



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Noblesse Oblige!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. had just come in from football practice when they spotted a crowd of juniors round the notice-board in the hall. Judging by the remarks of the Rookwood juniors, there was a notice on the board of unusual interest.

"A giddy farewell concert, by gad!" Smythe of the Shell was remarking. "Those Bagshot bounders again!"

"Jolly glad of the farewell, if not of the concert!" said Jones minor.

"Awful rot, most likely!" said Flynn. "Like Pankley's cheek? Who's going to listen to his ancient minstrel chestnuts?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. bore down upon the scene. The Fistical Four were interested.

They read the notice over the shoulders of the fellows collected in front of the board. It was quite a large and prominent notice, and it was in the large and somewhat sprawling hand of Cecil Pankley, the more important lines being set out in big and impressive capitals.

Thus it ran:

GRAND FAREWELL

CONCERT!

Notice!

Bagshot School being reopened next week, the Bagshot fellows who have been staying at Rookwood desire to express their 'Harty Thanks' for the generous Hospitality they have received from the Rookwood fellows before taking their Departure.

They had quite enjoyed their stay at Rookwood, and congratulate themselves upon the outbreak of Infloozna at Bagshot which provided them with this Grate Opportunity of enjoying Rookwood Hospitality.

They are very glad to think that they have lived up things a little during their brief sojourn in the classic shades of Rookwood, and that they have been able to give the Rookwood fellows some much-needed tips on football.

To testify their Gratitude for the

Roundest Hospitality they have received, the Bagshot fellows are giving a Grand Farewell Concert, to which all Rookwood fellows are cordially invited.

THE BAGSHOT DARKEY MINSTREL QUARTETTE

will give a first-class performance on Saturday at six. The performance will be given in the Fourth Form class-room, by kind permission of Mr. Bootles.

No charge for admission. Everybody welcome.

New and original songs with banjo accompaniment. Wheezes guaranteed quite fresh. Rookwooders are requested to roll up in their thousands.

DON'T MISS THE GRAND FAREWELL CONCERT!

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth wrinkled his brows a little over that notice. It seemed to him that he detected sarcasm in it. As the Bagshot juniors, while they had been quartered on the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, had been generally on fighting terms with the Rookwooders, the references to generous hospitality were at least slightly suspicious. Pankley and Poole of Bagshot shared the end study with the Fistical Four, and scarcely a day had passed without "liveliness" of some sort.

"Seems to me that that bounder is pulling our leg," said Jimmy Silver, with a shake of the head.

"Looks like it," said Lovell. "Look at that bit about tips on football! Lots of tips they could give us, the cheeky bounders!"

"Much-needed tips, by Jove!" said Raby. "Why, we've played their heads off!"

"It's blessed sare!" said Newcome. "Let's go and yank the notice down, and go and stuff it into Pankley's back!"

Jimmy Silver looked very thoughtful. In spite of the unending rows that had followed the Bagshot invasion, Jimmy admitted that the Bagshot bounders weren't really bad chaps in the main. They were cheeky, and they refused to

THE JAPE OF THE SEASON!

A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of JIMMY
SILVER & CO., the Chums
of Rookwood.

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.

be kept in their place, and they lacked proper respect for the Fistical Four; but upon the whole, now their stay at Rookwood was coming to an end, Jimmy Silver felt that it would be only the decent thing to give them a peaceful send-off. They ought to be allowed to "testify" their "harty thanks" in peace!

"Kids," said Jimmy Silver, "there's a lot of sare in that notice—a lot of cheek—but under the circumstances, it's up to us to keep the peace. We'll go to the concert, and cheer 'em. After all, they're going. Pankley is only being funny about Rookwood hospitality. I know; but we'll show him that we can be hospitable. We'll back up that concert."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell. "I was thinking we might go, and take our peashooters!"

"And an egg or two!" said Raby.

"No!" said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"What about noblesse oblige?"

"Noblesse o' which?" said Lovell.

"Noblesse oblige," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's French."

"You don't say so!" remarked New-

come, with heavy sarcasm. "Sure it isn't German or Dutch or Chinese?"

"It's French," said Jimmy Silver;

"and it means that it's up to a chap to play the game. They've been cheeky bounders while they've been planted on us here, but now they're going we're going to treat 'em well. We're going to show 'em that Rookwood can do the right thing. Noblesse oblige is going to be our motto. We'll go to the concert, but we won't take any peashooters or eggs. Even if Pankley sings we'll stand it."

"Oh dear!"

"Even if Poole plays his banjo we'll take it like lambs."

"My aunt!"

"We'll bear it smiling from start to finish, and give 'em a rousing reception," said Jimmy Silver firmly. "It's up to us! Noblesse oblige, you know!"

"Oh, blow noblesse oblige!" said Lovell peevishly. "Look how they're getting at us in that notice!"

"If we take it politely that will be heaping coals of fire on Pankley's head."

"I'd rather punch his nose!"

"Oh, don't be a Hun!" said Jimmy Silver. "I tell you, it's up to us. Let's go and see Panky, and tell him we're backing him up."

The Co. looked expressively at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy was the acknowledged leader of the Fistical Four. Since Jimmy Silver had dawned on Rookwood the Classics had more than kept their end up with the Moderns, their old rivals and foes. But never had the loyalty of Jimmy Silver's faithful followers been nearer to breaking-point than at that moment. The Bagshot concert was really such an excellent opportunity for ragging the Bagshot bouncers, and it seemed a sheer waste to let it go.

"I think you're an ass!" said Lovell at last.

"And a fathead!" said Raby.

"And a burbling duffer!" remarked Newcome.

"We could pack the Form-room and rag 'em bald-headed!" said Lovell temptingly.

"Not if they got some of the Sixth there," said Jimmy Silver. "Bet you Panky will get a prefect or two, in case of trouble. Bulkeley's sure to come if he's asked; he'd do anything for anybody."

"Oh!"

"Besides, it's up to us. We'll pack the Form-room all right—we'll get a ripping audience—and cheer!"

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell, with a groan. "I suppose you mean to have your way. But I think you're a silly ass!"

Raby and Newcome corroborated. But Jimmy Silver did not mind. Having gained his point, he proceeded in search of Panky and Poole, to assure these cheerful youths of the hearty support of the Classical Fourth.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Friendly Call!

PANKLEY and Poole were in the end study.

The two Bagshot juniors shared that study with the Fistical Four, and, of course, it was a crowd for a junior study. There were a dozen Bagshot juniors quartered on the Classical side at Rookwood, all in the Fourth, so the whole passage was crowded. And as Rookwood and Bagshot had always been rivals, naturally there was trouble when there were in such close quarters.

Panky and Poole seemed in a merry mood just now. Panky was seated at the study table, scribbling on a sheet of impot paper. Poole was standing before the glass dabbing his face with black, apparently practising with the make-up for the Bagshot Darkey Minstrel Quartette.

On the chairs in the study were scattered all sorts of "props" for the Bagshot minstrels—red-striped "bags," woolly wigs, gorgeous waistcoats, and flaming ties. The study was, in fact, fully occupied when the Fistical Four looked in.

Poole turned round a black face from the glass, and Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him.

"Making up already?" asked Jimmy Silver. "The concert isn't till to-morrow."

"Getting my hand in!" explained Poole.

"Seen the notice?" said Panky.

"Yes. This is rather a sudden idea, isn't it?" asked Silver.

Panky grinned.

"We've been planning it for some time," he explained. "But we've put

the notice up at the last moment. Sort of pleasant surprise to you, you know. I hope you fellows will come to the concert?"

"You bet!"

"Bulkeley's agreed to come," remarked Panky, in a casual sort of way.

"There won't be any rags."

"We're not thinking of rags," said Jimmy Silver; "we're going to give you our hearty support."

"Oh!"

"You're going to get a whacking audience, and every fellow will keep order," said Jimmy. "Any chap who talks about rags will get his head punished!"

"What's the little game?"

"No useless oblige," explained Jimmy.

"Eh?"

"It's up to us, and we're going to give you a chance," said Silver. "Of course, we know it will be rot! You can't sing—"

"What!"

"And your wheezes will be rot that we were brought up on in our early youth—"

"Why, you ass—"

"But we're going to stand it. Every joke will be laughed at—of course, if we sing 'em." You might arrange a kind of signal for the jokes, so that we shall know when to laugh."

"Why, you fathead—"

"Whenever there's a joke, let Poole give a thump on the banjo, and I'll see that there's a good laugh—"

"Look here, you silly ass—"

"We want to do our best for you," explained Jimmy Silver amicably. "Any assistance we can render you are welcome to. You can use this study for a dressing-room, if you like."

"We mean to!" growled Poole.

"If you put it like that, Poole—" began Lovell, with a warlike look.

Jimmy Silver made a chiding gesture.

"Shut up, Lovell! They're going to have this study for a dressing-room. We'll come and help 'em make up, if they like. We'll be dressers for the occasion."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

"You're jolly obliging," said Panky suspiciously. "No larks, you know."

Jimmy Silver looked pained.

"Larks!" he repeated. "Don't I keep on telling you that it's a case of noblesse oblige!"

"Well, you can come in and lend us a hand if you like," said Panky; "only you mustn't miss the show. The show is going to be good. New and original songs to new and original tunes, and first-class jokes. I'm corner-man. All the jokes will be new and good!"

"We'll help you with them, if you like," said Jimmy Silver generously. "Blessed if I won't make up your songs for you, if you like! Of course, they won't amount to much if you do 'em!"

Panky glanced at the paper before him, and grinned.

"That one of the songs?" asked Silver.

"Yes."

"Let's see it, and I'll give you my opinion."

Panky hastily folded the sheet, and thrust it into his pocket.

"No, thanks! We want the whole thing to come as a surprise. But you can depend on it that they're going to be good, and quite topical."

"Quite!" grinned Poole.

The two Bagshot juniors chuckled. Jimmy Silver looked puzzled.

"What's the little joke?" he demanded.

"We're keeping the little jokes for the farewell concert," said Panky. "Little boys mustn't ask questions! Now run away and play!"

"Why, you cheeky ass—" exclaimed Lovell.

"Run away!" said Panky, waving his hand. "Can't you see I'm in the throes of composition? I can't be interrupted by noisy kids— Why, you ass— Gerroff!"

"Chuck it, Lovell!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

Lovell had made a rush at Panky, and he had that cheery youth's head in Chancery. Lovell's temper was warmer than Jimmy Silver's, and noblesse oblige did not seem to appeal to him. Panky was dragged over the table, and his chair went flying, and his elbow hurled the ink-pot far and wide. Poole gave a fiendish yell as he caught it with his trousers.

"Yarrah!" roared Panky, hitting out wildly. "You silly ass! You—"

"You Bagshot-bouncer!" howled Lovell, pommeling away. "Noisy kids—eh? I'll noisy kids you!"

"Stoppit!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Get off, Lovell! Leggo, Panky! Drag 'em apart!"

Jimmy Silver grasped Lovell by the shoulders, and Raby and Newcome seized Panky by the legs, and they dragged away.

"Leggo!" yelled Lovell.

"Leggo!" bellowed Panky. "I'll squash him—"

"I'll pulverise him! Noisy kids! I'll—"

"All together!" said Jimmy Silver.

The three juniors tugged with all their strength, and the combatants had to come apart. Lovell flew back, and pitched violently into Silver, and knocked him through the study doorway, and rolled on him.

Panky came to the floor with a bump and a roar. Raby and Newcome had taken a leg each, with the best intentions, but rather thoughtlessly, for when Panky was thus dragged apart from his adversary, it was his head that landed on the study carpet.

"O-o-o-o-o-oh!" cried Panky.

Jimmy Silver scrambled up in the passage. Panky sat up and rubbed his head. Lovell wished to charge back into the study, but Jimmy Silver grasped him in time.

"Oh! Oh! Ow! Wow!" said Panky. "You! You've busted my napper! Oh! Ah! Yah! Oh!"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Lovell.

"Come away, you ass! What about noblesse oblige?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Bust noblesse oblige!"

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" gasped Jimmy.

Lovell was rushed away down the passage in the grasp of his three chums. At the end of the passage they bumped him hard on the floor till he promised to keep the peace, and have a due regard for the claims of noblesse oblige.

In the end study Panky was still groaning. It was an unfortunate end to a friendly visit.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

THE Grand Farewell Concert of the Bagshot juniors caused a considerable amount of excitement in the Lower School. In spite of noblesse oblige, there were more fellows to share Lovell's opinion of the matter than to share Jimmy Silver's.

The general idea in the Classical Fourth was that it was too good an opportunity to be wasted, and that the concert ought to be ragged. True, Panky had foreseen that possibility, and had arranged for the captain of the school to be present. The hardest raggers in the Fourth would scarcely have ventured

upon a rag in the presence of Bulkeley of the Sixth.

But there were ways and means, as Jones minor declared discontentedly. Jimmy Silver's idea of backing up the concert and giving the Bagshot bounders hearty support was voted rotten.

But Jimmy Silver had his way. His chums backed him up, though dubiously; and the Fistical Four were monarchs of all they surveyed in the Classical Fourth. So it was agreed that there should be no rags.

Tommy Dodds and his friends on the Modern side gave Jimmy Silver their support. The Moderns had not been bothered by the Bagshot invasion, as the new-comers were all quartered on the Classical side. They had, in fact, looked on and smirked at the troubles of the Classics. They agreed with Jimmy Silver that the Bagshot fellows should be given a good send-off, and Tommy Dodd undertook to see that there were no rags by the Moderns.

So Pankley and Poole and the rest went ahead in peace. There was not a whisper of what the programme was to contain. That was being kept a dead secret by the Bagshot fellows. But the new and original songs and jokes must have been very funny, to judge by the way the Bagshot juniors chuckled over them among themselves.

Peace being firmly established by the great efforts of Jimmy Silver, unusual concert interest in the end study. Lovell appeared to forget that his nose, was swollen, and Pankley made no reference to the three bumps on his head. Preparation was done that evening in great cordiality in the end study. It was a case of the lion and the lamb lying down in peace.

The trace was kept the next morning. After morning lessons were over Pankley was very busy making his preparations for the concert.

The Form-room was to be used as a concert-hall, and the Bagshot juniors were early at work getting it ready, and Jimmy Silver & Co. kindly helped them.

There was, indeed, no end to the politeness displayed by Jimmy Silver & Co. It was arranged that they were to act as dressers to the Darkey Quartette in the end study.

The quartette were Pankley, Poole, Putter, and Greene. The rest of the Bagshot fellows were to be in the audience with the Rookwood fellows. Other Bagshot juniors were coming, too, some from a distance. Two or three dozen, at least, would be in the audience when the farewell concert came off.

After lending their aid to their old rivals, the Fistical Four went down to the quad for a little football practice.

They were feeling very well satisfied with themselves and their unusually good behaviour. When the Bagshot bounders departed, they could not help taking away with them a good impression of Rookwood hospitality. That was worth more than a rag, as Jimmy Silver loftily explained to his somewhat doubtful chums.

"What about tea?" grumbled Lovell, when they came away from football. "Those bounders are in the end study making up their fatheaded songs and jokes and things. Awful rot, I expect." "No doubt about that," said Jimmy Silver. "But we'll stand it all the same. It's up to us. If they're busy there we'll have tea in another study."

"Look here, if you're so jolly polite to the beasts, they'll think you're funking a row with them!" growled Lovell.

"Rats! Noblesse oblige."

"Oh, rot!"

Jimmy Silver looked in at the end

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study to see how his old enemies were getting on. Pankley and Poole and Putter and Greene and several more of the Bagshot fellows were there, and the table was covered with written sheets. The Bagshot fellows were grinning over their literary labours. They were evidently pleased with their jokes, whatever they were.

As Jimmy Silver opened the door and looked in, the draught from the passage fluttered the literary works on the table, as the window was wide open.

"Here, look out!" exclaimed Pankley, jumping up.

"Sorry!" said Jimmy. "I'll help you pick 'em up."

Pankley jumped in the way in great alarm. The written sheets were sailing about the study, rough copies and finished copies galore.

"That's all right—you keep out!" exclaimed Pankley.

"But I'll help!"

"Don't you bother."

Pankley fairly shoved Jimmy Silver into the passage, while his comrades made plunges after the scattered sheets, and gathered them up.

Jimmy Silver grinned. The Darkey Quartette were keeping their little jokes to themselves, so that they should come quite fresh to the audience; but really Pankley's anxiety was carried too far.

"All serene, I'll clear it!" said Jimmy. "We'll have tea somewhere else if you like."

"And he shut the door."

"Do!" said Pankley.

Jimmy Silver rejoined his chums in the quadrangle.

"They're busy, and the stud's at sixes and sevens," he said. "Let's have tea with Hooker. We'll take in the grub."

"Oh, all serene!"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Newcome, as they sauntered across the quad towards Sergeant Kettle's tuck-shop.

It was a sheet of impot paper blowing away in the wind. Newcome picked it up, and glanced at it. Jimmy Silver burst into a chuckle.

"Some of Pank's effusions, most likely," he said. "The draught blew 'em all over the place when I opened the door."

"My hat!" said Newcome, staring at the paper.

"Oh, don't read it!" said Jimmy.

"The silly ass wants to keep their rotten wheezes dark till the show comes off. I expect we shall know every one of them by heart when we hear them."

"When is a door not a door—and that kind of thing, I expect," snorted Lovell.

"Oh crumbs!" said Newcome, still staring at the paper. "Oh you silly idiot, Jimmy Silver!"

"Eh?"

"You crass ass!"

"What's biting you now, you duffer?"

"You howling jabberwock!" howled Newcome wrathfully. "Nice jape you've let us in for, with your fatheaded noblesse oblige, and the rest of it. Look at this paper, you burbler!"

"But—but what—" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Look at it, you shrieking fathead!" howled Newcome.

The startled leader of the Fistical Four took the paper, and looked at it. Lovell and Raby looked at it, too. Then there was a howl.

"Oh, the rotters!"

"The spooling cad!"

"Up against us all the time!"

The Fistical Four stared at the paper, which was in Pankley's sprawling hand.

They glared at it. For as they read those

sprawling lines they understood why Pankley was keeping strictly dark the programme for the farewell concert. They understood why Pankley was giving the concert at all, in fact. The deep duplicity of the Machiavellian Pankley dawned upon them at last.

For this is what was on the paper—evidently a leading item of the farewell concert to be sung by the Bagshot Darkey Quartette:

"SONG—'THE FATHEADED FOUR!"

"Have you heard of the Fat-Headed Four?"

Oh, lor!

Have you heard of that wonderful Co?"

Oh!

There's Jimmy, the chief, with a face like a kite,

And Lovell, whose nose is a wonderful sight!

And Raby, whose features would frighten a cat,

And Newcome, who always talks out of his hat!

Oh! Oh!

They're at Rookwood just now, but to Bedlam they'll go!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver Has a Brain Wave.

JIMMY SILVER wanted to kick himself hard.

This was the kind of "farewell concert" the Bagshot fellows were giving.

The song, "The Fat-headed Four," was only one item in an extensive programme. There was no doubt that all the rest was on the same lines. The last scene at Rookwood was to be a general guying of the Classical Fourth under the form of a farewell concert.

"The awful rotters!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "So that's the little game."

Lovell caressed his swollen nose.

"So my nose is a wonderful sight is it?" he growled. "I'll make Pankley's nose a wonderful sight shortly!"

"And my features would frighten a cat, would they?" said Raby wrathfully.

"We'll put that blitherer's features into a state to frighten a Hun."

"So we've jolly well found 'em out," said Newcome. "Pulling our leg all the time. Getting up a concert to guy us at the finish. And that howling ass, Silver, is helping 'em to get an audience—to hear us guyed. All Rookwood coming, by Jove, to hear 'em sing songs about the 'Fat-headed Four,' and crack their stale wheezes about us! Us, by Jove!"

"And we're their dressers this evening," said Lovell, with bitter sarcasm. "We're going to help 'em get ready to go on and guy us."

"Oh, you fathead, Silver!"

"You champion ass!"

"This is what comes of your noblesse oblige," howled Lovell. "This! We help 'em with their rot, and get 'em an audience, so that they can poke fun at us. Oh, won't the fellows howl!"

"Kick me, somebody!" said Jimmy Silver. "Of—of course, I—I never suspected it was a jape on us."

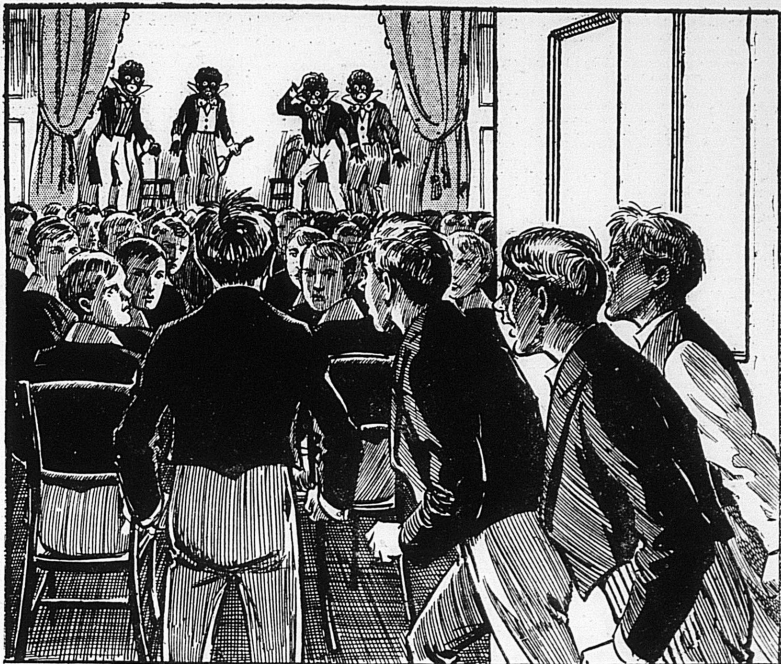
"Oh, scat!"

"I—I never thought—"

"Why didn't you?" demanded Lovell. "You knew they were keeping their programme jolly secret."

"Ye-es; but—but I thought that was only to keep the jokes fresh, you know, and not spoil it in advance. Panky's rather deep."

"Deeper than you, you ass, anyway," snorted Lovell. "Are you still going to



Four juniors with black faces and furious looks rushed in. They were hardly recognizable, but the audience guessed that they were Pankley & Co. "Here they are!" yelled Bagshot. "Here's Panky!" (see page 14.)

back them up, and help them get a big audience, and stop the chaps from ragging the cads? My hat! There's a crowd of Bagshot bounders coming to the concert. I wondered they'd take the trouble to come and hear those four asses twanging a silly banjo and cackling silly songs. But that isn't what they're coming for. They're coming to see Rookwood guyed."

"Oh, won't they cackle!" said Newcome.

"Serve us right!" said Lovell, with great bitterness. "This is what comes of Jimmy Silver, with his noblesse oblige."

"Rub it in!" said Jimmy dependently.

"Well, you must admit that you're a silly ass!" said Lovell. "But it's not too late; we've found 'em out in time. Let's go to the study now and rag 'em bald-headed, and shove their silly props into the fire!"

"Good egg!" said Raby and Newcome together.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose hard. He was thinking.

"There's one comfort," he remarked. "The Modern cads have been taken in as much as us. Tommy Dodd hadn't a suspish."

"Well, that's so," agreed Lovell. "We'll tell Dobby, and he can come with us and help make an example of those cads."

"Hold on!"

"What!"

"Don't be in a hurry!"

Lovell glared at his study-leader.

"Are you still noblesse obliging?" he roared. "Look here, I'm fed up with your rot, Jimmy Silver!"

"Hold on, I tell 'you!" said Jimmy firmly. "You're too much like a bull at a gate, Lovell!"

"And you're too much like a lunatic in an asylum!" snorted Lovell.

"They're japing us," said Jimmy Silver. "If this blessed concert comes off as they've planned, the whole school will simply howl at us. We can't rag 'em with the prefects there, and they'll guy us as much as they like, and—and we've been helping 'em and backing 'em up! But the concert hasn't come off yet, and now we know the little game we —"

"We'll jolly well put a stop to it!" said Raby.

"Go easy! I've got an idea!"

"Blow your ideas!"

"A wheeze!"

"Hang your wheezes!"

"A jape!"

"Go and bury it!"

"Look here!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Have some sense! 'Twasn't my fault they've been planning this blessed jape!"

"I can't help it if Pankley is as deep as a beastly Prussian, can I? I tell you I've

got an idea for turning the tables on them!"

"Well, we'll hear it," said Lovell, with the air of a fellow making a great concession. "We're fed-up with your noblesse oblige! But we'll hear your wheeze; there may be something in it!"

"Jolly good mind to leave you out, and ask the Modern cads to help me!" said Jimmy Silver severely.

"Oh, rats! What's the game?"

"There's something about Dobby on this," said Jimmy Silver, turning over the written sheet. "Look here! They've been using this paper to make rough drafts. I don't suppose they'll miss this. They must have written out fresh copies; this is nearly all scratches and corrections. Look at this!"

On the back of the sheet was another—"Song," Jimmy Silver had spotted it in turning the sheet in his hands. They had not noticed it at first. There were so many scratches and corrections on both sides that it was evident that this was merely the rough draft, in which Pankley had jotted down his inspirations, as it were, without giving them time to cool.

"I say, that's rather funny!" chuckled Lovell, as the Fistical Four read the second effusion from Pankley's fertile brain.

It ran, evidently to the tune of the old, popular song, "Tommy Atkins," but referring to quite another Tommy:

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"Oh, oh, Tommy, Tommy Dodd!

Your face is very odd!

Your nose is like a wrinkle, and your mouth is like a cod!

Your tousties are the biggest ones that ever, ever trod!

When you take them out together they almost fill the quad!"

"Well, that does hit off that Modern wurm!" said Raby. "Blessed if I ever saw such feet as Tommy Dodd's!"

"I call it jolly personal!" said Jimmy Silver. "Not that it would matter if they stuck to the Moderns; but they're got whole yards of stuff like this about both Classical and Moderns—yards and yards of it. Come on! We'll let Tommy Dodd see this, and those bouncers can help us turn the tables on the Bagshot bouncers!"

"Look here, let's go and rag 'em!"

"Rats! Something a bit more brainy than that," said Jimmy Silver, with a sniff. "You never think of anything brainier than bashing a fellow on the nose, Lovell!"

Lovell grunted, but he followed Jimmy Silver to the Modern side. The Fistical Four found the three Tommies at tea in their study. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were apparently in funds, for the table was plentifully spread.

Tommy Dodd waved a hospitable hand at the sight of the Classical Four.

"Trot in!" he said. "Sit down and feed! We're flowing with milk and honey to-day. It's pax till after the concert!"

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've found out something about that concert. It's a jape to guy us!"

"My hat! What awful check, when we're backing them up!" said Tommy Dodd indignantly.

"That's the cream of the joke," said Lovell sarcastically. "Silver was born to have his leg pulled, you know, and he'll always lend a chap a hand in pulling it. He calls it noblesse oblige!"

"Oh, do cheese it!" said Silver, pulling a chair to the table. "Fill your mouth, my son, and then shut it. Look at that, Tommy Dodd! That's an item for the concert. We bagged it, and Pankley doesn't know."

The Modern chums read the song "The Fat-headed Four," and burst into a chuckle.

"Well, that's funny," said Tommy Dodd. "Ha, ha, ha!" They seem to know you chaps jolly well, don't they?"

"Why, you ass—"

"Pankley is an observant chap," said Cook. "He's got 'em down all right—especially Silver. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I know it's excruciatingly funny!" said Jimmy Silver, with heavy sarcasm. "Now look at the other side—that's funnier still!"

Tommy Dodd turned the paper over.

"What's this? 'Tommy Dodd—face very odd! Why, the cheeky sweep! Fill the quad! The silly ass! Why, I'll—!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook and Doyle. "What are you silly asses cackling at?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "I call this silly rot—and jolly bad taste, too! I don't believe in personal jokes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fistical Four. "Only about us—that!"

"Well, those lines about you are funny, but this is silly rot! My hat! I'll show him whether my mouth is like a cod!"

"He's seen it already!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd jumped up.

"Look here, Silver—"

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"I don't need to look. I've noticed it already, same as Pankley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you want to go out of this study on your neck, you've only got to say so!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"That's what I like about these Modern chaps," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Always so jolly polite to fellows they ask to tea!"

"Well, I—I—" Tommy Dodd sat down. "Don't be so jolly funny, then, you fathoat! As for that fathoat Pankley, I'll pulverise him! Look at his mouth—yards long! And his nose—like a gooseberry-tart! And his feet!"

Words failed the indignant Tommy.

"You see, it's up against all of us, Moderns and Classics," said Jimmy Silver. "A rotten jape on all of us, to guy us before they go. But I've got an idea—"

"I don't think much of your Classical ideas," said Tommy Dodds, shaking his head.

"It's a ripping wheeze—the catch of the season," said Jimmy Silver. "Look here! If they can make up personal poems, so can we. If they can black their faces and play the giddy ox, so can we. And they're making up in the end study, and we're helping them—see?"

For a moment there was silence in the study, while the juniors thought it out.

Then Jimmy Silver's idea burst upon all together, and there was a roar. From that moment there was wonderful harmony in the study—Moderns and Classics pulling together with almost brotherly affection in the great task of dishing the enemy.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Little Surprise.

PANKLEY grinned and nodded as the Fistical Four came into the end study shortly before six. The Bagshot Quartette were very busy. They were also very amused. The sweet and friendly smiles of the Classical Four showed that they hadn't any suspicion of the real nature of that farewell concert—at least, so Pankley thought. Surely, if they had had any suspicion, they would not have come along in that friendly way to act as dressers for the quartette.

Pankley, Poole, Putter, and Greene were already making up. Two other Bagshot fellows were in the study helping them.

"Here we are!" said Jimmy Silver. "Hope we're not late. We've been having tea with the Moderns, and we stopped to do some scribbling. We're ready to help!"

"Thanks!" said Pankley. "You chaps are always so obliging. But you'll enjoy the concert; we've got some really funny songs!"

"Let's see them before you start," said Jimmy Silver. "We'd really like to have a look at the programme!"

Pankley shook his head.

"No, excuse me, really, old chap. Better hear everything fresh at the concert; it's the best way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the Bagshot fellows in chorus.

"What's the cackle about?" asked Jimmy Silver innocently.

"Only thinking of our jokes," said Poole blandly. "They're really funny, you know."

"The audience were going in when we passed the Form-room," said Jimmy Silver, changing the subject. "Pretty nearly all Rookwood will be there."

"The more the merrier," said Pankley.

"And a good many visitors have

arrived, too," said Raby. "You seem to have asked a lot of Bagshot fellows, Panky."

"All who were in the neighbourhood," said Pankley, smiling cheerfully. "They'll enjoy our little concert, I'm sure."

"Well, let's get on," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm rather a dab at making-up. Are you ready to be blacked?"

"Right-ho!"

The Fistical Four, with great cordiality, began to make-up the Darkey Quartette.

The other two Bagshot juniors left the study, Pankley directing them to look for visitors, and show them to the concert-hall. Under four busy hands the quartette were soon blacked.

The quartette could not help grinning all the time. It seemed so unusually rich to them that the Fistical Four should help them in this polite way in a jape on themselves. They pictured the faces of the Rookwood chums when they learned the real nature of those songs and those jokes that were being kept so dead a secret.

Pankley was so satisfied with his tremendous cunning in taking Jimmy Silver in that it did not occur to him for a single moment that Jimmy Silver might be taking him in in his turn.

But he was destined to make that discovery. A quarter to six had struck when there were footsteps in the passage. Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle came into the study smiling.

"Hallo!" said Pankley. "You ought to be in the concert-room. You won't get good seats if you're late."

"We've come to help," said Tommy Dodd blandly.

"Thanks! We've got enough help. There isn't room in the study for a crowd," said Pankley. "You run off to the concert-room, there's a good chap."

Tommy Dodd grinned, and locked the door.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Poole. "What are you up to?"

"Locking the door."

"What for?"

"In case any Bagshot bouncers might come along."

"I—I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Panky, old man, this is where you get it in the neck. Collar 'em!"

"Hold on!" yelled Pankley in alarm, dodging round the table. "Here, play the game, you rotters! You promised to help us dress!"

"Well, haven't we helped you?"

"Look here! Rags are barred—"

"Are they?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"What about the song of the 'Fat-headed Four'?"

"What about the song of Tommy Dodd, whose face is very odd?" hooted the Modern leader.

Pankley's jaw dropped.

"You—you—you know!" he stammered. "Some silly ass has been blabbing. How did you find out, you beasts?"

"Oh, we dropped on to it!" said Jimmy Silver carelessly. "You can't keep your end up with Rookwood, you know. Not much good trying to jape us. We are jolly well going to help you with your rotten concert."

"Noblesse oblige!" grinned Lovell.

"But now we've found out it's a jape, we're going to turn the giddy tables—see?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Pankley, in dismay. "It will be a frost, after all, Poole!"

"No, it won't," said Jimmy Silver. "The Darkey Quartette are going on just the same, and they're going to sing some funny songs, but it will be a different

quartette and different songs. Collar those sweeps!"

"Look here!—I say—ah!—oh!—Back up, Bagshot!" yelled Pankley desperately.

For a few minutes there was a wild and whirling struggle in the study.

Bagshot backed up, but it was no use, the odds were too heavy.

Pankley and Poole and Putter and Greene went to the floor, and the Rookwooders pinned them down, panting.

Jimmy Silver whirled a cord from his pocket, and in a marvellously short time the Bagshot quartette were tied up, hands and feet, and lay on the carpet as helpless as trussed turkeys.

Their faces were crimson with rage under the lamplack.

"Pankley yelled for help in the faint hope that some of his comrades might hear.

But the Bagshot juniors were all in the concert-room by that time, or showing in the visitors. The quartette and their dressers were left to themselves. And Cecil Pankley hadn't much time for yelling. Jimmy Silver was prepared for that.

The handkerchiefs of the four juniors were crammed into their mouths, their noses being gently pinched till they consented to open their jaws wide for the purpose. Jimmy Silver, who was always thorough, tied twine round their heads to keep the gags in place.

Pankley & Co. lay helpless on the floor, unable to move, unable to speak, only able to glare. They glared like basilisks, but their glares had no effect upon the seven Rookwooders. These cheery young gentlemen only howled with laughter.

"Time we made up," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Thanks awfully for the loan of this clobber, Pankley!"

"Grooooooh!" came faintly from the unfortunate Pankley.

"We shall make a ripping Darkey Quartette—what do you think?" chuckled Lovell.

"Gurrrr!"

"We've got new songs—quite a good selection," said Baby. "May I borrow your banjo, Poole?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co. could only glare in helpless rage and dismay. The Fistical Four stripped off their Etons, and proceeded to don the striking clobber prepared for the Nigger Quartette.

The three Tommies helped them to change, and then helped them to make up, chuckling gleefully the while.

The Bagshot juniors watched them with feelings too deep for words.

Pankley understood Jimmy Silver's wheeze now.

The Darkey Quartette were to appear on the boards all the same, but they would be the Fistical Four. In that minstrel clobber, with black faces and woolly wigs, they could not be recognised. All the audience would suppose that they were Pankley & Co. And Pankley did not need telling what songs they were going to produce. Evidently the tables were to be completely turned and instead of Rookwood being guyed in that farewell concert, it was Pankley & Co. who were to be guyed.

What the feelings of the Bagshot part of the audience would be when the Darkey Quartette produced satirical songs concerning Bagshot Pankley could not be guessed.

The song of "The Fat-headed Four" would never be sung. Those personal references to Tommy Dodd would never be made. The rest of the telling jokes the Bagshot Quartette had so carefully prepared would never see the light. There was to be a new quartette, with a new programme.

Pankley groaned inwardly. He could not groan outwardly—the stuffed handkerchief was in the way.

The last tremendous jape on the Rookwood fellows, which was to have been the send-off, as it were, of the Bagshot party, was working out backwards. Pankley thought of the Bagshot crowd that had come from near and far to the concert—fellows he had written to, and who had biked for miles to enjoy that joke against Rookwood. He could have wept. What would they think when the new Darkey Quartette got to work?

Pankley gave a desperate wriggle in his bonds. At any cost he must never let himself be "done" like that. Bagshot would never let him hear the end of it, even if Rookwood did.

Jimmy Silver looked round from the glass, where he was giving the final artistic touches to his make-up.

"That look all right, Panky?"

"Groooh!"

"So sorry you can't be at the concert," said Jimmy Silver. "But you can think of us, and we'll tell you all about it afterwards."

"Woooooh!"

"And we can assure you that it will be simply ripping—much better than you intended!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley wriggled furiously, but he wriggled in vain. Jimmy Silver had done his work too well. He could only watch in anguish till six o'clock boomed from the clock-tower.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The Concert.

TAP!

"Hallo! Who's there?" called out Jimmy Silver.

"It's six!" called back a Bagshot voice. "When are you coming, Panky?"

"All ready!" said Jimmy Silver. "Just coming!"

The handle of the door was shaken.

"I say, what have you got the door locked for?" called out the Bagshot junior. "Why don't you speak, Panky?"

Pankley's eyes gleamed with a sudden hope. He made a desperate effort to call out, but only succeeded in uttering a faint "Moo!" something like a cow.

Jimmy Silver sprang to the door. He knew that the Bagshot fellow outside was suspicious already, and he did not mean the alarm to be given.

"Look out and cellar him!" he whispered.

He unlocked the door, and the junior outside blinked at him. Jimmy Silver was utterly unrecognisable in red-striped bags, gorgeous waistcoat, woolly wig, and black face.

"That you, Panky? Hallo—Why—what—leggo—yurrooogh!" spluttered the startled youth, as the minstrel seized him suddenly by the collar and yanked him headlong into the study.

The Bagshot junior went spinning across the room, and Jimmy Silver promptly closed the door again. Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle were on the trapper inside in a twinkling, and he was bumped off the floor, and tied up and gagged with his handkerchief, almost before he knew what was happening.

He lay and blinked at the Rookwood chums and at Pankley & Co. with his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Now we'll get off," said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want any more fellows to come inquiring. Sorry you've got to miss the concert, young Hamley; you shouldn't have come inquiring. Fools run in where angels fear to tread, you know. You fellows ready?"

"Ready, O king!" chuckled Baby.

"You Modern chaps get off first—

mustn't be seen together, or even those Bagshot duffers might smell a mouse."

The three Tommies, chuckling, quitted the study, and hurried down to the Form-room, which was already crowded. The Fistical Four, in their new guise, followed. Pankley looked after them expressively.

"So sorry to leave you, Panky," murmured Jimmy Silver. "Now I leave you to your meditations, as Shakespeare puts it. You can thank what a duffer you were to fancy you could jape us, you know."

"Woooooh!"

"Ta-ta!"

The grinning darkeys quitted the study and closed the door, having carefully turned out the gas. Pankley & Co. were left in the dark, to wriggle and "Moo!" as much as they liked.

The four niggers hurried down the stairs. On the lower landing they met Purkiss of Bagshot, who was coming in search of Pankley. Had he arrived at the study, he would have shared the fate of the unfortunate Hamley.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of the four black faces. "You're keeping us waiting. Back up!"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and they passed into the Form-room, followed by Purkiss.

The Form-room was crowded.

All the audience were there, and there were at least twenty Bagshot fellows besides those who were staying at Rookwood. They had come along joyfully to watch the great Pankley "guying" the Rookwooders. All eyes were turned on the Darkey Quartette as they came in, and there was a murmur of applause from the Bagshot section.

"Bravo, Panky!"

"Ripping, old man!"

The quartette made their way to the dais at the upper end of the room, where four chairs had been arranged in a semicircle. They saluted the audience and sat down. In the front row of seats Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth were sitting in state; the august presence of the two professors was understood to imply that there was to be law and order, and that rags were strictly barred.

But nobody wanted to rag. The Bagshot crowd were prepared to enjoy the joke against Rookwood. And by this time a large number of Rookwood juniors, having been apprised in whispers of how the matter stood, were prepared to enjoy the joke against Bagshot. So both sides were satisfied.

Jimmy Silver began twanging his banjo—or rather, Poole's banjo, and there was a preliminary cheer from the Bagshot section.

"Go it, Panky!"

The first item was a song, sung in a sing-song voice by the darkey with the banjo, who twanged his own accompaniment. The Bagshot fellows prepared to enjoy that song, but as it proceeded their faces grew simply extraordinary in expression. For this is how the song ran:

"Have you heard of Pankley & Co?"

Oh!
Have you heard of the wonderful three?

He, he!
There's Panky, the chief, with a face like a rake,
Who for first-class fat-headedness collared the cake.

And Poole, whose queer features would frighten a Hun,
And Putter, whose nose is the shape of a bun,

He, he!
That is the three.
The thumpingest duffers you ever did see!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

That new version of Pankley's own composition made the Rookwood fellows howl. The Bagshot juniors looked utterly blank.

"Bravo!" roared Tommy Todd. "Go it!"

"Second lap!" shouted Cook. "Pile in!"

"I—I say, they—they're mad!" gasped Purkiss. "They—they were going to sing a song about the Classical chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Twang, twang! Pong, pong! went the banjo.

"They belong to a school that you know, Oh!

Called Bagshot, a place rather low, Oh!

It's a home for incurable duffers and flats,

And fellows who always talk out of their hats.

They can't keep their end up with Rookwood—they've tried—

But at cricket and footer they're licked to the wide!

Ho, ho!

That is the show, The Bagshot Asylum where lunatics go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood audience were almost in convulsions. The faces of the Bagshot fellows were pictures by this time. What could possess Pankley to make him sing that absurd song about himself and his school simply beat them. Where was the rag the Bagshot Co. had planned—the jape that was to wind up their stay at Rookwood so triumphantly? Pankley & Co. seemed to have gone out of their senses at the last moment, and turned the joke against themselves!

"Next man in!" shouted Flynn.

"Go it, darkeys!"

"On the bawl!"

It was a dialogue that followed.

"Massa Johnson!" squeaked Newcome from the end of the row.

"Yes, Massa Snowball?" squeaked Jimmy Silver.

"Massa Johnson, can you tell me the difference between changing a shilling and a Bagshot bounder?"

"Give it up, Massa Snowball!"

"Why, one's done by copper, and the other's done by Silver!"

"Bravo!"

Purkiss jumped up in wild excitement.

"Tain't Pankley at all!" he roared.

"It's those Rookwood bounders japing us! Where's Pankley?"

"Tain't Pankley!" yelled the Bagshot crowd, the truth dawning upon them.

"Order! Sit down!"

"Where's Pankley? Rush 'em!"

"Collar 'em!"

"Order!"

"Silence!"

"Order there!" shouted Bulkeley, rising in his place. "Keep order, please!"

"We'll make 'em keep order, Bulkeley!" said Tommy Dodd. "Let 'em try to rush anybody, that's all. We'll rush 'em!"

"Sit down at once, all of you!" exclaimed Bulkeley.

The Bagshot juniors sat down, foaming. Pankley's deep and cunning precaution in getting a prefect at the concert was working out in favour of the Fistical Four, like the rest of Pankley's unfortunate jape.

Twang, twang! Ping, pong, pong! went the banjo once more. Then came the song to the tune of "Tommy

Atkins"—but it was a new version; poetic genius was evidently as highly developed among the Rookwood juniors as amongst their rivals. Purkiss, boiling with rage, had slipped quietly out of the concert-room, and was dashing away in search of the missing minstrels, whose places now had clearly been taken by the fellows they had intended to jape. Meanwhile, Lovell was chanting the following:

"In the Bagshot Home for Duffers there's an ass,

The greenest chap where all the chaps are green,

His brains are very little, but his feet Are quite the biggest tootsies ever seen!

When'e'er he plans a clever little jape, He's somehow sure to meet a little check,

He's tried it on, in fact, but we caught him in the act,

And Panky's got it fairly in the neck! Oh, Panky, Panky, Pank! You've got yourself to thank!

You shouldn't come to Rookwood, dear, to play your little prank,

You can't expect to score when you're up against us four,

So we'll give your concert for you, while you're tied up on the floor!"

The Rookwooders shrieked with glee. They understood now what had become of Pankley & Co. while the Classical minstrels were giving the concert.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, in spite of his great dignity as a prefect and captain of the school, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

The juniors were almost in hysterics. Nearly the best part of the show was the expression on the Bagshot faces. Their looks were, as Tommy Dodd remarked, worth a guinea a box.

"Hurray! Ripping!" chorused Rookwood.

"Rotten!" yelled Bagshot. "Chuck it! Go home! Where's Panky?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Spoofers! Get off!"

"Order!"

"Silence!"

"Sit down!"

"What have you done with Panky? Where's Panky?"

"Order, you Bagshot bounders!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Bulkeley, speak a word to those noisy kids—do! They can't keep order—after asking a prefect to come here specially for law and order."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pong, pong, pong! went the banjo.

But the next item on the programme was destined never to be delivered. "Massa Johnson" was about to begin when the Form-room door was flung suddenly open. Purkiss of Bagshot had found the unhappy minstrels in the end street.

Four juniors with black faces and furious looks rushed in.

They were hardly recognisable, but the audience guessed that they were Pankley and Poole and Putter and Greene, the quartette who should have given that performance.

"Here they are!" yelled Bagshot.

"Here's Panky!"

"Order there!"

"Kick those hooligans out!"

Not a word did Pankley & Co. utter. They made a rush for the platform. They wanted vengeance, and they wanted it at once.

Bulkeley jumped up.

"Hold on! Stop!" he shouted. Pankley & Co. did not even hear him. Like a hurricane they swooped down on Massa Johnson & Co.

"Order!" yelled Jimmy Silver indignantly. "What do you mean by interrupting a concert—before your own visitors, too, and the prefect you've invited? Keep off, I tell you! Oh, my hat!"

Pankley fairly jumped at him!

The banjo went to the floor with a crash, and Pankley and Jimmy Silver closed, and crashed down on top of it. Poole was never likely to extract any more sweet music from that banjo.

Crash! Bump!

"Back up!"

"Yah! Go for the eads!"

"Give 'em socks!"

Eight black-faced and excited juniors were engaged in deadly strife. It was Pankley & Co. who had brought a prefect there to keep order. Now, under the very nose of the prefect they were committing assault and battery upon the Fistical Four.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Bump! Crash! Yell!

The audience were all on their feet, most of them nearly in convulsions. They yelled encouragement to the combatants according to their sympathies.

"Go it, Panky! Give 'em beans!"

"Back up, Jimmy!"

"Pile in, Bagshot!"

"Play up, Rookwood!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley stood gasping for some moments, utterly taken aback. Then he strode on to the platform. Fortunately, he had brought in a cane, in case it should be necessary to keep order. He did not trouble to speak to the infuriated nigger-minstrels. He laid about them on all sides with great impartiality.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroor! Oh! Oh!"

Whack, whack!

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley was "going it" hot and strong. It was more than the nigger-minstrels could stand. Even the infuriated Pankley cooled off as the cane came thwacking across his back.

The eight darkers scrambled wildly off the platform and fled. Bulkeley, gasping for breath, shook his cane after them as they bolted.

The Fistical Four did not stop running till they were safe in the end study.

Jimmy Silver sank in the armchair, gasping.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! I'm hurt!" growled Lovell. "What did Bulkeley want to chip in for? We could have kicked those cads out and finished the concert."

"Never mind! I think we did enough!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Ha, ha, ha! We did them brown! It's the last jape, and we've got the best of it. Pankley & Co. have been fairly done in the eye this time! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" chorled the Co.

On Monday the Bagshot crowd departed from Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. saw them off with genial smiles.

As the Bagshot brake rolled away Jimmy Silver called out to Pankley to be sure to let him know when he was giving another concert. But Pankley made no reply; he only blushed. It was likely to be a long time before Pankley's chums allowed him to forget that concert; and for days after the Bagshot fellows were gone Jimmy Silver & Co. chorled over the way they had succeeded in turning the tables. As Jimmy Silver remarked, it was the "Jape of the Season!"

THE END.