



Morny's Master-Stroke!



By Owen Conquest.

A splendid long complete story of Jimmy Silver and Co., of Rookwood, especially written for "The Holiday Annual." Illustrated by G. W. Wakefield.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Unexpected

IT was frightful luck.

And it was not Jimmy Silver's fault.

Even Arthur Edward Lovell—sometimes a stern critic—admitted that it wasn't Jimmy's fault.

It was just awful luck, one of those things that do happen just when they are not wanted to happen.

Detention on a half-holiday never was pleasant. Detention on the half-holiday specially devoted to the Greyfriars football match was distinctly unpleasant; but detention for the junior football captain on such an occasion—that could not be adequately described by any adjective to be found within the covers of the dictionary.

And that was what had happened.

Jimmy Silver could not feel that it was his fault. The snowball had been intended for Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth. It was by a curious concatenation of unexpected circumstances that Mr. Roger Manders had received it instead of Tommy Dodd.

A junior schoolboy, even a junior football captain, could not be expected to foresee, and guard against, a curious concatenation of unexpected circumstances.

On that Monday afternoon, lessons over,

Jimmy Silver had come out of the schoolhouse with a cheery smiling face, little dreaming of what was in store for him. His chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, were in cheery spirits also. Life looked good to the Fistical Four of Rookwood.

There had been a fall of snow. It lay thick among the old beeches. Jimmy Silver and Co. strolled across to the Modern side—Mr. Manders' House. They were not thinking of Mr. Manders, they were not, in fact, thinking of anything unpleasant at all.

They were only thinking of looking for some of the Modern fellows, and snowballing them; a harmless and necessary entertainment, even if it was not indeed the bounden duty of Classical chaps.

Tommy Dodd's study window was open.

Tommy Dodd's study being rather high up in Mr. Manders' house, the interior could not be seen from the quad. But the probability was that Tommy Todd and his study-mates were at tea in the study. Jimmy Silver could not help thinking what a happy surprise it would be for the Modern fellows if a snowball dropped into the study and landed on the tea-table, or on the features of Thomas Dodd. He was not particular as to whose features it landed upon; he would have preferred Tommy Dodd's. But Tommy Cook's or Tommy Doyle's would have served almost as well.

To Mr. Roger Manders' features he did not give a thought, not having any reason to suppose that those sharp, hawkish features were by any chance in a Fourth-form study.

All Rookwood was aware that Mr. Manders had a prying way of dropping into a fellow's study at unexpected moments. But Jimmy Silver was not bothering his head just then about Mr. Manders' disagreeable manners and customs.

He gathered a snowball with care, an extra large one, and kneaded it well. Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked on, grinning, as Jimmy Silver took aim at the open window.

The snowball flew with plenty of force and unerring aim.

It whizzed in at the open window.

And—horrible to relate—at that very moment an angular form, a sharp face, and a beak-like nose, showed up at the window; the form, face, and nose being the property of Roger Manders, senior Modern master of Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver and Co. gazed at it with horror.

It was too late to recall the snowball, which whizzed on its way like a bullet from a rifle. Crash!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy Silver did not speak. He was frozen with horror. The big snowball smashed all over the face of Mr. Manders.

There was a muffled yell.

Mr. Manders staggered back from the window, and disappeared from the view of the Fistical Four.

Three Modern juniors in the study stared at him blankly. They did not laugh; they were too terrified even to smile. The sight of Roger Manders sprawling across the study was too alarming to excite risibility, though otherwise funny enough.

"Ow! Oh! Ooooooh!" spluttered Mr. Manders.

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Tommy Dodd. "What awful ass has been chucking a snowball at Manders!"

"Groooooogh!"

Mr. Manders bumped on the tea-table, and set the crockery dancing. He slid to the floor, sitting down with a bump.

But he was on his feet again in a twinkling, jumping up almost as if he were made of india-rubber.

He made one furious leap to the window.

He wanted to know who had hurled that snowball, he was thirsting for information on that subject.

He dabbed and clawed snow from his face, and glared down into the quadrangle.

The Fistical Four had had no time to flee, even if horror had not rooted them to the ground.

Mr. Manders' baleful eyes fixed upon them.

"Who threw that snowball?" he thundered.

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"Sorry, sir!"

"Did you throw that snowball, Silver?"

"Yes, sir; but——"

"Wait!" thundered Mr. Manders. "I am coming down! Wait!"

He disappeared from the study window again. Jimmy Silver and Co. looked at one another.

"Better hook it!" said Lovell. "He's awfully wild——"

"He looked a bit wild!" murmured Raby.

"He can't touch us," said Newcome. "Modern master can't cane Classics."

"Not in theory," remarked Jimmy Silver. "He might in practice. I think we'd better cut."

And the Fistical Four cut—fading across the quadrangle at their best speed.

Ten seconds later Mr. Manders emerged from his house, raging. He looked a good deal like a lion seeking whom he might devour. But there was nobody for Mr. Manders to devour—the four Classical juniors had vanished from sight. Mr. Manders, breathing indignation, wrath, and fury, started for the school-house, to lay his case before Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth Form, and to demand condign punishment for Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth.

And to judge by Mr. Manders' looks, he was going to demand, at least, something lingering, with boiling oil in it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Blow Falls !

"**W**HERE'S Silver?"

Bulkeley of the Sixth was asking that question up and down the Rookwood school-house.

"Anythin' up, Bulkeley?" inquired Mornington of the Fourth.

"Silver's wanted."

"What's he done?"

"Snowballing a master, I think," said Bulkeley. "Anyhow he's wanted, and at once. Where is he?"

"Echo answers where!" answered Mornington, affably, and he dodged out of reach of a cuff from the prefect.

Bulkeley of the Sixth tramped up the stairs to the Fourth-form passage, to look for Jimmy Silver in his study.

That was where Jimmy Silver was, at the present moment—in dismay, with his dismayed chums. That there was going to be trouble the Fistical Four realised only too well.

Mr. Manders was the last man in the world to forgive such an injury. The Classical juniors having dodged him in the quad, it was certain that he would come over to the schoolhouse. That meant being called up before the master of the Fourth.

"It's only a licking, old chap," said Lovell, by way of comfort.

Jimmy glared.

"I don't want a licking!" he answered.

"Well, you'll get over it," said Lovell.

"Might be only detention."

"My hat!" said Raby. "If Jimmy got detained for Wednesday——"

Jimmy Silver almost turned pale at the thought. On Wednesday Harry Wharton and Co. were coming over from Greyfriars for the football match.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Jimmy.

"Dalton wouldn't be such a beast——"

"Not a bit of it," said Lovell. "Manders would. Manders hates footer, and he likes to bilk a chap out of a fixture. You remember he detained Tommy Dodd the day we played Bagshot last time. He likes doing these things. But Dicky Dalton is a sportsman. And it's in Dalton's hands—Manders can only complain to him. Let's hope, though, that you'll only get a licking, old chap."

Jimmy Silver rubbed his hands ruefully. He would have preferred a licking to detention on a half-holiday when there was a football fixture. But he did not exactly yearn for a licking.

Bulkeley's footsteps came along the Fourth

Form passage. The captain of the school looked into the end study.

"Oh! You're here, Silver!"

"Here I am, Bulkeley!" answered Jimmy, with great meekness.



"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell, as the snowball smashed all over the face of Mr. Manders. "Ow! Oooch!" spluttered the Modern Housemaster. (See page 213.)

Bulkeley gave a grim look.

"You young ass! What have you been up to? Haven't you sense enough not to play your japes on a master—especially a master like Mr. Manders?"

"It was an accident——"

"Better tell that to your form-master," said Bulkeley. "If you can make him believe that snowballs fly about by accident, all the better for you."

"I mean, it wasn't intended for Manders."

"Manders got it, it seems."

"It was meant for another rotter—I mean——"

"You'd better go and tell all that to Mr. Dalton," said Bulkeley. "He's waiting for you in his study, and Mr. Manders is with him."

And Bulkeley strode away. Jimmy Silver dismally slipped from his seat on the corner of the study table.

"Now for the jolly old circus!" he groaned.

"After all, I dare say it's only a licking," said Lovell, still in his role of Job's comforter. "Four on each hand, perhaps——"

"Ow!"

"Keep a stiff upper lip," said Lovell, encouragingly. "A licking's only a licking, you know."

Jimmy gave him an expressive look, and quitted the end study. Lovell could say, very much at his ease, that a licking was only a licking. It loomed up more unpleasantly to the fellow who was going to capture it.

"I say, Jimmy!" Tubby Muffin met Jimmy Silver at the foot of the staircase. "I say, old chap, you're for it!"

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Jimmy

"Manders is looking awfully wild, and Dalton has a face like a gargoyle," said Tubby impressively. "I fancy it will be a Head's flogging. Do you think so, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver did not reply in words—Tubby's happy anticipations afforded him no pleasure at all. He took Reginald Muffin by the collar and sat him down forcibly on the lowest stair. There was a howl from Tubby Muffin; and Jimmy proceeded on his way a little solaced.

He tapped at the door of his form-master's study and entered. Richard Dalton, the

master of the Fourth, gave him a severe look. Mr. Manders, who was standing by the form-master's table, gave him a black scowl.

"Silver! Mr. Manders informs me that you hurled a snowball at him, at a window in his House!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"It was an accident, sir——"

"What?"

"I—I was chucking it in at Tommy Dodd, sir," gasped Jimmy. "I—I didn't know Mr. Manders was in the study at all."

Mr. Manders curled his thin lip bitterly.

Obviously he did not believe that statement. Roger Manders, indeed, never believed anything if he could help it. He was that unpleasant kind of man.

"Ah! that alters the case," said Mr. Dalton, his brow clearing a little. "Mr. Manders will take a more lenient view of the matter if you convince him that it was an accident——"

"Absurd!" said Mr. Manders sharply. "The snowball was hurled at me, at a study window in my House—an open window——"

"It was Dodd's study, sir!" said Jimmy.

"You did not know that Mr. Manders was in Dodd's study at the time, Silver?"

"Never had the least idea, sir!" answered the junior. "I was going to drop the snowball among them—I thought the Modern chaps would be at tea—only a lark on the Moderns, sir. Then all of a sudden I saw Mr. Manders at the open window after I'd just chucked—I mean, thrown—the snowball."

"After?" sneered Mr. Manders. "Or before?"

"After, sir!" said Jimmy.

Mr. Dalton gave the Modern master a rather sharp look.

"I have every reason to place confidence in Silver's word, Mr. Manders," he said. "He is an honourable lad; and since I have been master of the Fourth Form, I have never known him tell an untruth. I accept his statement that the affair was accidental."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Manders set his lips.

"I have been struck down by a missile," he articulated. "Actually struck down, at a window of my own House! I——"

"One moment, sir!" said Mr. Dalton quietly. "I believe Silver's statement that the missile was not intended for you, and that he did not know that you were in the room at all. I am far, however, from excusing his conduct in hurling a snowball into a room in your House. Such a 'lark,' as he calls it, is very reprehensible. I shall leave Silver's punishment in your hands, as the offence was committed in your House."

Mr. Manders' angry brow cleared.

For a moment he had feared that the unhappy victim was going to escape. He was relieved upon that point now.

"Very good, sir!" he said. "I expected that of you, Mr. Dalton."

Jimmy stood in silent dismay.

He was well aware how little mercy he had to expect from Mr. Manders, who disliked him from of old.

"Nevertheless," continued Mr. Dalton, "the fact that the offence was unintentional should weigh with you, Mr. Manders. I think a light punishment should meet the case. However, I will, as I have said, leave the punishment to your sense of justice."

And Mr. Dalton walked to the study window, leaving the Modern master to deal with Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Manders looked at Jimmy, and his eye strayed to Mr. Dalton's cane, which lay on the table. Jimmy mentally prepared himself for a most tremendous caning.

But Mr. Manders did not touch the cane.

"In the circumstances, Silver," he said slowly, "I shall not cane you—I am bound to defer to your form-master's opinion."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy in amazement. "Yes, sir! Thank you, sir! I—I'm really very sorry the snowball hit you, sir."

"Very good," said Mr. Manders. "I hope that the profession of repentance is sincere, Silver. I will take it as sincere and award only a light punishment. You will be sentenced to detention for the next half-holiday, and during your detention, in the form-room, you will write out three hundred lines from the *Æneid*." Mr. Manders turned to the Fourth form master. "I trust, Mr. Dalton, that you do not regard that punishment as excessive, considering the offence?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Dalton, taking no notice of the sarcastic inflection in Mr. Manders' voice. "It is not more than adequate in my opinion. If you are satisfied——"

"Quite, sir!"

"Very good, then!" said Mr. Dalton.

And Mr. Manders whisked out of the study.

Jimmy Silver stood rooted to the floor. He was so overwhelmed with dismay that he could not speak.

The punishment was no more severe than he might have expected—it was, in fact, less so. Apparently, Mr. Manders, contrary to custom had been merciful.

But the next half-holiday was Wednesday, and Wednesday was the date of the Greyfriars football match.

Perhaps Mr. Manders hadn't known that—or hadn't thought of it! But there it was!

"You may go, Silver," said Mr. Dalton. "I may say that Mr. Manders has punished you very lightly, and you should be thankful. I think you should have thanked Mr. Manders."

Jimmy found his voice.

"But, sir——" he gasped.

"You should feel obliged to Mr. Manders, Silver, for letting you off so lightly!" said the Fourth form master, frowning.

"But, sir——"

Mr. Dalton interrupted the junior without ceremony.

"I am sorry to see you ungrateful, Silver, for Mr. Manders' extreme leniency. You may go."

"But——" stuttered Jimmy.

"Leave my study!" said Mr. Dalton, raising his hand.

Jimmy Silver almost limped from the study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Nothing Doing

So that was that!

Detention for the junior football captain—on the day of one of the most important fixtures on the junior list.

The Fourth heard it with dismay and wrath.

Even Tommy Dodd and Co. of the Modern

side, heard it with as much wrath and dismay as the Classics.

Classical and Modern were at one, for once, in their view of the situation. For on the occasion of a School match, when the eleven was selected from both sides of Rookwood, the fellows ceased to be Classics and Moderns, as it were, and became simply Rookwooders.

Jimmy Silver, captain and centre-half of the junior football team, could not be spared from the eleven.

That was impossible.

In almost any other match, it wouldn't have mattered so much. But the Greyfriars match was a match in which Rookwood Junior eleven had about equal chances. Harry Wharton and Co., of Greyfriars, were a tough proposition; extremely tough. For weeks Jimmy Silver had been knocking his men into shape for that match. And with the best junior footballer at Rookwood left out, what was to become of Rookwood's chances?

There were, indeed, fellows who considered that they could replace Jimmy Silver, with advantage to the team. Tubby Muffin was one of them—and he made the offer. Tubby's offer was not seriously considered. In fact, Arthur Edward Lovell took Tubby by the collar and shook him—which was the only answer Muffin received.

It was generally agreed that Jimmy Silver

had to play, or the match would be a goner.

It was true that, outside the junior football club of Rookwood, even that catastrophe would have been viewed with calmness. The solar system would have rolled on its accustomed way, regardless, even if the Greyfriars match had been a goner.

But to the Rookwood footballers, it was a catastrophe compared with which the

great earthquake at Lisbon, the Great Fire of London, and other historical episodes of that sort, were very small beer indeed.

To be licked by the visiting team after a strenuous match would have been bad enough, but not so bad. Sportsmen could stand that. But to be walked over by the visitors because their football captain was detained, writing out silly Latin classics in the form-room—that was the limit!

"If only it wasn't Manders!" groaned Arthur Edward Lovell.

There was the rub!

Any other master at Rookwood, finding that he had sentenced a footballer to detention on the date of an important fixture, would have made concessions. Detention postponed from Wednesday to Saturday would have met the case; and any Rookwood master would have made a concession like that—any master but Mr. Manders.

But the juniors knew that it was hopeless to ask Mr. Roger Manders for anything of the kind.



"I see no reason to defer Silver's punishment because he is playing in a football match!" said Mr. Manders drily. "Then there is nothing more to be said!" said Mr. Dalton, and he left the study with a clouded brow. (See page 219.)

Mr. Manders took no interest in games—or in the school record. Indeed, any interest he took was of the reverse kind—he disliked games and considered them so much waste of time. His ideal schoolboy was a fellow with a bumpy forehead, a pair of big spectacles, an absent-minded manner, peering into pots in the school lab.: which was not the Rookwood ideal at all. If a fellow could have thought in geometry, and talked in algebra, Mr. Manders would have been almost kind to him.

"It's a plant!" was Valentine Mornington's comment.

"How's that?" asked Jimmy Silver, who was debating with his chums the faint hope of making an appeal to Mr. Manders.

"He's wangled this!" answered Morny.

"Wangled it?" said Lovell.

Mornington nodded emphatically.

"Yes! Manders knows Wednesday is Greyfriars day—knows that Jimmy is captaining the team—and he's dished us on purpose! That's his charmin' way!"

Lovell whistled.

"My hat!" said Jimmy blankly.

"He wouldn't be such a beast!" said Raby.

"Such an awful beast!" said Newcome. Morny shrugged his shoulders.

"Isn't he every kind of a beast?" he inquired.

"Well, yes! But——"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it," said Jimmy Silver, slowly. "I was surprised at his letting me off a licking! I expected a record whaling, when Dalton left it to him. Of course, this hits a chap harder than any licking."

"That's his game!" said Morny.

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard.

"It seems almost too mean, even for Manders!" he said. "But he's such a beast—and such an ass! He's quite capable of thinking that three hundred lines from Virgil would do a fellow more good than a football match."

"There are idiots like that!" remarked Conroy.

"There are—and Manders is one of them!" said Lovell. "I agree with Morny—Manders knew all about the Greyfriars' match, and he's dished Jimmy on purpose."

"If Dicky Dalton knew that——" said Rawson.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"He wouldn't believe it!" he said. "Blessed if I can quite—it seems too mean even for Manders. Anyhow, he wouldn't listen to anything against another master."

"That's so!" agreed Mornington. "But it's the case all the same. We've got to beat Manders somehow."

"How?" said Oswald.

"I'm going to speak to Mr. Dalton about it," said Jimmy Silver resolutely. "He ought to be able to manage it for us. I know he would if he could."

"Try it on, anyhow!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver dropped into his form-master's study that evening to try it on. Mr. Dalton listened to him quietly.

"You see, sir, if it were made Saturday instead of Wednesday, it would be all right," Jimmy wound up. "In fact, detention for two half-holidays instead of one—I wouldn't mind that—so long as I'm free on Wednesday to play Greyfriars."

Mr. Dalton nodded.

"I quite see the point, Silver. Mr. Manders takes little interest in sports, and I'm sure had no intention of interfering with the school games. I will speak to him on the subject. The matter is entirely in his hands now; but I am sure he will concede such a point."

"Thank you, sir," said Jimmy gratefully.

"Wait here, Silver, and I will go to Mr. Manders' house and speak to him at once," said the master of the Fourth kindly.

Mr. Dalton crossed over at once to Mr. Manders' house. He found that gentleman in his study: engaged in the pleasant occupation of caning Towle of the Modern Fourth. Towle limped away rubbing his hands, and Mr. Manders fixed his eyes inquiringly upon the form-master.

Mr. Dalton proceeded to explain.

He had no doubt that Mr. Manders—owing to his lack of interest in the school sports—had quite unintentionally interfered with the junior fixture, in his sentence on Jimmy Silver. So he was surprised to find Roger Manders in an utterly uncompromising mood.

Mr. Manders' lip curled as he listened.

"I understood, sir, that you left the punishment of Silver in my hands, as his offence was committed against me, and in my House!" he remarked.

"That is quite correct, sir," said Mr. Dalton, "But——"

"I do not see there is any 'but' in the case," said Mr. Manders. "I gave Silver what you yourself considered a light punishment."

"That is true; but as it happens, the 'next' half-holiday is the date of a football match which the juniors regard as important!" the Fourth-form master explained laboriously.

"I am not closely acquainted with the important affairs of the Lower boys," said Mr. Manders, with a freezing smile.

"Silver is junior football captain, Mr. Manders. Surely you are aware of that?"

"Yes, I am aware of that."

"His presence is required in the match on Wednesday——"

"And all discipline and order may be thrown aside, in order that a junior game may not be interfered with?" inquired Mr. Manders.

"Nothing of the kind, of course. But the deferring of Silver's punishment from Wednesday to Saturday——"

"I see no reason to defer it. No doubt on Saturday some other important junior affair would arise, to defer it still later," said Mr. Manders, with a disagreeable smile. "Perhaps a meeting of the junior debating society, or a run of the cycle club——"

"I will answer for it that such will not be the case!" said Mr. Dalton, quietly. "Having left the decision in your hands, Mr. Manders, I cannot now rescind your sentence myself. But I should be very much obliged if you would make this concession——"

"I should be very glad to oblige you, Mr. Dalton," said the Modern master, genially, "but I feel it my duty not to allow Silver to throw aside all restraints in this way. If the junior boys are to dictate to the masters the precise time of their detention, there is an end to all law and order in the school."

"On this very exceptional occasion——" urged Mr. Dalton.

"The fact is, I see nothing whatever exceptional in this occasion," said Mr. Manders, still genial.

Mr. Dalton drew a deep breath.

"If that is really your view, Mr. Manders——"

"It is my fixed and most decided view, Mr. Dalton."

"Then there is nothing more to be said!"

And Mr. Dalton quitted Mr. Manders' house with a clouded brow—leaving Mr. Manders smiling as if he had quite enjoyed the interview.

Jimmy Silver was waiting hopefully in his form-master's study. His hope was faint—and it was quite dashed by Mr. Dalton's look when he returned.

"I am sorry to say that Mr. Manders declines to alter his decision, Silver," said Mr. Dalton.

"Oh, sir! But——"

"I am sorry; but there is nothing to be done," said the Fourth form-master. "I am afraid that you have only yourself to blame, Silver; you should be very careful how you play pranks on Mr. Manders' side of the quadrangle."

"Yes, sir. But——"

"There is no more to be said."

Jimmy Silver quitted the study, and returned to the junior common-room, where a crowd of eager fellows were waiting for news.

"Well?" exclaimed Lovell eagerly.

"Nothing doing."

"Oh, rotten!"

"Dicky Dalton put it to Manders, and Manders won't hear a word!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "The beast is pleased, of course."

"That was his game all along," said Mornington.

"Looks like it, now! But there's nothing doing!"

"Then the Greyfriars' match is a goner!" growled Lovell.

"You fellows will have to do your best without me," said Jimmy Silver dolorously. "Morny will captain the team—and Morny is a good skipper, anyhow."

"Thanks," said Mornington, with a grin. "But that isn't the programme. We've got to have you, Jimmy! We've got to beat Manders somehow."

Jimmy Silver shook his head dismally. Beating Manders was a consummation

devoutly to be wished; but to Jimmy Silver it did not seem to be within the range of practical politics.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Lovell Thinks It Out.

"BOLT!"

Arthur Edward Lovell uttered that remark suddenly; firing it off, as it were, like a bullet from a rifle. Lovell's face was bright—as if he had found himself in possession of a remarkably striking and original wheeze.

"Bolt!" repeated Jimmy Silver, suspending his prep. in the end study, and staring at Lovell across the table.

Arthur Edward nodded vigorously.

"That's it! Bolt!"

"What the thump——"

"I've got it, you see! Bolt," said Lovell. "On Wednesday afternoon, I mean. I've thought it out."

"Do you mean break detention?" asked Jimmy.

"That's it."

"I've thought of it. But——"

"Bother the butts," said Lovell, decisively. "Bolt's the word. Did you know the senior eleven is going over to Bagshot on Wednesday, to play Bagshot seniors?"

"Of course, ass."

"That means that most of the prefects will be away!" remarked Raby.

"Better than that," said Lovell, triumphantly. "I heard Bulkeley and Neville talking about it. Dicky Dalton is referee."

"Sure of that?" asked Newcome.

"Quite! He's refereeing the match at Bagshot. That means that he'll be out of gates all Wednesday afternoon—all the time the match is on here with Greyfriars, and some time afterwards. They're not likely to be home till dusk at least. Long before that we shall have beaten Greyfriars, and Jimmy can be back in the form-room, ready for Dicky Dalton to look in on him and find him there."

"Hold on, though," said Raby, "Jimmy's got to turn out three hundred lines of Virgil while he's in detention."

Lovell smiled.

"Can't Jimmy get them done in advance?" he asked sarcastically. "Can't he have the stuff in hand, and leave it in his locker in the form-room ready?"

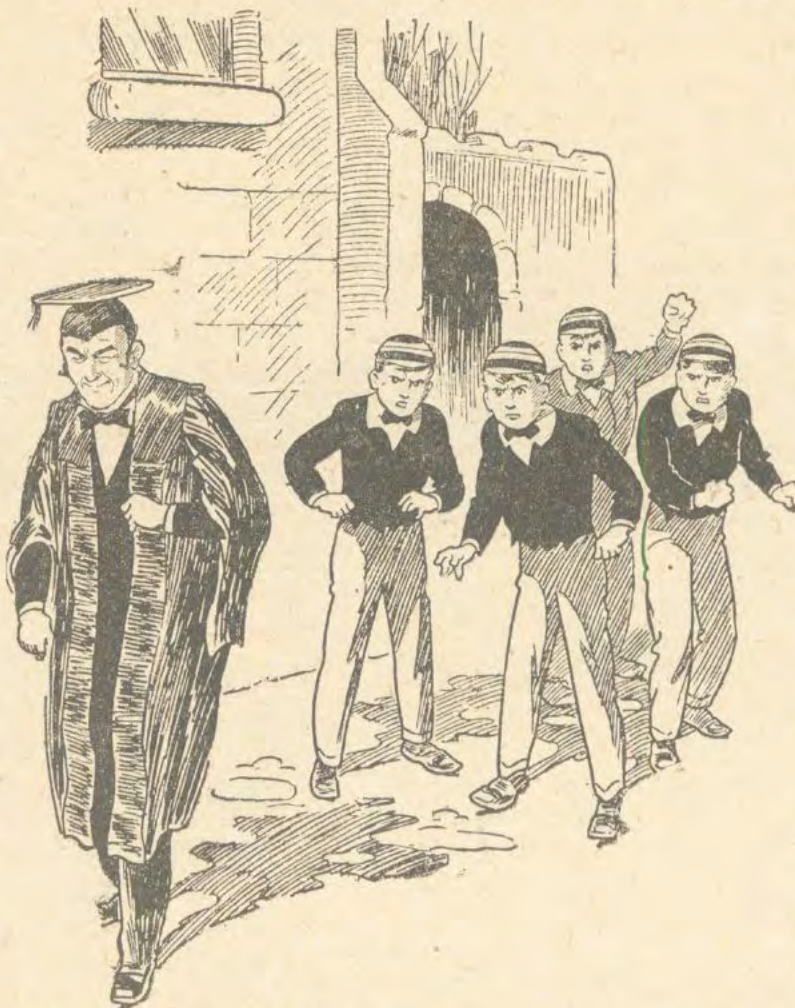
"Oh!" said Raby.

"That's possible!" said Jimmy Silver, thoughtfully, "if Mr. Dalton is away all Wednesday afternoon, he can't tell whether I'm in the form-room or not."

He can leave me there when he starts——"

"And you can walk out as soon as he's gone," said Lovell.

Raby and Newcome looked interested. Lovell was not, as a rule, the fellow for brilliant wheezes. He believed that he was; but as a matter of actual fact, he wasn't. But this time it certainly looked as if Arthur Edward Lovell had hit upon the method of cutting the Gordian knot.



"You will go into the Form-room at two and remain there until five, Silver!" said Mr. Manders; and stalked away, leaving the Fistical Four gazing furiously after him. (See page 223.)

"So long as Jimmy's lines are done, and he's sitting in the form-room when Mr. Dalton comes in, it's all serene," declared Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Something in that!" he said. "Only Mr. Dalton may ask a prefect to keep an eye on the form-room."

"That's the beauty of it!" grinned Lovell. "All the Classical prefects are in the senior eleven, excepting one—Carthew. They'll all be over at Bagshot, And you know Carthew. He'll be supposed to be on duty—but he'll clear off for the afternoon—catch Carthew hanging about a half-holiday to keep an eye on the form-room."

Really, it seemed as if Arthur Edward Lovell had thought of everything.

"It may come out afterwards that Jimmy played in the match!" observed Newcome.

"May or may not!" said Lovell, "but if it does it's only a licking. Jimmy can take a licking for the sake of beating Greyfriars at footer."

"Willingly!" said Jimmy Silver; "and it mayn't come out either. Unless—unless Manders happens to give the football a look-in—"

Lovell chuckled.

"Catch Manders giving the football a look-in!" he said. "Wild horses wouldn't drag Manders to see a football match."

"Well, that's true, too!" said Newcome. "Manders won't even walk down to Big Side to see the senior team play in a big match."

"He's never been known to look at a junior match," said Lovell. "Tommy Dodd is ashamed of having a master who won't take any interest in football. It's a sore point with those Modern cads."

"True, O King!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver forgot all about prep. in thinking over this important development.

It might be possible to play in the Greyfriars match after all; and that was a glorious prospect. Breaking detention was a rather serious matter; but in the present circumstances, it had lost its seriousness for the chums of the Fourth. The Greyfriars match

was more important than detention, from the junior point of view; and the suspicion that Mr. Manders had intentionally "mucked up" the fixture weighed with the juniors.

With Mr. Dalton and the Classical prefects gone, it was hard to see what was to compel a detained junior to remain in the form-room. Carthew, the slacker of the Sixth, was sure to go out of gates on his own business; and certainly the Head would not interest his lofty self in so very trifling a matter. Mr. Dalton might ask one of the other masters to have an eye on the "detenu"; but it was highly improbable.

Jimmy Silver's face was much brighter now.

Lovell regarded him triumphantly. Arthur Edward was quite proud of having found the solution of the problem.

"Looks like business, what?" grinned Lovell.

"It do—it does!" said Jimmy Silver. "Lovell, old man, you're a trump. It looks all right."

"What about Manders?" asked Newcome.

"Nothing about Manders!" said Lovell.

"I mean—he might keep an eye open—"

"On the other side of the quad. Manders will be in his own House," said Lovell. "He can't see across a quadrangle and through several brick walls. Manders is sharp, but not so sharp as that."

"Blessed if Lovell hasn't thought out the whole bizney!" said Raby with accustomed admiration. "Blessed if I knew he had the brains."

"Look here——" began Lovell warmly.

"Chuck over Virgil!" said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "I'm dropping prep. for this evening—I'll chance it with Dicky Dalton in the morning. I'm getting my lines ready for Wednesday."

"Good egg!" said Lovell. "I wish we could help! But Dicky would know it wasn't your fist."

"That's all right; I can wangle three hundred lines before Wednesday, though it's a big order."

Jimmy Silver lost no time.

If the stunt was to be put to the test, it was necessary to have a stack of lines ready, to

be shown up "after detention" on Wednesday afternoon. The manufacture of those lines was a somewhat lengthy task; and Jimmy put his energy into it at once.

There was a supply of impot paper in the study. Jimmy opened P. Vergilius Maro, and propped him up against the inkstand.

Then he started at "Tu quoque litoribus nostris," and worked on industriously; and by the time his chums had finished prep, he had reached "sed populo magnum portendere bellum"; eighty lines, which was a very good start.

Jimmy Silver felt entitled to a rest after that; and the eighty lines were carefully stacked away in the table drawer, and he left the end study with his chums.

The cheery looks of the Fistical Four attracted notice in the common-room, and fellows wanted to know the why and the wherefore.

Fellows who could be relied upon not to chatter were taken into the secret; and there was a joyful grin on the faces of the footballers when they were told.

"Ripping!" said Conroy.

"Top-hole!" said Mornington.

"Jolly good wheeze!" declared Erroll. "Dalton can't grumble if he finds the lines done."

"Dear man! He can grumble if he likes, so long as Jimmy helps us to beat Greyfriars!" said Lovell.

"But——" said Mornington thoughtfully.

"It's not a case of 'but'!" said Arthur Edward Lovell loftily. "It's a top-hole stunt, and it will work like a charm."

"I hope so. But——"

"But what, then?" asked Lovell rather irritably.

"You know Manders!" said Morny, shaking his head. "If he knows that Dalton will be away——"

"I don't suppose he knows! He never takes any interest in football matters."

"But if he knows——"

"Oh, rats! Suppose he does know, what then?"

"Well, he may keep an eye on the form-room, to see that Jimmy doesn't bolt."

"He can't, from the other side of the quad."

"Might walk over to this side," said Mornington. "He would walk ten miles to make anybody miserable."

Lovell grunted. He was quite confident in the success of his wheeze; and he was very impatient of criticism.

"Rot!" he said tersely.

"But——"

"Rats!"

Valentine Mornington said no more. He hoped as heartily as anyone that all would go well; but he had his doubts. But most of the junior footballers agreed with Lovell's point of view; and the Classical Fourth went to their dormitory that night, in the full belief that Mr. Roger Manders was going to be outwitted—foiled, diddled, dished, and done, as Lovell put it emphatically.

But Mornington, as it happened, was right!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Sold!

JIMMY SILVER AND Co. trotted out into the quadrangle in a cold, clear, sunny morning in cheery spirits. The weather was cold but fine, and promised well for Wednesday. Before Lovell's great wheeze was promulgated, the fellows would not have been sorry to see bad weather, which would inevitably postpone the Greyfriars' match. Harry Wharton and Co. couldn't have come over to play in a heavy snowstorm, for instance. But the weather promised well, and now they were glad of it. But a change came o'er the spirit of their dream shortly.

Mr. Manders was walking in the quadrangle when the Fistical Four strolled out before breakfast.

The Co. would have given much to hand out snowballs to Mr. Manders. They would have enjoyed it; it would have been worth a term's pocket-money. But they restrained their yearning. Instead of snowballing the Modern master, they "capped" him most respectfully as they passed him. Mr. Manders was, at present, a gentleman to be treated with diplomacy.

But diplomatic capping had no effect on Mr. Manders. Possibly he guessed the secret thoughts in the minds of the Classical juniors. Possibly he took them for granted.

He frowned at the Fistical Four, and called out:

"Silver!"

The chums of the Fourth halted. They did not want to speak to Mr. Manders; but Mr. Manders wanted to speak to them, apparently. They stopped before the Modern master in a respectful row.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Mr. Dalton spoke to me last evening, on the subject of your detention, Silver."

"Yes, sir."

"I have declined to alter my decision in any way!"

"Mr. Dalton told me so, sir. I am sorry."

"You understand, Silver, that you are detained for the whole of Wednesday afternoon, and that you will occupy the time in writing out three hundred lines of Virgil."

"I understand, sir."

"Very good. I hear," continued Mr. Manders grimly, "that your form-master will be absent on Wednesday afternoon."

Jimmy's heart sank.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"It appears, also, that some, if not all, of the Classical prefects will be away!" said Mr. Manders.

"Indeed, sir!" faltered Jimmy.

"In the circumstances," went on Mr. Manders in a grinding voice, "it may have occurred to you to break detention, Silver."

Jimmy Silver did not answer. He couldn't.

He wondered dismally whether the beast was a thought-reader.

Lovell's face was a study.

From Lovell's face, if not from Jimmy's, it was not difficult for Mr. Manders to divine that his surmise was well-founded. He smiled disagreeably.

"I trust, Silver, that you had no such intention," he said. "It would be disrespectful to me personally."

Jimmy made no answer to that. Probably disrespect to Mr. Manders personally would not have weighed very heavily upon his conscience.

"In order that you may not be tempted to be guilty of this disrespect and defiance of authority, Silver, I shall keep you under observation on Wednesday afternoon!" said Mr. Manders.

"You—You're very kind, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

Lovell suppressed a groan.

"You will go into the form-room at two o'clock tomorrow, Silver. You will remain there until five."

"Yes, sir!" groaned Jimmy.

"I shall look in several times in the course of the afternoon," added Mr. Manders. "On each occasion I shall expect you to have made reasonable progress with your lines."

"That's putting you to a lot of trouble, sir!" said Jimmy, with dismal sarcasm.

"I have no objection, Silver, to taking the necessary amount of trouble to preserve discipline among unruly junior boys."



Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at Morny. He was not speaking in his natural voice, but in a sharp, strident tone reminiscent of Mr. Manders! (See page 226.)

With that Mr. Manders turned and stalked away.

The Fistical Four gazed at one another in silence.

Words could not have expressed their feelings. No language could have described their fury. Even German would have been inadequate.

They tramped back dismally to the schoolhouse. Mr. Manders had succeeded in clouding the sunshine for them that bright morning.

"Sold!" was Jimmy's first remark.

"The awful rotter!" gasped Lovell.

"Spying beast!" said Raby.

"What's the row?" asked Mornington, joining them at the steps of the schoolhouse.

Jimmy Silver explained.

"Now say 'I told you so!'" said Lovell, with a ferocious glare at Morny. Lovell was suffering with an intense yearning to punch somebody's head. He could not punch Mr. Manders' head; so Morny would have served his turn.

But Morny did not say "I told you so." He smiled.

"Awful luck!" was what he said.

"Beastly!" said Newcome. "The rotter must be a giddy magician. Reads your thoughts like a book."

"Sold!" said Lovell. "Done! Diddled! Dished! Jimmy can't bolt with Nosey Parker poking into the form-room every half-hour or so. He would just enjoy coming down to Little Side and interrupting the game, and yanking Jimmy away."

"He just would!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

Mornington knitted his brows.

"Looks bad!" he said. "All the same, Jimmy's got to play in the football match to-morrow. If Manders could be kept off the grass somehow——"

"How could he?" growled Lovell. Lovell's own masterly strategem having been knocked into a cocked hat, so to speak, Arthur Edward seemed to have lost faith in stratagems.

"Might be kept in his own house somehow!" said Mornington, in deep thought.

"Thinking of screwing him up in his study?" asked Lovell sarcastically. "Thinking of catching a weasel asleep?"

"That wouldn't work——"

"Go hon!"

"But there's more ways than one of killing a cat!" said Mornington. "I'm going to think this out."

"Don't burst your brain box, old scout," said Lovell, still sarcastic and pessimistic.

"If you could think of anything, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Of course he can't," grunted Lovell. "Why, I can't." Lovell seemed to regard that as a clincher.

Mornington smiled.

"He might be kept busy somehow," he said.

"How?" snorted Lovell.

"Well, his rich uncle from Australia might call on him on Wednesday afternoon, for instance——"

"Eh? What? Has he got a rich uncle in Australia?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then what the thump!"

"Only putting a case," said Mornington affably.

"Fathead!"

"Or his aunt from Peckham might drop in——"

"Has he got an aunt in Peckham?"

"Never heard of her, if he has," said Mornington. "What I mean is, lots of things might happen to keep Manders busy in his own house on Wednesday afternoon."

"Lots of things might!" snorted Lovell. "But nothing will!"

"Something may, if we help," said Mornington. "While there's life there's hope. I'm going to give it a big think."

"Fat lot of good that will do!" snorted Lovell. "I've thought it out already, if it comes to that."

"Yes—but I'm going to do it with a different sort of intellect, old chap."

Mornington strolled away with that remark, leaving Arthur Edward Lovell speechless, and his chums grinning.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Mornington is Mysterious.

JIMMY SILVER's motto was "Keep smiling." Generally, Uncle James of Rookwood contrived to keep smiling, living up to his own cheery maxim, in spite of all the

troubles that came his way. But at breakfast on this particular morning there was no smile to be seen on the countenance of Uncle James. Mr. Manders had been unusually successful in his career as a killjoy. Instead of smiling, Jimmy Silver looked glum.

That unfortunate snowball, which had landed upon the august features of Mr. Manders instead of upon the unimportant countenance of Tommy Dodd, had the direst consequences. It was going to "muck up" the most important football fixture of the season.

Jimmy had brought the team up to perfection—or as near perfection as possible. They worked together like clockwork; they were to put it poetically, eleven souls with but a single thought, eleven hearts that beat as one.

Extracting Jimmy Silver from the team was like taking the keystone out of the arch. All the footballers thought so, and Jimmy Silver modestly agreed with them.

The fellows would put up a good match without Jimmy. Quite a good man could be found to take his place. But they wouldn't beat Greyfriars. To beat Greyfriars, Rookwood had to be at the top notch of their strength. Without Jimmy Silver, they were nowhere near that point.

And the case looked hopeless. Even the desperate resource of breaking detention seemed to be barred. There was no hope, unless Mr. Manders caught a sudden cold. He was given to catching cold—chiefly from lack of fresh air and exercise, which he disliked. He might catch a cold—and his cold might even, as Lovell remarked with blissful eagerness, turn to pneumonia.

But really it was not probable. Certainly Mr. Manders was not likely to catch a cold just to oblige the junior footballers. He was not an obliging man at the best of times.

Mornington was not looking glum at breakfast. He was looking very thoughtful. He was seen to smile—and his smile became a chuckle. Mr. Dalton glanced down the table at him; and Morny became serious again at once. But a glimmer was in his eyes—and Jimmy Silver glanced at him with a faint hope. Morny was a keen fellow, and it was possible—

barely possible—that he had thought of some way out.

After breakfast, Morny joined the Fistical Four as they came out. He was smiling now.

"No end funny, isn't it?" growled Lovell morosely.

"Who knows?" said Mornington. "The fact is, I've been doin' some thinkin'——"

"Any result?" grunted Lovell.

"Lots! You know what Shakespeare says——"

"Blow Shakespeare!"

"Blow him as hard as you like. But you know what he says, 'Sweet are the uses of advertisement!'"

"What rot! Shakespeare says, 'Sweet are the uses of adversity!'" said Lovell.

"Then Shakespeare missed a chance of statin' a great truth," said Mornington coolly. "I've never noticed any sweet uses in adversity—but in advertisement there are no end."

"What on earth are you driving at?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Manders!"

"What has Manders to do with advertisements, fathead?"

"More than he knows."

"Look here, Morny——"

Mornington glanced at his watch.

"At this hour the Head will be lingerin' on the matutinal toast and rasher," he remarked.

"It follows, my young friends, that there will be nobody in his study."

"What about it?" hooted Lovell.

"Lots! We can use his telephone."

"What the thump do you want to use his telephone for?"

"Manders!"

"You shrieking ass!" gasped Lovell.

"What has Manders to do with the Head's telephone?"

"Tons!"

Mornington walked away towards the Head's corridor, and the Fistical Four, in sheer amazement, followed him.

Morny tapped at the Head's door—in case that study should not be, after all, unoccupied. Then he looked in. The room was vacant. Dr. Chisholm had not left his house yet.

"All clear!" said Mornington cheerfully.

"But what——" exclaimed Jimmy.

"No time to talk now, my infant. I don't want the Head to meander in while I'm telephonin' for Manders."

"Has Manders asked you to telephone for him?" demanded Raby blankly.

"Not at all. I wouldn't if he did."

"Then what——"

"Keep an eye on the corridor."

Mornington glanced rapidly through the telephone directory, and then picked the receiver off the hook.

"Rookham two-0-four!"

"What's that number?" asked Newcome.

"The Coombe Times."

"The giddy local paper?" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's it!"

"Look here," growled Lovell, "we shall get into a row if we're caught in the Head's study. What's the good of sticking here while that ass Morny pulls our leg?"

"I'm not pullin' your leg, old bean. I'm pullin' the leg of the jolly old Manders bird."

"How?" hooted Lovell.

Mornington did not reply to that question.

A voice was coming through on the telephone, and Morny had to attend to business.

"Yes! Speaking from Rookwood School. That the 'Coombe Times'? Good!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. stared at Morny. He was not speaking in his natural voice, but in a sharp, strident tone that was reminiscent of Mr. Manders. Certainly the gentleman at the office of the "Coombe Times" could not have supposed that it was a schoolboy speaking.

"I understand that your paper appears to-morrow morning?"

"That is correct, sir. Advertisements may be handed in at any time up to twelve o'clock to-day."

"Very good. I will send a boy down to your office with my advertisement immediately. That will be in ample time?"

"Ample, sir!"

"I specially desire it to appear in this week's paper."

"It will appear without fail, sir."

"Very good. Perhaps you had better take down the name—Manders!"

"Mr. Manders? Very good, sir."

"You assure me that the advertisement will appear in this week's paper without fail?"

"You may rely upon that, Mr. Manders."

"I shall not be able to give any further attention to the matter, as I shall be otherwise occupied to-day, and cannot attend to the telephone. But if you assure me that there is no doubt——"

"None at all, sir," came the reply, in slightly surprised tones. "Advertisements handed in up to twelve o'clock——"

"Very good."

Mornington rang off. He turned to the Fistical Four with a smiling face.

"So far, so good!" he remarked.

"Well, where's the jape?" asked Lovell. "I believe that man at the 'Coombe Times' took you for Manders."

"Think so really?"

"Well, you didn't say so, but he must have thought so, from the way you spoke."

"Dear me!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"That's what Morny wanted him to think, fathead!" he said.

"Oh!" said Lovell.

"I haven't told him so," grinned Mornington. "If he chooses to think so, from my remarks, that's his own bizney."

"But what's the game?" asked Lovell impatiently. "I suppose you're not going to put an advertisement in the local paper in Manders' name?"

"Why not?"

"Great pip!"

"Why not, if it will keep him busy to-morrow afternoon while we're playing football?" yawned Mornington.



Instead of punting a ball about the quadrangle, Jimmy Silver sat down and patiently scribbled lines of Virgil. (See page 228.)

"But it won't!" howled Lovell. "How could it?"

"That, my dear old fathead, is still on the knees of the gods. I think we'd better clear now. The Head would be quite surprised to find us holding a pow-wow in his study."

"I think so too!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

The Fourth-formers lost no time in clearing, Morny's telephoning being, apparently, at an end. Lovell was perplexed and exasperated; Raby and Newcome were puzzled; and Jimmy Silver simply did not know what to think. But in spite of his doubts and misgivings, he was feeling hopeful.

"Now, look here, Morny——" said Lovell, as the juniors turned out of the Head's corridor.

"No time, old top—busy!"

With that, Morny hurried away to his study and locked himself in. He was busy there for ten minutes. When he came down he walked to the School gates.

"You'll be late for class, Morny!" called out Townsend.

"Really?" called back Mornington.

"You'll get wiggled!"

"What a life!" said Mornington resignedly. And he walked out of the gates, and disappeared from the sight of the surprised Towny.

Valentine Mornington was a quarter of an hour late for classes that morning, for which he duly received a hundred lines from Mr. Dalton. But the hundred lines did not seem to worry Morny; he only smiled politely, in fact, and Mr. Dalton gave him a sharp look. For some reason or other Morny appeared to be in the very best of spirits that day.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

A Sporting Chance!

JIMMY SILVER did not share Mornington's high spirits. He could not help feeling glum.

When he was called upon to construe, it became evident that he had not devoted his attention to "prep." the previous evening. He couldn't explain to Mr. Dalton that he had left prep. over, in order to get some of his lines ready for Wednesday afternoon, as a necessary step towards bolting from detention. Such an explanation as that would not have improved matters.

But the Fourth-form master, fortunately, was lenient. Perhaps he realised the perplexity of a junior football captain, barred out of his team by detention on a match day.

So Mr. Dalton let Jimmy off lightly. But the captain of the Fourth remained very serious, not to say solemn, during the morning class.

Morny had raised his hopes, to some extent; but he had

little faith that Morny's wheeze, whatever it was, would prove of much use. It seemed assured that he had to make up his mind to cut the Greyfriars' match, and in that case, his chief problem was to decide upon a new centre-half. Jimmy was thinking more that morning about the new centre-half than about the valued instruction he was receiving from Mr. Dalton.

And yet, all the time, there was a faint hope, a slim chance, that he might be able to play after all, and that the new centre-half would not be needed. It was quite worrying and



Mr. Manders stared at Tubby Muffin in angry surprise. "What do you want?" he asked. "M-my money, sir!" stammered Tubby. "You—you've got it, sir!" "I!" yelled Mr. Manders. (See page 232.)

perplexing; and not at all surprising that Uncle James of Rookwood could not, for once, "keep smiling."

Mornington joined the captain of the Fourth when they left the form-room. Morny was looking merry and bright.

"How many lines have you got in stock?" he asked.

"Eighty!" grunted Jimmy.

"Then hook it to your study and put in some more."

"What's the good? I shall have lots of time for lines during the football match to-morrow!" groaned Jimmy.

"Fathead! If you get clear, you'll be playin' footer, not writin' lines; but the lines will have to be shown up."

"How am I to get clear, with Manders watching me like a cat watching a dashed mouse?"

"Nothing doing!" snapped Lovell. "You're talking out of your hat, Morny. Chuck it."

Morny shrugged his slim shoulders.

"Keep smiling!" he said.

Jimmy smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid the game's up, old chap," he said. "I don't know what your dodge is, but I don't see, anyhow, how you can bottle up Manders for a whole afternoon."

"I don't either!" grunted Lovell.

"Lots of things you don't see, Lovell, that other fellows see!" remarked Mornington.

"Oh, are there?" said Lovell warmly.

"And what are they?"

"Well, you don't see that you're an ass——"

"What!"

"But other fellows see it plain enough."

"Look here!" roared Lovell.

"Shush!" said Mornington soothingly.

"Keep smiling, old scouts. I tell you there's a sportin' chance at least. It mayn't work! But I'm fairly certain that it will. Get your lines done, Jimmy, in case they're wanted. It won't do any harm, at all events."

"Well, that's so!" admitted Jimmy.

"Go ahead, then!"

Jimmy Silver decided to follow Morny's advice. Instead of punting about a ball before dinner, he repaired to the end study, where he sat patiently and scribbled Virgil.

Before he came down to dinner, he had progressed from "*sed populo magnum portendere bellum*" as far as "*Aeneas primique duces et pulcher Iulus*," and had a total of one hundred and seven lines in hand.

The lines were carefully disposed in the table drawer, under a stack of other papers. Not even Mr. Manders was likely to suspect their existence.

A fellow who got his lines done at the last possible moment was unheard of at Rookwood.

Perplexing as the position was, Jimmy Silver was conscious of rising hopes. Morny, evidently, was confident; and Morny was not a fellow to be confident without some reason. In his elusive and rather exasperating way, the dandy of the Fourth declined all explanation. That seemed to imply a doubt of success. But it was possible that Mornington was only exercising extreme caution: for undoubtedly his wheeze, whatever it was, required secrecy. He declined to be "drawn" upon the subject, even by Jimmy Silver, the fellow most concerned.

But Jimmy had made up his mind to have the three hundred lines finished and ready, at all events, on the sporting chance of being able to cut detention undetected on the morrow.

After dinner he added twenty. After tea, he primed himself for the ordeal by a brisk sprint round the quadrangle, and then sat down determinedly in the end study to grind out lines.

"Prep." had to go again. That couldn't be helped. Once more he had to risk "chancing it" with Mr. Dalton in the morning.

Lines, and lines, and more lines, were the order of the day. Three hundred from Virgil were no joke.

Jimmy was feeling as if life was barely worth living, by the time he had scratched down "*toto me opponere ponto*," and had completed his three-hundredth line.

He finished at a colon. One more line would have brought him to a full stop. But Jimmy saw no reason why he should write three hundred and one lines instead of a bare three hundred. The beauties of the great Mantuan were absolutely lost upon Jimmy

Silver at this time. Indeed, Jimmy would have given a week's pocket-money for the privilege of punching the Roman nose of the great poet.

"There!" gasped Jimmy. "Done! Oh, my hat! Three hundred—done! And if it's all for nothing——"

"Well, it's done, anyhow," remarked Raby. "Even if you have to keep in the form-room to-morrow, you won't have to do the lines now."

"Might as well, if I'm stuck in doors. I'd just as soon do lines as loaf about the form-room doing nothing," grunted Jimmy.

"Well, do them all the same, and keep this lot in stock, if you have to stick detention after all!" suggested Lovell. "A stock of lines always comes in handy."

"Something in that!" remarked Newcome. "May save time on another occasion. Or if any of us get lines from the Head, we could use them—the Head wouldn't notice the fist."

"Good!" said Lovell, heartily.

Jimmy Silver grunted.

Perhaps it was a happy thought on the part of Arthur Newcome. But, really, Jimmy had not laboured through three hundred lines, to supply a stock in case any of his study-mates got an impot from the Head.

"Well, it's done!" he said. "I'll put them ready in the form-room—Morny may turn up trumps after all, though I'm dashed if I can guess what his silly wheeze is."

And Jimmy Silver conveyed the stack of Virgil to the Fourth-form room, where it was carefully concealed in a locker, to be produced

if required. After that there was nothing to do but to wait, and hope for the best.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

The Amazing Conduct of Reginald Muffin

THE next day was Wednesday—the day of the great match. It dawned bright and clear and cold; an ideal day for a football match, had other matters been as propitious as the weather. That afternoon, Harry Wharton and Co. were to arrive, and it was still a question whether they would find Jimmy Silver in the ranks of the Rookwood footballers.

In class that morning Jimmy Silver did not distinguish himself as a model pupil. But Mr. Dalton was very kind. Indeed, the master of the Fourth had gone to the length of speaking to Mr. Manders once more, in the hope of softening that gentleman's heart. He failed to produce any effect upon Mr. Manders. That lean gentleman had apparently understudied Pharaoh of old, and hardened his heart. So all Mr. Dalton could do was to be forbearing to the perplexed junior football captain; and

he even kept patient when Jimmy Silver informed him, absent-mindedly, that Christopher Columbus was a famous centre-half.

It was at dinner that day that Tubby Muffin—generally the most unimportant member of the Fourth Form at Rookwood—came into prominence. That Tubby's mysterious conduct had anything to do with Morny's wheeze, or the prospects of the Greyfriars'



Jimmy Silver, clad for football, dropped from a window of the Form-room, and scudded away for the junior football ground. (See page 239.)

match, never even occurred to Jimmy Silver and Co. They were to learn that later. Meanwhile, they couldn't help sitting up and taking notice, so to speak, at the curious conduct of Reginald Muffin.

Muffin was several minutes late for dinner—which, in itself, constituted a record. Muffin was generally late for everything else—never for meals.

Punctuality is said to be the politeness of princes. At meal-times, Tubby Muffin was more than princely in that respect.

On this special occasion Tubby rolled in several minutes late. And instead of asking for a third helping, he devoted his attention to something which appeared to be a newspaper, concealed under his jacket.

Reading at meal-times is a bad habit. Tubby had heaps of bad habits, but he had never cultivated that one. There was no masterpiece of literature that could have drawn Tubby's attention from his provender. Yet here he was, squinting down at a folded newspaper, instead of devoting his whole and sole attention to the refreshment of the inner Tubby. It really was amazing.

"Muffin!" said Mr. Dalton.

Tubby jumped.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"You must not read at dinner, Muffin, as you know very well!"

"Oh! I wasn't, sir."

"Muffin!"

"I haven't got a paper under my jacket, sir——"

"What?"

"And it isn't the 'Coombe Times'!" gasped Muffin.

There was a chuckle along the Fourth-form table. How Tubby expected Mr. Dalton to believe those amazing statements was a mystery.

"Muffin, you will take fifty lines for prevarication!" said the master of the Fourth sternly, "and if you look at that paper again during dinner, you will be caned."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Tubby did not look at the paper again. He devoted himself to a third helping, and then to a fourth.

The juniors could not help being surprised.

Mornington, indeed, gave the fat junior a rather black look, which Tubby did not even notice. What unusual interest there could possibly be, in the local paper, was a question without an answer for the juniors. Rookwood fellows sometimes bought a copy of the "Coombe Times," as it reported school matches in its columns, and sometimes other items interesting to Rookwooders. Tubby had a special interest in the local paper this week, as he was advertising for sale a hutch for white rabbits. But nobody had ever found the columns of the "Coombe Times" interesting or thrilling; and it was simply amazing that Tubby should be so intensely enthralled by the local newspaper. The juniors even wondered whether a particularly atrocious murder might have been committed locally, and reported in the "Coombe Times." But it was not at all probable. Coombe was a quiet, old-world spot, and never produced a crime—it was, in fact, very much behind the times.

After dinner, five or six fellows surrounded Muffin in the corridor to inquire.

But Tubby was non-communicative.

"It's nothing!" he gasped. "Nothing at all. That's all."

"But what's in the paper?" asked Lovell.

"What paper?"

"The 'Coombe Times,' fathead."

"I—I haven't seen it."

"What?" roared Lovell.

"It only comes out to-day," gasped Tubby.

"Naturally, I haven't seen it yet. I didn't ask old Mack to take in a copy for me, and he didn't hand it to me just before dinner, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You awful Ananias!" exclaimed Raby indignantly. "What's that sticking under your jacket?"

"Eh! that—that's nothing! I mean, it—it's my Horace!" gasped Tubby.

"Your Horace!" yelled two or three juniors.

"Yes. I—I read him for pleasure, you know—I—I always carry old Horace about with me——"

Reginald Muffin was interrupted by a howl of laughter. The idea of Tubby reading

Q. Horatius Flaccus for entertainment was too much for the juniors.

Conroy jerked at the "Horace" under Tubby's jacket, and jerked it out into view. It proved to be the "Coombe Times."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Conroy. "I wasn't aware that Horace wrote for our local paper."

"I—I say—gimme that paper——"

"What's in it?" demanded Rawson.

"Nothing."

"Then we'll have a look at nothing!" said Townsend with a chuckle.

"Gimme my paper!" howled Tubby.

"There isn't any advertisement in it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, I'm going to claim it."

"Eh! Claim what?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"The money."

"What money?" demanded Jimmy blankly.

"It's mine."

"You fat duffer, what the thump——"

"I'm going to Manders about it at once."

"Manders?"

"Yes; he's got it."

Jimmy Silver took the fat junior by the shoulder and shook him. It really looked as if the fourth helping at dinner had got into Reginald Muffin's head. Certainly he was acting very strangely.

"Look here, you fat chump——"

"Yaroooooh!"

"What are you going to Manders for?"

"Ten pounds."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

Tubby Muffin jerked himself away, and rushed out of the schoolhouse. Jimmy Silver gazed after him in blank astonishment.

"Mad as a hatter!" he ejaculated.

"Fairly off his rocker!" remarked Putty Grace. "I've seen this coming on for some time. Now it's come."

The juniors crowded into the doorway staring after Muffin. That fat youth was speeding across the quadrangle to Mr. Manders' house as fast as his extensive circumference would allow. Breathless, Reginald Muffin vanished into Mr. Manders' house, and was lost to sight; and there was only one conclusion to which the Classical

fellows could come, and that was, that the hapless Tubby was indeed as mad as a hatter!

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Most Extraordinary!

MR. ROGER MANDERS had finished his lunch, and was crossing the hall to his study, on the Modern side. Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth, were looking out of the doorway in the quadrangle, and thinking of the approaching match, in which they were going to distinguish themselves. A fat form came rushing up the steps, and rushed into the house so suddenly and forcibly that Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle and Tommy Dodd were hurled right and left. Evidently, Reginald Muffin was in a hurry!

"My hat! What——"

"You fat duffer——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Heedless, Tubby rushed on. He was breathless, and his fat face was red with excitement. He caught sight of the angular form of Mr. Manders, and almost shouted:

"Mr. Manders!"

The Modern master looked round.

He was quite surprised to hear his name howled in that manner, in the hall of his own House, by a breathless Classical junior.

He frowned portentously.

"Muffin——!"

"It's mine!" gasped Tubby.

"What?"

"I've come for it, please."

Mr. Manders blinked at him. He was so astonished that he almost forgot to be angry—though not quite.

"Is the boy mad?" he ejaculated.

"Mine, sir——"

"What is yours, you absurd and stupid boy?" snapped Mr. Manders.

"The ten sovereigns, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I lost them——"

"You have lost ten sovereigns!" exclaimed Mr. Manders, in blank amazement.

The three Tommies, and a dozen other fellows, stared at Tubby, as amazed as their master. Tubby's statement was astonishing enough; indeed, it was dumbfounding.



Jimmy Silver passed the ball to Morny, and Morny drove it fairly into the goal. "Goal!" roared the crowd. Rookwood had equalised! (See page 242.)

Certainly Tubby Muffin had never been known to be in possession of such a sum as ten pounds! And sovereigns!

It was exceedingly doubtful whether there were, at any time, ten golden sovereigns within the walls of Rookwood School. Plenty of pound notes, doubtless; but sovereigns were quite another matter. There were fags at Rookwood who had never seen a sovereign.

"The boy is mad!" said Mr. Manders, addressing space.

"I—I've come for them, sir!" gasped Muffin.

"You have come here for ten sovereigns, which you allege you have lost?" exclaimed Mr. Manders.

"That's it, sir."

"Do you dare to state, Muffin, that you have lost ten sovereigns in this House?"

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Then what do you mean?"

"On the river bank, sir—the bank of the Roke—I lost the bag with the ten sovereigns in it—"

"I do not believe your statement for one

moment, Muffin. But if you have indeed lost a sum of money, the proper person to acquaint with the fact is your form-master, Mr. Dalton. It is no business of mine."

And Mr. Manders walked on angrily to his study, and snapped the door shut after entering it.

Muffin blinked after him.

"Potty!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Balmy in the crumpet, you know. I say, Muffin, go back to your dorm. and dream again."

Tubby Muffin did not heed. He rolled away to Mr. Manders' study door, and knocked at it. Without waiting to be told to come in, he opened the door and entered the study.

Mr. Manders stared at him in angry surprise.

"What do you want, Muffin?"

"My—my money, sir."

"Money!"

"Yes, sir."

"What have I to do with your money?" roared Mr. Manders, quite exasperated by this time.

"You—you've got it, sir!" stuttered Muffin.

Mr. Manders fairly jumped.

"I!" he yelled.

"Yes, sir! I've come for it."

Mr. Manders frequently became angry without adequate cause. On this occasion, it must be acknowledged that he had cause. Certainly he became very angry.

He strode towards Tubby Muffin, and grasped him by the collar. With his free hand he reached for a cane.

Outside the study, a dozen fellows stared into the open doorway, in amazement. Tubby's amazing conduct fairly dumbfounded them. Bearding a lion in his den, a Douglas in his hall, was child's play, compared with cheeking Manders in his own study, like this. Reginald Muffin was never supposed to be cast in heroic mould; yet what he was doing, the cheekiest and most plucky junior at Rookwood might have shrunk from. But he had to pay for his temerity.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Mr. Manders, as a Modern master, was not supposed to cane a Classical fellow. Occasionally he transgressed that rule. He transgressed it now with emphasis.

Whack! whack!

"Yarooosh!" roared Muffin, wriggling frantically in an iron grip. "Oh! Ow! Whooooop!"

Whack! whack!

"Help! Hooooop—woooooop! Oh, crumbs! Leggo! Gimme my money!" shrieked Tubby desperately. "You're not going to keep my money! Yaroooop!"

Whack! whack! whack! whack!

"Yoooooooooop!"

"There!" gasped Mr. Manders. "You—dare to come here—to insinuate—indeed to state—that I have in my possession money belonging to you. You wicked, untruthful, unscrupulous, stupid boy——"

"You—ow—ow—ow!"

"Take that——"

"Yooooooooop!"

"And that——"

"Wooooorrooop!"

"I trust, Muffin, that that is a sufficient lesson!" panted Mr. Manders; "you have,

I suppose, been set on by some more cunning person than yourself to play this disreputable trick—you are too stupid to understand its enormity. Who told you to come here?"

"Yarooooh!"

"Was it Silver?" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Wow-wow! No! Nobody! Ow! I came for my money!"

"Bless my soul!"

Whack! whack! whack! whack!

Tubby Muffin's terrific roars rang through Mr. Manders' House. The Modern fellows stared on blankly. It was a terrific whacking; but the amazing thing was, that Muffin kept on asking for it, as it were.

"Now go!" said Mr. Manders, breathlessly.

"Grooogh! Ow! Oh, dear My—my money——"

"The boy is out of his senses," said Mr. Manders, in sheer wonder; "Muffin, leave this study at once. Another word, and I will cane you again."

"Look here——"

Whack!

"I say——"

Whack!

Tubby Muffin booted. Flesh and blood couldn't stand it. Still, apparently, under the firm impression that Mr. Manders was in possession of cash that rightfully belonged to him, Muffin, the fat Classical, fled—yelling. Mr. Manders slammed his study door. And Tommy Dodd and Co. fairly buzzed with excited discussion—forgetting even the Greyfriars' match, in their amazement at the mysterious and extraordinary carryings-on, of Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Morny's Master-Stroke!

JIMMY SILVER AND Co., in the meantime, had elucidated the mystery. The clue was contained in that copy of the Coombe Times, which had been jerked away from Tubby Muffin. It was open at the advertisement columns; and a fat thumb-mark drew attention to a paragraph—evidently the paragraph which had so keenly interested Muffin.

The column was headed "LOST AND FOUND!" It contained two or three announcements of the usual kind found in such a newspaper column. But one announcement was of great interest. It ran:

"The person who lost a small bag containing ten sovereigns on the towing-path by the Roke, can have same by applying personally, between the hours of 2 and 5, on Wednesday afternoon, to Mr. Roger Manders, in Mr. Manders' House, at Rookwood School, near Coombe."

"My hat!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Is that what Muffin was after? He never lost ten quid."

"Tenpence would be nearer the mark, for Muffin!" said Raby. "The fat duffer's going to claim it."

"The awful rascal!" said Newcome.

"Just like Muffin!" chuckled Putty Grace. "I say, this is the first I've heard of Mr. Manders finding ten quids on the towing-path."

"What an ass to put in an ad. about it," said Rawson. "He could have taken it to the police-station."

"He ought to have taken it to the police, I think," said Jimmy Silver. "Why, an advertisement like this might bring a crowd of dishonest bounders after the money."

Lovell whistled.

"I—I suppose there are people who would claim it, without having lost it!" he remarked.

"Not nice people!" grinned Conroy. "But I believe there are a few people in existence who are not nice."

"Just a few!" chuckled Jones minor.

"Muffin for one!" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha! Tubby's put in for the ten quids already."

"The awful fat rotter!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing in spite of himself. "He ought to be kicked! But Manders wouldn't be ass enough to hand over the money to Muffin."

"No fear!"

"Hallo, here he comes!" roared Conroy. "He doesn't look as if he's bagged ten quids."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin certainly did not look like a

fellow returning from a successful expedition. He was gasping and groaning as he rolled dismally towards the schoolhouse. The crowd of juniors intercepted him.

"Got it?" howled Flynn.

"Ow! No! He won't hand it over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you expect him to, you fat duffer?" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"I say, it's mine, you know."

"Tell that to the Marines!" chortled Higgs.

"Manders isn't likely to believe it."

"And where did you get ten sovereigns from, Muffin?" demanded Jimmy Silver sternly.

"I—I—I—I had it in a registered letter," gasped Muffin. "My—my pater, you know—"

"And you lost the registered letter with the ten quid in it?"

"Yes, Exactly."

"The advertisement says it was in a small bag."

"Oh! I—I mean——"

"Tell us what you mean," grinned Lovell.

"It's quite interesting."

"You—you see, I—I had put it in a small bag, for—for safety——" Muffin stammered.

"Go it!" said Lovell.

"I say, Manders whacked me instead of handing over my money——"

"Serve you jolly well right."

"Think I'd better go to the Head, Jimmy?" asked Muffin anxiously.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Certainly. What you want is a flogging, you dishonest young rascal; and if you go to the Head with a yarn like that, you'll get one. Go at once."

"Oh! I say—do—do you think the Head wouldn't believe me?"

"Ha, ha, ha."

"How's he to know the money wasn't mine?" demanded Muffin. "Sovereigns ain't numbered like currency notes."

"So that's why you've laid claim——"

"Yes. I—I mean, no. Of course, I wouldn't! But—but anybody might claim the money, the way Manders puts it. I dare-say a dozen people will be here this afternoon for that money," said Muffin. "Dishonest

people, you know, who haven't any claim to it——"

"Have you any claim to it?" bawled Lovell.

"Well, I saw the advertisement first——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How is Manders going to tell whom it belongs to, if a dozen people come?" demanded Muffin.

"Why, that advertisement will be the talk of Coombe by this time. All the loafers at the Bird-in-Hand will be coming along to claim those quids. As the chap who spotted the advertisement first, I'm entitled to put in the first claim——"

"You fat rascal!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver, you're not going to claim it——"

"What?" yelled Jimmy.

"'Taint fair—it's my paper—you wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't had the paper. Don't you butt in——"

"Do you think I would claim money that doesn't belong to me, you fat worm?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Well, of—of course not. I wouldn't either, you know," gasped Muffin. "But—but to prevent some dishonest person getting hold of it, you know——"

"It's no good talking to Muffin," said Lovell. "Bump the fat bounder! May bump some honesty into him."

"Here, I say—yaroooooh——"



"Go!" roared Mr. Manders; and he swung the purple gentleman round and rolled him down the steps. "Yow-ow!" roared the visitor. "I'm going!"

(See page 243.)

Tubby Muffin had suffered at the hands of Mr. Manders. But his sufferings were not ended yet. The Classical juniors collared the enterprising claimant, and proceeded to bump him in the quad, methodically and scientifically. And the last state of Tubby Muffin was worse than the first.

When the chuckling juniors left him, Tubby Muffin was sitting on the ground, gasping and spluttering frantically. He was not thinking now of trying to get hold of the ten pounds. He was trying to get his second wind.

"By Jove, though!" Lovell exclaimed suddenly, as he walked away with his chums, "that giddy advertisement may come in useful."

"How's that?" asked Raby.

"Why, Manders doesn't seem to have thought of it, but a lot of rogues will be after that money," said Lovell; "I shouldn't wonder if every rotter in the neighbourhood gives Manders a look in, making out that he lost the quids."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Quite likely!" he said.

"Well, then, that ought to keep Manders pretty busy this afternoon—and give you a chance to bolt out of detention!" said Lovell excitedly; "if he has a lot of callers, all through the afternoon——"

"My hat! Might keep him too busy to squint into the form-room at all, what?" exclaimed Newcome.

Jimmy Silver

started.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "Morny!"

"What about Morny?"

Jimmy fairly gasped. He understood at last. Valentine Mornington was strolling under the beeches with his chum Erroll, and Jimmy Silver rushed across to him:

followed by his puzzled chums. Jimmy caught the dandy of the Fourth by the shoulder.

"Morny! You awful ass——"

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Mornington coolly.

"That advertisement——"

"What advertisement?"

"Did you do it?" gasped Jimmy.

"Holy smoke!" yelled Raby; "Morny! It was you——"

"Morny!" said Lovell dazedly, "how could Morny——" Arthur Edward broke off, as he remembered the telephoning in the Head's study.

"Don't shout, dear boys," said Mornington cheerfully, "I'd rather Manders and the Head didn't know."

"You did it?" gasped Jimmy.

"Little me!" said Mornington, with a cool nod.

"Then—then—then ten sovereigns haven't been lost on the towing-path at all?" stuttered Lovell.

"Not that I know of."

"Then—then Manders hasn't found them?"

"Couldn't have if they haven't been lost. I should say that that was as big a cert as anythin' in jolly old Euclid."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Lovell.

"And Manders never put that advertisement into the local paper at all?" murmured Newcome, in quite an awed voice.

"I fancy not!" assented Morny.

"Morny! You ass!" breathed Jimmy Silver; "there'll be an awful row about this. Manders will have a regular procession of rogues and vagabonds coming here, between two and five, after those quids."

"Just that!" assented Mornington; "keep him busy, what?"

"But—when it's found out that you put the advertisement in——" exclaimed Jimmy.

"But will it be found out?" asked Morny argumentatively. "'The Coombe Times' man thought it was Manders telephoning from here. He expected a boy to call with the advertisement, and a boy called——"

"You'll be recognised——"

"I don't see it. You see, I tipped a country kid a bob to take the advertisement into the office."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Fistical Four together.

"No end of a giddy jape, what?" smiled Mornington. "I don't say it's goin' to be a jolly old success. But there's a sportin' chance, what? Manders is certain to be fairly busy, at least. You'll hook it from the form-room as soon as Dalton's gone, and chance it, Jimmy."

Jimmy chuckled.

"You bet!" he answered.

"And Manders ought to have a busy time and a fairly entertainin' time. I hope so, at least. Of course, it was my kind regard for Manders that made me think of this stunt——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a gorgeous jape!" gasped Lovell. "Jimmy, old man, you're playing Greyfriars this afternoon! It's right as rain! Hurray!"

And the Fistical Four almost hugged Morny.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Chancing It!

OUTSIDE the select circle of Jimmy Silver and his immediate pals, nothing was said concerning Morny's master-stroke. Obviously, the less said about it the better. "The jape on Manders" was justifiable from the point of view of the junior footballers. Mr. Manders himself would not have looked at it from that point of view—neither would the Head—neither would Mr. Dalton. It was a case of the least said, the soonest mended; of speech being silvern and silence golden; of a still tongue showing a wise head; in fact, any amount of proverbial wisdom could have been cited on the subject. So the juniors, like Brer Fox in the fable, lay low and "said nuffin."

But inwardly they rejoiced. Even if Morny's "wheeze" did not succeed in distracting Mr. Manders' attention from the captain of the Fourth that eventful afternoon, at least it was certain to give Mr. Manders an exciting time. That was something. But the Rookwood chums hoped for complete success.

At the appointed hour, Jimmy Silver went into the form-room for detention. Mr. Dalton dropped in to speak to him there.

"As you know, Silver, I shall be at Bagshot with the senior team this afternoon," said the Fourth-form master. "I shall expect to find your three hundred lines written out when I return."

"Very well, sir," said Jimmy; happy in the knowledge that three hundred lines from the seventh book of the *Aeneid* lay already written in his locker.

"I am sorry, Silver, that I cannot excuse you from detention," added Mr. Dalton. "You see for yourself that it is impossible."

"Yes, sir; thank you all the same," said Jimmy.

He composed his face to a serious, in fact dismal, expression, as Mr. Dalton left him. In the circumstances it was not judicious to look too bright.

Mr. Dalton quitted the form-room, leaving Jimmy Silver to ink and paper and P. Vergilius Maro. Jimmy mounted to a form-room window, and a little later had the pleasure of seeing the senior eleven start in their brake—Bulkeley and Neville and the rest, with Mr. Dalton.

The brake rolled away and disappeared. Jimmy Silver descended from the window, and took his seat at a desk as there was a footstep in the corridor.

He was sitting down to Virgil, with a long dismal face, when Mr. Roger Manders looked in.

"Oh!" said Mr. Manders. "You are here, Silver."

Jimmy looked up.

"Yes, sir! I'm detained," he said innocently.

"You do not seem in a hurry to commence your lines, Silver," said Mr. Manders sarcastically.

"I've got the whole afternoon before me, sir."

"Quite so: but you must understand that unless the total of three hundred lines are written, you will be kept in the form-room until they are finished, even after five o'clock," snapped Mr. Manders.

"Very well, sir."

"It is now two o'clock," said Mr. Manders. "I shall give you a look in shortly, Silver."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Manders sniffed, and left the form-room. Jimmy was at a window a minute later, and he saw the Modern master's angular form striding away across the quad.

As soon as he was gone, Lovell looked in. He brought a bundle with him, containing Jimmy's football rig.

"You can change here, old bean, as soon as you feel safe," remarked Lovell. "Nobody will happen in here, if Manders doesn't. Stick it out to the last minute, for safety—don't come down to the ground till the Greyfriars' chaps are there."

"What-ho!" assented Jimmy Silver.

"Carthew's gone out," said Lovell. "He went off with Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth. Coast's quite clear."

"Good."

Lovell strolled away smiling, and Jimmy lounged to the window again. The kick-off was timed for two-thirty, so Harry Wharton and Co. were expected along soon. Raby and Newcome had gone in a brake to meet the Greyfriars' fellows at the station. On Little Side, some of the Rookwood footballers had already gathered, and were punting an old ball about to keep themselves warm.

Tommy Dodd and Co., of the Modern Fourth, were standing in the doorway of their house, with overcoats and mufflers on over their football rig, when Mr. Manders came back there. They were discussing the strange fact that Jimmy Silver, although detained for the afternoon in the schoolhouse, had not filled the vacant place of centre-half in the team. They drew from it the conclusion that Jimmy intended to cut detention: and their opinion was that Jimmy was an ass. For what chance had any fellow of escaping the hawk eye of Mr. Manders?

"The telephone's ringing in your study, sir," said Tommy Dodd, as the Modern master came in.

Mr. Manders nodded shortly, and passed on to his study. The bell was ringing loud and fast.

The Modern master took the receiver off the hook.

"Well?" he snapped.

"That there Rookwood?"

Mr. Manders gave a start. It was a hoarse voice, most decidedly uncultivated, that addressed him over the wires.

"Yes!" he snapped.

"Cove of the name of Manders there?"

"What?"

"Manders!"

"I am Mr. Manders! What do you want?"

"Good! I've been put off once—glad I've got you this ere time. I'm Bob Logger."

"I've no acquaintance with you, sir, and desire none!" snapped Mr. Manders, and he jammed the receiver back.

He sat down in his arm-chair. He had some papers to draw up that afternoon: papers with little catches in them, on which it was to be hoped that unwary pupils would come to grief. That congenial task was interrupted by a loud and incessant buzzing of the telephone bell.

Mr. Manders jumped up angrily, and grabbed the receiver.

"What? Who is it?" he exclaimed.

"Me, guv'nor." It was the same voice again. "We seem to 'ave got cut orf some'ow."

"Sir, I——"

"Corst me another thruppence," said Mr. Logger. "But that ain't much when ten blink-

ing quids is concerned. The money's mine."

"What?"

"Them ten sovereigns——"

"What ten sovereigns?" roared Mr. Manders.

"Them what was lost. They're mine. I'm calling for 'em this aiternoon. Jest rang up to let you know. I s'pose I'm the first?"

Mr. Manders was about to jam the receiver back savagely, but he realised that this Mr.

Robert Logger was a stickler. It was no use cutting off, to be rung up again. So he suppressed his angry impatience as well as he could. Obviously, to Mr. Manders' mind there was some mistake going on.

"I don't know what you are talking about!" he snapped.

"Eh? Them ten quids."

"You have the wrong number. Kindly ring off."

"'Old on! Ain't you Mr. Manders?"

"Yes."

"Roger Manders. Mr. Mander's 'Ouse, Rookwood?"

"Yes—yes."

"Then you're the bloke what's got the dibs. It's all right—I'm a-coming along for them. You ain't parted with 'em yet?"

"I fail to understand you! What on earth are you referring to?" Mr. Manders almost shrieked.

"Them ten quids——"

"Pah!"



Mr. Manders groaned and gasped and gurgled and shrieked for help, but Bob Logger, with a final hefty shake, hurled the House-master into the fender. "Come on!" roared Bob Logger, putting up his fists. (See page 246.)

Mr. Manders rang off, savagely. Three minutes later there was another ring at the telephone bell. Whether it was Mr. Logger again, or another gentleman, Mr. Manders did not know or care. He let the buzzing pass unheeded, and it ceased at last.

This incident—inexplicable and annoying—did not improve Mr. Manders' temper. When he heard the sound of merry voices in the quadrangle, he looked out of his study window with a frowning brow. The Greyfriars' party had arrived in the brake from the station—he saw the cheery faces of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the rest of the Greyfriars' crowd. The sight did not please him—happy smiling faces never pleased Mr. Manders. He looked more sour than ever.

Tommy Dodd and Co rushed away to greet the Greyfriars' visitors, with Lovell, and Mornington, and a crowd of fellows. Mr. Manders compressed his lips and left the house, walking over to the schoolhouse. These were the footballers who were to play Jimmy Silver's team: and Silver was quite capable—quite!—of breaking detention, and hurling defiance and disregard in the teeth of all authority. To save Silver from that iniquity, Mr. Roger Manders walked across the quad to the school house.

He found Silver in the Fourth form-room, just composing his features to an expression of the deepest woe. Jimmy had seen the lean gentleman approaching from the window, and was ready for him. He had the first sheet of his "lines" on the desk before him, too, so this time Mr. Manders could not accuse him of neglecting his task.

He looked up meekly as the lean face poked in at the doorway. Mr. Manders stood and regarded him sourly.

There was simply nothing for him to find fault with—nothing at all. It was hard—but there it was!

"I am glad to see you are working, Silver," said Mr. Manders, at last.

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy meekly. "It's very kind of you to take such an interest in me, sir,"

Mr. Manders set his lips.

"If that is intended for impertinence, Silver——"

"Mr. Manders, please, sir," came a voice from the corridor. Pilkins, the page in Mr. Manders' house came hurrying up.

"What is it Pilkins?" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Gentleman to see you, sir."

"Oh! Very well!"

Mr. Manders rustled away.

A minute later Mornington looked into the form-room, grinning.

"It's the first!" he said. "The jolly old first of the bunch! Let's hope there'll be a mob to follow. Raby says the brake passed five or six gaudy characters heading for Rookwood."

"Good egg!" said Jimmy.

"You've got to chance it now. Get into your things, and drop out of the window—and hook it! We're all ready on the ground."

"Right-oh!"

Mornington walked away whistling. Five minutes later, Jimmy Silver, clad for football, dropped from a window of the form-room, and scudded away for the junior football ground.

The die was cast now—or as Jimmy, being a Classical fellow, might have put it, *jacta alea est*. He had taken the chance: and he could only hope that his luck would hold good. Three minutes more, and the ball was kicked off; and the Rookwood footballers, and their old rivals and friends of Greyfriars, closed in strife.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

The First Half.

JIMMY Silver was chancing it. He hoped that Mr. Manders would be too busy that afternoon to give him any attention. But, as a matter of fact, he very quickly forgot even the existence of Mr. Manders.

The game claimed all his attention.

Harry Wharton and Co. had come over from Greyfriars to win—as they fondly believed. Certainly they put plenty of "beef" into the game from the start.

The pick of the Greyfriars' Remove were in the visiting team. There was Squiff in goal; Johnny Bull and Mark Linley at back; Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, and Tom Brown, halves; Harry Wharton, Hurree Singh, Vernon-Smith, Frank Nugent, and Ogilvy, forwards. That

was a team that required "some" beating, and Jimmy Silver was well aware of it.

With a team like that in front of him, a junior football captain was not likely to have any time to worry about Roger Manders.

Even if Mr. Manders had been sighted in the offing, Jimmy would hardly have given him a glance, once the game was fairly going.

Certainly, if that lean form had marched on the field and claimed Jimmy as a truant, Jimmy would have had to sit up and take notice. But that dread possibility was banished from his mind in the excitement and stress of the game.

Jimmy was in his favourite position—centre-half. His forwards were Raby, Mornington, Erroll, Tommy Dodd, and Tommy Cook. In the half-way line with Jimmy were Conroy and Arthur Edward Lovell. The backs were Tommy Doyle and Towle. In goal was Rawson.

Mornington, in the front line, was brilliant; Erroll was rapid and reliable; the others quite good. But doubtless the Greyfriars' forwards had some advantage. In the half-way line of Rookwood, however, was a tower of strength—or more correctly, three towers of strength. On the whole the teams seemed fairly well matched, and it was, as many of the spectators remarked, anybody's game.

But there was no doubt that, minus Jimmy Silver, the Rookwooders would have been at a terrible disadvantage. Forces so equally balanced would have been rendered terribly unequal by the loss of the best man on the Rookwood side.

Of the Fistical Four, only Newcome had no place in the team. Football came before friendship, Jimmy Silver considered, and Newcome manfully did his best to agree. Newcome was a good forward; but with better stuff in hand, his chum had to leave him on the reserve list. Arthur Newcome did not wholly recognise the superiority of the better stuff; but that was a matter for the football captain to decide, and Newcome took his sentence with cheerful fortitude. Newcome joined the crowd of Rookwood fellows who watched the kick-off; but being merely a spectator, he did not think solely of the game, but gave some thought to Mr. Manders.

The danger of the match being interrupted by Mr. Manders was manifest to Newcome, who had not forgotten the existence of that lean gentleman as the footballers had.

Indeed, Newcome had some desperate thought at the back of his mind, of watching for Mr. Manders, and "butting" him if he appeared on the football ground—truly a desperate expedient.

The game was hard and fast from the start; but the score was a long time coming. It was Harry Wharton who put the ball in at last for Greyfriars, after twenty-five minutes' play. There was a shout from the Greyfriars' fellows who had come over with the team.

"Goal!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Bravo!"

Greyfriars had broken their duck. Rookwood lined up again in a determined mood; but in spite of all their efforts it was not easy to equalise. Valentine Mornington, with a brilliant effort, almost succeeded, but Squiff knocked out the ball, and the game swayed away to midfield. There was almost a groan of disappointment from the Rookwood junior crowd. It had been a near thing, but a miss was as good—or as bad—as a mile, and Greyfriars were still one up with the interval approaching.

"I say! Jimmy's playing!"

Newcome glanced round as Tubby Muffin made that remark at his elbow.

"Go hon!" he said, sarcastically.

"I say, Jimmy's detained, you know," said Muffin, with a blink of great astonishment. "He ought to be in the form-room. Suppose Manders sees him here, what?"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Newcome.

Newcome looked round towards the school buildings. There was no sign of Mr. Roger Manders to be seen. Something or other must have kept the attention of the Modern master occupied, or certainly he would have missed the detained junior from the form-room by this time. Was Mornington's amazing scheme going to be a success? Really, it looked like it. Only stress of other affairs could possibly have kept Mr. Manders from discovering the absence of the truant.

THE GREYFRIARS V. ROOKWOOD MATCH



To face page 240.

"LOOK OUT IN GOAL!"



Newcome saw a man dodge in before the porter could shut the gates—then another got over the gates and another climbed over the wall. “Ha, ha, ha!” roared Newcome. “They’re all heading for Manders’ house. (See page 247.)”

Newcome observed, too, that the crowd round the football ground was not so numerous as before. Fellows seemed to be straying off, as if there was some other centre of attraction.

“Anything going on in Mr. Manders’ house, Tubby?” asked Newcome.

Reginald Muffin gave a fat chuckle.

“Yes, rather! Visitors, you know——”

Newcome grinned.

“After your ten quids?” he asked.

“Yes—dishonest rotters, you know. They can’t all have lost ten quids in a bag on the towing-path, can they?” asked Tubby argumentatively. “Old Manders might as well have handed it over to me. I say, there’s a crowd there—I’m going back.”

And Tubby Muffin rolled away, evidently regarding the proceedings at Mr. Manders' house as being more entertaining than the Greyfriars' match.

Newcome was not of that opinion; but he decided to give Mr. Manders a look-in, and he followed Tubby from the football ground.

A few minutes later there was a roar from the football field.

"Goal!"

"Bravo!"

Jimmy Silver had sent the ball to Mornington, and Morny—not failing this time—had driven it fairly in. Almost on half-time, Rookwood had equalised.

A minute or two later, Brown major of the Fifth, the referee, blew the whistle.

"One to one," said Arthur Edward Lovell, with much satisfaction. "All right so far. That was a good goal, Morny."

"Jimmy's as much as mine," said Mornington. "But have you fellows thought of Manders?"

Jimmy started.

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten there was such an object in the wide world!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looks as if the jolly old stunt is a howling success!" said Raby.

"It do—it does," said Jimmy Silver. "Good old Morny! If only Manders keeps off the grass for the second half——"

Jimmy Silver looked round, but the horizon, so far, was not blotted by the apparition of Mr. Roger Manders.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Inexplicable!

MR. MANDERS was amazed.

He was dumbfounded.

Thunderstruck, in fact, would not be too strong a word to describe the state of Mr. Manders.

The Modern master had expected to be busy that afternoon. He had exam. papers to prepare, with pleasant little catches in them for unwary victims—not an uncongenial task. Likewise, he had several little walks across the quadrangle in view. Every half-

hour or so, it was his amiable intention to glance into the Form-room, over in the School-house, and ascertain by the evidence of his own eyes that the detained Classical junior was still there, exploring the beauties of Virgil.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Manders was busy that afternoon, as he had expected to be. But he was not busy in the manner that he had expected. Far from that.

It seemed to Mr. Manders that that part of the county of Sussex in which Rookwood School was situated had been seized by a sudden spasm of insanity.

Only on such a theory could the amazing happenings of that afternoon be explained.

It began quite early. Mr. Manders, called from the School-house by the page's message that a gentleman had called to see him, returned to his own house. He wondered who the gentleman was, and what he wanted. As he came into his house, he wondered still more, for the gentleman who had called to see him was a rather remarkable gentleman.

He was a little, thin gentleman, clad in the shabbiest possible attire, and with a purple complexion. His looks indicated that he was a determined opponent of the Pussy-foot campaign. It was obvious that he spent a great deal of money in support of the drink traffic, which left him without resources to expend upon soap. Mr. Manders gazed at him in surprise and indignation. Such a gentleman had no right whatever to call at Rookwood to see Mr. Manders.

"Sir!" said Mr. Manders, most ungenially.

The purple gentleman nodded and smiled to him.

"Mr. Manders?" he asked.

"That is my name. Kindly explain what you want here!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Name of 'Ookey, sir."

"What?"

"'Ookey—that's me. I've called for the money."

"Money?"

"That's it! Ten sovereigns in a bag what I lost on the towing-path, sir."

Mr. Manders blinked at him. Ten sovereigns in a bag seemed to be haunting Mr. Manders that day. First of all, there had been the

amazing conduct of Tubby Muffin. Then there had been the mystifying talk on the telephone. Now there was a gentleman with a purple complexion, in person, actually calling on Mr. Manders on the same mysterious subject. Mr. Manders' footsteps seemed to be dogged, as it were, by a phantom of ten sovereigns in a bag.

"Lucky you found it, sir," said Mr. Hookey affably. "Looking in the paper for a job, sir; that's 'ow it was, otherwise I'd never 'ave knowed that you'd found it."

"Sir, I—I——"

"Got it about you, sir?"

"What? What?"

"Them ten quids, sir!"

Mr. Manders raised a bony hand and pointed to the open doorway.

"Go!" he said.

"Hay?"

"Go!"

"But I've called——"

"You are intoxicated, sir!" said Mr. Manders. "You have no right to be here! I shall speak severely to the porter for letting you enter. How dare you come here, sir?"

Mr. Hookey blinked.

"I've called for the money!" he said.

"Go!"

"But the money——"

"Do you dare to ask me for money?" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "How dare you come here to beg?"

"Who's begging?" demanded Mr. Hookey, getting angry himself. "Ain't I asking for my own money?"

"You are intoxicated!" thundered Mr. Manders. "Leave this house!"

"P'raps I 'ad a drop at the Bird-in-'And," said Mr. Hookey. "It's a cold day. As for being toxicated, it's a lie! No more toxicated than you are, Mr. Manders. Bless your 'eart, it ain't so easy to get toxicated these days. What with the price of drink——"

"Go!"

"Not without my money!" said Mr. Hookey hotly. "I s'pose you ain't trying to keep a man's money from him, sir?"

"Are you insane?" hooted Mr. Manders.

"I have no money belonging to you!"

"Them quids——"

"Go!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"Look 'ere, 'ave you got them ten quids or 'avent you got them ten quids?" demanded Mr. Hookey. "Did you pick up a bag of sovereigns or did you not?"

"What, what? Certainly not!"

"Then what for did you say that you did?"

"The man is mad!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Sir, if you do not leave these premises immediately, you will be ejected by force!"

"Look 'ere——"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"'And over the spondulics, and I'll go fast enough!" howled Mr. Hookey. "Why, keeping a man's money—you're no better'n a thief!"

That was too much for Mr. Manders. Generally, Mr. Manders was not prone to be belligerent; generally, in fact, he would have walked ten miles to avoid anything in the nature of a personal encounter. But the purple gentleman was very small, and Mr. Manders towered over him. Sideways, there was not much of Mr. Manders; but length-wise there was a great deal of him. It was safe to deal drastically with this obnoxious purple gentleman, so Mr. Manders, giving a free rein to his wrath, dealt with him drastically. He grasped the purple gentleman by his dirty collar, and jerked him round to the doorway.

The purple gentleman gave a wild howl.

"Ow! Let a man alone! I'm going! Yow-ow!"

"Go!" roared Mr. Manders.

The purple gentleman rolled down the steps.

He picked himself up, stared at Mr. Manders, and bolted for the open gateway. Mr. Manders, somewhat solaced by the drastic handling of the purple gentleman, retired to his study.

He was perplexed and annoyed. But he forgot his annoyance as he settled down to his work. Shortly afterwards his work was interrupted by a buzz on the telephone bell.

Mr. Manders picked up the receiver.

"That Mr. Manders?"

"Yes. Mr. Manders speaking."

"Keep it till I come!"

"What?"

"Don't you 'and it over to anybody else, sir! It's mine!"

"What? What is yours?"

"Them quids!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Jest seen it, sir—only jest, so I thought I'd ring up. I'm coming along directly."

There was quite a crash as Mr. Manders slammed the receiver back into its place.

"What can this mean?" he gasped.

"Have a number of people gone suddenly insane? There seems to be an impression that I have a sum of money to give away—it is amazing!"

Undoubtedly it was amazing. Nobody who knew Mr. Manders would have supposed for a moment that he would give anything away. Still, these mysterious claimants were strangers to him, and did not know his disposition; and evidently they had an impression that he was giving away sovereigns. Mr. Manders sat down to his study table again, but it was difficult to concentrate his attention upon his work. As for Jimmy Silver, Mr. Manders had forgotten him.

Possibly he would have remembered—in fact, certainly he would have remembered—had he been left in peace. But it was fated that Roger Manders should not be left in peace that surprising afternoon. There came a tap at the door of his study, and Pilkins looked in.

"A gentleman, sir—name of Logger—"

"Logger!" Mr. Manders remembered the first talk on the telephone. "I cannot see him, Pilkins. Tell him to go away at once."

"All right, guv'nor!" said a hoarse voice in the corridor. "I'm 'ere! Won't keep you a minute! Jest 'and over the quids, and I'm off!"

And Bob Logger twirled the page aside and walked into the study.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Shell Out!

MR. Logger nodded affably to the Rookwood master.

He was a powerfully built man, with a rugged, bulldog face, and knuckly fists of large size. He was, at first glance, a gentleman whom no prudent person would have cared to meet in a lonely place on a dark night. The study floor almost shook under his heavy tramp as he came in.

Mr. Manders stared at him savagely. But he had to rein his wrath to some extent. It was palpable that Mr. Logger could not be dealt with drastically like Mr. Hookey.

The burly man was quite good-tempered so far. Doubtless he was pleased and cheered by the prospect of handling ten sovereigns that did not belong to him.

"Arternoon, sir!" he said.

"G-g-good afternoon!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"I give you the tip on the 'phone, sir! You ain't 'anded out ten quids to any other bloke yet?"

"Eh! Certainly not!"

"Good!" said Mr. Logger, with much satisfaction. "Thought you might 'ave."



It was in vain that Pilkins denied the man admittance, and, inside, Mr. Manders fairly raved. "Go away! Go away at once!" he spluttered. (See page 249)

"I should not be likely to hand money to strangers for no reason, I suppose!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Very sensible of you, sir," approved Mr. Logger. "There's dishonest people about, sir—low coves what would claim money what wasn't their'n. Very right and proper, sir, for you to keep it in 'and for the right bloke. I'm the bloke!"

"You are what?"

"The right bloke!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Course, you want a cove to put it straight," said Mr. Logger. "I'll tell you 'ow it was. Them ten sovereigns, sir, was the savings of years of 'ard work. I kept them in a bag; I don't trust them banks." Mr. Logger shook his head. "Kep' it about me, sir. Being as 'ow I'd 'ad a drop too much that night, I goes and loses it. That's 'ow it was."

"I—I—I fail to understand——"

"Ain't I putting it plain?" asked Mr. Logger. "I'm the bloke what them quids belongs to. I've called for them—ten sovereigns in a bag."

"I—I think I must be dreaming!" gasped the unfortunate Mr. Manders. "Do you mean to say that you suppose I have ten sovereigns for you?"

"Not much s'posing about it that I can see!" answered Mr. Logger. "You ain't 'anded them to nobody else?"

"Certainly not! I have not——"

"Then 'and them to me!"

"Bless my soul! But—but why—what—how——"

"We're wasting time," said Mr. Logger. "I ain't got any time to waste, sir. I'm thirsty—I mean, I'm busy. 'And over the money and I'll go."

"I have no money to hand you!"

"What?"

"I cannot imagine why you should suppose that I have ten sovereigns to give you. I have nothing of the kind."

"Dror it mild!" said Mr. Logger, losing his affability quite suddenly. "Findings ain't keepings, I s'pose? You ain't sticking to them quids?"

"I have not the faintest idea——"

"Changed your mind since you put it in, what?" sneered Mr. Logger. "Well, sir, it's too late. If you wanted to steal them sovereigns, you should 'ave thought of that sooner. Now I've called for 'em."

"There are no sovereigns!" shrieked Mr. Manders, in bewilderment. "I have not a single sovereign in my possession! Are you so ignorant that you are not aware that there is now a paper currency in this country?"

Mr. Logger blinked.

"I don't foller," he said. "Currency be blowed! I lost them ten quids in a bag on the towing-path."

"If you have lost money, you must apply to the police. A schoolmaster is not the proper person to apply to."

"Come off!" said Mr. Logger roughly. "You found them quids——"

"Found them? Certainly I did not!"

"You didn't?" howled Mr. Logger.

"No! Most decidedly, no!"

"Then what for did you say you did?" roared Mr. Logger.

"I did not! I deny—I never——" spluttered Mr. Manders.

"You did!" roared Bob Logger. "Ain't I seed it in black and white? Didn't old Stiggins, at the Bird-in-'And, show it to me in the paper, and didn't he say to me, 'Bob,' says he, 'this looks like a chance for somebody,' says he. 'I'm on!' says I. And 'ere I am."

This was so much Greek—or, rather, Sanskrit—to Mr. Manders. He could only blink at the indignant Bob.

"If any other cove has told you that them quids is his'n," said Mr. Logger, "it ain't true! Savings of years of 'ard work, they was. I'm waiting for them quids, Mr. Manders."

"I repeat," gasped Mr. Manders, "that I have no money to give you! I have no sovereigns—I have not seen a sovereign for years. If you do not immediately leave this place, I shall telephone for the police!"

Mr. Logger breathed hard.

"Meaning to say, you don't believe that they belong to me?" he asked. "You can't take a man's word?"

"No—yes—no! There are no sovereigns! I assure you that I have never found any sovereigns on the towing-path or elsewhere."

"That won't wash, sir! If you didn't take my word they was mine, I'm willing to put up my 'ands, if you can't take a gentleman's word. But tellin' me there ain't any sovereigns—that's too thick! You goes and advertises in 'Lost and Found' in the paper that you'd found them——"

"I did not! I have not! I never——"

"Ain't I seed it?" roared Mr. Logger. "Didn't the landlord at the Bird-in-'And show it to me?"

"Impossible! You—you are acting under some—some misapprehension! I certainly never did advertise anything of the kind!"

"You're Mr. Manders?"

"Yes, yes."

"This 'ere is Mr. Manders's 'ouse, Rookwood?"

"Yes—oh, yes!"

"Then there ain't no mistake. You've changed your mind, and you want to freeze on to them quids; that's 'ow it is!" said Mr. Logger darkly. "Dishonest, I call it! In a schoolmaster, too, what has boys to bring up honest! I'd never 'ave believed such a thing. But if you think, sir, that you're going to 'ang on to my money, that's where the mistake comes in!"

"I—I tell you——"

Mr. Logger clenched his enormous fists and came round the table towards Mr. Manders.

"'And it over!" he said laconically.

Mr. Manders dodged wildly.

"I—I tell you, upon my word—my word of honour—— Keep off! I do most solemnly say—— Yaroooooop!"

Bob Logger had Mr. Manders by the neck now. He shook the lean gentleman a great deal like a terrier shaking a rat, only Mr. Logger bore a closer resemblance to a bulldog than to a terrier.

"Ow! Oh! Help! Police! Yoooooop!"

"Are you 'anding over my money?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Shake! shake! shake!

"Whooooop! Help!"

Bob Logger shook and shook. It was

growing clear to him now that there were no "quids" to be had from Mr. Manders. Possibly Mr. Logger had not wholly expected his claim to be credited; he was prepared for doubts. But Mr. Manders' declaration that there was no bag of sovereigns at all was too much for him. His only possible conclusion—after reading the advertisement in the "Coombe Times"—was that Mr. Manders, on reflection, had determined to keep the money.

Naturally that made Mr. Logger indignant. A rascal very seldom has any fellow-feeling for another rascal. So Bob Logger proceeded to punish Mr. Manders for his supposed rascality.

Shake, shake, shake!

Mr. Manders howled, and groaned and gasped and gurgled, and shrieked for help. Pilkins' scared face looked in at the study doorway; a dozen other faces were soon looking in. Two or three of the Modern Sixth came to the rescue at last—in a rather gingerly way, for Mr. Logger was a formidable gentleman to tackle.

Bob Logger gave Mr. Manders a final hefty shake, and hurled him into the fender. Mr. Manders rolled on the hearthrug and spluttered.

"Come on!" roared Bob Logger, putting up his hands.

The Sixth-formers backed.

"Clear out, you hooligan!" said Framp-ton.

"I'm going," said Mr. Logger. "That man—your blinking schoolmaster—he's a swindler! He's keeping money what don't belong to him. I'd fight him for it if he was man enough to put his 'ands up."

Groan from Mr. Manders.

Bob Logger stamped out of the study, the Sixth-formers gladly letting him pass in peace. Astonished stares greeted Mr. Logger on all sides as he strode away. In the quadrangle a crowd was gathering before Mr. Manders' house. Bob Logger halted there, and brandished a big fist at the façade of the house.

"Come out!" he roared.

Newcome had just arrived on the scene. He fairly blinked at Bob Logger. Evidently Morny's stunt was working—emphatically so.

"Come out!" bawled Mr. Logger. "If you're a man, old Manders, come out and put up your 'ands, man to man."

Mr. Manders would as willingly have accepted an invitation into the den of a hungry lion. He did not appear.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Newcome. "I say, my man, you'd better cut. They'll ring up the police-station."

"Who you torkin, to?" inquired Mr. Logger.

And with a backhander, he sent Newcome sprawling.

"Ow!" howled the hapless junior. "Oh, crumbs!"

"You coming out, old Manders?" roared Mr. Logger.

There was no reply, and Bob Logger stalked away towards the gates, old Mack retiring into his lodge as he saw him coming. And so Bob Logger at last shook the dust of Rookwood from his feet.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

The Second Half

"JIMMY——"

Newcome came up breathless. The Rookwood footballers were chatting with Harry Wharton and Co. in the interval. Brown major of the Fifth was looking at his watch.

Jimmy Silver looked anxious.

"Not——" he began.

"No. He's not coming!" gasped Newcome. "Oh, my hat! Such larks."

"Visitors for Manders?" asked Mornington.

"Ha, ha! Yes." Newcome's face beamed.

"Man pitched into him, lot of fellows saw it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's three more after him."

"Three! Oh, crumbs!"

"Old Mack tried to keep them out at the gates," gasped Newcome. "They wouldn't keep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One dodged in before he could get the gate shut — Manders has sent him an order to lock up — another got over the gates, and I saw another climbing over the wall."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "All heading for Manders' house!" gurgled Newcome. "And I saw five or six more shaking the bars at the gate, howling to Mack to let them in."

Jimmy Silver and Co. yelled. They had hoped that Mr. Manders would be kept busy that afternoon. Undoubtedly he was being kept

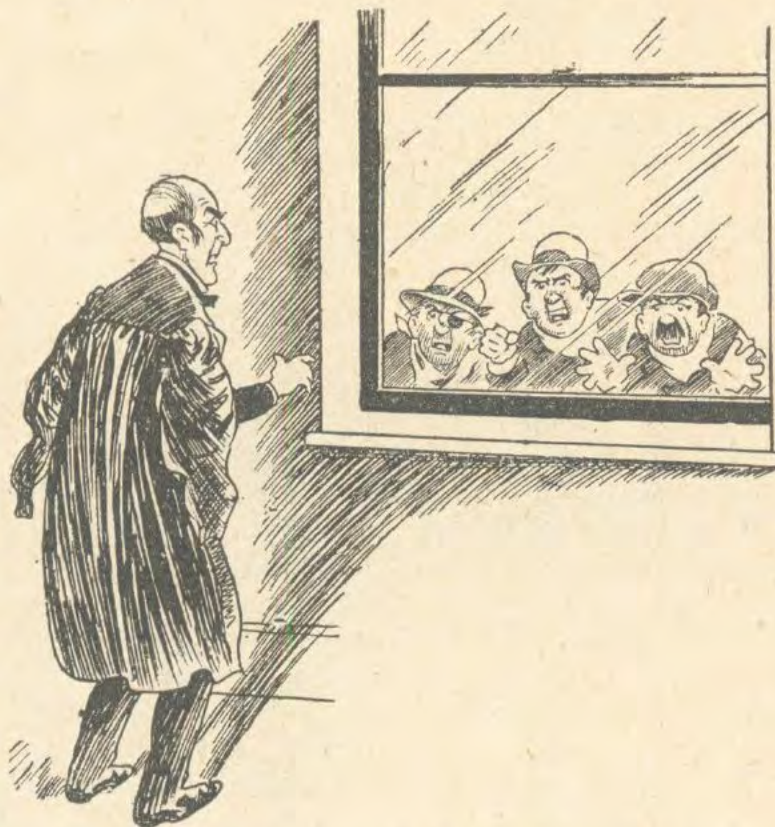
busy. Of that, as Mr. Gilbert has said, there wasn't a shadow of doubt, not a possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

"Big joke on, you fellows?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Joke of the season," answered Jimmy, beaming. "The last thing in japes, the real record. Somebody's shoved a bogus advertisement in the local paper, and a lot of rogues are coming along to claim a bag of quids that never was lost."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Manders is having the time of his life," explained Mornington. "It's keeping him so busy that he can't worry about a chap



Eager faces, rather in need of soap and water, were pressed against the window panes. "I lost them quids!" It was quite a chorus. (See page 251.)

who's playing footer instead of writing lines."

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I see."

"Some scheme, and no mistake," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The schemefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky junior of Greyfriars. "It takes the honourable and respected cake."

"Ha, ha! It does."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The footballers went into the field again for the second half of the great match.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were merry and bright. It was fairly certain now that there would be "no more Manders," so to speak. Roger Manders had his hands full with unnumbered claimants for a non-existent bag of sovereigns.

The second half started in great style, but the crowd of spectators had greatly thinned. It was a great match, an important match, and there was first-class play to be seen on both sides. But the counter-attraction was too strong.

All the Rookwood Fourth—Classical and Modern—were keenly interested in the Greyfriars' match; but still more keenly were they interested in the amazing adventures of Mr. Manders.

Even Newcome felt himself torn away, and, after watching the game for ten minutes or so, he drifted back to the quad to see how Roger Manders was getting on. Fellows who remained to watch glanced over their shoulders every now and then in the direction of the school buildings.

Only the footballers, in fact, quite forgot Roger Manders. But they had more important things to occupy their attention.

It was a gruelling game. Both teams were in great form, and in a mood of determination.

The score was level at half-time, and it remained level, with narrow escapes on both sides, as the minutes ticked away. But a terrific attack by Greyfriars got through at last. The Greyfriars' forwards came up the field in splendid style, passing like clock-work; and Rawson, in goal, was beaten to

the wide. The ball went in from the foot of Vernon-Smith.

"Goal!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Two to one!" murmured Jimmy Silver, as the footballers walked back to the centre of the field. "Pull up your socks, you fellows."

The Rookwooders pulled up their socks, and luck came their way. Five minutes later Erroll put the ball into the Greyfriars' goal.

Once more the score was level, with ten minutes to go. It was still "anybody's game."

Every minute that followed was crammed with incident. Another goal to either side would decide that hard-fought game; it was pretty clear that not more than one would be taken. Both sides were determined that it should not be a draw.

Jimmy Silver, all thoughts of Mr. Manders and of his detention forgotten, urged his men on to their utmost efforts.

"Stick it on, you fellows! Now's the time! Only one more goal!"

And the Rookwooders "stuck it on" manfully.

Hard and fast went the game, swaying up and down the field. A struggle in front of the Rookwood goal failed to materialise; the backs cleared, and Lovell sent the ball along. A rush into the Greyfriars' territory followed.

Squiff was on the watch in his citadel, all eyes and hands and feet; and Harry Wharton and Co. fell back to defend. But they could not succeed in clearing. The ball went to midfield, only to meet the foot of Jimmy Silver, and to come back like a pip from an orange. Mornington drove it in, and Squiff fisted it out. Brown of the Fifth looked at his watch.

Hard and fast; harder and faster! But there was, by this time, not a shout of encouragement for the football heroes, for not a single spectator remained on Little Side. The counter-attraction had won the day, and every fellow not chained to the spot had streamed off towards Mr. Manders' house. It was the first time on record that Roger Manders had succeeded in interesting a Rookwood crowd; but, quite unintentionally, he had succeeded this time. In fact, Mr. Roger Manders had brought down the house!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Awful !

“Go away !”
“Hay ?”

“Go away !” shrieked Mr. Manders passionately.

Mr. Manders was excited ; indeed, he looked almost hysterical. The strange, mysterious, inexplicable affair of the bag of sovereigns was getting on his nerves.

It was in vain that Mr. Manders had sent orders to old Mack, the porter, to lock the gates, and to refuse admittance to any person asking for Mr. Manders. Old Mack locked the gates, but the seekers after fortune were not to be baffled so easily as all that. Obviously, Mr. Manders' advertisement in the “Coombe Times” had spread all over Coombe. Every loafer at the Bird-in-Hand or the Red Cow had heard of it, and jumped at it. Ten pounds were not to be picked up every day ; the temptation was great to gentlemen of loose principles. Had the advertisement stated that banknotes had been found, it would have been a different matter ; a claimant would have been expected to give the numbers of the notes. But a bag of sovereigns could be claimed with impunity, and there was a sporting chance of getting hold of the goods, at least. So the honourable company of the Bird-in-Hand considered, at least.

Three rough-looking individuals, with mutually hostile looks, converged on Mr. Manders' house. It was in vain that Pilkins denied them admittance ; they shoved in. Mr. Manders fairly raved when they found their way into his study.

“Go away ! Go away at once ! Goodness gracious, go away !”

They stared at him.

“What's the trouble, guv'nor ?”

“I've looked in for that there bag of quids——”

“I've called for my money——”

“Cheese it, Bill Hikes ! It's my money !”

“You shut up, Sam Trotter ! I lost that there money on the towing-path——”

“You 'ad ten quids to lose ? I don't think !”

“Look here, you two, it's mine——”

“Chuck it, Ted Harker ! Chuck it !”

“Go away !” roared Mr. Manders. “I have no money ; no sovereigns have been found, I assure you !”

Messrs. Harker, Hikes, and Trotter ceased their recriminations, and gave their undivided attention to Mr. Manders as he made that statement—or, rather, as he roared it.

“No money——”

“No sovereigns——”

“Dror it mild ! Where's the dibs then ?”

“Go away !” gasped Mr. Manders. “I will telephone for the police——”

“Where's the dibs ?” roared Mr. Harker indignantly. “You advertises that you've found a bag of spondulics. Where are they ?”

“I—I have not——”

“You advertises !” howled Mr. Hikes.

“I did not—I——”

“Why, 'ere it is in black and white !” shouted Mr. Trotter, producing a soiled copy of the “Coombe Times” from his pocket. “Look at this 'ere, old codger !” A dirty thumb indicated the advertisement, to the amazed eyes of Roger Manders. “Now wot you got to say ?”

Mr. Manders had nothing to say for some moments. He wondered whether he was dreaming. There it was—in black and white, as the indignant Mr. Trotter declared. Mr. Manders gazed at it, thunderstruck.

“Deny it if you can !” said Mr. Trotter, scornfully. “Don't you believe I'm the howner ? I'll prove it. I dropped that there bag of sovereigns on the towing-path out of my trousis pocket. There was a hole in the pocket, which I can show.”

And Mr. Trotter dragged out the lining of his ragged trousers, and showed the hole in it. There were about fifty or sixty other holes in Mr. Trotter's garments, if further proof had been required.

“Gammon !” howled Mr. Hikes. “Gammon ! I dropped that there bag of quids on the towing-path accidental like, jest as I was taking it to the bank—dropped it out of my 'and——”

“Stick to the truth, Bill Hikes !” interrupted Mr. Harker. “Well you know that I lost that bag of quids on the towing-path !”

"There was no bag of sovereigns at all!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"What?"

"This advertisement is false—it is unauthorized—it has been inserted in my name by some person or persons unknown——"

"You don't expect a cove to swaller that?" inquired Mr. Harker, with lofty scorn. "Say you mean to pocket the money, and we'll believe yer."

"I assure you—I swear——"

"Come off, old gentleman! We're arter the quids. We ain't come 'ere to listen to fairy tales."

"No blinking fear! Look 'ere, 'and out the dibs, and we'll settle atween us who they belong to!"

"That's fair!"

"There is no money!" raved Mr. Manders. "Go away! Go away at once! Bless my soul! Go!"

Mr. Manders careered to the telephone. He grabbed up the receiver, and panted out the number of the police-station.

The three claimants stared at him, and stared at one another. Whether the bag of sovereigns had a real existence or not, it was plain that Messrs. Harker, Hikes, and Trotter were not going to handle them.

"Send a constable!" gasped Mr. Manders into the transmitter. "Send a constable at once—Mr. Manders' house, Rookwood. Hurry! Hurry!"

"Strike me pink!" said Mr. Harker.

There was a general move on the part of the three claimants. They did not seem to want any personal dealings with a constable. Probably their relations with the police were rather strained already.

Mr. Trotter only lingered a moment to bestow the end of his ragged boot on Mr. Manders as he bent over the telephone. There was a fearful howl from Mr. Manders as he rolled over, dragging the instrument down with him. Then the visitors retired.



With a heavy, stately tread, Mr. Boggs crossed towards Mr. Manders' house. (See page 251.)

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Manders. "Ow! Goodness gracious! I—I—Oh! Thank goodness they are gone! Ow! Oh! Wow!"

They were gone. But alas for Mr. Manders! As they went another gentleman passed them in the doorway—coming in!

"This 'ere Mr. Manders' 'ouse, what?" asked the gentleman.

"Haw, haw!" roared Mr. Harker. "You arter the quids? Yes, this is the 'ouse. Go in and try your luck!"

The gentleman went in. Pilkins made an attempt to close the door, but the gentleman planted a large foot in the way.

"Mr. Manders at 'ome?" he asked.

"Yes—no—can't come in!" gasped Pilkins.

"Tell 'im Mr. Scuppers has called about the bag of sovereigns——"

"Oh, my eye!" said Pilkins. Mr. Scuppers shoved the door further open, and shoved in. Another gentleman came racing up the steps.

"Don't you come in here, Charley Hunks!" exclaimed Mr. Scuppers. "I was first, and I know what you're arter!"

"Halves!" breathed Mr. Hunks.

Mr. Scuppers reflected a moment, and nodded.

"Halves it is," he answered. "Where's Mr. Manders, me lad?"

"You can't see him—you—Yow-ow!" wailed Pilkins, as Mr. Scuppers took his ear in a hefty finger and thumb.

"Can't I?" said Mr. Scuppers, pleasantly.

"Ow! This way!"

Slam!

Mr. Manders heard them coming. He slammed his study door and turned the key in the lock, just in time.

Mr. Scuppers and Mr. Hunks hammered at the door.

"Go away!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"We've called for the money, sir."

"Them quids, sir."

"Belongs to both of us, sir. Lost it together on the towing-path, we did!"

"Kept it in the same bag, sir, being such pals. It's ours, sir."

Thump. Thump! Thump!

"Go away! I have sent for the police. Bless my soul! I will have you taken into custody—prosecuted, arrested! Oh, dear!"

"Here comes the bobby!" shouted Pilkins.

"Oh, my 'at!" gasped Mr. Scuppers. "I don't want to see no bobby. I 'ate bobbies. I'm off!"

"I'm arter you!" gasped Mr. Hunks.

The hammering at Mr. Manders' door ceased. A crowd of Rookwooders in the quad roared with laughter as the two latest claimants dodged out of the house and fled. Pilkins—who had not been brought up at the feet of George Washington—had given the alarm rather early; there was no sign of a policeman yet. But as soon as Messrs. Hunks and Scuppers were out of the house, Pilkins shut the door and put the chain up.

Bang, bang, bang! came at the door. Hunks and Scuppers were gone, but three or four other untruthful gentlemen had arrived. The door did not open, but a kind junior—Newcome of the Fourth—pointed out Mr. Manders' study window to the visitors. Eager faces, rather in need of soap and water, were pressed to the window-panes.

"Mr. Manders, sir——"

"Let a bloke in——"

"I lost them quids!"

It was quite a chorus. Mr. Manders pressed his hands to his distracted ears, and longed for the sight of a policeman's helmet. There was tapping at the window, and a rather vigorous tap broke a pane. Fragments of glass rattled on the floor.

"Let a cove in, sir! You don't want to keep my money, I s'pose?"

"What's this 'ere game, Mr. Manders? Can't you answer a bloke who's called for money he's lost?"

"Look 'ere, do you want me to come in at the winder?"

Mr. Manders groaned.

"Look out!" shouted Tubby Muffin in the quad. "Peelers!"

It was Police-constable Boggs at last. Old

Mack thankfully let him in at the gates. With a heavy, stately tread, Mr. Boggs crossed towards Mr. Manders' house. And at the sight of the official uniform, the claimants of the bag of sovereigns melted away like snow in the sunshine. Peace at long last descended upon the harassed soul of Roger Manders.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

The Winning Goal!

"GOAL!"
"Good old Jimmy!" gasped Lovell.

"Huray!"

It was a splendid goal. Right up to time, the hot attack on the Greyfriars' citadel lasted, but Johnny Bull drove back the ball at last. It was then that Jimmy Silver, centre-half, put in a long shot almost from midfield, and sent the leather home. He knew it was on time—he expected to hear the blast of the whistle as he kicked—there was not a second to spare; no time for anything but taking that long chance, and Jimmy Silver took it and "got there."

"Goal!"

Pheep! went the whistle.

"Huray!"

It was Rookwood's game right on the stroke of time. Arthur Newcome came racing up breathlessly. He heard the shrilling of the whistle as he came.

"Rookwood wins!" Lovell shouted to him. "How's Manders getting on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a regular riot!" gasped Newcome.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha! They've been besieging him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now the bobby's come——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut off, Jimmy," breathed Lovell. "We'll look after these chaps. Cut off."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

All had gone well. Mornington's amazing scheme had been an amazing success. Jimmy Silver had played in the great match—in spite of Roger Manders and all his works. And—as it turned out—he had won the match for Rookwood. Jimmy would not have cared very much now if his absence from the

Form-room had come to Mr. Manders' knowledge. Nevertheless, he was not anxious for a licking to wind up that happy and eventful day, so he cut off from the football field without delay.

The attention of nearly everybody within the walls of Rookwood was centred on Mr. Manders' house just then. It was easy enough for Jimmy to dodge in at the open window of the Form-room unnoticed.

He was breathless, but he lost no time. In the dusky Form-room he changed hurriedly, and his football clothes were rolled out of sight in a locker.

In Etons once more, Jimmy Silver sat at his desk, with a stack of impot paper before him on which were inscribed three hundred lines from P. Vergilius Maro—so fortunately prepared in advance.

Harry Wharton and Co. were staying to tea before they went for their train. Lovell and his comrades looked after them, Jimmy being under detention.

Newcome looked in at the Form-room door, grinning.

"They're gone," he announced. "Boggs cleared them off, and turned back some more that were coming up the road."

Jimmy chuckled.

"Manders might look in here now."

"Let him," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Newcome strolled away to join the footballers at tea. But Mr. Manders did not look in. Mr. Manders was utterly oblivious of Jimmy Silver now, he had completely forgotten the existence of that cheery youth. In a state of excitement, almost hysteria, and of raging wrath and indignation, Mr. Manders was thinking about anything but Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy smiled as he heard the sound of a brake in the quadrangle, and understood that the senior footballers had returned from Bagshot with Mr. Dalton. It was close on five now, and at five o'clock his detention was to expire—if his lines were done! Undoubtedly his lines were done!

There was a step outside as five o'clock rang out from the clock-tower. Mr. Dalton looked in.

Jimmy rose respectfully to his feet.

"Your lines are done, Silver?" asked Mr. Dalton, with a kindly glance at the detained junior.

"They are here, sir," said Jimmy demurely.

"Then—ah, here is Mr. Manders!"

The lean gentleman had remembered Jimmy's existence as five o'clock rang out. He came whisking into the Form-room. Possibly he hoped that Jimmy was not there—a victim would not have been unwelcome to Mr. Manders just then.

"Oh, you have returned, Mr. Dalton?"

"Yes, Mr. Manders."

"Has Silver——"

"Silver is here."

Mr. Manders set his lips hard.

"I see that he is here," he said sourly.

"I think it as well, however, to ascertain whether he has written his lines."

"He tells me——"

"I should prefer to see for myself, Mr. Dalton."

"Pray do so, then, Mr. Manders."

Mr. Manders did so. Then, having absolutely nothing more to say, he whisked out of the Form-room, and stalked across the quadrangle to his own house.

"You may go, Silver," said Mr. Dalton, with a smile.

"Thank you, sir."

And Jimmy Silver went.

Mr. Manders made exhaustive inquiries into the affair of the inexplicable advertisement. He spent a great deal of time on that matter; but the result was nil. Somebody, it was clear, had played a jape on Mr. Manders, but the identity of that somebody was a deep mystery.

Mr. Dalton came to learn, later, that Jimmy Silver had figured in the Greyfriars' match. When that circumstance came to his knowledge, Mr. Dalton may have put two and two together with more or less success. But he did not speak on the subject, and Jimmy Silver and Co. never knew how much their Form-master knew or guessed concerning the mystification of Mr. Manders.

THE END.