy Silver."

"You don't expect anything of the kind," said Lovell bluntly. "Don't talk out of your neck, you fathead!"

"What beautiful manners they have in the end study!" said Mornington, unruffled. "Any more of your graceful remarks to make, Lovell?"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Lovell. And he swung away and returned to his own study with a somewhat clouded brow.

"I fancy you were right, Jimmy," said Lovell. "It would have been better to leave that swankin' cad out. Rookwood won't be big enough to hold him, if he gets home and you don't."

"That won't happen, unless there's foul play," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "And if there's foul play, Morny won't know his own face again when he looks in the glass!"

From which it really looked as if there was likely to be trouble during the Rookwood paperchase that afternoon.

CHAPTER 18.

Hares and Hounds!

"READY?" said Bulkeley.

Immediately after dinner the Rookwood juniors turned out into the quad, most of them in running-clothes. Even Smythe of the Shell and the rest of the nuts had turned up, though they seldom took part in such affairs. But Smythe & Co. were looking forward with keen interest to the intended "dishing" of Jimmy Silver. They were not likely to be "in at the death."

Tommy Dodd & Co. had come over in great force from the Modern side. The three Tommies lined up with more than a dozen other Moderns. And there were a good thirty Classical of the Fourth, Shell, and Third. Even some of the Second had turned up, for the first part at least of the run—Jones minimus, Snooks, Fisher, and Murphy. Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, was to start them.

Jimmy Silver and Mornington both looked very fit and well in running garb, with the bags of scent slung over their shoulders. Morny was the great leader of the "Giddy Goats" of Rookwood, but he never looked weedy and seedy like his pals. And certainly he looked very fit now, and very handsome, with a flush in his cheeks and a sparkle in his eyes.

"Three minutes' start," said Bulkeley.

"Right-ho Bulkeley!"

"Off with you."

The two hares started from the gates. They trotted down the road towards Coombe, side by side.

The pack waited for the signal.

Bulkeley had his eyes on his watch, and the waiting juniors eyed him eagerly. The captain of Rookwood raised his hand at last.

"Off!"

And the pack streamed out of gates in great spirits. It was a keen, cold, frosty afternoon, ideal weather for a hard run. A blast from Tommy Dodd's bugle announced that he had sighted the hares across the fields, and the

pack went plunging through a hedge with loud whoops.

The hares, however, had a good start. Dropping the scent as they ran, Jimmy Silver and Mornington kept on at a steady trot. Mornington looked back over his shoulder as the bugle-note sounded through the clear air.

"Tommy Dodd's ahead," he said.

"Moderns won't catch us," said Jimmy Silver, with all the pride of a Classical, "Lovell or Raby, if anybody does."

"Well, nobody's goin' to catch me," said Mornington. "Hurry up!"

He put on speed, and Jimmy Silver followed suit. Jimmy's eyes gleamed a little. He was captain of the Fourth, and it was for him to give directions, if anybody did, and he was a better judge of the necessary pace than Mornington was. But Morny evidently did not mean to lose the opportunity of "swank." A quarrel between the hares meant an early capture by the hounds, and Jimmy Silver did not want that. Morny was willing to risk it rather than keep his place. That was where the unscrupulous junior had the advantage.

However, Jimmy Silver said nothing, but ran on, scattering the scent. He was heading for the bridge over the river, when Morny swerved and bore off towards Coombe Wood.

"Come on!" called out Mornington.

"That's not the way," called back Jimmy. "The run is over the bridge and along the heath, and back by the wood."

"Better try the wood first—they're comin' on fast. They'll lose us in the wood."

Mornington shouted the last words over his shoulder, keeping on. Jimmy Silver hesitated a moment, and then followed. The hares had to keep together, and it was clear that unless Jimmy followed, they would not keep together. It was the beginning of Morny's knavish tricks. The dandy of the Fourth meant to take the lead, and Jimmy Silver could like it or lump it, as he chose.

Jimmy could have kicked himself for having given way, and consented to take Morny as his partner in the run. But it was a little too late to think of that now.

He rejoined Mornington, and they plunged into the wood together, under the trees, that were showing the first green of spring. Side by side they ran along the footpath, leaving the scent behind.

The pack were out of sight now. Mornington left the footpath, winding through the wood, and leaving a circuitous trail, and Jimmy had no choice but to follow his lead. Morny paused to take breath as they reached the stream that flowed through the heart of the wood, crossed by a single plank resting on stones.

"Done them so far," said Morny. "Careful how you cross that plank—it's a bit rocky since the rains."

"Keep your advice till I ask for it," said Jimmy Silver curtly.

Mornington laughed, and ran lightly across the plank. He turned, and stopped, catching the end of the plank in his hands, as Jimmy was following.

"Let that alone!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"I'm holdin' it for you—it's loose!"

"Let it alone, you fathead—you're loosening it."

"I tell you I'm helpin' you. Oh, by gad!" ejaculated Mornington.

The plank slipped from the stones, and Jimmy Silver had just time to jump back to the bank he had just left. The plank, caught in the current, whirled downstream, and jammed in the rushes a dozen yards away.

Mornington looked at Jimmy across the stream. Jimmy glared back at him.

"You howling cad!" he shouted. "You did that on purpose."

"My dear chap, I was goin' to help you—"

Jimmy clenched his hands hard. There were six yards of icy water in front of him, deep in the middle.

Faintly from afar came the shouting of the pack in hot pursuit.

"By gad! I'm afraid you're done in," called out Mornington, with a mocking grin. "No good both of us gettin' caught! I'll get on."

"You rotter!" roared Jimmy.

Mornington did not reply. He turned his back on the stream, and ran on, leaving the torn-paper trail behind him. And Jimmy Silver stood on the bank, and shook a helpless fist at the fellow who had tricked him so easily.

CHAPTER 19.

in the Hands of the Philistines!

"TA-RA-RA-RA-RA!"

Tommy Dodd's bugle rang through the woods.

Down the footpath towards the stream came the Rookwood pack, in great style. But the pack was less numerous now.

Jones minimus and the other Second Formers had dropped out, and Smythe and Tracy and Howard of the Shell, in spite of their keenness to see Jimmy Silver "dished," had given it up, with bellows to mend. Townsend and Topham, Gower and Peele, were all the nuts that remained in the pack.

Tommy Dodd was in the lead—next to him Lovell and Raby—then, in a bunch, Newcome and Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook. Next came Pons and Van Ryn and Conroy, in a row, running with steady strength. The rest of the pack were strung out behind.

"Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra!"

"By gad, there's Jimmy Silver!" gasped Townsend. "Left behind, by gad!"

The nuts gave a breathless chuckle.

There was Jimmy Silver, on the hither side of the stream, his companion out of sight.

"Morny's done him, just as he said!" chortled Topham.

"Put it on!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "Here's one of them!"

Jimmy Silver looked back with knitted brows.

To be fairly caught after a hard run was not so bad! But to be captured almost at the start, through the treachery of his fellow-hare, was too bitter.

Jimmy Silver was not caught yet, however.

He turned to the stream again, and plunged down the bank. There was a splash as he disappeared into the water.

The water was icy cold; but Jimmy hardly noticed it. He struck out for the other side with powerful strokes.

There was a whoop as the pack came swooping down to the bank. There they halted.

"No surrender!" said Tommy Dodd. "I'm going on."

"Same here!" gasped Lovell.

Splash! Splash! Splash!

Six or seven of the leading hounds plunged in recklessly; the rest of the pack trying along the bank for an easier crossing.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver dragged himself out, squelching mud, on the opposite bank, and took up the run again.

He followed Mornington's paper trail through the wood, putting on a spurt that left the pack well behind.

His running-shoes were thick with mud. He was soaked to the skin, and steam rose from him as he ran. But he ran on hard, and in about ten minutes sighted Mornington, clearing out of the wood and entering upon the heath.

Mornington looked back, and gave a jump at the sight of the muddy junior bearing down on him.

"By gad! You got across!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you cad!"

Mornington faced round, and put up his hands defensively. The glitter in Jimmy Silver's eyes told of war.

But Jimmy restrained his anger. A fight between the two hares meant certain capture. The hounds were coming on fast.

"Come on!" growled Jimmy. "I'll talk about that to you at Rookwood,

you worm! But if you play another trick on me, look out!"

"Rats!" said Mornington coolly.

And in that humour they ran on.

Jimmy Silver was putting on hard speed now, to make up for lost time. Mornington, good runner as he was, was hard put to it to keep the pace. His teeth set hard as he ran.

At this rate, it was Mornington who was in danger of being left behind. That prospect did not suit the dandy of the Fourth at all. His first scheme for "stranding" Jimmy Silver had failed. But Morny's brain was fertile of schemes. He had not finished yet.

The hares paused on a knoll on the heath to look back. Mornington was glad of the respite.

The pack had streamed out of the wood, sadly diminished in numbers. The fellows who had gone along the stream for a dry crossing were hopelessly left behind.

But the three Tommies, muddy, but cheerful, were still in the lead, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome and the Colonial Co. were still there, and Oswald and Rawson and Towle and Flynn.

As the hares looked back, Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn passed the leaders, and led the way, with the same steady pace they had kept to all along. The Colonial Co. were pretty certain not to be far behind at the finish.

"Come on!" said Mornington.

"This way!" shouted Jimmy angrily. "That path leads to old Stuckey's ground, and we're not allowed there."

"It's the best way!"

"This way, I tell you!" roared Jimmy.

"Oh, rats!"

With that Mornington dashed on.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, hard breath. But there was no choice left for him, and he followed Mornington, who was already a dozen yards ahead.

Mornington was putting on great speed now to keep ahead.

The heath was left, and he followed a deep, rutty lane, leading between ploughed fields, still scattering the scent, Jimmy Silver close behind.

Mornington stopped at a low gate and vaulted over it. There was a board beside the gate, bearing the legend, "Trespassers will be Prosecuted." Morny did not even glance at it.

Jimmy Silver leaned on the gate and shouted:

"Come back, you idiot! You'll have old Stuckey out!"

"Rats!"

"Come back, you chump!"

Mornington ran on.

Jimmy Silver gritted his teeth. Mr. Stuckey had more than once complained to the Head of Rookwood about trespassers on his land, and the old gentleman's property was strictly out of bounds. Jimmy Silver did not want the paperchase to end in a caning all round in the Head's study at Rookwood.

And he could see Farmer Stuckey himself near the farmhouse—a fat old gentleman in gaiters, who was staring as if transfixed at Mornington. Mr. Stuckey's breath seemed to be taken away by the junior's "cheek" in dashing across his land under his very eyes.

Mornington saw him, but he did not pause. He was too reckless to care for Farmer Stuckey or possible punishment later; and if Jimmy did not follow, he would be caught, and Morny would have the pleasure of calling him funk. The whoop of the pack down the lane decided Jimmy, and he vaulted over the gate and followed.

"Stop, you there!" came in a bellow from the outraged Mr. Stuckey, as he started towards the juniors.

They ran on, unheeding, Mornington more than a dozen yards ahead now, owing to Jimmy's delay at the gate. Mr. Stuckey was dashing to intercept Mornington before he could escape from the field on the opposite side. He came puffing and panting into the Rookwood junior's way.

Mornington eyed him warily, and made as if to charge straight at him, his head lowered to butt on the farmer's fat waistcoat. Mr. Stuckey gripped his whip, and waited for him; but, just out of the reach of the whip, Mornington

swerved, and circled round Mr. Stuckey like a flash and ran on, leaving the farmer spluttering with rage.

Mornington ran on, laughing, for the opposite fence. With perfect coolness, he was still leaving the paper trail.

Mr. Stuckey, spluttering, followed him a few paces, but he quickly realised that he had no chance of overtaking the nimble schoolboy. He swung round, and faced Jimmy Silver as he came on. He was directly in Jimmy's path, and Jimmy was not likely to elude him so easily as Morny had done.

"Stop, you young varmint!" roared Mr. Stuckey, flourishing his whip. "Here, Willyum, Charley—'ere! Stop him!"

Two labourers were running up from different directions.

Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

Mornington had left him in another trap, more serious than the first. Mr. Stuckey was not to be negotiated so easily as the stream in the wood.

Jimmy dodged round the farmer, but Mr. Stuckey was on the watch for dodging now. He plunged down on the junior, and grasped him by the shoulders.

Jimmy struggled furiously.

He hooked his leg in Mr. Stuckey's, and the fat farmer came with a bump to the ground, uttering a wild roar. It was no time to stand on ceremony.

But Willyum and Charles were close at hand now, and as Jimmy, breathless, dragged himself away from the sprawling Mr. Stuckey, the two labourers colared him.

"Let go!" yelled Jimmy, struggling.

"Hold him!" spluttered Mr. Stuckey, struggling to a sitting position. "Hold the young villain! Groooh!"

"My heye, 'ere's some more of 'em!" ejaculated Willyum.

The pack had arrived at the gate, and were scrambling over.

"Stop 'em!" shouted Mr. Stuckey. "Leave that young varmint to me! You go and stop 'em!"

Mr. Stuckey grasped Jimmy Silver

in brawny hands there was no escaping from. His two men rushed to the gate. They had pitchforks in their hands, and the pack scrambled hastily back into the road. There was no arguing with pitchforks at close quarters.

"Look here, we want to cross this field!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"You keep hout!" said Willyum.

"We shan't do any harm," said Conroy. "Let us pass, like a good chap."

"Mr. Stuckey's orders!"

"Look here——"

"You'll get this 'ere fork if you come over!"

And the pack raged in vain at the gate.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate Jimmy Silver was a prisoner. Mr. Stuckey held him in a grip like a vice. Mornington had vanished across the adjoining field, merrily leaving the paper trail behind, quite satisfied at the way matters had turned out. The pack were stopped, and Jimmy Silver was out of the running, and all Morny had to do was to saunter home to Rookwood, a victor. At all events, so it seemed to Morny, and he chuckled gleefully as he trotted on.

CHAPTER 20.

"Stone walls do not a prison make!"

"NOW, you young rascal!"

Mr. Stuckey shook the captured junior vigorously.

"Go easy!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "I don't want to kick your shins, old scout, but you're going the right way to make me!"

Mr. Stuckey snorted, but he ceased to shake his captive.

"Well, I've got yer!" he remarked.

"You have," agreed Jimmy.

Jimmy cast a glance round. The pack were stopped at the gate; he was in no danger of capture so far as they were concerned. He had a lingering hope for a moment that Mornington might turn back to his aid now that the two farm-hands were at a distance, but the

dandy of the Fourth was already vanishing across the next field.

Jimmy strove to take his reverse cheerfully, and to "keep smiling," according to his motto.

"Let go, Mr. Stuckey!" he said, as sweetly as he could. "No harm done you know. Be a sport!"

"You tripped me up!" snorted Mr. Stuckey.

"Well, accidents will happen. I was in rather a hurry."

The farmer smiled grimly.

"You won't be in a 'urry now!" he remarked. "You jest tell me where you came from. I dessay you belong to Rookwood or Bagshot?"

"Go hon!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

He had no intention whatever of telling Mr. Stuckey where he belonged. Mr. Stuckey could find that out for himself.

"You're a schoolboy; I can see that!" snarled Mr. Stuckey.

"That's jolly sharp of you!" said Jimmy admiringly.

"Are you a schoolboy, or ain't you?" roared Mr. Stuckey.

"My dear chap, I'm a hare!" said Jimmy seriously.

Mr. Stuckey shook him again.

"I dessay you belong to Bagshot School," he said, "perhaps Rookwood. Anyway, I'm going to take you to your headmaster! Now, where's your school? Tell me the name of your school, you young rip!"

"You're going to take me there?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes."

"Won't that be a waste of your valuable time, sir?"

"Not if I see you thrashed by your headmaster!" said Mr. Stuckey grimly. "Now, what's that school?"

"Glasgow University!" said Jimmy sweetly. "It's rather a walk from here!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Or, on second thoughts, Trinity College, Dublin!" said Jimmy. "Better start at once, or we shan't get there before dark!"

"So you won't tell me?" growled Mr.

Stuckey. "Well, I'll take you to the police-station in Coombe, and charge you with trespassing! They'll find out where you belong fast enough!"

Jimmy Silver groaned dismally.

This was an unhappy end to the merry paperchase. Police Constable Boggs, in Coombe, knew Jimmy well enough. He had had the honour of having his helmet dislodged not so long ago by a snowball from Jimmy. Mr. Boggs would be quite pleased to see him—under such circumstances. But the pleasure would be all on Mr. Boggs' side.

"Well, you going to tell me where that there school is?" demanded Mr. Stuckey.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Stuckey snorted, and marched Jimmy Silver off in a tight grip. A paperchase across his land really did no great harm, but Mr. Stuckey was a bad-tempered gentleman. Also, he had strong opinions about boys wasting their time at school instead of working on the land, as they did in the good old times, for more kicks than halfpence.

Mr. Stuckey hadn't had much schooling, and, as he sometimes proudly remarked, it had made him what he was. What he was was an unpleasant-tempered and unreasonable old fellow; but Mr. Stuckey did not look at it like that. Mr. Stuckey was prepared to waste an hour of his valuable time in taking Jimmy Silver to his headmaster and demanding a flogging for him—a shocking waste of time, as Jimmy thought.

It was no use Jimmy resisting; there was no arguing with the big, horny hand that gripped him. He was led away to the farmhouse.

"Alf!" rapped out Mr. Stuckey.

"Yes, zur?"

"Put the pony in the trap at once!"

"Yes, zur."

"You can wait 'ere," said Mr. Stuckey, leading Jimmy Silver into a shed. "I'll come for you when I'm ready. Cool your 'eels 'ere, my fine young feller!"

"I say, Mr. Stuckey, don't be a beast, you know!" pleaded Jimmy.

Snort!

"I say——"

Slam!

The shed door closed and the key turned in the lock, and Jimmy Silver was left alone. He shook his fist at the door.

"Beast!" he remarked.

Jimmy's situation was decidedly unpleasant. He was still damp from his immersion in the stream, and his running-clothes were scanty and very damp. And it was very cold in the shed. The little window was thick with frost.

He waved his arms to keep himself warm, and considered.

As soon as the trap was ready it was evidently Mr. Stuckey's intention to drive into Coombe with him and deliver him up to Police Constable Boggs. That was rather worse than being taken direct to the Head of Rookwood. If he were taken to the Head, Jimmy was doubtful whether he would get a flogging or a caning. But he did not yearn for either.

"I've got to get out of this!" growled Jimmy. "And—and I'll hammer that cad Mornington till he won't know his face again!"

He rubbed the window clear and looked out. The window faced towards the farm-buildings, and he could see Mr. Stuckey at a distance. There was no escape that way.

He crossed to the opposite side of the shed.

It was a flimsy building, not in the best of repair, and built entirely of wood. It was no time to stand upon ceremony. There were several agricultural implements in the shed—spades, rakes and forks. Jimmy selected a spade, and commenced operations on a board that showed signs of rot.

Crash! Crash!

The spade went through the board near the ground. The gleam of daylight through the wood was encouraging. Jimmy wondered whether anyone in

the farmhouse would hear the noise. But he could not afford to hesitate. Crash, crash, crash went the spade, wielded by his sturdy hands, and splinter, splinter, splinter, went the board.

In a very few minutes Jimmy Silver had crashed open an orifice large enough to squeeze through. He threw down the spade, panting.

There was a shout outside the door.

"Damaging my property, you young rascal! You wait till I come in to you!"

The key grated in the lock.

Jimmy shoved his head and shoulders desperately through the jagged opening in the wooden wall.

The shed door on the opposite side opened, and Mr. Stuckey's portly form was framed in the doorway. The farmer was red with anger, and he had a big cart-whip in his hand.

Jimmy wriggled desperately through the opening.

Mr. Stuckey gazed, for a moment transfixed, at the legs of the junior, which were all he could see of him.

"By gosh!" he ejaculated.

He rushed across the shed, lashing out with the whip. There was a fiendish yell from Jimmy Silver as the thong curled round his unprotected legs.

"Yoooooop!"

He shoved on furiously to get clear. His body passed through the gap, and his legs were following, when Mr. Stuckey grasped one of his ankles.

"No, you don't!" said Mr. Stuckey grimly. "Here, Alf! Come 'ere!"

Jimmy Silver was desperate.

As Mr. Stuckey held on to one foot Jimmy landed out with the other, backwards, and his shoe caught Mr. Stuckey under his fat chin.

There was a terrific roar from Mr. Stuckey, as he sat down on the shed floor with a sudden bump, letting go Jimmy to clasp his chin.

The next moment he made another furious clutch at him. But one second had been enough for Jimmy Silver.

He was through the gap now, and he rolled on the ground outside. He sat up rather dazedly.

Mr. Stuckey's furious face glared at him through the gap in the wall. The farmer was a little too portly to follow the same way.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy, blinking at him. "Hallo, Stuckey! Where did you get that face?"

Mr. Stuckey, almost choking, whirled about, and rushed for the door to get round.

And Jimmy Silver picked himself up and dashed away at top speed. He was in need of all his running powers now.

CHAPTER 21.

Run Down!

"STOP 'im, Alf!" shrieked Mr. Stuckey.

Jimmy Silver sprinted desperately across the farmyard, scattering startled ducks and geese as he ran. There was a terrific cackling as the junior dashed on, with the stout farmer lumbering breathlessly after him.

He reached the fence about a dozen yards ahead of the farmer, and bounded over it without touching it with his hands.

On the other side he paused and looked round. Mr. Stuckey shook a fat and furious fist at him.

Jimmy kissed his hand in response.

"Good-bye, Stuckey!" he called out.

"I'll—I'll——"

"Keep smiling, cocky!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Ta-ta! See you again some other time—next time we have a paperchase!"

And Jimmy ran on, laughing.

Mr. Stuckey stopped at the fence, breathless. He was quite pumped, and he could only shake a fat fist after the junior as he disappeared.

The pursuit was over, but Jimmy Silver did not pause.

Keeping to the paper trail left by Mornington, he ran on at a good speed,

in the hope of overtaking the dandy of the Fourth. He had something quite emphatic to say to Mornington as soon as he met him.

He crossed field after field, and came out on the heath again at last. Mornington was giving the hounds a long run.

Jimmy panted to the top of a knoll, and looked round him.

Far in the distance behind appeared a number of moving specks, and he knew that they were the pack. He could see only seven of them, and they were well behind. The hounds had argued in vain with Wilyum and Charley, and had finally gone a long way round, avoiding Mr. Stuckey's land altogether, and picking up the trail on the other side.

"All serene, so far!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Now where's Mornington, the sneaking cad?"

He looked in the opposite direction.

In a few moments he spotted Mornington, sauntering now, at a considerable distance across the moor. There was no hurry for Morny; he was so far ahead of the pack, owing to his peculiar tactics, that he was safe to walk home to Rookwood if he chose.

Jimmy ran on steadily.

He was gaining on the single hare at every stride, he knew that. But the trail ran into the wood before he sighted Mornington. He came in sight of the dandy of the Fourth at last, sauntering along the footpath with a careless air. Morny was still scattering the scent with a careless hand.

Jimmy's light footsteps made no sound on the grass and the old leaves, and he was quite close behind before Mornington learned that he was there at all. But Morny looked round suddenly, and started violently as he saw Jimmy Silver within a few yards, running him down.

"By gad!" ejaculated Morny.

"Stop!" panted Jimmy.

"So you got away?"

"Yes, you cad! Stop, and put up your hands!"

Mornington grinned, and ran on. After a leisurely walk, he was much fresher than Jimmy, and he shot ahead—still scattering scent, however. Jimmy panted after him.

"Stop, you rotter!" he roared.

Morny gave a mocking laugh.

"I'll see you at Rookwood, if you're not caught!" he called back.

"Stop, you rotter!" panted Jimmy.

There was plenty of time to deal with Mornington, with the pack so far behind, and Jimmy did not mean to leave the reckoning till they reached Rookwood. He meant to make sure that there were no more tricks on the homeward way, by giving the cad of the Fourth the hammering of his life.

But Mornington ran on. He was on the bank of the little stream again now, and running along it in the direction of the Coombe high-road. Jimmy Silver guessed his intention. Near the road, the stream was crossed by another plank; and Morny evidently intended to cross it, and displace the plank, as he had done with the other plank-bridge earlier.

It would mean another swim for Jimmy Silver in icy water—not a pleasant experience when he was blazing with heat from his exertions—and it would mean delay which would enable the treacherous hare to make his escape and get to Rookwood.

Jimmy put all his "beef" into it, and fairly flew over the ground. He gained on Mornington now.

Nearer and nearer he came, till with his outstretched fingers he could almost touch Morny's shoulder.

A handful of torn paper, hurled back by Morny, smote him in the face, and he staggered, blinded for a moment. Mornington darted across the plank. But Jimmy Silver recovered in a second, and dashed on the plank after him.

Mornington bounded to the bank, and turned; and as he turned, Jimmy Silver was upon him.

"Now, you cad!" panted Jimmy.

"Hang you!" muttered Mornington, between his teeth.

And they clutched, and rolled in the grass, hammering furiously.

CHAPTER 22.

Bad Luck for Jimmy!

"HANG you!"
"You rotter!"
"Take that!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Both the hares had quite forgotten the pack now, and whether they were near or far. Morny had played too many tricks, and the hour of reckoning had come. Jimmy Silver was hammering away furiously, and Morny hammered in return with hearty goodwill. The dandy of the Fourth was no coward. They rolled in the grass, punching and pummelling and gasping, and then broke loose and jumped up.

"Now come on, you cad!" shouted Jimmy.

"I'm ready for you, hang you!"

And they rushed at one another.

More than once, already, since Morny had come to Rookwood, he had come to blows with Jimmy Silver. He had always had the worst of it; but he had plenty of pluck, and he did not shrink from trying again. Jimmy was not at his best now, after so severe a run, and Morny, who had been taking it easy till the last ten minutes, was a good deal rested. They seemed well matched as they slogged away furiously.

Mornington was the first down, however, stretched in the grass with a right-hander that swept him fairly off his feet.

Jimmy glared down at him as he lay gasping.

"Now, you cad, will you play the game?" he panted.

"Hang you!" howled Mornington. "I'll smash you!"

He scrambled breathlessly up.

"You rotter!" breathed Jimmy. "You've tried twice to leave me

stranded, you swanking cad! You won't try again!"

"Yes, I've tried twice, and I'll do it again!" hissed Mornington. "You won't be fit for a run after I've done with you!"

"Oh, come on, and don't brag!" said Jimmy contemptuously.

And they closed again, hitting hard.

Faintly, from the distance, came an echoing voice—the voice of Tommy Dodd:

"Tally-ho!"

"Hold on!" gasped Jimmy. "They're coming——" He dropped his hands. "We'll finish this at Rookwood, Mornington."

"We'll finish it here!" snarled Mornington.

"You fool! Do you want to be caught?" panted Jimmy, stepping back.

But Morny was rushing on, and his fists lashed into Jimmy's face. Jimmy was standing close to the edge of the woodland stream, where the steep bank sloped down three feet to the water. The sudden attack sent him reeling, and he crashed helplessly down the bank.

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Mornington.

Without a look to see how Jimmy Silver had fared, Mornington ran on, scattering scent for the trail.

Jimmy Silver had gone headlong into the water, but he came up puffing, and scrambled on the thick, muddy bank. He gave a cry of pain as he did so. He had fallen helplessly, in a heap, and his foot had caught in a trailing root, and his ankle was hurt. His face was pale with pain as he dragged himself up the steep bank to the grass, and there he sank down, almost exhausted.

Mornington disappeared down the footpath towards the high-road.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Jimmy Silver. He felt over his ankle savagely.

It was not sprained, but it had had a bad twist, and it hurt him to move it. He set his teeth to keep back a cry of pain as he staggered up.

Away down the footpath towards the heath the pack came in sight, and a loud blast on Tommy Dodd's bugle showed that he had seen Jimmy. The pack was sadly reduced now. Tommy Dodd, Lovell, Van Ryn, and Conroy were all that remained of nearly fifty juniors who had started from Rockwood early in the afternoon.

They were showing signs of wear and tear, too, but they still came on gallantly. Far in the rear, the others were struggling on—such as had not given up the game, and started for Rockwood by short cuts.

Jimmy ran on, and came in sight of the high-road. He clambered over a fence, and dropped into the road—his ankle giving him a sharp spasm as he did so.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Jimmy.

But on he went, at a limping run.

If the pack had been fresh, Jimmy Silver would not have had much chance. But the four who were keeping up were hard hit by the run, and the pace had slackened very much.

Only three came clambering over the fence into the road after Jimmy Silver—Tommy Dodd, Lovell, and Conroy.

Jimmy, with teeth hard set, was running for Rockwood—nearly a mile yet, and Mornington well ahead.

Mornington looked round as he heard the pattering feet behind him. He grinned at Jimmy's white face.

"By gad, you're a sticker, Silver!" he exclaimed, with reluctant admiration. "You're not fed-up yet?"

"You cad!" panted back Silver.

Mornington slackened a little, and Jimmy Silver drew nearer.

"What's the matter with your hoof?" demanded Mornington.

"Hurt, confound you!"

"Oh! Hurt it when you tumbled into the water?"

"Yes; it's your doing!"

"Why not chuck it up?" grinned Mornington. "I shall get home all right—they can't touch me!"

"Rats!"

Mornington laughed, and looked back.

Lovell had dropped out—he was walking now; he hadn't a run left in his sturdy legs. But Tommy Dodd and Conroy, the Cornstalk, were coming on at a pace that equalled that of the hares, though they were not gaining. The run was on the open high-road now—a straight run to Rookwood.

"I could shake them off," said Mornington, breathlessly but coolly. "Better leave it to me, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy lurched in his run at that moment—his ankle had almost failed him. His face grew paler.

But he pulled himself together, and ran on, his teeth shut hard. If it killed him he felt that he could not let the cad of the Fourth beat him now.

Mornington laughed, and kept on. He was drawing ahead again, and he could have drawn farther ahead, but he did not. More than once he glanced at Jimmy Silver, whose face showed only too clearly the pain he was enduring with Spartan fortitude. Perhaps there was a glimmer of remorse in Mornington's look.

"You're done up, Silver," he said at last.

Jimmy did not reply.

"Better chuck it!"

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"There's Rookwood!" said Mornington, as the school came in sight far down the road. "Hallo, they're putting it on!"

Tommy Dodd and Conroy were putting on all they could now, in sight of home. The next hundred yards settled the matter one way or the other. Jimmy Silver exerted himself, and ran on; but it was too much. A sharp cry escaped his lips, and he pitched helplessly forward, and rolled in the dust.

CHAPTER 23.

Playing the Game!

"HERE they come!"

"By gad, Morny's leadin'!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a crowd round the gates

of Rookwood. Smythe & Co. were there in force, to see Mornington come in sole victor, as they hoped. Some of the pack who had given in early and returned home, were there, too. Fifteen or sixteen fellows were waiting to see the finish. And there was a shout as the hares came in sight, with only two of the pack still clinging to the trail.

"It's a win for the hares," said Townsend, "and Morny will do it! Look at Silver; he's quite groggy!"

"Staggerin', by Jove!" grinned Topham.

"Good old Morny!"

"Go it, Morny!"

"There were yells of encouragement to Mornington from his nutty friends and to Jimmy Silver from the other fellows.

"By gad, he's down!" yelled Adolphus Smythe, in great delight.

"Silver's done!"

"Put it on, Morny!" yelled Peele.

Jimmy Silver was down—there was no mistake about that. His damaged ankle had failed him. He rolled helplessly in the road. Mornington ran on.

But he ran on only a few paces. Then he stopped. There was a strange expression on Mornington's face as he turned back to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy sat up, gasping. He tried to rise, but he could not.

"Done?" muttered Mornington.

"Yes, you rotter!" muttered Jimmy Silver, between his teeth. "It's your win—get on, you rotten trickster!"

"Come on, Morny!" yelled Smythe, from the gate.

Mornington did not heed either Jimmy Silver or Smythe. He cast a backward glance at the hounds. Tommy Dodd and Conroy were coming on hard.

Then the dandy of the Fourth stooped over Jimmy Silver.

"Get hold!" he snapped out.

"What?"

"Put your arms round my neck, and hold on!"

"What the dickens——"

"Don't waste time! You can't go on.

I'm going to carry you!" said Mornington coolly.

"You can't!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"I'm goin' to!"

"But——"

"Catch hold, I tell you, or they'll have us!"

Jimmy Silver, in utter amazement, did as Mornington directed. He was too astounded to say anything further.

Probably Mornington himself did not fully understand his own motives. Somewhere within the wilful and wayward breast was the instinct of a true sportsman, though it had not always had full play. He grinned at Jimmy Silver's astounded face as he hoisted him.

"Hold on—we'll beat them yet!" he muttered.

"You could beat them alone——"

"Both or neither! Sink or swim together!" said Mornington. "Now for it!"

Jimmy was half-across his shoulder, holding on. Burdened with the weight of the captain of the Fourth, Mornington ran on, more slowly now. There was a panting shout from Tommy Dodd behind.

"Come on, Conroy! We've got 'em now!"

"You bet!" gasped Conroy.

The two hounds—last survivors of the numerous pack—put on all they could. Mornington was putting on all he could, too. Without his burden, he could have run clear home ahead of the hounds. But, burdened as he was, the result was exceedingly doubtful.

"Of all the howlin' idiots," ejaculated Smythe in amazement, "Morny takes the biscuit! Look at him!"

"The burblin' ass!" said Townsend, in disgust.

The nuts simply blinked at Mornington as he ran on unsteadily under Jimmy Silver's weight. What Morny was doing it for was a puzzle to the nuts. They were not troubled with any sporting instincts. But Morny was doing it, whatever his motives.

Closer and closer came the panting

hounds, gaining at every stride now. Mornington was panting on grimly.

His flushed face had turned pale now. His eyes glittered hard, his teeth were set, showing white between his parted lips. He was under a strain that would have made most of the Fourth "crack up," but he would not yield to it. By sheer force of iron will he drove his aching limbs on.

Closer and closer to the gate, and the crowd opened to give him room to pass through. But the hounds were close behind now.

"Buck up, Morny! Buck up!"

"Put it on! They're at you!"

"Go it, Tommy Dodd"

Tommy Dodd made a catch at the hare, missed, and stumbled, falling on his knees. He had missed by an inch. Conroy rushed on past him.

Mornington did not feel the outstretched hand close behind him, but he knew it was there. With a last terrific effort, he hurled himself forward into the gateway.

Conroy's finger-tips just missed.

Before he could catch again, Mornington was through the gateway of Rookwood, and staggering in.

Bump!

With a crash, the dandy of the Fourth went to the ground, Jimmy Silver with him. He was down at last, utterly spent.

But he was down within the gates, and the race was won!

CHAPTER 24.

Well Won!

"HOORAY!"

"Well run, Morny!"

Conroy staggered against the gates, spent and breathless. It had been a near thing, but a miss was as good as a mile.

A dozen fellows rushed to help up Mornington and Jimmy Silver. Morn-

ington leaned breathlessly on Townsend's shoulder.

"We've done them!" he gasped.

"What the merry dickens did you carry Silver in for?"

Mornington laughed.

"Blessed if I know! I say, Silver, we've done them!"

Jimmy Silver, held up by Oswald of the Fourth, grinned. His feelings were quite cordial towards Mornington at that moment.

"We've done them!" he agreed. "Thanks for getting me in!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"If you'd like to step into the gym after tea—" he said.

"I wouldn't!" said Jimmy quietly. "You're a queer fish, Mornington—a jolly queer fish. But I'm not going to lick you."

"You're welcome to try."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Jimmy Silver.

And he limped away to the School House, leaning on Oswald's arm.

Mornington laughed and walked away with his friends.

An hour later, the Fistical Four gathered to tea in the end study. The Classical chums were all feeling the effects of the hard run, but they were quite merry and bright. Jimmy Silver's ankle was not giving him such pain now, and as he was satisfied that it would be well enough for footer on Saturday, he found it quite easy to "keep smiling."

"So Morny carried you in?" said Lovell. "You did that once at the end of a run, Jimmy. But I'm blessed if I should ever have expected it of Mornington."

"He's a queer fish," said Jimmy.

"Did you have trouble on the run, after all?" asked Raby.

"Ahem!"

"What's the matter with your nose?" grinned Newcome.

"My nose?"

"Yes. It looks as if it's knocked against something hard. So does Morny's eye."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, as a matter of fact, there was a bit of trouble," he said.

"Mornington tried to dish you on the run?"

"Yes," admitted Jimmy.

"He moved that plank in the first place, and he got you on Stuckey's Farm on purpose," said Lovell, with a nod.

"Well, yes."

"And you hammered him?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Then why on earth did he change his mind at the finish, when it was all in his hands, and risk getting caught, to see you through?"

"Because he's a queer fish," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "He acted like a howling cad all along, and then like a real sportsman at the finish. That's the kind of funny animal he is. And I've been thinking, you chaps——"

Jimmy paused.

"About Morny?"

"Yes. Look here, the chap's got the makings of a sportsman in him," said Jimmy Silver. "I've been thinking of giving him a chance."

"In the footer, do you mean?"

"Yes, and generally."

Lovell whistled.

"You know how it turned out last time, Jimmy."

"I know," said Jimmy Silver. "But—but he did play up like a real sport for once. And, if you fellows agree, we'll give him a chance. And I'll play him at Bagshot on Saturday and see how it turns out. What do you say?"

"Any old thing!" said Lovell, with a grin. "I think I know how it'll turn out. Somebody's nose will be punched. But give him a chance, by all means, and we'll see."

And Jimmy Silver decided that he would, though what the dandy of the Fourth would make of his chance remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 25.

Jimmy Has His Way!

"ROT!" That was Tommy Dodd's opinion.

Tommy Dodd pronounced it with considerable emphasis. There was no mistaking Tommy's meaning.

"You see——" began Jimmy Silver.

"Rot!"

"I must say, I agree with Tommy," remarked Rawson. "You must be off your rocker, Jimmy, to think of playing Mornington in the Bagshot match!"

"You see——"

"I don't see," said Tommy Cook, quite in agreement with the other Tommy. "You're a howling ass!"

"Oh, give Jimmy his head!" said Lovell. "He always gets it in the long run, so you're wasting time!"

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"Look here," said Tommy Dodd warmly, "you know Mornington's a rotter; you've said so yourself!"

"Yes; but——" said Jimmy Silver.

"You know he never plays the game!"

"Yes; but——"

"Oh, blow your yesses and butts! Haven't we tried him in the matches before, and how did it turn out?"

"Rotten!" said all the junior football committee together.

"Hasn't he actually tried to give a game away to the enemy, because he was in one of his ratty tempers?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "Why, you said you'd never play him again as long as you were skipper. If you're thinking of playing that unreliable rotter against Bagshot, it's about time you chucked being skipper, by Jove!"

"High time!" agreed Cook. "I'll tell you what, Silver. You chuck it, and let's have a Modern skipper. It will be all the better for Rookwood!"

To which suggestion the Classical members of the committee answered, with one voice:

"Rats!"



Burdened with the weight of Jimmy Silver, Mornington struggled on. He did not feel the outstretched hand of the "hound" close behind him, but he knew it was there. With a last terrific effort, he hurled himself forward into the gateway, and the race was won!

Jimmy Silver looked a little worried.

He had proposed to the committee to give Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth, a chance in the next match. The proposal came as a surprise from Jimmy Silver.

But Jimmy Silver had his reasons.

"I knew you'd be surprised," he agreed. "But lend me your ears instead of your jaws for a bit. Morny's a ripping forward when he likes——"

"And he likes when he happens to be in a good temper," snorted Tommy Dodd; "and if his noble temper happens to be ratty, he will chuck away a game out of sheer rattiness!"

"And he's done it, too," said Cook.

"He can't be relied on, Jimmy," said Rawson, with a shake of the head. "Put him in the eleven, and he'll try to boss the team at once, and the fellows won't stand it, even if you will!"

"I know," said Jimmy. "But——"

"Butting again!" grunted Tommy Dodd.

"Do listen a minute. I know Morny's rather a worm, but he played up like a real Briton over the paper-chase last week——"

"One swallow doesn't make a summer."

"He's shown sometimes that he's got some good points——"

"He generally keeps 'em pretty well hidden."

"My idea," said Jimmy, "is to give him a chance. He's had some pretty stiff lessons, and he's got the makings of a decent chap in him, and he might make the best of a chance."

"He might!" grunted Tommy Dodd. "And suppose you offend his noble lordship, and he decides to chuck away the match to spite you—what!"

"I don't think he would now."

"He did before."

"Well, yes."

"And he would again. I'll tell you what—if you want a new man in the team, there are several Modern chaps I can recommend——"

"Oh, don't begin on that!" said

Jimmy. "Do let a fellow have his say out! I won't play Morny if the committee's against it. I agree to that. I know it's a risk. But I'd like to give him a chance to play up, and I think very likely he would make the best of it. Perhaps I'm a bit too trusting——"

"No perhaps about it!" grunted Tommy Dodd.

"It's the Bagshot match, too," said Cook. "Pankley & Co. will give us a tussle, even if we're at full strength."

"Morny's a ripping winger, if he chooses——"

"He may not choose."

"Well, put it to the vote," said Jimmy Silver resignedly. "I don't insist on it. I'd like to give him a trial, that's all."

"Oh, rats!" said Tommy Dodd. "If you really want to, I agree for one. I don't want to overrule you. But I think you're a chump!"

"Same here," said Cook, with a nod. "I think you're a burbling ass, and I agree!"

"I've agreed already!" grinned Lovell. "It's no good arguing with Jimmy. He could argue the hind legs off a donkey!"

Jimmy Silver smiled.

After all the explosive remarks on the subject, there was not a dissentient voice. The junior football committee agreed that Jimmy Silver was a howling ass, and that he was to have his asinine way.

"Then I'll put his name down," said Jimmy. "The list's got to go up this evening. The fellows want to see it."

"There'll be some surprise when they do!" grinned Lovell.

"And I hope you'll get scalped, Jimmy Silver," remarked Cook. "You can't deny that you deserve it!"

Jimmy Silver grinned, and proceeded to complete the footer list. There were ten names down so far: Conroy, Raby, Van Ryn, Rawson, Jimmy Silver, Doyle, Lovell, Tommy Dodd, Pons, Cook. In the place of the — Jimmy Silver now wrote in the name of Mornington.

"I'll go and get this on the board," he said.

"You can go and eat coke!" grunted Tommy Dodd. "Don't forget I think you're an ass!"

Jimmy Silver nodded agreeably, and quitted the study to post up the notice on the board, many of the Rookwood juniors being very anxious to see it.

And the football committee turned their attention to tea, which was the next item on the programme.

CHAPTER 25.

A Ragging for Jimmy!

"HERE comes the cad!"

Mornington of the Fourth made that remark.

There were a good many of the Classical Fourth gathered about the notice-board in the hall, and prominent among them were Mornington and his friends—Townsend and Topham, Peele and Gower, and Smythe, Tracy, and Howard of the Shell. The nuts of Rookwood were in a group, talking together in low tones, when Jimmy Silver was sighted on the big staircase.

"Yaas, here he comes," said Smythe. "Ready, dear boys?"

"What-ho!" grinned the dear boys.

"Wait till he gets here," muttered Mornington. "We'll collar the cad while he's pinnin' up the notice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll stuff the precious footer list down his back, an' bump him, an' give him the frog's-march along the passage!" grinned Mornington. "That'll let him know what we think of his football eleven!"

And the nuts chortled.

The nuts were in a merry mood. Mornington had arranged that pleasant reception for Jimmy Silver when he came along with the footer list.

Morny had no idea of the purport of the committee meeting in the end study. It never crossed his mind for a moment that the captain of the Fourth

had decided to give him a chance in the Bagshot match.

Mornington, with all his dandified and slacking ways, was a keen footballer, and, if his temper had been a little more reliable, would have been a valuable recruit for the eleven. He declined to admit that it was his own fault that he was excluded, and resented his exclusion bitterly.

On occasions when he had been played, he had calmly assumed the right to act as if he were skipper of the team, which Jimmy Silver could hardly be expected to take patiently. There was not exactly room for the two captains in one eleven. And if his lordly temper happened to be crossed, Morny had gone to the length of obstructing his own side, after which he had been dropped like a hot potato.

But the dandy of the Fourth was far from admitting that he was to blame in the slightest degree. His idea apparently was that whatever he chose to do was to be respectfully tolerated—an idea which he had all to himself.

Jimmy Silver glanced at the nuts as he came along to the notice-board, and smiled a little, thinking of the surprise the notice contained for them. Smythe & Co. were as annoyed as Morny at being passed over, and with still less reason, for they were anything but footballers, and never turned up to practice if they could help it.

"Now, then," murmured Mornington, as Jimmy reached the board.

There was a rush.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jimmy, in surprise.

He was collared on all sides. With a yell, he went down on the floor in the midst of the grinning nuts.

"Yow! Ow!" roared Jimmy, as he smote the floor. "Leggo, you silly asses!"

"Down him!"

"Sit on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington tore the paper from Jimmy's hand, crumpled it, and pro-

ceeded to stuff it down Jimmy's back, while the captain of the Fourth struggled furiously in the grasp of the rest.

Jimmy roared and resisted.

But the odds were too great, and the nuts had it all their own way. The crumpled note was safely deposited inside Jimmy's shirt.

"Frog's-march!" said Mornington.

"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy.

Flynn and Oswald and Jones minor ran up. But they were shouldered off, and Jimmy was dragged up in the grasp of Mornington & Co.

"Up the staircase!" chuckled Mornington. "Buck up, or Bootles will be out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroo! Rescue!"

"Up with him!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Jimmy Silver, struggling wildly, was rushed up the big staircase, bumping on every step as he went.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up the staircase went the crowd of nuts, yelling with laughter, and Jimmy Silver yelling in quite another manner.

They reached the Fourth Form passage, and rushed along towards the end study.

Conroy of the Fourth stepped out of Study No. 3 as he heard the din.

"What the merry dickens——" he began.

"Lend me a hand!" yelled Jimmy.

"My hat!"

The Australian junior rushed to the rescue. But he was bowled over by the rush, Jimmy Silver bumping into him like a battering-ram as he was rushed on.

Conroy went down with a bump and a yell, and the yelling nuts rushed over him, and Jimmy Silver, with his arms and legs flying wildly, was borne along to the end study.

Mornington kicked the door open.

"Hallo!" shouted Lovell, jumping up from the tea-table. "What——"

"Great Scott!"

The football committee were all on their feet, staring.

Jimmy Silver was rushed headlong into the study.

"On the table!" yelled Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Up went Jimmy in the grasp of the nuts, and he was brought down with a crash on the tea-table. There was a terrific smashing and crashing of crockery, in the midst of broken tea-things and scattered provender.

"What——what the dickens——" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Having deposited the captain of the Fourth on the table, the nuts retreated from the study, roaring with laughter. Mornington looked back from the door.

"That's what we think of your merry footer skipper!" he explained.

Then he followed his friends, chuckling.

The football committee gasped. Then they roared. The end study rang with it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 27.

All the Same!

"YOW! Ow, ow, ow!"

Thus Jimmy Silver.

He sprawled dazedly on the wrecked tea-table.

The juniors in the study howled with merriment. They could not help it.

Mornington's outbreak, in reply to Jimmy's including him in the eleven, struck them as comic. Jimmy had carried his point, and Morny's name was down, in spite of the adverse opinion of the whole committee. And this was Morny's reply! The juniors roared.

Jimmy sat up in the butter and jam, and gasped.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tommy

Dodd. "Oh, Jimmy! Oh, you ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooooh! There's nothing to cackle at, you silly asses! Ow! I'm hurt! Yow! Ow, ow!"

The juniors almost wept.

Jimmy rolled off the table, with butter and jam clinging to him. He glared at the hilarious committee.

"You silly cuckoos——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm hurt!"

"Well, you can't be used as a steam-hammer without being hurt!" gasped Cook. "You've smashed all your own crocks."

"And mucked up the tea!" grinned Rawson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that Morny's way of showing his gratitude?" chuckled Lovell. "Oh, Jimmy!"

Raby and Newcome came into the study. They stared at the sight of the wreckage. Then they joined in the roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crumbs!" mumbled Jimmy. "Oh, dear! Of—of course, it was a misunderstanding. Mornington didn't know his name was in the list."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "This isn't funny——"

"Your mistake; it is!" chortled Tommy Dodd.

"Beastly ungrateful of Morny!" howled Lovell. "Oh, Jimmy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Like their cheek to handle a footer captain like that, though!" said Rawson.

"Blow them!" growled Jimmy. "They were all ready for me in the hall, and they rushed me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They had it all cut and dried, of course. The silly asses! Of course, Morny thought he was left out, as usual."

"I suppose he will be left out now?"

grinned Tommy. "Even you won't be ass enough to play him after this. Better play Towle, of our side."

"What are you at, Jimmy?" asked Lovell. Jimmy appeared to be trying to tie himself into a sailor's knot. "Anything down your back?"

"Yes, ass; the footer list. Get it out for me."

There was a fresh explosion of mirth in the study. Lovell extracted the crumpled footer list, gasping with laughter.

Jimmy Silver smoothed it out.

"Cross out Morny's name!" said Raby. "The rotter oughtn't to be played, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver paused.

His handling by the nuts naturally made him very wrathful. He was greatly inclined to take the advice of his chums and scratch Mornington's name.

But he paused. Mornington's action had been cheeky, there was no denying that; but, after all, it had nothing to do with footer. If he had ever been entitled to a chance in the Bagshot match, he was as much entitled to it now as before that outbreak.

Jimmy shook his head.

"You're going to play him still?" demanded Lovell.

"Yes."

"After what he's done?"

"Yes."

"Well, you fathead!"

"Of all the howling asses——" said Newcome.

"This doesn't make any difference," said Jimmy resolutely. "We'd decided to give Mornington a chance."

"You'd decided, you mean."

"Well, I'd decided. I don't see why I should change my mind because of a silly rag."

"Oh, you're an ass!"

"Thanks! Morny plays all the same." "Fathead!"

"I shall post up this notice, just as if nothing had happened," said Jimmy Silver. "I think I ought to."

"We'd better come with you, then," grinned Lovell. "There may be another rag."

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

Jimmy Silver, having made himself a little more tidy, left the study with the paper in his hand. Lovell and Raby and Newcome went with him. The nuts were not likely to attempt another rag with the Fistical Four all together.

The notice was duly pinned on the board, and it was at once read by a crowd of juniors.

There were general exclamations of surprise at the sight of Mornington's name in the list.

"Morny, bedad!" exclaimed Flynn. "Is that Morny's reward for raggin' ye, Jimmy?"

"Rats! Morny's name was in the list before."

"Faith, it's an ass ye are!"

"Morny will think he's ragged you into putting him in, Jimmy," said Dick Oswald.

Jimmy snorted.

"Morny can think what he likes."

And he strode away.

"What about calling on Morny?" asked Lovell, as they passed Study No. 4 on their way back to the end study.

There was a sound of laughter from Study No. 4. The nuts of Rookwood were rejoicing.

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

Never had he felt more inclined to "mop up" the passage with the dandy of the Fourth.

But he decided not.

If Mornington was to play in the eleven on Saturday, giving him a bidding was not a very good preliminary to playing in the match with him.

With rare self-control Jimmy Silver decided to let the "rag" pass.

"After all, it was only a rag," he said. "We've ragged Morny often enough. Let him alone."

"They'll think you're a funk!" snapped Lovell.

"Let 'em!" said Jimmy.

And he went on, and his chums followed.

But Jimmy was looking a little thoughtful at tea in the end study. It was quite possible that the nuts might take the view that Morny's name had been put into the eleven after the rag, and not before—that, in fact, Jimmy had done it from motives of "funk."

It was quite probable that Mornington himself would take that view; and such an impression would do a great deal to spoil the effect of Jimmy's concession. Yet he felt that he ought not to change his settled plans because of a misunderstanding on the part of "swanking" bounders. That was so, but it was very unfortunate, all the same.

Higgs of the Fourth looked in during tea. Alfred Higgs was scowling.

"Look here, Silver!" he exclaimed. "I see you've got that swanking cad Mornington's name in the list."

"Oh, yes!" growled Jimmy.

"What do you mean by it?"

"Can't you guess?" snapped Jimmy. "I mean by it that Mornington plays in the eleven. A name in a footer-list generally means that, doesn't it?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled the bully of the Fourth. "What about me?"

"Oh, blow you!"

"I can play back!" said Higgs angrily. "You can put Raby in the front line, and me at right-back, if you want another man."

"I don't!" said Jimmy.

"Perhaps you'd put me in if I came here with my friends and ragged you?" sneered Higgs. "That seems to be a good way of getting into the eleven."

Jimmy flushed.

"Morny's name was in the team before," he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Higgs rudely. "If it's a ragging you want before you put a chap in the team, I shall know what to do!"

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Well, come and get on with the ragging," he said. "You won't go into the team, but you'll go out of this study on your neck!"

"Perhaps you could put me out!" sneered Higgs.

"Perhaps I could!" assented Jimmy. "I'll try, anyway."

Jimmy's temper was not at its best at that moment, and Higgs' attempt at bullying was the last straw.

He rushed at the bully of the Fourth, and they grasped one another, and executed what appeared to be a waltz round the study.

The waltz ended suddenly.

Alfred Higgs shot through the doorway, and landed in the passage with a bump.

Jimmy slammed the door after him.

He returned to the tea-table with a ruffled brow, which was not made more serene by the chuckles of the tea-party.

But Higgs, at all events, was finished with. The bully of the Fourth apparently gave up the idea of getting into the junior eleven by ragging in the end study, for he did not return.

CHAPTER 23.

Not a Success!

"NEWS for you, Morny!"

Townsend came into No. 4 Study, his face full of excitement.

Mornington and Peele were there, smoking cigarettes. Mornington gave the newcomer an inquiring glance.

"Jimmy Silver sent me a challenge?" he asked carelessly.

"Ha, ha! No. Guess!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders. "Not worth the trouble of guessin'. What is it?"

"He's put you in the eleven!"

"What!"

Mornington jumped up at that.

"Blessed if I could believe my eyes when I saw it!" said Townsend. "But

it's right enough! Your name's down in the list, in Silver's hand."

"By gad!" said Mornington.

His eyes gleamed.

"My hat!" exclaimed Peele. "You went the right way to work, after all, Morny. A raggin' does that cheeky cad good."

"You're not rottin', Towny?" said Mornington.

"Honest Injun!"

"By gad! Fancy Silver toein' the line like that!" said Mornington, with a deep breath. "I meant to make him do the right thing in the long run, but I'm dashed if I expected it so soon! He's been brought to his senses after all!"

"Looks like a funk, an' no mistake!" remarked Peele.

"Not exactly funk—he isn't what you'd call a funk—but he's thought better of it!" grinned Mornington.

"He doesn't want trouble. Well, I don't, either, if I have my rights. I'm goin' to have my rights, Jimmy Silver or no Jimmy Silver! If he chooses to do the right thing, I'll let him alone."

"Anybody else in?" asked Peele. He was referring to the nuts.

Towny shook his head.

"No; only Morny."

"Let's give him another raggin', and he'll put some more of us in!" chuckled Peele.

"That will do for a beginnin'," said Mornington. "We've gained our point, and that's enough. I must say I never thought he'd give way so soon. I was expectin' him to come raggin' here."

Mornington left the study in high good-humour, and hurried down to look at the notice. He found a good many of the Fourth looking at it, too. He grinned with great satisfaction at the sight of his own name in the list, in Jimmy Silver's handwriting.

"Well, that's all right!" he remarked.

"I don't call it right," said Flynn.

"Jimmy Silver could have found a better man. Conroy's as good a goal-

keeper as I am; but I'm a better forward than you are, any day, Morny!"

"So he's got that Cornstalk chap in goal," said Mornington, glancing at the list again. "You've lost your job, Flynn."

"Conroy's all right between the sticks; I'm not grumbling at that," said Flynn. "A chap can't expect to play in every match. But you——"

"I wouldn't stand it," said Mornington. The amiable Morny lost no opportunity of sowing dissension among Jimmy Silver's followers in the Fourth. "Like his cheek to leave you out, Flynn!"

"Well, I don't say that," said Flynn. "Jimmy's skipper. Conroy ought to have a chance."

"Well, yes, in a Form match, if you like," said Mornington. "But in an important match we ought to stick to a tried man."

"Sure, there's somethin' in what ye say!" assented Flynn unsuspectingly. "Sure, Conroy's only a new kid, and I've played in goal nearly every toime, and the fellows think I'm a good goalie."

"First-class," said Mornington, concealing a smile. "I only hope this doesn't mean chuckin' the match away. To be honest, I think it does. It's risky putting a new untried man in goal against a team like Bagshot. I should jolly well raise an objection in your place."

"Well, Jimmy's skipper, you know——"

"A chap has a right to speak," said Mornington. "He's treated you badly, and if you don't speak up for yourself nobody else will."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Flynn. "I'll spake a worrud, and a good worrud, too."

And Flynn started for the end study, to "spake" a word to Jimmy Silver. Mornington returned to his own quarters in a satisfied mood. He had started trouble between the unsuspecting Irish junior and Jimmy Silver, which was Morny's way of showing his

gratitude for finding his own name in the list. It was the kind of gratitude Jimmy Silver might have expected.

Flynn's face was clouded as he presented himself in the end study. Tea was over there, and the guests had left, and the Fistical Four were settling down to preparation.

"A worrud with yez, Jimmy Silver," said Flynn abruptly.

"A dozen if you like," said Jimmy Silver cordially.

"Ye've left me out of the team."

"I told you yesterday you wouldn't be in this time," said Jimmy.

"Sure ye did," said Flynn. "But if you want my opinion——"

"Well, I don't specially," said Jimmy. "But you can go ahead. Get it off your chest."

"It's a big match, the Bagshot match," said Flynn surlily. "I've kept goal for Rookwood a lot of times. You've put an untried man in for one of the big matches, an' left out a good man."

Jimmy Silver gave Flynn a sharp look. Jimmy was no fool, and he could see at a glance that the happy-go-lucky Patrick O'Donovan Flynn had not thought of "grouching" on his own account.

Flynn had taken it quite cheerily the previous day, and never thought of grumbling. And his present "grouse" had been put into his unsuspecting head by somebody else; Jimmy could see that.

The hands were the hands of Esau; but the voice was the voice of Jacob, so to speak. And Jimmy did not need to cudgel his brains to guess who was the Jacob in the case.

"Look here, Flynn," said Jimmy quietly, "don't be an ass. You haven't been treated badly, but some cad has suggested to you that you have. I suppose Mornington's been talking to you."

Flynn started.

"Sure he has, but he only said——"

"He only said enough to lead you

by the nose, and make you come here and row with Jimmy," growled Lovell.

"Sure, I—I——" Flynn stammered.

"And Conroy isn't untried," said Jimmy. "He sticks to practice like glue, and he's a first-rate goalkeeper. You know he is, Flynn."

"Sure, I'm not sayin' he isn't, But——"

"There isn't any but," said Jimmy cheerily. "Let me give you a tip. When a chap tries to make you grouse with your pals, don't listen to him. Punch his nose instead."

Flynn grinned.

"Faith, I think ye're right," he said. "Sure, it seemed all right before Morny spoke to me, and I dare say he was pullin' my leg. I'll go and punch his nose."

And Flynn left the end study, leaving the Fistical Four grinning.

"Morny hasn't changed his ways yet," said Lovell.

"He doesn't seem to have," admitted Jimmy. "I wish the fellow wouldn't be such a rotten cad. Still, I don't think he'll get much change out of Flynn."

Jimmy was right. The Irish junior had gone directly to Mornington's study. Morny gave him a very cordial look as he entered. Morny did not like the breezy, open-hearted Irish junior, but he would have shown him brotherly affection to set him against Jimmy Silver.

"Spoken to Silver?" he asked genially.

"Sure I have."

"What does he say?"

"He's pointed out to me that you've been pulling my leg, you baste," said Flynn unexpectedly, "and he's advised me to punch ye're nose, and faith, I'm goin' to do it."

Mornington jumped up with a yell as Flynn rushed at him. The next moment they were rolling on the study carpet, pommelling furiously.

When Patrick O'Donovan Flynn left the study five minutes later, he was

dabbing his nose and grinning at the same time. He left Mornington sitting on the floor, also dabbing his nose, but not grinning.

CHAPTER 29.

Smythe Has No Luck!

MORNINGTON turned up to practice with the Junior Eleven the next day.

Jimmy Silver was very keen on practice, and a fellow who missed it without good reason had little chance of remaining in the eleven.

Morny had not the slightest doubt that Jimmy had put him in the team to avoid further trouble with him. He could not quite think that the captain of the Fourth was afraid of him—but he believed that his tactics had caused Jimmy to think better of his policy of exclusion.

That he had, in fact, shown Jimmy Silver that he was too dangerous a customer to be passed over. But having gained his point, as he regarded it, Mornington did not attempt to "swank" over the football captain.

He attended practice sedulously, and played a fine game, and some of the other fellows began to think that he was, after all, an acquisition. He could play footer; and if he had learned to play the "game," too, there was no reason why he should not play for Rookwood.

Jimmy was not long in seeing how Mornington looked at the matter; but he gave no sign. If Morny was fool enough to think that Jimmy had been forced into playing him, he could—that was how Jimmy looked at it.

Jimmy was not specially given to being dignified; but he could not descend to argue such a matter out with a purse-proud, self-sufficient bouncer like Mornington. If the dandy of the Fourth had put on "side" in consequence, Jimmy would have dealt

with him sharply enough. But Morny did not.

He was a good deal too cautious for that. Now that he had "squeezed" into the eleven, he meant to keep there, if he could, and use his best efforts to undermine Jimmy Silver on his own ground.

So, though Morny made no secret of his opinion that the long contest had ended in his favour; he was careful not to display his disagreeable qualities on the footer ground; and off the footer ground Jimmy had nothing to do with him.

Jimmy had never supposed it possible before that he and Mornington could pull together in the same team; and the success of the experiment, so far, made him glad that he had made the attempt.

Smythe & Co., who came down to watch the first practice in the hope of seeing a passage at arms between the new recruit and his captain, were disappointed.

After the practice, Jimmy spoke a word of commendation to his new outside right. As Mornington regarded himself as the best junior player at Rookwood, Smythe & Co. did not expect him to take Jimmy's commendation amicably. But he did.

"Glad I've given satisfaction, Silver," Mornington replied, with perfect gravity.

"You'll do!" said Jimmy. "If you play up like that on Saturday, I shall be glad I put you in the team."

"Rely on me!" said Mornington.

And he put on his coat and muffler, and walked away with Smythe & Co. "Seems to be toeing the line, after all," Lovell remarked.

"Oh, he's all right," said Jimmy.

"Mind you don't tread on his toes on Saturday, that's all," grunted Tommy Dodd. "If you do, he'll kick the ball through our goal."

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy.

Smythe & Co. eyed Mornington very curiously as they walked away with

him. They did not understand his tactics.

"You've grown remarkably tame, Morny," Adolphus Smythe remarked. "I expected you to fly out at Silver more than once."

"Not before Saturday," said Mornington.

"Well, he couldn't turn you out. He put you in against his will; you know that."

"I know; but I'm not spoilin' my own chances. The fellows are goin' to see on Saturday that there's a better footballer than Jimmy Silver at Rookwood," said Mornington. "It's my game to toe the line till I'm sure of my ground."

"Blessed if I thought the raggin' would turn out like that," remarked Peele. "That's a game that can be tried more than once. I'd like to play for Rookwood."

Mornington's lip curled.

"Don't you try it, Peele. You won't succeed."

"Why shouldn't I, if you have?" demanded Peele.

"Silver knows he can't keep his end up against me, in the long run. It's different with you."

"Swank!" growled Peele.

"Well, have your own way; but leave me out of your raggin'," said Mornington.

"I backed you up," said Peele wrathfully.

"I know you did, old scout; but that was to get a good player into the team. You're not a good player, you're a rotten bad one."

And Mornington walked away.

"Swankin' rotter!" growled Peele. "Look here, you fellows, you back me up. Silver gave in last time, an' he'd give in again."

"Of course he would," said Smythe. "Why should we be left out of the footer? He's playin' some of the Modern cads. I used to leave 'em out when I was skipper. We'll make him give us a show. We can do it if Morny can."

"Good egg!" said Townsend. "They say Silver had Morny's name on the list before he was ragged. But that's all rot. He wouldn't. Well, if we rag him again, we'll make him give us a chance."

"Done!" said Smythe.

With that scheme in their heads the nuts looked out for Jimmy Silver. Jimmy had gone to the tuckshop for supplies for tea, and he came back with a parcel across the dusky quadrangle. Smythe & Co., intending to strike the iron while it was hot, surrounded him under the beeches.

"Now collar the cad!" said Adolphus.

Jimmy Silver was not taken off his guard this time. As the nuts closed round him, he dropped the parcel, and put up his hands.

Smythe, rushing on, met with a terrific drive from Jimmy's right that laid him on his back, and the next moment Jimmy's left caught Peele under the chin, and he crashed into a beech-trunk with a yell of anguish.

The rest of the nuts jumped back.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Smythe, remaining on the ground. And Peele nursed his chin, and groaned deeply.

Jimmy Silver grinned. He could guess that it was an intended ragging, encouraged by the supposed success of Morny's ragging. The idea tickled him.

"Won't you have some more?" he asked. "Come on, Towny!"

Townsend jumped away.

"You spoiling for a row, Howard?"

"Keep off, you beast!" growled Howard.

"What about you, Tracy?"

Tracy strolled away.

"Well, Gower?"

Gower backed away.

"My hat!" said Jimmy. "Is the circus over already? Well, ta-ta!"

He picked up his parcel, and sauntered on, and the nuts did not raise a hand to stop him. As a matter of fact, the merry band were not much

use without the leadership of the resolute and reckless Mornington. Adolphus Smythe remained on the ground till Jimmy was gone.

"Rotten ruffian!" groaned Adolphus. "I'm not goin' to have anythin' more to do with him. Ow!"

"Yow-ow!" said Peele.

Mornington was in Study No. 4 when Peele came in, still nursing his chin. He grinned.

"How did you get on with raggin' Silver?" he asked.

"Oh, rats!" growled Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peele gave him a savage look.

"I don't believe Silver's playin' you because you ragged him, Morny," he said. "I dare say he had your name down before that, just as Lovell said."

Mornington sneered.

"He'd have taken it out after, I should say, if he had," he remarked. "My dear chap, Silver knows it's no good buckin' against me. But he can walk all over you, and you're a fool to try to tackle him."

And Peele growled, and was silent. But the cheery nuts of Rookwood did not renew their attempt to influence the football captain by means of raggings. Whether or not it had been a success in Morny's case, it was evident that there was no success for them.

CHAPTER 30.

The Cloven Hoof!

"I SUPPOSE we're goin' to have a coach."

"No."

"I'll telephone for a car, if you like."

"I don't like!" said Jimmy Silver curtly.

Mornington frowned.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the Rookwood Junior Eleven were preparing to start for Bagshot School. The distance was not much over a mile, and the football party were to walk; but that did not suit Morny's ideas. Morny didn't want to crawl into

Bagshot, as he expressed it. Money was no object to Morny, and he would willingly have stood a car for the whole party.

But Jimmy Silver had no intention of letting him do anything of the kind. The Rookwood junior club did not want to sponge on Mornington, and they did not want a car.

Club funds were rather low, and economy was the order of the day. No one minded, except Mornington.

"Look here, what's the matter with my telephonin' for a car?" said Mornington angrily. "I'm not goin' to ask you to pay for it."

"Rotten bad form," said Jimmy cheerfully. "We're going to walk."

"I'm not going to crawl into Bagshot on foot."

"You'll stay behind, then."

"Look here——"

Jimmy Silver turned away before Mornington could finish. The dandy of the Fourth gritted his teeth.

Up till now Mornington had been very careful. Even Lovell and Tommy Dodd had to admit that on the footer ground Mornington had given no cause for complaint. But the control he had exercised over his accustomed insolence had been an effort, and Morny's temper was none the better for being suppressed.

It looked as if Morny had come to the end of his prudence, and was going to show the cloven hoof at last.

The footballers came out in a merry crowd, and Mornington joined them sulkily. A good many fellows were walking over with the team, and the nuts joined the crowd. Smythe & Co. entertained the charitable hope that Morny's temper would break out, and cause trouble in the team.

They thought Morny ungrateful. They had backed him up in forcing his way into the eleven, as they supposed, and he had refused to do the same good turn for them. There would have been dry eyes among the nuts if Morny had been turned out after all.

"Nice weather for walkin'," grunted

Smythe. "Look at the mud! I used to stand a coach when I was junior captain."

"I've offered to stand a car!" growled Mornington.

"Yaas, I heard you. Silver sat on you fast enough," chuckled Smythe. "You'd better give him another raggin'. He's gettin' his ears up again."

"I sha'n't stand much more of his rot," said Mornington.

"Don't, old chap," said Adolphus cordially. "I wouldn't!"

Mornington strode on sullenly. His uncertain and insolent temper was all the worse, perhaps, for its long suppression. After all, why should he be sat upon, as Smythe expressed it? He had forced Jimmy Silver to admit him to the team, and that meant that he had, in fact, the whip-hand, if he chose to use it. Morny was fully determined not to stand any more of Jimmy Silver's "rot."

The Rookwood crowd arrived at Bagshot with muddy boots. The footballers did not mind that, but it was little short of a catastrophe in the estimation of Smythe & Co.

Cecil Pankley, the junior captain of Bagshot, greeted Jimmy Silver cheerily. They were deadly enemies and rivals in a sense, but quite good-humoured about it, and "rags" were barred on the occasion of football matches. Pankley glanced rather curiously for a moment at Mornington's sullen face. It was very noticeable in the midst of the otherwise cheery crowd.

The Rookwooders went into their dressing-room and proceeded to change.

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Morny?" Lovell asked impatiently. "What are you scowling about?"

"Go an' eat coke!"

"The Bagshot fellows noticed it, you sulky ass!"

"Yes, cheer up, Morny," said Tommy Dodd. "Your face would frighten a Hottentot!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Mornington.

The Modern junior's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"If you want a thick ear to begin with—" began Tommy Dodd.

"I do, if you can give me one," sneered Mornington.

"Now, then, no ragging!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver interposing. "Get into your clobber, and don't jaw!"

"All serene!" said Tommy Dodd cheerily. "Keep your wool on, old son!"

And Tommy turned his back on the sulky Classical, and proceeded to change. Mornington stood with his hands in his pockets.

"Buck up, Mornington!" said Jimmy Silver, with rather an anxious glance at the outside-right. He wondered whether Morny's evil temper was going to break out again, and half-regretted that he had had his way with the football committee, after all.

"Any hurry?" growled Mornington. "The Bagshot fellows are waiting for us."

"Let 'em wait!"

"We can't let them wait!" said Jimmy sharply. "Don't be an ass! Get changed!"

Mornington gave him an evil look. When his sulky temper was roused, he was reckless of everything else.

"I suppose I can take my own time," he said. "I'm goin' to, anyway."

"Will you get changed, or won't you?" said Jimmy, his own temper beginning to rise. "We can't wait for you!"

"You'll have to!" said Mornington coolly.

Jimmy drew a deep breath. But he controlled his temper with an effort.

"Don't let us have any trouble now, Mornington," he said quietly. "This isn't a time for it. You've got a chance now of playing for Rookwood, and I'd like to see you make the best of it. I put you into the team against the advice of the committee to give you a chance—"

"I know why you put me into the team," said Mornington, shrugging his shoulders. "That's ancient history."

"And why, you rotter?" broke out Lovell savagely.

"Because I couldn't be kept out of it," said Mornington.

"That serves you right, Jimmy!" said Lovell. "I told you how it would be. The silly rotter thinks he drove you into playing him."

"Never mind what he thinks, so long as he plays up," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "That's all we want."

"It's true," said Mornington coolly. "You've tried every dodge of keepin' me out of the Eleven, an' you put me in at last because you knew you had to. Everybody knows that."

"Everybody's made a little mistake then, if they know that," said Jimmy. "If you're not ready to turn out with the rest, you don't play to-day, Mornington."

Jimmy's tone was very quiet, but hard as steel; and Mornington considered it best to get changed. He was ready to turn out only a few moments after the others, and the Eleven went out together. But Jimmy Silver was in a somewhat anxious mood.

The improvement in Morny had evidently not lasted; he was showing the cloven hoof again, and there was no telling what would come of it. And Jimmy Silver, by this time, was feeling inclined to kick himself for having brought Mornington to Bagshot at all.

CHAPTER 31.

The Same Old Morny!

PANKLEY won the toss, and gave Rookwood the wind to kick off against. The ball rolled, and the game started.

There was a crowd of Bagshot fellows round the ropes, and a dozen or more Rookwooders who had come over. Smythe & Co. stood in a little group near the Rookwood goal, looking on in pleased anticipation. They knew the danger-signals in Morny's face.

"Mornny's in one of his rotten tempers," Smythe remarked to his chums. "I know that gleam in Mornny's eye. Sulky cad!"

"Silly ass if he mucks up his own chances by playin' the goat now," remarked Tracy.

"Well, Silver was fairly forced to play him; he wouldn't have if he could have helped it," said Adolphus sagely. "Mornny was too much for him."

"I've been thinkin' that over, an' I'm not so jolly sure of it," said Peele. "Lovell said Mornny's name was down before that raggin'."

"Oh, that's rot!"

"Silver's kept him out all the season," said Gower. "Why should he let him in of his own accord? Mornny gave him too much trouble in every way, and he saw he had to toe the line. What surprises me is that Mornny has been so jolly civil to him all the week. But he was bound to break out sooner or later, and take the bit between his teeth."

"If this match goes through without a row, I'll eat my Sunday topper," said Adolphus. "An' if there's a row in the team, Rookwood will be licked, an' serve 'em jolly well right."

"Blessed if I wouldn't put half-a-quad on Bagshot, if I could find a taker!" grinned Tracy.

"You'd win, dear boy."

And the nuts watched the game with much more attention than they generally bestowed on a footer-match; or, indeed, upon anything but their neckties.

Mornington was playing up well, so far.

The Bagshot men had started with a hot attack, which came through to goal; but Conroy, between the posts, kept the leather out. The game went away to midfield, and struggled from there towards the Bagshot citadel, and then back to midfield again. The two teams seemed to be remarkably well matched, and it looked like anybody's game.

Rookwood's chance came at last, however. Jimmy Silver, at centre-half, received the ball from Raby, and sent it to Tommy Dodd, the centre-forward. Tommy sent it out to Lovell, inside-right, as Pankley rushed him down. Lovell had a chance for a clear run in, and he started merrily. The backs were rushing in, but Lovell judged well; he had time.

"Pass, you fool!" shouted Mornington from the wing.

Mornny evidently did not judge Lovell's chance to be so good as the inside-right supposed.

Lovell did not heed. He ran the ball on, beat the backs, and drove the leather at the goal. It was a good shot, but Putter of Bagshot drove it out with his fist, and Poole cleared away to midfield.

There was a rush for the ball, and outside-right swerved up to inside-right and shouted:

"You confounded ass! Why didn't you pass?"

"Shut up!" snapped Lovell.

"I should have put it in."

"Will you shut up?" roared Lovell angrily.

"You're throwin' the game away," said Mornington. "A kid in the Second Form would have known better."

Lovell manfully resisted a powerful inclination to plant his fist full in the outside-right's face, and send him spinning into touch. It was no time for a row. The forwards were struggling for the ball. It came out of the press.

"On the ball, Lovell!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

But Lovell did not need the shout; he had seen the chance, and was on the ball. As he ran it up the field against the wind, it was hooked away from his foot, Lovell at the same time being elbowed off. But it was not a Bagshot player who had robbed him of the ball; it was the Rookwood outside-right!

Lovell staggered, and almost fell, purple with rage.

Mornington was running the ball in, and by sheer luck he dodged the backs and kicked for goal, and Putter missed the leather by a hair's breadth.

"Goal!"

The ball was in the net.

"Goal!" roared Smythe. "My hat! What a goal!"

"Bravo, Morny!" yelled the nuts.

Mornington swung round from goal, with a vaunting air.

Lovell was stuttering with rage.

Jimmy Silver had seen it all. His brow was black as he strode up to Mornington. A goal was a goal; but rotten and disorderly play which, by luck, had ended in a goal was not what Jimmy wanted in the Rookwood team.

"You utter idiot!" panted Jimmy. "What do you mean?"

"Isn't it a goal?" sneered Mornington.

"Yes, it's a goal, by a fluke——"

"It was a good goal!"

"What do you call it?" exclaimed Jimmy. "Do you think that's how to play footer—getting out of your place and taking the ball away from another man? Are you out of your senses?"

"Lovell was goin' to muck it up, an' I prevented him," said Mornington insolently. "I'd do the same again."

Jimmy clenched his hands hard.

"Do the same again, and you go off this ground without finishing the match!" he said, between his teeth. "Get to your place!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders and went to his place as the team lined up after the goal. Lovell, in his excitement, caught Jimmy by the arm.

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"Easy does it, old chap" said Jimmy. "I'm sorry I put that rank outsider in the team. Can't be helped now."

"But I'm not going to stand——"

"Keep your temper, for the sake of the game."

"I'll keep my hands off him, if I can!" stuttered Lovell. He glared at outside-right as they lined up, and outside-right gave him a sneering smile in return.

"Better let me have the ball next time!" called out Mornington. "You're not going to throw away chances while I can stop you, Lovell."

Lovell said nothing; but he clenched his hands till the nails drove into his palms. He was trying to control his temper, for the sake of the game, but it was hard work.

The goal had been a certainty for Lovell; and Mornington had brought it off by a fluke—and such play was not likely to be followed by another success. If there was any more of it, it was possible that there would be a "scrap" in the Rookwood front line.

And it was pretty certain that there would be more of it. Mornington's look showed that he intended to go on as he had started.

"Morny's breakin' out," chuckled Smythe to his friends. "Did you ever see such play? Nearly spoiled a goal for his own side through swank. I fancy Morny is goin' to get scalped this afternoon!"

"What a game!" chortled Townsend.

And the nuts watched with delighted anticipation. Mornington's variety of the great winter game was entertaining, at least.

The Bagshot men, with the wind behind them, were attacking now, hotly. The wind was keen and strong, and it gave them an advantage. The attack came right up to the visitors' goal, and shots rained in on Conroy. The Australian junior was beaten at last, and the Bagshot crowd roared:

"Goal!"

Then came half-time, with the score equal. Mornington came up to Jimmy Silver in the interval. His manner was insolence itself.

"You'd better speak to Lovell, Silver," he said.

"What do you mean?" growled Jimmy.

"I suppose you saw that he was tryin' to keep the ball away from me all the time? I warn you that I'm not standin' it!"

"That's enough!" said Jimmy curtly. "I was a fool to trust you, after what I know of you! I shan't be such an ass again in a hurry!"

"You mean you won't play me again?" grinned Mornington. "In that case look out for another raggin'. You can't keep me out of the team, an' you know it!"

Jimmy's eyes blazed.

"Do you want to be sent off the ground now?" he asked.

Mornington laughed.

"Oh, don't be funny!" he said. "An' remember what I've told you—if Lovell tries to spoil my chances, there'll be trouble. I'm goin' to win this match for Rookwood."

Mornington sauntered away before Jimmy could reply. Jimmy opened his lips, but closed them again. Sending Mornington off was playing a man short, and that was not to be risked against a team like Pankley & Co., except in case of dire necessity. Jimmy felt that he had brought it upon himself, and that it was up to him to understudy the celebrated Job in the way of being patient. And he did.

The whistle went for the resumption of play. The wind was behind the Rookwooders now, and it was freshening. They had held their own with the wind in their faces, and now that it was behind them their hopes were high. But for the uncertainty of the outside-right, Jimmy Silver would have counted on a win. But there was no telling what Mornington would do next.

Mornington did not leave his comrades long in doubt, however. Playing the game was an idea that did not seem to enter his head at all. Between swank and sulky temper, Morny was at his worst now.

The ball came out to him, and he ran it up along the touch-line. It was easy to see that he intended to make a reckless run for goal, in the hope of bringing off another dramatic shot, instead of passing in, as he should have done. He had not the slightest chance

of getting through, as a less conceited player would have seen at once. The Bagshot defence could see it, and they were grinning.

"Pass!" yelled Lovell, keeping pace.

"Pass!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Do you hear, Mornington? Pass! Pass!" Mornington heard, but he did not heed.

He ran on, dribbling the ball.

Poole, grinning, charged him fairly over, and the ball went anywhere. Mornington sat down, gasping.

The leather, lifted into the air by a Bagshot back, sailed away over the half-way line.

"Well cleared! Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bagshot crowd.

"What a game!" chuckled Smythe. "Oh, my only Aunt Matilda! What a game!"

Jimmy Silver was too busy to deal with Mornington for the moment. Bagshot were attacking fiercely, and, in spite of the Rookwood defence, they drove through and scored.

Then Jimmy Silver strode up to Mornington, his face set and his eyes gleaming.

"Get out!" he said.

Mornington eyed him insolently.

"Jokin'?" he asked.

"Get off the field!"

"Rats!"

"Will you go?" panted Jimmy Silver.

"I order you off!"

"Goin' to play a man short?" sneered Mornington.

"Yes."

"Oh, don't be a cheeky ass!" said Mornington. "You can't keep me out! Do you want some more raggin' before you come to your senses? You put me into the team against your will, an' you'll do it again."

Jimmy Silver did not answer. He had no more words to waste on Mornington. He strode right at him with his fists clenched.

"Ah! Would you?" hissed Mornington.

He threw up his hands. They were

knocked aside, and Jimmy's right, clenched hard, was planted fairly between his eyes. Mornington gave a gasping howl, and staggered over the touch-line, and sprawled in touch.

"Take that cad away, Flynn!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Arrah! I'm ye're man!" grinned Flynn.

He ran forward and dragged Mornington off the ground.

The footballers lined up again without Mornington. Most of the Bagshot fellows were grinning.

A man short, Rookwood put up a gallant fight, but had it not been for the freshening wind blowing into Bagshot faces they would have fared badly. As it was, they held their own, and towards time Lovell sent the ball into the net, and the score tied.

That was the last goal taken. The match ended in a draw, and, under the circumstances, Jimmy Silver & Co. felt that they were lucky to draw.

Smythe & Co. had walked home with Mornington, with many ironical condolences.

When the footballers came in, they found Mornington at Rookwood, with a swollen nose and a darkening eye. He gave them a ferocious look, but that was all.

It had dawned upon Mornington at last that it was not, after all, the ragging that had made Jimmy Silver give him a trial in the footer eleven. It had dawned upon him rather too late. He had had his chance, and he had thrown it away. He was not likely to have another.

At tea in the end study, when the Fistical Four were discussing the forthcoming match with St. Jim's, Lovell inquired hilariously whether Jimmy was going to play Mornington. To which Jimmy Silver morosely replied: "Fathead!"

From which it was to be inferred that he was not.

CHAPTER 32.

Tommy Dodd's Idea!

"I 'VE got it!"

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth grinned as he made that announcement.

And Cook and Doyle, his loyal chums, said simultaneously:

"Go it, Tommy!"

And the half-dozen other Modern juniors gathered in Tommy Dodd's study echoed:

"Go it!"

Thus encouraged, Tommy Dodd went it:

"You know those classical duffers have got up a fatheaded dramatic society they call the 'Classical Players'—a rotten imitation of our Stage Society——"

"They started the Classical Players first," remarked Towle, rather unfortunately.

Tommy Dodd paused, to bestow a glare on Towle.

"You silly ass, Towle!"

"Well, they did, didn't they?" protested Towle.

"Order!"

"Dry up!"

"Oh, all right!" said Towle. "Only I don't see how it was an imitation if they started first!"

"Towle had better go and join the Classical side," suggested Cook sarcastically.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Towle indignantly. "I was only pointing out——"

"I'll go on, if Towle doesn't mind shutting up before bed-time!" said Tommy Dodd, in a tone of patient politeness.

"Oh, rats!" grunted Towle. "I only——"

"Order!"

"Cheese it!"

"Pile in, Tommy!"

Towle gave another grunt, and subsided into silence, and Tommy Dodd went on victoriously:

"The Classical Players is a rotten,

spoofing, spurious, imitation of the Modern Stage Society——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And it's no good——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And it's up to us to see that the Classical duffers don't make themselves and Rookwood ridiculous by playing the giddy ox in what they call amateur theatricals——"

"Oh!"

"Moreover, they mucked up our last play with their pea-shooters——"

"The rotters!"

"Jimmy Silver and his fatheaded pals came over in a gang and did it! Well, I've found that the Classical Piffers——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are getting up a new play, and they have their rehearsals in the box-room. According to what I hear, it's something quite new—a modern play, but on Shakespearian lines, and the silly chumps seem to think an awful lot of it——"

"Silly asses!"

"They lock themselves in the box-room for rehearsals, in case we should raid them and interrupt," continued Tommy Dodd. "I scouted round last evening, but there was no getting at them. But I've been thinking it over, and I've got it!"

"Go it, Tommy!"

"They've shoved all the boxes and trunks to one end of the room, to give 'em space for their fatheaded rehearsals. Well, all those boxes and trunks are empty, of course."

"Of course!" said Towle. "Boxes in the box-room generally are empty."

"Shut up, Towle!"

"On the ball, Tommy!"

Tommy Dodd gave the interrupter a withering look, and proceeded:

"My idea is to sneak along to the box-room on the Classical side, and take cover there some time before the rehearsal. Then they can come in and rehearse——"

"Can't take cover behind the boxes," said Towle. "They're not piled up; only shoved to one end of the room."

"Oh, sit on him, somebody!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "We're not going to ambush behind the boxes, ass but in the boxes, fathead!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's the idea," said Tommy Dodd; "and with us in the boxes, the Classical asses can rehearse their giddy play that they're keeping so dark, and we shall hear every blessed word——"

"Hear, hear!"

And then, when I whistle, we come out and mop them up!" said Tommy Dodd. "We'll make an example of the whole gang——"

"Bravo!"

"And Jimmy Silver can go home and hide his diminished napper. The Classical Piffers have got to be sat on—heavy! We're the fellows to sit on them!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll take a rope along, and tie 'em all up in a row!" pursued Tommy Dodd. "We'll tie up their right legs, and make them hop out——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if that don't make Jimmy Silver sing small nothing will. Now, they're meeting at seven, and it's half-past six now. You've got to wedge along to their old box-room one at a time, without being seen."

"Easy enough if we can get there," said Towle. "What about the door in the passage leading to their side, though? It's kept locked."

"Fathead!"

"Well, I can't get through a keyhole, for one!"

"Do you think I hadn't thought of that, ass? Leggett's got a key to that door."

"Oh, good!"

"Jolly good wheeze, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle heartily. "It's a janius ye are, Tommy darling!"

"Bravo, Tommy!"

"Right-ho!" said Tommy, much gratified by this hearty approval from his loyal followers. "We shall make the Classical asses look small this time, and no mistake! I'll go first, and you come after me, one at a time, a few minutes after one another."

And Tommy Dodd quitted the study.

CHAPTER 33.

The Rehearsal!

"TIME for the rehearsal!" remarked Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, as seven rang out from the clock-tower of Rookwood.

"Ready!" said Lovell and Raby and Newcome together.

The chums of the end study were quite keen on the new play, which had been planned, written, re-written, and revised in the end study. It was a stunning play, as all the Classical Players were agreed. It was really Jimmy Silver's idea.

The Classical players had done Shakespeare many a time and oft—in first-rate style, as they all agreed.

But they agreed, also, that something a bit more modern was wanted by way of a change, and Jimmy Silver had designed a drama on Shakespearian lines, dealing with modern events.

Hence the play, which was written upon the lines of "Julius Cæsar"—an old favourite with the Classical Players, and which they knew by heart.

The Classics all agreed that the idea was a real "corker," and they were very careful to keep it to themselves. For their deadly rival, Tommy Dodd of the Modern side, would certainly have "lifted" that stunning idea, if he had had wind of it.

"I've been thinking," remarked Raby.

"Don't!" said Jimmy.

"But it's the First of April in a few days!"

"Never mind your birthday now, old scout!"

"You silly ass!" roared Raby. "It isn't my birthday."

"My mistake!" said Jimmy Silver blandly. "Judging by appearances"

"Oh, ring off, you funny ass! I was thinking that we ought to take a rise out of the Modern cads on the First of April."

"So we ought," said Newcome. "We oughtn't to let that date pass without spoofing Tommy Dodd. And I've got an idea, too."

"You starting ideas?" said Jimmy Silver, in surprise.

"Fathhead! I've got an idea for dishing those bounders on the First. What about getting them to a spoof footer match?" said Newcome. "If we could think of a way of fixing it up, and sending them somewhere to play footer with a team that doesn't exist!"

"How?"

Newcome sniffed.

"That's got to be thought out, of course. It would make a ripping wind up of the footer season, if we could work it."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Might think over it," he agreed.

"But never mind the First of April now. The rehearsal's the order of the day. Here's Oswald."

"Ready?" said Dick Oswald, looking into the study.

"You bet!"

"The other chaps are going in," said Oswald.

"Right-ho!"

The Fistical Four followed Oswald to the box-room.

The gas was lighted there, and the blinds were drawn. Flynn and Conroy, Rawson and Pons and Van Ryn were already there. The boxes and trunks having been shifted to one end

of the room, there was ample space for the rehearsals of the Classical Players—a study not being quite large enough.

Jimmy Silver turned the key in the lock after they had entered.

It was always necessary, on such occasions, to take precautions, in case of a raid by the rivals on the other side of Rookwood. The warfare between Classics and Moderns seldom slept.

The box-room was empty when the Classical Players came in; at all events, it looked empty. But, as with the jam in the story, there was more in it than met the eye.

"Well, here we are!" said Rawson. "I say, Jimmy, the Modern cads have got on to it that there's something on. Tommy Dodd's awfully curious about it."

"He won't guess the idea in a month of Sundays," said Jimmy Silver. "It isn't everybody who's got brains enough to think of a parody of Shakespeare. Tommy Dodd won't know anything about it till the play comes off in the Form-room. Hallo! Who's that sniggering?"

"Not a dress rehearsal this time?" asked Oswald.

"No; we haven't got the stuff ready yet. Next time. I hope you fellows have got your lines by heart?"

"Pretty fair, I think," said Conroy. "You haven't given me such a lot. This edition of 'Julius Cæsar' won't take more than a quarter of the proper time."

"Well, we don't live in the spacious days of Queen Bess, as old William did. Life's short, you know, and fellows won't sit down to a play for more than an hour, if they can help it. It isn't like the Sixth Form play on Speech Day, when chaps have to stick it out whether they like it or not. We give the whole bizney in half a dozen telling scenes. It's an improvement."

"I've no doubt Shakespeare would think so," grinned Oswald.

"Never mind Shakespeare now," said Jimmy Silver. "We can give Shakespeare a rest for a bit. He's dead, you know."

"I believe I've heard a rumour to that effect," said Conroy, with a thoughtful look. "Now, where did I hear that rumour?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be funny, Conroy. This isn't a time for jokes," said Jimmy Silver severely. "We shall simply knock the Moderns with this play. Who ever thought of producing a real live modern play on Shakespearian lines?"

"Nobody outside the end study," said Lovell.

"And nobody outside the end study seems to be getting' much of the play, be jabbers!" remarked Patrick O'Donovan Flynn. "You fellows have it jolly nearly all among you."

"I've noticed that," grinned Oswald.

"Well, that had to be so," explained Jimmy Silver. "We couldn't have so many characters as Shakespeare. The thing had to be boiled down a bit; and, of course, for the leading parts, the best actors in the Classical Fourth had to be selected. That was only sense."

"Oh! You were going to select the best actors for the principal roles?" asked Conroy.

"Exactly."

"Then why don't you?"

Jimmy Silver's reply to that question consisted of a glare, while the rest of the Classical Players chuckled.

"I've warned you not to be funny, you ass!" he said. "Let's get on with the bizney. We're going to give the Moderns the kybosh with this play, and make the Fifth Form sing small with their precious Thespian Society, as they call it. Mind you don't let Tommy Dodd get wind of it, that's all. Who was that sniggering?"

"Oh, get on!" said Lovell.

"I thought I heard someone sniggering," said Jimmy Silver, looking round suspiciously. "Never mind. Let's get on! Lend me your ears."

"Is that the play?" asked Conroy innocently.

"No, fathead, that isn't the play! I'm just trying to draw your fat-headed attention. Now, I'll give you one of my speeches."

"What for?"

"To show you how it goes, ass! Who's stage-manager of this theatrical company, I'd like to know?" said Jimmy Silver warmly. "Now, where do I begin? If you don't leave off sniggering, Conroy—"

"I wasn't sniggering!"

"Well, somebody was. This is a rehearsal, not a sniggering match! Now, shut up and listen!"

Jimmy Silver sorted out his script, and prepared to deliver his lines, and the Classical Players prepared to listen to him, with varying expressions of resignation upon their faces.

"Friends, Britons, countrymen, lend me your ears!" began Jimmy.

"Sure that sounds like Shakespeare himself, bedad!" said Flynn.

"Of course it is, fathead!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Haven't I told you this play is on Shakespearian lines, adapted to modern events!"

"But sure, people don't spake like that in real life!"

"Ass! People can speak how they like in a play!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "You dry up, and listen!"

"Mark, learn, and inwardly digest," grinned Conroy.

"On the bawl!" said Pons.

And Jimmy Silver restarted, after the interval, so to speak.

"Friends, Britons, countrymen, lend me your ears!"

I come to call my countrymen to arms!

Too long worshipping the name of
Peace,

We lay unarmed. Shall the proud
And noble flag on which no sun has
set

Retreat before the Dictator's veiled
threats?

Perish the thought! The British
Empire stands.

Firm, and four-square to all the
winds that blow."

"Bedad, and it's foine," said Flynn, as Jimmy paused. "But where do we come in, Jimmy darling?"

"That's where you cheer!" explained Jimmy. "You yell 'Hurrah!' at that bit."

"Oh, Hurrah!" roared Flynn.

"What next?"

"Then I go on!"

"Oh, do you, bedad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I do!" roared Jimmy Silver. "It's rather a long speech—the best thing in the play, really. Dry up!"

The Classical Players dutifully dried up, and the captain of the Fourth, having resumed his dramatic attitude, was about to recommence, when there came a sudden and startling interruption.

There was a sharp whistle in the box-room, and as if moved by the same spring, the lids of several boxes and trunks flew up.

From the boxes and trunks Modern juniors jumped like jacks-in-the-box.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"My hat! What the——"

"Great Scott!"

"Go for 'em!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Down with the Classics!"

And there was a rush.

CHAPTER 34.

A Classical Procession!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were completely taken by surprise by the enemy.

The sudden and unexpected charge

of the Moderns bowled them fairly over.

Jimmy Silver went down, and Tommy Dodd sat on his chest, and the rest were bowled over by the Moderns like skittles, and a grinning Modern sat on each of them to keep them down.

Like Cæsar of old, Tommy Dodd came, and saw, and conquered.

The Moderns were there in force. The odds were against the Classics. And the surprise did the rest.

Almost before Jimmy Silver & Co. knew what was happening, they were pinned down, and the Moderns were yelling with triumph over them.

"A clean sweep!" chuckled Cook.

"Hurray!"

"You silly chumps!" roared Lovell. "Lemme gerrup, and I'll pulverise you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"So that's the merry secret, is it?" grinned Tommy Dodd, as Jimmy wriggled under his weight. "That's the merry play that's going to knock spots off creation. I don't think much of it myself!"

"Rotten!" agreed Towle.

"Jimmy Silver does all the jaw, and the other asses stand round like a lot of moulting hens!" grinned Doyle. "Do you call that a play intirely?"

"Still, we'll take it in hand, and see whether we can make a play of it," said Tommy Dodd considerably.

"Oh, you Modern rotters!" groaned Jimmy. "Just like a Modern trick, hiding yourselves in the trunks——"

"Yes; a Classical wouldn't have the brains to think of it!" agreed Tommy Dodd. "This is where we smile."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trot out the rope, Lacy!"

Lacy trotted out the rope.

"Look here!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"Dry up, dear boy! You're dead in this act! Tie 'em up, Lacy!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Lacy.

The Classical players struggled desperately.

But it was no use. They were too firmly held. They were dealt with one by one, and their wrists were tied behind their backs.

Then they were allowed to rise to their feet.

"Look here! What's the game, you fatheads?" demanded Jimmy Silver savagely.

"You are!" chortled Tommy Dodd. "Stick 'em in a row!"

"Oh, you rotters!"

The Classics were slammed into a file, Jimmy Silver at the head, and the other fellows behind. They were secured one behind the other by several cords, every fellow's wrists being tied to those of the fellow behind him, leaving them just room to walk.

The Classics almost raved.

But there was no help for it. They were in the hands of the Philistines, and they had to stand it.

"Don't they look a pretty set?" said Tommy Dodd admiringly. "You'll find the paper caps in the box, Cooky!"

Tommy Cook brought out the paper caps. They were fool's caps, and they were arranged on the heads of the Classics.

Then Tommy Dodd groped in the chimney for soot. With the soot he daubed the noses of the Classical juniors one after another.

Those who opened their mouths to remonstrate received a little of the soot in the opening, and thereafter they closed their lips and endured in silence.

"Unlock the door!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, you rotter!" stuttered Jimmy Silver. "You're not going to send us out like this?"

"I rather think we are!"

"Look here, you Modern worm——"

"March!" rapped out Tommy Dodd.

"I'm not going a step!" roared Jimmy Silver furiously.

"Anybody got a pin?"

"Ha, ha! Here you are!"

"Are you going to march, Jimmy?"

"No!" yelled Jimmy. "Oh, my hat! Keep that pin away you beast. Yaroooh!"

Jimmy Silver marched; there was no arguing with a pin at close quarters. His comrades followed; there was no choice about that. Like a long serpent winding its length away, the file of Classics "processed" out of the box-room and into the Fourth Form passage.

The Moderns followed them with yells of laughter.

Never had the Classical Players presented so absurd an appearance. The funniest comedies they had represented on the amateur stage were nothing to this.

A howl of laughter in the Fourth-Form passage greeted them.

Mornington & Co. were chatting near the landing, and they yelled at the sight of the procession, in fool's caps and with blackened faces.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, by gad!" gasped Townsend.

"Come and help us, you cackling chumps!" bellowed Lovell.

"Keep off!" rapped Tommy Dodd.

"Don't interfere with the procession!"

"Ha, ha!" roared Mornington.

"We're not goin' to interfere. Is this a rehearsal of somethin' specially funny, Jimmy Silver."

"A dress rehearsal, by gad!" chortled Topham. "I must say your cap suits you, Silver."

"Quite the thing, by gad!" chuckled Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no help from the nuts of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver & Co. paraded down the corridor in unhappy procession.

The yells of laughter soon drew the rest of the Classical Fourth to the spot. Jones minor and Hcoker rushed to the rescue, but they were hurled off by the Moderns.

Most of the fighting-men of the Classical Fourth were tied up in the soot-noosed procession, and Mornington & Co. remained neutral, and Jones and his friends were quite outnumbered. There was no rescue for the unhappy victims of Tommy Dodd's jape.

"Take 'em down to the Common-room!" suggested Towle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! We don't want to run into Bootles," said Tommy Dodd. "Bootles mightn't see the joke. You know these Form-masters."

"Right wheel, Jimmy Silver!"

"Oh, you rotter!"

Jimmy had to turn, and the procession wound round from the landing, and marched back along the passage, amid shrieks of laughter.

"When father says turn, we all turn!" chortled Doyle.

"Look out! Here comes Bulkeley!" yelled Peel suddenly.

"Oh, my hat!"

The yells of laughter had brought the captain of Rookwood upstairs. The Moderns vanished down the passage leading to Mr. Manders' House like magic. They had disappeared by the time Bulkeley of the Sixth came striding on the scene.

The captain of Rookwood gasped at the sight of the wriggling procession.

"What the—what the—what the Dickens——" he stuttered.

The procession groaned in spirit.

"I—I say, Bulkeley——" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"What do you mean by this?" roared Bulkeley. "What have you young idiots tied yourselves up like this for?"

"We—we—we didn't——"

"It's a rehearsal of the Classical Players, Bulkeley!" chuckled Mornington. "They're going to stagger humanity with it!"

"It isn't!" roared Lovell. "We've been tied up! Oh, crumbs!"

Bulkeley's face relaxed.

"Oh! Some of your rot with the Moderns, I suppose?" he said.

"Ahem!"

"But this is rather past a joke," said Bulkeley, frowning. "You can be heard nearly all over the house. Stop it at once, and go and clean your faces!"

"Please we—we can't!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "We're tied up!"

"Cut them loose, then!" rapped out Bulkeley to Mornington & Co., and the nuts of the Fourth unwillingly obeyed. Mornington & Co. were quite enjoying the discomfiture of Jimmy Silver & Co.

Bulkeley strode away, grinning in spite of himself. Jimmy Silver & Co. were set loose at last. They scuttled away to the dormitory to wash off the soot, followed by a howl of laughter from the other Classics.

In the dormitory Flynn shook a set of knuckles under Jimmy Silver's nose.

"Ye omadhaun!" he roared.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Ye call yerself a leader intoirely, and ye lead us into this!" roared Flynn.

"Jimmy, you chump!" yelled Lovell.

"Jimmy, you ass!"

"Jimmy, you duffer!"

"You grouching chumps!" exclaimed the exasperated Jimmy. "You didn't see the Modern cads in the trunks any more than I did!"

"We're not leader!" howled Flynn. "Faith, and it's a precious leader ye are!"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Jimmy.

The Classics agreed that it was all Jimmy Silver's fault. A leader's place certainly was not to lead his devoted followers into a trap, and to have them "guyed" unmercifully by the enemy. Jimmy Silver retreated from the dormitory with a heightened colour. When

his chums joined him in the end study, Jimmy met them with a glare.

"Of all the asses——" began Lovell.

"Chuck it!" said Jimmy. "I'm fed up!"

"Mornington's proposing to get a new captain for the Fourth," growled Raby. "Blessed if I don't think it's a good idea!"

"This study has been let down," said Newcombe, with a shake of the head. "You will really have to brighten up a bit, Jimmy."

"Was it my fault, you chumps?" howled Jimmy.

"Well, you're leader."

"Oh, rats!"

And with that the Fistical Four sat down to their prep.

CHAPTER 35.

Never Say Die!

"I 'VE thought it out!"

Jimmy Silver made that announcement in the end study a couple of days later. And Lovell and Raby and Newcome replied, with one voice:

"Rats!"

The great leader of that famous study was no longer apparently the oracle he had been. Never had the prestige of the end study been at so low an ebb.

There was no doubt that the Moderns had scored, and even Jimmy had to admit it. All Rookwood had laughed over the procession of the Classical Players. Really, Jimmy Silver could not have been expected to spot that cunning ambush of the enemy in the box-room. But the Classics felt that somebody must be to blame, and they agreed that Jimmy Silver was that somebody.

A scapegoat was required, and the leader of the Classics was the scapegoat. There wasn't a Classical junior at Rookwood who was not of opinion that Jimmy Silver would have to be

"scrapped" if he didn't brighten up a bit.

The great drama planned by the Classical players had been dropped. Any performance of it would have been too reminiscent of the ridiculous procession in which the players had figured.

But Jimmy Silver was not worrying about that. He had been thinking out ways and means of dealing with the victorious enemy, and restoring the damaged prestige of the end study.

Having thought it out, he was proceeding to communicate it to his chums after tea, when they greeted him with the unanimous reply of "Rafs!"

"Don't you do any thinking, Jimmy," advised Lovell, as the captain of the Fourth glared at him. "Tain't in your line, you know."

"Look here, you ass, it's a wheeze!"

"Take it away, and boil it!"

"Yes; let's have tea," said Newcome.

"Never mind your wheezes, Jimmy. Have you got a new idea for a procession?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Jimmy. "We've got to down the Moderns somehow, or we shall never hear the end of the cackling. I've thought of a wheeze for dishing them on the First of April."

"Bow-wow! Shove the kettle on."

Jimmy Silver looked daggers at his followers. The end study seemed to have lost faith in its great leader.

"It's really what Newcome suggested the other day," he remarked. "I've thought it out, you know."

"Oh, let's hear it, then," said Newcome, showing some interest.

"You can go on, Jimmy," said Lovell. "I don't suppose it will be any good. But you can rip it if you like."

"Suppose we spoofed the Moderns on the First of April?"

"Oh, you couldn't, you know."

"Suppose they got a telephone message from Latcham Barracks?" went on Jimmy Silver, his eyes

gleaming. "Soldier chap tells them he's heard of their footer team, and asks them to come over and play an army eleven."

"Soldier chap wouldn't."

"Fathead! I should be the chap on the telephone."

"And Tommy Dodd would guess it at once," grunted Lovell. "He isn't ass enough to think that a junior eleven would be asked to play a soldier team—especially a rotten Modern eleven."

"Yes, try something better, Jimmy," said Raby consolingly.

"You haven't heard it all yet!" roared Jimmy.

"Oh, is there anything more?" said Lovell resignedly. "You can run on while I boil the eggs. I'm sure I don't mind."

There was a plentiful lack of enthusiasm in the end study. But Jimmy Silver went on.

"I don't suppose Tommy Dodd would take his one-eyed team over to Latcham on the strength of a telephone call. But the secretary of the soldier chap's team would come over to make the arrangements."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But he wouldn't!" howled Raby.

"Haven't you ever heard of the Classical Players?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Can't I play a part, fat-head?"

"You?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Tommy Dodd would spot you."

"He might spot you, ass! He wouldn't spot me!" said Jimmy Silver witheringly. "Now, what do you think of the wheeze?"

"Rotten!"

"Oh, you duffers! Look here, it's a half-holiday on the first, and the Modern asses would jump at the invitation, if they got it. They would swank over us no end at being asked. And when they get to Latcham—"

Lovell grinned at the thought of that. But he shook his head.

"N. G.!" he said.

"They'll bowl you out and cackle all the more," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver gave the doubting Thomases a withering look.

"Well, I'm going to try it," he said. "You silly duffers can back me up or not, as you like."

"Oh, we'll back you up. But——"

"Bless your butts! Pass the eggs," said Jimmy crossly.

Over tea in the end study the scheme was discussed in full, and something like enthusiasm dawned upon the Co. Lovell and Raby and Newcome agreed that it would be a tremendous jape on Tommy Dodd—if it came off. On that point they had their doubts.

Perhaps Jimmy Silver had some doubts, too. If so, he kept them to himself. And, at all events, the Co. were prepared to back him up, as they always did in the long run.

CHAPTER 36.

A Very Flattering Request!

"OH, come in, Dodd!"

Mr. Bootles blinked over his glasses at Tommy Dodd, as that cheerful youth presented himself in the study doorway on the following day.

"You sent for me, sir," said Tommy.

"Yes, Dodd. A gentleman at Latcham Barracks wishes to speak to you on the telephone," said Mr. Bootles. "As I conclude, Dodd, that it is some relative of yours in His Majesty's Army, I shall allow you to use the instrument for a few minutes. I shall return in five minutes, Dodd."

"Thank you, sir," said Tommy, in wonder.

Tommy Dodd had several relatives in the Army, but he was not aware that any of them were at Latcham. Mr. Bootles walked out of the study, and the Modern junior picked up the receiver, which was off the hooks.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that Thomas Dodd?"

"Yes," said Tommy. "Who's speaking?"

"I'm speaking from Latcham. Please tell me whether you are Thomas Dodd, junior captain on the Modern side at Rookwood School?"

"That's me."

"Very good. Would you care to bring a junior eleven over to the barracks to play us in a footer match?"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

"Eh?"

"Sure you don't want Bulkeley?" asked the puzzled junior. "I'm only in the junior eleven here, you know."

"Yes, exactly. Our team is the—ahem!—Drummer Boys' eleven. We have a vacant date on the first of the month, and should be very glad to meet a Public school junior eleven."

"Oh, I understand!"

"If you care to arrange the fixture our secretary will call upon you on Saturday afternoon to make all arrangements. The match would be played—ahem!—at the barracks. The colonel would kick off for us. Tea afterwards in the tent. Would you care about the match?"

Tommy Dodd's eyes danced.

Would he?

Bulkeley would have jumped at the chance of securing an Army match for the First Eleven of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver would have given one of his ears for such a chance. And it had fallen to Tommy Dodd!

"Oh, rather!" gasped Tommy into the transmitter. "We shall be jolly glad. I'll bring over a Modern team."

"Exactly! I have heard that the Modern side at your school is a long way ahead of the Classical side in footer, and we want a good game. That's why I've rung you up."

"I see you know all about it," agreed Tommy Dodd. "The Classics think they can play, but, of course, we play their heads off. We'll be glad to see your secretary."

"Good, I'm the man. Then I'll drop in on Saturday afternoon, about three. That suit you?"

"Right on the nail!"

"Done! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Tommy Dodd replaced the receiver on the hooks, and simply tore out of the study. He was in a hurry to impart that stunning news to his chums on the Modern side.

In five minutes all the Modern side at Rookwood knew that Tommy Dodd's eleven had been challenged to an Army match, and that the secretary was coming on Saturday afternoon to arrange details.

Needless to say, the Moderns rejoiced.

A crowd of them rushed over to acquaint the Classics with the news. They swanked a little about it. Swank was excusable under the circumstances. It wasn't every junior team at school that was asked to a match with a real, live Army eleven on a military ground, with a real, live colonel to kick off the ball for them.

The news was received with incredulity on the Classical side.

Jimmy Silver, as it happened, was absent. But when he came in on his bike from a long spin he heard the news. Tommy Dodd, with pardonable pride, told him before a crowd in the Common-room.

"Gaimmon!" said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head.

"Why, you ass?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd wrathfully.

"They'd ask the School Junior Eleven, if they asked anybody," said Jimmy Silver, with another shake of the head. "If they know anything about Rookwood they must know that the Moderns can't play footer. You admit that yourself, Doddy?"

Tommy Dodd did not admit that himself. He snorted.

"Faith, the secretary's coming to see us about it on Saturday," said Tommy Doyle.

"Well, I'll swallow that when I see him," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "The fact is, I'm rather sorry to see you get the cold shoulder like this, Silver. If you like I'll make room for you in the team."

"It's going to be a Modern team!" exclaimed Cook.

"Yes, I know: But we can make room for Silver. After all, he's a good half, though he's a Classical."

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Want me to captain the team?" he asked.

"No jolly fear!" said Tommy Dodd promptly and emphatically.

"Then I shall have to decline with thanks."

"Well, you can go and eat coke," said Tommy Dodd. "After all, we shall be stronger without any Classics."

Most of the Moderns agreed on that. Tommy Dodd was very careful in his selection of the eleven. He was considerably exasperated by Jimmy Silver's want of faith. But, as a matter of fact, Tommy himself might have had some doubts about the genuineness of the telephone message but for the fact that the Drummer Boys' secretary was to call on Saturday to make arrangements. That circumstance, of course, banished all doubts.

The Moderns looked forward to Saturday, and the arrival of the secretary of the Drummer Boys' Football Club, with great keenness. So did the Classics—especially Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 37.

The Chap from Latham!

"HERE he is!"

It was Saturday afternoon, and the three Tommies were waiting at the gates of Rookwood. The Fistical Four had gone out on their bicycles—perhaps for a picnic, as Jimmy Silver had taken a large and well-filled bag with him. But the Moderns were not bothering about the

Fistical Four. They were thinking about the secretary of the Drummer Boys' F.C.

A youth came wheeling up at a good rate on a bicycle to the school gates, and the three Tommies eyed him eagerly. Was this the sec?

He was not in khaki. But he wore a khaki cap, which looked very soldierly. His face was very red, and there was a trace of a moustache on his upper lip. But what was most striking about him was a bandage over one side of the face, which concealed one eye, one cheek and one ear. Apparently the youth had met with some accident that had severely damaged his face.

He jumped off his machine and looked at the three juniors, touching his khaki cap with a military salute.

"Is this Rookwood?" he asked in a high-pitched but quite agreeable voice.

"Right!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me where to find Thomas Dodd."

"I'm the chap," said Tommy. "You're the Drummer Boys' F.C. sec, I suppose?"

"I'm the man."

Tommy Dodd shook hands with the young stranger heartily.

"Jolly glad to see you," he said.

"Trot in. Leave your bike at the lodge. You take it, Cooky. You seem to have had a bit of an accident."

The newcomer passed one hand over his bandaged face.

"It's dangerous to get too near a gun when they're testing it," he said. "Never mind. All in the day's work."

The three Tommies could not help feeling a keen admiration for the youth who made so light of what was evidently a serious accident. They marched him in across the quadrangle in great triumph. The khaki cap attracted glances from all sides, and a crowd of fellows came up to be introduced to the drummer—whose name appeared to be Argent—rather a Frenchified name, Tommy Dodd thought, though the chap

—what could be seen of him—did not look at all French."

"By gad, it's genuine 'enough!" Mornington remarked to his chums. "It's one in the eye for Jimmy Silver not bein' asked."

"Jolly good, too!" said Townsend. "All the same, it's queer they should have asked the Moderns—a rotten scratch lot."

"Might have asked us, by gad!" remarked Smythe of the Shell, turning his eyeglass on the youth in the khaki cap. "The Modern cads will be swank-in' about this no end."

Smythe was right there—the Moderns did show just a little swank. It was really the first time that the great superiority of the Modern side had been recognised outside the school.

Twenty fellows gathered round the youth from Latham to march him into Mr. Manders' House. He was marched up to Tommy Dodd's study, where a tea of unusual magnitude was ready. The Drummer admitted that he had brought an appetite with him, and he seemed to enjoy the lavish hospitality of Tommy & Co. The study was crowded with Modern fellows.

Unfortunately, it appeared that Master Argent could stay only half an hour. But half an hour was enough for a ripping tea, and for all arrangements for the footer match to be made.

Those arrangements were carefully noted down by Tommy Dodd.

The Modern eleven was to arrive at Latham Barracks not later than half-past two on the first of the month—fortunately a half-holiday. They could bring any number of visitors with them. All would be welcome to a tremendous spread in the tent after the match. Every Modern fellow who wasn't in the eleven decided at once to go as a spectator.

There was no room for Classics in the crowded study. But Tommy Dodd did wish that Jimmy Silver hadn't been out that afternoon. He would have liked Jimmy to see that youth from

Latcham, and have his doubts dispelled at once.

"Thanks awfully, you fellows," said Master Argent, as he rose from the table. "It's really good of you to treat me like this. I'll see you again on the first."

"What-ho!" said Tommy Dodd. "Sure you must go?"

"Yes. We're not quite our own masters in the Army, you know," said the secretary, smiling with the visible side of his face.

"Yes, I understand. We'll see you off at the gates," said Tommy.

A Modern army marched down to the gates with the popular visitor.

Tommy Cook wheeled out his bicycle for him. Tommy Dodd held it while he mounted. The visitor shook hands with the three Tommies and half a dozen other fellows, and they gave him a cheer as he cycled away at last.

The Moderns turned in at the gates with looks of great satisfaction. They bestowed superior glances upon the Classics—who weren't asked to a khaki match.

The visitor rode away at a good rate towards Coombe. He did not go so far as the village, however. After a glance back over his shoulder he turned into the footpath through the wood.

He had followed the footpath about half a mile when he came upon three juniors who were eating sandwiches, with three bikes leaning against the trees. Then he jumped down.

"Well?" said Lovell, Raby and Newcome in one voice.

The bandaged youth chuckled. "All serene."

"You weren't spotted?" yelled Lovell. "Of course not, fathead!"

"Oh, my hat!"

If the three Tommies could have been present just then they would not, probably, have been so pleased with their visitor. The youth from Latcham took off the khaki cap, and peeled off the bandage from his face. Then, in spite of the reddened complexion and the darkened eyebrows, it would have

been quite easy to recognise Jimmy Silver of the Fourth.

"The bandage did it!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I don't think I should have passed muster without that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the khaki cap!" chuckled Jimmy. "It was worth the four bob we gave for it at Hinks'—what? And it will come in handy, too, for some of our merry dramas. Now I'll give my face a wash in the brook and get the clobber off, and we'll get home."

The cheery Jimmy stripped off his clothes—under which he wore his Rookwood Etons.

"Here's the sandwiches, Jimmy!" chuckled Raby.

"Thanks! I've had my tea."

Lovell yelled.

"Did they stand you tea?"

"Certainly—a topping spread!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was a distinguished visitor, you know. There was no end of hospitality. I was introduced to half the Modern side—"

The Co. yelled.

"And they're coming over to Latcham at half-past two!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"On the first of April!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I can only say I hope they'll enjoy themselves."

The Fistical Four roared till the wood echoed. Jimmy Silver chortled while he was washing the make-up from his face. His gravity had been put to a severe test in Tommy Dodd's study at Rookwood. On the first of April, probably, Tommy Dodd would admit that there was at least one member of the Classical Players who could act.

An hour later four cheery cyclists arrived at Rookwood—one of them with a bag tied on his handlebars. As the Fistical Four went into the School House Mornington & Co. met them, evidently in cheery spirits. The slight put upon Jimmy Silver by the invitation to the Modern Eleven delighted

the nuts of the Fourth, and they wanted to "rub it in."

"Pity you were out, Silver," grinned Mornington.

"Anything happened?" asked Jimmy carelessly.

"The Army sec has been over," said Townsend. "He's fixed it all up with Tommy Dodd, I hear."

"Honest Injun?" asked Jimmy seriously.

"Yes, by gad!" said Mornington. "There's some chaps who don't think the end study is the salt of the earth, you see. I dare say you'll wonder for weeks why they didn't ask you to play the match at Latcham."

"Well, it's a bit odd, isn't it?" said Jimmy. "As junior captain, I ought to have got the invitation, really."

"Puts your nose out of joint a bit—what!" chuckled Townsend.

"Oh, I don't mind! I wish Tommy Dodd luck. I shall bike over to see them at Latcham on the first, anyway."

Jimmy Silver passed on with his chums, leaving the nuts somewhat disappointed. But Morny shook his head.

"You bet he doesn't like it, all the same!" he said. "It's one in the eye for Jimmy Silver, however he chooses to take it."

And the nuts agreed that it was, and all the Modern fellows shaded their opinion. As a novelist would put it, they little knew!

CHAPTER 38.

Not a Match!

"H AVING a bus?" asked Jimmy Silver affably.

It was the "first" at last.

April was ushered in by bright sunshine, and the weather was excellent. It was really almost good enough for cricket. But the Modern juniors were thinking of the winter game, and of the great match which was to wind up the season for them in great style.

"Yes, we're having a bus," said Tommy Dodd, with a genial smile. Tommy was feeling in great spirits that day. "Bit too far to walk. Besides, we must put on a bit of style for an Army match. I'll find room for you in the bus if you'd like to come over."

"Biking it," said Jimmy cheerily.

"You're coming to watch us?" asked Towle.

"Certainly. I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

"I must say you're taking it decently, Silver," said Tommy Dodd. "Some chaps would have groused at being left out like that."

"No fear!" said Jimmy. "You're welcome to all you get at Latcham, Tommy. I only hope you'll enjoy it."

"Same here!" chuckled Lovell.

"Blessed if I see where the cackle comes in," said Tommy Dodd, puzzled. "It's a feather in our cap. One up for Rookwood, too. Hallo, here comes the bus!"

The Modern footballers were ready, in coats and mufflers, to take their places in the bus. The bus was a large one, but there was none too much room, for every Modern fellow who could cram himself in was going. There was no room for Classicals. Any Classicals who wished to go had to bike it after the bus.

But quite a number of them had decided to do so. The Fistical Four, of course, were going—they had their own reasons. The Colonial Co. also wheeled their machines out, and Rawson and Oswald and Flynn and Jones minor, and several more.

It was really very flattering to the Moderns. The Classical cyclists seemed to be in high good humour, too. Tommy Dodd was surprised to see such a bunch of Classical juniors following the bus. He was not aware that Jimmy Silver had been passing a whisper round among them which made them very keen to see the denouement at Latcham Barracks.

It was a glorious first. The sun, as

if to make up for late misbehaviour, was shining merrily. The Modern fellows trilled choruses in more or less melodious tones as the bus rolled away up and down high roads and lanes for Latcham. The bunch of cyclists behind were in equally high spirits. Their faces almost continually wore smiles.

Latcham town came in view at last, and the bus rolled through the High Street, and out of the town again, to the big barracks outside.

At the gate on the road the bus stopped. Several motor-lorries and other vehicles were coming out, and the bus had to wait for them. Tommy Dodd scanned the gateway. He had half expected Master Argent, that agreeable secretary of the Drummer Boys' F.C., to be at the gates to welcome the arriving team. But Master Argent was nowhere to be seen. He was not, as a matter of fact, far away, if Tommy Dodd had only known it.

The Rookwood cyclists arrived, and stood by their machines, waiting for eventualities. Exactly what was going to happen, Jimmy Silver did not know; but he knew that it was nothing like what the merry Moderns expected to happen.

"Argent doesn't seem to be here," said Tommy Dodd. "That blessed sentry's staring at us as if he'd never seen a footer team before. I dare say word's been left with him. I'll speak to him, anyway."

The sentry at the gates had come a little nearer, and Tommy Dodd jumped down from the bus to speak to him.

"Hallo! What's wanted?" asked the sentry, eyeing Tom curiously.

"We're the eleven from Rookwood," explained Tommy Dodd.

The sentry stared.

"You're the what?" he asked.

"The football team from Rookwood," said Tommy. "Haven't we come to the right gate?"

"You cut off!" said the sentry sternly. "This isn't the place to come and play your little jokes, Master Schoolboy!"

"It isn't a joke," said Tommy Dodd impatiently. "We're the Rookwood School Eleven, and we've come for the match."

"The what?"

"The football match, of course. Do you know where Argent is?"

"Argent?"

"Yes; the secretary of the Drummer Boys' Football Club."

"The—the—the—what?" yelled the sentry.

"The Drummer Boys' Football Club!" howled Tommy Dodd. "I suppose you've heard of it?"

The soldier blinked at him. His first impression was that it was a schoolboy "lark." But Tommy Dodd's earnestness impressed him a little, and he was perplexed. The Modern fellows in the bus were beginning to look a little uneasy. The Classics standing by the bikes were all smiles.

"First I've heard of it," said the Tommy good-humouredly. "Sure you've come to the right place? This is Latcham Barracks."

"Yes, that's right."

"Here, Bill," shouted the sentry to another man within the gates, "have you ever heard of the Drummer Boys' Football Eleven here?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" was the reply of Bill.

"What's all this?" asked a deep voice as a big, bronzed sergeant came out of the gates. "Now, then, what do you want?"

"We've come to play the football match," said the bewildered Tommy Dodd. "It's for this afternoon. Chap named Argent—"

"Never heard the name."

"He's secretary of the Drummer Boys' Football Club—"

"Never heard of it," said the sergeant suspiciously. "If this is a lark, young man, I warn you—"

"Do you think we should hire a bus and come ten miles for a lark?" bawled Tommy Dodd.

The sergeant grinned.

"Well, I s'pose not. But— Wait a minute, young gentleman, and I'll inquire."

"Thank you!" said Tommy Dodd gratefully.

The sergeant went in. The rest of the Modern footballers had gathered round Tommy Dodd now, in a puzzled and worried frame of mind. It was simply extraordinary that the eleven they had come to play had never been heard of in Latcham Barracks.

A handsome young lieutenant came out after a few minutes and gave the Rookwood juniors a genial smile.

"Come, now, what is it?" he asked.

Tommy Dodd went laboriously through his explanation once more. The sentry and the sergeant were grinning. The lieutenant's lips were twitching.

"I'm afraid you've come to the wrong shop, my lad," said the officer. "You can't come in here, that's certain. And there isn't any football match on for to-day, and if there were a Drummer Boys' Eleven in the place I should certainly have heard of it."

"My only hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd, in utter dismay.

"Did you look at the calendar before you started?" asked the lieutenant, with a smile.

"The—the calendar?" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

"Yes. You might have noticed then that it was the first of April," said the young man, laughing. "I'm afraid somebody has been pullin' your leg, young friend. Good-afternoon!"

The natty young gentleman disappeared, still smiling. Tommy Dodd & Co. looked at one another in blank dismay.

"The—the—the first of April!" repeated Tommy Dodd mechanically.

"April fools!" muttered Tommy Cook.

"Spoofed!" stuttered Tommy Doyle. "Oh, howly mother av Moses! If I iver get within hittin' distance of that spalpeen Argent—"

"Oh, what a sell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Modern footballers climbed back into their bus. It was only too clear that they had been spoofed, and that they had, unintentionally, assisted some practical joker in celebrating the famous anniversary. There was a wild yell of laughter from the Classical crowd.

The Moderns' faces were crimson.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver & Co. as they dragged their bikes out into the road.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "Wait till I meet that chap Argent again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd like to meet him?" asked Jimmy Silver, pausing with one leg over the saddle.

"Wouldn't I just!" panted Tommy Dodd, clenching his fists.

"Then I'll manage it for you!" said Jimmy.

"You?"

"Certainly! Do you remember any of the French you've learned at Rookwood?"

"French! What's that got to do with it?"

"Lots!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "What's the French for silver, Tommy?"

"Eh? Argent, of course."

"And what's the English for Argent?"

"Silver!" said Tommy Dodd, mystified.

"Exactly!" said Jimmy, while his chums roared. "And there you are!"

"Why—what—what——" A light began to dawn upon Tommy Dodd, and his look grew positively ferocious.

"Argent—Silver—you——"

"Queer that bit of a bandage over a chap's chivy should make such a difference, isn't it?" said Jimmy.

"You—you—you——"

"Now you know why Master Argent arranged the match for the first of

April!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Good-bye!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were home soon after the bus. Howls of laughter greeted the Modern heroes as they crawled away to their House to hide their blushes.

The procession of the Classical Players was quite forgotten now. The prestige of the end study was quite restored by that extraordinary jape by which the luckless Moderns had been fooled on the first.

CHAPTER 39.

Only the Ventriloquist!

DICK VAN RYN, of the Classical Fourth, looked into the end study with a lugubrious expression upon his usually cheery face.

"Rotten news!" he announced.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Raby and Newcome were at work. But they suspended prep to look up as the South African junior made his announcement.

"What's happened?" asked Jimmy.

"Bootles has got a cold."

The Fistical Four stared at Van Ryn. Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was a mild and kind little gentleman, much liked by his Form. Jimmy Silver & Co. were sorry to hear that he had a cold. But they were prepared to bear Mr. Bootles' misfortune with fortitude. They did not see any reason whatever for making the announcement with a voice and a countenance like Job of old.

"You howling ass!" said Lovell, in measured tones. "Have you come here with a face as long as a fiddle to tell us that?"

"Yes."

"Well, take your chivvy away and bury it!"

"I dare say Bootles will get over it," said Jimmy Silver. "People generally do get over colds."

"He may be laid up for two or three

days with it," said Van Ryn, as lugubriously as before. "It's rotten!"

"Like a coal-scuttle to cry into?" asked Raby sarcastically.

"I tell you it's rotten!"

"Rotten for Bootles," said Newcome. "But not quite so bad as an earthquake, or anything like that. Are you trying to pull our leg, you ass?"

"You don't seem to catch on——"

"We'll catch on soon enough when a duffer comes here pulling our leg!" growled Lovell. "Catch on, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four jumped up as if moved by the same spring, and "caught on" to Van Ryn.

The lugubrious junior was suddenly swept off his feet, and he came down in the doorway with a loud concussion.

"Yaroooh!" he roared. "You silly chumps! Oh, crumbs!"

"There, that's worse than Bootles' cold," said Jimmy Silver. "You can make a long face now with something to make it about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Van Ryn sat in the doorway and gasped, while the chums of the Fourth returned to the study table, grinning.

"You howling asses!" gurgled Van Ryn. "You don't understand! I've a good mind to mop up the whole study!"

"Wade in!" grinned Raby.

"You—you—you——" Van Ryn scrambled up. "You chumps! You duffers! Don't you understand? Bootles is laid up with a cold——"

"Blow Bootles and blow his cold!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" growled Van Ryn. "Carthew of the Sixth is going to take the Fourth to-morrow morning——"

"Eh?"

"In Bootles' place for the day."

"Oh, my hat!"

The Fistical Four understood now the reason of Van Ryn's lugubriousness. They looked rather lugubrious themselves.

Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, was to take the Fourth! As a Sixth Form prefect, Carthew was quite capable of taking a class temporarily. The Fourth Formers did not doubt his abilities; but they knew Carthew.

None of the juniors liked Carthew—excepting perhaps Mornington, who got on very well with him. Mornington's wealth enabled him to secure the good graces of a fellow of Carthew's character.

Carthew had special dislikes for two sets of fellows in the Classical Fourth—the Fistical Four and the Colonial Co., Van Ryn, Conroy and Pons.

Those seven juniors had a very unpleasant time to look forward to, with Carthew of the Sixth in charge of the Fourth.

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell, in dismay. "Is it certain?"

"I've just heard it from Bulkeley."

"Why couldn't they give Bulkeley the job?" growled Lovell. "We can stand old Bulkeley. We can't stand Carthew at any price!"

"It means trouble," said Jimmy Silver. "Carthew won't let a chance like that slip. We're booked for a high old time, my sons."

Lovell snorted.

"I shan't stand any of his rot! If Carthew comes the Form-master over me there will be a row!"

"Britons never shall be slaves!" said Raby. "That applies specially to Rookwood fellows. We'd better show Carthew his place at once."

"What about ragging him for a start?" asked Lovell, with a warlike look.

"And getting reported to the Head and flogged?" growled Jimmy Silver. "Not good enough!"

"Well, there'll be trouble, anyway," remarked Van Ryn. "Carthew may let us alone—he's not up against my study

—"

"Rats!"

"But he's sure to make an example of you chaps," said Van Ryn cheerfully.

"You had better be good little boys and toe the line."

"Fathead!" roared Lovell.

"That's my advice."

"Keep it!"

"Jolly good idea, all the same," said Jimmy Silver. "We'd better make up our minds to be good—very, very good—like Little Georgie in the story-book, who loved his kind teachers."

"Bow-wow!"

"No need giving Carthew a chance at us," said Jimmy. "He will be looking for chances, anyhow. If we have to go for him, we'd better be in the right when we do it."

"Something in that," agreed Raby.

"Rot!" grunted Lovell. "I don't care twopence for Carthew, and I wouldn't stand any more rot from Carthew than I would from any other prefect. Carthew's a rotter, anyway—"

"Lovell!"

It was a sharp, unpleasant voice from the passage—the well-known disagreeable voice of Carthew of the Sixth.

Lovell jumped.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Were you referring to me, Lovell?" thundered the voice from the passage.

Lovell blinked at the doorway.

"Ahem! I—I—I—"

"Come out here at once!"

Lovell hesitated a moment. But, in spite of his warlike announcement, he had to obey a prefect's order. Whether he cared twopence for Carthew or not, Carthew was a prefect of the Sixth, and a junior had to do as he was told.

With a glum face, Lovell stepped out of the study into the passage.

Then he stared blankly.

The passage was empty.

Lovell blinked up the passage, and blinked down the passage. Then he made a sudden jump at Van Ryn, who was grinning in the doorway.

"You spoofer!" he roared. "I'll give you ventriloquism!"

Van Ryn and Lovell rolled into the study together, with a crash. Jimmy Silver & Co. jumped up and dragged them apart. Carthew was not on the

scene at all, and Lovell remembered that Dick van Ryn was a skilful ventriloquist, and the mystery was explained.

"Lemme get at him!" roared Lovell.

Van Ryn roared, too, with merriment.

"You don't care twopence for Carthew!" he chuckled. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll——"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Keep smiling, you know!"

"I'll—I'll——" spluttered Lovell.

Van Ryn walked away, smiling, and Jimmy and Raby and Newcome plumped Lovell into his chair.

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy. "This study can take a joke, fathead!"

Lovell grunted.

"I don't see the joke."

"You wouldn't!" grinned Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I don't see anything to cackle at!" roared Lovell.

"Never mind; we do! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

And preparation in the end study was interrupted several times by chuckles from three members of the Co.—chuckles for which the fourth member of the Co. could see no grounds whatever.

CHAPTER 40.

The Upper Hand!

THERE was a good deal of discussion that evening in the Classical Fourth when the news became known.

All the fellows were sorry that Mr. Bootles was laid up with a cold; but not wholly on Mr. Bootles' account.

Carthew's bullying proclivities were too well known for the juniors to expect a comfortable time with him in charge of the class.

And the juniors who were on bad terms, anyway, with Carthew, had no doubt that the bully of the Sixth would make the most of the opportunity to wipe out old grudges.

It was rather a serious outlook for the

Fistical Four, who had had many little rubs with the prefect.

Only Mornington and his friends seemed pleased. Mornington & Co. knew how to keep on the right side of the Sixth Form bully. Mornington was looking forward to seeing Jimmy Silver & Co. enjoy a high old time. Indeed, that evening the dandy of the Fourth paid a visit to Carthew's study, and it was extremely probable that he was putting in a word for Jimmy Silver—not for Jimmy's benefit.

Jimmy's plan—Jimmy was never at a loss for a plan—was adopted by most of the Classical Four. It was to give Carthew his head, as Jimmy expressed it.

If the juniors were very, very good, even the bully of the Sixth would have no excuse for coming down on them; and they resolved to be very, very good.

It would be rather a strain, perhaps, but it was evidently the best thing to be done; and the juniors decided to be good, and to hope for Mr. Bootles' speedy recovery.

The Modern juniors were not so much concerned about the matter. They did not see much of Carthew, as a rule—Carthew being on the Classical side, and they did not spend much time in the Form-room with the Classics.

So Tommy Dodd & Co. were able to face the new situation with equanimity, while Jimmy Silver and his friends looked forward to it with anxiety.

In pursuance of their plan, the Fourth-Formers marched into the Form-room in the morning with the greatest orderliness.

Although their master was absent there was no pushing or shoving. Carthew was not there yet, but he had been spotted round the corner of the passage; and Jimmy Silver sagely guessed that Carthew was leaving them alone for a few minutes, in the hope of catching them at horseplay when he came in.

If that was Carthew's hope, he was disappointed.

When he came into the Form-room five minutes late, the Fourth were seated at their desks, in grave silence. They were understudying the old Roman senate when the savage Gauls arrived. Carthew was more savage than a Gaul, really; he was more like a tiger, in the opinion of the juniors, at least.

Carthew cast a glance over the Form, and frowned, and went to Mr. Bootles' desk. His first action was to take out Mr. Bootles' cane, and put it in a handy position.

The juniors exchanged glances at that. It was pretty clear that Carthew had already decided upon stern measures.

First lesson, however, went off quietly. After that lesson the Modern part of the Form trooped off, being due on the Modern side with Mr. Manders. The Classics were left in the sole enjoyment of Carthew's company.

"Muffin!" rapped out Carthew suddenly.

Tubby Muffin jumped.

"Ye-es, Carthew!"

"What are you eating?"

"Eating!" stammered Tubby.

"Yes, you fat pig! Come out here!"

Tubby Muffin left his place, making desperate efforts to get rid of the chunk of toffee that was bulging out his fat cheek. The prefect picked up the cane.

"Don't you know that you're not allowed to gorge in class, Muffin?"

"Ye-e-es, Carthew!"

"Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now the other!"

Swish!

"Yoop!"

"Put that muck in the fire, and go back to your place!" snapped Carthew.

The fat Classical mournfully ejected the toffee into the grate, and crawled back to his place, squeezing his plump hands.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged glances. Carthew was beginning.

Mr. Bootles would have given Tubby Muffin lines for eating toffee in class; but two cruel cuts with the cane were

quite out of proportion to the offence. The bully was getting his hand in, as it were.

Jimmy Silver was called upon to construe. Jimmy had been very careful with his prep, foreseeing that Carthew would catch him tripping if he could.

Carthew was not able to catch him tripping; Jimmy construed without a fault. But it was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again.

"That will do, Silver! Is that the way you do your work in this Form?" said Carthew. "You did no prep last night, I can see!"

"I did, Carthew," said Jimmy quietly.

"Then why are you construing like a fog in the Second Form?" demanded Carthew.

"I'm not."

"What?"

"I've done my best, anyway," said Jimmy.

"If that's your best, you will have to learn to do better," said Carthew; "and don't argue with me!"

Jimmy's lips opened, but he closed them again.

"I fancy you're rather accustomed to running wild in this Form," went on Carthew. "You won't find it pay while I've got you in hand! I tell you plainly that I'm going to have no slacking!"

Grim silence from the Fourth.

"You will take two hundred lines, Silver, and bring them to me before afternoon classes."

"Very well!" said Jimmy.

"And don't scowl!"

"I wasn't scowling."

"If you give me any more back answers, Silver, I shall cane you!"

Jimmy repressed his feelings with a manful effort, and was silent.

Carthew gave him an angry look; but he could not very well find any more faults, especially as there were none to find, and he passed on.

"Mornington!"

Mornington smiled as he was called upon. His construe was by no means

so perfect as Jimmy's; Morny had done no prep.

But Carthew had no fault to find with it; quite the contrary.

"Very good, Mornington; I am glad to see there is one member of this class, at least, who is not a dunce!"

Mornington sat down with a smile.

"Lovell!"

Lovell stumbled over his construe, as was natural. He was not a brilliant scholar, and Carthew's evident intention of catching him out if he could, flustered the junior. He stopped in less than a minute.

"Don't go on, Lovell! This isn't the Second Form-room!" said Carthew. "I'm ashamed to hear such blundering in the Fourth. Why didn't you do your preparation?"

"I did do it, Carthew!"

"Don't tell lies!" snapped the prefect.

"I'm not telling lies!" growled Lovell.

"And don't answer me! You are a dunce, and a disgrace to the Form! You will stand in the corner for the rest of the lesson!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"You hear me? Go into the corner at once, and stand with your face to the wall!"

Lovell turned crimson.

Such a punishment was never inflicted in the Fourth; it was treating the Fourth Former like a naughty infant.

Some of the juniors began to grin. Lovell drew a deep breath, and stood firm in his place.

"Do you hear me, Lovell?"

"Yes."

"Do as you're told!"

Lovell did not move. Carthew's eyes gleamed. Disobedience was what he wanted from the Fistical Four; it gave him the excuse he required for visiting long-deferred vengeance upon their heads. He took up the cane.

"For the last time, Lovell; obey me!"

Jimmy Silver jerked at Lovell's sleeve.

"Go it, Lovell, old chap!" he whispered. "Don't give him an excuse."

Lovell swallowed his fury, and left his desk, and went into the corner. He was simmering with rage.

Carthew was disappointed for a moment. But he had observed Jimmy Silver's whisper to his chum.

"Silver, you were speaking to Lovell."

"Ye-e-es," stammered Jimmy.

"Are you not aware that talking is not allowed in class?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Stand out here!"

Carthew took a step towards the class, cane in hand. Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath. Raby and Newcome looked at him, and their looks said as eloquently as words that they were ready to back him up in "rushing" the bully and downing him.

But Jimmy held himself in hand. His good resolutions were not forgotten. He came out before the class, with his lips set.

"Hold out your hand!" said Carthew, in his most bullying tone.

Jimmy obeyed, and the cane came down with a terrific swish. The junior uttered a sharp cry.

"Now the other!"

Swish!

Jimmy was silent this time, though his eyes were burning. Mr. Bootles had never in his life administered such cuts as those. Carthew was evidently bent on making the most of his opportunities.

"Get back to your place!"

Jimmy sat down again, squeezing his aching hands under the desk.

CHAPTER 41.

Jimmy Loses His Temper!

MORNING lessons in the Fourth ended at last.

It had not been a pleasant morning.

Mornington & Co., certainly, had been very cheery; but the Fistical Four were in almost a homicidal mood when classes closed.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome had been caned in turn. They had been careful to give their tyrant no excuse; but Carthew found it quite easy to invent excuses.

Lovell was caned for scowling; Raby for shuffling his feet; Newcome for having whispered to Flynn, though Newcome declared that he hadn't whispered to Flynn.

Curiously enough, the rest of the Form escaped almost scot-free.

Even Van Ryn, Pons, and Conroy, whom Carthew disliked exceedingly, had not been caned or "lined."

Carthew's leniency to the juniors was a little puzzling, but Jimmy Silver was at no loss to guess the reason.

The bully of the Sixth had seized upon the opportunity of feeding fat his ancient grudge against the end study.

A general course of bullying and worrying would probably have been more agreeable to Carthew's taste; but by letting the rest of the Form alone, he made his vengeance upon the Fistical Four more secure. He did not want his rule in the Fourth to end in a riot. Canings all round might very easily have caused trouble to that extent.

Carthew was too cunning for that. He had selected the four juniors whom he detested as his victims, and he was devoting himself, as it were, to them.

"Sure, he's not such a baste as I expected intirely," Flynn remarked, as they came out of the Form-room. "Sure, he hasn't said a worrud to me!"

"Nor to me," remarked Rawson. "I never expected him to go easy with me!"

"Same here," said Jones minor. "After all, he's not such a rotter as he might have been!"

"It won't be so bad, after all," said Hooker.

"Only you've had a rotten time, Jimmy," said Rawson sympathetically. "He seems to have picked you out."

"It's about time some cheeky cads were put in their place!" remarked Mornington, with a grin.

"Yaas, by gad!" chuckled Townsend.

"I think it's an improvement on Bootles," said Topham, with a grin. "Carthew doesn't make a chap work like a nigger!"

"Not some chaps," said Van Ryn, with a curl of the lip. "Sneaking rotters who have been sucking up to Carthew are in luck now!"

"I'm jolly well not going to stand much more of it!" muttered Lovell, rubbing his hands. "The rotter's made a dead set against our study!"

"If he keeps it up, something will have to be done," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"We'll all back you up, Jimmy," said Rawson.

"We jolly well won't!" exclaimed Townsend. "You won't catch me backing up against a prefect to please Jimmy Silver!"

"Nor I, either!" said Peele.

"No jolly fear!" exclaimed Gower emphatically.

"You wouldn't have pluck enough, anyway!" said Jimmy contemptuously. "But we won't drag you into it, Rawson, or the other fellows. We'll toe the line if the rotter keeps within the limit; but if he doesn't——"

"You'll toe the line all the same," said Mornington; and there was a chortle from the nuts of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver looked steadily at Mornington.

"I'm bound to take cheek from Carthew, as he's a prefect," he said; "but I'm not bound to take it from you, Mornington, and I warn you to chuck it!"

Mornington laughed mockingly.

Carthew was visible at the end of the passage, looking out into the quadrangle.

With the bully of the Sixth so near, Morny's idea was that Jimmy Silver would find it prudent to keep his temper in check; but he did not quite know Jimmy yet.

"Gas!" said Mornington. "The fact it, Jimmy Silver, you're not quite the Big Panjandrum you fancy, and you've

got to toe the line. And don't give me any of your cheek; I'm not standin' it!"

"Give him one, Jimmy!" growled Lovell.

"I've a jolly good mind to," said Jimmy.

"And a better mind not to," chortled Mornington.

That was enough for Jimmy Silver. His temper had already been sorely tried in the Form-room.

He made a jump at the dandy of the Fourth, and grasped him.

"Hands off!" yelled Mornington, hitting our furiously.

His fists lashed into Jimmy's flushed, angry face.

But he had no time to hit twice.

Jimmy swung him over, and, dropping on one knee, laid Mornington across the other, face downwards, and wriggling furiously.

Then his right hand rose and fell with resounding thwacks.

Spank—spank—spank—spank!

"Yaroo! Oh! Ow!" yelled Mornington, struggling wildly.

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Give him socks, Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

The Classical juniors roared with laughter at the sight of Mornington sprawling across Jimmy Silver's knee, and being spanked as hard as the captain of the Fourth could spank.

"Yaroo! Help! Oh!"

Spank—spank—spank!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington struggled and kicked and scratched, but he could not get out of Jimmy Silver's muscular grasp. The spanking went on with terrific vim.

"Look out, Jimmy!" gasped Oswald.

"Here comes Carthew!"

Jimmy Silver did not heed.

His long-pent-up wrath was finding vent now, and Mornington was being punished for himself and Carthew too.

Spank—spank—spank!

"Jimmy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew strode up, and seized Jimmy Silver by the shoulder. The captain of the Fourth was dragged to his feet, and Mornington rolled from his knee and sprawled on the floor.

He sat up, dazed and crimson and furious. Even the nuts were grinning at the ridiculous spectacle Morny had presented. The rest of the Fourth were yelling.

"Silver! How dare you?" roared Carthew, shaking Jimmy by the shoulder.

Jimmy jerked himself away.

"What's the matter?" he asked coolly.

"I saw you, you young hound!"

"Well, is there any law against spanking a cheeky cad?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"You attacked Mornington—"

"Oh, rats!"

"What!" yelled Carthew.

"Rats!" said Jimmy Silver, quite reckless now. His good resolutions had been thrown to the winds at last, and he faced the prefect with blazing eyes. A little tyranny went a long way in the Fourth. "Keep that ashplant to yourself, Carthew! If you touch me, I shall hit back!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Carthew.

The bully of the Sixth had hoped, and intended, to drive his old enemies into resistance, so that he could have ample excuse for visiting vengeance on their heads. But he had not quite expected this. He was grasping the ashplant with a hand that almost trembled with rage.

"Hold out your hand, Silver!" he stutted.

Jimmy put his hands behind him.

"Do you hear me?"

"I'm not deaf," said Jimmy coolly.

"Will you hold out your hand?"

"No, I won't!"

There was a breathless buzz from the Fourth Formers. Jimmy's defiance rang out loud and clear. And the juniors waited in breathless expectation for what was to happen next.

CHAPTER 42.

The Head Comes Down Heavy!

THERE was a crowd in the Form-room passage now. The Shell and the Thrd were out, and they had gathered round to look on, with the Fourth. The sight of a Fourth Former facing a prefect of the Sixth with flashing eyes made them stare. It was an almost unprecedented scene within the walls of Rookwood.

Carthew gripped his ashplant almost convulsively.

"Silver, for the last time!"

"Rats!"

"Bravo, Jimmy!" sang out Conroy.

Carthew did not speak again. He sprang at the junior and grasped him by the collar. Then the ashplant came down in a shower of blows across Jimmy's shoulders.

Jimmy Silver struggled fiercely, and hammered at the prefect's ribs. But he was not left to fight his battle alone. Lovell and Raby and Newcome rushed on Carthew like hounds on a stag.

The prefect was grasped on all sides, and dragged away from Jimmy by sheer force and weight.

He staggered in the grasp of the juniors, and went with a crash to the floor.

"By gad!" said Smythe of the Shell. "By gad! He's down."

Carthew was down, and the Fistical Four were upon him. Lovell, hardly knowing what he was doing in his excitement, was banging Carthew's head on the floor, holding his ears for the purpose.

The unfortunate prefect's yells rang along the passage.

Mornington made a movement as if to go to his help; but he was collared promptly by the Colonial Co. and fairly pitched along the passage. Mornington sprawled and yelled, and did not come back.

"Help!" raved Carthew, as he struggled wildly in the grasp of the incensed juniors. "Oh! Help!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, came running up.

"What the dickens—what—Silver, Lovell, are you mad?" roared Bulkeley, almost petrified with astonishment at the sight of a prefect struggling with the heroes of the Fourth.

"Give him jip!" roared Lovell, unheeding.

"Stop this at once!" shouted Bulkeley, grasping Lovell in one hand and Jimmy in the other, and dragging them up. Raby and Newcome, however, were still pounding at Carthew.

There was a sudden buzz among the juniors.

"The Head!"

"The Head!" murmured Adolphus Smythe. "Now look out for fireworks, dear boys!"

Dr. Chisholm, with rustling gown and frowning brow, strode upon the scene. The din in the passage had reached even the sacred precincts of the Head's study.

"Cease this at once!" thundered the Head.

"Oh, my hat!"

Four abashed juniors blinked at the Head of Rookwood. Carthew sat on the floor, groaning.

"Bulkeley," rumbled the Head, "what does this disgraceful disturbance mean?"

"I don't know, sir," said Bulkeley. "I came up and found Carthew struggling with the juniors."

"Get up, Carthew!"

The prefect struggled to his feet. He was dusty and dishevelled, and crimson with rage.

"Now, Carthew, kindly tell me what this extraordinary scene means," said the Head, in icy tones.

Carthew panted.

"I have been attacked by these four juniors, sir. Silver refused to be caned, and they set on me."

The Head's frown grew simply terrific.

"As you know, sir, I am in charge of the Form," added Carthew. "I suppose these boys thought they could do

as they liked with their Form-master absent, and they have given me trouble all the morning. This is what it has led to."

"I understand," said the Head. "Silver, Raby, Lovell, Newcome, follow me to my study."

"If you please, sir——" began Jimmy

"Have you anything to say, Silver?"

"Yes, sir. Carthew is a rotten bully!"

"What?"

"He picked on me for nothing!"

"How dare you, Silver? Did you or did you not refuse to be caned by the prefect placed by me in charge of your Form?"

"Yes, sir. But——"

"Enough! Follow me."

The Head swept away majestically, and the Fistical Four had nothing to do but to follow him.

They went in dismay.

From the Head's point of view, it was a case for the most severe punishment. Carthew had deceived him easily enough. It was natural that the juniors should be a little out of hand in their master's absence; and the Head, naturally, knew nothing of Carthew's private grudge against the four. Jimmy Silver & Co. marched dolorously into the Head's study.

Dr. Chisholm selected his stoutest cane, and gave the unhappy delinquents a dark frown.

"I shall punish you severely," he said. "You must remember that a prefect placed in charge of your Form must be treated with the same respect and obedience as your Form-master himself. I am surprised and shocked at your conduct."

"Yes, sir, but——"

"It is all the more reprehensible as your Form-master is ill at this moment," said the Head severely. "I am greatly shocked. I should have expected better feeling from my boys. You first, Silver."

"But——"

"Your hand! Silence!"

There was an almost continual swish-

ing in the Headmaster's study for some minutes. When it ceased, the Fistical Four were wriggling with anguish. The Head had laid it on with great vigour.

Dr. Chisholm pointed to the door.

"You may go! If there is any further insubordination in the Fourth Form, while Carthew is in charge, I shall administer a public flogging to the culprits. Bear that in mind."

"If you please, sir——"

"You may go!" said the Head, raising his voice a little.

And the unhappy delinquents went.

They crawled away to the end study, with a feeling that life was not quite worth living. In the study, they groaned and mumbled in chorus. They had already been licked that morning by Carthew. But even Carthew's caning was not quite so bad as the Head's. The reverend gentleman had exhibited unsuspected muscular powers.

There was a crowd of sympathetic visitors to the study. Oswald and Flynn and Rawson and the rest condoled with the sufferers. But it was noticeable that there was no suggestion of "handling" Carthew.

The Head's interference put that out of the thoughts of the most reckless fellow. Jimmy Silver & Co. replied only with mumbles and groans to the condolences, and their sympathisers left them to groan it out, as Jones minor expressed it. Then Mornington and Townsend looked into the study, smiling.

"What a happy-lookin' crew!" grinned Mornington.

"Toppin'!" said Townsend. "Are you goin' to toe the line after this—what?"

Jimmy Silver made a feeble clutch at a cushion to hurl.

But it was not needed. Three juniors came along the passage, and Mornington and Townsend found themselves in the grasp of the Colonial Co. There was a succession of wild yells as the two nuts were kicked along the passage as far as the stairs. Then Van Ryn

and Pons and Conroy came into the end study.

"Thanks," groaned Jimmy Silver.

"Had it bad?" asked Van Ryn.

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Lovell. "Do you think we're making this row for fun?"

"It's hard cheese, old chap!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"We're going to stand up for you, said Van Ryn encouragingly.

"Oh, rats!" groaned Raby. "What can you do, fathead? Head says there's a flogging for anybody who cuts up rusty in class with Carthew. Yow-ow-ow! I'm going to give him his head, for one."

"I've got an idea!"

"Go and bury it!" snorted Lovell.

"We're going to tackle Carthew!"

"Fathead! Rats!"

The South African junior laughed. He was not getting much gratitude from the end study.

"Carthew has got us in a cleft stick!" said Van Ryn. "We can't handle him. The Head don't understand, and he would come down like a ton of bricks. But there are ways and means."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"I'm going to spring some ventriloquism on him!"

"Oh, bother your ventriloquism! What's the good of your rotten ventriloquism! Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

"But you see—"

"Oh, rats! Yow-ow-ow!"

The Colonial Co. departed—Jimmy and his chums were not in a mood to be comforted. But Dick Van Ryn did not give up his idea. He intended Carthew to meet with some surprises in the Form-room that afternoon.

CHAPTER 43.

The Ventriloquist Sets to Work!

CARTHEW was smiling when he came into the Fourth Form-room that afternoon.

The bully of the Sixth had been

somewhat roughly handled by Jimmy Silver & Co.; but he was not sorry the incident had occurred. The Head had been drawn into the matter, and had, as was to be expected, supported the prefect with all his authority.

In any further resistance, the Fistical Four would be backing up against their headmaster, as well as against Carthew. Their old enemy felt that he had them in a cleft stick, as it were. If they did not resist, he could persecute them at his own sweet will; and if they did resist, the Head would be down upon them again more severely than before. Carthew would have been quite pleased at being bumped on the Form-room floor, if it had resulted in a flogging in Hall for Jimmy Silver & Co.

The chums of the end study understood the position as well as Carthew. They came into the Form-room with glum faces. They meant to stand Carthew as long as they could; but if he went too far, and they couldn't, they knew what would follow resistance. They felt that they were caught, and that they were at the mercy of the mean-natured prefect, and it was not a pleasant feeling.

As for the South African junior's intention of "chipping" in, they thought little of it. If the end study couldn't back up against the bully, what good was any other study? None at all! But the Fistical Four, as well as Mark Carthew, were to be surprised that afternoon.

Carthew gave the four a malevolent look. He did not waste time before beginning on them.

"Silver!" he rapped out, before the juniors had fairly taken their seats.

"Yes, Carthew," said Jimmy, very quietly.

"Have you done the lines I gave you?"

"No."

"I told you to bring them to me before afternoon lessons."

"My hands were too bad for writing, Carthew. I can't handle a pen yet."

"Don't pitch me any lying yarns, Silver! You are the biggest liar in the Form, I think."

Jimmy's eyes glinted, but he was silent. But at that moment, through the half-open door of the Form-room, came a thunderous voice.

"Carthew! Is that the language you use to a junior?"

Carthew spun round in alarm.

For it was the voice of the Head.

"Sir!" stammered Carthew, taken utterly aback. He had supposed that the Head was in the Sixth Form-room, or in his study.

"Follow me at once, Carthew!" came the stern, commanding tones.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stuttered Carthew.

He almost limped towards the door. The Head had not appeared there, and though it was a little singular that he had spoken to Carthew without looking into the room, Carthew had no choice but to obey him. The Fourth Formers exchanged glances of keen satisfaction. The bullying prefect was in a row at last.

Carthew went into the passage, and stared. The Head was not in sight. How the old gentleman could have got out of the corridor already was surprising; Dr. Chisholm did not usually move in a hurry. But he was gone, and Carthew made his way reluctantly to the Sixth Form-room.

He entered the senior Form-room, where the top Form were at work with the headmaster. Dr. Chisholm was deep in Euripides with the Sixth; the Sixth, perhaps, not being quite so keenly interested as the doctor was. He looked round somewhat sharply as Carthew came in.

"Carthew! Why have you left the Fourth Form? I trust there is no more trouble with the juniors?"

Carthew stared at him blankly.

"I—I——" he stammered.

"Well, what is it?"

"I—I—I've come, sir," stuttered Carthew.

"I can see you have come, Carthew," said the Head testily. "I'm asking you why you have come."

The Sixth Formers all looked curiously at Carthew. The latter's face was growing crimson.

"But you—you told me to come, sir," stammered Carthew, in helpless bewilderment. He wondered whether the reverend Head had taken leave of his senses.

"I told you, Carthew?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have no recollection of doing so," snapped Dr. Chisholm. "When I placed you in charge of a junior Form, on your own offer to undertake Mr. Bootles' duties during his indisposition, it was understood that you would sacrifice your own work in this room."

"Yes, sir, but—but——"

"When did I tell you to come back, Carthew?"

"A—a few minutes ago, sir," stuttered the prefect.

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"What!"

"You—you called to me from the corridor, sir, and—and told me to follow you here."

"Carthew! Is this a joke?" thundered the Head. "Have you ventured, sir, to play a foolish joke on your headmaster?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Carthew. The prefect would sooner have played a joke on a tiger than upon the Head of Rookwood.

"Then what do you mean, sir, by stating that I called to you from the corridor a few minutes ago?"

"But you—you did, sir."

"I have been in this room for ten minutes, Carthew."

Carthew felt as if his head were turning round. The seniors were beginning to grin. They could only suppose that—unheard-of as it was—Carthew was really venturing to "pull" the leg of the headmaster.

"I—I—I——" babbled Carthew.

Dr. Chisholm was looking at him very hard.

"If anyone called to you from the corridor, Carthew, it was not I. Perhaps some junior was deceiving you from a mistaken sense of humour."

"I—I suppose so, sir!" gasped Carthew. "I—I'm sorry I've interrupted you, sir."

Dr. Chisholm had already returned to Euripides, and Carthew left the senior room. He rubbed his nose in wonder as he went down the passage. Unless he was dreaming, Dr. Chisholm had called him out of the Fourth Form-room; yet he denied having done so. If it was some fag's practical joke, the fag had imitated the Head's voice wonderfully. And what fag could it have been, when all the juniors of Rookwood were at classes?

Carthew returned to the Fourth Form-room in a dazed state, blinking. He found the juniors all in their places; and some of them smiling. The expression upon the face of Dick Van Ryn was child-like and bland; Conroy and Pons were grinning; and

Jimmy Silver & Co, looked remarkably cheerful. They knew now that the voice from the passage had been produced by the Rookwood ventriloquist, and they could have hugged the junior from South Africa.

Carthew scowled at the class, and singled out Conroy, whose grin certainly was very noticeable.

"What are you laughing at, Conroy?"

The Australian junior became serious at once.

"Was I laughing, Carthew?" he asked.

"Yes, you were. Come out here."

"Carthew!"

It was the Head's voice from the passage again.

Carthew jumped to the door.

He peered out into the passage; it was empty. Carthew stared at the blank walls, and gasped. Then he spun round to the class again.

"Some junior is playing a trick!" he shouted. "Who is it that has been calling out from the passage? I know you know who it is!"

Silence.

"Silver!" thundered Carthew.

"Yes, Carthew."

"Someone has been calling to me from the passage, and imitating the Head's voice. Do you know who it was?"

"I don't think there was anybody in the passage, Carthew," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"You know there was!" roared Carthew furiously. "I believe you have a hand in it. Come out here!"

Carthew snatched up Mr. Bootles' cane. The practical joker in the passage, apparently, dodged away too quickly to be caught, but Carthew intended that someone should smart for it.

"Carthew!"

It was the Head's voice once more. But Carthew did not look into the passage; he strode towards Jimmy Silver.

Swish! Swish!

"Yow-ow!"

Carthew pitched the cane on the desk again.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his hands, and gave Van Ryn an expressive look. The South African junior, certainly, had made Carthew "sit up" with his queer ventriloquial gifts; but Jimmy had not benefited much, so far. But Van Ryn was not finished yet.

CHAPTER 44.

An Exciting Time for Carthew!

"CARTHEW, you cad!"

Carthew jumped, and looked round. The voice did not come from the class. It came from the wall-cupboard at the end of the Form-room, where the blackboards and easels were kept.

"Who—what's that?" ejaculated the prefect.

"Yah! Cad! Rotter! Bully!"

Carthew's face became crimson with rage.

He strode to the desk, and grabbed the cane, and then strode to the big cupboard.

Evidently some fag was hidden there—at least, that was the only explanation Carthew could think of.

The Fourth Formers watched him, grinning, while he hurled the big door open, and peered in among the lumber in the cupboard.

All the Fourth knew by this time that the Rookwood ventriloquist was at work.

Mornington & Co. were exchanging dubious glances. They could have informed Carthew of the exact nature of the mysterious voice; but "sneaking" was a serious offence at Rookwood.

All the protection he could have obtained from Carthew would not have made Morny's life worth living afterwards, if he had betrayed Van Ryn. He knew it, and he was silent. He did not want to be mercilessly ragged and

sent to Coventry; neither did the rest of the nuts.

As for Towny & Co., they were enjoying the prefect's bewilderment and discomfiture, and would have been sorry to spoil the joke.

Carthew's movements certainly were interesting. He peered among the lumber in the wall-cupboard, without finding anyone hidden there. He shoved the cane into every recess that was large enough to conceal a cat. But the practical joker did not come into view.

"Silly ass!"

Carthew spun round at the voice behind him.

"Who spoke?" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" yelled Carthew.

"Fathead!"

The voice came this time from Mr Bootles' desk. Carthew rushed to it, and peered under it. But the space was empty.

"By gad!" gasped Carthew, in utter bewilderment. "I—I—I can't understand this! It's a trick of some sort!"

He glared at the grinning class.

The opprobrious epithets having ceased, Carthew took up the lesson again, in a very red and flustered state.

He was in a villainous temper by this time, and he rapped knuckles right and left with a ruler, by way of solace.

Mornington came in for a rap, and scowled like a demon. Carthew was not in a mood to distinguish friends from foes now. Anybody who happened to be near him was in danger from the ruler.

"Mind what you're doin'!" shouted Mornington, sucking his knuckles furiously.

"Hold your tongue, Mornington!" snarled Carthew savagely.

"Well, let my knuckles alone, confound you! Yaroo!" roared Mornington, as the angry prefect dealt him a terrific box on the ear.

There was a howl of laughter from

the Fourth. Mornington had enjoyed Carthew's rule in the morning; he was not enjoying it so much in the afternoon. The prefect was in too savage a temper to think of favouritism.

"Now shut up!" snarled Carthew. "I'll keep order in this class, or I'll know the reason why!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Mornington, rubbing his ear. "Oh, by gad! Oh, ow!"

"Silver, what are you laughing at?" "Mornington, please," said Jimmy meekly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Hold out your hand, Silver!"

"Don't be such a beastly bully, Carthew!" came a voice from the back of the class.

"Who spoke?" shrieked Carthew

"Go and eat coke!"

"Was that you, Muffin?"

Tubby Muffin jumped, in dismay and terror.

"Nunno. No, please, Carthew, it wasn't!" he howled.

"Who was it, then?"

"Find out, fathead!" came the voice. And, for the life of him, Carthew could not tell from which junior it proceeded.

He gripped the ruler hard, and went in among the desks, gritting his teeth. There was a sudden sound of yapping and snarling fairly under his feet.

"Gr-r-r! Bow-ow-wow! Gr-r-r!"

Carthew jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Who's got a dog here?" he yelled. "Who has dared to bring a dog into the Form-room?"

No reply.

Carthew glared under the desks in search of the dog. But there was no dog to be seen. He came back towards Jimmy Silver, with a deadly gleam in his eyes.

"This is a trick!" he said hoarsely. "I don't quite know how you are doing it, Silver, but I know it is you! I'll thrash you within an inch of your life, you cheeky young cad!"

He grasped Jimmy by the collar, and dragged him out of his desk.

"Leggo!" roared Jimmy wrathfully. "Oh, my hat! Yow-ow! Stoppit!" The ruler was crashing on his shoulders; Carthew was in too great a rage to care how hard he struck. "Let go, you rotter! I'll kick your shins——"

"I'm not standing this!" roared Lovell. "Come on!"

He rushed out of his place, and drove his fist fairly into Carthew's face. The prefect reeled away, releasing Jimmy. Raby and Newcome rushed forward the next moment—the Fistical Four were always shoulder to shoulder. Both the juniors crashed into Carthew, hitting out; and the Sixth Former went to the floor.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Van Ryn. His ventriloquism had brought about rather unexpected results.

"Back up!" yelled Oswald.

Carthew staggered to his feet. He was gripping the ruler to rush on the Fistical Four, who faced him with gleaming eyes.

Oswald joined them, and the Colonial Co. were only a second later. Then came Flynn, with a rush.

"Go back to your places!" roared Carthew.

"Let Jimmy Silver alone, then, ye spalpeen!"

Carthew struck furiously at Flynn, by way of reply. The next moment the ruler was torn from his hand, and six or seven juniors surrounded him and seized him.

"Frog's-march!" roared Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!" grinned Conroy. "There'll be a thumping row, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him socks!"

"Let go!" howled Carthew. "Release me! Oh, crumbs!"

The struggling prefect was caught up in the grasp of the juniors, and round and round the Form-room he went, ex-

perliencing, for the first time since he had been a senior, the joys of the frog's-march. Evidently the Fourth Form were quite out of hand.

CHAPTER 45.

The Fall of the Tyrant!

THE Form-room door was flung suddenly open.

Framed in the doorway appeared the awe-inspiring figure of the Head, towering in wrath.

"Cave!" stuttered Jones minor.

Bump!

The Fourth Formers dropped the perfect like a hot potato. Carthew sprawled on the floor, utterly breathless, unable to speak.

Dr. Chisholm strode into the Form-room, his brow like thunder.

"Carthew! Is this the way you keep order in this class?" he exclaimed.

"Gurrrrrgh!" came from Carthew.

"Go to your places!" thundered the Head.

The juniors scuttled back to their desks like rabbits. Mornington & Co. had not joined in the rag; but most of the Fourth had helped to give Carthew the frog's-march, and now they sat palpitating. But Van Ryn was as cool as a cucumber; he had not finished yet.

"Carthew!"

"Oh, don't yell at me!"

The Fourth Formers jumped at that reply, in Carthew's sulky voice. Dr. Chisholm stood rooted to the floor.

"Wha-a-at!" he stuttered.

"I say, don't yell at me!"

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Carthew! Are you out of your senses? How dare you address your headmaster in that manner?" thundered the Head, hardly able to believe his reverend ears.

"Grooogh!" gasped Carthew.

As a matter of fact, he had not spoken a single word; he was still trying to get his second wind. The Rookwood ventriloquist had kindly spoken for him.

"I—I have never heard of such insolence!" gasped the Head. "Get up, Carthew! Do not sprawl upon the floor in that ridiculous manner!"

Carthew staggered to his feet.

"I'm fed up with this, Dr. Chisholm! You can get somebody else to look after the Fourth! The little beasts won't let me bully them!"

"Wha-a-at!" articulated the Head.

Carthew stared blankly.

"I—I didn't speak, sir."

"Carthew, I begin to believe that you have taken leave of your senses! Are you in your right mind?" roared the Head.

"I—I never said——"

"I shall certainly not leave you in charge of the Form after this, Carthew! I should not think of it for one moment! You have the audacity—the unparalleled audacity—to tell me that you wish to bully these boys? I can scarcely credit my ears!"

"I—I didn't—— I—I never—— I—I——"

"Do not interrupt me, Carthew! You tempt me to administer corporal punishment, Sixth Former as you are!"

"I—I——"

"So when you offered your services, Carthew, in Mr. Bootles' place, it was your intention to bully, as you call it, these juniors——"

"Nunno! No, sir! I—I never——"

"And you have the unheard-of audacity to tell me so!" exclaimed the Head. "I am glad, Carthew, that in your unseemly excitement you have blurted out the truth. I begin to understand why there has been so much disturbance in this Form under your charge."

"I—I—I——"

"It is too late to attempt excuses, Carthew. You have addressed me, your headmaster, insolently. Unless you apologize for it this instant, in the humblest manner, I shall expel you from the school."

Carthew almost staggered.

"You hear me, Carthew? I am waiting."

The Head was evidently in deadly earnest. There was no choice left to Carthew. He did not want to be expelled from Rookwood.

"I—I apologise, sir!" he stammered, hardly aware of what he was wanted to apologise for. "I—I beg your pardon, I'm sure, sir! But I didn't—"

"That will do. You have shown your unfitness, Carthew, for the position I have placed you in. You will go to the Sixth Form-room at once and ask Bulkeley to step here!"

"But, sir, I—I—I can take charge of the Fourth, sir. I'm quite willing."

"Only a few minutes ago, Carthew, you told me you were not—using a vulgar expression."

"I—I didn't sir. I—I—I never—"

"Do you expect me to believe a palpable falsehood? Can I not believe my own ears?" thundered the Head. "Not another word! Go to your place in your own Form-room at once, and send Bulkeley here!"

Carthew, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, limped out of the room. There was a gasp of laughter from the Fourth, but it died away instantly as the Head's glance went over them.

"Silence!"

A pin might have been heard to drop then.

"I found this Form-room in a state of uproar," said the Head sternly. "But for Carthew's amazing confession that he had been bullying, I should punish you all most severely. As it is, I shall pass over the matter. According to Carthew's own words, he was chiefly to blame."

The juniors were silent. Only Van Ryn closed one eye at Pons, who was next to him.

"Bulkeley will take charge of the class until Mr. Bootles recovers," added the Head. "I need not say that if there is any further disturbance, the punishment of the offenders will be most exemplary."

"There won't be, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver. "Bulkeley won't have any trouble with us."

"I trust, not, Silver," said the Head grimly.

Bulkeley came into the Form-room. Smiling faces from the Fourth greeted him. The juniors were only too glad to be put under the authority of the popular captain of Rookwood.

"Bulkeley, I should be glad if you would take charge of this class until Mr. Bootles is able to do so again. Carthew has proved totally unfit for the post."

"Certainly, sir!" said Bulkeley.

The Head swept out of the Form-room. Bulkeley eyed the juniors rather grimly. But they smiled at him sweetly. And from that moment lessons proceeded in the Fourth Form-room without a hitch. That the trouble in the Fourth was due to Carthew's methods was made quite clear, by the fact that the Classical Fourth did not give Bulkeley a single cause for complaint. The captain of Rookwood was quite satisfied with them when he dismissed them after lessons.

As soon as the Fourth came out, Jimmy Silver & Co. rushed up to Van Ryn and cheered him.

"Hallo! What's the game?" roared Van Ryn.

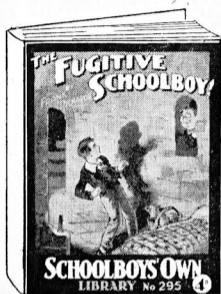
"Shoulder high!" shouted Lovell.

"Oh, I see!" The South African junior grinned. "Any old thing!"

On the shoulders of the Fistical Four, Dick van Ryn was carried out in triumph into the quadrangle, amid cheers from the Fourth.

The Fourth Form had done with Carthew, and their trials and troubles were over; and they owed their rescue from the tyrant to Dick van Ryn, and for the present, at least, there was no more popular junior in the school than the Rookwood ventriloquist.

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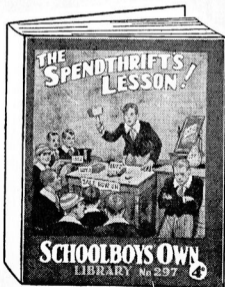


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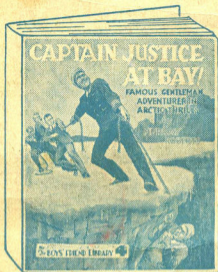
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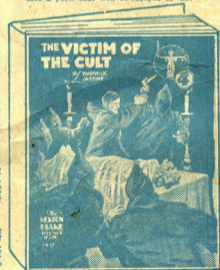
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