

# RIVAL GUYS OF ROOKWOOD!

By  
OWEN CONQUEST



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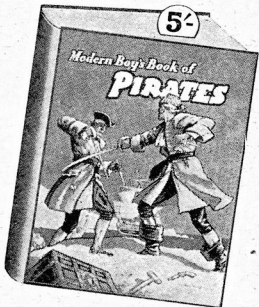
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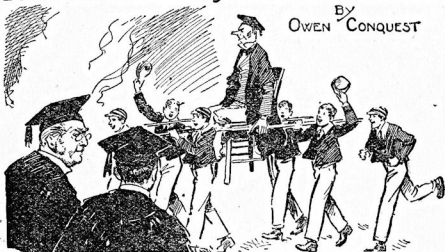
Specially written by Flying Officer  
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# RIVAL GUYS of ROOKWOOD!

BY  
OWEN CONQUEST



An exciting Long Complete School Story of JIMMY SILVER & Co.,  
the Cheery Chums of ROOKWOOD.

## CHAPTER 1.

Up to Uncle James!

"**W**HEREFORE that worried brow?"

Jimmy Silver asked that question humorously but sympathetically.

Tommy Dodd's brow certainly was worried.

He looked, indeed, as if there had fallen upon his youthful shoulders all the troubles in Mr. Manders' House, if not in all Rookwood.

He was tramping under the beeches with his hands driven deep into his pockets, with a deep line corrugating his forehead.

The Fistical Four, of the Classical side, drew up in a smiling row before him and stopped his gloomy progress.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Raby and Newcome were particularly cheerful that afternoon. For was it not a half-holiday? Was not the weather, for

once in a way, rather fine, and were not the four of them booked for a visit to Mr. Sankey's World-Renowned Circus, now camped in a field near Coombe?

In that cheerful conjunction of circumstances the Fistical Four felt that all was right with the universe.

"What's the awful trouble, old man?" asked Lovell. "Thinking of the next House match and the whopping you're going to get?"

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "Tommy's up against it. What's the trouble, Dobby? Anything your Uncle James can do?"

"Yes," said Tommy Dodd, with a ferocious look. "Take Mr. Manders out to some quiet spot and—drown him. I'll be ever so much obliged."

The Fistical Four grinned. Feeling so cheery themselves, they were prepared to do anything they

could to buck up Tommy Dodd, their old rival of the Modern Side at Rookwood. But they really could not oblige him to that extent.

"So it's Manders?" asked Raby.

"Isn't it always Manders?" grunted Tommy Dodd. "He's never happy except when he's miserable, and making chaps miserable. I'm gated for this afternoon, and I was going down to the circus. Everybody else is going, and I've got to loaf about and watch 'em go off. I suppose you Classical asses are going?"

"We are!" agreed Jimmy. "There'll be a big crowd of Rookwood fellows there this afternoon. The show's only at Coombe for a few days."

"And I've got to give it a miss!" growled Tommy Dodd. "Cook and Doyle have offered to stay in with me. But, of course, I'm not mucking up their afternoon because Manders has mucked up mine. Fancy being gated on a half-holiday for nothing!"

"For nothing?" asked Newcome.

"Practically nothing."

"Oh!" said Jimmy Silver. "Only practically?"

The Fistical Four smiled. Mr. Roger Manders, the senior Modern master, was a severe gentleman—very severe. But even Roger Manders was not likely to "gate" a fellow for nothing at all. "Practically" nothing was quite another matter.

"Suppose a fellow's carrying a footer downstairs under his arm," said Tommy Dodd argumentatively. "Is it his fault if a silly ass butts into him and he drops the footer?"

"No fear."

"Can a fellow help it if the footer bounces on the banisters?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Certainly not!"

"And is it a fellow's fault if Manders happens to be ambling by and catches the footer with his silly head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd's gloomy face relaxed as the Classical fellows chuckled.

"Well, it was funny," he said. "You should have seen Manders jump. I think he cleared the floor by about a foot. Startled him, you know."

"I suppose it would," chuckled Jimmy.

"But it was a sheer accident, of course."

"Oh, of course!"

"It was really!" hooted Tommy Dodd. "Really and truly! Manders isn't the man to bonnet with a footer if you can help it. He's too jolly dangerous."

"Well, didn't he believe it was an accident?" asked Newcome.

"Oh, yes! Being an accident, he let me off with a gating. If it hadn't been an accident I should have been skinned or flayed or boiled in oil, or something," said Tommy Dodd. "And when I told him I was booked for the circus this afternoon he said that he trusted that the deprivation of that somewhat infantile entertainment would impress upon my mind the necessity of being more careful."

"Perhaps it will," suggested Lovell brightly.

"Ass!"

"Look here——"

"Fathead!"

"If you want me to lick you before I go to the circus——" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

"My dear man, if you began you wouldn't go to a circus afterwards, you'd go to a hospital!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Why, I—I——" Lovell pushed back his cuffs. "I'll jolly well——"

"No, you won't, ass!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Tommy's up against it, and we're going to help him out. You've not got a detention task, Doddy—only gated?"

"Yes, only!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "I can mooch about in the quad or Little Quad, or play football all by myself if I like. Or I can go into the library and read the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' if I like," he added



sarcastically. "I don't like, as it happens."

"That's all right."

"Is it, fathead?"

"I mean, you can cut," said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "You know how Manders spends his afternoons when he's clear of you kids—mugging over chemistry. He won't be watching you. Of course, you needn't walk out of gates with the rest. Drop over the wall and chance it. Turn up for the roll, and ten to one he'll never know."

Tommy Dodd shook his head dolorously.

"You don't know Manders. When he gates a fellow he takes jolly good care the fellow goes through it. I know jolly well he'd miss me before I'd been gone a quarter of an hour. And that's a licking, and Manders' lickings are rather hefty. He doesn't just flick you like Dicky Dalton."

"Chance it!" said Lovell. "I would!"

"You would," agreed Tommy Dodd. "That's the sort of ass you are!"

And Tommy Dodd drove his hands deep into his pockets again and tramped on in his pessimistic way. Jimmy Silver frowned thoughtfully.

"It's rotten!" he said.

"Yes," growled Lovell. "I really ought to lick that Modern ass for his cheek."

"I don't mean that, ass! I mean, it's rotten for poor old Doddy to be gated when we're all going to the jolly old circus."

"Oh, blow Doddy!" said Lovell.

"Still, it's rotten!" said Jimmy. "I wonder——"

Jimmy Silver fell silent and very reflective. He felt that it was really rotten for Tommy Dodd to be left out of the merry crowd going down to Mr. Sankey's circus that afternoon for so trivial an offence as dropping a footer on Mr. Manders' head—by accident, too. If there was any way of rescuing Tommy Dodd, Jimmy Silver felt that it was up to him to find out, and to pluck the hapless Tommy up

from the depths of gloom. And so, while the Fistical Four sauntered under the beeches, Jimmy Silver exerted all his intellectual powers on the problem.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Something Like a Wheeze!

"WE'LL stay in if you like, old man," said Tommy Cook.

"No!"

"Sure, we will, and we'll punt a ball about, and—and rag old Mack and the sergeant, what?" said Tommy Doyle.

Tommy Dodd smiled faintly.

"Get going, you two!" he said.

"I'm all serene. I've got a fire, and an armchair, and a 'Holiday Annual.' Tell me all about it when you come back."

Cook and Doyle hesitated.

The three Tommies of the Modern

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Fourth generally were inseparable on a half-holiday. And with heroic self-sacrifice Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were prepared to give the circus a miss, and stay within gates that afternoon to keep their gated chum company.

But probably they were relieved by his refusal to accept the sacrifice. They looked rather brighter when they received an answer in the negative.

Still they hesitated. The study looked very cosy and cheery, with a big fire, and Tommy Dodd sprawling in an armchair, with his "Holiday Annual" propped open on his knees. But they did not like leaving Tommy to it.

"It's a shame intirely," said Doyle.

"Rotten!" said Cook. "I believe it's a jolly good show at Sankey's—bucking horses, you know, and lions and tigers—they make a special fuss of the royal Bengal tiger—they've got

a picture of him on the hoardings at Coombe and Latcham—no end of a corker! I say, Tommy, what about hooking it, and chancing Manders?"

Tommy Dodd was tempted, and his look showed it. He laid down the "Holiday Annual."

"After all, you mightn't be spotted," said Cook hopefully. "Manders may forget all about you and——"

"Hush!" said Doyle suddenly.

There was a step in the passage. The juniors knew that quick, jerky footsteps; it belonged to Mr. Roger Manders.

The Modern master arrived at the study doorway. His sharp, suspicious glance gleamed over the three juniors.

"Oh! You are here, Dodd?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir," said Dodd.

"Very good!"

The thin, angular gentleman, with another suspicious glance at the three, walked on.

The Modern trio exchanged eloquent glances.

Tommy Dodd sat down again.

"Nothing doing!" he said. "Of course, he knows jolly well that I shall cut if I get half a chance. He's keeping an eye open. It's not good enough, you fellows. Off you go!"

And two of the Tommies took their departure, leaving Tommy Dodd to his "Holiday Annual." But as soon as they were gone Dodd laid down his volume and crossed to the study window. From the window he had a view of a cheery crowd setting out for the gates—Moderns and Classicals together.

Tommy Dodd looked very gloomy.

"Oh, here you are, kid!"

It was Jimmy Silver's cheery voice at the door. He smiled in at the Modern junior, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome smiled, too. Tommy Dodd did not smile. He looked dismal.

"You fellows just off?" he asked. "Cook and Doyle have gone."

"I've got a wheeze, old bean," said Jimmy.

"Take it home and boil it!" answered Tommy Dodd. "Nothing doing! Manders has just been mooching along to see whether I'm here, and he'll be mooching along again soon. If he misses me from the study he'll take a walk all over Rookwood to make sure that I'm not out of gates. He's a sticker, Manders is—he's got what he calls a sense of duty. Blow him!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"All the same, I've got a wheeze," he said. "There's a risk, but it may work all right. I think it will."

"Your Classical wheezes are no good!"

"Is that how you thank a chap?" inquired Arthur Edward Lovell, with sarcasm.

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here——"

"Well, I think——"

"Never mind what you think, old scout," interposed Raby. "Life's short, you know. Go ahead, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver smiled and went ahead.

"Manders may look round for you once or twice, Doddy——"

"I know he will. No 'may' about it."

"Well, he will, then. Suppose he sees you in this study, reading your 'Holiday Annual'—then he won't miss you, and you can be at the circus all right, see?"

Tommy Dodd stared.

"Potty?" he asked. "How can he see me in this study if I'm at the circus, you ass? Is that a Classical joke?"

"Yes—a joke on Manders. Look here!"

Jimmy Silver drew a small, hairy object from his pocket. Tommy Dodd blinked at it. It was a light brown wig.

"From our props," explained Jimmy Silver. "Our private theatrical things, you know. I've picked it out as the nearest to your mop in colour."

"What on earth——"

"You've got an old suit of Etons, I suppose——"

"Yes—why?"

"Then what's the matter with rigging up a life-size Tommy Dodd in that armchair, with a book?" said Jimmy complacently. "Leave the door half-open—if Manders passes he sees you there—see? No reason why he should butt into the room if he sees you."

Tommy Dodd jumped.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

"I've thought it out, you see," said Jimmy cheerily. "Leave it to your Uncle James."

"Jolly good stunt, what?" grinned Raby.

Tommy Dodd chuckled. The possibilities of that idea dawned upon him at once.

"Well, for a Classical you've got some sense, Jimmy Silver," he conceded. "If we could make it lifelike——"

"No 'if' about it," said Jimmy briskly. "We can! Sort out your old clobber, and some rags and things for stuffing, and let's get along. Then we'll see if the coast's clear for you to slip out, see?"

Tommy Dodd hesitated—only for a moment. He wanted to get out—he wanted it very much, and he was ready to take some risk. And really this seemed almost as safe as houses. Mr. Manders, he was certain, would take occasion later in the afternoon to ascertain that he was within gates. But a glance into the study from the passage would show Tommy Dodd's effigy there—and, seeing it there, the Modern master would not be likely to walk into the study. Why should he?

At close quarters the effigy would not bear scrutiny, certainly. But it would not have to stand such a test.

"I'll risk it!" exclaimed Tommy resolutely.

"Good man!"

And the juniors closed the door and set to work at once. A suit of Etons was laid out, and the juniors proceeded to stuff the trousers and jacket to fill them out to life-size. A cushion, tied up in a muffler, formed the head of the effigy, and was secured to the stuffed jacket and nice white collar fastened round an imaginary neck. Then the light brown wig, which was just Tommy's colour of hair, was skilfully affixed to the top of the dummy head.

Tap!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, dear!"

The knock at the study door made the conspirators jump. With desperate haste they shoved the half-finished effigy under the study table as the door opened.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### At the Circus!

CLARENCE CUFFY of the Modern Fourth stood in the doorway.

His simple, innocent face looked benignly into the study.

Tommy Dodd and the four Classical juniors looked at him—looked daggers at him.

For one terrible moment they had supposed that it was Mr. Manders at the door. It was a relief to find that it was only Cuffy. But it was exasperating, all the same.

"You silly ass!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"My dear Thomas——" The duffer of Rockwood seemed mildly surprised.

"You—you owl!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"My dear James——"

"What do you want?" demanded Dodd.

"My dear Thomas, I do not want anything," said Clarence Cuffy in his kind and gentle way.

"Take it and go, then!" suggested Lovell.

"My dear Arthur——"

"Hook it!" said Raby.

"I came to see you, my dear Thomas," said Clarence Cuffy. "Being aware of your unfortunate predicament, my dear fellow——"

"Cut it short!" howled Tommy.

"Being aware, my dear Thomas, that, by order of Mr. Manders, you were detained within the precincts of the school for the afternoon," continued Cuffy. "It occurred to me that possibly you would be glad of my company, my dear Thomas. It would be a genuine pleasure to me to help you pass the time pleasantly and profitably by showing you my entomological specimens and explaining something of the attractive science of entomology to you——"

"Great pip!"

"I am sure, my dear Thomas, that in such an entrancing pursuit you would soon forget the rather frivolous attraction of a circus," said Cuffy, beaming. "Pray do not think it would be a trouble to me. I assure you that I regard it as a pleasure, as well as a duty, to pass on my accumulations of knowledge to less gifted individuals. If you are somewhat dull and slow of comprehension, my dear Thomas, you need not fear that I shall lose patience. Far from it. I shall, indeed, endeavour to suit my explanations to your rather limited intellect."

Tommy Dodd did not answer in words.

He picked up the poker from the grate and made a sudden rush at Clarence Cuffy.

It was in the kindness of his kind and gentle heart that Cuffy had come there. Probably he did not expect thanks. If so, he was not disappointed. Certainly he did not receive any.

What he received was a lunge from the study poker, which elicited from him a terrific yell.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Give him another."

"Oh, dear! My dear Thomas!

Yooooooph!" howled Cuffy as Tommy Dodd made another lunge.

Clarence Cuffy turned and fled along the passage. His affectionate friend and relative, Tommy Dodd, brandished the poker.

"Come back and be brained!" he roared.

"Oh, dear!"

Clarence vanished.

Tommy Dodd came back into the study, breathing hard. He shut the door with a bang, and hurled the poker into the fender with another bang.

"That's all right now," he said. "Let's get on. We shall be late for the circus at this rate!"

Tommy Dodd II was dragged out from under the table, and the juniors set to work actively. Many hands made light work, and the effigy was finished at last and arranged in the armchair.

Really it looked amazingly lifelike.

Jimmy Silver stepped out into the passage and surveyed it from that point of view. The back of the chair was partly turned towards the door. From that direction a shoulder and an arm could be seen, and the back of a brown head, and one leg crossed over another.

Certainly, anyone coming right into the study, and getting a front view of the effigy, would have seen what it was at a glance.

But from the passage it looked just like a junior sprawled in the armchair, and the "Holiday Annual" was skilfully propped up on the crossed knees, as if being perused by the sprawling junior.

"Right as rain!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ripping!" said Lovell, joining the captain of the Fourth in the passage. "Blessed if I shouldn't think it was Doddy!"

"Tip-top!" said Tommy Dodd.

There was general satisfaction. The juniors retired from the study, with the pleased feeling of good work well done.

The door was left half open. Any-

one passing along the passage—Mr. Manders, for instance—could glance in and see Tommy Dodd comfortably at home, while he was in reality revelling in the attractions of Sankey's Circus a mile away. So all parties would be pleased—a state of affairs seldom attained in this imperfect universe.

"Now for getting out!" said Tommy Dodd.

That was fairly easy. In the circumstances it was not judicious for the Modern junior to walk out of the House by the front door. But it was easy enough to slip out by a back door, and to drop over the school wall in a secluded spot.

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled out of Mr. Manders' house cheerily. As they went they spotted the tall, angular gentleman looking out of his study window. They smiled as they walked down to the gates—Mr. Manders seeing quite clearly that Tommy Dodd was not with them.

But outside the gates of Rookwood Tommy Dodd joined them and they walked down the lane to Coombe in cheerful company.

They reached the field near the village where the circus was camped, and where a crowd was going into the big tent. Tiny Tony, the clown, was beating a drum at the entrance, and calling on ladies and gentlemen to walk up. And the ladies and gentlemen were walking up in goodly numbers.

Tommy Dodd slapped the backs of two Modern juniors in the crowd, and Cook and Doyle turned round and stared.

"Tommy, old man——"

"Here I am!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "All serene, old scouts! I don't think Manders will miss me—and, if he does, bother him! Shove in!"

"Now then, you Modern bounders, don't shove!" roared Lovell.

"Push those Classical duffers out of the way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Ow!"

Arthur Edward Lovell, suddenly up-ended by the three merry Moderns, sat down hard. He scrambled up in great wrath; but Tommy Dodd & Co., chuckling, had vanished into the big tent.

"This way, ladies and gents!" shouted Tiny Tony, rattling the drum. "Walk up, walk up! Come and see Hercules the Strong Man and Tiny Tony, the funniest clown on earth! Come and see the royal Bengal tiger, that eats a man for his breakfast every morning in his native jungle! Walk up, walk up!"

"Where's those Modern blighters?" gasped Lovell.

"Never mind the Moderns!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Come on, old man—we don't want the back seats."

And the Fistical Four pushed on and paid their shillings and marched into the big tent.

They found themselves three or four rows behind the Modern trio, in the amphitheatre of wooden seats. Lovell shook a fist at Tommy Dodd over a crowd of intervening heads, and Tommy grinned.

"Here they come!" said Raby.

Clatter, clatter!

Horses began to career around the ring with thundering hoofs. Mr. Sankey, resplendent in evening-clothes, with white waistcoat, and a diamond in his shirt-front which must have been worth a thousand pounds—if it was worth anything—cracked a long whip, and Tiny Tony jumped through paper hoops, on and off horses, and cracked his ancient circus jokes—jokes ever new to an audience willing to be pleased.

In an interval of the performance Tommy Dodd stood up and waved a friendly hand at the Classics behind.

"This is better than a gating!" he called out cheerily.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

And Arthur Edward Lovell grinned and nodded.

"Here comes the giddy tiger!" said Newcome.

And there was deep attention as an iron cage was wheeled into the arena, with a huge striped beast inside, shifting restlessly to and fro, eyeing the encircling sea of faces with savage, scintillating eyes. The tiger tamer walked beside the cage as it was wheeled in—a dusky Hindu, in his native costume.

"My hat! That brute looks jolly savage!" commented Jimmy Siver. "Blessed if I should like to do that darkey's turn in the cage!"

"Same here!" agreed Lovell.

All eyes were upon Sujah Das, the tiger-tamer, as he stepped into the cage and the iron door clanged behind him. Tommy Dodd had forgotten even the existence of Mr. Roger Manders, and yet, if he had only known— But that is another chapter!

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### The Death of Tommy Dodd!

CLARENCE Cuffy was looking sad. He was concerned for his relative, Tommy Dodd.

Cuffy was a forgiving fellow. Already he had forgiven Tommy Dodd for those lunges with the poker.

What he was thinking of now was—whether he should venture to approach dear Thomas again and comfort him in his isolation. He was willing, indeed eager to do so; but he did not want any more lunges from the study poker. He was very, very sure that he did not.

Footsteps came along the passage, and Cuffy brightened.

Was it dear Tommy coming to seek him?

Cuffy jumped up and opened the study door. He was prepared to welcome a repentant Thomas with open arms.

But it was a thin, angular figure that strode along the passage. Cuffy was quite disappointed to see Mr. Manders.

Mr. Manders glanced at him sourly, and passed on towards Tommy Dodd's study.

Cuffy noticed that he stopped there for a moment, and glanced in at the half-open door.

Cuffy even heard him give a grunt. Then Mr. Manders walked away to the staircase, and disappeared.

Cuffy smiled faintly.

He knew that Roger Manders was suspicious, and doubted whether Tommy Dodd had not, after all, disregarded his gating and gone to the circus. But that glance into Tommy's study had reassured the Modern master.

After Mr. Manders had gone back to his own quarters downstairs Cuffy made up his mind.

He walked along the passage to the study that belonged to the three Tommies. The door was still half-open and Cuffy glanced in.

He had a partial side view of the junior in the armchair, with the "Holiday Annual" propped up on his crossed knees, and his light curly brown head showing over the white collar.

Tommy Dodd was, apparently, deeply interested in his book, for he was very still—quite motionless, in fact.

Cuffy stood at the door and coughed, to draw the attention of his relative. But he did not succeed in drawing any attention from the figure in Tommy Dodd's armchair.

"My dear Thomas!" said Cuffy at last.

"No reply.

"Thomas—my dear Thomas!"

Not a movement—not a sound. A pained look came across Clarence Cuffy's mild face. Was dear Thomas sulky? He had often known Tommy to be wrathful, but never sulky before.

"Thomas I trust that you are not offended with me," said Cuffy gently. "I do not desire to stress the point, my dear Thomas, but indubitably the damage in our late unfortunate en-

counter was sustained by me. You really caused me considerable agony in the ribs, my dear Thomas, when you thrust that iron implement into juxtaposition with my person."

The junior in the armchair did not even turn his head. He seemed deaf to the gentle voice of Cuffy.

"Will you not answer me, Thomas?" asked Cuffy in great distress. "Surely you are not nourishing a feeling of rancour?"

No answer.

Cuffy stood looking in at the motionless figure. Mr. Manders had only glanced in at it and had passed on satisfied. But Clarence Cuffy had been staring into the study for five minutes or more now, and it was dawning upon him that there was a strange, lifeless stillness about the figure in the armchair.

It was not like Tommy Dodd to be sulky and to refuse to answer. Not like him at all, and he was very, very still; indeed, Cuffy listening intently, could catch no sound of breathing.

He began to feel alarmed.

"Thomas, are you ill?" he exclaimed anxiously.

There was no answer, and Cuffy stepped into the study at last. He set the door wide open and stepped in warily. He was anxious about Tommy Dodd—anxious and alarmed—but he had not forgotten his experience with the study poker.

Sagely, he left open a retreat behind him as he stepped warily in.

"Thomas!"

The silence was really uncanny, alarming. Not the slightest movement came from the hunched-up figure in the chair—it might have been a lifeless, stuffed figure, from its deadly stillness.

"Oh dear!" gasped Cuffy.

Was Tommy Dodd in a fit, or something of the kind? Was he—was it possible that he not only looked, but actually was, lifeless—some terrible seizure, or stroke, or heart failure, or

something? Cuffy had read of such things, though they had not come within the range of his experience.

At that terrible thought Clarence threw prudence to the winds. A hundred study pokers would not have kept him away now.

He rushed towards the inanimate figure in the chair and grasped it by the shoulder, shaking it violently in his agitation.

"Thomas! Dear Thomas! Oh, my goodness!"

Crash!

The shake did it.

Skilfully as Tommy Dodd II was fixed in the armchair, he was not in a position to stand shaking.

The figure tumbled helplessly forward, and sprawled face down on the hearthrug.

The "Holiday Annual" crashed to the floor.

Cuffy jumped back with a wild cry.

He stood and stared at the motionless figure. Had it fallen face up even Cuffy would have seen what was the matter with it. But the face was down—he could see only the well-stuffed suit of clothes, the white collar, and the back of the curly brown head. To Cuffy's eyes it was a Rookwood junior who lay stretched there—still, motionless, and obviously lifeless. Cuffy gazed at the figure in horror, wide-eyed, and backed to the door, gasping.

"Thomas!" he gasped.

The silence was terrible. With a face as white as chalk, Clarence Cuffy turned and rushed from the study. He only thought now of getting help; and he raced along the passage to the stairs, yelling. Knowles of the Sixth was coming up the staircase as Cuffy started down, on his way to Mr. Manders' study; and Cuffy, heedless, crashed right into him. There was a roar from Knowles as he staggered and grasped the banisters.

"You young idiot—"

"Oh!" gasped Cuffy, "Ow!

Knowles, dear Thomas is dead! Oh, dear!"

Knowles grasped him by the collar. "You little idiot! You——"

"Let me go!" shrieked Cuffy wildly. "Dear Thomas is dead! I must tell Mr. Manders. Oh, dear!"

Knowles released him in sheer astonishment. Clarence Cuffy raced down the stairs and crashed at Mr. Manders' study door, hurling it wide open. It was no time for the ceremony of knocking at a door.

Mr. Manders seemed to think that it was, however. He jumped up, startled and angry, and glared at Clarence.

"Cuffy, how dare you! What——"  
"Help!"

"What! Is the boy mad?" Mr. Manders grabbed up a cane. "Cuffy, hold out your hand! Do you hear?"

"Dear Thomas is dead!" wailed Cuffy.

"Wha-a-t?"

"He is lifeless in his study," sobbed Cuffy. "Oh, dear! And to think that I was angered towards him for having somewhat violently placed a poker in juxtaposition with my ribs! Oh, dear! Ow!" roared Cuffy, as the puzzled and angry Mr. Manders brought the cane down across his shoulders. "Ow! Oh! Whooop!"

"Now, what do you mean?" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Whooop!"

"Were you alluding to Dodd of the Fourth Form?"

"I—ow! Yes. Who—oop!"

"Has something happened to Dodd? I saw him only ten minutes ago in his study, reading."

"Ow! He's dead! Wow!"

"Are you out of your senses?" roared Mr. Manders.

"He is—ow!—dead! He fell—wow!—lifeless before my—yow!—eyes!" gasped Cuffy.

Mr. Manders glared at him. Mistaken or not, Cuffy was evidently in

dead earnest, and a twinge of uneasiness seized the Modern master. He shoved Cuffy roughly aside and rushed out of the study, and, with a speed very unusual for Mr. Roger Manders, raced up the staircase and sprinted for Tommy Dodd's study in the Fourth Form passage.

## CHAPTER 5. Unparalleled!

"**D**ODD!"  
Mr. Manders gasped out the name.

He stood in the doorway of the junior study, staring in at the still figure stretched on the floor.

Knowles of the Sixth had joined him, startled and perturbed. Clarence Cuffy had followed him, and two or three fellows who happened to be about the house followed on, surprised and interested.

So there was a group gathered outside Tommy Dodd's door, staring into the room, where the still, lifeless form met their startled gaze. Mr. Manders stood arrested on the threshold.

"Dodd! What is the matter, Dodd? Get up at once!"

"He is d-d-d-dead!" wailed Cuffy. "He f-f-fell over as soon as I t-t-touched him. Oh dear, oh dear!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Manders.

He strode into the study. The figure on the floor looked lifeless enough; but Mr. Manders, after the first shock, was more angry than alarmed. It was more likely that Tommy Dodd was playing a trick than that he had suddenly expired in his study, which really was a very improbable proceeding on the part of a fit and healthy youth like Tommy.

Mr. Manders stooped and grasped the lifeless form by the shoulder.

"Now then, Dodd——"

No sound—no answer—no movement. An extraordinary expression came over Mr. Manders' face. The grasp of his



wiry fingers sank into the shoulders of the lifeless figure, which startled him very much, but which was not really surprising, as the shoulder consisted only of an Eton jacket stuffed with mufflers and handkerchiefs.

"Bless my soul! What——"

"He—he can't be—be dead, sir!" exclaimed Knowles.

"It is a trick!" exclaimed Mr. Manders furiously.

He dragged the figure up, its extremely light weight showing that it certainly was not a human form.

There was a buzz of amazement from the group at the study door. The lifeless figure dangled helplessly in Mr. Manders' grasp as he held it up, swaying loosely. The boots hung down from the trouser-ends, obviously having no feet inside them. The head sagged sideways, and displayed no features on the face, only a handkerchief tied over a little cushion.

"It—it—it—it is a—a—a figure—a—a dummy!" gasped Mr. Manders. "It is not Dodd at all!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Knowles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows in the passage burst into a laugh. Mr. Manders gave them a glare of concentrated ferocity, which checked their merriment with startling suddenness.

"What—what is that? Is this—this wretched deception an occasion for merriment? Leggett—Lacy—Smith, take a hundred lines each!"

"Oh, dear! Is—is it not really Thomas?" gasped Clarence Cuffy, blinking at the figure in blank amazement. "Is dear Thomas not dead, after all? Oh, I am so very, very glad!"

"You stupid boy!" roared Mr. Manders.

"Eh?"

"You incredibly stupid and obtuse boy, how could you imagine for one moment that this—this stuffed dummy was Dodd? Go to my study and wait

for me there, Cuffy. I shall cane you!"

"Oh, dear!"

Clarence Cuffy trailed away dolorously. He was very, very sorry that he was going to be caned. He thought it was very, very hard and unjust, and he feared that it would be very, very painful. But it was very, very certain that he was "for it."

Mr. Manders hurled the dummy into the armchair, where it collapsed into a shapeless bundle, certainly not looking much like a Rookwood junior now. Mr. Manders glared at Knowles, on whose face a grin was lurking. The grin vanished as Knowles met Mr. Manders' infuriated stare.

"This is not a laughing matter, Knowles."

"Nunno, sir! Certainly not."

"It is an act of trickery—of astounding impudence!"

"It—it is, 'sir," agreed Knowles hastily. "Amazing!"

"Dodd has evidently gone out—gone to the circus, of course—and has left this—this—this object here to deceive me into believing that he was still in the House," Mr. Manders gasped. "I—I was actually deceived. I looked into the study a quarter of an hour ago, and—actually supposed that Dodd was here!"

"D—did you really, sir?" gasped Knowles.

It really was hard work for the Modern prefect to suppress a chuckle at that.

"It is unparalleled—unprecedented!" stuttered Mr. Manders. "Dodd's punishment for this—this trickery shall be exemplary. But for that absurd boy Cuffy I should never have discovered the deception. Knowles, I have said that this is not a laughing matter!" roared Mr. Manders.

"Oh, yes! Quite so, sir! Certainly not!"

"Pah!"

Mr. Manders swept out of the study. Knowles stared after him, and stared at the collapsed figure in the chair, and chortled. Now that Mr. Manders was gone he could chortle unchecked, and he did.

The Modern master hurried back to his study. He was in a towering rage, which really was not surprising in the circumstances. His leg had been pulled—the leg of Roger Manders—almost the most important leg at Rookwood! While he had believed Dodd in his study, the young rascal—the young rogue—the young trickster—the young scoundrel was enjoying himself at the circus, in defiance of “gating.” Really, it was too much!

But Dodd’s enjoyment was to be cut short. He was to learn that the leg of Roger Manders could not be pulled with impunity.

Mr. Manders stayed only to cane Cuffy before he started in pursuit of the elusive Fourth Former. Not for a moment did he think of leaving the matter over till Tommy Dodd returned. Doubtless the young rascal, the young scoundrel, was grinning with his friends at that very moment over the cunning way he had fooled the Modern master. If so, his grinning would very quickly be changed into intense seriousness. To reach the circus tent as quickly as possible, to seize Tommy Dodd by the collar and drag him away—that was Mr. Manders’ only thought. To leave him in enjoyment of his ill-gotten entertainment was not to be thought of for a moment.

“Hold out your hand, Cuffy!”

“Oh, dear!”

Really, Mr. Manders might have been grateful to the duffer of Rookwood, without whom he never would have discovered that he had been taken in. But he was not in a grateful mood.

He was yearning to cane somebody. He would willingly have caned Knowles, for grinning, had it been possible to

cane a prefect of the Sixth. He could cane Cuffy—that was possible, and it was a solace.

Whack, whack!

“Whoop!” roared Cuffy.

“You absurd boy, you have alarmed me for nothing! Hold out your hand again!”

Whack!

“Yaroooooh!”

“You are the stupidest boy at Rookwood! The other hand!”

Whack!

“Ow! Wow, wow!”

“Now go!”

“Oh, dear! Ow!”

Cuffy was glad to go. He limped out of the study with his hands tucked under his arms, wriggling.

Mr. Manders felt a little better.

He hurried to get his hat and coat, and started out of the House at a great speed. He was in a great hurry to get to the circus tent. The bare thought that the entertainment there might finish before Dodd could be taken away was an unendurable one to Mr. Manders. He whisked out of the school gates at a speed that astonished old Mack, the porter. Old Mack came out of his lodge and blinked out of gates after Mr. Manders, still more astonished at the sight of the tall, angular gentleman whisking along the road almost at a run.

“My heye!” murmured old Mack.

Mr. Manders whisked on.

But the luck of Roger Manders was out.

He arrived at the circus-field in time to see the crowd swarming out of the big tent. The circus was over, and Tommy Dodd, that young rascal, that young rogue and scoundrel had had his afternoon’s entertainment, evidently, to the very end. And Mr. Manders, feeling that this was the last straw, stared round furiously to pick the offender out of the crowd of Rookwood fellows pouring out of the tent.

## CHAPTER 6.

## Mr. Manders Does It!

**JIMMY SILVER & CO.** came out of Sankey's Circus in cheery mood in the falling dusk. It had been quite a ripping show, and the Fistical Four were satisfied with it. Tiny Tony had been very funny; Hercules the Strong Man had done wonderful feats of strength; the Queen of the Ring had, to put it Shakespearianically, witched the world with noble horsemanship; and the royal Bengal tiger had thrilled the audience with his savage growling and ferocious glares.

They had, as Arthur Edward Lovell remarked, had a good bob's worth. The three Tommies were equally satisfied—especially Tommy Dodd. Quite unconscious of the fact that he was a young rascal and a young rogue—according to Roger Manders—Tommy Dodd was feeling quite pleased with himself and things generally. The Modern chums joined the Fistical Four as they came out, all in cheery mood.

"Ripping—what, you chaps?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Jolly good," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"I wonder what Manders would say if he knew I'd been here?" chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"Something emphatic, I fancy. But he won't know, if you sneak in the back way and keep it dark," said Jimmy.

"Jolly good wheeze of yours, old chap!" said Tommy. "But the sooner I get in, and put that dummy out of sight the better. Lucky Manders doesn't care for circuses! If he'd dropped in—"

"Tare and 'ounds!" ejaculated Tommy Doyle suddenly.

"What's the row?"

"Manders!"

"Oh, pip!"

The tall, angular figure of Mr. Manders appeared in sight, in the glare of a naphtha lamp. He was staring round him, as if in search of someone,

but he had not seen the group of juniors in the swarming crowd. Tommy Dodd gazed at him in horror.

What had brought Mr. Manders there he did not guess. But to be seen by him now meant discovery, and all the fat in the fire.

"Cut!" breathed Cook.

"Dodge away among the vans," whispered Jimmy Silver.

"What-ho!"

Tommy Dodd plunged through the crowd, heading for the circus camp. There was a good chance of dodging away unseen among the vans and carts and the canvas stables.

Unfortunately, a sudden energetic plunge through a thick crowd raised loud objections on the part of the persons plunged into.

"Where are you shoving?"

"Stop that!"

"Mind where you're going!"

Mr. Manders' keen eye noted the disturbance. He spotted Tommy Dodd just as that youth reached the canvas shelter where Mr. Sankey's menagerie was housed.

He made a plunge after Tommy Dodd.

Tommy glanced round and spotted the angular gentleman coming in his direction. Whether Mr. Manders had seen him or not he did not know, but he was taking no risks. He dodged into a canvas shelter out of sight. It was dark under the canvas, and Tommy ran blindly into a little, dark man in Oriental costume, who was standing by the door of a huge iron cage on wheels.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped Tommy.

"What do you in a tent?" asked a sharp voice. "You no go come in a tent like so you belong!"

It was Sujah Das, the tiger-tamer. He made a grasp at Tommy Dodd, and caught him by the collar.

There was no time to explain. Tommy jerked himself loose and ran on, stumbling in the dusk, towards an

opening on the other side of the structure.

"You one scamp!" howled Sujah Das. "You no go come in a tent you no belong! I whack!"

And the tiger-tamer ran angrily after Tommy Dodd, catching up a stick as he went. Tommy ran out, with the angry coloured gentleman on his trail. A minute later Mr. Roger Manders arrived in the canvas shelter.

He stooped his tall head and peered in.

"Dodd, I know you are here. I saw you enter. Come out at once!"

No answer.

Tommy Dodd was already out on the other side, scuttling across the dusky field, with the angry Hindu on his track, waving a vengeful stick.

"Do you hear me, Dodd?" roared Mr. Manders. "I repeat, that I know you are here in hiding! Boy, come forth!"

The boy did not come forth.

"I am aware of your trickery!" shouted Mr. Manders, quite unconscious of the fact that he was addressing space, and wasting his sweetness on the desert air. "I have come to take you back to Rookwood! Your punishment will be exemplary—exemplary! Come forth! Will you come forth, Dodd, or will you compel me to fetch you?"

And as he received no reply, Mr. Manders plunged into the shadowy tent.

On the farther side Sujah Das had let fall a flap of canvas in pursuing Tommy Dodd. It was very dark inside, and no way out was to be seen, and Mr. Manders had no doubt whatever that Tommy Dodd was lurking there in the deep shadows.

"Dodd, where are you? I repeat that I know you are here!"

There was no reply, but Mr. Manders heard a movement, of something that stirred among straw.

He groped his way in the direction

of the sound, and his hands came in contact with an iron door. Beyond that door of iron bars he could hear a stealthy sound, as of someone—or something—creeping in straw. He had no doubt whatever that it was Tommy Dodd in hiding.

"You young rascal! Will you come here, Dodd? Upon my word, this passes all bounds! But I will find you, Dodd—I will find you!"

Mr. Manders, in a state of fury, groped over the iron bars and found a fastening. The next moment the door was open.

"Now, Dodd——"

A stealthy movement again.

"Dodd, you impudent young rascal! I am perfectly well aware that you are hiding in this cage! Do you hear me, Dodd?"

Mr. Manders stooped his head into the cage. His wrath was at boiling-point. For a Rookwood junior, hunted by a master, to dodge into an empty cage and hide there, was unparalleled—it really passed all bounds. It did not occur to the exasperated Mr. Manders that the cage was not empty, and that Tommy Dodd was not there.

"Dodd! For the last time, will you come out?"

Growl!

Mr. Manders stared and started back, his blood running cold.

That deep and savage growl certainly did not proceed from a Rookwood junior.

It dawned upon Mr. Manders that Dodd was not there—that the sounds he had heard had been made by some animal stirring in the straw.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Mr. Manders.

He jumped back.

Then, realising that he had opened the door of an animal's cage—perhaps a dangerous animal—he jumped forward to close it again. As he did so, a huge head loomed up in the gloom,

and huge, shadowy, behind it, was a long striped body.

"Oh!"

One glimpse Mr. Manders had of two rolling eyes and a frightful set of teeth!

One glimpse was enough!

He leaped away, with a leap that carried him out of the tent, and he stumbled over in the field on his hands and knees.

There was a deep-throated roar behind him.

Forgetful of Tommy Dodd, forgetful of everything, but the danger he had brought upon himself, Mr. Manders leaped up and ran. It did not even occur to him that others would be in danger with the tiger loose. His long legs made wonderful time as he sprinted across the dusky field.

From the tent, a long, striped, sinuous body came creeping out, and the freed tiger glared round him, and then crept softly away among the tents and vans. A minute or two later, Sujah Das came back into the tent, and threw down his stick angrily. He had not succeeded in laying it about the intrusive schoolboy who had butted into his quarters—Tommy Dodd had vanished over a hedge, and was already half-way home to Rookwood.

In the circus field, a great part of the outcoming crowd had cleared off, but there were still a good many people about—among them Jimmy Silver & Co.—when a dark, little man, with wildly rolling eyes, came tearing out of the menagerie quarters, waving his dusky hands and yelling with alarm.

"You look out! You take some care! Him tiger be loose!" yelled Sujah Das.

Sujah Das' English was not good. But his meaning was clear. There was a hubbub of alarm at once. Mr. Sankey rushed up to the tiger tamer and caught him by the shoulder.

"What's that?" he howled.

"Him tiger be loose!" shrieked Sujah

Das. "Someone who no belong do come and open him cage. He go! Him loose! He not in a tent!"

"Hook it, you chaps!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"What-ho!"

The field had been clearing slowly. Now it cleared with remarkable rapidity. The news that the royal Bengal tiger was loose was enough. On all sides there was the sound of running feet.

"Put it on!" gasped Lovell.

The Rookwood juniors fairly sprinted. They came out of the field into the lane, and headed for Rookwood—and had Coombe Lane been the cinder-path, they could not have put up a better race. The royal Bengal tiger had been thrilling enough to watch, behind the iron bars of his cage. At close quarters he was likely to be much too thrilling.

"Here, I say! What—what——"

Rookwood fellows arrived at the school in a scurrying crowd. They poured in at the gates, and yelled to old Mack to lock up. And as soon as the Rookwood porter learned that the circus tiger was loose, he lost no time in locking up. Later comers were admitted cautiously, squeezing in, with Mack holding the gate.

That evening, great excitement reigned at Rookwood. Fellows were severely confined to their houses; no one was allowed even to cross the quad. So it was not till the following day that Jimmy Silver & Co. learned of Clarence Cuffy's exploit in the afternoon, and of the terrific caning Tommy Dodd captured from his Housemaster. Mr. Manders, greatly worried and alarmed by the result of his intrusion into the tiger tamer's tent—of which he did not breathe a word—"took it out" of Tommy Dodd, and that youth did not enjoy his evening. His only

solace was to call on Cuffy in his study, taking a stump with him; and Clarence Cuffy was very, very uncomfortable for some time afterwards.

## CHAPTER 7.

### No Takers!

**P**UTTY of the Fourth came into the end study and dumped down a large bag on the carpet.

Then, after a cautious glance out into the Fourth Form passage, he closed the study door carefully and turned to meet the surprised gaze of Jimmy Silver & Co.

The Fistical Four were at tea in the end study. But they forgot tea for the moment in their surprise at Putty's proceedings.

Teddy Grace—better known in the Classical Fourth as "Putty"—nodded and grinned at the Fistical Four.

"I've got it!" he said.

"What?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Which?" inquired Lovell.

"The jape of the term!" said Putty impressively.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked dubious. They knew Putty and his japes. They had, so to speak, been there before.

Putty of the Fourth was a practical joker, a humorist whose sense of humour was seldom kept within due limits. Nobody ever knew what Putty might do next, excepting that it would most likely be something better left undone.

"What have you got in the bag?" asked Raby.

"The Head's head."

"What?" roared the Fistical Four, with one voice.

"I bagged it from the school museum."

"The museum?"

"Yes. And I can tell you it wasn't easy to get it away without being spotted. Carthew got his eye on this bag. But I dodged him all right. Of

course, it's against the rules to take anything from the museum without special leave. But I couldn't ask for special leave to get hold of the tiger's head to jape with, could I?"

"Oh! You mean the Head's tiger's head?" said Lovell.

Putty chuckled.

"I didn't mean Dr. Chisholm's own head, ass! Besides, his head wouldn't have been of any use. It was the tiger's head I wanted."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Newcome. "You've had the neck to take the tiger's head out of the museum?"

"Just that!"

"It means a licking, you duffer. The Head will be no end waxy. He thinks an awful lot of that giddy old napper," said Jimmy Silver. "It was his father shot the tiger and brought home the head and had it stuffed. At least, I've heard so. And what on earth do you want it for?"

"The jape of the term. I suppose you fellows know that the royal Bengal tiger has escaped from Sankey's Circus at Coombe?"

"We were there when it happened," said Lovell. "We got back to Rookwood jolly quick, too, when we heard. He looked a savage beast when we saw him in the cage. Shouldn't like to meet him out!"

"Of course we know!" grunted Raby. "Isn't the whole school gated till the blessed old tiger is rounded up?"

"Suppose he came to Rookwood?" said Putty.

"Well, he might. Nobody seems to know where he's wandering," said Jimmy Silver. "Might happen along here."

"It would cause some excitement—what!"

"A lot, I should think," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Let's hope he won't give Rookwood a call!"

"He's jolly well going to!" said Putty

"Eh?"

"That's the jape."

"The jape?" repeated Jimmy.

"Just that! That's why I've bagged the tiger's head from the museum," chuckled Putty of the Fourth, his eyes dancing. "It's got glass eyes, you know, and an electric torch inside the head would make them glitter like—like anything; more than lifelike, in fact. See? We're going to rig up a spoof tiger for a jape."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, the fellows will jump to it at once that the escaped tiger has got into the school!" chortled Putty. "No end of a catch—what?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at Putty.

Evidently the humorist of the Fourth was greatly pleased and tickled with his great wheeze.

"That's why I've brought it to this study," explained Putty. "You fellows are going to help me."

"Are we?"

"Yes. The chaps in my study haven't the nerve. Tubby Muffin and Jones minor and Higgs—they're no good. They just hooted at me when I proposed it."

"I should jolly well think they did!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "You born idiot!"

"Eh?"

"You burbling bandersnatch!"

"What?"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet. Often and often Putty of the Fourth's misdirected sense of humour had led to drastic measures being taken with him. And it was clear to the captain of the Fourth that it was time for drastic measures to be taken once again.

"So we're going to rig up a spoof tiger, and make the fellows believe that the escaped circus beast has got into Rookwood," said Jimmy.

"That's the idea. Ripping—what?"

"And we're going to bag a licking all round from the Head for fooling about with his silly old tiger's napper?"

"Pooh! What's a licking?"

"That's what you're jolly well going

to find out here and now!" grinned Silver. "Collar him!"

"Here, I say! What—what—Leggo!" roared Putty of the Fourth, in surprise and indignation, as the Fistical Four rushed at him.

But the four juniors did not let go. They held on, and Putty came down on the study carpet with a heavy concussion.

"Whoooop!"

"Bump him!"

"You silly owls! Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"There's a stump on the shelf," said Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell made a jump for the stump. A moment later there was a sound of loud whacking in the end study, and still louder yelling. Putty of the Fourth, not looking or feeling in the least humorous now, roared and yelled and wriggled.

"You silly asses! You fatheads! Leggo! Stoppit! Oh, my hat!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Now chuck him out!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're too funny, Putty! You'd better get that tiger's napper back to the museum just as fast as you can, before it's missed. Savvy?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Putty of the Fourth, wriggling in the grasp of four pairs of hands, was swung through the doorway. There was a loud bump in the Fourth Form passage as Putty landed there, roaring. Then there was a crash as the bag was hurled after him.

Then the door of the end study closed with a slam.

Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to their tea, chuckling. Putty of the Fourth was not likely, in their opinion, to carry on his new and wonderful jape in the face of such drastic discouragement. If he did they were prepared to give him some more. The affair of the escaped tiger was much too serious for Putty's japes, though Putty of the Fourth seemed unable to realise it.

## CHAPTER 8.

"Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!"

"HAVE they got him, sir?" Mark Carthew of the Sixth asked that question, as Mr. Dalton came into the House in the falling dusk.

Mr. Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth, shook his head.

He did not need to inquire to whom Carthew alluded as "him." The escaped tiger was the chief topic at Rookwood School now, as indeed in all the vicinity.

For twenty-four hours the royal Bengal tiger—one of the greatest and most thrilling attractions of Sankey's Circus—had been missing. A huge tiger wandering free as air was no joke, except, perhaps, to Putty of the Fourth. Mr. Sankey and his men were seeking the tiger far and wide, anxious to recapture him before he did any mischief, or sustained any. For he was a very valuable tiger, and it would have been a very serious matter to Mr. Sankey had he been shot, a thing that was quite likely to happen.

"No, Carthew, the tiger has not been caught yet," said the Fourth Form master. "He has been seen again, however. A carter saw him in the wood, from the road, in Ruff's spinney."

Carthew started.

"That's quite near Rookwood, sir," he remarked.

"Yes. The prefects must see that no boys go out of the House after dusk," said Mr. Dalton. "It is improbable that the animal will come near the school, but one cannot be too careful."

Carthew had a rather worried look. In the prefects' room he had expressed annoyance at the announcement that the Sixth, as well as the other Forms, were gated. But, as a matter of fact, Carthew would not have ventured outside the walls of Rookwood at any

price. His glance was quite anxious as he looked out into the dusky quad.

"Look out, Carthew!" shouted Putty suddenly. "What's that behind you?"

Carthew involuntarily spun round. There was a yell of laughter from the juniors.

"All serene!" called out Putty. "It was only your back hair, old bean. It's still behind you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew gritted his teeth and made a rush for the stairs. The juniors fled up the staircase, still chortling. And there was a laugh from two or three fellows in the lower hall.

"Grace!" shouted Cardew. "Stop!"

Putty of the Fourth did not stop.

The bully of the Sixth hurried up the stairs, and turned into the Classical Fourth passage.

There was a sound of scampering feet, and the juniors had vanished, probably into their studies.

Carthew stamped on angrily to Study No. 22, which belonged to Putty of the Fourth, and Jones minor, Higgs, and Tubby Muffin. The owners of the study were apparently absent now, however, for the room was in darkness. Carthew threw open the door.

"Grace, you cheeky young rascal!" he exclaimed savagely. "I jolly well know you're there. Put on the light."

There was no answer from the shadowy room.

Carthew strode in.

"Now, you young sweep——"

He broke off suddenly.

From the farther corner of the room, in the darkness, two balls of fire gleamed and glowed, eerie in the deep shadows.

Carthew stared at them blankly.

Two awful-looking eyes were glaring at him, and as he stared at them, almost frozen with terror, he made out, in the dimness, the shape of a fearful, bristly head—the head of a huge tiger.



Carthew stood rooted to the floor.

His knees knocked together; close and awful as the danger was, he was deprived of the power of movement.

Fascinated by those awful eyes, he stood motionless, his heart scarcely beating, realising with horror that the escaped tiger must have penetrated into the school. For here he was!

There was a rustling sound in the shadowy study.

That sound brought Carthew to life, as it were. It seemed to indicate that the awful beast was stealthily creeping upon him—perhaps about to spring.

He uttered a hoarse yell and jumped backwards into the passage. Then there was another yell.

Arthur Edward Lovell was coming along the passage, and Carthew had landed on him. Lovell staggered across to the opposite wall.

"Ow!" roared Lovell. "You silly ass! What—"

Carthew did not heed him.

He tore away to the stairs.

Down the staircase he went, three steps at a time, white as a sheet, expecting every moment to hear the roar of the tiger behind him.

"Help! The tiger! Help! Look out!" shrieked Carthew, as he came tearing down the stairs.

"What's that?" shouted Bulkeley of the Sixth from below.

"The tiger!" yelled Carthew. "Study No. 2, in the Fourth!"

"Rubbish!"

"The tiger—here?" howled Hansom of the Fifth.

"I've seen him—in the Fourth! Oh oh, dear! Help! Carthew babbled incoherently. He rushed on, almost knocking over Hansom of the Fifth, and tore away to his study, where he rushed in and slammed the door after him and locked it. He left a wild buzz of excitement behind him.

## CHAPTER 9.

## A False Alarm!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL stared blankly after Carthew as he fled.

A light gleamed in Study No. 2.

Lovell looked in at the open door.

Putty of the Fourth was there. He had switched on the light, with a cheery grin on his face.

Lovell's gaze passed him to the corner of the room.

He started at the sight of a huge tiger's head, with glass eyes that gleamed and glowed. But the sight was not alarming now that the light was on. The tiger's head was not an unfamiliar sight—Lovell had seen it often enough in the school museum. It was a terrible-looking head, certainly, and in life its owner had certainly been a dangerous beast. The glass eyes, with an electric lamp gleaming behind them, were strangely life-like. But there was nothing very alarming in a tiger's head arranged on a coal-box, the rest of the tiger not being there at all. Even Carthew would not have been alarmed had the study been lighted when he entered it.

Putty winked at the surprised Lovell.

"Lend us a hand," he said. "Carthew seems to have been a bit startled—"

"You silly ass!" gasped Lovell.

"So you're playing your silly tricks with that napper, are you?"

"Lend us a hand! They'll be up here soon, and I've got to get it out of sight!" snapped Putty.

He grabbed up the tiger's head hurriedly, and jammed it into the big, open bag. Lovell held the bag open for him, and the "napper" of the once fearsome beast was hidden from sight.

Putty shifted the bag into a corner behind the bookcase, and drew a chair to the study table and sat down.

"Look here, you ass—" began Lovell.

"Shurrup!" hissed Putty. "They're coming."

There were footsteps on the stairs, and many voices. Carthew had spread the alarm far and wide.

Bulkeley came up the stairs at a run, poker in hand, and Neville was soon after him, and Hansom of the Fifth followed, and then a crowd of other fellows. As a matter of fact, nobody quite believed that the tiger really was there; it was, to say the least, a very extraordinary lurking-place for the escaped animal to select.

"Why—what——" ejaculated Bulkeley. He stared blankly into Study No. 2.

According to Carthew, the escaped tiger was there. Bulkeley did not see any sign of a tiger; he saw Putty of the Fourth sitting at the table with a Latin grammar before him, and Arthur Edward Lovell sitting on a corner of the table with a grin on his face.

Putty looked up placidly.

"Hallo, Bulkeley! Anything up?" he asked.

"Carthew says he saw the tiger in this study!"

"What tiger?" asked Putty.

"The escaped tiger, you young ass—the circus tiger! I suppose you haven't seen anything of it?" growled Bulkeley.

"I saw it at the circus yesterday in——"

"Don't be a young ass!"

"Well, I don't think it's here," said Putty, glancing round the study. "I'm just starting my prep, Bulkeley, but if the tiger is here I shall ask Mr. Dalton to excuse me from prep this evening. A fellow can't be expected to do his prep with a tiger in the study, can he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

Bulkeley grinned.

"I knew there was nothing in it," he said, turning back into the passage. "It's pretty thick for a Sixth Form prefect to get nerry like this. I suppose Carthew fancied he saw the tiger."

"Dashed funk!" growled Neville.

"What is this?" Mr. Dalton arrived in haste on the scene. "What is all this disturbance, Bulkeley?"

"Carthew thought he saw the tiger here, sir——"

"Absurd!"

"Well, he said so, sir, so I thought we'd better come."

Bulkeley, with a very pink face, tried to keep the poker out of sight. In the circumstances, he felt that the poker was a little ridiculous.

"Quite right, Bulkeley; but, of course, the tiger could not possibly be in the house," said Mr. Dalton. "It really is too much for a Sixth Form prefect to spread an absurd alarm in this manner. I shall speak very severely to Carthew."

Mr. Dalton walked away, frowning.

Bulkeley glanced into the study again. His glance dwelt rather suspiciously on Putty of the Fourth.

"Have you been playing any tricks, Grace?" he demanded.

"Tricks!" repeated Putty innocently.

"You're such a tricky little villain," said the captain of Rookwood. "Have you been pulling Carthew's leg somehow?"

"Oh, Bulkeley!"

"Where were you when Carthew thought he saw the tiger?"

"In the study," said Putty meekly.

"I was just going to light up when Carthew looked in. Perhaps he took me for the tiger! You never can tell what a Sixth Form chap may do, can you, Bulkeley?"

Bulkeley did not answer that question. He turned away, and tramped out of the Fourth Form passage, still trying to keep the poker out of sight as much as possible. The crowd dispersed, grinning, some of them going alone to Carthew's study in the Sixth, rather interested to hear what Mr. Dalton had to say to Carthew.

Mr. Dalton was knocking at Car-

thew's door angrily. He had found it locked.

"Carthew!" he called out.

"Oh!" came a gasp from within the prefect's study. "Oh! Who—who—who is that?"

"Open your door, Carthew!"

"Is he—is it gone?"

"Do not be absurd, Carthew! The tiger has not been here at all."

"I saw it!" howled Carthew.

"You could not possibly have seen it when it certainly is not here. You are making yourself utterly ridiculous, Carthew!" exclaimed the Fourth Form master.

"Buck up, Carthew!" called out Hansom of the Fifth. "It's all right! You were only frightened by a shadow, old man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The key turned in Carthew's lock. The door opened, and he stared out at the grinning fellows outside. Mr. Dalton, however, was not grinning; he was frowning.

"You—you're sure it's gone, sir?" stammered Carthew.

"I repeat that the animal was never here, Carthew," snapped Mr. Dalton. "I am surprised that a Sixth Form boy should be frightened by a shadow."

"I saw the tiger——"

"Nonsense!"

"In Grace's study in the Fourth!"

"Grace himself is in his study, at preparation——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"For goodness' sake, Carthew, pull yourself together, and do not display such childish nervousness," snapped Mr. Dalton. And he walked away, leaving Carthew blinking at a dozen grinning fellows.

"I tell you I saw him!" Carthew hissed. "He was crouching in the study——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam!

Carthew banged his door, leaving a

chortling crowd to chortle in the passage. And they chortled still more as they heard Carthew's key turn in the lock again. Evidently Carthew was not satisfied that the Bengal tiger was not within the walls of Rookwood.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. had dropped in at Study No. 2. They had something to say to Putty of the Fourth. Putty met them with a cheery grin. But the grin faded away as he noted the stump in Jimmy Silver's hand.

"Here, no larks!" he exclaimed.

"Just what we've come in to tell you!" chuckled Lovell.

"You howling ass!" said Jimmy in measured tones. "Didn't we give you a stumping as a warning not to play these fatheaded japes? You've put the whole House into an uproar, and you might have frightened Carthew into a fit. Can't you get it into your head that this is a serious subject?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Collar him!"

Putty made a jump for the poker, and the Fistical Four made a jump for Putty. The humorist of the Fourth was collared and extended across the study table, face down—his face, in fact, was in the ink, the inkpot being upset in the process.

"Groogh! Look here——" howled Putty.

"Didn't we tell you to take that tiger's napper back where it belongs?" demanded Jimmy.

"Fathead! Leggo!"

"We'll take it ourselves," said Jimmy. "You're too funny to live, Putty old man; but if a stump can make you feel serious we'll do our best with it!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-whoop!"

"Do you feel more serious now?"

"Yaroooh!"

Whack!

"Now——"

"Ow! Yes! Stoppit! Leggo!" yelled Putty.

And the Fistical Four released the

hapless humorist and quitted the study, Jimmy Silver taking with him the bag containing the tiger's head.

Putty of the Fourth rolled off the table, gasping and spluttering ink. It was borne in upon his mind that his weird gift of humour was very inadequately appreciated in the Classical Fourth, and undoubtedly the stump had reduced him to seriousness. For quite a long time, in fact, Putty of the Fourth was feeling very serious indeed.

#### CHAPTER 10.

Awful for Mr. Manders!

**M**R. ROGER MANDERS of Manders' House sniffed.

"A Classical boy, of course?" he said.

"Oh, yes, sir!" agreed Knowles.

"No boy belonging to my House," said Mr. Manders, "would have the audacity—the effrontery—to remove a valuable article from the school museum."

Knowles of the Modern Sixth was not quite so sure of that. But it was his cue to agree with his Housemaster.

"Some Classical fag, to be sure, sir," he assented. "In fact, the whole House has been questioned."

Mr. Manders nodded.

"I will acquaint the Head with that fact," he said. "Thank you, Knowles. The stuffed head has undoubtedly been taken to play some foolish and reckless trick, to cause a scare, the school being in a state of alarm owing to the escape of the circus tiger. A foolish and reprehensible trick!"

"Oh, very sir!" agreed Knowles.

And the Modern prefect left Mr. Manders' study. Mr. Roger Manders sniffed again.

There was trouble in the air. Dr. Chisholm had missed the stuffed head from the school museum. His wrath was great.

Ever so many years ago the doctor's father had brought that stuffed head home from India. It had frowned and glared at the doctor since his boyhood days—ever so long ago. Ever since he had been headmaster of Rookwood—over twenty years—that stuffed head had adorned the school museum. Never had an audacious hand been laid upon it before. Now it had actually been removed—taken away by some audacious person or persons unknown. The startling news had been communicated to both Houses for investigation throughout the length and breadth of Rookwood School.

Mr. Manders had instructed his prefects to inquire; hence Knowles' report. Nobody on the Modern side, apparently, knew anything about the missing "napper." Mr. Manders was quite sure that it been purloined by some Classical boy—probably one of Mr. Dalton's boys. He did not like Mr. Dalton.

The Modern master put on his coat and hat and left the House, to cross the quadrangle to the School House.

There was a sound under the beeches as the singular figure of the Modern master whisked along the shadowy path.

Mr. Manders paused and glanced round him.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated suddenly.

A great, whiskered head loomed up dimly in the dark shadow of a tree.

Two eyes that seemed like balls of fire glimmered at the Modern master.

For a moment Mr. Manders stood stock-still, his heart thumping very uncomfortably.

Then he uttered an impatient and annoyed exclamation.

"Pish!"

His eyes gleamed.

The dim shape he discerned under the beeches was that of a huge tiger's head—and Mr. Manders had not the slightest doubt that he had chanced

upon the practical joker who had purloined the stuffed "napper" from the school museum.

Doubtless that practical joker expected to cause a scare with the stuffed head in the dark. But Roger Manders was not so easily taken in. He faced the dim head and the glaring eyes and shouted:

"Boy!"

There was no answer; the head did not move.

"Boy, I can see you!" shouted Mr. Manders angrily. "Come here at once! Do you hear? I command you to come forth!"

Silence. But the head backed a little deeper into black shadow. Mr. Manders started angrily towards it.

"You young rascal! How dare you disregard me!" he exclaimed. "Upon my word, this is too much! Will you come here immediately?"

Growl!

Mr. Manders started at that sound, it was so lifelike. Had he not known—or, at least, been convinced—that this was a practical joker playing a foolish trick with a stuffed head he might have fancied that the growl came from the deep throat of a Bengal tiger.

"You—you impudent young rascal!" roared Mr. Manders, all the angrier because the growl had startled him. "How dare you! This is unparalleled, upon my word! Do you think, sir, that you can frighten me by imitating the growl of a wild animal? You shall be flogged for this, sir—flogged! Do you hear?"

Growl!

It was too much for Mr. Manders' patience to hear that growl repeated by the practical joker. As if he could be scared by such nonsense!

He rushed under the dark beeches right at the dimly seen head and the glaring eyes.

"Now, you young rascal!"

A deep sound rang and echoed under the trees. It was not a growl this time; it was a terrific roar.

Mr. Manders stopped dead.

He had a glimpse in the gloom of a cavernous mouth, wide open, and a terrific set of teeth.

Certainly the stuffed head from the school museum could not possibly have opened in that manner!

For a single second Mr. Manders stood frozen.

It was not a practical joker; it was not the stuffed head! It was a live head—with a frightful set of teeth in it!

Only for a second Mr. Manders stood there, while he realised in an awful flash that he was standing within three feet of the royal Bengal tiger that had escaped from Sankey's Circus!

Then he made a backward jump.

That jump carried him at least six feet, as if he had been Spring-Heeled Jack instead of Roger Manders.

Growl!

Mr. Manders spun round and fled.

His long legs fairly twinkled as he ran.

He bumped into a tree, and staggered—he bumped into another tree, and yelled. He stumbled over, and picked himself up again, and ran on, not even knowing whether he was running—only knowing that behind him was the royal Bengal tiger.

Light glimmered from a little window—it was old Mack's lodge. Mr. Manders tottered to the door and banged on it.

"Mack! Mack! Let me in!"

There was a slow movement within the lodge. Old Mack, the porter, was not a young or active man—he was old, and he had his rheumatism to consider.

"Mack, Mack! Help!"

The door was locked. With escaped tigers in the neighbourhood, old Mack sagely locked his door at dark. Mr. Manders tore at it and thumped at it

in wild desperation. He could see and hear nothing of the tiger; but the shadows round him were peopled, in his terrified fancy, with glaring eyes and cavernous jaws and terrific rows of teeth.

"What's the row?" came old Mack's voice.

"The tiger! The tiger!" yelled Mr. Manders. "Just behind me! Open the door at once!"

"Oh, my heye!" exclaimed old Mack.

He did not seem in a hurry to open the door. Perhaps he did not like royal Bengal tigers at close quarters, any more than Roger Manders did.

Bang, bang, bang! rang the Modern Master's thumps on the door.

There was a sound behind Mr. Manders. It was the winter wind stirring the beeches, but to Roger Manders' mind it was the growl of the Bengal tiger. He quitted Mack's door, and rushed frantically away.

Lights gleamed before him—the lighted windows of the School House.

Panting, bedewed with perspiration, Roger Manders rushed up the steps and hurried himself at the big oak door. And as he did so there sounded close behind him the deep, terrifying growl of the Bengal tiger.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Hard Cheese!

"HERE'S the jolly old Head!" murmured Lovell.

Prep was hardly over in the studies of the Classical Fourth. But most of the juniors looked out of their doors as Dr. Chisholm appeared in the passage.

The Head was frowning. A visit to the Fourth Form quarters by the headmaster was a rare occurrence, and evidently it boded trouble. The Classical Fourth wondered upon whose devoted head the chopper was to come down.

Dr. Chisholm stopped at Study No. 2. Carthew of the Sixth was with him,

and Bulkeley, head prefect of Rookwood. And the Head had a cane under his arm. Only too evident there was trouble for someone.

Carthew opened the door of Study No. 3 for the Head. Putty of the Fourth, Jones minor, Higgs and Tubby Muffin jumped up as the headmaster stepped in. They were alarmed; but it was a relief to the rest of the Classical Fourth.

"That ass Putty has been up to something again," Arthur Edward Lovell murmured to Jimmy Silver, in the passage, and Jimmy nodded.

Dr. Chisholm surveyed the four occupants of Study No. 2 with a stern brow. Bulkeley looked very serious, and Carthew gave Putty a venomous look.

"Boys!" said the Head, in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Putty.

"An article has been taken from the school museum—a stuffed tiger's head," said Dr. Chisholm.

"Oh, sir!"

"It—it isn't here, sir!" stammered Higgs.

"We shall see!" said the Head grimly. "I have little doubt that it was taken, at all events, by a Fourth Form boy. It was in this study, Carthew, that you fancied you saw the escaped tiger."

"Yes, sir," said Carthew.

His look was black and bitter. As soon as he had heard of the missing "napper," Carthew had guessed at once what had happened in Study No. 2, and he had no doubt that it was one of Putty's practical jokes. He had made an absurd display of cowardice before all the House, and he was certain now that it was nothing more than a stuffed head that had scared him. But there was solace in reporting the practical joker to the Head.

"Which of you boys abstracted the head from the museum?" demanded Dr. Chisholm.

No reply.

"Doubtless it is still here," said Dr. Chisholm. "Of course, some boy not belonging to the study may have played that trick—I think you told me the study was unoccupied at the time, Carthew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; search the room. If it is not here, I have no doubt it will be found in one of the studies. Bulkeley, you will see that no Fourth Form boy leaves the passage."

"Yes, sir."

Carthew proceeded to search Study No. 2 for the stuffed head. Having no doubt that Putty was the guilty party, he was rather puzzled by that youth's cool equanimity.

Putty, as a matter of fact, was quite cheery. Jimmy Silver & Co. had deprived him of the tiger's head to put a stop to his weird japing, and he had been intensely exasperated at the time. Now he was rather pleased. Certainly he would not have liked the missing article to be discovered in his study.

Carthew's search was thorough. But nothing remotely resembling a tiger's head was found in Study No. 2.

"It's not here, sir," said Carthew at last, with a savage look at the cool and smiling Putty.

"Very well; let us proceed," said the Head.

They proceeded.

Bulkeley of the Sixth had ordered all the juniors back into their studies. So every fellow was at home when the Head looked in with Carthew.

Under the Head's eyes, Carthew investigated each study in turn.

Study after study was drawn blank, and the searchers arrived at last at the end study.

Jimmy Silver, and Lovell, Raby and Newcome stood up respectfully when the Head loomed in their doorway. Carthew came briskly in.

"Is—is anything the matter, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver mildly.

"Yes, Silver! The stuffed tiger's

head has been taken from the school museum, and I have the best of reasons to suppose that it is in some study in the Fourth."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy involuntarily.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome almost gasped with dismay. Carthew had already spotted a large bag in a corner of the study, and was going over to it. The Fistical Four watched him blankly. They knew, only too well, what was in that bag. There had been, so far, no opportunity of taking it back to the school museum. Now, evidently, it was too late!

Carthew opened the bag.

"It's here, sir."

Dr. Chisholm knitted his brows deeply.

"Very good!" The cane slipped down from under his arm into his hand. "Take it away, Carthew! It may be placed in my study for the present. Silver! Lovell! Raby! Newcome! You are responsible for this!"

"We—we—" gasped Jimmy Silver. "You—you see, sir——"

"Hold out your hand—you first, Silver!"

"The—the fact is, sir, we—we——"

"You need say nothing, Silver! The article has been discovered in your study, and that is enough!"

"But we—we—we——" stuttered Lovell.

"Do you venture to tell me that you did not know it was here—that you did not bring it here?" demanded the Head.

"Oh, no, sir! But——"

"That is enough! Your hand!" thundered the Head. "Not another word, Silver—hold out your hand!"

Swish, swish!

"Lovell!"

Swish, swish!

"Raby!"

"I—I say, sir——"

"Boy!" thundered the Head. And George Raby's hand came out.

Swish, swish!

"Newcome!"

Swish, swish!

Dr. Chisholm tucked the cane under his arm again. He surveyed four wriggling juniors with a terrific frown.

"Any repetition of such conduct and you will be flogged!" he rumbled. "Bear that in mind!"

And the Head rustled out of the study following Carthew who had already taken away the bag with the tiger's stuffed head in it.

Jimmy Silver & Co. wrung their hands in speechless anguish. The Head had felt that it was an occasion for severity. He had not spared the rod. Jimmy Silver & Co. felt that they had been right to intervene and put a stop to Putty's humorous activities with the tiger's head. But undoubtedly now they wished that they had left that duty undone.

"Ow!" gasped Lovell at last. "Wow! I—I—I'll pulverise that villain Putty!"

"I'll slaughter him!" groaned Raby.

"Ow! My hands!"

"Ow! Wow, wow!"

"We—we—we'll squash him!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "We—we'll lynch him! We—we— Oh, come on! Let's go and smash him now!"

The Fistical Four rushed out of the study. There was only one possible solace in their anguish—passing it on to Putty of the Fourth. Possibly Putty expected such a visit. He was not in Study No. 2 when the avenging Four arrived there.

"Where's that villain Putty?" roared Lovell.

"Eh? He's gone down," said Jones minor.

"Come on!"

The Fistical Four rushed for the stairs. They caught sight of Putty of the Fourth in the Lower Hall, and they sped down the staircase at almost breakneck speed. Putty of the Fourth

promptly vanished from sight. Jimmy Silver & Co. reached the bottom of the staircase.

The next moment Putty and his many sins vanished from their minds. The big door swung open, and Roger Manders of Manders' House, with a face like chalk, tottered in.

He reeled against a wall, panting. He could not speak, but he made wild gestures towards the door as a dozen fellows gathered round him in wonder. Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him blankly.

"What on earth——" began Lovell.

The next instant they knew!

A huge whiskered head, with glaring eyes and gleaming teeth appeared in the doorway, a long, sinuous, crouching body behind it. The fierce eyes glared at the Rookwooders.

"The tiger!"

One yell of alarm, and then scurrying and scampering feet. Up the stairs, along the passages, into the studies the Rookwood fellows scattered. It was too late to shut the door. The head and shoulders of the royal Bengal tiger were inside. In something less than a second the old oak hall was untenant, flying footsteps and slamming doors sounding in all directions, and the tiger was left monarch of all he surveyed.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Trapping the Tiger!

"SILLY asses!" murmured Putty of the Fourth.

Putty had dodged into the Fourth Form class-room and closed the door after him. There, in the dark, Putty of the Fourth lay low. Just then he did not want to meet the Fistical Four.

It was fortunate, from Putty's point of view, that the stuffed head had been discovered in the end study instead of in his own. But he realised that he



could not expect Jimmy Silver & Co. to be pleased. Judiciously he decided to give them time to get over the Head's licking before he met them again. So he retired to the deserted Form-room and sat down on a form to wait. He did not venture to put on a light, with four avengers seeking him. That would have been extremely injudicious.

As he sat waiting in the dark, prepared to take cover under the desks if Jimmy Silver & Co. thought of locking in the Form-room, he heard confused sounds from the distance—shouting voices and slamming doors—and wondered what was happening. The Fistical Four could scarcely be making all that uproar in searching for him.

He approached the door at last, and opened it cautiously to peer out. The passage outside was dark, and he could see nothing. The disturbance, whatever it was, was at a distance from the Form-rooms.

"What the thump—" murmured Putty, quite perplexed. Something evidently was going on, but he could not guess what it was. Naturally, it did not occur to him that the escaped circus tiger had come upon Roger Manders in the quad, that Mr. Manders had fled into the School House, and that the Bengal tiger had followed him in. He was not likely to guess that.

As he stood peering out into the dark passage a stealthy, creeping sound became audible to his ears. Suddenly he became aware of two glowing, greenish eyes quite close to him.

Putty started back.

For a moment his heart stood still as he made out dimly a long sinuous, striped body, crouching and creeping.

It was the tiger!

It was probable that the royal Bengal tiger had been startled, if not scared, by the terrific uproar that had followed his sudden appearance in the hall of the School House of Rookwood. At all events he had crept away from

the light, seeking cover, as had once been his way in his native jungle.

Putty stared almost wildly at the crouching, creeping beast. His heart throbbled almost to suffocation as he backed into the Form-room and grasped the door to slam it hard.

There was a wild roar as he slammed it.

It slammed on the head of the tiger, and did not shut! The great beast's head was groping in the doorway as Putty hurried the door to, and probably the concussion startled the tiger considerably.

The door flew back on Putty, and in sheer desperation he flattened himself behind it against the wall, drawing the door to him.

His heart beat like a hammer as he heard the tiger creeping into the Form-room, growling savagely.

If the brute found him there——

The tiger passed on. Whether seeking cover or seeking Putty of the Fourth the junior could not guess. But in a minute or two he could hear the great brute moving among the desks, where in the daytime the Fourth Form were wont to sit and receive instruction from Mr. Dalton.

Putty pulled himself together. With set teeth he stepped out on tiptoe from behind the door.

A second more and he was out in the corridor, dragging the door shut after him.

The door closed. There was a roar from the tiger, and a heavy body crashed on the inner side of the door.

Putty reeled against the wall, almost overcome for the moment. Within the Form-room there was a wild roaring and growling and crashing of overturned desks as the trapped tiger raged. Twice again the great animal crashed on the door, shaking the solid oak.

But the royal Bengal tiger was safely trapped now. He could not get out of the Form-room. And Putty, recovering himself walked away, finding the House deserted on all sides. He

proceeded to Mr. Dalton's study and tapped at the door.

The door opened instantly. Mr. Dalton grasped the junior by the shoulder, hooked him into the study, and closed the door again in a flash.

Putty grinned.

"It's all right, sir!"

"Remain here," said Richard Dalton. "I am about to leave by the window to reach the sergeant's house. Fortunately, he has a rifle."

"No need, sir," said Putty with cheerful coolness. "I've bagged the tiger, sir."

"What?"

"I've shut him up in the Fourth Form room, sir!" said Putty airily. "I thought he'd be safer there, sir. He can't get out."

Mr. Dalton stared at him.

"This is no time for jesting——" he began sternly.

"Honest Injun, sir—I—I mean, he's really shut up in the Form-room," said Putty. "He's making no end of a shindy there, but he can't get out."

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

He hurried from the study, and a minute later he was outside the door of the Fourth Form room. The royal Bengal tiger, realising that he was trapped in the room, was roaring and growling and pacing wildly about. But strong walls and a strong oak door held him a prisoner.

"All serene, sir—what?" grinned Putty, who had followed the Form-master.

Mr. Dalton smiled.

"Quite, my boy. You have done very well and very bravely," he said. "I will telephone to Coombe at once, and no doubt the circus people will be here very quickly to secure the brute. You have done very well indeed!"

Half an hour later a breathless excited Rookwood watched Mr. Sankey and his men taking away the tiger.

Sujah Das and Mr. Sankey and Hercules the Strong Man and a dozen other men were in charge of the animal, and strong ropes secured the limbs of the royal Bengal tiger, recaptured, much to Mr. Sankey's satisfaction, without damage.

The Fourth Form room was left in rather a parlous state. But that was a trifling matter. With deep relief the Rookwooders saw the royal Bengal tiger borne away in a motor-van. And old Mack gladly slammed and locked the gates behind him.

Putty of the Fourth was the hero of the hour.

Jimmy Silver & Co. eyed him rather grimly as they came on him in the junior Common-room, giving a description of his adventure to a crowd of Rookwood fellows.

Putty gave them a cheery nod.

But the Fistical Four felt that he had earned his pardon. It really was difficult to say what might or might not have happened at Rookwood had not Putty succeeded in trapping the escaped tiger in the Form-room.

"Jolly well done, old bean!" said Mornington. "But what the thump were you doin' in the Form-room in the dark when the giddy tiger got there?"

Putty grinned.

"Taking cover," he explained. "Four silly asses were tracking me."

"I've a jolly good mind——" began Lovell.

"We'll let you off," said Jimmy Silver. "You got us a licking, you silly owl, but in the giddy circumstances——" He rubbed his hands. "The Head laid it on jolly hard, you fathead!"

"It might have been worse, old bean."

"How could it have been worse, ass?"

"He might have licked me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! The hero of the hour smote

a hard oak floor and roared. And once more it was borne in upon Putty's mind that it was possible to be too humorous.

### CHAPTER 13.

#### A Chance for Gunner!

"WHAT about Gunner?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

Arthur Edward Lovell made the suggestion, and he laughed as he made it. Raby and Newcome grinned.

"Why not?" said Jimmy.

"After all, he's keen," said Lovell. "He can't play footer for toffee—he can't do anything for toffee or nuts. But he's keen—no end keen. Give him a chance to distinguish himself in a school match for once."

There was merriment in the end study in the Classical Fourth. The mere mention of Peter Cuthbert Gunner in connection with football was sufficient to cause merriment.

"Too thick, though!" said Raby, shaking his head. "Of course, the match will be a walk-over—we knew St. Kit's style in Soccer. But, after all, it's a school match, and it counts. Can't leave anything to chance."

"Rot!" said Lovell.

"Make us look awful asses if a crew of fumlbers like that happened to beat us," remarked Newcome.

"Rot!" replied Lovell, more emphatically.

That was Arthur Edward's way of countering argument. And opinion that did not agree with his own was obviously rot, and Lovell never hesitated to say so.

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful.

He had a paper on the study table before him, and a pencil in his hand. He was jotting down names for a football-match.

Usually that was a very serious matter for the junior football captain of Rookwood—as serious as a senior match could be for Bulkeley, the captain of the school.

But the circumstances, in this case, were exceptional.

Rookwood juniors had played St. Kit's once in the previous term. The match had been, from their point of view, a comical one. They had beaten St. Kit's by eleven goals to nil, and could have made the score higher had they not been laughing too much to kick goals. Jimmy Silver had rather regretted taking on the match at all; it was a waste of time, from his point of view. At Rookwood they took Soccer seriously, which was evidently far from being the case with the St. Kit's fellows.

But the return match was to be played. Jimmy Silver & Co. were going over to St. Kit's to play it, after which it was Jimmy's idea to bid a long long farewell to that particular fixture.

So the sorting out of players, usually a serious task, did not worry Jimmy very much now. Any old thing was good enough to play the nuts of St. Kit's.

The great men of the junior eleven were ready to stand down—indeed, rather keen to stand down. There was no need for a centre-half like Jimmy, a right-half like Lovell, a forward like Mornington or Erroll or Tommy Dodd, a goalkeeper like Rawson. In fact, Jimmy's opinion was that the Third Form fags could have put up a team to walk over St. Kit's.

So fellows who seldom or never had a chance in a school match had a chance at last of seeing their names in the football list.

Still, there was a limit.

Gunner of the Fourth was the limit. So Arthur Edward Lovell's merry suggestion made Jimmy think a little.

"Give him a chance!" said Arthur Edward. "He's keen. -After all, it's rather hard cheese on old Gunner never to get a look in simply because he's a silly ass!"

"Silly asses aren't really wanted in a football side," remarked Jimmy.

"St. Kit's will be playing eleven silly asses," retorted Lovell.

"Well, that's so."

"You can put in two or three good men, to make a sure thing of it. But the fact is, Jimmy, fellows aren't keen on playing those goats. It's a waste of time."

Jimmy nodded.

"You've offered to let Morny captain the side, and he's told you that he wants to stand out."

"I know."

"I'm standing out, too," added Lovell.

"Oh, are you?"

"Yes, I am! I'm afraid of being charged with manslaughter if I charged one of those stuffed dummies. Suppose he fell down dead?"

Jimmy laughed.

"The Modern chaps are always saying they want a better show in school matches," went on Lovell. "Well, give 'em a show. Let Tommy Dodd skipper the side if he likes. And put Gunner in. Give Gunner a chance. He's a born idiot, but he's good enough for St. Kit's."

"After all, three or four of ours could play all St. Kit's," observed Raby. "Old Gunner will jump for joy if he's given a chance."

"St. Kit's will jump, too, when they see his style," said Newcome.

"Oh, they don't know anything about footer!"

"I believe they've got a good senior side," said Jimmy Silver. "I've heard so. But their junior side is too funny. I'm jolly well inclined to give them Gunner."

"Do!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

It is well said that he who hesitates is lost. Jimmy was well aware that a football captain should leave nothing to chance. But, really, there did not seem any chance in this matter. Victory over Carton's team at St. Kit's was a foregone conclusion.

"After all, it will make him happy," said Jimmy Silver cheerily; and he wrote down Gunner's name.

Then the captain of the Fourth strolled downstairs to the junior Common-room to post up his list. There were a good many Classical juniors in the room, and among them was Peter Cuthbert Gunner, of the Fourth. The burly, bulky Gunner was talking to his study-mate, Dickinson minor. Gunner was a great talker. He rather prided himself upon being one of those strong, silent characters—and, like many of such characters, he had a great deal to say. The hapless Dickinson had to bear the brunt of it.

Gunner was talking football now; and Dickinson was shifting from one leg to the other, and casting unhappy glances to right and left, hoping that some other fellow would come up and talk to Gunner, and give him a chance to escape. But there never was any yearning on the part of the Rookwooders for Gunner's conversation. He was a good fellow, good-hearted and good-natured, in a lofty sort of way, and he was rather liked, as well as laughed at. But there was no doubt that he was a bore—especially on the subject of Soccer. On that subject, what Gunner did not know would have filled huge volumes.

Jimmy Silver's entrance rescued Dickinson minor, however. Peter Cuthbert Gunner glanced at the captain of the Fourth, and crossed over to him. Dickinson had not ventured to move off while Gunner was talking; but Gunner moved off without the slightest ceremony.

"That the footer list, Silver?" inquired Gunner, in his powerful voice, which was heard all over the room.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Usual gang of fumbling footlers—what?" asked Gunner sarcastically.

"Not quite," said Jimmy mildly. "I'm making some changes for next Wednesday."

Gunner sniffed.

"You call yourself a football captain?" he said.

"I do," assented Jimmy.

"You fancy you know a fellow's form?"

"I've got a sort of fancy that way," agreed Jimmy.

"Well, you're an ass! Look at me."

"I'm looking! It's not a particularly pleasant sight—but I'm looking."

"Is there a half at Rookwood like me?" demanded Gunner warmly.

"Not one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner stared round, surprised that Jimmy's unexpected admission had caused a burst of laughter from the other fellows. Even Dickinson minor was grinning.

"I don't see anything to cackle at!" snorted Gunner.

"There's a looking-glass yonder!" suggested Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're making some changes, what?" resumed Gunner. "Leaving that ass Lovell out of the half-way line, by any chance?"

"Yes."

"Well, that shows sense, at least. But I'll be bound you're going to put some silly fathead into his place."

"Think so?" asked Jimmy genially.

"Sure of it," scoffed Gunner. "The silliest ass you can dig up at Rookwood, in either House, most likely."

"Well, you ought to know," agreed Jimmy.

"Eh? Who's the chap?"

"P. C. Gunner," answered Jimmy.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Classical fellows. P. C. Gunner's face was quite a study just then.

"Oh!" gasped Gunner. "You—you—you're playing me?"

"Little you!" agreed Jimmy, and he put up the paper. Peter Cuthbert Gunner, scarcely believing his eyes, had the pleasure of reading his own name therein.

His rugged face was irradiated with smiles.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated. "You're not by any means such a silly owl as I've always supposed, Silver."

"Thanks."

"Not at all; I speak as I find," said Gunner. "You're no great shakes of a football captain; but you're not such an absolutely fozzling fathead as I thought."

"Good!"

Gunner rubbed his hands.

"This is all right," he said. "The game is practically won; in fact, it's all over bar shouting already. I'm not a fellow to brag—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm not a fellow to brag!" roared Gunner. "But I will say this—I'm the only footballer in the Lower School here—speaking seriously of football, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I can jolly well tell you that there are seniors in the First Eleven nowhere like me at Soccer."

"Lots," said Jimmy; "all of them, in fact. Nothing like you, old bean."

"Well, I'm glad you can see it," said Gunner, whose mighty intellect was never very quick on the uptake. "Jolly glad! You seem to be getting quite a sensible chap, Silver—not nearly such a fool as you look, you know. I can promise you something worth watching next Wednesday."

"I'm sure of it," said Jimmy cordially.

And he walked away, leaving Peter Cuthbert Gunner in high glee. Whether it was wise to chance a man like Gunner in any football match might be a question; but there was no question that he had made Gunner happy. That evening Peter Cuthbert seemed to be walking on air; and almost, like the gentleman of ancient times, to strike the stars with his sublime head.

## CHAPTER 14.

Not Keen!

"CHEEK!"

Tommy Dodd, captain of the Modern Fourth, made that observation warmly.

The observation was called forth by the perusal of the list of men for the St. Kit's match.

Generally, the Modern fellows grouched a little because there were too few Moderns, in their opinion, selected for the School junior team.

Now their complaint was on reverse lines.

For once, too many Moderns had been selected.

In the list, there were no fewer than six Moderns, to five Classics; and as the Classical side at Rookwood was the more numerous side, that number was quite out of proportion.

Really, the Moderns ought to have been flattered, and so they would have been had the match been with St. Jim's, or Greyfriars, or Bagshot. But it was not flattering to be picked out for the St. Kit's match. That was a match "pour rire," as Morny put it in French; simply a comic episode under the guise of Soccer.

"Classical cheek!" agreed Tommy Cook.

"Just neck!" said Tommy Doyle.

The three Tommies were quite agreed. Tommy Dodd frowned at the list.

"Look here, we're not standing it," he said. "We're not going to waste an afternoon going over to St. Kit's to fumble about with those foolzers. I'd rather play Oakshott again—and they're nearly the limit. The Classics can have the St. Kit's match all to themselves."

"What-ho!" agreed his comrades.

"They've got Gunner in; that shows what they think of the match!" said Tommy Dodd. "Fancy thinking we'd play in the same team with a born idiot like Gunner!"

"Cheek!"

It was the "quarter" after second lesson on Saturday morning. The match was taking place on the following Wednesday, so the list had been posted unusually early. But Jimmy Silver had not had to bestow much mental exercise in that list.

The three Tommies walked over to the Classical side, where they found Jimmy Silver & Co. strolling under the beeches, whiling away the time till third lesson.

"It won't do!" announced Tommy Dodd.

"What won't?" inquired Jimmy.

"You've got six Moderns down for Wednesday."

"That's all right—they won't do any harm this time," said the captain of the Fourth reassuringly. And there was a chuckle from Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

"Cut it out!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "I tell you I wouldn't be found dead in a team with Gunner in it. Catch on?"

"You want to stand out?"

"All three of us! We're not wasting time going over to St. Kit's to play a set of dummies, who ought to be playing hop-sotch."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"All serene, old man; keep your wool on. I was going to ask you to captain the side."

"Ask your grandmother!" retorted Tommy Dodd.

And the three Tommies walked away sniffing. Jimmy Silver grinned and sighed. As a rule, there was crowding for places in the junior eleven; sometimes soreness on the part of fellows who weren't selected. On this occasion there was no crowding—quite the other thing. Only Peter Cuthbert Gunner was eager to play.

"It won't be so jolly easy to fill up the eleven, at this rate," said Jimmy. "Morny's standing out, and Erroll, and Rawson, and—and all of us; and

Oswald's told me he'll rather drop it, and nobody's keen excepting Gunner. But somebody will have to go over to St. Kit's."

"You'll jolly well have to go!" chuckled Lovell. "You've offered two or three fellows to let them captain the side, and there's no takers. You're jolly well hawking the captaincy up and down Rookwood, and nobody jolly well wants it."

Jimmy frowned.

"I suppose I shall have to go," he conceded. "Anyhow, we shall have to send three or four players along with the duds; even St. Kit's could beat a team made up wholly of Gunners and Dickinsons and Muffins. We can't run any risk of a beating."

"My hat! We should be laughed to death if St. Kit's beat us," said Newcome.

"We're for it," said Jimmy. "We shall have to go—"

"Leave me out!" said Lovell.

"I've left you out; but I shall have to put you in again, old man. You two chaps as well. Somebody's got to play."

"Rot!" snorted Lovell. "Those cheeky Moderns are always grouching that they don't have a full show in the matches. Now they're given more than half the eleven, and they drop out."

The bell for classes cut short the discussion, and the Fistical Four went to their Form-room.

The junior football captain found himself compelled, after all, to give the St. Kit's match some reflection. His difficulty was a very unusual one; the difficulty of finding eleven fellows willing to play. As Morny had put it, a footballer with a reputation to consider couldn't afford to be seen playing a team like Carton's men at St. Kit's. No fellow who really could play wanted to play in that match. Every regular member of the team wanted to stand down and give the reserves a

chance. And the reserves were far from eager to close on the chance so generously offered them.

Fellows who never had a chance at all in matches had a chance now, and they did not seem at all keen. But even in a football match "pour rire" it was necessary to play a few good men to make sure of victory. And Jimmy, as captain, could scarcely keep out of it, and he decided that his three chums should back him up. The Fistical Four, on their own, were quite able to beat Vernon Carton's team. And the other seven players might be any sort of odds and ends.

After dinner that day Jimmy Silver called on his men for games practice. The new team—such as it was—had to be put through its paces, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome, after some demur, agreed to play up. But Peter Cuthbert Gunner was going out that afternoon, and he stared when Jimmy told him he was wanted for practice.

"Bosh!" said Gunner. "That's all right. I don't need practice like you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat!" was all Jimmy could say.

"You fellows pile in," said Gunner encouragingly. "You need it! I hear that St. Kit's are no great shakes in the football line; but you can't be too careful. Stick to it! No need for me to worry, as I'm in great form, and there's nothing left for me to learn at Soccer."

"Little Side at two-thirty!" said Jimmy curtly.

"I tell you I don't need practice," said Gunner impatiently. "I'm going out for a spin with Dickinson."

"Dickinson's in the team, and he's wanted for practice, too."

Gunner sniffed.

"Well, look here, Silver! It's a bit thick for a fellow like me—a man of my football abilities—to put in a lot of unnecessary practice with a lot of

fags. Still, I don't mind. Only, I want one thing clear."

"What's that?" asked Jimmy, smiling.

"You've made up your mind jolly suddenly to give me a chance in the matches," said Gunner. "You're changeable!"

Jimmy laughed. He had his reasons for being changeable on that occasion, though Gunner was too obtuse to comprehend them.

"If I put in this afternoon at games practice—quite unnecessary—I want it to be clear that I'm not wasting my time," said Gunner. "No dropping me at the last minute or anything of that kind. See?"

"I see," assented Jimmy.

"If I'm playing on Wednesday, I'm at your orders," said Gunner. "If not, not! That's how it stands. I'm playing—honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun!" said Jimmy reassuringly.

"That's a promise?"

"Yes."

"Good enough!" said Gunner graciously. "I'm your man, then! Here, Dickinson, we're not going out. Get changed, and come down to footer! I'll show you some things in Soccer that you're not used to, Silver."

"I dare say you will," assented Jimmy.

And Gunner walked down to Little Side with the footballers, to join in a pick-up game, and cause considerable gaiety among the fellows who saw him at it.

#### CHAPTER 15.

##### Surprising News!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Jimmy Silver looked round.

He was watching the pick-up game on Little Side, and smiling cheerily at the mysterious antics which Peter Cuthbert Gunner regarded as playing football, when a fat voice addressed him.

A fat youth, whose podgy face was adorned by a big pair of spectacles, grinned at him and held out a fat hand.

"Surprised to see me—what?"

Jimmy Silver shook hands rather perfunctorily with Billy Bunter of Greyfriars. He was surprised to see the Owi of Greyfriars there, and not particularly pleased; but he was polite.

"Thought I'd run over and see you chaps," said Billy Bunter brightly. "I knew you'd be glad to see me."

"Did you?" murmured Jimmy. He wondered what could have put that idea into Bunter's head.

"Yes, I've really neglected you rather," said Bunter. "But a fellow has so many calls on his time—a fellow like me, I mean. It's a bit of a worry sometimes being so much sought after. Still, a fellow likes to be popular, on the whole."

"Oh!"

"So I'm giving you this afternoon," said Bunter. "There's a match on today at Greyfriars. We are playing St. Jim's. Wharton wanted me to play, but I told him plainly that it couldn't be done. A chap can't give up every half-holiday to footer, can he?"

Jimmy Silver grinned. He could guess exactly how much Billy Bunter was desired to figure in a Greyfriars team.

"So here I am," said Bunter. "I shan't be able to stay very long. It's rather a step from here to Greyfriars, you know. But I shall be able to stay to tea."

"I'm sure you will," assented Jimmy.

"By the way, is that what you Rookwood chaps call footer?" inquired Bunter, with a grinning glance towards the players in the pick-up.

"It's practice."

"Who's that long-legged idiot bargaining about like a bull in a china shop?"

"That's Gunner."

"Does he think he's playing footer?"



"He does!"

"Well, that sort of thing may do for Rookwood," said Bunter. "It wouldn't do for Greyfriars!"

Jimmy Silver smiled cheerily. He had met Bunter more than once before, and knew what kind of manners to expect from him.

Bunter continued to watch the pick-up, and to make polite and pleasant remarks; to which Jimmy Silver listened with polite tolerance. The practice finished, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome came off to change, and the Fistical Four adjourned to the end study for tea. The three juniors eyed Billy Bunter rather grimly; but they followed Jimmy's example of extending politeness to the stranger within the gates, and Bunter was allowed to wedge into the end study to tea. And some extra supplies were very necessary in any study where William George Bunter of Greyfriars was a guest.

Bunter grinned cheerily over the festive board. Lovell dished up the eggs—five nice new-laid eggs, one for each member of the tea-party. Bunter helped himself to three of them.

"Don't apologise, you fellows," he said. "I've taken you by surprise, I know. I don't expect much. It's all right. I can do with eggs!"

"Oh! Can you?" gasped Lovell.

"Certainly, old chap!"

Bunter polished off three eggs in less than three minutes. He blinked round for more, but the other two had vanished.

Jimmy Silver hastily pushed the cake towards him.

"Help yourself, Bunter."

"Thanks, old fellow!"

Bunter transferred the cake to his plate, a proceeding that was watched in a rather petrified way by the Fistical Four. Certainly it was not a very large cake, but there was enough to go round. But evidently the cake

was to stop as well as to start with Bunter.

"This isn't a bad cake," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"Oh, isn't it?" murmured Newcome.

"No, not at all. Of course, not like the cakes I get from home," said Bunter.

"No?"

"Oh, no! If you saw the cakes I have sent to me from Bunter Court you'd think this rather measly. Still, it's all right. I can eat it."

"Looks like it!" said Lovell.

Bunter finished the cake. Then, like Alexander of old, he looked round for new worlds to conquer. But the table was bare now.

"Is that the lot, you fellows?" asked Bunter.

"That's the lot!" said Lovell grimly.

"Is this what you call a study spread at Rookwood?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not answer that question. They were beginning to feel that the manners and customs of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars were too much for them.

Arthur Edward Lovell, indeed, was so restive that only Jimmy's warning glances restrained him from some exceedingly plain speaking. Lovell was debating in his mind whether he would be able to resist much longer his intense desire to kick the Owl out of the end study.

"I'll do you better when you come to see me at Greyfriars," said the fat junior. "You'll be coming over for the footer-match soon, anyhow. But I can tell you you'll get jolly well laughed at if you play footer as I've seen you playing it this afternoon."

"Shall we?" said Lovell in a sulphurous voice.

"Yes, rather! We play Soccer at Greyfriars, you know, with the accent on the 'play,'" said Bunter calmly. "My hat! Your style will make the fellows cackle no end. Do you call it footer, by the way?"

Lovell breathed hard.

"If that's the team you're bringing over to Greyfriars—the lot I saw to-day—you may as well save your railway fares," said Bunter. "You won't have the ghost of an earthly."

"That's not the team," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "That's a scratch team we're sending over to St. Kit's on Wednesday. Any old thing is good enough for St. Kit's—see?"

"Oh, you play St. Kit's!" said Bunter. "My dear man, don't do it! They're over your weight. Why, they've beaten us!"

"What?"

"Fact!" said Bunter. "I was left out of the Greyfriars team, and I dare say that accounts for it. But they did, a week ago."

Jimmy Silver stared at the fat junior. As Rookwood had a regular fixture with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, he knew the form of the Greyfriars footballers pretty well. Bunter's statement was astounding.

"Are you gammoning, Bunter?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Eh? No."

"Do you mean to say that St. Kit's juniors beat Wharton's team at footer?" roared Lovell.

"Yes; last Saturday."

"Rot!"

"Oh, really, Lovell——"

"What's the good of giving us that?" snorted Lovell. "Carton's team couldn't beat a girl's school."

Bunter stared.

"They beat Wharton's crowd, two goals to one," he said. "Carton isn't junior captain at St. Kit's now. I've heard he was sacked. Anyhow, he's gone. They've got a new lot. There's a chap named Wilmot junior captain now, and I can tell you he's a corker. He's fixed up a regular fixture with Greyfriars, and he's won the first match, two to one."

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at Bunter.

It dawned upon them that the Owl of Greyfriars had stated the facts; and, if that was so, evidently there had been great changes in St. Kit's junior football since the last time Rookwood had played that school.

"Wilmot!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "I've never heard of the chap before."

"I believe he's rather new at St. Kit's," said Bunter. "From what I've heard, he's made a lot of changes there. Anyhow, if you fellows are playing St. Kit's, you'll have to pull up your socks, I can tell you. Not that you'll have any chance, anyhow. If they've beaten Greyfriars, Rookwood isn't likely to be able to stand up to them—what?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Silver——"

"I—I mean, isn't it about time you caught your train, Bunter?"

Bunter sniffed, and rose to his feet. There was nothing left to eat, and he realised that he was wasting his time.

After Bunter was gone, the Fistical Four looked at one another.

"What a discovery!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Gammon, in my opinion," said Lovell obstinately. "St. Kit's can't play footer for toffee, and never could."

"Well, it stands to reason they've got some fellows who can play," said Jimmy. "That chap Carton was a swanking sort of an ass who simply fooled with the game, and he picked his men to match. But if they've got a new captain who knows the ropes it would make no end of a difference. I'm rather glad Bunter butted in here to-day. Look's to me as if we've had a jolly narrow escape."

Raby and Newcome nodded.

If St. Kit's juniors were putting into the field a team capable of beating Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, it was obvious that Rookwood would have to sit up and take notice very seriously.

Only the best men they could send out would have a chance of beating a team that had been victorious at Greyfriars.

"It's gammon!" repeated Lovell. "Bunter was pulling our legs. I've never heard of Wilmot."

"A chap might exist without your hearing of him," suggested Raby. "We know nothing about what happens at St. Kit's."

"Rot!"

"The fact is, I've played the goat," said Jimmy Silver soberly. "I've taken too much for granted. Nothing should be left to chance in football-matches. My hat! If we'd sent that crew over to St. Kit's, and if they put a strong team into the field——"

"They couldn't," said Lovell.

"Well, I'm going to find out," said Jimmy Silver. "We can get an exeat on Monday and go over and see. If it's as Bunter says, we've had a jolly narrow escape of making complete asses of ourselves."

"It isn't!" persisted Lovell.

But Arthur Edward Lovell was alone in his opinion, which doubtless was the reason why he persisted in it. To the other fellows it was clear that the butting-in of Billy Bunter had been a blessing in disguise, and that they had had a very narrow escape.

## CHAPTER 16.

### Gunner Sticks!

**J**IMMY SILVER came in with his bicycle on Monday just in time for lock-up. His face was grave as he walked to the House, after putting up his machine. It was a good distance to St. Kit's, which was just over the border in the next county; but a long cycle ride did not worry Jimmy Silver, who was as hard as nails and always fit. But what he had seen that afternoon at St. Kit's worried him a little. For he realised clearly now, and beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he had had the narrowest possible

escape of making the completest kind of an ass of himself.

Tea was ready in the end study when he came in, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were there. They gave the captain of the Fourth an inquiring look, and Lovell gave a sniff. He was not prepared to be shaken in his fixed opinion if he could help it.

"Here you are, Jimmy," said Newcome. "Tea all ready. Tuck into those muffins, old man. What's the news?"

Jimmy Silver sat down and started on muffins. He was hungry after his long ride.

"Seen them?" asked Lovell. "You got to St. Kit's?"

"Yes."

"I really shouldn't have cared to butt in myself," said Lovell. "My impression of those fellows is that they're swanking cads, especially that chap Carton; not likely to be very civil to an unasked visitor. I shouldn't expect them to waste politeness on us as we did on Bunter."

Jimmy smiled.

"I was treated jolly civilly," he answered. "That man Carton isn't at St. Kit's now, and his friends, so far as I can make out, are pretty small fry. I've met Wilmot, the new junior captain, and he's a good sort, I think—civil enough, anyhow, and seemed glad to see me. He wasn't at St. Kit's when we played them last, I think; but he's going to captain the side in the return match, and he's a good man."

"Seen him play?" jeered Lovell.

"As a matter of fact, I have," answered Jimmy. "I was in time to see them at games practice, as it happens, and I watched a pick-up on Little Side there, and I saw some jolly good play. Wilmot's one of the best junior footballers I've ever seen, and he's got a winger named St. Leger who is a regular flier. The others seem pretty good, too—all new men, but one or two, from what I could gather. He was putting his team through their paces, ready for next Wednesday, and they

shaped jolly well. Wilmot and St. Leger were friendly enough, quite different from Carton's style."

"Lucky Bunter blew in when he did," remarked Raby. "It's put us on our guard."

"Yes, rather!" assented Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell was silent. In the face of what Jimmy Silver had seen with his own eyes, Arthur Edward could scarcely persist that the information received from the Owl of Greyfriars was all "bunkum."

"Well, you are an ass, Jimmy!" said Lovell, breaking his thoughtful silence at last.

"Eh?"

"Playing a chap like Gunner, when St. Kit's are a good team in good form all the time," said Lovell severely. "I'm surprised at you!"

"What! I never knew——"

"I know you never knew! But you ought to have known, old chap, before you took such risks—especially Gunner!"

"Why, you suggested playing Gunner yourself!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Did I?" Lovell seemed to have forgotten that little circumstance.

"You jolly well did!"

"Well, I didn't know about this jolly old revolution at St. Kit's," said Lovell triumphantly. "And it wasn't my business to know. I'm not football captain."

"Fathead!"

"You'll have to make some pretty extensive changes in the team now," went on Lovell.

"I don't need an oracle to tell me that," said the captain of the Fourth sarcastically. "Of course, I shall go over the team with a comb, now. All the duds will have to be dropped."

"There'll be a howl," grinned Newcome, "as soon as they find out it's a decent match, after all. They'll be keen to play."

"Very likely. But we can't chuck away School matches to please the duds. They've got to go."

"Gunner will be wild."

"Let him!"

"Yes, let him!" said Lovell warmly. "Let me hear Gunner putting on side, and I'll jolly well punch him fast enough. Gunner's got to go, first of all."

"Yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver finished his tea thoughtfully. Then he went down to take away the list posted in the junior Common-room. Higgs of the Fourth strolled up to him.

"I say, Silver. I can't say I'm keen on going over to St. Kit's on Wednesday," said Higgs patronisingly.

Jimmy smiled.

"Not?" he asked.

"No. Oswald says you've shoved me in because I'm no good in a decent match," growled Higgs. "Of course, it isn't so."

"But it was," said Jimmy.

"What?"

"Higgs, old man, don't be a goat. You know you're not the form for a real football game."

Higgs snorted.

"Then you can jolly well scratch my name out!" he exclaimed.

"Done!"

Jimmy Silver drew his pencil through Alfred Higgs' name at once. In the new circumstances of the case Higgs' name had to go, anyhow, but Jimmy certainly had not expected Higgs to ask for it. However, he had asked, and he had got at once what he asked for.

Jimmy looked round and nodded to Jones minor.

"You keen on playing, Jones?" he asked.

"Not a bit," answered Jones minor.

"I'll oblige you, Silver, but I expect you to be civil about it."

"Out you go, then!"

"Blessed if I care!" said Jones minor, shrugging his shoulders.

"What about you, Muffin!"

"Oh, I'll play!" said Tubby Muffin.

"Mind, I'm not going to make work of it. But I'll play."

"I'm afraid, old fat tub, that you'd have to make it the work of your giddy existence, if you played," said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"Catch me!" jeered Muffin.

"You don't like the idea?"

"No jolly fear!" said the fat Classical emphatically.

"Then you drop out! You'd drop out, anyhow, if you come to that," said Jimmy, and he drew his pencil through Reginald Muffin's name. "Hallo, Dickinson! I'm sorry I shall have to drop you on Wednesday, after all."

"Drop me, and be blowed!" answered Dickinson minor independently. "I'm not keen on a mugs' game."

"Right! And you, Gunner?"

"Cut it out!" said Gunner.

"You see, it's turned out that things aren't quite as I supposed at St. Kit's," explained Jimmy Silver. "I'm really sorry that I shan't have any use for your valuable services, Gunner. I'll remember you some time when we play St. Kit's at hop-sotch or halma. But you will have to be counted out of the footer."

Gunner looked unpleasant.

"Can't be done," he answered. "I've heard a lot of jaw about St. Kit's, and it seems that they're a lot of foozlers—like you chaps, really—and not up to a player of my weight. Still, I'm playing. I've been kept out of the matches, so far, and I'm not missing this. See?"

"I'm afraid, old man, that you'll have to give it a miss," said Jimmy regretfully. "Sorry, and all that, but there it is. It's turned out that there's been a sort of revolution at St. Kit's since we saw them last, and they've got a new skipper and a jolly good team. We've got to go all out to beat them. So you see, there's no room for little you."

"That's good news," said Gunner. "I'm glad if it turns out to be a good

match. It will give me a chance to show my quality."

"It won't, old bean. Besides, you haven't any quality to show," explained Jimmy. "You drop out."

"I don't!" said Gunner unpleasantly. "I fancied something of this sort might crop up. You're changeable, Silver, and you never know your own mind from one day to another. That's why I made you promise."

"Promise?" repeated Jimmy Silver blankly.

"Honest injun!" said Gunner. "I suppose you haven't forgotten?"

Jimmy stared at him. In point of fact Jimmy had completely forgotten his rash promise to Gunner. He remembered it, of course, now that Peter Cuthbert referred to it.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

He had promised Gunner, "honest injun," that he should play in the St. Kit's match. The promise had been made under a misapprehension, certainly. But a promise was a promise.

"Lost your memory?" asked Gunner sarcastically.

"I remember, now, of course," said Jimmy. "But that's all rot, Gunner. When I promised to play you I never knew—"

"I'm not accountable for what you knew or didn't know," sneered Gunner. "I know jolly well that you ought to have known what you were talking about, whether you did or not. I know that a promise is a promise, and that only a cad and an outsider breaks his word. You're a duffer, Jimmy Silver, and an ass, and no footballer, in my opinion; but I don't think you're dishonourable. You'll keep your word, I suppose?"

Jimmy Silver's face was a study.

"You don't hold me to it in the circumstances?" he said.

"I jolly well do!"

"Look here, Gunner, we want good men to play St. Kit's, as it turns out, and it's simply impossible to play a

dud in a hard game. You've got to let me off that promise."

"Rats!"

"Look here, you cheeky ass!"

"You can talk till you're black in the face. But unless you choose to break your word, I'm playing in the St. Kit's match on Wednesday."

"I tell you we've got to put our best men in the field, you crass ass!" roared the captain of the Fourth.

"That's what you'll be doing, if you play me."

"Oh, you fathead!"

"Nuff said!" interrupted Gunner, with a lofty wave of his hand. "I'm playing. You'll be glad of it when you see the St. Kit's men going over like ninepins. I'm playing not for my own sake, mind you, but for the sake of the school. We've got to beat St. Kit's."

"You—you—you——" gasped Jimmy.

"Nuff said!"

And Peter Cuthbert Gunner turned his back on the angry and indignant captain of the Fourth and walked loftily away.

## CHAPTER 17.

Gunner is Game!

"YOU'VE done it now!"

Jimmy Silver gazed at Lovell. There was no doubt that he had "done it."

It was Tuesday, the day before the St. Kit's match. Forewarned is forearmed and drastic changes had been made in the Rookwood junior team. The three Tommies of the Modern side, now that they knew how matters stood, petitioned to be taken back into the eleven, and were taken. They were also keen that there should be six Modern members as heretofore, but on that point the answer was in the negative. Four Moderns was a good allowance in Jimmy's opinion, too much of an allowance in the opinion of many Classicals.

Mornington and Erroll, of course, were in the team again, and Rawson for goal. Conroy and Lovell and Raby and Jimmy Silver made up the total. That left Peter Cuthbert Gunner over as twelfth man.

And Gunner claimed to play. Somebody—some man who was wanted, and perhaps badly wanted—had to stand out if Gunner played. And Wilnot's team at St. Kit's was as strong as any team Rookwood ever met. They knew that now. To take a passenger like Gunner was to ask for a defeat. It would be playing ten men against eleven. Indeed, worse than that, for Gunner was certain to get in the way, to hamper his side, to commit infractions of the rules, probably to give the enemy penalty goals. Gunner was not in the picture at all. He had to stand out. Only he wouldn't!

On many and many an occasion had Gunner claimed to play for School, thereby adding to the gaiety of Rookwood, and effecting no other result cases.

Jimmy Silver, carelessly enough, had given his word.

His word, given carelessly or carelessly, was his bond. If he remained football captain he had to play Gunner or break his word. The latter alternative was not to be considered.

As for dropping out himself and leaving the captaincy in other hands, nobody suggested that, or wanted it. Jimmy Silver was needed in that match, even plus Gunner. Without Jimmy in his usual place at centre-half the Rookwooders had little to expect but a beating.

A beating on ordinary lines they could take like sportsmen. But a beating because a "dud" was in the team—because Gunner insisted on Jimmy keeping a rash promise—that was the limit.

Jimmy had put it to the footballers. He would resign if they liked and leave a new skipper to pick his own men. If he captained the eleven

he had to play Gunner, unless P. C. G. let him off.

The bear idea of resignation was scouted. So the only alternative remained—to play Gunner. A prospect which made "Uncle James" of Rookwood look as if all the troubles in the county of Hampshire had fallen upon his youthful shoulders and stuck there.

"You've done it," repeated Lovell accusingly. "I've talked to that idiot Gunner. I've argued with him. I've even punched his head. And it's done him no good at all, no good whatever."

Jimmy smiled faintly.

Arthur Edward's nose, like Marian's in the poem, was red and raw. It looked as if all the punching had not been on one side. Gunner was a hefty youth, and when it came to punching heads he was generally able to keep his end up.

"You've done it!" said Lovell. "I've often told you, Jimmy, what an ass you are. You can't deny it. But this—well, this is the limit."

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet. In silence, but with vigour, he grasped Arthur Edward Lovell by the collar, and shoved his head into the coal-locker.

There was an indignant roar, and then a wild and dusty splutter from Lovell. He struggled furiously, but the captain of the Fourth held him grimly and rammed his head into the coals, and stirred them with Lovell's scalp.

It was Arthur Edward's way to say, "I told you so." Apparently, he had said it once too often.

Leaving Lovell in a dazed state, gasping on the study floor, and raking coal-dust out of his eyes and hair and ears with both hands, Jimmy Silver walked out of the end study. Lovell perhaps had supposed that his remarks might improve matters somehow. But they had only had the effect of demonstrating that even "Uncle James" of Rook-

wood might, at times, arrive at the extreme limit of his patience.

Jimmy walked along to Study No. 7, which belonged to Gunner and Dickinson minor. The door of Study No. 7 was wide open, and three or four of the Classical Fourth were standing there, telling Gunner what they thought of him. Jimmy pushed through into the study.

Gunner sat at his table, serene and lofty. His large nose showed some signs of damage, doubtless due to his argument with Lovell. Otherwise he was very merry and bright.

He nodded cheerily to Jimmy Silver. Dickinson minor eyed the captain of the Fourth rather uneasily. In these hours Dickinson lived in fearful expectation of a terrific study ragging taking place in Study No. 7. There was no doubt that Gunner was asking for it, or, as Putty of the Fourth said, begging and praying for it.

"Hallo, Silver! Feeling fit?" asked Gunner brightly.

"What?"

"You're looking a bit down," said Gunner critically. "Mind, we want to be in form to-morrow, Silver! If you don't feel up to the mark, stand out of the game. I'm prepared to captain the team if you ask me."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

"Hark at him!" hooted Oswald from the doorway. "Gunner, you born idiot—"

"Gunner, you frabjous jabberwock!" hooted Rawson.

"You burbling, footling frump!" howled Townsend.

Gunner grinned cheerily.

"Keep it up!" he said. "You'll sing to a different tune to-morrow when I walk all over Wilmot's lot at St. Kit's. But keep it up now if it amuses you. It doesn't hurt me."

"Gunner, old man," said Jimmy Silver imploringly, "let me off. There's a good chap, let me off. I—I'll play you in a House match with the

Moderns instead next week. Honour bright."

"Rats!"

"It won't matter so much if you make a guy of yourself in a House match, with only Rookwood to see you," said Jimmy, almost tearfully. "But we can't—we can't take you to St. Kit's to make us all look fools, old chap!"

"Anybody would hardly think you were talking to the best footballer at Rookwood, would they?" said Gunner. "You see, Silver, you don't know much about the game. I'm not really satisfied with you at centre-half. Mind you don't keep barging into me to-morrow."

"You won't let me off if I play you in the next House match?"

"You'll be glad to play me in all the House matches after you've seen me at St. Kit's."

Jimmy Silver suppressed his feelings. He quitted the study without another word. It was his last appeal to the egreious and self-satisfied Peter Cuthbert, and it had failed.

Gunner slammed the door after him.

"Pretty thick, isn't it, Dickinson?" he said, a little gloomily. "Silver isn't such a fumbling fozzler as the other chaps, yet even he can't see that I'm the only good footballer in the Fourth. Thick, isn't it?"

"Is it?" gasped Dickinson.

"Isn't it?" roared Gunner.

"Oh, yes, yes!" ejaculated Dickinson minor hastily. He did not desire a nose to match Lovell's.

"That ass, Silver—that chump, you know—actually thinks it will weaken the team to put me in," said Gunner, more in sorrow than in anger.

"He—he—he does!" stammered Dickinson minor. "I—I—I wonder why?"

"No eye for a fellow's form," said Gunner. "Properly speaking, I should be football captain. But there's a prejudice against me in football

matters. Our record would be a good deal different with me as skipper."

"It—it—it would. I'm sure it would."

"But I'm holding on," said Gunner. "The fellows all think I'm playing it rather low down on Silver by holding him to his promise. So I should be if I were a dud at the game—like you, for instance, Dickinson."

"Oh!"

"Being the best junior player at Rookwood, I'm bound to stick to this chance. You see that?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Dickinson minor.

"Do you see it or not?" roared Gunner.

"Oh, yes! Yes, rather!"

"So I'm sticking! They can say what they like, and—Hallo! What the thump do you fellows want?"

Gunner of the Fourth swung round to the door as it was hurled open. Seven or eight members of the Classical Fourth crowded into the study. They were led by Mornington, and after him came Raby and Newcome and Oswald and several more of the Fourth. And they looked warlike.

Many fellows might have felt uneasy at the sight of that invasion. Not so Peter Cuthbert Gunner. So far as pluck went he was of the stuff that heroes are made.

"Last time of askin', Gunner!" said Valentine Mornington. "You've got our captain in a cleft stick, and you're takin' a rotten, mean advantage of him. Are you goin' to chuck it?"

"That's only your ignorance," Gunner pointed out. "If you knew anything about footer——"

"Are you letting him off?"

"No fear! I've got my duty to the school to consider, as the only really first-class player at Rookwood."

"Do you want a raggin'?"

"There'll be some trouble if you start ragging in this study!" said Gunner, pushing back his cuffs. "Back up, Dickinson!"



Dickinson minor did not back up. He slipped out of the study.

"Dickinson!" roared Gunner.

But Dickinson minor was gone.

"Now, the long and short of it is that you're lettin' off Jimmy Silver, or else you're gettin' the raggin' of your life," said Mornington. "Which is it to be?"

"Outside!"

"What?"

"Get out of my study!"

"He's beggin' for it! Collar him!"

There was a rush at Gunner. A wild and whirling scramble in Study No. 7 followed.

Gunner fought valorously.

He was hefty, and he had heaps of pluck, and the ragers had their hands full for some minutes. There were crimson noses and blinking eyes among the party by the time Gunner was secured. But secured he was at last.

"Now, then, Gunner!" gasped Mornington.

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

"Will you chuck it?"

"No! I'll jolly well wallop you! Lemme gerrup!"

"Bump him!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

"Oh, my hat! Yaroooh! I'll pulverise you! Yaroooop!"

"Give him the cinders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner resisted desperately, but he resisted in vain. Never had there been such a ragging in the history of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Gunner was rolled and bumped, and the cinders from the grate were rubbed in his hair and down his neck. The inkpot was emptied over his head, the coals from the locker were distributed over him. In ten minutes he looked a fearsome object, like nothing else in the earth or the air or the waters under the earth.

"Now will you chuck it?" demanded Mornington.

"No!" gasped Gunner faintly.

"Give him some more!"

Still resisting, though feebly now, Peter Cuthbert Gunner was stretched face down on the carpet, and Morny put in some vigorous work with a cricket stump. The whacks of the stump rang from one end of the Fourth Form passage to the other. Almost as loud rang the howls of Gunner. And still, when Morny put the question, the answer was in the negative. Peter Cuthbert Gunner might be the worst footballer that ever was, but undoubtedly was game.

Bumped and rolled and ragged, a picture of disastrous dishevelment to the eye, Gunner sprawled on the dusty carpet, gasping, with the tired ragers round him. He was breathless, he was exhausted, he was spent; but he was still Gunner, and as obstinate as ever.

"Will you chuck it?" demanded Mornington.

Gunner's lips moved, but he could not speak. With a last effort he shook his head.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner was a hopeless wreck when Dickinson minor came back, uneasy, to the study. Fortunately, from Dickson minor's point of view, he was in no state to take vengeance for his study-mate's desertion.

He was a wreck—a hopeless wreck. There was only one solace for Gunner—that on the morrow he was playing for School. On the morrow he would be scoring goals for Rookwood amid enthusiastic cheers—at least, he fully believed so. That was a solace, It brought him comfort while he sorted cinders out of his ears and his hair. It was a happy prospect.

It was anything but a happy prospect to Jimmy Silver & Co., and for once in his career "Uncle James" of Rookwood found it hard to live up to

his own favourite maxim and "keep smiling." Indeed, Jimmy Silver really looked as if he were at present understudying that ancient king who never smiled again.

#### CHAPTER 18.

##### Perplexing!

**J**IMMY SILVER smiled.

Arthur Edward Lovell grinned. Raby and Newcome fairly chuckled.

The Fistical Four were not the only members of the Rookwood Fourth who gave signs of great joy.

Mornington glanced at Erroll brightly, and Erroll smiled and nodded to Morny. Tommy Dodd winked at Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle—the three Tommies of the Modern side seemed quite hilarious.

In fact nearly every member of the Fourth Form at Rookwood seemed greatly bucked.

Mr. Dalton, master of the Fourth, was puzzled—naturally! He thought that he understood his Form; he was, indeed, assured that he knew them quite well. But he could not account for this.

Really, it was surprising.

The cause of that sudden and universal brightening in the Rookwood Fourth was the fact that the "chopper" had come down on Peter Cuthbert Gunner.

Gunner of the Fourth was in trouble.

P. C. Gunner never was a gratifying pupil. Richard Dalton often found him a severe strain in the Form-room.

It was not only that Gunner was obtuse. He had a peculiar self-satisfaction which rendered his obtuseness quite irritating. Having made a "howler" of which a fag in the Second Form would have been ashamed, Peter Cuthbert would receive correction with a look of superior knowledge and wisdom, scarcely concealing the fact that he regarded his master as an ass.

It was not easy for his Form-master to struggle against Gunner's obtuseness; but that was his duty, and he did it manfully. To struggle against his self-satisfaction as well was asking too much.

So Gunner sometimes came up against the sharpest edge of Mr. Dalton's tongue, and sometimes up against the cane. All of which he bore with the same air of misunderstood superiority.

On this particular morning in the Fourth Form-room, Gunner had been unusually and particularly exasperating.

He was as obtuse as ever, as self-satisfied as ever, and, in addition, he was careless, forgetful, evidently thinking of anything but the Form work. He obviously regarded lessons as a worry and a bore, and found it difficult to be patient with Mr. Dalton, who was worrying and boring him. More important matters occupied the powerful brain of P. C. Gunner.

But if Gunner found it difficult to keep patient with Mr. Dalton, Richard Dalton, on his side, found it impossible to keep patient with Gunner. So Gunner was "for it" that morning. First he was what he called "jawed"; then he was rapped with the pointer, and then he was caned. And then Mr. Dalton, on fresh offence given, came down very heavy.

It was Wednesday, a half-holiday, and the day of the St. Kit's match. Third lesson was drawing near its close, after which the Fourth Form would be their own masters for the rest of the day. And then, worn out by Gunner, Mr. Dalton rapped out a severe sentence:

"Gunner!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Gunner, in a tired voice. He was fed-up, and made no secret of the fact.

"You will be detained this afternoon!"

"Eh?"

"You will be detained for the half-holiday, Gunner!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I shall set you a detention task at two o'clock, and you will remain in the Form-room till five," said Mr. Dalton.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner stared aghast.

But the rest of the Form, Classical and Modern, smiled and grinned and nodded to one another, and displayed every sign of the liveliest satisfaction.

Mr. Dalton could not help noticing it.

It perplexed him.

Gunner was every kind of an ass, no doubt, but he was a good-hearted fellow, not at all unpopular in the Form. The fellows laughed at him, perhaps, but they rather liked him. Even Dickinson minor, his study-mate, rather liked him, in a way.

Yet the whole Form was obviously pleased—in fact, delighted—to hear that Gunner was detained for the half-holiday.

They were so pleased that they couldn't conceal it. They looked as if Mr. Dalton had just brightened school-life for them in the most wonderful way.

Had the Head come into the Form-room and announced an extra whole holiday they could not have looked more delighted.

So Richard Dalton, who had supposed that he understood his Form quite thoroughly, had to admit to himself that there was still something in the Rookwood Fourth that he did not quite catch on to.

Smiles, grins, congratulatory nods and winks, passed up and down the Form; there was quite a buzz of approval, pleasure, and relief.

"Silence!" rapped Mr. Dalton.

Rejoicing in the misfortunes of a Form-fellow was quite unlike the Rookwood Fourth. Generally they had plenty of sympathy for a fellow who was detained—even an unpopular fellow like Peele or Gower. Yet now

the rejoicing was open and manifest.

"Silence!"

There was silence in the Form.

Gunner broke it.

"Sir! Mr. Dalton——"

"You may sit down, Gunner!"

Mr. Dalton paused. He had sentenced Gunner, deservedly. But the gladness of the Form displeased him, and he began to consider whether he might not, after all, let Gunner off more lightly.

It was just like Gunner to go ahead at that unpropitious moment and make his master implacable.

"Excuse me, sir, I must speak!" exclaimed Gunner.

"What?"

"I can't possibly be detained this afternoon."

"Eh?"

"Impossible, sir! Any other afternoon you like. Not to-day!"

"Not to-day?" repeated Mr. Dalton, quite dazedly.

"No, sir! I'm playing football this afternoon—I've got an important engagement——"

Mr. Dalton picked up his cane and walked over to Gunner.

"Gunner! Bend over that form!"

"Oh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Oh! Wow! Wow!"

"Now be silent, you unruly and stupid boy!" said Mr. Dalton.

"I—I say, sir——"

"Another word, and I will send you to the headmaster!"

Gunner collapsed.

Third lesson proceeded to its finale, with a severe frown on Richard Dalton's face, blank dismay in Gunner's, and a smile on every other face in the Fourth Form. And when the Fourth were dismissed, Jimmy Silver & Co. went down the corridor in a joyous cake-walk, and other fellows smacked one another on the shoulder and chortled gleefully.

"Gunner's detained!"

"Landed for the afternoon!"

"He can't come over to St. Kit's!"

"Hurrah!"

"What larks!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And Richard Dalton walking away from the Form-room, heard those joyous ejaculations, and was more perplexed than ever.

#### CHAPTER 19.

Plus Gunner!

**JIMMY SILVER** came in to dinner with a cheery face that Wednesday. Trouble had lain heavily on Jimmy's shoulders for several days, and now it was lifted by the detention of Gunner.

For Gunner personally Jimmy was sorry, as he would have been sorry for any fellow under detention. But satisfaction on other accounts quite swamped the sorrow.

Dicky Dalton had saved the captain of the Fourth. He had cut the Gordian knot, as it were.

So it was no wonder that Jimmy Silver smiled at dinner, and met answering smiles on the faces of the other footballers.

Only Gunner was frowning.

Gunner could not be expected to feel pleased. But, unfortunately, it did not matter whether Gunner was pleased or not.

After dinner Gunner came out with his chum, Dickinson minor, his rugged brows deeply corrugated

"It's a bit rotten, you know," Gunner remarked.

"Isn't it?" assented Dickinson, winking into space with the eye farthest from Gunner.

"Mind, I'm not thinking of myself," said Gunner morosely. "I'm thinking of the school. What sort of a match will those fozzlers put up at St. Kit's without me to give the team a backbone?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It means a licking for Rookwood, of course," said Gunner gloomily.

"They sometimes win matches, you know," remarked Dickinson minor, with a sarcasm that was lost on Gunner.

"I know. It beats me how they do it, fozzlers like that crowd! There's a lot of luck in Soccer. They've fluked several wins this season. But we can't depend on fluking through all the time, can we?"

"Oh! H'm! No," murmured Dickinson minor.

"Something will have to be done," said Gunner, knitting his brows more gloomily than before. And he walked away with his hands driven deep into his pockets, apparently thinking it out.

Dickinson minor chuckled. His impression was that Gunner was going to be "done," and he considered it a jolly good thing.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. were making their preparations for the journey over to St. Kit's.

With Gunner in the team they had viewed that match rather pessimistically; but now all was calm and bright.

"We're going to beat them now." Arthur Edward Lovell told Jimmy Silver. "I don't care what form they're in, and what sort of a captain they've got in that man Wilmot. We're going to beat them all right now that idiot Gunner is dropped."

"What terrific luck!" grinned Raby. "Amazin'!" said Mornington. "I always liked Dicky Dalton, but never so much as to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"You'll be wanted, after all, Conroy," he said.

"What-ho!" said Conroy.

"And let this be a warning to you, Jimmy," said Arthur Edward Lovell, feeling that it was up to him not to let pass this opportunity of delivering a little lecture. "You can't be too careful, you know!"

"Fathead!" said Jimmy politely.

"You shouldn't have promised Gunner a place in the team, and you jolly well know it!" said Lovell warmly.

"Ass!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Erroll.

"We all thought that St. Kit's were the same fumlbers we played last term, and Gunner wouldn't have done any harm in playing Carton's lot."

"Any old thing would have done for that crowd," said Tommy Dodd. "But as it happens we've had a lucky escape."

"Jimmy was an ass to promise. You have to be careful in football matters," said Lovell. "In fact, he was an ass to put in Gunner at all."

"Why, you suggested Gunner!" exclaimed Newcome.

"I wish you wouldn't keep on arguing, Newcome."

"Well, it's all serene now," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "I did promise Gunner, and I was bound to keep it or resign, and you fellows didn't want me to do that. Now Dicky Dalton's solved the difficulty, and it's all serene. Let's get off."

"The 'bus is here," called out Tommy Cook.

Jimmy Silver & Co. went out to the 'bus cheerily with their bags. They were in high spirits.

The footballers, and a good many other fellows who were going over to St. Kit's with them, mounted into the bus and it started.

"Hallo, there's old Gunner!" exclaimed Lovell, as the 'bus was rolling slowly away from the school gates.

"He wants to say good-bye," grinned Newcome. "What has he got that bag for, though?"

The crowd in the 'bus stared back at Gunner.

Bag in hand, he was racing after the bus, with a red face, and perspiration on his brow. He waved his free hand and shouted:

"Stop!"

"No fear!" murmured Mornington.

Gunner put on a desperate spurt and came up with the bus. To the surprise of the occupants he tossed his bag in and clambered up behind.

"Coming to the station with us?" asked Jimmy Silver, rather surprised. "I say, old man, will you get back in time for your detention?"

"Make room for a chap!" gasped Gunner. "Why the thump didn't you stop for me?"

"We've got a train to catch, old man. Glad of your company as far as Lat-cham," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Suppose I hadn't caught you up?" snorted Gunner.

"Well, it would have been awfully unpleasant to miss your company as far as the junction, but we might have survived it," remarked Mornington.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Gunner. "You might have lost the best man in your team, Silver—the only good man in it, in fact. Still, a miss is as good as a mile."

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, staring at him. "You're detained!"

"That's off."

"Wh-a-a-t?"

"Eh?"

"How?"

Gunner smiled.

"It's all serene," he said "Dalton isn't a bad sort—a bit stupid, you know, but quite a decent sort in a way. I explained to him that I was down to play this afternoon, and he's let me off detention."

"What?" roared the footballers.

"Decent of him, what?" said Gunner. "Of course, I get the detention all the same—next Saturday. Dalton seemed surprised to hear that I was in the eleven."

"I should say so!"

"But as soon as he knew, he let me off for this afternoon. He's a bit of a fool, but he's a sportsman," said Gunner.

Peter Cuthbert sat down comfortably.

"So it's all right!" he added.

Gunner was alone in that opinion. The footballers stared at him in blank dismay.

The popularity of Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth, recently so great, was now at its lowest ebb.

## CHAPTER 20.

### Desperate Measures!

ARTHUR Edward Lovell gave Jimmy Silver an accusing look.

"Well, you've done it, Jimmy!" said Lovell, apparently in the role of Job's comforter. "The match is a goner now."

Jimmy did not answer.

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Gunner. "What bothers me, Lovell, is having a fumbler like you in the half-way line along with me. Mind you don't butt into my way in your usual style."

"You silly owl!" roared Lovell.

"Dalton ought to be lynched!" exclaimed Mornington. "What the thump does he mean by letting that dangerous lunatic off detention?"

"Oh, cheese it," said Gunner. "I dare say Dalton would like to see Rookwood win matches. He was bound to let me off when I explained."

"What about dropping the born idiot out of the bus?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Look here, you Modern chump——" roared Gunner.

"Let's!" said Towle.

Jimmy Silver shook his head sadly. He would have been willing to see Peter Cuthbert Gunner dropped out of the bus, or out of the solar system had that been possible. But "Uncle James" of Rookwood was a slave to his word.

"Can't be done!" he said. "I promised him——"

"You shouldn't have!" hooted Lovell.

"I know that!"

"Well, then——"

"A promise is a promise," said Jimmy. "Now the circumstances have

altered, Gunner oughtn't to hold me to it. But if he does, I'm bound to play him."

"I jolly well do!" said Gunner promptly. "I'm going to show you fellows what real football is like."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Jabberwock!"

Gunner smiled serenely. Offensive epithets rolled off him like water from a duck. His self-satisfaction was like an armour of proof.

"I'm ready to resign," said Jimmy, looking round. "If I stand out, a new skipper can play Gunner or not as he pleases."

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell.

"Bosh!"

"That's no good!"

"Then Gunner plays," said Jimmy, with a sigh. "We must do the best we can to win with Gunner on our backs."

"Oh dear! What a prospect!" groaned Raby.

"Rot!" growled Mornington. "The silly ass ought to be scragged."

"Wait till you see me showing the ball through the goal!" said Gunner, cheerfully.

"Through our goal, if any!" grunted Conroy.

"Oh, you're an ass, Conroy. You don't know anything about Soccer, and it's really lucky that there's no room for you in the team. If I were skipper, I should drop you, too, Mornington."

"Would you?" breathed Morny.

"Yes, rather. Mind you don't get in my light," said Gunner impressively. "With a front line like ours, the halves will have to do a lot of work for the forwards, I can see that—at least, I shall have to. Mind you don't get in my way."

"Oh, kill him, somebody."

The bus rolled on towards Latcham, its occupants in a dismal humour, with one exception. Valentine Mornington, at a little distance from Gunner, conversed in low tones with Tommy Dodd. Generally, the dandy of the Classical

Fourth had little to say to the Modern junior; but now they seemed to have some topic that engaged them deeply. Several times, as they spoke in whispers, they glanced at Gunner; but that youth did not observe it. Gunner was not a very observant fellow; besides, he was thinking of the tremendous triumph that awaited him at St. Kit's.

In his mind's eye, Gunner could already see himself making overwhelming rushes up the field, scattering Wilmot and his men like chaff before the wind, and raining in shots on a dazed goalkeeper. In his mind's eye, he saw the doubt change to delight in the faces of his comrades—he saw himself lifted in enthusiastic hands, and carried shoulder-high from the field of victory amid thunderous cheers.

Unfortunately, Gunner was never likely to see all that with any eye than that of the mind.

But for the present, at least, all was happy anticipation; and Gunner was happy.

"There's Latcham!" grunted Lovell, at last.

"Plenty of time for the train," remarked Tommy Cook. "Not that it matters! Might as well lose the train as we're going to lose the match."

"Just as well!" groaned Rawson

"Oh, cheer up!" said Gunner. "I admit it looks a bit doubtful, with a lot of fozzlers like you fellows, if St. Kit's are in anything like form. But you've got one good man."

"Oh dear!"

The Rookwood crowd poured out of the bus at Latcham Junction. Nearly a dozen fellows were going over to St. Kit's with the eleven, so it was quite an army that invaded the platform at Latcham. The train was not yet in, and the Rookwooders stood about in groups waiting for it.

"Here she comes!" said Oswald, at last.

"Now if Gunner would only fall down in a fit——" murmured Putty, of the Fourth. Putty and Oswald were not in

the eleven, but they felt the presence of Gunner as keenly as any of the footballers.

"He won't!" said Oswald dismally.

"No such luck!" groaned Lovell.

And Gunner didn't!

He crammed into a carriage with six or seven other fellows. Jimmy Silver was about to enter the same carriage; but Morny waved him back.

"Full up!" he said.

"Oh, make room," said Jimmy, rather testily. The presence of Peter Cuthbert Gunner had had a rather deteriorating effect upon the usual sunny good-humour of "Uncle James."

"Can't be done, old bean! Try next door."

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy.

He moved to the next carriage, and Morny and Tommy Dodd smiled at one another. Morny sat opposite Gunner, in a corner seat, and Tommy Dodd sat next to the undesired half.

"Shut the door, Morny," said Gunner. "Don't want a lot of passengers shoving in here. Too full already."

Morny was holding the door with his hand, and looking out. He did not seem to hear Gunner.

Doors were slamming along the train. The guard was about to wave his flag, when Morny suddenly woke to action.

Before Gunner could realise what was happening, or anything was happening at all, Morny signed to Tommy Dodd; and the two juniors grasped him.

Gunner went out of the carriage like a pip from an orange.

He sprawled on the platform with a roar.

Mornington slammed the door; the train moved. A shrill whistle rang over Latcham Junction; the express was in motion.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd. Mornington sat down.

"Rather neat—what?" he said.

"Oh, great Scott!" yelled Lovell, who was in the carriage. "Gunner has——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Todd glanced from the window. Every door had slammed, and Gunner was sprawling on the platform, blinking at the gliding train.

Tommy Dodd sat down again, chuckling.

"Poor old Gunner! Jevver get left?"

"Mornny old man, you're a giddy genius!" howled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Oh, my hat! What a wheeze! He's left!"

The crowded carriage rang with merriment.

"That's why you kept Jimmy out!" exclaimed Raby.

Valentine Mornnington chuckled.

"Better for our respected captain not to be on the scene," he remarked. "He couldn't have a hand in this, as he had promised Gunner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I fancy that he will be rather pleased when we get to Oakstead to find that Gunner isn't in the jolly old party."

"I fancy so," chortled Lovell.

"Next express an hour and a half," added Mornnington. "I shouldn't wonder if Gunner comes on after us. He's a sticker! He will be in time to see us coming off the field at St. Kit's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roars of merriment reached the next carriage. Jimmy Silver put his head out of the window at the next stop and glanced along to meet Mornnington's laughing face at the carriage window.

"What's the howling joke?" asked Jimmy Silver. "You fellows can be heard all over the train, I think!"

"Nothing much—only Gunner's lost the train," called back Mornnington.

The captain of the Fourth jumped and knocked the back of his head on the window in his surprise and joy.

"Ow! Lost the train?"

"Yes; he seems to have got left behind at Latcham. Got out at the last moment for some reason!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar behind Mornny.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy, his face all smiles.

He sat down again with a cheery countenance and quite enjoyed the run of the express to Oakstead, in Sussex. It was quite a happy journey for Jimmy Silver.

## CHAPTER 21.

### Fool's Luck!

**O**AKSTEAD! Change for Wicke and St. Kit's!"

The express stopped, and Jimmy Silver & Co. swarmed out on the platform. All the party knew by that time that Peter Cuthbert Gunner had been left behind at Latcham, and rejoiced greatly thereat. It was a smiling band that poured out of the carriages.

"Over the bridge for the local train," said Jimmy Silver. "Five minutes for the train; so buck up!"

The Rookwooders marched off cheerily. There was a sound of pattering feet behind them and breathless panting.

Jimmy glanced back.

A burly figure was running hard along the platform after the Rookwooders, and he came up panting.

Jimmy stared at him as if mesmerised.

"Gunner!" he said faintly.

It was Gunner!

Valentine Mornnington stared at him as if he had been a ghost. Up to that moment he had firmly believed that Peter Cuthbert had been safely left behind at Latcham. His sudden reappearance at Oakstead was really uncanny.

"You rotter!" panted Gunner.

He rushed right at Mornnington. Three or four fellows grasped him and yanked him back.

"Let me go!" roared Gunner.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Don't kick up a shindy here!"

"I'm going to punch him!" bellowed Gunner in indignant wrath. "I'm going to smash him! Think I'm going to be holsted out of a train——"



"How did you get here, you villain?" shrieked Mornington. "I thought you were left behind."

Gunner snorted contemptuously.

"Catch me being left behind, when a football match depends on me, and me only!" he snapped. "I jumped into the guard's van."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Just in time!" said Gunner. "Just jumped in in time as it passed me. Made the guard jump, too. I can tell you. But for that I should have been left behind, and the St. Kit's match would have been a goner. You deliberately tried to throw that match away, Mornington—tried to keep out the only man who could win for Rookwood! You, too, Dodd! I'm jolly well going to smash both of you!"

"Behave yourself, you 'ass!" said Jimmy Silver gloomily. "Shut up, for goodness' sake! Buck up, you chaps; we don't want to lose the local!"

The footballers walked on over the bridge, and Gunner, contenting himself with ferocious glares at Mornington and Tommy Dodd, tramped along with them.

The brightness had faded once more from the faces of the Rookwood footballers.

The local train was waiting on the other side, and the Rookwooders crowded into it. Peter Cuthbert Gunner, with a distrustful glare at Mornington, wedged into Jimmy Silver's carriage. He did not intend to risk another sudden descent on the platform on his burly neck.

In another carriage Valentine Mornington sat in discussion with Oswald and Putty Grace and several other fellows who had come over with the team.

It was a short run from Oakstead to Wicke, the station for St. Kit's, but it was long enough for the discussion between Morny and the followers of the Rookwood team.

At Wicke the party alighted.

"You've got it clear?" murmured Mornington, as he walked down the platform with Oswald & Co. "You collar the silly owl——"

"Yes, rather!"

"Sit on him, or jump on him—any old thing you like! It doesn't matter if you lynch him——"

The conspirators chuckled.

"Only keep him from St. Kit's," said Mornington. "You might tie him to a tree. Or chuck him under a motor-car!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll miss seeing the match, but you'll help us win!"

"That's all right!" said Oswald.

"We'll take jolly good care of him! He won't turn up at St. Kit's unless he carries us there!"

"Good man!"

Morny looked satisfied as he joined Jimmy Silver and walked out of the station with the captain of the Fourth. It was impossible for Jimmy to dodge his promise by having any hand in the elimination of Gunner; and if he had known of the scheme there was little doubt that he would have felt bound to intervene. But if Gunner vanished without his knowledge or concurrence, and had to be replaced in the eleven by another man, there was no doubt at all that Jimmy would be pleased.

And that Gunner should vanish was the fixed determination of Oswald and four or five other followers of the team who had come over to see the match, but were quite willing to miss seeing it so long as Peter Cuthbert Gunner missed figuring in it.

It was not a long walk from the station at Wicke to St. Kit's, but there would be plenty of time to contrive somehow to collar Gunner and sit on him somewhere, while Mornington and the rest kept Jimmy's attention engaged elsewhere.

Indeed, it really seemed that nothing could save Gunner this time. True, there was such a thing as "fool's luck." Gunner undoubtedly was entitled to

count upon that kind of luck on his merits.

Outside Wicke Station a bus was standing, and a couple of fellows stood by it chatting, and glancing towards the entrance. As Jimmy Silver & Co. came out, one of them came towards the Rookwood crowd with a cheery smile on his handsome face.

"Here you are!" he said.

"Hallo, Wilmot!"

Jimmy Silver shook hands cordially with the St. Kit's junior skipper.

"We've got the bus for you," said Wilmot. "Tumble in!"

"Thanks, old bean!"

Mornington's face was a study.

It was kind and thoughtful of Harry Wilmot to turn up with a bus for the Rookwood crowd. But Morny was not feeling grateful just then. He was feeling deeply-disposed to punch Harry Wilmot's head for his kind hospitality.

"Roll in, you chaps," said Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwooders rolled in, Gunner among the first. Oswald gave Mornington a look, and Morny shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

He had counted on the walk to St. Kit's; but obviously Gunner could not be collared in a crowded bus, under the eyes of a couple of St. Kit's fellows, and under Jimmy Silver's.

"Fool's luck" had befriended Gunner once more, and once more he was saved. He sat cheerily in the bus, without the slightest suspicion of the danger he had so narrowly escaped.

The footballers and their friends crammed in, and the bus rolled out of Wicke on the road to St. Kit's.

Wilmot and his companion, St. Leger, chatted cheerily with Jimmy Silver & Co. on the way. Gunner, of course, butted in.

"I hear you've been making some changes in your footer at St. Kit's, Wilmot," he said.

"A few," assented Wilmot, with a smile.

"That chap Carton gone?"

"Yes."

"New men in the team?"

"Nearly all new men."

"Well, it may be something like a game, then," said Gunner. "The lot you sent over to Rookwood last term were really enough to make a donkey sit up on its hind legs and cackle!"

"Made you laugh—what?" asked St. Leger.

"Yes, rather!" said Gunner, and he was surprised to hear a chortle through the crowded bus. "Awful lot of fozzlers, you know. I really hope you've got something better this time. I don't want to feel that I've wasted my afternoon coming over here. These chaps could have beaten your old crowd without my help. I like a good game. I don't want to walk all over you without a tussle, you know."

Wilmot stared.

"Shut up, Gunner!" implored Jimmy Silver.

"Is this a giddy International you fellows have bagged to spring on us?" asked St. Leger.

"I suppose that's meant for sarc," said Gunner. "But, as a matter of fact, there are some Internationals not at all my style."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gunner knows the difference between a football and a fancy-dress ball," said Mornington seriously. "Don't you, Gunner? It's the limit of his knowledge of the game, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilmot and St. Leger looked rather perplexed, as well they might. The bus rolled on to St. Kit's and landed its crew. Gunner looked round him with the air of a fellow who was monarch of all he surveyed. The St. Kit's eleven, when he saw them on Little Side, did not seem to impress him.

"Pretty so-so," he remarked to Oswald. "I dare say they'd beat Jimmy Silver's usual lot. But you just watch me!"

"I'm going to," said Dick Oswald

grimly. "I'm not going to take my eye off you for a minute, Gunner."

"Well, that shows you've got more sense than I ever supposed, Oswald," said Gunner quite cordially. "You keep an eye on me, and you'll get a surprise."

"So will you, if I can manage it," murmured Oswald.

"Eh—what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Oswald moved away, and whispered to Mornington. Mornington nodded hopefully. There was little time left, but there was still time for a last throw of the dice, as it were.

## CHAPTER 22.

### Sat Upon!

"STOP!"

Gunner roared in astonishment and wrath.

"Stop! Putty, you cheeky rotter, stop!"

Jimmy Silver looked round angrily.

"What's that row?" he exclaimed.

"Will you dry up, Gunner? You're always kicking up some chindy."

Gunner did not answer.

He brushed past Jimmy Silver and started off at a run. Jimmy stared after him in amazement.

"What on earth's the matter with that ass?" he asked.

Mornington laughed.

"Perhaps he's gone for a ramble, instead of playin'," he suggested. "You never know what Gunner may do."

"Oh, rot! No such luck."

"While there's life there's hope," said Mornington.

"If he's not here on time he won't play," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "I've got to keep my word to the silly idiot, but I shan't delay the match one second for him. Come in and get changed, you fellows."

"What-ho!"

The Rookwooders went into change, minus Gunner.

Gunner, indeed, would have found it difficult to change into football rig at that moment. Putty of the Fourth had picked up Gunner's bag and cleared off with it at a run. Gunner, indeed, would not even have known that he had done so, being engaged in talk with Oswald, had not Oswald drawn his attention to the fact when Putty was at rather a distance.

Then Gunner roared to Putty of the Fourth to stop, and started after him as Putty ran on without stopping, and with the bag.

Gunner breathed wrath as he ran.

Putty of the Fourth was famous at Rookwood as a practical joker; but this, in Gunner's opinion, was no time for practical jokes. Putty had often suffered for his humorous proclivities, and now he was going to suffer again, severely, as soon as Gunner arrived within hitting distance.

"The silly owl!" gasped Gunner, as he sprinted. "Fancy playing such a silly trick on a fellow just now!"

"After him!" exclaimed Oswald.

Oswald was running with Gunner, so were Jones minor, and Flynn, and Hooker, and one or two other fellows of the team.

Apparently they were keen to help Gunner run down the practical joker, and recover his property. Gunner, naturally, had no doubt on the subject.

Putty of the Fourth vanished into the Oak Walk, a long avenue of trees. Gunner panted after him, and Oswald & Co. panted after Gunner.

Some St. Kit's seniors were strolling in the Oak Walk, and they stared at the Rookwood juniors as the latter raced along. But the Rookwooders did not heed them.

Putty, bag in hand, kept well ahead.

As a matter of fact, he could have walked away from Gunner if he had liked; he had at least twice Peter Cuthbert's sprinting powers. But he did not like. He kept his distance, while Gunner panted in pursuit.

At the end of the Oak Walk, Putty

turned, and waved the bag at the infuriated Gunner. Then he started off again by a path that led towards the river. There was a gate in the way, but Putty coolly tossed the bag over the gate and clambered after it.

Gunner stopped at the gate.

He was breathless and enraged. But he realised that he was losing valuable time.

"After all, I can borrow Conroy's things, and smash that idiot Grace afterwards!" he panted.

Putty grinned at him through the gate.

"Old bean, you couldn't smash a mosquito," he said cheerily. "Get over the gate and see what will happen to you. I'll wait."

"You'll wait?" spluttered Gunner.

"Yes, rather! I'll wait till you screw your courage up!" said Putty.

"Why, I—I——" Gunner clambered frantically over the gate, and after him clambered Oswald & Co. They were far from the football field now, out of sight and sound.

Putty waited, as he had promised. Gunner landed on his feet and rushed right at him.

"Now, you funny idiot——"

"Pile in!" roared Putty.

"What-ho!" chuckled Oswald.

"Collar him!"

Oswald & Co. rushed on and collared Gunner right and left. Gunner yelled in surprise and wrath.

"You silly owls—ow—leggo! Collar him, not me, you dummies! Wharrer you at?"

Apparently, Oswald & Co. knew what they were at. They collared Gunner, not Putty, and Peter Cuthbert, hefty fellow as he was, was soon quite helpless in the grasp of half a dozen fellows.

Amazed, wondering whether he was on his head or his heels, Gunner collapsed in the grasp of many hands.

"Will you let go?" he gasped.

"No jolly fear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yank him along!"

"I told you I'd keep an eye on you, didn't I?" gasped Oswald. "Now, will you walk, or will you be carried?"

"I—I—I'll smash you!"

"Bring him along."

Gunner struggled frantically, as he was picked up by half a dozen pairs of hands and borne away.

But his struggles did not avail. He was "for it" this time, and he had no chance—his luck had failed him.

Down the path towards the river the grinning juniors bore him, out of sight of St. Kit's. They avoided the boathouse, and turned up the towpath with the wriggling Gunner.

From the towpath they turned into a wood, a good quarter of a mile from the football ground of St. Kit's, and there Peter Cuthbert Gunner was dumped on the ground and held, still wriggling spasmodically.

"You—you—you villains!" gasped Gunner. "What are you playing this potty trick for? You'll make me miss the match at this rate."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Oswald & Co. Apparently their object had not yet dawned upon Gunner's powerful brain.

"Do you want the match to be lost?" shrieked Gunner.

"Ha, ha! We want it to be won!" chuckled Putty. "That's why we're looking after you, Gunner."

Gunner comprehended at last.

"You—you rotters! You're keeping me away from the match."

"Dear me! He's got on to it."

"What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner struggled furiously.

"Will you have a little sense?" he raved. "You know there's a set of silly duffers there to play St. Kit's. You know I'm the backbone of the team—the only good man in it. That ass Conroy will have to play if I don't get back! Think of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have they bribed you to keep me out of the match?" roared Gunner. "Is this a St. Kit's trick? Bribed

Rookwood fellows to let them win! Is that it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. Gunner's new theory was really too much for them. They laughed till they wept.

"You rotters!" gasped Gunner. "You don't understand—you're spoiling everything! I tell you, Rookwood can't win without me!"

"Can't jolly well win with you, at all events," grinned Jones minor. "We're giving them a sporting chance by keeping you here, at least."

"You fathead! You ass! I—I—I will——"

Gunner made a terrific effort.

But it was of no avail. He went down again, and Oswald sat on his chest to keep him there. Flynn and Hooker sat on his thrashing legs.

"Make up your mind to it, old bean," advised Putty. "You ought really to be grateful to us. We're saving you from playing the goat, and from chucking away a football match. You haven't thanked us yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," gasped Gunner. "How much have St. Kit's given you to keep me out of the game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You villains——"

"Go it!"

"Will you let me go?" shrieked Gunner.

"No jolly fear!"

"They'll be waiting for me——"

"I don't think!" chuckled Oswald.

"I'll smash you!"

"Go hon!"

For the next hour or so Gunner's remarks were almost incessant and wholly emphatic. His captors heard him, but they heeded not. Like the flower that is born to blush unseen, Gunner wasted his sweetness on the desert air. In despair he realised that he would kick no goals that day for Rookwood. That need not really have worried him, for that was the precise number of goals that he would have

kicked, anyway. But it did worry him, very much; and his emphatic objurgations continued, to an accompaniment of chuckles and chortles from Oswald & Co. There was no help for Peter Cuthbert Gunner; fool's luck had failed him at last.

## CHAPTER 23.

Minus Gunner!

**J**IMMY SILVER frowned.

"Where's Gunner?"

Morny stared round.

"Anybody seen Gunner?"

"Of all the silly chumps!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell, in exasperation. "After butting into the team, to wander away and leave us waiting! Look here, Jimmy, you're jolly well not going to wait for him."

"He must be off his silly chump!" growled Jimmy Silver. "I saw him running off somewhere ten minutes ago. Hasn't he come back?"

"Looks as if he hasn't," said Tommy Dodd. "You're not going to keep St. Kit's waiting for an ass like Gunner."

Conroy caught Jimmy's eye. If Gunner was not available, the Australian junior was wanted.

"Blessed if I understand it!" growled Jimmy. "He was frightfully keen to play, you all know that. But even a chump like Gunner can't expect us to keep St. Kit's hanging about waiting for him. Get into your things, Conroy, anyhow, in case you're wanted."

"Right ho!"

Conroy lost no time.

"You're not going to wait, Silver!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd and several other fellows.

Jimmy hesitated. He had declared emphatically that he would not wait a second if Gunner was not ready. But Jimmy was a generous fellow, and a promise was a promise. He felt that it would not be the game to jump at a chance of escaping his rash promise; the superfluous member of the team

was entitled to as much grace as Jimmy would have allowed any other fellow in the eleven.

"I'll speak to Wilmot," he said.

"Oh, rats!"

"Don't!"

"Get on with it!"

However, Jimmy Silver spoke to Wilmot.

"One of my men has gone off the ground—will you give us a few minutes?"

"As many as you like," answered Harry Wilmot.

"Say five!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "If he's not here in five minutes I play another man. He's ready."

"Right you are!"

Five minutes ticked away slowly. Conroy was ready—all the team were ready. They were five minutes of real anguish to all the team, excepting Valentine Mornington.

The unexpected—the un hoped for—had happened. Gunner, the dead-weight passenger in the team—the player whose presence spelled defeat, and who could not be eliminated—had chosen to walk off, and give his captain a chance of dropping him. If only he did not come back in time—

It was amazing that the obtrusive Peter Cuthbert was not there on time. It was a stroke of good luck that was almost incredible—to all but Morny. It was, as Tommy Dodd remarked, really wicked not to take prompt advantage of it. But Jimmy Silver had promised Gunner, "honest Injun," that he should play, and he was bound to give the man a chance. But Jimmy, as well as his comrades, counted the seconds as they crawled by, with an anxiety that amounted to anguish. If only Gunner didn't come back in time—

And he didn't!

As a matter of fact, with half a dozen fellows sitting on him a quarter of a mile away, he couldn't.

"Time!" exclaimed Lovell eagerly.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath.

"You play, Conroy!"

"Oh, good!"

"Ready!" called out Jimmy Silver.

And the footballers went into the field—minus Gunner.

It was a great game.

From the kick-off it was hard and fast, and Jimmy Silver & Co. found that there was indeed a wonderful new quality in St. Kit's side. Wilmot especially made them open their eyes, after their former experience of St. Kit's football.

But Rookwood were in a winning mood. Their fortunate escape from Gunner had bucked them immensely.

In the first half there was no score, but in the second, Mornington found the St. Kit's net. After that, the game was ding-dong to the finish; time and again St. Kit's nearly got through, but Rawson in goal was a tower of strength. There were narrow escapes, many of them—but a miss was as good as a mile; and St. Kit's did not quite "get there."

They played hard and well, but Rookwood had to go all out to hold them; and it was absolutely certain that with a weak spot in the defence, St. Kit's would have come through with flying colours. But there was no weak spot—Gunner was not there.

The final blast on the whistle was welcomed. It rang out with Rookwood still one goal to nil.

Rookwood had won.

"Good old Gunner!" said Mornington, as they came off the field. "He's won the game for us."

"Gunner has?" ejaculated Lovell.

"Yes; by standing out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But where the thump can Gunner be all this time?" said Jimmy Silver, remembering Peter Cuthbert's existence. "He hasn't turned up even yet."

"I wonder?" murmured Mornington.

And the Rookwooders changed in great spirits, bade a cheery farewell to

Wilmot & Co., and rolled away in their bus—still minus Gunner.

Jimmy Silver & Co., so happily minus Gunner during the St. Kit's match, found themselves plus Gunner, when they took the train at Wick. There Oswald & Co. rejoined the party; with them Gunner, arguing.

"You lost, of course?" howled Gunner.

"No; we won!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Why didn't you turn up?"

"Ask that rotter—that villain—That—that—"

"You see, we were sitting on him," explained Oswald. "We thought that a player of Gunner's quality was safer at a good distance, with somebody sitting on him. So we sat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver blankly.

On the way home to Rookwood, Gunner was eloquent and inexhaustible. Roars of laughter punctuated his indignant eloquence. And when Gunner told his tale of woe at Rookwood, there were more roars of laughter. Gunner had not, after all, played football for Rookwood; but undoubtedly he had added considerably to the gaiety of existence at the old school.

#### CHAPTER 24.

##### Unlucky for Lovell!

"WHERE'S my crackers?"

"Eh?"

"Crackers!" said Lovell, with an accusing look at his comrades.

Classes were over for the day at Rookwood, and Arthur Edward Lovell had gone up to the end study of the Fourth. He had come down again with a frowning brow.

Evidently Lovell was annoyed.

"Crackers!" he repeated. "Crackers

and squibs! Some silly ass has shifted the box! Now, which silly ass was it?"

"Fathead!" was the answer of Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome, and they answered in unison.

Lovell's frown deepened. Arthur Edward Lovell was a thoughtful fellow in some ways, and for the great occasion of the approaching Fifth of November he had taken time by the forelock, as it were. Being in funds, he had made quite an extensive purchase of crackers, squibs, and Roman candles, and other fearsome things, with which the anniversary of Mr. Fawkes' little plot was to be duly celebrated when the date came round. Which was really very thoughtful of Lovell; for riches take unto themselves wings, and fly away—especially in the hands of the Lower boys at school.

It was quite probable that Lovell's funds might have evaporated before the Fifth of November, leaving him in a firework-less state on the bonfire day. While the fireworks, already purchased and stacked in a box in the study, couldn't evaporate.

But if they had not evaporated, it seemed that they were gone. Hence Lovell's wrathful questions and accusing looks.

"It's a queer thing," said Lovell, "that a fellow can't lay a thing down in the study without some silly ass shifting it. My account-books are always being shifted. I left my football boots in the bookcase only yesterday, and some chump shifted them into the corner behind the desk, and I had to hunt for them. Now some frabjous, fooling ass has shifted the firework box. Where is it?"

"Not knowing, can't say," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Can't you remember what you did with it?" asked Raby, gently as the cooing dove.

It is said that a soft answer turneth away wrath. Raby's soft answer, however, seemed to add fuel to the flames.

"You silly chump!" roared Lovell. "I left it under the study table—I keep it there. It's gone!"

"Gone off?" asked Newcome. "Well, I suppose the fireworks were made to go off, weren't they?"

Lovell breathed hard and deep.

Filled with righteous indignation as he was, he was not in any mood for little jests like this.

"You footling chump!" he said.

"Can it, old man!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Nobody's shifted your old box! You've shoved it somewhere and forgotten it."

"I haven't!" roared Lovell.

"But you must have!" said Raby, in a gently argumentative tone. "You say you keep it under the study table; I remember seeing it there myself. If it's not there now, you've put it somewhere else, see? Try to remember where, instead of blowing off steam."

"Yes, try!" urged Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed on the verge of an explosion, as if he were a firework himself.

"You—you—you—" he gasped. "Mean to say that you haven't shifted that box, any of you?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Then who has?"

"Ask me another!" yawned the captain of the Fourth.

"Somebody has!" roared Lovell.

"Then I'll tell you what," said Jimmy Silver, as if struck by a sudden bright idea, "look for that somebody, and find him, and roar at him instead of at us! See?"

And the Co. walked away smiling, leaving Arthur Edward Lovell in a sulphurous state.

Slowly it dawned upon Arthur Edward's powerful intellect that his study-mates were not responsible for the removal of the box of fireworks. It began to look as if some other fellow in the Classical Fourth, with a taste for fireworks, had shifted that big card-

board box, stacked with crackers and squibs and Roman candles. Possibly the raider was actually entertaining himself by letting off the fireworks in some secluded corner at that very moment.

"Can't you help a chap look for his fireworks, you chumps?" bawled Arthur Edward, as the Co. sauntered off.

But the Co. turned a deaf ear. In his present frame of mind, they did not yearn for the company of Arthur Lovell. They deemed it judicious to give him time to cool off. Arthur Edward was one of the best fellows in the wide world, but there were times when his manner was against him.

"I—I'll jolly well find the rotter, and scrag him!" gasped Arthur Edward. "Bagging my fireworks! I'll give him fireworks!"

And Arthur Edward proceeded to inquire after the missing box. It was a matter requiring care, for the juniors were not allowed to keep combustibles in the studies. On Bonfire Day rules were relaxed, but on other days nobody was supposed to have such things in his room. There was danger of fire, a danger which Lovell, in his own lofty way, loftily disregarded. In such matters he knew better than the Head. He had no doubt on that point. Still, it was impossible for a Fourth Form fellow to tell the Head so, and so Lovell's loss had to be kept away from the knowledge of masters and prefects.

Fortunately, information was soon obtained. Tubby Muffin was loafing on the stairs, and Lovell bore down on him. Tubby had eyes for everything that did not concern him, and it was quite possible that he had had an eye on the end study since classes, as he had no business there.

"Seen anybody rooting about my study, Tubby?" asked Lovell.

Reginald Muffin nodded.

"I saw Cuffy—"

"Cuffy! That Modern idiot?"

"Yes. He wasn't ragging," said



Muffin. "Cuffy never rags. He carried away an old cardboard box. I thought you must have sent him for it."

"An old cardboard box!" gasped Lovell. "Was it about a foot square, and tied with string?"

"That's it!"

"My hat. That born idiot Cuffy taking to study-raiding!" ejaculated Lovell. "I'll give him raiding my study!"

Lovell scudded out of the House.

It was surprising in fact astonishing to learn that the mild and amiable Clarence Cuffy had raided his box of fireworks. But there it was. Muffin had seen the raider with his own eyes. The cardboard box that Cuffy had carried out of the end study was undoubtedly the cardboard box containing the fireworks.

Lovell cut across the quadrangle to Mr. Manders' House, breathing wrath.

He was going to recapture his fireworks and he was going to punch Cuffy. He was going to punch him hard. He would give him a lesson to stick to noughts and crosses and leave study-raiding severely alone.

Lovell rushed into Mr. Manders' House. Being a Classical fellow and warfare being fairly perpetual at Rookwood between Classics and Moderns, it would have been wiser of Lovell to stroll in quietly and sedately. But he was too excited and angry to be cautious.

And so it was that Mr. Manders, stepping out of his study, almost walked into the Classical junior as he came in a great hurry. And Lovell's excited face showed that he was there on no peaceful mission. Mr. Roger Manders raised a commanding hand.

"Lovell!"

Arthur Edward reluctantly halted. He despised all Moderns, and especially Modern masters. Mr. Manders taught chemistry, and wore elastic-sided boots, and was therefore an object of scorn to Classical men. Never-

theless, he was a master, and a House-master, and, especially in his own House, he was not to be disregarded. So Arthur Edward Lovell halted rebelliously.

"Why are you in this House, Lovell?" asked the Modern master suspiciously.

"I—I've come to speak to a fellow," stammered Lovell. "I—I want to see one of the Fourth, sir."

"Another of the rags, as I believe you call them, which cause continual disturbance at Rookwood," said Mr. Manders acidly. "Which boy do you wish to see, Lovell?"

"Cuffy, sir," said Lovell savagely.

"Indeed! For what reason?"

"He—he—he's got a box of mine, sir."

"Do you mean you have lent Cuffy a box?" asked Mr. Manders.

"N-n-n-po, sir!"

"You cannot mean that Cuffy has purloined a box belonging to you, Lovell? If so, you may inform me of the particulars of the theft."

"No!" gasped Lovell. It was just like Mr. Manders to put it like this. He really was a very unpleasant gentleman.

"Then what do you mean, Lovell?" asked Roger Manders in his most magisterial way.

"I—I mean it was a lark, sir—a study raid—only a jape—no harm done," stammered the unfortunate Lovell. "I—I just want to ask Cuffy for the box, sir."

"If Cuffy has taken a box from your study, I fail to see how it can possibly be regarded as a joke," said Mr. Manders. "At all events I fail to see any humour in it. But if Cuffy has your box, Lovell, certainly it shall be returned to you. Describe the box."

Lovell began to regret his hasty invasion of Mr. Manders' House. But he regretted too late, as he often did.

"Oh, just a cardboard box, sir, about a foot square, tied up with string," he stammered.

"What did it contain?"

"H'm!"

"Kindly acquaint me with the contents of the box which, you allege, a boy belonging to this House has taken from your study in the School House, Lovell," said Mr. Manders sternly. "Was it some article of value?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Some eatables, I suppose—some of the indigestible pastries upon which, I believe, Classical boys are allowed to— to gorge in their studies?" said the Modern master in disgust.

"No, sir, it wasn't tuck."

"Then what was it?" snapped Roger Manders.

"Hem!"

"If you cannot acquaint me with the contents of the box, Lovell, I decline to believe that Cuffy has taken any box belonging to you," said Mr. Manders. "It is clear to me that you have come here to pick a quarrel with a Modern boy, for no reason whatever save your natural quarrelsome disposition."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I shall take you to your Form-master, Lovell."

"I—I—I don't mind telling you, sir," gasped Lovell desperately. "It—it was fireworks, sir, that I'd got ready for the Fifth."

Mr. Manders frowned.

As he was a Modern master, and had nothing to do with the Classical side, Lovell hoped that the existence of fireworks in a Classical study would not worry him. But he had overlooked Mr. Manders' well-known gift of interfering in matters that did not concern him.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "You have been keeping fireworks in your study against the rules of the school, Lovell?"

"It isn't long to the Fifth, sir, and—"

"Scandalous!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "You will be punished for this, Lovell, punished severely!"

Arthur Edward Lovell's eyes gleamed.

He was more than fed-up with Roger Manders by this time.

"I shan't be punished in this House, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What—what?"

"You can't cane Classics, sir," said Lovell.

Mr. Manders smiled grimly.

"I shall deal with Cuffy myself, Lovell, as he belongs to my House. As you so clearly state, you are a Classical boy, and to be dealt with elsewhere. I shall take you to your Form-master, and explain to Mr. Dalton. Come!"

Lovell backed away.

"I—I—"

"Come!" said Mr. Manders in a grinding voice, and he dropped a heavy hand on Lovell's shoulder and led him out of the House and across the quad to the Classical side.

## CHAPTER 25.

### Cuffy Means Well!

"MY dear James—"

"My dear ass!" answered Jimmy Silver cordially.

Clarence Cuffy, with a grave and serious expression on his face, came up to the three juniors in the quad. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome resisted the impulse to walk quickly in another direction.

Really, they felt that they had had enough Cuffy for one day. But they were good-natured fellows, and they held on.

"I observe that Lovell is not with you, my dear James," pursued Cuffy, blinking at the captain of the Fourth.

"He's looking for a giddy box he's lost," answered Jimmy. "Why not run along and help him, Cuffy?"

"Good egg!" said Raby heartily.

"Do!" urged Newcome.

Clarence Cuffy was so excessively obliging a youth, so thoughtful for others and so forgetful of himself, that the three Classics expected to see

him scud off towards the House at once to lend his assistance to Arthur Edward.

But Cuffy did not. He shook his head very seriously.

"In the circumstances, my dear James, I do not desire to approach within closer proximity of Lovell," he said. "I should greatly prefer to give you a message for him, James."

"A message! What on earth about?"

"Possibly he may have already missed his box of fireworks——"

"My hat! That's the box he's looking for!" Jimmy Silver stared at Cuffy. "You don't know anything about it, I suppose, Cuffy?"

"I am very, very well acquainted with the matter, my dear James. You see, I removed the box from your study."

"You did!" yelled the three.

"Precisely, my dear friends."

"My only hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver in amazement. "Here's Cuffy taking to playing japes in his old age. Great pip! But you mustn't jape Classical studies, Cuffy! You really mustn't, you know! Keep it for the Modern side!"

"But, my dear James——"

"We always bump silly asses who jape in our study," explained Raby.

"We give them whole beans."

"My dear George——"

"Collar him!" said Newcome. "I hardly like the idea of bumping a white rabbit, but we can't let Moderns rag in Classical studies. It's a matter of prestige."

"My dear Arthur——"

"Sorry!" said Jimmy Silver kindly. "I'm not displeased to see you waking up, Cuffy, and developing some of the attributes of a human being. In fact, I am very, very pleased."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby and Newcome, quite tickled by that playful imitation of Cuffy's solemn style.

"But," continued Jimmy Silver, "it's a well-established law, like unto the laws of the Medes and giddy Persians,

that any merchant who rags in our study gets it in the neck. Sorry and all that, but for the sake of our prestige we've got to bump you."

"My dear James——"

"Bag him!"

"Yarcooh! I assure you—— Oh, dear! Oh, my goodness!" yelled Cuffy, as he was upended in the grasp of the Classical trio.

Bump!

It was not a hefty bump, only a playful bump. But it was enough for Clarence Cuffy, who was of the weedy variety physically. The game of noughts and crosses, though so very much preferable to football, had not developed Cuffy's muscles to any great extent. He sat on the ground and gasped and blinked at the three in a dizzy state.

"Oh, dear! Oh, my goodness!" he gasped. "My dear James—my dear George—my dear Arthur—ow! I do assure you in the most serious manner that I was not what you term japing in your study. I have always sedulously avoided joining in anything of the nature of a practical joke. I assure you, my dear friends, that I removed the—ow!—box of fireworks with the very, very best intentions. Ow!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled and picked Cuffy up by the collar and set him on unsteady feet.

"If you weren't japing we've wasted that bump," he said. "You can consider that you never had it."

"Ow! Ow! My dear James——" gasped Cuffy.

"But if you weren't japing, what the thump did you mess about with Lovell's box of fireworks for?" demanded the captain of the Fourth.

"Ow! That is what I was about to explain when you broke out into what I can only characterise as indefensible hooliganism!" stuttered Cuffy. "I removed the box of fireworks in order to save Lovell from the punishment due for keeping such things in a junior study. I felt it my duty to do Lovell

this act of kindness. Ow! But as I considered it possible that Lovell might be annoyed, I was going to ask you to tell him, instead of personally acquainting him with this act of—ow!—kindness."

The Classical trio stared at the gasping Cuffy.

"Do you mean that some giddy master had heard about Lovell's fireworks, and was going to root them out?" asked Raby in wonder. "If so, you could have tipped Lovell the wink, instead of taking them away yourself, you born ass!"

"You do not as yet wholly comprehend the situation, my dear George. Lovell was breaking the rules of the school in keeping fireworks in his study before Bonfire Day. I learned that Bulkeley of the Sixth suspected their presence there, and, had he found them, undoubtedly Arthur Edward would have been caned. That would have been very, very sad."

"Sad enough for Lovell!" agreed Jimmy. "But why couldn't you tell Lovell about it, fathead?"

"My dear James, I could not wholly reconcile it to my conscience to be a party, however innocent, to a serious infraction of the rules of the school," explained Cuffy. "Lovell would merely have placed the fireworks in a safer spot. In an entirely unjustifiable spirit of self-sufficiency he would have persisted in his infraction of the rules of the school. For that reason I conveyed the box of fireworks to Mr. Dalton's study."

"What!" roared the Classics.

Cuffy blinked at them.

"I considered that the most judicious thing to do in the circumstances," he said. "The fireworks, of course, will be confiscated. I hope and trust that that will impress upon dear Arthur Edward the necessity of obeying the rules of the school. Do you not think it probable, my dear James?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped dear James.

"Somebody's put the silly owl up to this," said Raby. "How did a Modern ass know anything about a box in a Classical study? Who told you, Cuffy?"

"Dear Albert."

"Fathead! Do you mean that cad Leggett? He's the kind of spying cad who would know what there was in a fellow's study," sniffed Raby.

"My dear George, pray do not speak so very, very slightly of dear Albert. He was caned by Mr. Dalton in the Form-room this morning, and is suffering considerable discomfort, but he is showing a kind and forgiving spirit that has delighted me. Dear Albert told me that the fireworks were in Lovell's study, and that Bulkeley knew, and suggested that a really kind-hearted fellow would remove them in time. Was not that very, very kind of Leggett?"

"Pulling your silly leg, you owl! He spied out Lovell's fireworks, but Bulkeley never knew anything about it," growled Newcome.

"Oh, my goodness! You surely do not think that dear Albert was capable of deceiving me."

"Fathead!"

"But he seemed so very, very kind and thoughtful," said Cuffy in distress. "He suggested saving Lovell from an offence against the rules of the school by taking the fireworks to Mr. Dalton's study. I had not thought of it myself, but as soon as dear Albert suggested it I perceived what a very, very good idea it was."

"You crass ass!" said Jimmy Silver. "You—you—you pink-eyed white rabbit!! Lovell shelled out a quid for those fireworks! They'll be confiscated now."

"Without doubt, my dear James. But do you not think that that will be a valuable lesson to Lovell? Albert thought so."

"I'll talk to dear Albert later," growled Jimmy Silver. "Come on, you chaps! Dicky Dalton went out for

a walk after class, and we may be in time to get the fireworks back before he comes in. We'll try."

"My dear James," exclaimed Cuffy, "let me prevail upon you not to undo the good work I have done, on the kind suggestion of dear Albert. I assure you that I acted with the very, very best intentions——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

But Cuffy was not to be denied. He grabbed the captain of the Fourth by the sleeve as the juniors turned back hastily towards the House.

"One moment, my dear James——"

"Leggo, you fathead!"

"But if you will reflect seriously for a few minutes—— Yaroooooh!" roared Cuffy, as he sat down.

Jimmy Silver had no time to waste, and he smote. The three Classics off towards the House, leaving Clarence Cuffy sitting on the hard, unsympathetic earth—so different from Cuffy himself, who was so very soft and sympathetic! But there was no doubt that the earth was unsympathetic and hard, and Clarence Cuffy felt very, very pained.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Wow! Yow! Oh, my goodness! Ow!"

The three Classics raced for the House.

They knew that Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, had gone out for his usual walk after classes, and there was a chance of annexing Lovell's box from his study before he returned. If he had already returned the game was up; but they hoped for the best, and did not lose a second.

They ran breathlessly into the House and headed for Mr. Dalton's study. Valentine Mornington was loafing in the passage, and Jimmy caught him by the arm.

"Has Dicky come in?" he asked quickly.

Morny nodded.

"Yes; he passed me a minute ago."

"Oh, rotten luck! Did he go to his study?"

"I think so."

"Come on," said Jimmy. "There's a chance yet—he may have gone to Masters' Room! If he's there, we'll ask him something about deponent verbs; if he isn't, we'll bag Lovell's box. Come on."

The three hurried on to Richard Dalton's study.

Just as they reached it, the door opened. Richard Dalton himself glanced into the passage.

"Ah, Silver!" he said. "Have you a box of matches, my boy?"

"Oh—ah—what! Matches?" There was no doubt that Richard Dalton had gone to his study!

"Yes," said Mr. Dalton, with a smile. "My fire is laid, but I find there are no matches in the study and I have none about me. Perhaps you will fetch me a box, Silver."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

He cut off, and returned in a minute or two with a box of matches.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Dalton, and he went back into his study and closed the door. The fire was ready laid in his grate, and Mr. Dalton was accustomed to putting a match to it himself when he came in from his walk after classes.

In the passage the three Classics looked at one another.

"Nothing doing!" remarked Newcome, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Only to kick Cuffy and thrash that cad Leggett," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"It's rotten," he said; "but we've done our best. Better find that ass Lovell and tell him where his giddy fireworks are, anyhow."

"My hat! Here he comes, with Manders."

"Oh, dear! More trouble!" sighed Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Roger Manders, with a grim and frowning brow, came along the cor-

ridor, with a heavy hand on the shoulder of Arthur Edward Lovell. Arthur Edward was looking sulky and rebellious.

Mr. Manders glanced at Jimmy Silver & Co. with a frown, and then tapped at Mr. Dalton's door. Lovell, with a grimace at his chums, went with him. Evidently Arthur Edward was being taken to his Form-master for punishment for some offence; he had not been long in gathering up trouble after parting with his comrades.

"What on earth's up?" said Jimmy. "Goodness knows! Let's wait for him."

And the Classical three waited.

#### CHAPTER 26.

##### Explosive!

**R**ICHARD DALTON glanced over his shoulder as a tap came at his study door. He was kneeling before the fire, applying matches to the paper stuffed under the wood and coal.

"Come in!" he said.

The door opened, and Roger Manders entered, leading in Lovell of the Fourth by the shoulder.

Mr. Dalton rose to his feet.

The paper in the grate had caught now, and was flickering. Mr. Dalton laid the box of matches on the mantel-piece and stepped to his table. He was not looking pleased. Mr. Manders' expression hinted only too plainly that he had come to lay a complaint—and Mr. Manders was a gentleman much given to laying complaints. Always, or nearly always, Mr. Manders had some complaint to make of the conduct of Classical fellows, and Classical masters generally suffered from a tired feeling on the subject.

Still, it was Richard Dalton's duty to hear the complaint and to adjudicate, and he stood at his writing-table and looked across it at Mr. Manders and Lovell as politely as he could.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Manders!"

"Oh, good-afternoon, sir!" said Roger Manders acidly. "Mr. Dalton, I have to bring to your notice——"

"I trust that Lovell——"

"Lovell has been insolent to me, sir," said Mr. Manders. "That, perhaps, may not seem very serious to you, Mr. Dalton."

"Really, Mr. Manders——"

"I will not dwell upon it, sir—I will not dwell upon it!" interrupted the Modern master. "I am well aware that on the Classical side in this school views differ from those held on the Modern side. Lovell's impudence, I have no doubt, is in keeping with the traditions of his House."

"Mr. Manders!"

"But there is another matter, sir, which I must report to you, which I think that you will regard as serious!" snapped Roger Manders. "Lovell burst into my House, sir, a few minutes ago, in search of a Modern boy, whom he accuses of taking a box from his study. So far as Cuffy of the Modern Fourth is concerned, I shall deal with the matter. But reluctantly, sir, very reluctantly, Lovell confessed to keeping a box of fireworks in his study, against all the rules of the school, sir. This utterly reckless boy totally disregards the danger of setting Rookwood on fire, and recklessly disregards the strict injunctions of Dr. Chisholm! That matter, sir, I felt bound to bring to your notice, as Lovell's Form-master, sir."

And having thus delivered himself, at twice the necessary length, Mr. Manders took up a commanding position on the hearthrug, leaving Lovell to face his Form-master across the writing-table.

Mr. Dalton frowned.

He was annoyed by the manner of the Modern master, annoyed by the fact that Mr. Manders had a plausible pretext for reporting one of his boys, and angered by the infraction of the

rules of the House. So he was by no means the usually kind and genial young man the Classical Fourth knew as he fixed his eyes on Lovell.

"Lovell! You had a box of fireworks in your study?"

"Yes, sir," said Lovell.

"You are well aware of the strict rule against keeping fireworks in the studies before the Fifth of November?"

"I—I forgot, sir!" stammered Lovell.

Sniff! from Mr. Manders.

Mr. Manders, with his hands under his coat-tails, stood on the hearthrug, his back to the fire, enjoying the genial warmth as the flames spread through the grate.

"The boy says that he forgot!" sneered Mr. Manders. "I venture to suggest, Mr. Dalton, that he did nothing of the kind. The boy is speaking untruthfully, Mr. Dalton."

Lovell's eyes flashed.

"I'm not!" he shouted. "You've no right to say that, Mr. Manders!"

"What—what?"

"Control yourself, Lovell!" said Mr. Dalton sternly.

"I'm not a liar, sir!" growled Lovell.

"You know I'm not, Mr. Dalton. If I didn't exactly forget the rule about fireworks in the studies, I mean I didn't think of it at the time, sir. That's what I meant, sir. I know jolly well I've broken a rule, and I'm not denying it."

"It is a serious matter, Lovell! A fire was caused in a study at one time from the explosion of some fireworks which had been carelessly left near a fire. Since then the rule on the subject has been very strict. It was quite right and proper of Mr. Manders to report this to me. I am obliged to you, Mr. Manders," added Richard Dalton, with an effort.

"Not at all, sir—not at all!" said Mr. Manders, with a slight inflection of sarcasm.

"As for you, Lovell——"

Mr. Dalton was interrupted.

It was an amazing interruption.

Bang!

"What——" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

Bang!

"What——" stuttered Lovell.

Bang, bang, bang! Fizzzzzzzz!

Squisssssssh! Bang, bang, BANG!

"Whoooooop!" yelled Mr. Manders.

It was a sudden, terrific, deafening, volcanic explosion in the fire-grate!

Wood and coal were hurled in all directions!

Bang, bang, bang!

That sudden, terrific explosion just behind him made Roger Manders leap fairly into the air.

Bang, BANG! Squizzzzzzzz!

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "Fire, fire! Help! Whoooooop! Bless my soul! Help! What—what—Oh!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Fireworks!" stuttered Lovell. "Fireworks—in the fire! That villain Cuffy—— Oh, my only summer hat!"

Mr. Dalton stood transfixed. But for Mr. Manders' visit, probably he would have been seated in the armchair before the fire, changing his boots for his slippers, and in that case he would have got the full benefit of the sudden eruption.

As it was, it was Mr. Manders who got the full benefit of it.

He leaped away from the fender, pursued by whizzing fragments of coal and wood, whizzing rockets and Roman candles and fizzing squibs. To the astounded and scared Modern master it seemed as if a bomb had exploded just behind him.

Bang, bang, bang!

Evidently a stack of fireworks had been carefully hidden in the heart of the fire. It had taken a little time for the newly lighted fire to reach them. And then——

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Fireworks flew on all sides. A "jumping" cracker—one of those fearsome contrivances that exploded half a dozen

times in succession—seemed to haunt Mr. Manders as he jumped and leaped and dodged. It banged under his coat-tails; it banged again between his feet as he came down after his first jump; it banged behind him as he fled; it banged after him; it jumped and banged again in front of him. It seemed endowed with almost a human ingenuity. Mr. Manders stumbled over a chair in his wild dodging and fell to the floor, fairly on the repeating cracker. It gave a final bang as he landed on it.

**BANG!**

Mr. Manders jumped up as suddenly as if the floor had become red-hot.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Help, fire, fire! Help!" shrieked Mr. Manders frantically.

"Upon my word!" gasped Richard Dalton.

Lovell stared dazedly at the smoking, fizzing fire-grate. He knew where his fireworks had gone now. Evidently Cuffy had not taken them over to Manders' House, as he had supposed at first. They were here—here, in Mr. Dalton's study, going strong!

The door opened and Jimmy Silver's alarmed face looked in, with other alarmed faces looking over his shoulders.

"What is it, sir? What—what——" stuttered Jimmy.

"A diabolical outrage!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Upon my word! I am burnt—I am scorched—I am injured! Mr. Dalton, I—I——"

Words failed Roger Manders.

The study reeked with smoke and the smell of gunpowder.

With a last fizz the last quib went off, and there was silence after the terrific uproar. Outside, in the passage, a startled mob of Rookwood fellows stared into Mr. Dalton's study. Along the passage some scared fag was yelling "Fire!" and an angry senior was yelling to him to "chuck" it. Then there was a buzz of "the Head!" and

the crowd in the passage parted to give room to the majestic figure of Dr. Chisholm, the headmaster of Rookwood.

## CHAPTER 27.

Awful for Albert!

**D**R. CHISHOLM swept into the study. He swept in lofty and majestic. But the next moment as the atmosphere of the study struck him, he coughed and sniffed. This detracted a little from his majesty, but added to his anger.

"What is all this?" he exclaimed. "What does this mean—in your study, Mr. Dalton? I have been startled, astounded by an explosion, a series of deafening detonations!"

"It is an outrage, sir!" almost shrieked Mr. Manders. "I have been subjected to an outrage—a—a—a diabolical outrage!"

"What has happened?" thundered the Head.

"Explosives, sir, were stacked in Mr. Dalton's fire, and I—as I was standing before the fire, sir—was blown up—blown up, sir!" stuttered the Modern master. "Mr. Dalton can doubtless explain, sir—Mr. Dalton may be able to explain——"

"Have a little sense, Mr. Manders!" rapped out Mr. Dalton. "Do you imagine for one moment that I am a party to this—that I had any knowledge of this rascally trickery?"

"I suspect it very strongly, Mr. Dalton. I certainly think——"

"You are childish, sir!" hooted the Fourth Form master.

"What—what? Did you say childish?"

"I said childish, sir, and I repeat——"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head in a formidable voice. "You forget yourselves, gentlemen! Mr. Manders, calm yourself! Mr. Dalton, kindly tell me at once what has occurred."

"Mr. Manders came here with Lovell,



of my Form, sir, to report him for keeping fireworks in his study. We were interrupted by that sudden explosion. Some person had stacked fireworks among the coal in my grate. Quite ignorant of this, I applied a match to the fire when I came in, as is my habit. It was, of course, by the sheerest accident that Mr. Manders was standing before the fire when the explosion took place."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "But this—this wicked and dangerous trick—this must be severely inquired into. Lovell, it appears, had fireworks in his possession. Did you place fireworks in Mr. Dalton's grate, Lovell?"

"No, sir!" gasped Lovell.

"Where are your fireworks now, at this moment?"

"I—I don't know, sir!"

"You do not know!" thundered the Head. "I think we may safely conclude that they were your fireworks, then, that exploded in this study, Lovell."

"I—I think it's very likely, sir; but—but—"

"Then it was you——"

"No, sir!" panted Lovell, in dire apprehension. "Not at all, sir! Mr. Manders will bear me out, sir, that I went over to his House, looking for a fellow who had taken the fireworks from my study."

"If you kept fireworks in your study, Lovell, you will be caned. If you played this dastardly and dangerous trick, you will be given a public flogging."

"I—I didn't, sir!"

"Give me the name of the boy who has taken the fireworks from your study immediately."

"I—I——" stammered Lovell.

"It was Cuffy, of my House, sir," said Mr. Manders. "That was Lovell's statement. But I am absolutely certain, sir, that no Modern boy played this trick, and least of all Cuffy."

"Cuffy!" repeated the Head. "I have noticed the boy Cuffy, and certainly I should never have suspected — Send for Cuffy at once, and I

will question him. This matter must be probed to the very root."

"Cuffy!" shouted voices along the passage.

Half a dozen fellows propelled Clarence Cuffy towards Mr. Dalton's study.

The duffer of Rookwood came in brightly enough. Being the only fellow at Rookwood who was blessed with an absolutely clear conscience on all possible subjects, Cuffy had no fear of standing in the presence of his headmaster. He did not know why he was wanted, but he came along quite cheerily.

"Cuffy!" said the Head, fixing his eyes on Clarence's mild face. "You removed a box of fireworks from Lovell's study?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do with them?"

"I brought them here, sir."

"Here!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "To this study?"

"Yes, sir!" said Cuffy brightly.

"Upon my word!"

"Then you are guilty of this outrage, Cuffy?" demanded the Head, scarcely able to believe his ears.

Clarence Cuffy jumped.

"I, sir! What outrage, sir? Has anything happened, sir?"

There was a chuckle in the corridor, which died away instantly as Dr. Chisholm's eye turned towards the doorway. Grave and serious faces met his eye.

"Did you place the fireworks in Mr. Dalton's grate, Cuffy?"

Another jump from Cuffy!

"Oh, my goodness! No, sir! I should consider such an action, sir, as extremely disrespectful to Mr. Dalton. I should regard it as taking a very, very great liberty, sir."

"Then why did you bring the fireworks here?"

"I considered it was my duty to do so, sir, as Lovell was keeping them in his study against the rules, sir. My intention was to do Lovell a service, sir, and I hoped and trusted that it

would be a lesson to him to act in a more thoughtful and law-abiding manner on future occasions, sir. Leggett was also of the same opinion, and, though I seldom agree with Leggett's views, I certainly consider that on the present occasion dear Albert advised me with unusual perspicacity and propriety of feeling, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Is it possible that Leggett played this wretched trick, after inducing that foolish boy to bring the fireworks to this room?" said Mr. Dalton.

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Cuffy, quite overcome by the bare idea of such duplicity on the part of dear Albert.

"I do not think so for one moment, sir!" boomed Mr. Manders. "No boy in my House would dream of playing such a dastardly prank. Some Classical boy beyond a doubt. I suspect Lovell."

"It appears to be clear that Lovell's fireworks were taken away by Cuffy, and Lovell is, therefore, exonerated," said the Head. "Send for Leggett, and he shall be questioned."

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged glances. They had no doubt whatever that Albert Leggett had stacked the fireworks in Mr. Dalton's grate, after Cuffy had landed them there, dodging into the study to play his trick after Cuffy had left. But they were equally certain that Leggett would never admit anything of the kind; and there was no proof of any kind to be had—Leggett had planned too cunningly for that. All the evidence there was was against Clarence Cuffy, though the happy Clarence did not realise it in the least.

"It is possible, of course, that some other boy than Lovell had fireworks in his possession—very probable, in fact," said the Head. "Lovell's fireworks may not have been used. I shall sift this matter thoroughly, and you will be given every opportunity of clearing yourself, Cuffy."

"I, sir!" stammered Cuffy.

"You, sir!" snapped the Head. "At present, every circumstance points to you as the culprit."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"There seems nothing to connect Leggett with the matter, unless it can be proved that he came to Mr. Dalton's study after you left the box of fireworks here. If the same fireworks were used for this trick, therefore, Cuffy——"

"Oh, dear!"

"Where did you leave the box of fireworks, Cuffy?" asked Mr. Dalton gently. "I do not see it in the study."

"I left it under the table, sir."

"See if it is still there."

There was a cover on Mr. Dalton's table which descended half-way to the floor. Clarence Cuffy raised the edge of the cover, and peered under the table.

He started back with a howl of surprise.

"Oh, my goodness! What are you doing there, my dear Albert?"

"What?" gasped Mr. Dalton.

"What?" stammered Mr. Manders.

"What?" thundered the Head.

"Great pip!" murmured Jimmy Silver, almost in ecstasy. "Leggett was here—must have been here when Dicky came in, he hadn't time to dodge out of the study after stacking the crackers in the fire— Oh, holy smoke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Raby and Newcome.

"Silence!" boomed the Head.

Dr. Chisholm stepped to the table and jerked aside the cover.

"Emerge!" he thundered.

Leggett of the Fourth emerged. His face was white with terror. All eyes were fixed on him. Only too plainly, Leggett, having stacked the fireworks in the grate, had been surprised in the study by Mr. Dalton's sudden return from his walk, and had desperately dodged under the table to escape discovery. He had been there all the time, listening and quaking, fearing detection; and now——"

He cringed with terror before the Head. If his presence there, and his hiding, had not been proof enough, there were smears of coal on his fingers, plain for all eyes to see. For a terrible moment there was silence.

"I think we need look no further for the culprit!" said the Head, in a deep voice. "Leggett, follow me to my study!"

And Albert Leggett, quaking, followed the Head.

The episode, to the Head, seemed an exceedingly serious one, and he impressed his view upon Albert Leggett, with the assistance of the birch. But most of Rookwood saw a comic side to the affair, and there were roars of laughter over it in the Classical Fourth studies. Even Arthur Edward Lovell hardly regretted the loss of his fireworks, the way the affair had turned out. When Leggett came away from the Head's study he was wriggling and writhing; and for a long, long time he writhed and wriggled, and groaned and gasped. But nobody wasted any sympathy on Leggett; even Clarence Cuffy did not sympathise with him.

#### CHAPTER 23.

Cuffy is Very, Very Pleased!

"CUFFY looks joyful!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

"He do—he does!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "No end bucked! Has Mr. Manders patted him on the napper and told him he's a good boy?"

"Or has he won the championship at noughts and crosses?" suggested Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt that Clarence Cuffy, of the Modern Fourth, looked quite bucked.

As he sat on a bench under one of the old Rookwood beeches, his kind and gentle face was beaming with satisfaction.

Jimmy Silver & Co., sauntering

under the beeches, spotted him, and paused to observe him.

Something, evidently, had happened to cause great pleasure to the duffer of Rookwood, and they wondered what it was.

He looked as pleased as a fellow who had just been picked out to play for School; but that, as it happened, would not have pleased Cuffy at all. Football was much too strenuous for him. As a game he preferred noughts and crosses. He considered it more intellectual, and undoubtedly it called for less exertion, and was not so rough a game.

Had he reached the top of his class he might have looked pleased, but he was never likely to attain it.

So Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered why his kind face was irradiated with satisfaction, and they paused to inquire.

"Give it a name, old chap," said Lovell.

Cuffy gazed with mild inquiry at the Fistical Four.

"I do not quite follow your remark, my dear Arthur," he said. "To what are you referring?"

The Classical juniors chuckled.

That was Clarence Cuffy all over. He had never been known to ask a fellow what he was driving at. He would ask him to what he was referring. Every Rookwood fellow knew that you shouldn't wind up a sentence with a preposition, and Clarence Cuffy was the only fellow who never did.

"You're looking bucked, old man," said Jimmy Silver. "Have you been beating somebody at noughts and crosses, after a terrific struggle?"

"Or has somebody told you you're a good boy, and do credit to your Aunt Georgina's training?" asked Newcome.

Cuffy shook his head. He took those questions quite seriously. Cuffy took everything with great seriousness.

"Neither, my dear friends," he answered. "But it is an indubitable fact that at the present moment I am

considerably pleased—I think I may, without exaggeration, say very, very pleased."

"How very, very nice!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Is it not, my dear James?" said Cuffy, beaming. "You are perhaps aware that for some days I have been on bad terms with my dear school-fellow, Albert Leggett. We have now made friends. Is not that very, very gratifying?"

"Oh, ripping!" gasped Jimmy.

"Spiffing, in fact!" said Lovell.

"Dear Albert was very, very cross with me," said Cuffy. "You are aware that he played a foolish and inconsiderate trick in Mr. Dalton's study with some fireworks, and I was very nearly punished by mistake."

"You silly owl!" said Lovell. "Leggett tried to land it on you, and if he's made friends again, he's going to play you some dirty trick. I know he's not got over the flogging the Head gave him, and he's as spiteful as a cat."

Cuffy looked pained.

"My dear Arthur, Leggett has assured me that he is very, very sorry

"Gammon!"

"He has confessed that his action was very, very thoughtless——"

"Pulling your leg, old bean."

"I should be very, very unwilling to suspect Albert of such duplicity, my dear Arthur," said Cuffy. "In fact, if I may say so without wounding your feelings, I am shocked at the suggestion."

"Fathead!"

"I'd trust Leggett of the Modern Fourth about as far as I could see him," remarked Raby. "Of course he's pulling your silly leg. But what the thump is he taking the trouble to pull your silly leg for?"

"My dear George——"

"Leggett got an awful licking the other day for his silly trick with the fireworks," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm pretty certain that he wants to take it

out of you, Cuffy. Mind your eye, old bean."

"I should be very, very sorry to distrust dear Albert," said Cuffy mildly. "But, as a matter of fact, my dear friends, Albert has given proof of his good intentions. He is standing me a spread this afternoon. Although dear Albert is not in your House, doubtless you are aware that he very, very seldom stands anybody anything."

"I know he's as mean as a chap can be," said Lovell. "So he's standing you a spread to make up for getting you into a row with Mr. Dalton?"

"Just so, my dear Arthur!"

"Well, the proverb says that leopards can't change their spots," said Lovell. "But, if this is straight, Leggett has changed his giddy spots with a vengeance. Not that I believe it. He's spoofing you."

"Let's go and kick him," suggested Raby. "We haven't kicked him for days."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Newcome, as the weedy figure of Albert Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, appeared on the path under the beeches.

Cuffy jumped up in alarm.

"My dear friends, I trust you will not be rough with dear Albert!" he exclaimed. "I should be very, very shocked and grieved."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Come on," he said. "We mustn't shock and grieve dear Clarence. Besides, he was born to have his leg pulled. We'll kick Leggett another time."

And the Classical chums walked away as Leggett came up. The cad of the Fourth cast a suspicious glance after them, and joined Cuffy.

"Quick march!" said Jimmy Silver. "There's Tubby Muffin, and he's tried three times to borrow a half-crown to-day. He may get hold of it at the fourth time of asking."

"I say, Jimmy——" shouted Reginald Muffin.

The Fistical Four walked very quickly.

"Jimmy!" roared Muffin.

It was nearly tea-time, and at such a time it was really not safe to meet Reginald Muffin.

Jimmy Silver & Co. turned a deaf ear. Like Felix, they kept on walking. But Muffin was not to be denied. The fat Classical rolled in pursuit and broke into a run.

"Trot!" said Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reginald Muffin was so plump, and had so intense a dislike of exertion, that it seemed rather a good wheeze to give him a run. The chums of the end study broke into a trot, and passed under the arch into Little Quad. Reginald Muffin, puffing and blowing, trotted after them. The Fistical Four passed under the library windows, and right round Little Quad, with the fat Classical puffing on their trail.

He stopped at last to get his second wind. Then the Fistical Four halted and looked round.

"Hallo! Did you call, Muffin?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"Ow! I say, Jimmy—groogh!—I'm out of breath!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I say, can you lend me a—groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Half-crown!" spluttered Tubby. "You see, I'm rather short—"

"And fat!" remarked Jimmy.

"I mean, short of money, owing—"

"Owing money right and left, what?"

"Owing to not getting a remittance from my uncle, Captain Muffin. I've got nothing for tea," said Tubby lugubriously.

"Try tea in Hall!" suggested Raby. Muffin sniffed impatiently.

"I've had tea in Hall! That doesn't make much difference to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try Leggett!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Leggett of Manders' House. He's standing a feed to-day."

Another sniff from Muffin.

"Meanest cad at Rookwood," he said.

"He never stands anything. Lend me half-a-crown—"

"He's standing Cuffy a spread, and Cuffy may let you in. You know, he's very, very kind and very, very obliging," chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I'd rather you lent me half-a-crown. You see—"

"Good-bye, Muffin!"

"I say—hold on—stop! Yah!" roared Muffin. The Fistical Four trotted again, and vanished through the old stone arch into Big Quad.

Reginald Muffin hadn't a trot left in him. He rolled on after them at a more leisurely pace, and by the time he entered Big Quad they had vanished. And Tubby Muffin, with a discontented grunt, proceeded to look for Cuffy and Leggett. There was a very, very slim chance of capturing anything in that direction, but it was a case of any port in a storm. Muffin had had only one tea, so he was hungry, and when Muffin was hungry, matters were serious. So he looked under the beeches for Clarence Cuffy, with a faint hope in his podgy breast.

## CHAPTER 23.

### The Wrong Man!

"MY dear Albert—"

Cuffy beamed on Leggett of the Modern Fourth.

Leggett grinned back.

The mild and gentle Cuffy would have been very, very shocked to suspect Leggett of duplicity. No other Rookwooder would ever have suspected him of anything else.

Leggett was not a nice character.

He had laid his little scheme a few days before to startle Mr. Dalton with a firework explosion in his study grate, the blame and the punishment to fall upon the unsuspecting Cuffy.

But the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley, and Leggett's scheme had not worked out successfully. Cuffy had been lucky in escap-

ing. It proved, as Mornington had remarked, that there was such a thing as "fool's luck."

Leggett had been flogged, as he had deserved, but he did not like getting his deserts. He blamed Cuffy for his disaster, and Leggett was a fellow who never forgot a grudge. He could forget a benefit with wonderful facility, but a grudge lingered long in his memory.

He had always despised the mild and kind-hearted duffer of the Fourth. Now he disliked him intensely, and was determined to make him "sit up" in retaliation for his flogging.

Anyone lacking Cuffy's touching faith in human nature might have suspected Leggett of trickery when he spoke of standing a spread. Leggett was never known to give anything away. His dearest pal—if he had had one—would never have dreamed of asking him for anything. Orpheus, with his lute, drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek; but a dozen of him, with a whole orchestra, would not have drawn sixpence from Albert Leggett. But to the kind and simple mind of Clarence Cuffy this unusual and amazing generosity on the part of Albert Leggett was only a signal proof of his repentance of his scheming trickery.

"My dear Albert, I am so pleased that we are friends again," said Cuffy. "I was very disturbed by the rancorous feelings you displayed, my dear Albert, after you received that very, very well merited flogging from the Head. I am so glad, Albert, that you can see now how very, very badly you acted, and how you deserved the contempt which all the fellows feel for you."

"Eh?"

"It is possible, my dear Albert, that if you keep in this greatly improved frame of mind the fellows will begin to regard you as quite a decent chap," said Cuffy, beaming. "They may cease to consider you a rank outsider and an unspeakable cad, as they do, at present.

Will not that be very, very gratifying, my dear Albert?"

Leggett seemed to experience some difficulty in breathing.

"How very, very pleasant it would be for you, Albert, to be trusted and liked, instead of being distrusted and despised," said Cuffy. "I have often, often reflected how very disagreeable it must be to you, Albert, to be regarded with general dislike and contempt."

Leggett gasped.

"Oh! Yes! Ah! I say, Cuffy, I came to tell you that I've fixed it up about the spread."

"It is very, very kind of you, Albert," said Cuffy "I should have had a very nice tea to-day, as I received a large plum cake from my dear Aunt Georgina, but Towle asked me for the cake, and I thought it would be selfish to refuse. I think, perhaps, Towle was jesting, as he seemed quite, quite surprised when I gave him the cake. However, he took it, and I should have to take my tea in Hall but for your thoughtful kindness, my dear Albert."

"Well, of all the idiots——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I see," said Leggett. "Quite so. Look here, you know how fussy Mr. Manders is about fellows having feeds in their studies. So I've arranged this spread in the wood-shed."

"I trust that there will be nothing of a surreptitious nature, my dear Albert," said Cuffy anxiously.

Leggett breathed hard.

"Oh, no! There's no law against a feed in the wood-shed, old chap. That's all right. I've taken the stuff there—it's all ready. Just cut along and unpack it, will you, while I go and— and post a letter for Mr. Manders. I'll join you in the wood-shed."

"Certainly, my dear Albert."

"Don't wait for me, you know," said Leggett. "Just begin! Everything I've put in the wood-shed is for you, Cuffy!"

"That is certainly very kind of you, Albert. I will proceed to the wood-shed

immediately, as I am somewhat hungry," said Cuffy. "Pray join me as soon as you can."

"Right-ho! Cut off now!"

Clarence Cuffy walked away under the beeches, and Leggett gazed after him with a sarcastic grin. Certainly he had prepared something for Cuffy in the wood-shed, but only Cuffy would have believed that it was a spread. But the happy Cuffy had no doubts.

Leggett walked back to Manders' House feeling satisfied. Clarence Cuffy was about to pay for the flogging Leggett had writhed under a few days ago. Without a glimmering of suspicion in his mind, Clarence Cuffy trotted off cheerfully. As he passed the stone arch a fat figure rolled out of Little Quad and hailed him.

"Cuffy! I say, Cuffy!"

Cuffy looked round. Even Cuffy, kind as he was, felt disposed to clear when he sighted Tubby Muffin. But he would not give way to a selfish impulse, so he halted.

Tubby Muffin rolled up to him.

"In a hurry?" he asked, with a fat, ingratiating grin.

"I am somewhat pressed for time, my dear Reginald," said Cuffy. "The fact is, I am a little hungry, and I am going to partake of a spread."

Muffin's round eyes glistened.

"You're going away from the House," he said.

"The spread is in the wood-shed, my dear Reginald. Mr. Manders is rather fussy about fellows in our House standing feeds in the studies."

"Oh!" gasped Muffin. "And—and is the stuff really in the wood-shed now?"

"Certainly, my dear Reginald."

"I—I say, Cuffy, Jimmy Silver wants to speak to you. He wants you to go to his study—very important!"

"Oh, dear!" said Cuffy. "I am somewhat hungry, and the spread is actually waiting for me. Are you quite, quite sure that it is important, Muffin?"

"Oh, quite! You—you see, his father's been run over by a motor-lorry," said Tubby recklessly. "He's—he's fearfully cut up!"

Cuffy jumped.

"Oh, my goodness! What a dreadful, dreadful blow for poor dear James! How very, very sad! Are you quite sure, Reginald?"

"Oh, quite! He got right under the traction-engine——"

"The what?"

"I mean the motor-lorry—and—and expired without a word," said Muffin. "It was—was frightful! Awful, in fact! Jimmy's, blubbing in his study, and if you'd only go and speak a word to him—comfort him, you know——"

"Certainly, my dear Reginald! I am very, very grieved and pained. I will go to poor dear James at once! It would be very, very selfish of me to think of my tea at such a time."

And Clarence Cuffy started for the School House at a rapid run.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Muffin.

It really seemed too good to be true, to Reginald Muffin. Cuffy was disposed of, for ten minutes at least; and he had said that the spread was all ready in the wood-shed. In ten minutes Reginald Muffin could dispose of the most expensive spread ever heard of in the annals of Rookwood School. Cuffy was a fellow who, as it were, opened his mouth to be stuffed; but Reginald Muffin had scarcely dared to hope to stuff him so easily. While Cuffy cut off to the House, Muffin sprinted for the wood-shed. He forgot that he was tired; the enticing prospect of bagging Cuffy's spread gave him new life. And that spread was at his mercy; and on such occasions Reginald Muffin was merciless! Really, it seemed too good to be true!

As a matter of fact, it was!

Tubby Muffin reached the wood-shed. The door was a few inches ajar, and Muffin hurriedly pushed it open and rolled in.

Crash!

Squash!

"Yarooooooooooh!"

Something from above fell and squashed and splashed on Reginald Muffin; something that had been lodged on top of the door as it stood ajar.

"Grooogh! Hoooooh! Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered the hapless Tubby. And he staggered and tottered, and spluttered and gurgled and gasped in a sea of tar—wrapped in black, oozy, sticky tar as in a garment.

#### CHAPTER 30.

##### Fool's Luck!

"MY poor, dear James!"

"What?"

"My poor, bereaved James——"

"Eh?"

"I am very, very sorry——" gasped Cuffy.

Jimmy Silver & Co., sitting down to tea in the end study on the Classical side, stared at Clarence Cuffy.

Cuffy had rushed breathlessly into the study, and his kind face was full of emotion. Evidently he was feeling the deepest sympathy for Jimmy Silver; but for what reason was a mystery to Jimmy and his friends.

"Wandering in your mind, old bean?" asked the captain of the Fourth pleasantly.

"My poor dear James, I have only just heard the dreadful, dreadful news!" gasped Cuffy. "Were you very, very fond of your father, dear James?"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"What?"

"Your poor dear father——"

Jimmy Silver felt a horrid chill run through him. He strode at Clarence Cuffy and grasped him by the shoulder. His face was set and almost white.

"What do you mean? Talk like a human being for once, you idiot! What's happened to my father?"

"My dear James——"

"What's happened?" shrieked Jimmy.

"Have you not heard the news, my dear James? Surely it is a mistaken kindness to keep it from you? Your poor father——"

"Tell me, you dummy! What news do you mean? What's happened to my father?" shouted Jimmy furiously.

"Did you not know that he had been run over by a motor-lorry——" gasped Cuffy.

"Good heavens!"

Jimmy Silver released Cuffy's shoulder and staggered back, with a feeling of strange weakness in his inside that he had never experienced before. For a moment the whole study swam round him.

"Buck up, old man," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Keep cool! It can't be true; you'd get the news before Cuffy. Where did you hear this, Cuffy?"

"Muffin told me a few minutes ago——"

"How did Muffin know?"

"He did not acquaint me with the details, my dear Arthur. He simply stated that dear James wished to see me in his study, because of the dreadful news——"

"You fool!" roared Lovell.

"What?"

"You—you crass idiot! Muffin was pulling your silly leg! It's all right, Jimmy; we saw Muffin only ten minutes ago in Little Quad, and he'd have said it then if there was anything in it. It's some sort of an idiotic joke on this fool Cuffy."

Jimmy Silver pulled himself together.

"I suppose that's it," he said. "Of course, the news would have come to the Head, and he would have sent for me at once. But, my hat! I'll make that fat villain wriggle for making jokes on such a subject! You've not heard it from anybody but Muffin, Cuffy?"

"No, my dear James! I came here directly to offer you my deepest, deepest sympathy——"

"Fathead!" said Jimmy Silver ungratefully. "Lot of good your cackle



would do if it had really happened. But why on earth should Muffin want to send you here with such a yarn? I'll skin him! I'll burst him! Where is he now?"

"I really do not know, my dear James."

"Ass! Where were you when he told you?"

"I was in the quad, my dear James, on the way to the wood-shed."

"What the thump did you want in the wood-shed?" snapped Lovell. "Going to add your head to the stock?"

"No, my dear Arthur! I was going there for a spread. Dear Albert had placed the spread in the wood-shed, and as he was detained posting a letter for Mr. Manders, I was going there first."

A light broke on Jimmy Silver.

"Did you tell Muffin there was grub in the wood-shed?"

"I certainly referred to the circumstance, my dear James, but I do not see how that affects the matter in any way."

"You born ass, Muffin wanted to clear you off, and he spun you a yarn to get shut of you!" snorted Lovell.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"We shall find Muffin at the wood-shed if there's any grub there," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver picked up a fives bat.

"I'm going to see if he's there," he said.

"My dear James, you surely do not suspect that Reginald would make an untruthful statement with the deplorable design of raiding my tuck in the wood-shed!" exclaimed Cuffy. "I must really say— Yoooop!"

Clarence Cuffy did not mean to say "Yoooop!"—he said it quite involuntarily, as Jimmy Silver cleared him out of the way with the fives bat. Cuffy sat on the floor of the end study and gasped; and Jimmy Silver sprinted down the Fourth Form passage, followed by his chums. Tea in the end study, in the circumstances, was a secondary consideration.

It was clear that Muffin had told the duffer of the Fourth the first yarn that had come into his untruthful head, to sheer him off the scene while he dealt with the spread in the wood-shed. Jimmy Silver had no hope of teaching Reginald Muffin to tell the truth; but he intended to instruct him that he had better be a little more careful in the selection of his untruths. The fives bat was taken for the purpose of instruction.

The Fistical Four hurried out of the House, and sprinted round to the wood-shed. Startling sounds greeted them as they arrived on the spot.

"Groogh! Gug-gug-gug-gug! Ooooooh!"

"What the thump—" exclaimed Lovell.

"What—what on earth's that?"

"That" was a blackened figure that staggered in the doorway of the wood-shed, gouging wildly at its blackened face, and uttering weird and wild and woeful sounds.

Only by his extensive circumference was Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, to be recognised.

"Is—is—is that Muffin?" gasped Jimmy Silver. The fives bat dropped to his side. Really, Reginald Muffin looked as if he had captured sufficient punishment to go on with.

"Groogh! Ooooooh! Ow! Oh! I'm smothered! I'm chook-chook-choked!" spluttered Muffin. "That villain Cuffy—booby-trap—told me there was a spread— Ow, wow! Ooooooh! Groogh! Gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Ow! Look at me!" shrieked Muffin. "Tar—tar all over! Bucket of tar right on my napper! Ooooooh!"

"You fat villain! Did you tell Cuffy that my father had been run over by a motor-lorry?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Ow! Wow! I dare say I did! Groogh! I had to clear the silly idiot off! I thought it was all straight, and there was a spread here. Ooooh! And

he was pulling my leg all the time! Groooh! Making out there was a spread here—owh!—and all the while it was a booby-trap! Frooh! Look at me!" spluttered Muffin.

The Fistical Four looked, and they roared.

Reginald Muffin was a remarkable and striking sight.

Tar streamed all over him—over his fat face, and his hair, and his neck, and his collar, and his clothes. The cleaning of Reginald Muffin looked like being a hefty task—a hefty one and a lengthy one. To the beholder there was something comical in Reginald Muffin's remarkable aspect. To Reginald Muffin himself there was nothing but tragedy in this awful catastrophe.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "Fancy Cuffy! Cuffy coming out as a practical joker! Cuffy the japer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my goodness!" Clarence Cuffy had followed the Fistical Four to the wood-shed, and he gazed at the blackened visage of Reginald Muffin in horror. "What—what—what has happened to dear Reginald?"

"You ought to know, if you fixed up the booby-trap for him!" chuckled Raby.

Cuffy jumped.

"I, my dear George! I trust I should never be guilty of so thoughtless and inconsiderate an action. My goodness!"

Jimmy Silver burst into a chuckle.

"Oh, that was Leggett's game!" he exclaimed. "I see it now! That was why he yarned to Cuffy about a feed in the wood-shed. He had this fixed up for Cuffy!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"And Muffin butted in and got it!" shrieked Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow! Ooooooh!" spluttered Muffin.

"The way of the giddy transgressor!" chortled Newcome. "You

asked for that, Muffin, and I hope you like it now you've got it!"

"Grooooooh!"

"Is—is—is it possible that Albert really laid such a snare for me, my dear friends?" ejaculated Clarence Cuffy. "In that case, I am compelled to suspect him of untruthfulness and duplicity. Is it not very, very dreadful?"

"Oh, very!" chortled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at me!" shrieked Tubby Muffin. "Look! Smothered with tar—smothered! Look at my clothes! Oh, dear! Ooooooh!"

"It is very, very horrid, my dear Reginald; but how fortunate you ought to consider it from an unselfish point of view," said Cuffy. "But for you, my dear Reginald, I should now be in that horrid, tarry state. I am very, very much obliged to you, my dear Reginald."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly owl!" gasped Muffin. "I—I—I—" He made a rush at Clarence Cuffy, with the intention of transferring some of the tar to him.

Clarence promptly backed away, and retreated. He had had a very fortunate escape, and he did not want any of the tar. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away, chuckling. "Fool's luck" had befriended Clarence Cuffy once more; and Tubby Muffin had been justly punished for his sins. Reginald Muffin was left gouging at the tar; Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to tea in the end study, and left him to it.

In Mr. Manders' House, Leggett of the Fourth had quite a shock, when he saw Clarence Cuffy walk in, without a trace of tar on him. Cuffy came up to him with a shocked and grieved face.

"I am very, very shocked, my dear Albert!" he said.

"I—I say, didn't you go to the wood-shed?" asked Leggett. "Haven't you started on the spread?"

"I have now discovered your men-

dacity and duplicity," explained Cuffy. "I am very, very shocked! I fear that you are a very, very bad boy, Leggett!"

And, with that crushing statement, Cuffy walked on, leaving Leggett staring after him and gritting his teeth.

### CHAPTER 31.

#### Too Good!

"**H**OW very, very kind!"

Cuffy of the Fourth uttered that observation in his study after classes the following day.

Quite a surprise awaited Cuffy in his study.

On his table lay a large cardboard box, open at the top. Inside the box, nicely wrapped in shiny paper, was a large cake.

It was a very large cake, with marzipan on the top, and stacked with plums. It was a cake that might have made any fellow's mouth water simply to look at it.

Cuffy gazed at it with great pleasure.

He was surprised to find it in his study, as he had certainly not been expecting a handsome present like this from anyone.

But there it was—evidently intended for Cuffy, as it was on his study-table. Some kind friend, apparently, had planned this little surprise for him, and Cuffy felt that it was very, very kind.

He wondered who the unknown donor could possibly be. Possibly it was Towle of the Fourth, who was repaying a similar act of kindness. Possibly it was Albert Leggett, if he had repented of his misdeeds and desired to make atonement; but Cuffy could not help thinking that that was unlikely. He had given up hope of seeing Albert Leggett reform.

Possibly the cake came from Tommy Dodd; his relation in the Modern Fourth. Anyhow, from whosoever it came, there it was, and it was a beautiful cake—an expensive one, and a

luscious one. It was delightful to the eye, and probably still more delightful to the taste. Cuffy was an extraordinary youth in some respects; but he had a normal schoolboy's appreciation of a good cake. He liked the look of that handsome cake; but, still more than the cake, he liked the thoughtful kindness of the unknown donor who had presented it to him in this delicate, anonymous way. Evidently the giver of the cake did not want to be thanked for his handsome present.

Cuffy beamed at the cake.

It was just what he wanted for his tea; he was going to enjoy himself. But it occurred to him at once that it would be selfish to enjoy that cake all to himself. He would ask some other fellow to share it—and it was just like Cuffy to think of Leggett.

Leggett had injured him, and had tried to injure him still more. So it would be an act of kindness and forgiveness to ask Leggett to the feast. It might have an improving effect on Leggett's malicious nature and hard heart; and Cuffy was extremely keen on improving people. He decided at once to ask Albert Leggett to share that lovely cake.

But from that point his thoughts worked on. His kind face beamed with the consciousness of goodness.

Instead of asking Leggett to share that cake, he would give the cake to Leggett!

That would be an act of goodness, generosity, and self-denial, which he was sure would gain the whole-hearted approval of his Aunt Georgina.

His face glowed at the thought.

"What a surprise for dear Albert!" murmured Cuffy.

He picked up the box containing the cake and walked along the passage to Leggett's study.

That study was empty; Albert Leggett was not in his quarters. Cuffy laid the box on the table.

Then he smiled sweetly.

Instead of presenting the cake to

Leggett, as he had first intended, he would leave it in the study for him, just as some kind and thoughtful friend had left it in Cuffy's study for Cuffy.

What a surprise that would be for Leggett; and what an ameliorating effect it ought to have on his hard and selfish heart! Surely even that bad boy would be touched, and brought to think of better things by the present of that beautiful cake from an unknown hand. It would make him realise that someone was thinking kindly of him; that he was not so generally disliked and contemned as he had only too much reason to suppose was the case.

With a beaming face, Clarence Cuffy left the study, closing the door carefully after him; leaving that fragrant cake on Leggett's table to surprise the cad of the Fourth when he came in.

Cuffy went down to tea in Hall.

It would be idle to deny that he felt a slight pang. That cake was really so very nice, so very fragrant, so very rich and attractive; and tea in Hall seemed very poor and spare in comparison. But the consciousness of goodness and self-denial sufficed for Cuffy. He resolutely shut out of his mind the thought of that tempting cake, and headed for Hall and weak tea and bread-and-butter.

He found Albert Leggett among the Modern fellows who had turned up for tea in Hall.

Leggett stared at Cuffy, as if surprised to see him there. Cuffy gave him a kind and forgiving smile. Badly as Leggett had treated him, Cuffy's kindness and forgiveness were unlimited.

"Aren't you teeing in your study, Cuffy?" Leggett asked, as the duffer of Rookwood sat down.

"No, my dear Albert."

"Haven't you been to your study since class?"

"Yes, my dear Albert."

"Well, then——" Leggett seemed puzzled somehow. "You're looking

jolly pleased about something," he said.

"I have done a good deed," explained Cuffy.

"Oh, my hat! You silly owl!"

"My dear Albert——"

"Shut it!" said dear Albert rudely.

"Leggett," came Mr. Manders' rusty voice from the head of the table, "you are chattering. I have said, more than once, that I will not have chattering among the juniors at the table. You will take fifty lines, Leggett!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Leggett.

He looked daggers at Cuffy.

"I am so very, very sorry, my dear Albert," whispered Cuffy.

"You silly chump! I've a jolly good mind to hack your shins!"

"Leggett, you are talking again!" said Mr. Manders. "You will take a hundred lines, and if you speak again I shall cane you."

Leggett did not speak again.

## CHAPTER 32.

### The Track of the Raider!

**K**NOWLES of the Sixth came into his study in Mr. Manders' House with his friends Frampton and Catesby. The three Modern seniors had been at football practice, and they had come in rather late for tea, and very hungry.

"All ready, I think," said Knowles. "I told my fag to have tea ready. I've got something rather decent—a cake from home, and it's rather a corker, to wind up with."

"Good!" said Frampton.

The tea-table was laid in Knowles' study. Knowles' fag was not likely to neglect his duty. Knowles had rather too heavy a hand for that. The fag, Tomkins of the Third, was in the study, persuading the kettle to boil.

"Make the tea, Tomkins," said Knowles.

Tomkins made the tea.

"You've made the toast?"

"Yes, Knowles."

"And cut the ham, I see. Eggs

ready? Yes." Knowles had no excuse for using the ashplant. "Very well. Get the cake out of the cupboard, and you can cut, Tomkins."

"The cake?" repeated Tomkins.

"Yes. Don't jaw."

"I didn't see a cake——"

"Look, then, you young ass!"

The three seniors sat down, and Tomkins went to the cupboard. He stared into it, and stared again, and then turned round and stared rather apprehensively at Knowles.

"I say, Knowles, there isn't any cake here!"

"Don't be a little idiot!" said Knowles. "There's a big cake in a cardboard box. Unpack it and put it on the table."

"It isn't here, Knowles!"

"By gad! Are you asking me to lick you, Tomkins?"

"But it isn't," said Tomkins, almost tearfully. "There isn't any box, and there isn't any cake, Knowles. There isn't, you know."

"Phew! Somebody raided your cake, Knowles?" asked Catesby, with a grin.

"I don't think anybody would dare to raid my study," said the Modern prefect grimly. "He would be sorry for himself afterwards, if he did. Get out that cake, Tomkins!"

"It isn't here!" gasped Tomkins.

Knowles rose from the table and picked up his cane. But as he stared into the study cupboard a change came over his face.

Undoubtedly, no cake was there. There was no sign of a cake, or of the box that should have contained it.

Knowles was astounded. The cake was gone, obviously gone! It was really incredible that any fellow in Manders' House should have dared to raid the study of Cecil Knowles, head prefect of the Modern side, and captain of the House. But the cake was gone!

Knowles turned a grim eye on the terrified Tomkins.

"What have you done with it, you

young sweep?" he demanded, swishing the cane.

"I—I—I haven't seen it!" gasped Tomkins. "I haven't, really, Knowles. There wasn't any cake here when I came in."

Knowles eyed him.

It was fairly clear that the fag was telling the truth. Moreover, it was simply unthinkable that the Third Former would have ventured to raid the cake belonging to Knowles of the Sixth. Some much bolder spirit than Tomkins of the Third must have done the deed.

"You didn't see anybody about the study when I sent you in?" asked Knowles, his face growing grimmer and grimmer.

"No; and I've been here half an hour, waiting for you to come in," said the fag. "If there was a cake here, somebody took it before you sent me in, Knowles. I never saw it."

"What a neck!" said Frampton. "The fags raid one another's studies, I believe, but it's rather a new thing to raid the Sixth."

"Quite new," said Catesby. "They're beginning on you, Knowles."

Knowles' jaw set hard.

"It's the first time," he said, "and it will be the last. I can't quite believe that any fellow in this House would have the nerve to do it. Might be some Classical kid—that cheeky young cad Silver, perhaps."

"Silver and his gang were at the footer," said Catesby. "I noticed them there."

"Anyhow, the cake's gone," said Frampton. "I don't see how a Classical kid could know anything about it, if you come to that. Some young sweep saw it brought in here, I suppose."

Knowles nodded. He realised that it was extremely unlikely that this was a raid from the Classical side.

"Well, I'm going to look into it," he said. "You fellows get on with your tea. I'm going after that cake. I

may be able to get it back. Anyhow, I shan't let the matter rest till I've fairly skinned the young scoundrel who collared it."

"Go ahead!" grinned Frampton.

Knowles left the study, cane in hand, while his friends started tea. He proceeded at once to the Fourth Form passage, and kicked open the door of Tommy Dodd's study.

Dodd and Cook and Doyle were at tea there, and there was a fishy atmosphere in the room. Herrings bulked largely on the tea-table of the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth. There was no sign of a cake.

"Hallo, Knowles! Anything up?" asked Tommy Dodd, rather uneasily, as the prefect glared into the study.

"Somebody's raided a cake from my study," growled Knowles. "You cheeky young scoundrels know anything about it?"

"Not guilty!" said Tommy Dodd, at once. "We wouldn't, you know."

"I don't think you'd dare, if that's what you mean," snapped Knowles. "But some young cad has done it, and you're the cheekiest young rotter in the House. If you've done it, look out!"

And Knowles went along the passage to investigate further.

The three Tommies exchanged a grin.

"Fancy raiding Knowles!" murmured Tommy Cook. "I say, the chap must have had a nerve. Knowles will raise Cain about it."

"Shouldn't like to be in the fellow's shoes when Knowles gets hold of him," remarked Tommy Doyle.

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"I noticed Leggett hanging about his study, just after classes," he said. "Leggett wouldn't have the nerve, surely?"

"No fear! About the last fellow in the House to do it, I should think."

"Well, I should have thought so," said Tommy Dodd. "But I saw him as I was coming down the staircase.

He was dodging out of Knowles' study, and he had something under his arm. He didn't see me—he cut off very quickly. Knowles was at the footer then."

"Well, if Leggett had it he's put it out of sight, and he will tell lies by the bushel if Knowles asks him!" said Cook. "Anyhow, it's no bizney of ours—we're not going to tip Knowles the wink."

"No fear!"

And the three Tommies went on with their tea, quite indifferent to Knowles' loss. Knowles was not popular among the juniors of his House.

Cecil Knowles proceeded along the passage, looking into study after study. In some of the rooms he found the Modern juniors at tea; others were vacant, their owners being at tea in Hall or in other fellows' studies. He looked into Clarence Cuffy's study, but it was empty; and next he looked into Leggett's.

Then he jumped.

Albert Leggett was not there. But the cake was there! Knowles stared at it quite blankly.

There it was, on Leggett's study table, still in the box it had arrived in, only the lid having been removed.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Knowles.

He had had his eye, as a prefect, on Leggett more than once. He knew that Leggett was a shady sort of fellow, with little regard to the rights of property. Leggett, he was well aware, would have had no scruples whatever about bagging a cake belonging to anybody else, friend or foe. But he would never have guessed that Leggett had the nerve to raid a prefect's study.

But there was the cake—on Leggett's table. More than once Leggett had been punished for forcibly annexing apples or tarts from smaller boys. Now he had had the unexampled impudence to annex a cake from a prefect of the Sixth Form. It was his first venture of that kind. And Knowles was grimly determined that it should be his last.

Taking a tight grip on his ashplant, Knowles left the study and proceeded to look for Albert Leggett of the Modern Fourth.

## CHAPTER 33.

No Luck for Leggett!

"TRY Cuffy!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had come away from the footer ground rather late for tea and feeling keenly in need of tea of a substantial kind. But—as will sometimes happen in the best-regulated studies—funds were short in the end study.

The Fistical Four were late for tea in Hall; that, as Raby remarked, was a goner. And as they went through their pockets in search of cash to expend at the school shop, they found themselves in possession of a total sum of sevenpence.

Sevenpence was not a large sum to provide tea for four hungry schoolboys. So the question arose: Was tea to be missed—which was really impossible, considering the keen edge which footer gave to a fellow's appetite—or were the Fistical Four to invite themselves to tea in some other study? Or was a loan to be raised somewhere in the Fourth? The chums of the end study decided upon raising a loan, and they asked Putty of the Fourth first of all. And Putty answered at once that he would lend them his last farthing if they liked.

But it turned out, on investigation, that that farthing was all that Putty of the Fourth possessed in the way of cash.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were looking for a loan, not for one of Putty's playful jokes. So they banged his head on the trunk of a beech and left him roaring, and looked for somebody else to provide the necessary funds. Then they sighted Clarence Cuffy, ambling along

with a beatific expression on his face and Lovell suggested trying him.

"Can't borrow off a Modern cad," said Raby, shaking his head.

"Oh, we can stretch a point at times!" said Lovell. "Cuffy looks bucked—he may have had a remittance. No need to carry on these House rows all the time, you know."

"Especially at tea-time!" grinned Newcome.

"Cuffy, old man——" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

Cuffy gave the Fistical Four a pleasant smile.

"You're looking bucked," said Jimmy. "Have you had a whacking remittance by any chance?"

"No, my dear James! If you are hard-up, I should be very happy to make you a loan."

"Good!"

"It would be a real pleasure to me," said Cuffy. "Nothing is more truly gratifying than to help a friend in need. Do you not think that it is very, very gratifying, my dear James?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Jimmy Silver heartily. "There are times, old bean, when you talk so sensibly that a chap would think you were almost sane. Hand it out."

"I should be very, very pleased——"

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses!" said Newcome. "We can do with five bob."

"It would be a very, very great pleasure," said Cuffy. "But it unfortunately happens that at the present moment, my dear friends, I have no money!"

"You frantic ass!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Couldn't you say so at first?"

"My dear Arthur——"

"Oh, bump him! He's a Modern cad, anyhow, and these Moderns have to be taught manners!" growled Lovell.

"But I can make a suggestion, my dear friends," said Cuffy hastily. "Leggett has a large—a very, very

large cake for tea. Perhaps he would be willing to share it with you."

"Too much perhaps about that, fat-head!" grunted Raby.

"Catch Leggett parting with a crumb that he's paid for!" snorted Lovell.

"But Leggett has not paid for that cake," said Cuffy, beaming. "I have made him a present of it. Some kind friend placed it in my study, and I found it there, and I took it to Leggett's study as a joyful surprise for him!"

"Well, my only hat!" said Jimmy Silver, in astonishment. "Mean to say that you found a cake in your study and don't know who put it there?"

"Exactly, my dear James! Some kind-hearted and thoughtful fellow made me that handsome present. It is a very expensive cake, and could not have cost less than fifteen shillings. Was it not a very, very kind act?"

"So jolly kind that I'm blessed if I catch on to it!" said Jimmy. "There's a catch on it somewhere. They don't do these kind acts on the Classical side, anyhow!"

"And you gave it to Leggett, you frabjous ass?" asked Newcome.

"Not a word to dear Albert!" said Cuffy. "I placed it in his study as a happy surprise for him, just as some kind friend had placed it in mine. Far be it from me to boast of a good action, my dear friends, but I cannot help feeling that this was an act of self-abnegation which will delight my Aunt Georgina when I tell her about it next holidays."

"Of all the frabjous idiots, I think Cuffy takes the bun!" said Arthur Lovell, apparently not taking the view of the transaction which Cuffy expected his Aunt Georgina to take.

"My dear Arthur——"

"Here's Leggett," said Newcome, with a grin. "Shall we be nice to Leggett and see whether he hands out any of the cake?"

"I'd rather punch his head!" growled Lovell.

Leggett came up to Cuffy. Evidently he was looking for that mild and beneficent youth.

Leggett was in a puzzled frame of mind.

Having raided Knowles' magnificent cake and planted it on Cuffy, as it were, he had expected Cuffy to "tea" in his study—and to be found in possession of the remnants of the cake by the enraged Knowles.

Somehow it had not happened. Cuffy had been to his study—he had said so—and must have found the cake there, yet he had "tea'd" in Hall. Leggett had an uneasy feeling that something had gone wrong with his latest scheme for catching Cuffy, and he wanted to know! He was keeping clear of the Modern Fourth studies till the affair was over. He did not want to be on the scene when Knowles started looking for his cake. In such matters a fellow could not be too careful.

"I say, Cuffy——" began Leggett.

"Yes, my dear Albert."

Jimmy Silver & Co. moved off. There was no loan to be raised from Clarence Cuffy, and they barred Leggett. In the distance they saw Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth come out of Mr. Manders' House with an ash-plant in his hand and stare about him with knitted brows. Knowles was looking for somebody, and, to judge by his look, that somebody was booked for an exciting time when Knowles found him.

The Modern prefect came striding over towards the Classical juniors. He signed to them to stop.

"I'm looking for Leggett, of my House!" he snapped. "Have you seen him? He seems to have gone out of the House after tea."

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not answer. A big beech screened Leggett from Knowles' view, and they did not feel disposed to put the bully of the Modern Sixth on his track.

"Have you seen him?" shouted Knowles angrily.



"Hem!"

The Modern prefect's angry voice reached Leggett's ears. He stepped from behind the beech with a grin on his face. Having heard Knowles shout "Have you seen him?" Leggett had no doubt that the prefect had discovered the raided cake in Cuffy's study and was looking for Cuffy. He had no scruples about putting a prefect on the track of a delinquent. He grabbed Cuffy by the arm and pulled him out into view.

"I think Knowles wants you, Cuffy!" he chuckled.

"Oh, my goodness!" ejaculated Cuffy in alarm as the prefect, catching sight of the two juniors, strode towards them gripping his cane. "Knowles looks very, very cross——"

"He does!" chuckled Leggett.

"I—I think I—I shall not wait for Knowles!" gasped Cuffy. "He looks so very, very angry."

And Clarence Cuffy, with unusual presence of mind, scudded away among the beeches and vanished.

To Leggett's surprise, Knowles did not heed the flight of the duffer of Rookwood. He did not even look at Cuffy.

He strode straight up to Leggett and grasped him by the shoulder.

"You young rascal!"

"What?" ejaculated Leggett.

"So you think you can raid a prefect's study, do you?" roared Knowles. Leggett jumped.

"I—I——"

"Don't tell me any of your lies, Leggett! I've found the cake, and I know that you took it from my study!" howled Knowles.

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Jimmy Silver. "Leggett's luck is out again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"I—I say, Knowles——" gasped Leggett. "I—I—yaroooh! I never—— Oh, my hat! Leggo! Leave off! I'm sorry! I—— Yarooop!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Knowles was in such a hurry to ad-

minister punishment that he did not even wait to tell Leggett to bend over. He gripped the cad of the Fourth by the collar and laid on the cane recklessly, with terrific swipes.

Leggett struggled and roared and yelled.

"Ow! Stoppit! Leggo! Oh, my hat! Ow!"

"I'll teach you to raid a prefect's study!" roared Knowles. "It's the first time, and I think it will be the last, Leggett! Take that—and that!"

"Yoooooop!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "This is too rich! Leggett was the kind friend who put that cake in Cuffy's study!"

Lovell gurgled.

"And Cuffy's put it in Leggett's, out of sheer fatheaded goodness! Oh, my only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fool's luck!" chortled Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Newcome. "Leggett doesn't seem to have any luck."

The Fistical Four roared. Leggett was roaring, too, but in quite a different way. Knowles laid on the ashplant as if he were beating carpet. Leggett roared and howled and protested and begged pardon in vain. How the prefect knew that he was the raider of the cake was a mystery to Leggett—a mystery he had no leisure just then to solve. Evidently Knowles knew, and did not need Leggett's howling confession. He laid on the ashplant till his arm was tired.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away chuckling. Once more Leggett's peculiar schemes had gone awry. In Morny's study—where they found hospitality—the Fistical Four told the story, amid roars of laughter. The hapless Leggett, after Knowles had done with him, leaned feebly on a beech, gasping and groaning. And when Clarence Cuffy came gently up and told him that he was very, very sorry for him and felt the deepest,

deepest sympathy, Leggett was too far gone even to punch Cuffy.

After that painful episode Leggett of the Fourth quite gave up his schemes for catching Cuffy. He found the trail of vengeance altogether too exciting.

#### CHAPTER 34.

Mimicking Mr. Manders!

"WHAT'S that?"

"Manders!"

"What?"

"Manders!" repeated Arthur Edward Lovell. "Mr. Manders! Roger Manders! Mr. Roger Manders, head of Manders' House, chief beak on the Modern Side at Rookwood! Is that explicit enough?"

Lovell's explanation was sufficiently explicit. But Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome stared, all the same.

They had come up to the end study in the Classical Fourth, and found Lovell very busy there.

Lovell had been shut up in the study for some time. His comrades had missed him, and supposed that he was at his accounts; Lovell, being secretary and treasurer of the junior football club, was often deep in accounts.

On such occasions his comrades preferred his room to his company—accounts having a deteriorating effect on Arthur Edward's temper and manners.

But they had come up at last, and now they found that Lovell's occupation was not accounts.

The study table had been pushed aside, and in the middle of the room was a strange figure.

Had not Lovell been at work upon it the chums of the Fourth might have supposed that some practical joker had annexed a scarecrow from a field and introduced it into the end study by way of a jest.

A rusty old black frock coat was stuffed out with shavings, a pair of long, thin trousers flapped round two

sticks, elastic-sided boots adorned the lower ends of the sticks. Above the frock-coat was a collar, and above that a head formed of a toy balloon with paper pasted over it. Two glaring eyes were painted on, with a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles over them. A wide mouth was painted also—very wide.

Lovell was in the act of attaching a long, thin nose, red at the tip, when his amazed chums stared into the study.

Lovell stepped back, with the nose still in his hand, and grinned at his chums, and then surveyed the weird figure with great pride.

"Something like—what?" he asked.

"Like—like Manders?" ejaculated Raby.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, it's not a speaking likeness," said Lovell. "But every chap at Rookwood will know those barnacles and those boots! Manders is the only man at Rookwood who creaks about in elastic-sided boots. I dare say it's corns. They may be good for corns. I dare say he's got corns—look at his temper! Anyhow, he creaks in that kind of foot-gear—you can hear him creaking yards away! The fellows will know him."

"But what on earth's the game?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Are you making an effigy of Mr. Manders?"

"Just that!"

"What on earth for?" demanded Newcome.

"Please to remember the Fifth of November, the Gunpowder Treason and Plot!" chanted Lovell. "I see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot."

Jimmy Silver gave a yell.

"You frightful ass! Is that a guy for Bonfire Day?"

"Right first time!" assented Lovell.

"You—you—you frabjous cuckoo!" yelled Raby. "If you guy Mr. Manders he will report you to the Head! It will be a flogging."

"Rats! It's one up against the Modern side if we guy their beak," said

Lovell. "Tommy Dodd will be quite wild. Of course, he would like to lynch Manders, probably. But Manders is a Modern man, and the Moderns will be frightfully wild if we guy their House like this. See?"

"Hasn't it occurred to you that Mr. Manders will be wild, too?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

Lovell grinned.

"That's all right! I'm not a fool! I'm not going to put a label on him, 'This is Roger!' I'm simply going to put on a long nose and horn-rimmed specs and elastic-sided boots, and leave the fellows to guess. They'll guess all right."

"So will Manders when he hears of it, ass!"

"Let him! If he thinks this guy is like him, and says so, it will be the cream of the joke! Cap fit, cap wear, you know!"

Jimmy Silver stared at the weird figure, and burst into a laugh.

Certainly if Roger Manders, of the Modern side, claimed that that fearsome object was a caricature of himself, and professed to recognise even the remotest resemblance, it would set Rookwood in a roar.

"It's all right," said Lovell confidently. "Manders will hear of it, and he will come out of his House to spy on it. You know his way—always spying and prying. But he can't say anything! I shan't call the thing Manders! I shan't say anything! There's no law against putting elastic-sided boots and specs on a guy, is there?"

"No. But——"

Lovell proceeded to affix the long nose to the weird face.

His chums chuckled as they watched him.

Inhuman as the horrid-looking figure was, there was some reminiscence of Mr. Roger Manders' features about it. That long nose was modelled after Mr. Manders' own—it was the longest nose at Rookwood. According to Mornington, this could be explained on the theory of evolution: Mr. Manders' nose

had grown longer and longer through being continually poked into other people's business.

An extremely long nose, with horn-rimmed spectacles perched over it, undoubtedly suggested Mr. Manders. The elastic-sided boots more than suggested him.

Still there was, as Lovell said, no law against such adornments for a guy.

"It's risky, all the same," said Raby.

"Bosh!" said Lovell.

"Anyhow, the Moderns will be wild," said Newcome. "They don't like Manders, but they will be wild at having the head of their House guyed."

"Just what we want!" said Lovell. "It's no end of a jest on the Modern cads."

"Yes," assented Jimmy Silver. "But

"Old man, you're as full of 'buts' as a billy-goat," said Lovell. "Leave off butting, and get tea while I'm finishing this guy. There's a lot of work in it."

"Oh, all right!"

And Lovell proceeded with his task.

#### CHAPTER 35.

##### Tommy Dodd is Not Pleased!

"OH, gad! Ha, ha, ha!"

Valentine Mornington burst into a roar of laughter as he looked into the study after tea.

The guy was finished now.

It stood leaning against the table, facing the door, and it rather startled Morny for a moment. Then he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Good egg!"

"Think it's good, what?" asked Lovell with pardonable pride.

"Oh, rippin'!"

"You recognise it, then?" asked Jimmy Silver, a little uneasily.

"Manders, of course! You've got his boko to a T. And his specs! And his boots! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, Lovell, if Morny jumps to it at once, so will Manders, if he sees it," said Jimmy.

"Let him!" said Lovell, with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

"Might be his twin!" chuckled Mornington. "A bit better-looking than Manders, perhaps, but——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, a wonderful resemblance. You'll get an awful licking for this, but it's worth it. I must tell the fellows this."

And Mornington shouted along the Classical Fourth passage:

"Oyez! Oyez! Roll up, men! Here's another guy! Manders' twin brother!"

Morny's shout brought the Classical Fourth fellows out of their studies.

The Classical Fourth, almost to a man, crowded along the passage to stare at the guy, and chuckle at it, and chortle over it.

"Rippin'!" declared Townsend.

"Toppin'!" said Topham.

"Manders will be wild!" chortled Tubby Muffin.

"It's the jape of the term!" said Putty of the Fourth. "How the merry thump did Lovell come to think of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, it will make all Rookwood yell when we parade it round!" exclaimed Oswald. "It's a corker! The Moderns will be gnashing their giddy teeth."

"Keep it dark till the day," said Lovell. "We'll let it come as a surprise to the Moderns. They'll be getting up some guy on their side, but I rather fancy they won't beat this."

"No fear!"

There was a shoving in the passage, and a Modern junior came pushing through the Classical crowd towards the end study. It was Tommy Dodd, captain of the Modern Fourth.

"Here, you sheer off, you Modern cad!" exclaimed Townsend, as Tommy Dodd's elbow jabbed into his well-fitting waistcoat.

"Let a chap pass!" said Tommy cheerfully. "I've got to speak to Jimmy Silver about the House match. No larks."

"Keep him out!" shouted Lovell, as he heard the Modern junior's voice in the passage.

But it was too late. Tommy Dodd had hustled his way to the end study, and stood looking in at the doorway.

"You here, Silver?" he asked. "Forgotten that I was to see you about the football match after tea?"

"My hat, I'd forgotten!" said Jimmy Silver. "But——"

"Great Scott! What's that?"

Tommy Dodd fixed his eyes upon the guy.

The crowd of Classics watched him, grinning. They wondered whether the Modern junior would spot the likeness to his Housemaster.

They were not long left in doubt. Perhaps the nose did it, perhaps the elastic-sided boots, perhaps the horn-rimmed glasses, perhaps all of them together. From the expression on Tommy Dodd's face it was quite clear that he recognised the effigy as a caricature of Mr. Roger Manders, science master of Rookwood, and head of Manders' House.

Tommy Dodd did not laugh; he did not even grin. He did not like his Housemaster—nobody could really like Roger Manders. But Mr. Manders was his Housemaster. The dignity of Manders' House was bound up with the dignity of Mr. Manders, and Tommy Dodd cared a very great deal for his House.

Tommy Dodd knitted his brows, and looked at the Fistical Four.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"Don't you sort of recognise it?" grinned Lovell. "Isn't there a resemblance to somebody you've seen—somebody over in Manders' House, for instance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky Classical chump!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd indignantly. "How dare you guy my Housemaster?"

The Classics roared.

Tommy Dodd made a rush at the effigy.

"Stop him!" shouted Lovell.

Tommy's intention was plain. He

was going to smash up the effigy on the spot, and his action was so swift that he very nearly succeeded. But Morny's foot came out in time to trip him up as he rushed at the imitation of Mr. Manders, and Tommy plunged headlong. He reached the effigy with his head instead of his hands, and knocked it over with the top of his head. The effigy fell on its back as Tommy fell on his nose.

The next moment five or six Classicals had collared him.

"Outside!" shouted Lovell.

Tommy Dodd struggled desperately.

But the crowd of Classicals whirled him out of the study, and he went spinning into the passage, where he collapsed, gasping, against the wall, with his necktie gone and his hair ruffled.

"Oh!" he spluttered. "Ow! You Classical rotters! Ow!"

"Kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!"

Tommy Dodd fled.

#### CHAPTER 36.

##### Wrathy!

**W**RATHY was not the word. Lovell had opined that the Modern fellows would be wrathy.

But the word was too mild.

The Modern fellows raged. On the following day, when the news had spread all over Manders' House, the denizens of that establishment were furious.

Mr. Manders noticed a good deal of excitement among the junior members of his House. He attributed it to the arrival of the great anniversary, when there always was excitement in the school. He little dreamed that he had any personal connection with it.

Indeed, it would have surprised Roger Manders had he known how furious his House was, and what was the cause of its fury.

He was not popular in his House.

He had never been under the delusion that any fellow in his House liked him any more than Classical fellows did. So he would have been greatly surprised to know that his House raged as one man because he was being caricatured on the Classical side, and was going to be held up to general ridicule on Bonfire Day.

The plain fact was that the Modern juniors did not care two straws about Mr. Manders, except as the official representative of his House. On that score alone he was important in their eyes.

Manders could not be ridiculed without Manders' House sharing the ridicule. If Manders was gayed, Manders' House was gayed. It was not pleasant to Manders' men to know that they had a Housemaster of whom they could not be proud. But to have a Housemaster who was to be held up to general mockery was the last straw. Men were bound to stand by their House, and, in consequence, by its official head.

"If Manders were ten times the tick he is, they shouldn't guy him!" Tommy Dodd declared vehemently to his bosom pals, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. "If he were a born Hun, they shouldn't pull his silly old leg like this! If he wore spats over his elastic-sided boots, they shouldn't make fun of it! Not if we could stop them!"

"Hear, hear!" said Cook and Doyle loyally.

The three Tommies were quite in agreement on that, and the rest of the Moderns were in full agreement with all three. Third and Fourth and Shell, on the Modern side, agreed with wonderful unanimity that Roger Manders was not going to be gayed by Classical "ticks."

But how they were going to stop it was another question.

Wild proposals of "rushing" the Classicals, of knocking the Classicals into a cocked hat, and seizing upon the guy and destroying it, were mooted, but had to be dropped. For the Classical side at Rookwood was a more numerous

side than the Modern; the Head's house outnumbered Mr. Manders' house by almost two to one. To knock double their number of fellows into a cocked hat was a large order—too extensive to be executed, in fact. In a general affair between Classicals and Moderns, the cocked hat was likely to fall to the Modern share.

"But we're going to put the stopper on!" said Tommy Dodd determinedly.

"We are!" said Towle of the Fourth. "But how?"

"Somehow!" said Tommy.

And there it rested, for a time. Somehow it was going to be done, but the "how" had not yet transpired.

Meanwhile, Manders II, as the Classicals called the guy, remained safely locked up in the end study. And the Fistical Four kept a watchful eye on that study. Lovell came up before tea and found Lacy of the Modern Fourth prowling in the passage, and Lacy of the Modern Fourth fled before Lovell's vigorous boot with loud howls.

"A giddy burglar, you know," said Lovell, at tea in the end study. "Looking for a chance to burgle the study! Greedy, you know—he's got Manders I on the Modern side; he can leave us Manders II."

And Lovell's comrades chuckled.

"If the door hadn't been locked, that cad Lacy would have got at the guy," went on Lovell. "There wouldn't have been much of it left for us then. Lucky I thought of locking the door."

"Hem!"

"At least, you suggested it, Jimmy, but I did it, and I had the key in my pocket. And I'm keeping it there."

"They can't get through the key-hole," grinned Raby. "Our Manders is all right! They'll have to be satisfied with their own Manders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After tea Jimmy Silver & Co. had an engagement in the gym. The study door was carefully locked when they left it, and Arthur Edward Lovell put the key in his pocket again.

About half an hour later Tubby Muffin looked in at the gym and noted the Fistical Four busily occupied there. Reginald Muffin grinned a fat grin and rolled back to the House.

He arrived at the door of the end study and turned the handle.

Reginald Muffin was not specially interested in the guy. But he was deeply interested in a cake that had arrived that day for Jimmy Silver from home.

Tubby's eye—he had a special eye for cakes—had noticed that it was a very large cake, and he considered it extremely probable that a good portion of it was left over from tea. It was very likely that the chums of the Fourth intended the remainder for supper. That intention was to be carried out now, only the cake was to form Tubby's supper.

Reginald Muffin was quite unaware that the study door was locked. Study doors never were locked in the Fourth.

He was in rather a hurry to get in, as he did not want to be seen raiding the study by any fellows who might look out of another room.

So he turned the handle, shoved at the door, and made a forward movement to enter, all at once.

Had the door been unlocked, all would have been well.

But as the door remained fast, the outcome was that Reginald Muffin drove his fat little nose against the panels with a heavy smite.

"Ow!"

Muffin released the door-handle and clasped his nose with both fat hands.

"Ow-wow!"

For a minute or more Reginald Muffin stood in anguish, with his hands clasped to his nose. That organ felt as if it had been pushed back suddenly into his head.

Fortunately, it was not so bad as that. But it was very painful.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Muffin. "Ow! Wow! Oh, my nose! Wow! Awful beasts, locking the door! Just as if

they suspected that a fellow might be after their measly cake! Wow!"

And Reginald Muffin leaned wearily on the locked door and caressed his damaged nose.

Suddenly he gave a start.

The door was locked and the study was dark; its owners were in the gym, yet a sound came to Muffin's ears from the study. It was the sound of a window opening.

Tubby Muffin started and jumped. The thought of burglars flashed into his fat mind. But really burglars seemed rather improbable, so early in the evening, with lights in the windows of both Houses. Tubby's second thought was nearer the facts. Somebody was entering Jimmy Silver's study by the window, and it dawned on Tubby that that "somebody" was a Modern junior—after the effigy of Mr. Manders. Certainly, nobody was likely to get a ladder to a study window for the purpose of annexing a cake—even Reginald Muffin would not have gone to that length.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Muffin.

He listened breathlessly.

He could hear quite plainly the window being pushed up, and then came a muttering voice:

"Careful!"

Tubby Muffin grinned. Faint as the whisper was when it reached his ears, he recognised the voice of Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth.

A moment more, and Reginald Muffin was scudding away for the gym as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

#### CHAPTER 37.

Caught in the Act!

"**C**CAREFUL!"

"Ow!"

"What's the trouble, ass?"

"Knocked my blessed head on the window-sash! Ow!"

"Well, don't knock your silly head again, for goodness' sake!"

"I'll jolly well knock your silly head, Cook, if you don't look out!"

"Shut up, both of you!" snapped Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Dodd, captain of the Modern Fourth, stood inside the end study. Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were clambering in at the window. It was very dark—they did not venture to show a light.

A ladder, borrowed—without leave—from Sergeant Kettle, was reared against the window-sill. The window had not been fastened; Jimmy Silver & Co. had thought only of securing the door. They had never dreamed of burglarious expedients like this. But the three Tommies of Manders' House were in deadly earnest. They were going to make an end of that disrespectful effigy or perish in the attempt.

Tommy Dodd groped round the study as Cook and Doyle dropped within, and Doyle stood rubbing his head. Inside the study was very dark; the fire was out.

"Turn on a light now," said Cook. "Nobody will notice a light specially from a study window."

"That's so," assented Tommy Dodd.

He lighted up the study.

The effigy was spotted then, standing in a corner of the room, looking horribly lifelike, and hideously reminiscent of Mr. Manders.

"There it is!" said Tommy Doyle. "We can't get it away. We'll smash it up into little pieces, and leave them for those duffers to find when they come in."

Tommy Dodd chuckled.

"Better than that. We'll drop it out of the study window. It will smash on the ground. They can hunt for it to-night and find it in the morning."

"Good egg!"

"Lift it over," said Dodd.

Manders II was lifted across to the study window. There was a deep drop below; and it was quite certain that if Manders II smote the ground after a fall from that height, Manders II

would separate into more pieces than could be counted.

"Heave-ho!" grinned Cook.

"Out he goes!"

Head and shoulders of the figure were shoved through the open window. Then, all of a sudden, Tommy Dodd jumped.

"The ladder!" he exclaimed.

The ladder was moving!

It had been planted safely enough against the window-sill, and the three Tommies had mounted by it. But it was swaying away now—and in horrified alarm the Modern juniors saw it swing back from the sill. Tommy Dodd made a frantic clutch after it in vain.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated.

The figure of Manders II was dropped on the study floor. The raiders from Manders' House were not thinking of the effigy now. They were thinking that with the ladder gone, their escape from the study was cut off; the door was locked, the key gone, and there was no means of descent from the window.

"Somebody's down there!" exclaimed Doyle, peering down from the window. "My hat! It's those Classical cads!"

"Oh! They've moved the ladder——"

"That's it! We're done in the eye."

There was the sound of a laugh below. The three Tommies, peering down in the gloom, dimly made out half a dozen upturned faces.

"They're still there!" came Tubby Muffin's fat voice. "I heard them, you know—I spotted the cads! We've got them now! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "We've got you, you Modern rotters!"

"Fairly trapped!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classics roared. The light in the study showed the dismayed looks of the Modern trio at the window.

"Look here, you Classical rotters!"

exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Shove that ladder back here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After our guy!" roared Lovell. "Isn't one Manders enough for you? Do you want two of the same sort?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck the guy down on their nappers!" exclaimed Tommy Cook.

"Hold on!" called out Jimmy Silver. "We've got you fair and square. If you damage that guy, we'll take the ladder back to the sergeant's yard and leave you there for the night."

"Yes, rather!" chortled Lovell. "You touch a giddy hair of its head and you're landed till morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies had lifted the effigy, with the intention of hurling it out. But they stopped now and looked at one another.

"Sure, they won't dare to leave us here!" muttered Doyle.

"There'll be a frightful row if we're not back in our house for lock-up," said Cook uneasily.

"We're jolly well going to smash this guy!"

"Hold on!" said Tommy Dodd. "Look here, you Classical cads——"

"Is it a go?" asked Jimmy Silver cheerily. "You let our guy alone and we'll let you out. Otherwise we walk off with the ladder and we don't come back."

"And you can amuse yourselves by singing 'We won't be home till morning'!" chortled Lovell.

"We're going to smash it!" roared Tommy Doyle.

"Good-bye, then!"

The Classical juniors lifted the long ladder to their shoulders and started. Tommy Dodd & Co. stared after them blankly. They realised that the Classics were in earnest; that it had to be give and take. To remain locked up in a study in the Head's house was impossible. They were fighting the



battle of Mr. Manders; but they knew what they had to expect from Mr. Manders if they were out of their House when the doors were locked.

"We've got to toe the line!" muttered Tommy Dodd.

"Chuck the blinking thing out and chance it," said Doyle.

"Fathead! They mean business! Jimmy Silver!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy turned his head.

"Bring that ladder back, you rotter!"

"You're letting the guy alone?"

"Yes," said Tommy Dodd reluctantly.

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!" growled Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"All serene, then! Back she goes!"

The grinning Classics bore the ladder back and reared it up to the study window. Tommy Dodd & Co. heard it clump against the window-sill with deep relief.

"Roll down!" chortled Lovell.

One after another the three Tommies descended the ladder with frowning faces. They were greeted with laughter by the Classics as they stepped to the ground.

"Now bump them for their cheek!" said Lovell.

"No; let them cut," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Run away while you're safe, Tommy. And don't try burgling again—next time we'll make an example of you!"

"Rats!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Don't be peevish!" chuckled Lovell.

"We'll invite you to the show on the Fifth—you shall help to carry Manders II if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. returned to Manders' House with feelings almost too deep for words.

"We're done!" growled Tommy Dodd. "We shan't have another chance at that blessed guy. They'll make game of our Housemaster in their giddy procession on the Fifth—but we're going

to get our own back somehow. We've got to turn the tables on those Classical chumps—and especially on that howling ass Lovell!"

Tommy Dodd gave that important matter a great deal of deep thinking. He was still thinking it over after lights out in the Modern Fourth dormitory. Apparently his deep thinking produced some result, for suddenly a loud chuckle broke the silence of the dormitory.

"I say, Cook, old man!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"Doyle, old chap!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"I've got it, you fellows!"

"Keep it!" mumbled Cook sleepily.

"Look here——"

"Mmmmmmm!"

Tommy Dodd had to keep it.

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## CHAPTER 38.

## Another Guy!

"PLEASE to remember the Fifth of November!" chortled Arthur Edward Lovell, as he came across Tommy Dodd & Co. on the day before that celebrated date. "You fellows coming to the show?"

The three Tommies smiled.

"Oh, we shall turn up!" said Tommy Dodd. "We're whacking out the bonfire, you know! We shall have a guy of our own."

"Anything like ours?" grinned Lovell. "Look here, I'll give you fellows a tip. Catch Manders napping."

"What?"

"We had to make our Manders," said Arthur Edward. "You've got your Manders ready-made! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Cook.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tommy Dodd, unperturbed. "We're going to have a Classical guy. There's one fellow on the Classical side who was born for the job, and our guy will be his giddy likeness!"

"Who's that?" asked Arthur Edward.

"His name's Lovell!"

"Why, you — you — you — you —" spluttered the owner of that name.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies walked away laughing, leaving Arthur Edward Lovell glaring after them in great wrath.

Lovell was a humorous fellow in his way, but, like many humorous fellows, he failed to grasp a joke against himself. It seemed to him no end of a jest to mimic the Modern Housemaster in the form of a guy. But to be guyed himself in the same way did not appeal to his sense of humour in the least.

He strode away to the field adjoining the kitchen gardens, where a crowd of fellows were already busy stacking up combustible materials for the bonfire that was to be lit that afternoon.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were busy there; but they had to

suspend their busy preparations to listen to Lovell.

In deep indignation Arthur Edward explained, and his indignation was intensified when his comrades chuckled.

"Do you think it's funny?" hooted Lovell.

"Keep smiling, old chap," said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "It's only Modern gas. They can't do it. We can imitate Manders with a guy because he was designed by nature for the part. You're not — not quite, anyhow!"

"Thanks!" said Lovell sarcastically.

"Hallo!" Tommy Dodd came up. "Lovell there?"

"Here I am!" snorted Lovell angrily.

"Sure it's you?" asked Tommy Dodd, as if in doubt. "You're not my guy that's got out and started wandering, are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell did not answer the question. He rushed at Tommy Dodd.

To the surprise of the Classical fellows, instead of closing in combat with the enraged Lovell, Tommy Dodd took to his heels and ran.

Lovell was surprised himself. Tommy Dodd was the greatest fighting man on the Modern side, yet he was running like a frightened fag. Lovell whooped after him in pursuit.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Who'd have thought that Doddy would show the white feather like that?"

"It's a lark!" said Mornington. "He's goin' to give that hot-headed ass a run round the school. Let's go in for the guy, and let him run."

"Let's!" agreed Raby.

And the Classics marched in to bring out the guy that still reposed in the end study behind a locked door. Meanwhile, the wrathful Arthur Edward was chasing on the track of Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Dodd dashed into the archway into Little Quad and Lovell rushed after him.

As he rushed into the dark arch, two dim figures detached themselves from the shadows and grasped him.

Before he knew what was happening Arthur Edward Lovell was on his back on the ground, with Tommy Cook sitting on his chest and Tommy Doyle grasping his wrists.

Tommy Dodd stopped his headlong flight, and turned back with a breathless chuckle.

"Got him!" he gasped.

And his grasp was added. Arthur Edward Lovell began to struggle; but the three of them were too many for him.

It dawned upon Lovell now that Tommy Dodd had deliberately led him into an ambush, and that the whole thing had been planned. But that knowledge came too late to be of any use to him.

To his utter amazement, Lovell found himself tied up and gagged. Then Doyle fastened a paper fool's-cap on Lovell's head. Tommy Dodd decorated his face with coloured crayons. A charcoal moustache, red circles round his eyes, and green ears gave Lovell a wild and unearthly aspect. The three Moderns chortled as they looked at him.

Lovell could not speak. He chewed desperately at the gag; but he could not utter a word to tell the Moderns what he thought of them.

Towle and Lacy arrived carrying an ancient chair, evidently sorted out of a lumber-room. Lovell was lifted into the chair and tied there with ample cords. A ragged old coat was draped round him from head to foot; an ancient boot and an equally ancient shoe were shoved on his feet over his own shoes. Festoons of coloured paper were pinned to him. His aspect, with his eyes rolling with fury, was so amazing and extraordinary, that the Moderns almost wept with merriment.

Even yet it did not dawn upon Lovell what the game was.

"I think that will do," said Tommy Dodd at last. "Take him up!"

Four Modern fellows lifted the chair, with Lovell in it.

"Now we're ready!" said Tommy Dodd. "My belief is that our guy will knock their guy into a cocked hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell wriggled convulsively. He understood at last.

"Catch on, old bean?" asked Tommy Dodd. "Didn't I say that we were going to have a guy just like you? Well, you're like yourself, I suppose—what? Come on, you men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March!"

"Here's another guy!"

And the Modern crowd, roaring with laughter, marched, with Arthur Edward Lovell elevated on the chair in their midst.

## CHAPTER 39.

Like Lovell!

"HERE'S another guy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classical procession had reached the field in which the bonfire blazed.

Manders II carried on an old wicker chair on the shoulders of the Classics, swayed above the crowd.

Roars of laughter from the Classics and cat-calls from the Moderns greeted the appearance of the imitation of Mr. Manders.

"Crikey! Here comes the Head!" exclaimed Silver suddenly.

"Oh, my hat!"

Trepidation seized upon some of the Classical fellows as Dr. Chisholm was seen approaching in company with Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth. The Head had a benignant expression on his face, and Mr. Dalton a kindly smile. They were giving the celebration a kindly look-in, partly to encourage the merry-makers, partly, perhaps, to see that excitement did not run too high.

"Dear me! Is this the—the effigy!" said the Head, signing to the procession to halt. "Bless my soul! What a very extraordinary figure!"

"Extraordinary indeed!" said Mr. Dalton, rather dryly.

The Head, fortunately, had noticed nothing of the horrible resemblance to Mr. Manders in the effigy.

Richard Dalton, however, was a little keener, and the juniors did not quite like the expression on his face. However, he kept his thoughts, whatever they were, to himself.

"A very ingenious construction, I must say!" observed the Head kindly. "Very ingenious indeed! Proceed, my boys."

And the procession, in great relief, proceeded.

"Here comes another procession," remarked Mr. Dalton, as the arrival of Tommy Dodd & Co. was heralded by a roar.

Two or three dozen Modern juniors marched into the field, with a chair held aloft, in which sat a weird-looking personage with a black charcoal moustache, red-rimmed eyes, and green ears, wrapped in a ragged coat, with an odd boot and shoe on its feet.

"Bless my soul! This is really more extraordinary than the other figure!" exclaimed the Head, bursting into a laugh. "It is quite lifelike!"

"Quite!" said Mr. Dalton.

"Hurrah! Here's another guy!"

The two masters walked away, smiling. Tommy Dodd and company marched on, with their extraordinary guy. Crackers and squibs rattled and banged and fizzed round the swaying figure in the chair as they went.

The two processions, marching round the field from opposite directions, met at last. The two guys swayed face to face.

"My hat! Is that your giddy guy, Doddy?" asked Jimmy Silver, staring at the strange figure in the chair.

"That's it!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "Isn't it a bit like Lovell?"

"By Jove, you do seem to have caught a likeness!" said the captain of the Fourth, in amazement.

"Where's Lovell?" exclaimed Raby.

"I say, Lovell would be waxy if he were here! Where's he got to?"

"March!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "Here's another guy! Get out of the way, you Classical chumps!"

Crash!

A faggot, suddenly hurled by a Modern junior, caught Mr. Manders II on the chest, and the effigy went to the ground with a crash. There was a roar of wrath from the Classics.

"Up with it!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

Manders II was lifted up. But the crash on the ground had had much the same effect on the effigy as Humpty-Dumpty's celebrated fall. The effigy was hopelessly smashed, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not have put Manders II together again.

"It's done for!" exclaimed Mornington. "Cheeky rotters! Collar their guy and smash it up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Shove it on the bonfire!" yelled Tubby Muffin.

"Smash it up!" roared Gunner.

The Classics rushed at the Modern procession.

"Hands off, you dummies!" yelled Tommy Dodd in alarm. "Keep off! Oh, you chumps! I tell you—Yarooooh!"

The chair came to the ground and rolled sideways. The Moderns, outnumbered and hurled aside by the Classical rush, were swept away. The Classics surrounded the guy which was so strangely like Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Smash it up!" roared Gunner.

"Jerk its head off!" shouted Dickinson minor.

A gurgling sound came from the guy, but in the general din it was unheard. Many hands were laid on the Modern guy.

Jimmy Silver gave a sudden horrified yell, and jumped back.

"Ow! It's alive! I saw its eyes move!"

"Rot! You're dreaming!"

"Great pip! Look at it!" howled Oswald.

The Classics stared blankly at the guy that so resembled Lovell. Its eyes were seen to roll horribly.

It was only too clear now that the figure was alive; that it was, in fact, a Rookwood fellow got up as a guy. The lower part of its face seemed to be wrapped up, and Jimmy understood now that the hapless guy was gagged. He dragged the cord and duster away.

"Who—what——"

"You silly idiot!" yelled the guy.

"Lovell!"

"You frabjous dummies!" yelled Lovell. "You footling chumps! Didn't you know it was me? You burbling jabberwocks, let a fellow loose!"

"Great pip!"

"Lovell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell was released. He wriggled out of the chair amid roars of laughter. His aspect, with his painted face, made the Rookwooders shriek. Classics and Moderns alike.

"Oh, Lovell!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha! So that

was Tommy Dodd's wheeze—you were the guy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You footling chumps——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell gave it up.

It was a merry celebration, after the remnants of Manders II had been consigned to the bonfire. Classics and Moderns fraternised in letting off fireworks, shouting, and generally kicking up a tremendous shindy, till the powers that were decided that it was enough, and the prefects came on the scene and shepherded the hilarious juniors back to their Houses. All the fellows agreed that the celebration had been unusually ripping, with one exception—the exception being Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell had not been pleased by his part in the performance. For days and days, after the Fifth, any fellow who wished to excite Arthur Edward Lovell to frenzy had only to whisper as he passed "Here's another guy!"

THE END.

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## "LEG-PULLING"!

**W**HO was the world's first hoaxer? If you cared to take the trouble of tracing the ancient sport of "pulling the leg," as the French have it, back through the centuries, you might find that it owes its origin to the stone-age humorist who slipped the news to one or two of his worst enemies that there was a fine juicy ichthyosaurus steak waiting for them round the corner—and forgot to add the ichthyosaurus was still very much alive and kicking.

### The Bomb That Wasn't!

Anyway, whether that is the first hoax on record or not, there always seem to have been people with such a highly developed gift for leg-pulling that to them a day without somebody or other "taken in" is a day wasted. One daring, original, and successful piece of bluff has very often made its perpetrator famous for the rest of his life, though not more than once or twice in a century does a hoax receive as much publicity as that given to the practical joke the whole country was talking about quite recently.

During the visit of a certain distinguished statesman to a Public school in the North of England, a queer contraption, described as a "highly dangerous bomb," was found under the dais in the school hall only a few moments before the great man was due to make his appearance. Startled and panicky, the governing body called in Scotland Yard, and no effort was spared to track down the "anarchist plotters" responsible for the "outrage." The mystery was becoming steadily deeper when the police experts to whom the "infernal machine" had been sent for examination announced that it was just a harmless practical joke, without enough explosive to make a jumping cracker do its stuff. The school

authorities breathed large sighs of relief; then suddenly awoke to the fact that a few million people were having a good laugh at their expense, and hunted high and low for the hoaxers. But those young gentlemen were wise in their generation; they laid very low and said nothin'.

### The Sultan of Zanzibar!

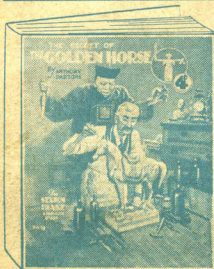
For sheer nerve it would be hard to beat the exploits of a hoaxer who, during his undergraduate days at Cambridge, made it his special job to bluff and hoodwink as many of its solemn and dignified personages as he could. A newspaper report that the Sultan of Zanzibar was paying a State visit to this country gave him a bright idea. He decided that his Highness was going to honour Cambridge with his presence, and that he would impersonate the sultan. He advertised his arrival all over the town for days beforehand, suitably disguised himself and his retinue of attendants, and, without the quiver of an eyelid, arrived punctually to the minute.

The mayor and corporation, as well as important University officials galore, were at the station to meet him, and their hospitality was almost overwhelming. They showed him round the colleges, entertained him in great style; and, to cap everything, even listened to his speech of thanks in "real Zanzibar," without smelling a rat. Not until nearly a year later, when the daring japer had left the University, did the sultan's real identity leak out.

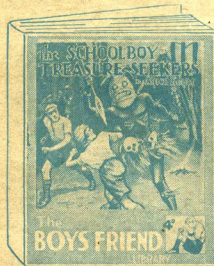
Compared with one of this prince of practical jokers' later efforts, however, even that stunt seems tame. This time he became the King of Abyssinia, and, with four, friends similarly disguised in gorgeous rig-outs, passed himself off as a guest of the Foreign Office with such success that the party was shown over the flagship Dreadnought by the admiral himself! And once again the japer got away with it.



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