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**GUNNER'S LATEST!** Peter Cuthbert Gunner simply asks to have his leg pulled, and Jimmy Silver & Co. do it! It is the only way to deal with the heavy-handed duffer of the Fourth Form!

# Gulling Gunner!



A Rollicking, Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood.

By  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Gunner Means Business!

"GUNNY, old chap—" "Shut up, Dickinson!" "But I say, old fellow—" pleaded Dickinson minor.

Dickinson minor pleaded almost with tears in his eyes.

He would have gone down on his knees to Peter Cuthbert Gunner just then, if that would have done any good.

It was for Gunner's own sake.

Gunner of the Fourth was a very trying study-mate; but he was Dickinson minor's study-mate, and not a bad fellow in his own way. It was his misfortune, not his fault, that he was the champion duffer of Rookwood School.

Dickinson felt that it was up to him to save Gunner from himself—if he could. So he pleaded—in fact, beseeched.

"Don't try it on, old fellow!"

Snort from Gunner.

"Jimmy Silver's right under my thumb," said Gunner calmly. "You ought to know that, Dickinson. I'm going to make Jimmy Silver put me in the eleven for the Bagshot match. I've said so. When I say a thing, Dickinson, I mean it."

"But, I say—"

"You needn't say anything, Dickinson. Do you think I've been studying mesmerism for a whole fortnight, not to put it to any use at the finish? You must be an ass!"

"But—but suppose it doesn't work?"

"What rot! I've studied it—mastered it. You know that. I've simply got to put the 'fluence on Jimmy Silver, to make him the slave of my will. His personality will be merged in mine; that's how they put it in the book: 'Mesmerism Simplified.' I've got it all at my finger-tips."

"Oh dear!" groaned Dickinson

minor. "But—but if it doesn't work?"

Gunner smiled.

"It must work! Didn't it work in your case, when I hypnotised you, and made you believe you were a rabbit?"

Dickinson minor grinned involuntarily.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner fully believed that that wonderful experiment in which he had put his weird powers to the test, was a bona fide one.

He did not give sufficient consideration to the fact that Dickinson minor, at the time, had been hungry, and wanting his tea.

As Dickinson couldn't have his tea until Gunner mesmerised him, his only resource was to be mesmerised. He was willing to let Gunner tell him that he was a rabbit, or a rhinoceros, for that matter, so long as Gunner would leave off playing the goat, and let him have his tea.

Of course, he couldn't explain all that to Gunner. Gunner was too heavy-handed a youth to be given such explanations. He would have dusted the study, with Dickinson minor for a duster.

Having proved to his own satisfaction that he was a hypnotist of strange and terrible power, Gunner was going ahead with his great scheme for getting into the junior eleven.

As Gunner's cricket was of a kind that might have made the angels weep, he had no chance of getting into the eleven in the ordinary way. Jimmy Silver would have preferred even Tubby Muffin as a member of his team.

But Gunner intended to have what he regarded as his due. Only by means of the "influence" could he hope to obtain it.

Under the mystic hypnotic 'fluence Jimmy Silver would not be able to help himself. He would play Gunner,

and Gunner would knock up whole centuries for Rookwood—unless he was dismissed for a duck's egg, as was really more probable.

Gunner had a sense of duty. He felt that it was his duty to play for Rookwood. He was going to do his duty.

Heedless of Dickinson minor and his beseeching, Peter Cuthbert Gunner turned to the study door. There was no time to waste, for the Bagshot match took place on the morrow, Wednesday. On this very evening the list of players was to be posted up, and the name of P. C. Gunner was going to appear in it, or P. C. Gunner would know the reason why not.

Dickinson minor gasped as Gunner opened the door.

Egregious ass as Gunner was, Dickinson could scarcely believe that he really supposed that he could hypnotise Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, and bend that rather determined youth to his will.

But Gunner evidently did believe it. Perhaps the wish being father to the thought helped Gunner to believe it. And the experiment on Dickinson minor had been convincing—to Gunner.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Not Quite a Success!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were finishing tea in the end study when Gunner looked in. The Fistical

Four all smiled to see him. Gunner, and his claims to play in the Bagshot match, appealed to the sense of humour of all the Fourth Form at Rookwood. How a fellow, who fancied himself at cricket, could play quite so badly as Gunner did, was a deep mystery to the Rookwood juniors; and how he could continue to fancy himself at the game, in the circumstances, was a still deeper mystery.

"Trot in, old top!" said Arthur Edward Lovell cheerily. "Tell us something about cricket."

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"What's the difference between a wicket and a wicket-keeper, Gunner?" asked Raby.

"Gunner hasn't got that far," said Newcome. "Ask him something easier."

Gunner frowned. "I didn't come here to talk silly rot!" he said.

"You didn't?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Then you'd better keep mum, old top. If you say anything, you'd do what you didn't come here to do."

"I want a private interview with you, Silver."

Jimmy stared. "I mean it," said Gunner. "It's very important. The winning of the Bagshot match may depend on it."

"Wha-a-at?"

The Fistical Four blinked at Gunner. "You've got something to tell me about the match?" said Jimmy Silver, utterly mystified.

"And why can't we hear it?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell.

"What utter rot!" remarked Raby.

"Look here, Silver, I tell you it's important," said Gunner. "I want only a few minutes, but I must see you alone."

"My only hat!"

Jimmy looked at his chums. Why Gunner should want a private interview was a puzzle, but there was no special reason why he shouldn't have it if he wanted it. Lovell grinned, and rose to his feet.

"Gunner thinks he may be able to persuade you to put him into the team when your kind uncles ain't looking after you," remarked Arthur Edward. "If you do, Jimmy, we'll lynch you!"

"If I do, I shall deserve to be lynched," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "No danger of that."

Tea being finished, the Co. strolled out of the study. They had been going out, anyway. Gunner closed the door carefully after them. Jimmy had risen, too. He was going down to the cricket ground with his chums—when he was done with Gunner.

"Cut it short!" he remarked.

"Sit down!"

"What for?"

"It's necessary."

"Look here, I can't waste a lot of time, Gunner," said the captain of the Fourth. "Come to the point, and be sharp."

However, Jimmy Silver obligingly sat down again.

Gunner stood before him. The hour had come. Gunner recalled to mind the instructions in "Mesmerism Simplified," which he had studied so deeply, and with such profit.

Gunner had expended half-a-crown on that valuable handbook, and never had a purchaser received such value for half-a-crown—if Gunner's belief in his weird powers was well-founded.

According to his half-a-crown's-worth, a powerful personality and an iron will were requisite for a hypnotist, and Gunner had these, also a commanding eye, which was necessary, too.

With a powerful personality, an iron will, and a commanding eye, to start with, Gunner had found the rest quite easy. Now Jimmy Silver was going to have the benefit of the lot.

Jimmy's eyes opened wide with amazement as Gunner fixed a stony glare upon him. Then Gunner's hands came up, and he proceeded to make passes—mesmeric passes.

Jimmy Silver did not know that they were mesmeric passes. He did not even think of anything of the kind.

So far as he could see, Gunner was THE POPULAR.—No. 390.

understudying the celebrated gentleman who was "washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water."

Jimmy's stare grew wider. Once or twice before he had entertained doubts as to whether Peter Cuthbert Gunner was quite right in the head. Now all his doubts were resolved.

A fellow who glared into your eyes and waved his hands about in front of your face for no ostensible reason could not be supposed to be in possession of all his senses.

Jimmy Silver pushed his chair back and doubled his fists ready to tackle Gunner if he grew violent.

"Keep still!" snapped Gunner.

"Are you potty?" yelled Jimmy.

"Sleep!"

"What?" shrieked the captain of the Fourth.

"Sleep!"

Jimmy Silver did not obey that command. He shoved his chair back farther and leaped to his feet.

He was really alarmed now.

"Keep off, you potty chump!" he shouted, as Gunner advanced. "I don't want to hurt you, but if you come nearer I'll knock you down!"

"Sit down!" yelled Gunner.

"Let me pass, you maniac!" yelled Jimmy, dodging round Gunner towards the door.

Gunner grasped him. His victim was not to escape him like this before the fluence was on.

Jimmy hit out at once from the shoulder. There was a crash as Gunner stretched out on the floor.

He gave a roar as he landed there.

In another second Jimmy Silver had torn open the door and was in the passage.

He was a good deal excited and alarmed. Jimmy Silver feared no foe in the ordinary way, but being shut up alone in the study with a lunatic was no joke.

Gunner sat up dazedly. He groped for his nose, which felt as if it wasn't there, and spluttered.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!"

Jimmy Silver started down the passage at a run. His idea was to cut down to Mr. Dalton's study, and acquaint the master of the Fourth with Gunner's alarming state, so that the unhappy fellow could be looked after and seen by a doctor.

Dickinson minor jumped out of the

doorway of Study No. 7, and caught Jimmy by the arm.

"What's happened?" he gasped.

"Don't stop me!" panted Jimmy Silver. "Gunner's gone mad!"

Dickinson minor giggled hysterically.

"Hold on! He's not mad——"

"He's as mad as a hatter! He was glaring at me and waving his hands in my face——"

"Ha, ha! Hold on, I tell you! I'll explain. For goodness' sake don't go to Mr. Dalton! It's all right; only a game!" gasped Dickinson. "He's told me not to tell, but I'd better now. Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver paused.

"What do you mean?" he demanded gruffly.

"I'll explain. Let's get away in case Gunner——"

"Come down with me, then," said Jimmy Silver.

The two juniors went down the passage together to the stairs, Jimmy in a state of doubt and amazement.

It was several minutes later that Gunner came out of the end study with his handkerchief to his nose. But he was not thinking about Jimmy Silver, or even the Bagshot match. His nose required attention—careful attention—and Gunner headed for the nearest bath-room, where for quite a long time he was busy bathing his nose.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Gunner's Latest!

LOVELL and Raby and Newcome were waiting downstairs for their study leader. They looked at him inquiringly when he came down with Dickinson minor.

"Well?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"He's potty!" Jimmy Silver explained. "Started the maddest antics in the study. I had to knock him down and bolt!"

"Great Scott!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Dickinson.

"It's not a laughing matter, Dickinson," said Lovell sternly. "He's your chum, too!"

"He's not mad, you know," gurgled Dickinson. "Jolly near it, if you like; but I'll explain to you fellows where Gunner can't hear. Don't tell him I've told you, or he will scalp me bald-headed. Come here."

Dickinson minor drew the Fistical Four into a window recess. There he gave a cautious look round, to make sure that Peter Cuthbert Gunner was not in the offing.

The secret of Gunner's hypnotic power was a deep, deep secret, and Dickinson knew that his life would not be worth living in Study No. 7 if he gave Gunner away, and Gunner discovered the fact.

But for Gunner's own sake the secret had to be told. Dickinson couldn't stand aside while Gunner was reported to the Fourth Form master as a maniac needing control.

Dickinson chuckled spasmodically.

"Gunny's not mad!" he breathed. "I know it looks like it. I thought so at first, but he isn't! He's a mesmerist!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Which?"

"A—a—a mesmerist!" repeated Jimmy Silver faintly.

"That's it! He's got a book on it, and he's studied it, and he thinks he's got it pat!" murmured Dickinson. "Fathead, you know! He can't help being a fathead! He mesmerised me in the study——"

"You!"

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"Yes; told me I was a rabbit!"

"Great pip! Did you believe it?"

"Well, not, exactly," said Dickinson cautiously. "You see, I wasn't really mesmerised. But Gunner wouldn't let me have tea till he'd done it, so—so—"

"So you pulled his leg!"

"Well, yes! How's a fellow to get on with Gunner without pulling his leg?" said Dickinson defensively.

"By punching his head?" suggested Lovell.

"Well, I can't punch his head; he's too hefty. Besides, I like the old chap; he's a good sort in his way. He stands magnificent spreads in the study!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Than which there is no higher praise!" he remarked.

"Well, you see—"

"I see that you think more of the flesh-pots of Egypt than of the frozen truth!" said Jimmy Silver. "You've no right to take Gunner in like that!"

"Well, I wouldn't," said Dickinson. "But he asks to have his leg pulled; he fairly sits up and begs for it. Well, that's how it is. He thinks he can mesmerise, and he's going to mesmerise you, Jimmy, and make you put him in the Bagshot eleven!"

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"So that's it!" he stuttered.

"That's it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

The Fistical Four shrieked. The discovery that Gunner wasn't insane was a relief; but the discovery that he was a mesmerist, endowed—in his own imagination—with fearful and irresistible powers, took the Fourth-Formers by storm.

They roared till the tears ran down their faces. They were used to Gunner, but this was unusually rich even for Gunner.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed Jimmy Silver at last. "Gunner will be the death of me some day!"

"A mesmerist!" gasped Raby. "He's going to—to—ha, ha!"

"Going to mesmerise Jimmy, and get into the eleven!" stuttered Newcome. "He would have to mesmerise Bagshot, too, if he wanted to get off without a duck's egg!"

Jimmy Silver wiped away his tears. "Well, I'm glad he's not actually potty," he said. "This comes pretty near it—"

"So near as makes precious little difference!" chuckled Lovell. "Poor old Gunner. He will wind up in Colney Hatch some day!"

"Don't tell him I told you," implored Dickinson. "Just bump him when he tries it on. That will meet the case."

"Oh, we won't tell him," said Jimmy. "Set your feeble little mind at rest."

Dickinson minor walked way feeling much relieved. Jimmy Silver & Co. started for the cricket field, chuckling as they went. Gunner's latest really put the lid on, as Lovell remarked.

"Will the howling ass try it on again?" said Lovell. "After coming a mucker, as he's just done?"

"Well, he's a sticker!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I shall have to be on my guard. A fellow with these fearful and wonderful powers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Co.

Jimmy's eyes danced.

"Let him try it on again!" he said. "Now I know what the burbling jabberwock is at, I'll pull his silly leg. I'll let him think the 'fluence is on—right up to the time we play Bagshot. That will give him a lesson for his silly cheek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, what's the merry joke?" asked Conroy, as the Fistical Four came on the cricket field chortling.

"Gunner!" said Jimmy Silver. "He wants to play against Bagshot tomorrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Conroy chuckled. The mere mention of Gunner in connection with cricket was enough to make any fellow in the Fourth chuckle.

Meanwhile, Peter Cuthbert Gunner had bathed his nose and done all that could be done for the damaged organ. But it still had a rich blossoming look when he brought it down to Study No. 7. He found Dickinson minor there. That youth gave him a rather guilty look.

"D-d-did you try it on?" he murmured.

Gunner nodded morosely.

"W-w-w-was it a success?" asked Dickinson hypocritically.

"Fairly," said Gunner.

"Eh?"

"But not quite. The 'fluence was going on, I could see that, but Silver is a tougher customer than you, Dicky. More character, you know—not so soft. More resisting power. It was going on quite well when he made a sudden effort and—broke the 'fluence, as it were."

"Oh!" gasped Dickinson.

"But I'm satisfied that I can handle him," said Gunner confidently. "I'm going to try again, and next time there will be no mistake. I shall have him right under the influence in plenty of time for the Bagshot match. Already he's partly under it, in spite of his resistance. I shall finish the job. You'll see."

"Oh!" said Dickinson again. That was really all he could say.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Under the 'Fluence!

"SILVER!"

"Hallo, Gunner."

Jimmy Silver's tone was quite merry and bright.

It was the following day, and morning lessons had finished at Rookwood. Most of the juniors were thinking about the Bagshot match. Pankley & Co., of Bagshot, were expected at Rookwood quite early in the afternoon.

Gunner was thinking about it as much as anybody. Time was getting very close now, and the 'fluence was not yet on.

During the previous evening Gunner had looked for chances without finding them. Jimmy's chums had hardly left him, and the amateur hypnotist hadn't been able to get to work.

Quite unknown to Gunner, Jimmy intended to give him a chance; but he did not want it to begin too soon. Pulling Gunner's egregious leg was entertaining, but the captain of the Fourth hadn't too much time to waste on the entertainment.

"I want to speak to you," said Gunner. "Come for a stroll in the quad, Silver, will you?"

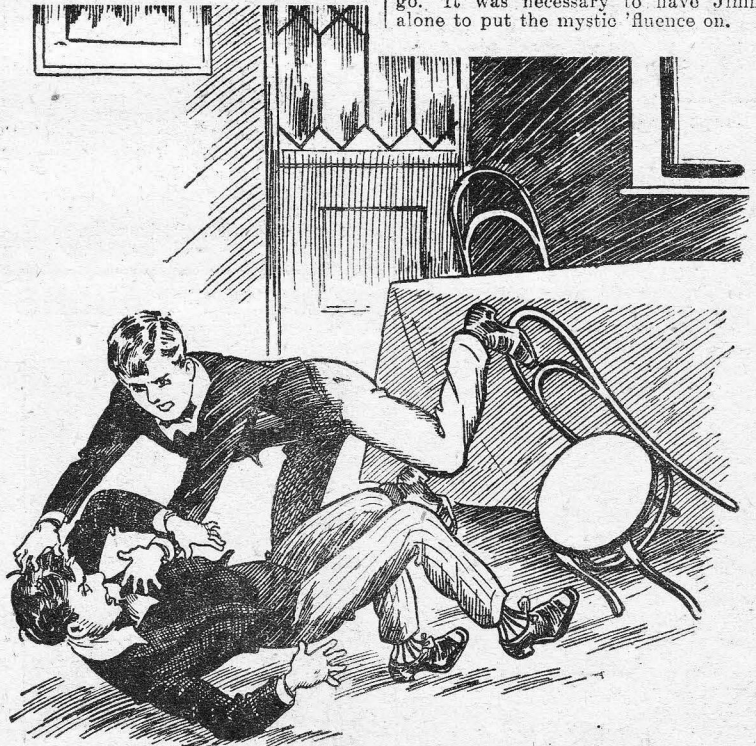
"After dinner," said Jimmy.

Gunner frowned. But he had to wait till after dinner; there was no help for that.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were smiling when they came in to dinner. They were anticipating what was to follow.

When the Rookwooders marched out of the dining-room, Gunner joined Jimmy Silver at once. Lovell and Raby and Newcombe strolled away, just as if they wanted to give Gunner a chance.

Peter Cuthbert was glad to see them go. It was necessary to have Jimmy alone to put the mystic 'fluence on.



UNDER THE 'FLUENCE! "Now you're a tiger," said Gunner gloatingly. "What are you?" "A tiger!" said Jimmy Silver. And Jimmy, apparently in the belief that he was a tiger, made a sudden spring at Gunner. The mesmerist went with a crash to the floor and Jimmy clawed at him ruthlessly. (See Chapter 4.)



"Well, what is it?" said Jimmy amiably.

"Come into the Common-room," said Gunner.

"Certainly."

Jimmy followed Gunner into the junior Common-room, which was deserted at that time of the day.

"Sit down, old chap," said Gunner.

Jimmy sat down.

Gunner stood before him, just as he had done in the study the previous day. But this time Jimmy Silver showed no sign of restiveness. He seemed like clay in the hands of the potter.

Gunner fixed his eyes on Jimmy's, with a steady fixed glare.

"The fact is, Silver," said Gunner, "I'm doing some new gymnastics—wrist exercises, in fact, and I'd like you to see them. Just sit still and watch for a few minutes, will you?"

This was deep, very deep, of Gunner. What he wanted was to gain time for the quelling eye and the mystic passes to work their magic effect on the mesmerised victim. If Jimmy could only be induced to sit still for a few minutes while Gunner put in the mesmeric passes, all was well, according to Gunner's belief.

Jimmy restrained his feelings. To Gunner's great satisfaction he nodded an amiable assent.

"Go ahead, old chap!" he said. "This is quite interesting!"

"More interesting than you think, perhaps!" said Gunner. "Just you watch me!"

With his eyes fixed on Jimmy's, he started the mesmeric passes. His large hands waved and wove patterns before Jimmy's eyes.

To his delight, Jimmy's eyelids began to droop.

Gunner had been washing his hands in invisible soap in imperceptible water for only a couple of minutes, when the captain of the Fourth displayed unmistakable signs of drowsiness.

In three minutes his eyes had closed. "Sleep!" said Gunner in a thrilling voice.

Jimmy snored.

Gunner almost gasped. Of course, he had known that he could do it, he had not had any doubts about that. Still, it was a thrilling moment when the amateur hypnotist saw his victim helpless before him—his will merged in Gunner's, as it were, the slave of the master-mind.

"Open your eyes!" commanded Gunner.

Jimmy Silver's eyes opened.

"Now," said Gunner in a deep, impressive voice, "you're under the influence, Jimmy Silver—the slave of my will. Understand?"

"Yes," said Jimmy drowsily.

"You have to obey my orders!"

"Yes."

"Stand up!"

Jimmy Silver stood up.

"Now stand on one leg!"

Jimmy Silver stood on one leg.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner almost crowed with delight. Evidently the captain of the Fourth was the slave of his powerful personality.

"By George!" murmured Gunner aloud. "This beats it! Why, after this, I'll mesmerise Bulkeley of the Sixth, and make him put me in the First Eleven, and win matches for Rookwood. I'll mesmerise the Head, and make him put me in the Fifth Form—dash it all, no, in the Sixth! It's a curious thing that they grin

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under the 'fluence. Dickinson minor did just the same, and now Silver's doing it. Affects the muscles of the face, somehow, I dare say. Lucky for some people that I'm a chap of high principles, and only mean to use this terrible power for good things!"

Jimmy was still standing on one leg, the slave of the hypnotist's will!

"Now, Silver," said Gunner, "your name's not Silver at all. Your name's Higgins. Now what is your name?"

"Higgins," said Jimmy.

"Good! Now you're a cat!"

"Miaou-au-iaou!" mewled Jimmy Silver.

Gunner fairly chortled with satisfaction. He was putting his victim to severe tests, and all of them were successful.

"Now you're a tiger," said Gunner gloatingly. "What are you?"

"A tiger!" said Jimmy Silver.

And Jimmy, apparently in the belief that he was a tiger, made a sudden spring at Gunner. The mesmerist went with a crash to the floor, taken quite by surprise, and Jimmy clawed at him ruthlessly, as undoubtedly a real tiger would have done.

"Yaroo!" roared Gunner. "Oh, my hat! Gerroff! Oh! Oop!"

"Gr-r-r-r!" growled Jimmy Silver tigerishly. And he clawed at Gunner, and gnashed his teeth in the hypnotist's startled face.

"Great pip! Gerroff! Here I say, you're—you're a canary!" gasped Gunner breathlessly. "Just a harmless little canary bird! Gerroff!"

Jimmy Silver ceased to claw. He went and perched himself on the corner of the table.

Gunner staggered to his feet. His collar had been torn off the studs, and his necktie wrecked by the clawing of the tiger.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "I shall have to be jolly careful how I exert my power! Better not make a chap believe he's a lion or a tiger again."

Gunner set himself to rights hastily. He was feeling rather bumped and breathless, but very triumphant.

"Now you're Jimmy Silver again!" he said. "Captain of the Rookwood Fourth, you know! You're playing me in the Bagshot match this afternoon. Understand?"

"Yes," said Jimmy drowsily.

"Good! Come with me. Mind, you

are the slave of my will, and have to do exactly as I tell you!"

"To hear is to obey!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Come on!"

Gunner took the captain of the Fourth by the arm and led him out of the Common-room.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Gunner Wakes Up!

"COME on, Jimmy!" called out Arthur Edward Lovell. The Co. were waiting for Jimmy Silver in the passage.

"I'm ready!" said Jimmy.

Gunner gave his victim a rather anxious side-glance. Jimmy Silver looked quite normal—there was no trace of 'fluence in his looks.

"The fellows are ready," said Raby. "Bagshot may be here in a few minutes."

Jimmy turned to Gunner.

"Get into your flannels!" he said.

"What's Gunner to get into flannels for?" asked Lovell, suppressing a chuckle.

"He's told me to play him!"

"My hat!"

"I won't keep you two jiffies!" said Gunner in great delight. And he bounded for the staircase.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked out of the School House. Jimmy Silver smiled serenely.

"Is the 'fluence on?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy nodded.

"Right on! Gunner took me into the Common-room and mesmerised me. He made me believe that I was a tiger and a canary. At least, he thinks he did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a tiger I clawed him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co.

"As a canary, I was just thinking of pecking him when he came to business," said Jimmy Silver. "Now I'm going to play him against Bagshot—I don't think! Dear old Gunner!"

Meanwhile Gunner was changing into flannels in high spirits. As he came down in spotless array he met Dickinson minor, and Dickinson minor staggered as he saw him.

"You—you—you're not playing!" stammered Dickinson.

"What do you think?" grinned Gunner. "I'm down for the Bagshot match. Didn't I tell you so?"

"But—but Jimmy Silver—" babbled Dickinson.

"He's under the influence!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"The slave of my will!" said Gunner.

"Oh, my hat!"

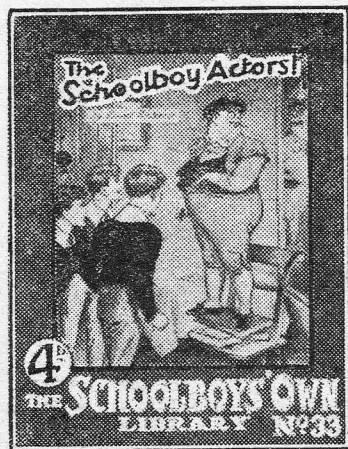
"Come along and see me play, old fellow!" said Gunner, linking his arm in Dickinson minor's, and leading his dazed chum away. "I've got a chance at last. The fellows are going to see what I can do. I expect to get a century in each innings—the other bats will hardly be wanted! I shall make Silver open the innings with me, of course. First in and not out, you know! That's the style! This will be a red-letter day for Rookwood! The Bagshot Bounders will see some cricket they've never dreamed of!"

"They—they will—if—if you play!" stammered Dickinson.

Gunner almost raced his dizzy chum down to Little Side. Dickinson minor went like a fellow in a dream. Was Gunner really a mesmerist after all? If not, what was he doing in flannels, with a bat under his arm, hurrying

(Continued on page 22.)

## TONS OF LAUGHS IN



NOW ON SALE!



into the wood itself, and moved about the undergrowth.

He came across a pheasant's nest, and was only dissuaded from eating the eggs therein by the plucky defence of the hen-pheasant herself.

Thence he set out on a journey right through the wood. Having been away hunting for two nights on end, as was his custom, he was going back to his wife and children, who had a special nest of their owl in the hollow of an old tree-root.

Now, all his adventures\* that night had taken up some hours, and his progress being slow—he had one broad stream to cross, for one thing—the sun was well up when he finally reached the old tree-stump; and then and there he stopped as if frozen. Apparently, mother hedgehog was out, and one of the soft, white-spined babies had wandered out against orders.

Our hedgehog knew nothing of this, however. What he saw was the baby hedgehog waddling innocently and stupidly straight for the hole in the stump, across which a large, venomous viper lay basking in the sun—basking, but now with head raised ready to strike. Back drew the evil, hissing head farther and farther. In another instant the fatal blow would be delivered, when—ah!

With an odd, harsh cry, half-squeal, half-grunt, the hedgehog hurled forward, snapped at the snake, and leapt clear, to receive the infuriated serpent's lightning-quick return blow on his spines. Again and again he leapt in, bit, and leapt out again, the maddened serpent lashing itself impotently against his spiny shelf, till at last its strength failed, and the hedgehog sprang in to stay.

Finally, he thoughtfully ate the snake up, and went into his home for a good sleep.

## GULLING GUNNER!

(Continued from page 20.)

down to Little Side for the match? Dickinson minor pinched himself to make sure that he was not dreaming.

There was a crowd of Rookwooders on Little Side—Jimmy Silver and his merry men were ready. Bagshot were expected any moment now. Jimmy stood among the cricketers, and Gunner was rather surprised to see eleven fellows ready. Apparently the skipper had not yet decided which one to leave out to make room for Gunner.

The Fistical Four exchanged merry glances as Gunner came up.

"Ready!" announced Gunner.

Many eyes turned on Gunner.

"And what are you ready for?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"What's the ass doing with that bat?" asked Conroy. "Has he dreamed that he's a cricketer?"

"I'm playing!" said Gunner coolly.

"Is there a match on to-day at marbles, then?" asked Conroy.

"I'm playing Bagshot!" roared Gunner. "Silver, I want to open the innings, and take the first over."

"Oh! You want that?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes. A good innings at the start will buck up the team. You can take the other end."

"Thanks."

"Don't try any showing off, or fancy cricket," said Gunner. "What I want is some good, steady stone-walling. Leave the run-getting to me. Just back me up, that's all. That's what I want."

"What you want, and what you are going to get, seem to be a bit different," remarked Jimmy Silver, cheerfully. "Hallo! there's the Bagshot brake. Run away and play, Gunner."

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Put some more 'fluence on, Gunner." Gunner jumped.

"What? Silver—I'm playing! I've told you—ordered you—why, I'll jolly well smash you—here, leggo!" roared Gunner.

"It's time for you to wake up!" explained Jimmy Silver. "Carry him away and drop him somewhere."

The Co. collared the astonished Gunner, and he was lifted off his feet. His bat dropped in the grass, and Gunner struggled wildly—but in vain—Jimmy Silver smiled at him sweetly.

"The 'fluence wasn't quite strong enough," he explained. "Try again—another day. Too busy now."

"Why, I—I—I—" stuttered Gunner. He choked with wrath. Amid a roar of laughter, he was whirled away, and dumped down at a distance from the pitch.

By the time Peter Cuthbert Gunner had his second wind, Bagshot were batting, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the field. Gunner sat up in the grass and blinked at them. Slowly, but surely, the truth forced itself into his powerful brain, that Jimmy Silver hadn't been under the 'fluence at all—that he had been pulling the mesmerist's egregious leg. It took Gunner a long time to realise that, and to digest it.

He sat for quite a long time and blinked at the cricketers. Jimmy Silver & Co. had quite forgotten his existence, by the time he limped away—a sadder, if not wiser, Gunner.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner did not play in the Bagshot match. But he found another occupation that afternoon. He lighted a fire in Study No. 7, and put "Mesmerism Simplified" upon it. With a gloomy brow Gunner watched his half-crown's worth of marvellous knowledge reduced to ashes.

From which Dickinson minor—with considerable satisfaction—deduced that Gunner had given up mesmerism, and that nothing more would be heard of Gunner's Latest!

THE END.

(You will all enjoy reading: "Lovell's Business Deal!" next week's rollicking long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood.)

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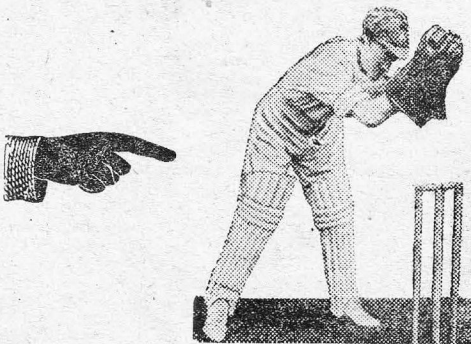


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