



THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!

"Ow! Whoop!" William Wibley roared.

Really, it was enough to make a fellow roar. He was walking along quite peacefully when Bob Cherry came up to him and kicked him.

Bob did not offer any explanation for the kick. He walked away, grinning, and a howl of laughter arose from other fellows in the quad.

It was a bright spring morning, in the interval between class and dinner. Fellows were kicking footballs, chatting, laughing and otherwise enjoying themselves. Mr. Quelch, the Master of the Remove, was sampling the sunshine with an agree-

able smile on his face. Even the acid-tempered Hacker, master of the Shell, was talking pleasantly to Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. Sunshine bathed the old quad in brightness, and everyone was gay.

Except Wibley! Wibley was brooding!

The Remove Dramatic Society were producing "Julius Cæsar" at the end of the month, and Wibley, as producer, manager and chief actor, was worried. The cause of his worry was Harold Skinner, who had been cast as Cassius.

At the rehearsal the previous evening Cassius had organised a rag. Skinner had a gift for acting. He had also a gift for practical joking, and it was the latter gift he used on this occasion.

MR. QUELCH'S DELUSION!

By HARRY WHARTON

When William Wibley, the actor of the Remove, sought revenge on Harold Skinner, the outcome of his scheming had alarming results for Mr. Quelch!

The upshot was that Wibley had "chucked him," and "Julius Caesar" was now short of a Cassius. Producing "Julius Caesar" without a Cassius was rather a problem; hence Wibley's wrinkled brow!

To add to his worry, there was the strange conduct of the fellows in the quad. More than a dozen of them had already kicked Wibley, and not one of them had condescended to explain his reason for it.

Wibley was fuming.

He turned round to glare at Cherry, and as he did so Hobson of the Shell came up behind him and let out his boot.

Crash!

"Whoop!" roared Wibley. "You silly ass! What are you kicking me for, you fathead?"

Hobson walked away, laughing.

Had Wibley been able to see the back of his own jacket, he would have understood.

Perhaps Harold Skinner felt rather sore at being "chucked," or perhaps his gift for practical joking was too strong for him. At all events, he had hooked a large square of cardboard on to Wibley's back, and on that cardboard was the legend:

"FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRY-MEN, LEND ME YOUR BOOTS!"

This was too good a jest to be neglected. Friend and foe alike took the opportunity to lend Wibley a boot, and the unfortunate producer was aching all over.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd in the quad, and Wibley spun round in fury.

Mr. Quelch, basking in the sunshine near the steps, frowned slightly as he glimpsed a placard on Wibley's back. Wibley was a Remove fellow,

and Quelch did not approve of Remove fellows making themselves ridiculous.

"Wibley!" he said severely. "Come here!"

Wibley approached.

Harold Skinner was standing close to Mr. Quelch, and as Wibley passed him, Skinner deftly hooked that placard off his back. He did not want that little joke to meet the eye of a beak. It was cleverly done, and Mr. Quelch did not observe it.

"Yes, sir?" said Wibley, wriggling.

"Why are you acting in this foolish manner, Wibley? Take that ridiculous cardboard off your jacket."

"Wha-at?" gasped Wibley. "What cardboard?"

"Are you not aware, Wibley, that there is a notice attached to the back of your jacket?"

"Nunno!" howled Wibley, straining his neck to see behind him. "It's some rotten joke!"

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's mouth twitched. "Turn round, and I will remove it for you."

Wibley turned round.

Quelch gazed at him with a puzzled frown. The placard was now under Skinner's jacket, well out of sight. The Remove master had not seen Skinner's action, and the absence of the cardboard startled him. True, he had obtained only one glimpse of it, but he was certain the cardboard had been there.

He looked from Wibley to the ground.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured.

"Isn't it there, sir?" asked Wibley.

"Apparently not, and yet I was positive—" Mr. Quelch coughed. "You yourself did not remove it, Wibley?"

"Nunno, sir! I never knew it was there!"

"H'm ! Very well, Wibley, possibly I was mistaken. Indeed, it seems that I must have been ! "

And Mr. Quelch walked away with a very puzzled expression.

Mr. Hacker and Mossoo were still chatting as Mr. Quelch walked by. Hacker gave him a nod.

" You are looking worried, Quelch," he remarked.

Mr. Quelch stopped.

" I am wondering, as a matter of fact, whether my eyesight may be growing defective," he replied nervously. " It is a strange thing, Hacker, but I am positive I saw some paper or cardboard attached to a boy's jacket just now. Yet when I investigated, I found I was mistaken.

Do you think it possible that a trick of the eye—"

Hacker shook his head. He was looking very grave.

" Not the eye, Quelch," he responded solemnly. " The brain, my dear fellow—the brain ! "

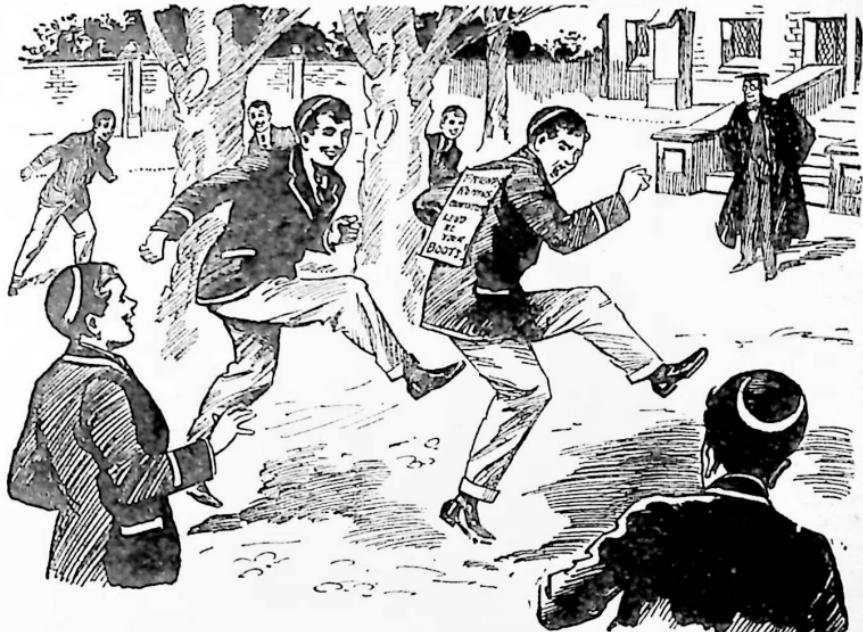
" What ? "

" The brain ! " murmured Mossoo. " My dear Hackair—"

" I have no doubt of it," said the master of the Shell. " You are suffering, Quelch, from a form of hallucination, brought on by over-work."

" Do you suggest, Mr. Hacker, that I am—ahem—"

" No, no, no ! " laughed the Shell Form master. " Don't misunderstand



"Whoop ! " roared Wibley, as Hobson of the Shell came up behind him and let out his boot. " You silly ass ! What are you kicking me for, you fathead ? " Wibley was quite unaware of the "Invitation" on his back !

me, my dear Quelch. Hallucinations of that kind are quite common, and are not necessarily serious. It is a state which can be described as a strained brain. You have been overworking, and your nerves are causing you to imagine things."

"But I saw it so plainly——"

"That is one of the symptoms," said Hacker cheerfully. "I have a large book on 'Hallucinations and Nervous Disorders.' I will lend it to you, if you like."

Mr. Quelch certainly looked as though his nerves were disordered at that moment.

"I—I—I cannot believe that——"

"Watch closely," said Hacker. "If it was an hallucination, it will be repeated in other forms. If you see anything else mysterious, let me know. I am really quite interested in your case."

"Thank you!" answered Mr. Quelch cuttingly. "It is very kind of you, Hacker; but I do not believe it was anything of the kind. I am not likely to imagine anything else, either now or in the future."

And the Remove master, puzzled and rather angry, walked back to the house.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

WIBLEY'S WHEEZE.

SKINNER, Snoop and Stott, the gay dogs of the Remove, were having a quiet cigarette—or three quiet cigarettes, to be precise—after dinner. As cigarettes, quiet or otherwise, were forbidden at Greyfriars, the three Removites had to keep out of sight, and for this purpose they repaired to the top box-room and smoked in secret.

"Nothin' like a cigarette after dinner," remarked Skinner, puffing luxuriously.

"Nothin'," agreed Snoop and Stott.

The door of the box-room opened. Skinner & Co. spun round with startled faces. The intruder was William Wibley, and he looked wrathful.

"You—you silly ass!" growled Skinner. "I—I thought it was a prefect, bother you!"

And Stott, who had swallowed a cubic foot of smoke in his alarm, coughed and spluttered wildly.

"You weedy rotters!" snorted Wibley, coughing out the fumes. "It would serve you right if a prefect did catch you smoking."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'm looking for you, Skinner! You fastened a card on my back before dinner, and I'm going to wipe up the floor with you—see?"

Skinner laughed.

"You couldn't wipe up one side of me, old top!"

The next moment Wibley charged. Skinner was just putting a cigarette to his lips when Wibley whirled him over, and the cigarette went in lighted-end first.

"Ah-wah-wah!" shrieked Skinner, with his mouth full of burning tobacco. "Oooo-wooo-wooo-wooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley.

Skinner dabbed frantically at his mouth with a handkerchief. He was burnt and he was savage.

"Thlow that lotter ouder here!" gurgled Skinner, and he advanced on Wibley, aided by Snoop and Stott.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Wibley. "Man to man, you rotters! Three against one isn't fair—Yarrooop!"

Wibley was overborne by the odds. He wasn't much of a fighting man at the best of times, and pluck did not avail against superior numbers. The three blades grasped Wibley and up-ended him. A steep staircase led

from the Remove passage to the box-room. It was down this staircase that Wibley was thrown.

Bump ! Bump ! Bump !

"Oooop ! Woooop ! Yoooogh !"

"Ha, ha, ha ! " yelled Skinner and Co. as Wibley crashed.

Wibley picked himself up and crawled back to his study.

"The rotters ! " he groaned. "I'd like to whop those three smoky ticks. But how—" He paused, as an idea smote him.

In the French class that morning, the three slackers had all been in trouble with Monsieur Charpentier. They had been given lines to hand in by tea-time, but they hadn't troubled to do them, because Mossoo always forgot.

But supposing Wibley made up as Mossoo and caned Skinner & Co. for not doing their lines !

Wibley had made up once or twice before as the French master. They were much of the same height, and Wibley could stuff himself to Mossoo's thickness with the aid of cushions. He had a false beard, moustache and wig which he kept specially for his Mossoo make-up.

"Ripping ! " chortled Wibley. "I can make up so like Mossoo that a microscope couldn't tell us apart. The only drawback is, I shall have to borrow a gown and mortar-board. Still, Quelchy's got a spare outfit, and I know where he keeps it."

Fired with this idea, Wibley went along to Mr. Quelch's study to annex his spare gown and mortar-board. Quelch, he knew, would be in the Form room, preparing some lessons for class that afternoon.

As it happened, however, Mr. Quelch walked back to his study for a book. He turned the corner of the Masters' Corridor just as Wibley was vanishing into his study.

"Who's that ? " demanded Mr. Quelch, as he had only a fleeting back view of the visitor.

"Oh, crumbs ! " gasped the dismayed Wibley inside the study. "Here comes Quelchy ! "

Wibley made a jump for the cupboard, and crouched inside it. He certainly did not want Mr. Quelch to see him appropriating his scholastic gown.

Quelch strode along the passage and entered the study.

"What do you want ? " he inquired, as he came in. "You should not—bless my soul ! "

He stared around the study in dismay. The study was—or appeared to be—empty !

Mr. Quelch rubbed a shaking hand over his eyes. To make quite sure, he looked under the table and behind the screen, but he knew, as he did so, that it was useless.

Was Hacker's doleful verdict right ? Had he really got a strained brain ? Was he the victim of hallucinations ?

He took the book and left the study, his face quite pale. With a faltering step he made his way back to the Form room. He would not tell Hacker about it—anything was better than admitting to Hacker that he had been right all the time. But he would secretly tell his troubles to a doctor. And yet—Mr. Quelch shook his head. No, he would keep the matter to himself and trust that nothing more would happen.

In class that afternoon he was quite worried. Wibley, however, was cheerful. He had annexed the gown and mortar-board, and that was all he cared.

Skinner grinned at Wibley when the Remove was dismissed. Wibley grinned, too.

" You wait," he murmured, " till I get my make-up on ! Then you'll see some fireworks, you rotter ! "

THE THIRD CHAPTER

MOSSOO'S TWIN !

" **H**OWLY Moses ! " gasped Micky Desmond. " It's Mossoo himself, intoirely ! "

Wibley grinned complacently. Desmond, his study-mate, had been helping him don his make-up, and now the transformed schoolboy actor stood in all his glory—as like Mossoo as one pea is like another.

" Bon soir ! " clucked Wibley, *à la* Mossoo. " Now zen, Desmond, mon enfant, vat you zink of zees—yes ? "

" Begorrah ! " grinned Desmond. " Ye look more like Mossoo than Mossoo does himself. If I didn't know it was yez, I wouldn't belave it, intoirely."

Wibley picked up a cane. With his beard and moustache, and his figure padded out to triple-size, no one could have imagined he was only a boy. He grinned and turned to the door.

As he did so, there was a tap on the door. Wibley stopped.

The door opened and a voice spoke.

" Bon soir, mes enfants, I desire zat — mon Dieu ! " howled Monsieur Charpentier, clutching at his forehead. " Vat is zees ? "

Mossoo had been beaming as he opened the door, but at the sight of Wibley his hair stood on end, and he seemed about to have a couple of fits.

Wibley groaned beneath his make-up. It was the worst possible luck ! What mischance had brought Mossoo on the scene he neither knew nor cared, but it was obvious, now, that the game was up.

Desmond looked on in dismay.

" Ar-r-rh ! " shrieked Mossoo. " I

go mad, vasn't it ? Who is zees zat look so mooch like me ? Pardieu, I am amaze ! "

Wibley was silent.

" Speak viz yourself, rascal ! " hooted Mossoo fiercely. " Zat isn't me—no ? I'm here, not zere ! Who is it zat make himself like me ? Speak, scelerat ! "

" I—I—I'm Wibley, m'sieu ! " stuttered the unhappy jester. " I—I—I— You see—"

" Wibley ! C'est ne pas possible ! Vat for zen you look like zat ? "

" I—I was just making up for—er—" Wibley gasped. " You see, I—I—I—"

" Oui, oui ! I see ! I zink so ! " nodded Mossoo grimly. " You vill make yourself like me on ze purpose, hein ? It is to make ze zhoke of me, yes ? "

" Oh, Mossoo ! "

" Oui, oui, sans doute ! Ve vill see what Monsieur Quelch zink of heem. Allons, mon enfant ! Follow me and bring too zat gown and zat hat ! "

" Oh, lor' ! " groaned the wretched Wibley.

" Faith, and it's hard luck, ould chap ! " murmured Desmond.

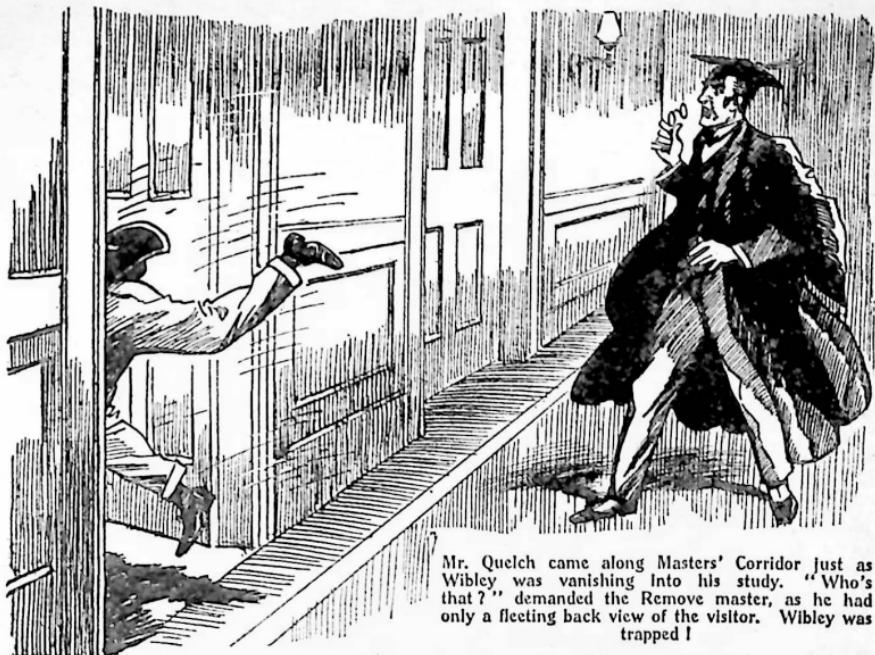
Wibley groaned again as he walked with Mossoo towards Mr. Quelch's study. Not only would he be punished for the trick, but there was the little matter of Quelchy's gown into the bargain. It seemed to the unlucky jester that his woes were without end.

There were howls of astonishment and laughter at the sight of Mossoo and Wibley walking together, as like as two peas. Fellows could hardly believe their eyes.

" Great pip ! "

" Ha, ha, ha ! "

" What on earth—" Harry Wharton gasped. " Mossoo's got a twin ! "



Mr. Quelch came along Masters' Corridor just as Wibley was vanishing into his study. "Who's that?" demanded the Remove master, as he had only a fleeting back view of the visitor. Wibley was trapped!

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Mossoo is beside himself with rage. He, he, he!"

"It's Wibley!" gasped Desmond. "Poor old Wib!"

"Wibley!" The fellows understood at once, and there was a roar of laughter.

"The howling ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "He'll bag a flogging for this!"

"Venez!" hooted Monsieur Charpentier, grasping Wibley by the arm.

"Come in!" called Mr. Quelch, when they tapped his study door.

They went in, and stood side by side before Mr. Quelch's desk. The Remove master was writing busily. He did not look up.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Mon cher Quelch——"

Mr. Quelch looked up.

For one second his eyes dwelt on the twin Mossoos in front of him. Then he left his chair and proceeded in the direction of the ceiling for a distance of three feet.

Having come to earth again, he uttered a howl of dismay and fairly bounded out of the study.

"My dear sair——" gasped Mossoo, astounded.

But Quelch was gone.

Mr. Hacker was about to start his tea when the door of his study was flung unceremoniously open, and Quelch flew in and collapsed into a chair.

"What—what—what——" Hacker exclaimed, startled.

"Hacker, I'm going mad! I'm beginning to see double! You were quite right—I admit it—hallucinations—delusions—"

"I was sure of it," said Hacker soothingly. "Come, come, my dear Quelch, don't give way. There may still be some vestige of hope for you."

"I assure you, Hacker, that not two minutes ago I distinctly saw two figures of Monsieur Charpentier in my study. I saw them as plainly as—"

"Yes, yes, of course," agreed Hacker. "An infallible proof of mental aberration. Probably a case of incipient paranoia."

"Can—can anything be done for it?" groaned Quelch.

"Done? Why, of course. After a few years' rest—"

"A few years!" cried Quelch.

"Yes, in absolute solitude—"

"Oh!"

"It is quite possible that you may recover," said Hacker cheerfully. "We must not, of course, under-estimate the gravity of your condition, but there is a distinct chance—Why—what—what—" howled Hacker, as Mossoo and Wibley appeared in his study doorway.

Mossoo was gasping with astonishment.

"Pray listen to me, sair—"

"Two of them!" hooted Hacker, clutching his head.

Quelch turned to him eagerly.

"Can you see two of them?" he demanded hopefully.

"See them, sir? Of course I can see them! Do you think I am blind?" Hacker fairly gibbered.

Mr. Quelch laid a soothing hand on his arm.

"Come, come, don't give way, Hacker," he said. "There may still be some hope for you. Of course,

we must not expect too much, but after a few years' rest—"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Meestair Quelch!" howled Mossoo, in despair. "Listen, sair! Ecoutez, je vous prie!"

"If you are Monsieur Charpentier," gulped Quelch, "will you kindly tell me who is—that!" He pointed to Wibley.

"Certainement, if you vill pairmit me to speak," roared Mossoo. "C'est Wibley, sair, en deguise! He has made himself to look like me—"

"Wibley!" Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath. "Ah, now I understand! This is not the first time he has impersonated people at this school. So, Wibley, you have dared to caricature Monsieur Charpentier in this ridiculous way?"

"I—I—yes, sir!"

"I leave ze mattair to you, sir," said Mossoo, and, with a bow, he walked away, considerably puzzled.

Mr. Quelch glared at Wibley. Mr. Hacker glared at both of them.

"You will be punished severely for this prank, Wibley. I am greatly inclined to take you to your headmaster for a flogging." Wibley writhed. "Where did you procure that gown and mortar-board you are carrying?"

Wibley groaned dismally. He had expected this.

"They're yours, sir!"

"What?" Mr. Quelch glared. "Do you mean that you have abstracted them from my study?"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"When?" The master's voice was like buzz-saw going through teak.

"Just—just before class, sir!"

A glitter shot into Mr. Quelch's eyes.

"Were you in the study when—when—"



"Bon soir, mes enfants, I desire zat—mon Dieu!" howled Monsieur Charpentier, clutching at his forehead. "Vat is zees?" At the sight of his double in the room the French master seemed about to have a couple of fits!

"Yes, sir, in the cupboard," replied Wibley, with a faint grin.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch pondered. "Wibley, did you have anything on your back in the quadrangle this morning?"

"Eh? Yes, sir—a card. A fellow pinned it on me for a joke."

"Indeed?"

Wibley was amazed to see the dawning of a gentle smile on Quelchy's face. The Remove master, in fact, was thrilling with happiness. Relief poured over him like a healing stream. There were no delusions, after all.

Wibley waited miserably to hear his doom.

"Follow me," said Mr. Quelch abruptly, and led the way to his own study. "Replace my gown and mortar-board!" Wibley took them off in silence. "Very well! Now you may go!"

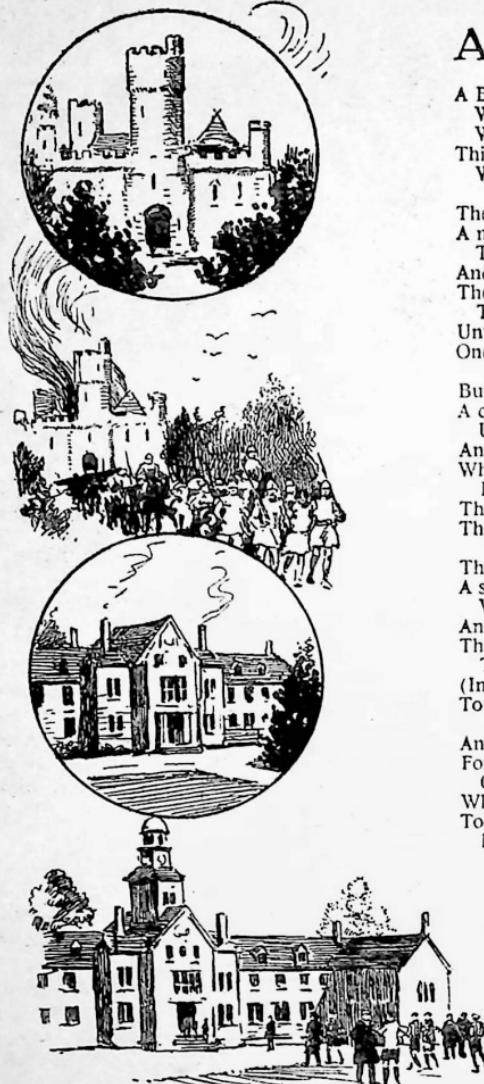
"Eh?"

"You may go!" Mr. Quelch simply couldn't look severe. He beamed. "I propose to overlook the matter this time. But if anything of the kind occurs again—"

Wibley didn't wait for the rest. Amazing, incredible as it was, Quelch had told him to go. Wibley went, before Quelch could change his mind!

THE END

The STORY of ROOKWOOD



A BOUT eight hundred years ago,
There lived in Happy Hampshire, so
The old historians tell us,
A Baron, last of all his line,
Who split his rivals to the chine
Whenever he felt jealous !
This Baron's gloomy castle stood
Within a rook-infested wood.

The building was in Norman style,
A mighty and forbidding pile,
To fit the Baron haughty !
And from its portals, strong and stout,
The Baron frequently went out
To make a sudden sortie,
Until the castle was attacked
One morning, and completely sacked !

But Rookwood wasn't finished yet ;
A certain grim Plantagenet
Upon it hung his banner,
And stayed until the Civil War,
When Rookwood was besieged once more
In no uncertain manner ;
The keep, though partly ruined, stood ;
The rest was battered down for good.

There next was built a country seat,
A spacious manor-house, complete
With windows, large and leaded :
And secret passages galore,
Through which the owners ran, before
They found themselves beheaded.
(In those old days it often paid
To have a secret passage made.)

And many dramas here took place ;
For instance, we may take the case
Of one poor girl, Eleanor,
Who went one morning to her tower
To sit and paint, and since that hour
No eye has ever seen her !

She simply disappeared—but how
Has not been answered even now.

But space forbids us to recite
The tales of terror-stricken flight,
With ghostly candles burning !
The manor passed through many hands
And now, as Rookwood College, stands,
A famous seat of learning !
And yet its glories still increase,
Long may it flourish thus in peace !