

MR MANDERS' CHRISTMAS DIARY



The Cross-Grained Modern Master's Intimate Christmas Confessions

DECEMBER 20th.—The first thing that struck me this morning was a snowball. Finding that it emanated from those disrespectful young wretches, Dodd, Cook and Doyle, I furiously ordered them to my study. In reply to my sarcastic inquiries as to how they justified their outrageous conduct, they had the brazen effrontery to plead that it was the festive season. Gave the three of them a sound thrashing. Christmas indeed! Br-r-r-r! Dyspepsia very bad.

DECEMBER 21st.—Called to the Head's study, where the Head reminded me that the school will be breaking up to-morrow. Dr. Chisholm seems almost as bad as the boys—had quite a twinkle in his eye! Told him that I intended staying on at the school and devoting the vacation to studying the classics. Offered to take charge of any boys who had no arrangements. Transpired that they were all booked up. So much the better; I shall be well rid of them for a month!

Caned Towle, McCarthy and Wadsley for indulging in uproarious laughter on the Modern House steps. Issued instructions to the House that the breaking-up was to take place quietly and decorously. Dyspepsia much worse.

DECEMBER 22nd.—Breaking-up Day. The school broke up; I nearly broke down at the sudden horrid thought that for a whole

month I should be unable to give out impositions and thrashings. Dreadful! Boys from the Classical House departed in relays, cheering vociferously. I'd give them cheer if they were in my charge!

Called Dodd, Cook and Doyle into my study for a final lecture. Recommended them to spend the vacation in study and self-discipline. Dodd had the impudence to ask me what I was doing myself. Told him that it was no business of his, but that if he wanted to know I should be remaining here, preparing for the next term. The young wretches wished me a merry Christmas as they went out. Managed to grunt a similar compliment. Merry Christmas, indeed! Huh!

Silver and his friends from the Classical House, in leaving the school, so far forgot the respect due to my position as to bombard me with snowballs. They shall be made to smart for it next term!

Dyspepsia awful.

DECEMBER 23rd.—Found myself alone at Rookwood—with the exception, of course, of a servant or two. Assembled the House Dame and servants in my study and gave them to understand that perfect quietude must be maintained. Festivities would not be allowed under any circumstances.

Felt peculiarly uncomfortable in the evening. Dead silence everywhere—almost uncanny. Had a walk round the grounds in the

snow. The wind moaned eerily and the trees creaked. Once or twice thought I saw spectral shapes in the distance; only imagination. Wondered whether there were such things as ghosts. Utter nonsense, of course, but still—

Went to bed. Tried to sleep but couldn't. Kept on hearing strange, creaking sounds. Not frightened; perish the thought! Br-r-r! Dyspepsia simply dreadful.

DECEMBER 24th.—Awoke feeling the most miserable man alive. Decided I cannot stay on at Rookwood; but where else is there to go? None of the other masters or even the boys gave me an invitation. The whole lot of them are against me. Or—can it be possible? Perhaps I've given some of them cause for misunderstanding. I can see, on reflection, that I haven't always been quite fair. Should not have caned Dodd and the rest so near Christmas, for instance. Wish I hadn't now. If they were here I'd tell them so.

Telegram arrived in the afternoon: "WILL YOU, AS MY SON'S HOUSEMASTER, HONOUR US WITH A VISIT FOR CHRISTMAS?—DODD SENIOR." Goodness gracious—then I haven't been forgotten, after all! Most gratifying!

Hurriedly packed and caught the first train to Mr. Dodd's house. Received a very hearty welcome from the entire household, including Dodd and Cook and Doyle. There are good points in those boys; I wonder I haven't noticed them before!

Dyspepsia surprisingly better.

DECEMBER 25th.—Christmas Day. Hurrah! What a jolly experience to join in the innocent fun of a pleasant house-party like this! Everybody most kind; felt quite overwhelmed!

In the evening we all went by car to another party at Mr. Silver's home. How good-natured and charming young Silver and his friends seem to be! Threw myself wholeheartedly into the merriment, and the fun was fast and furious.

Ate roast turkey and stuffing, plum pudding, mince-pies galore, Christmas cake, fruit, nuts, chocolate and Turkish delight and other good things too numerous to mention.

Dyspepsia entirely cured!

CLASSICS v MODERNS FOOTBALL



By the Rookwood Rhymester

UPON a lusty winter day
In cold and frosty weather
The Classics and Moderns play
A footer match together.
Full many a time they've played before
In snowstorms, hail and blizzards,
And every time the Classics score
The Moderns play like wizards.

This afternoon the Modern backs
Aren't any good at stopping
The rival forwards' smart attacks,
For Silver's caught them hopping.
The Classic wingers really shine,
The inside men are steady—
A properly well-balanced line,
They're one goal up already.

Now Jimmy Silver gets control
And taps the ball to Erroll;
The Modern backs surround their goal,
Which stands in greatest peril.
The winger's tackled swiftly, yet
He shoots. The goalie grovels;
A head deflects it in the net
(The head was Arthur Lovell's).

Two goals up! The Classics crow!
But Dodd provides the sequel.
Still twenty minutes yet to go,
There's time to make scores equal.
The Moderns, rousing at his call,
Grow keen and eager wholly,
Until James Towle obtains the ball
And taps it past the goalie.

"Hurrah!" the Moderns cry. "Two-one!
Play up there, everybody!"
Ten minutes left! Can it be done?
"It can and shall," says Dobby.
The game goes on—a desperate fight,
Till, in the final minute,
Dodd shoots at goal with all his might—
'Tis done! The ball is in it!

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

*A Prophetic Article from the Pen
of MARK LINLEY*

It is the Old Boys' Day at Greyfriars, in the Year of Grace, 1950.

There is a continuous hum of aeroplanes over the old school, and one by one the machines alight on the playing-fields, and "taxi" into the big hangars which are now a permanent part of the school premises.

Waiting outside the hangars to welcome the Old Boys is Dr. Quelch, headmaster of Greyfriars. Dr. Quelch succeeded Dr. Locke as headmaster when the latter retired some years ago. Messrs. Prout, Twigg, and Capper, a venerable and grey-haired trio of masters, are chatting with the Head.

From one aeroplane steps Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry—now come to manhood, and a pair of stalwart, fine-looking Englishmen. Wharton is a squadron-commander in the Royal Air Force, and Bob Cherry is a flying officer in the same squadron. Their friendship has grown even stronger with the passing of the years, and they have shared many adventures, both pleasant and perilous, together.

The next aeroplane to alight is a very rickety, old-fashioned "bus," which gives the impression of having been bought at second-hand—or, rather, fifth-hand. From it emerges Billy Bunter, who has grown even more portly and podgy than ever, and who is now a manager of a West End hotel. He explains that his magnificent saloon airship, in which he usually travels, has been borrowed by one of his titled relations; which made it necessary for him to hire this old "crock" to bring him to Greyfriars.

"The same old Bunter!" cries Bob Cherry. "Still an expert at telling the tale. By the way, has your postal-order turned up yet, Billy? You were expecting it eighteen years ago, you know."



"The same old Cherry!" retorts Billy Bunter. "Still an expert at chipping and chaffing his superiors. No; my postal-order hasn't turned up yet. And I've no use for postal-orders now. I've a big fat bank balance, Bob Cherry, that would make you turn green with envy."

Next, a giant air liner descends, crowded with passengers. And Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Billy Bunter rush forward to welcome their old Form-fellows. All have "made good" in various walks of life. There is Peter Todd, the eminent barrister; Percy Bolsover, the amateur boxing champion of Great Britain; Frank Nugent, of the Diplomatic Service; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, now the dusky ruler of Bhanipur.

Then there is Commander Tom Redwing, of the Royal Navy; Tom Brown, the eminent explorer; Fisher T. Fish, the millionaire oil magnate; Dick Penfold, playwright and poet; William Wibley, the famous film star—and a host of others.

It is a very joyous reunion; and the Old Boys spend a thoroughly happy day "fighting" their schoolboy battles over again, and exploring once more the famous old school to which they have added new lustre and fresh laurels.