

Pleasing Dear Thomas!



A Humorous Story of the Chums of Rookwood School

By OWEN CONQUEST

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Cuffy on the Carpet!

TOMMY DODD, of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood, grunted.

It was an expressive grunt.

Tommy was annoyed.

Cook and Doyle, his study-mates, grinned. They knew the cause of Tommy Dodd's annoyance, but they seemed to derive some entertainment from it.

Tommy Dodd looked at them morosely. He had thrown himself into the armchair in the study, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a frown on his brow.

"All very well for you silly owls to snigger!" he said. "But what would you do if you had a relation like Cuffy?"

"Boil him in oil, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle.

"I think I'd take him out somewhere and lose him," grinned Tommy Cook. "Of all the silly chumps——"

"Of all the frabjous duffers——" said Doyle.

"I'm jolly well going to talk to him,"

said Tommy Dodd. "I've told the silly owl to come here. I'm going to give him a royal jaw!"

"Better give him a fives bat. He would understand that."

"Br-r-r-r!"

The study door opened, and Clarence Cuffy, of the Modern Fourth, looked in.

There was a genial smile upon the face of the duffer of Rookwood.

"You asked me to come here, my dear Thomas!" he remarked.

"Oh, trot in!"

"Certainly, Thomas!"

"You boiled owl!" said Tommy Dodd. "How often have I told you not to call me Thomas? Can't you make it Tom or Tommy?"

"I am so sorry, my dear Thomas," murmured Clarence. "It really does appear to me somewhat lacking in courtesy to address you by a disrespectful diminutive——"

"Hark at him!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, in great exasperation. "I suppose you

know that you are a born idiot, Cuffy!"

Clarence shook his head.

"While extremely unwilling, and indeed decidedly reluctant, to disagree with you, Thomas, I am bound to say that I was totally unaware of that circumstance," he answered.

"Is that the way for a human being to talk?" shrieked Tommy Dodd, with a frenzied look.

"My dear Thomas, I am far from desiring to exacerbate your already excited feelings, but I can only reply in the affirmative."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook and Doyle.

"Shut up, you cackling chumps!" said Tommy Dodd ferociously. "Now, look here, Cuffy! You've got to chuck it. You're the biggest fool at Rookwood!"

"You forget yourself, Thomas."

"Wha-a-at?"

Cook and Doyle shrieked.

"Now, you've got to turn over a new leaf," said Tommy Dodd. "Understand! You're my relation, and you've got to leave off letting me down. Besides, my pater specially asked me to look after you at Rookwood. I'm going to do it. Are you willing to turn over a new leaf?"

"I am willing to do anything that will afford you even a modicum of satisfaction, my dear Thomas."

"In the first place, you've got to learn to talk like a human being!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Good gracious!"

"You're not to say 'good gracious'!" howled Tommy. "Can't you say 'My hat!' or 'Holy smoke!' like any other fellow?"

"Good gracious! I—I mean—holy hat—that is, my—my smoke!" gasped Cuffy, evidently anxious to please, but a little confused.

"You've got to stop talking like a dictionary and being as serious as a boiled owl. You've got to cultivate a sense of humour, and stop being taken in by japers—especially Classical japers. It doesn't matter so much on this side, but you've got to stop letting the Classics pull your leg.

You've got to become like other fellows."

Cuffy shook his head.

"I should not care to become like the thoughtless youths who form the bulk of the population of Rookwood, my dear Thomas."

"Well, that's what you've got to do," said Tommy. "I dare say you were sent to Rookwood to get a little sense knocked into you. Now, I'm going to knock some. You've got to change entirely—so entirely that you won't know yourself. If you don't I'm going to lick you. See?"

"I trust you will not be guilty of any departure from the courteous amenities of existence, my dear Thomas."

"Won't I?" howled Tommy Dodd. "You'll see! Stop grinning, you chaps, and collar him!"

Cook and Doyle did not stop grinning; they couldn't. But they collared Clarence Cuffy.

"Lay him over the table!"

"My dear Thomas——"

Tommy Dodd picked up a fives bat. A loud whack echoed through the study, and dust rose from Clarence Cuffy's trousers. And a terrific yell rose from Clarence Cuffy.

"Yaroop!"

"Understand that?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Ow! Yes!" gasped Cuffy. "Stop it!"

"You see, it's done you good already," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Five minutes ago you'd have said that the answer was in the affirmative, and requested me to cease."

"Yow-ow!"

Whack!

"Yoooop!"

"Now, that will do to go on with," said Tommy Dodd, laying down the bat. "You understand, Cuffy, that this is for your own good."

"Yow-ow!"

"I'm looking after you, just as my pater told me to. Chuck him off the table!"

Bump!

"Woooooop!"

"Now, Cuffy," said Tommy Dodd, shaking a warning forefinger at the dazed Clarence, as he sat gasping on the carpet.



While Cook and Doyle held Clarence Cuffy flat on the table, Tommy Dodd started in with a fives bat. Loud whacks echoed through the study, and clouds of dust rose from the duffer's trousers. "Yarooop!" yelled Cuffy. "Ow! Stoppt!" (See Chapter 1.)

"That's the first lesson. Now you're going to turn over a new leaf."

"G-g-good gracious!"

"What?" roared Tommy Dodd, clutching up the fives bat again.

"Ow! I—I mean my hat!"

"That's better. Now you can clear out, and begin your reform," said Tommy Dodd. "In future, every time you're spoofed by a practical joker, I shall give you the fives bat. Don't believe everything that's told you. And don't be an owl!"

"B-b-but I am not an owl, my dear Thomas," said the bewildered Cuffy. "I am in total ignorance of possessing any ornithological attributes whatever!"

Whack!

"Yarooooh!"

"Bedad, he understands the fives bat!" said Tommy Doyle. "It's a good idea intirely!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Cuffy. "M-m-may I go now, Thomas?"

"Cut, you silly ass! And start to-day being like the other fellows," said Tommy Dodd. "Stop being a serious owl. Jape somebody. Pull somebody's leg. Cough up a sense of humour somehow."

"But—but——"

"If you can't, it will be troublesome for you," said Tommy Dodd. "If you don't jape somebody to-day, I'm going to bat you again to-night!"

"Good—good—my hat! Oh, dear! But—but surely the recipient of a practical joke will be somewhat incommoded, and

may even be reduced to a condition of considerable exasperation—— Yaroooooh!"

Clarence Cuffy fled from the study, with the fives bat behind him. Tommy Dodd kicked the door shut.

"I fancy that will do him good!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clarence Cuffy retired to his own study in a state of great dismay and bewilderment. Cuffy was conscious of the fact that he was not quite like the other Rookwood fellows, but he was rather inclined to pride himself on the difference. He was a serious and thoughtful youth, and he had never played a "jape" in his life. And he did not want to. But he realised that the fives bat was a powerful argument. A request that was backed up by a fives bat was not to be disregarded.

"Good gracious!" murmured Cuffy. "I—I wonder if it is possible that there is some degree of reasonableness in the extraordinary views taken by Thomas? I should certainly like to gratify him, and the application of that obnoxious bat is certainly conducive to extreme personal discomfort. Oh, dear! I—I will try to please Thomas!"

And, having come to that sage resolve, the duffer of Rookwood set his powerful brain to work to discover the easiest and simplest method of pleasing Thomas.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Startling!

JIMMY SILVER & Co., of the Classical Fourth, were at football practice on Little Side when the three Tommies arrived there. Arthur Edward Lovell bestowed a grin on the Moderns. It had been Arthur Edward's idea to start Clarence Cuffy singing in class that afternoon, and the unsuspecting Cuffy had fallen into the trap, much to the astonishment of the Form-master.

The Classics still seemed to be extracting amusement from the incident. Which was extremely annoying to Tommy Dodd. Cuffy was his relative, and was under his wing, as it were. Tommy was not proud of his relative, and had often been exas-

perated by him. He had put his foot down at last; he was going to make Cuffy a bit more like the other fellows, or he was going to use up a fives bat on him. That was Tommy's fixed determination.

He had the satisfaction of banishing the grin from Arthur Edward Lovell's face by landing a muddy football there. Lovell grinned no more.

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell as the football slid off after depositing mud on his features. "Wharrar you playing at, banging a ball in a chap's face?"

"My mistake!" said Tommy Dodd blandly. "I didn't know it was a face! It doesn't look like one!"

"Why, you cheeky Modern worm——"

"You Classical ass!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver, as Lovell rushed at the Modern junior. "This is footer, not a dog-fight!"

But Lovell did not heed. Apparently he thought that it was a dog-fight, and not footer.

He clasped Tommy Dodd round the neck, and they rolled on the ground together.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome rushed up and dragged the combatants apart.

"Lemme gerrat him!" roared Lovell.

"Chuck it!"

"I'll smash him!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Cheese it, fathead!"

"You Modern dummy!"

"You Classical chump!"

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome walked Lovell off the field.

"Time we got in to tea, anyhow," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Come on, Lovell, old top!"

"I'm going to lick that Modern worm!" howled Lovell.

"You're coming in to tea, fathead!"

"Look here——"

"March!" said Jimmy Silver.

And Arthur Edward Lovell was walked off to the School House by his chums. The three Tommies continued football practice till dusk came on, and then they trotted off cheerfully to the Modern side to change, and repaired to their study for tea.

"Bedad, I'm hungry!" remarked Tommy Doyle, as he threw open the door of the study. "I—— Yarooooooooop!"

It was dark in the study. As the door opened and Doyle stepped in, something was detached from the top of the door, and it came down on Tommy Doyle with a crash.

Dodd and Cook jumped back.

"What——" ejaculated Cook.

of the door and had plumped on Doyle's head and burst.

Doyle breathed and spluttered flour. He lived and moved and had his being, as it were, in flour.

"My only hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cook.

"Groogh! You sniggering idiots!" gasped Doyle. "Is there anything funny in this? Grooch! I'm chook-chook-choking!"



Arthur Edward Lovell, incensed by Tommy Dodd's words, rushed at the Modern Junior, clasped him round the neck, and they rolled on the ground together. "Here, hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver. "This is footer, not a dog-fight." (See Chapter 2.)

"Looks like a booby-trap!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "And Doyle's caught it!"

"Yurrrrrgggh!" came from Doyle, in wild accents.

He staggered into the passage, looking like a ghost. Flour was all over him from head to foot. Flour was in his hair, in his eyes, in his nose, down his neck, and sprinkled over his clothes. It was a large paper bag of flour that had rested on top

I'm suffocated! Woooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who rigged up that bag of flour?" shrieked Doyle. "I want to find him! I'm going to slaughter him! Groooooogh!"

"Some Classical cad must have sneaked over while we were at the footer," said Tommy Dodd, laughing. "Never mind, old fellow, it's all in the game!"

"Yurrrrrggghh!"

"You do look a picture, old top!" said Cook. "Better get off to the dorm. and clean up. We'll get tea ready."

"Oooch! I — I — I'll slaughter the beast. I'll — I'll —"

Words failed Tommy Doyle. He stamped away to the dormitory to get the flour cleaned off — not an easy or rapid task.

Dodd and Cook grinned as they went into the study. They did not doubt that it was a Classical jape, but they could see the comic side of it, which was quite lost on Doyle himself.

Tommy Dodd struck a match and put it up to the gas. The gas did not catch, however.

"Oh, thump!" said Dodd crossly. "They can't have turned it off at the meter, I suppose."

"It's alight in the other studies," said Cook. "P'r'aps you haven't turned it on!"

"Fathead!"

"Well, you know what you are, old chap!"

"Dummy!" hooted Tommy Dodd.

"I'll try the other burner."

But the other burner did not light.



The paper in the grate flared up as Doyle set light to it. The next moment there was a roar. Crack, crack! Bang! Squizz! Doyle recoiled from the terrific explosion, and Dodd and Cook slipped off their chairs and crashed to the floor. (See Chapter 2.)

"Something's wrong with the dashed thing," he said. "Is there a candle anywhere?"

"There was a bit on the mantelpiece."

"Scout for it, then, old bean, if you know where it is."

Tommy Dodd groped on the mantelpiece and uttered an exclamation.

"Hallo! What's the matter now?" asked Cook.

"There's something upset here. I've got my fingers into it. Feels like ink."

"You've knocked the bottle over!"

"I haven't!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Well, find the candle, for goodness' sake! We can't sit in darkness like the giddy heathen."

Tommy Dodd breathed hard and groped again. He found the candle-end, and it was lighted. The glimmering light of the candle showed a flood of ink and gum on the mantelpiece, dripping into the fender. Cook stared at it.

"My hat! You've knocked over the gum as well as the ink!" he remarked.

"I tell you I didn't knock anything over!"

"Well, you must have——"

"I tell you——"

"They're knocked over, anyhow."

"You'll be knocked over pretty soon if you don't talk sense, Tommy Cook!"

"Bow-wow! Let's see what's wrong with the gas."

Cook mounted on a chair and examined the gas-burners by candle-light. Then he gave a whistle.

"By gum! They're plugged up!"

"What?"

"With sealing-wax," said Cook. "My only hat!"

The two Modern juniors stared at one another in great exasperation. A jape was all very well—Classicals and Moderns were always japing one another—but this was carrying it a little too far.

"Lovell, of course!" said Dodd.

"Or Jimmy Silver."

"The lot of them, most likely," hissed Tommy Dodd. "That's why they cleared off from the footer before we did. They came over here to muck up our study, the rotters! We'll jolly well make 'em sit up for this!"

"After tea, then," said Cook. "For goodness' sake lend a hand, and let's get a light!"



Jimmy Silver and Co. went sprawling on the floor as the three Modern juniors upended the table; and like a cataract there swept down upon them the cake, the biscuits, the tea, the crockery, and the jam! Crash! (See Chapter 4.)

Dodd and Cook were still scraping the gas-burners clean when Doyle came into the study, newly swept and garnished, but still looking floury. He did not seem in a good temper.

"Why the thump haven't you got a light?" he demanded.

"Burners plugged up with sealing-wax," grunted Tommy Dodd crossly. "Bear a hand, instead of jawing, or light the fire. Get the kettle on while we're getting a light, and give your chin a rest."

"Oh, rats!" said Doyle.

He knelt before the fire, which was ready laid, and struck a match.

The paper stuffed in the grate flared up as Doyle set light to it. The next moment there was a roar.

"Crack, crack! Bang! Fizz, fizz! Squizz! Bang, bang!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER Something Like a Rag!

DOYLE rolled backwards from the grate, completely flabbergasted by that terrific explosion. Dodd and Cook spun round and slipped off the chairs they were standing on, and landed on the carpet.

Bang, bang!

Fizz! Crack, crack, crack! Fizz, fizz!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"What the thump——"

"Fireworks!"

"What burlbing idiot——"

"Oh, dear!"

The fireworks spluttered out at last. Fragments of wood and coal were scattered over the study, and the smell of gunpowder was strong and unpleasant. Its fumes filled the study. The three Tommies stared at one another blankly.

"Open the window!" gasped Dodd.

Cook threw open the window. Tommy Dodd staggered to his feet, and his face was a study in indignant wrath.

"Some Classical brute——" he stuttered.

"Ow! I've jolly nearly had my eyebrows singed off!" howled Doyle. "Some crass idiot found the fire laid and stacked fireworks into it! Ow!"

"We'll go over to the Classical side and mop them up!" roared Tommy Dodd. "I'll give 'em japing in our study, the rotters!"

"Oh, dear!"

The gas was lighted at last. The three Tommies stared at the havoc in their study in wrath and dismay. They did not doubt to whom they owed these kind attentions. They thought of the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth at once.

"The rotters!" growled Tommy Dodd. "We'll make 'em sit up for this! Get that fire going somehow, and let's have tea!"

Doyle started on the fire, this time without explosive results. Tommy Dodd proceeded to turn the cupboard out for tea. He breathed hard as he handed out the teapot.

"That'll want washing!" he said.

"I washed it yesterday!" grunted Cook.

"It's got ink in it now."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Here's the tea-caddy! Great Scott! What's the matter with this tea?" Tommy Dodd stared into the biscuit-tin which was used as a tea-caddy.

The tea was there, but it was mixed with coffee, boot-polish, and gum. As tea, it was no longer desirable.

"They've made a pretty thorough jape of it!" said Tommy Dodd, breathing hard.

"I don't call this a jape!" snapped Cook. "I call this dashed hooliganism! Wrecking a study like this is——"

"Look at the jam!"

"Oh, crikey!"

There was a pound of jam in a three-pound jar. The empty space, however, had been filled up—with cinders and ashes.

"And the marmalade——" breathed Cook.

"My hat! The butter's in it!"

"And the ink——"

"Here's the loaf, anyhow! It's got a queer niff——"

"Some villain has been sprinkling carbide of calcium over it!"

"Oh, dear!"

Tea in Tommy Dodd's study was likely to be a difficult meal that evening. The japer had evidently done his work with



Between the two lines of Classical juniors scudded the three Tommies, while hefty blows rained on them, amid yells of laughter. "Give 'em socks!" roared Lovell. "Make 'em hop! Go it!" (See Chapter 4.)

much thoroughness. As they looked round the study, the three Tommies noticed that the clock was not ticking. They were hardly surprised, now, to find that it was filled with flour.

Tommy Dodd, feeling almost overcome, sank down in the armchair. He reposed there for a millionth part of a second, and then leaped to his feet with a fiendish yell.

"Phwat's the matter now?" howled Doyle.

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Tacks!"

"Tacks!" said Cook dazedly. "Oh, dear!"

"I've sat on 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you sniggering dummy——"

"Look here!" exclaimed Doyle. "We're not standing this! They've mucked up our study while we've been at footer, and now they'll be having tea and chortling over it. Let's go over and mop 'em up! There's no tea for us here, anyhow, and it's too

late for Hall. Let's go and smash 'em!"

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed.

"Good!" he said, between his teeth. "We'll give 'em something else to chortle over! Come on!"

The three Tommies, in a state of boiling rage and exasperation, left the study. There was no tea for them. Nothing, in fact, remained but vengeance. Just then they wanted vengeance more than they wanted their tea.

They hurried down the stairs and slipped out into the dusky quadrangle. They scudded across to the School House.

Bulkeley, of the Sixth, spotted them as they came in, and called out to them.

"Hallo! What do you Modern fags want?"

"Just going to speak to Jimmy Silver!" said Tommy Dodd, with a sweet smile.

"Oh, all right!"

The three Tommies mounted the stairs, and reached the Fourth Form passage.

Most of the Classical Fourth were in their studies at tea. They found only Tubby Muffin loose in the passage. Tubby blinked at them.

"Hallo, you Modern bounders! What — Yoooooop!"

Tubby Muffin sat down with a bump, and the three Tommies rushed up the passage to the end study, to speak to Jimmy Silver!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER Only Cuffy!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were at tea in the end study.

The Fistical Four were in a very cheery mood.

There had been a remittance that day from an uncle of Lovell's, whose name was Arthur Edward. Lovell had been named after that uncle, with excellent results. One of the results was that there was a really tip-top spread in the end study on this occasion. There were three kinds of jam, there was ham and bloater paste, there were biscuits and jellies, and there was a big cake. Lovell, as he surveyed the festive board, felt that his parents had acted with a thoughtfulness unusual in grown-ups, in naming him after Uncle Arthur Edward.

Tubby Muffin, of course, had scented the feed and rolled in. Lovell's boot had persuaded him to roll out again. Now the Fistical Four, hungry after footer in the keen air, were enjoying the spread. It was tip-top, and it was extensive, and they were doing it full justice. It was quite a different scene from that in Tommy Dodd's study over the way. The fire burned brightly, the gaslight glimmered on shining crockery and on four cheery faces.

"Topping!" said Raby, with his mouth full of cake. "Lovell, old man, your uncle is a brick! I've got two I'd swap for him."

"This cake," said Newcome, "is a corker! Good old nunky!"

Arthur Edward Lovell beamed.

And then——

Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, came the disaster. The study door was hurled open as if by a battering-ram. Three excited and infuriated youths rushed into the study.

Before the Fistical Four even had time to jump up the enemy were upon them.

Then, as in the famous case of the Raven's unhappy master, unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster!

Four yelling and astounded juniors went sprawling on the floor amid overturned chairs, and the table was up-ended upon them.

Like a cataract there swept down upon the carpet and upon the sprawling four the cake, the biscuits, the tea, and the crockery, the bloater-paste, and three kinds of jam!

Crash!

It was something like an earthquake, but rather more so. In a moment that cheery study looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Hurrah!"

"Give 'em jip!"

"You Modern rotters!" raved Lovell.

Jimmy Silver sprang to his feet, and jerked the jam-dish out of his waistcoat and the milk-jug out of his neck. The jam and the milk were not so easily detached.

"Pile in on 'em!" roared Jimmy.

The Co. scrambled up furiously. They piled in on their assailants with fury. In a moment there was a record scrap going on in the end study.

Crash! Thud! Bump! Thump! Crash!

There were four Classics to three Moderns, but Tommy Dodd & Co., full of righteous wrath, were putting up the fight of their lives. The combatants trampled to and fro, struggling and pommelling, trampling over crockery and cake and jam.

The uproar rang the length of the passage, and there was a rush of fellows from other studies to see what was going on. Classical juniors crammed the passage outside the doorway.

"Modern cads!" shouted Mornington.

"Give 'em socks!"



When the three enraged Tommies had finished with Clarence Cuffy, he sat up in the passage and wondered whether he was still all in one piece. Only one thing was clear in his mind—he had not succeeded in pleasing dear Thomas! (See Chapter 4.)

"Give 'em beans!" shouted Tubby Muffin valiantly from the rear. "Go for 'em, you fellows! Lynch 'em!"

There was not much room in the study for more combatants, but Mornington and Conroy, Putty Grace and Oswald and Rawson, crowded in. The Moderns were collared.

"Here, fair play!" yelled Tommy Dadd. "We've come over here to lick this study. Ow—wow!"

"Scrag 'em!" howled Lovell. "They're—they've mucked up the feed! Look at the cake! Look at the jam! Oh, my hat!"

"Rag the rotters!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Dashed hooligans! This isn't a jape—this is dashed ruffianism! Give 'em the jam!"

"Ow! Yow! Leggo—oooooooo!"

The Fistical Four were wrathful, not without reason. That gorgeous spread was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream. What remained of it was trampled on the carpet. Naturally, they did not stand on ceremony with the reckless invaders.

The three Moderns were seized and held, and the remains of the jam lathered over them liberally.

"Now we'll make them run the gauntlet in the passage," said Jimmy Silver vengefully. "They've got to learn better manners than this!"

"We'll pulverise 'em!" gasped Lovell. "All the feed mucked up—my hat! The rotten ruffians—"

"Serve you jolly well right!" howled Tommy Dodd. "I'm glad! 'Tain't worse than you've done in our study!"

"What! We've done nothing in your study," said Jimmy Silver. "Haven't been near your mouldy study! What do you mean?"

"Gammon! You've wrecked our study—"

"We haven't, you ass!"

"I—I say—honest Injun?" gasped Tommy Dodd. He realised that perhaps he had been a little hasty. "We—we thought it was you fellows, of course. The place has been wrecked!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

He understood the cause now of that sudden and infuriated entry into the end study.

"Here, hold on! Let's explain!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd breathlessly. "We—we thought it was you chaps. If it wasn't, we're—we're sorry—"

"Fat lot of good being sorry, isn't it?" hooted Lovell. "Look at what you've done!"

"Look here! Haven't you fellows been in our quarters?" exclaimed Cook.

"No, you Modern ass!"

"Well, it was some Classical rotter if it wasn't you," said Doyle. "Show us what study it was, and we'll mop up that study, man to man."

"Nobody's been raiding you that I know of," said Jimmy Silver.

"Rats!"

Tommy Dodd glanced round at the wreck, and felt a little remorseful. His proceedings had been rather drastic, considering that the Fistical Four were guiltless, after all.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't know—I thought—"

"Think a bit more carefully next time," snorted Lovell. "You're going through it now. It may help you to think another time, with your feeble little Modern brain. Form up, you fellows!"

"You bet!"

"Look here——" began Dodd.

"Go it!"

The grinning Classics formed up in a double line in the passage. Every fellow grasped a cap, or a cushion, or a fives bat, or something else, and stood ready. In spite of their explanations and expostulations, the three Tommies were hurled out of the end study and started.

There was no help for it. They had to run the gauntlet of the whole Classical Fourth.

They ran as if for their lives.

Down the passage they went scudding, and from either side hefty blows rained on them, amid yells of laughter. The three Tommies yelled, too, but not with laughter by any means.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Make 'em hop! Go it!"

The Classical juniors were "going it" with a vengeance. The three Tommies ran, and staggered, and lurched, and ran again, and by the time they reached the staircase they hardly knew whether they were on their heads or on their heels.

They went down the stairs three at a time, breathless, with yells and catcalls and hoots following them from above. Glad enough were the three hapless Moderns to dodge out into the quadrangle and escape.

In the dusk of the quad., they stopped at last to pump in breath. They felt in sore need of their second wind.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "What a go! I—I say, we were rather asses to jump to conclusions like that——"

"You were an ass, you mean!" spluttered Cook. "I agree—you were! A thundering ass!"

"Oh, holy Moses!" groaned Doyle. "Don't rag, you dummies! It's bad enough already! I'm bumped all over!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

A disconsolate trio limped home to the Modern side. It was some time before Tommy Dodd felt equal to making any further inquiry into the mystery of the

raid. With inquiry, the mystery seemed to deepen. Nobody in the house had seen any Classical juniors about—nobody had seen any raiders near Dodd's study, or in the house at all. It really looked as if the "rag" must have been perpetrated by Modern fellows; but that was impossible, for surely no Modern junior would have dared to raise the heel against Tommy Dodd, the great chief of the Modern juniors, in this way. Dodd was perplexed and puzzled.

It was later that enlightenment came. In a rather dismal mood, the three Tommies were at prep., when their study door opened, and the smiling, beaming face of Clarence Cuffy looked in.

Tommy Dodd waved an impatient hand at him. He was in no mood to be bothered just then by the duffer of Rookwood.

"Cut, Cuffy!" he snapped.

"I have done my best to please you, Thomas!" purred Cuffy. "I hope you were pleased!"

Tommy Dodd stared.

"Why, what have you done?" he asked.

Clarence beamed.

"I have done as you wished, my dear fellow. For the first time in my life, I have played a practical joke! I have been very thorough—very thorough indeed, my dear Thomas!"

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"And who's the happy victim?" he asked.

"You, my dear Thomas!"

Tommy jumped.

"Me? I?" he yelled.

Clarence nodded, with a smile.

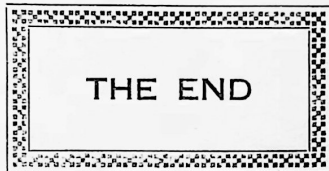
"Yes! I have been playing practical jokes in your study, my dear Thomas, just as you wished. It seemed very strange to me that you should desire me to play practical jokes, but I have always wished to please you, my dear Thomas. I have told the fellows about it, and they are laughing like anything in the Common-room, Thomas. Do you think it was very funny?"

Tommy Dodd stared at the hopeful Cuffy as if paralysed. Cook and Doyle regarded him open-mouthed. They understood at last! It was not a Classical raid on their study, after all! It was Cuffy—only Cuffy!

"You!" Tommy Dodd managed to articulate at last. "You!"

"Little me!" smiled Cuffy. "I was very thorough, was I not, my dear Thomas? I did everything I could think of. I should never have dreamed, dear Thomas, that I possessed such extensive faculties for practical joking, a form of somewhat disagreeable entertainment I have hitherto disregarded and condemned. But in trying to please you——"

Three maddened juniors came at him like three arrows. What happened next was amazing to Cuffy—amazing, confusing, and very, very painful. When he was left in the passage, he sat up and wondered whether he was still all in one piece. Only one thing was clear to his mind, and that was that, after all his patient efforts, he had not succeeded in pleasing dear Thomas! On that point, at least, there was no possible, probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever!



High Days & Holidays



CHUMS AWHEEL!

MOUNTING our trusty steeds of steel,
We all set off together;
Light-hearted, care-free chums awheel
Defying wind and weather!
And fast and fierce the pedals fly,
And bells clang out in chorus;
And ever we've a watchful eye
On the white road before us.

Wharton and Cherry, Bull and Brown,
Redwing and Rake and Russell,
And other cyclists of renown—
All men of might and muscle!
Softies and slackers do not care
To join our gay excursion;
With drowsy voices they declare,
"Exertion's our aversion!"

Through leafy Kentish lanes we spin,
And bowl along the byways;
Avoiding thus the dust and din
And hubbub of the highways.
And when a farmhouse comes in sight,
With "DAINTY TEAS PROVIDED!"
With one accord we all alight,
On choice cream cakes decided.

And when the sun sinks in the West,
A golden ball of glory;
We pedal home, with song and jest,
And many a merry story.
We cycle through the dusky Close,
Where shades of night fall eerily;
And then retire to our repose
Both wearily and cheerily!

Stepping on The Gas!

ON the last lap of a motor race, the excitement of that most thrilling of all sporting events reaches its climax. For mile after mile the daring drivers have piloted their plunging mounts round the tortuous course of winding roads, driving apparently at reckless speed, yet actually with an iron restraint. No race driver who hopes to win can afford to let his car "all out" in the early stages of a gruelling road race. The engine must be carefully "nursed," and a little bit of extra speed must be kept in hand against the many emergencies which may crop up. Thus engine revolutions must be kept rigidly down below the danger mark, however great the temptation, until the last lap!

The last lap! Every man puts his foot down on the throttle-pedal, and goes "all out" to win! The sorely-tried engines literally scream round; the plunging cars are wrenched round the corners, their tyres slithering and scrabbling on the torn-up road surface. What a thrill for the spectators—and a super-thrill for the drivers themselves!

The last lap of a big road race, such as the International Tourist Trophy Race held by the Royal Automobile Club each year in Northern Ireland, becomes, in motor-racing parlance, a "regular dog-fight." Now or never is the thought in each driver's mind, and every man "steps on the gas" until the chequered flag slashes down as the winning car crosses the line!

Our colour plate shows a spirited "scrap" on the last lap by three cars in close company in the last Tourist Trophy race.

As is the rule in International motor races, the nationality of the different cars is indicated by their colour. Thus the leading car represents Italy, red being the colour allotted to that nation. The blue car lying second is French, while the green car closely pressing the leaders is British.

Let us hope that No. 3 proves the victor in the ding-dong struggle for the Blue Riband of the motor-racing world!



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THE LAST LAP!

H.A.