

The Rookwood Rebellion!

By
Owen Conquest.



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JIMMY SILVER & Co., and the rest of the cheery chums of Rookwood, are the last fellows to knuckle under quietly to tyranny and oppression—a fact that is brought home to Mr. Roger Manders in a manner both painful and surprising!

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Manders Down Heavy!

"**N**ONSENSE!"
"But, sir—"
"Nonsense!"

Mr. Manders, Housemaster of the Modern House at Rookwood School, rapped out the word in his most unpleasant tone. And Mr. Manders' voice could be very unpleasant indeed.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood silent, in deep wrath.

The Fistical Four were in their own study, the end study in the passage sacred to the Classical Fourth at Rookwood. Properly speaking, Mr. Manders had no business there at all, Mr. Manders being a master of the Modern side.

But he was there.

And, unfortunately, Mr. Manders was there with authority!

For all Rookwood had been detained at school over the Christmas vacation, owing to an outbreak of influenza, and Mr. Manders was the master left in charge.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had been busy. Costumes of varied colours, rivaling Joseph's celebrated coat, were lying on the table, or scattered round the study. Putty

of the Fourth was giving the last touches to a costume he was to wear in a feminine part in a forthcoming comedy, Putty Grace being specially skilled in such parts. Lovell was sewing a doublet, with an occasional howl as the needle found a wrong destination. Raby and Newcome were patching; Jimmy Silver was cutting out. But everything came to a stop as the frowning face and long, reddened nose of Mr. Manders loomed in the doorway.

"Nonsense! Rubbish!" said Mr. Manders.

He glanced with a disapproving eye over the preparations for theatrical business in the study.

"Utter nonsense!" he repeated. "A sheer waste of time—a nonsensical waste of time!"

"It's holiday-time, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver.

"Don't argue with me, Silver."

"But, sir—" burst out Lovell.

"If you are impertinent, Lovell, I shall cane you!"

Arthur Edward breathed hard, and held his peace. Mr. Manders had the upper hand, and was quite ruthless in using it.

"I have never approved of this play—"

ing nonsense," said Mr. Manders. "In fact, I disapprove of it most strongly."

Mr. Manders raised a long, thin hand.

"Put all that rubbish away!" he said. "I distinctly forbid you to indulge in any of this foolish play-acting while you are under my charge. Remember that my orders are to be obeyed."

With that, Mr. Manders turned and whisked out of the end study.

He left five juniors there in an almost homicidal frame of mind.

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at one another, almost bereft of the power of speech. Mr. Manders, as temporary Head, had been unpleasant enough all the time. But this was the limit!

"The awful cad!" breathed Lovell.

"He's got no right to chip in," said Teddy Grace hotly. "Even if we have to stay at Rookwood because of that dashed flu, it's our Christmas holiday all the same."

"Of course it is," said Raby.

"He'll be starting holiday lessons next," said Lovell savagely. "I know he'd like to."

"The awful rotter!"

"It's his corns!" said Jimmy Silver. "I know his corns hurt him when there's a frost."

"Blow his corns!" roared Lovell.

"Tommy Dodd's caught it, on the Modern side, this morning," said Jimmy. "He's been licked for sliding down the banisters."

"Manders can mop up the whole Modern side, for all I care. But he's not going to bother us!" howled Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy, we're going to give our comedy all the same."

Jimmy shook his head.

"Can't be done, old top! Manders would march in and stop it."

"We could chuck him out!"

Jimmy laughed.

"Chucking out masters is more easily said than done, old fellow. Besides, the prefects would back him up."

"Blow the prefects!"

"The Sixth—"

"Bless the Sixth!"

"We've got to toe the line," said Jimmy, with a sigh. "Can't be helped. Keep smiling."

"Oh, rats! Why can't Manders catch the flu, and go into sanny?" said Lovell, in

great exasperation. "Mr. Dalton and Mr. Greely have got it. Why can't Manders get it? It's not fair!"

Putty Grace laid down his costume, in which he was to have distinguished himself on the histrionic boards.

"It's rotten!" he said. "First a crowd of asses get the flu, then a blessed doctor orders the whole dashed school to stay up over the vac; then the Head mizzles, and leaves that—that bony old bounder in charge. I'm fed up with Manders!"

"But what are we going to do?" asked Raby. "All our trouble for nothing, Jimmy?"

"Looks like it. The only thing we can do is to take it out of the Manders bird, somehow."

"I'd got my costume so topping," said Putty, with a sigh. "As a new and improved edition of Charley's aunt, it couldn't be beaten. And—and now I shan't be able to wear it. Bother Manders!"

"We'll make him sorry for himself, somehow!" said Jimmy Silver savagely.

Valentine Mornington looked into the study.

"What did Manders want?" he asked.

"Stopped what he calls the play-acting," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "The comedy is off."

"Oh, gad!"

"We're not going to stand it!" bawled Lovell.

At which there was a general shrugging of shoulders. The unfortunate thing was, that Jimmy Silver & Co. had to stand it; and their only solace was the forming of wild and wrathful plans for making Mr. Manders "sit up" in his turn!

CHAPTER 2.

Jimmy Silver's Idea!

"PUTTY, old man!"

Jimmy Silver looked into Study No. 2 that evening. Putty of the Fourth was alone there, looking rather dismal. Jones minor and Higges were down with flu; Tubby Muffin was ranging the passages and studies seeking what he might devour, so Putty had the study to himself. Jimmy found him putting up the rather striking costume he was

to have worn as "Smith minor's aunt" in the comedy that was not to come off.

"Well" said Putty dismally. "Feeling fed up, old bean?"

"I've been thinking," said Jimmy, coming into the study and closing the door. "We're not taking this lying down, Putty."

"The Manders bird? Just give me a chance to get at 'his nibs'!" said Putty vengefully. "I'd make him hop! Just his rotten tomper and his corns—he likes to see long faces round him."

"You were going to play in those glad rags," said Jimmy, glancing at the folded costume. "You're jolly clever in female parts, Putty."

Putty of the Fourth bowed.

"Will half-a-crown do?" he asked.

"Fathead!" said Jimmy, laughing. "I mean business. You had the nerve to get yourself up as a girl once, and take me in—"

"Old man, you're bursting with compliments," said Putty. "If you're short of tin, I'll make it five bob."

"Ass! I've been thinking it over," said Jimmy. "I'm a pretty good actor myself, but I own up that you can beat me hollow. I've thought of a stunt; and after what you did on Christmas Eve I believe that you could do it. But it would want tons of nerve."

"I'm not short of nerve," grinned Putty. "If it's up against the Manders bird, give it a name and count me in."

"That's it," said Jimmy.

"Then I'm on. What's the stunt?"

"Manders is a giddy old bachelor," said Jimmy.

"A dashed crusty old bachelor," said Putty. "I dare say that's why he's so crusty and corny. But what about that?"

"Suppose his wife turned up at Rookwood?"

"Eh?"

"Catch on?" asked Jimmy.

"Not quite!" said Putty, with a stare. "You're not suggesting that Manders is a sort of giddy Bluebeard with wives tucked away in odd corners, are you?"

"Ha, ha! No! But suppose a sort of 'Charley's Aunt' lady turned up and claimed him as her long-lost husband. It would give Manders no end of a jump."

"I think it would! But what—"

Putty broke off short as Jimmy pointed to

the costume on the table, and he understood.

There was a yell from Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He rushed at the captain of the Fourth, seized him, and waltzed him round the study table in the exuberance of his delight.

"Hurrah!" he yelled. "Jimmy, what woke up your brain like that, after its long rest? Hurrah!"

"Leggo, you ass!"

"Hip-pip!"

Putty waltzed the breathless Jimmy round the table till they crashed into the armchair, and the impromptu dance came to a sudden stop.

"You silly owl!" roared Jimmy Silver, as he sprawled over the armchair.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Putty. "My dear chap, I was only showing my appreciation. Why, it's the stunt of the season! It's the catch of the term. It—it—it's great!"

The door opened, and Lovell and Baby and Newcome looked in, with Mornington and Erroll and several more juniors. Putty's exuberant delight had been audible all along the Fourth Form passage.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Putty.

"Gone off his rocker?" inquired Morny.

Putty wiped his eyes.

"Come in, my infants, and hear the biggest stunt that ever was stunted," he said. "Shut the door! And keep your heads shut when you're out of this study. It would mean the sack for somebody if it came out!"

"But what—" asked Erroll, puzzled.

"Have you ever seen Mrs. Manders?" asked Putty.

"Eh! There isn't a Mrs. Manders, is there?"

"There's going to be!"

Mornington tapped his forehead.

"Quite off!" he remarked.

"Wait and see," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Do you really think you'd have the nerve, Putty?"

"Fathead! I could do it asleep!" said Putty. "Just watch me rehearse the part! What's Manders' front name, by the way?"

"Roger!"

"Then you watch what Roger is going to see to-morrow."

Putty whipped the costume off the table. He tucked up his trousers, and whipped off his jacket, and slipped into the dress. With marvellous rapidity he adjusted the rather striking skirt and bodice, the striped stockings and the shoes. He turned his face to the glass, and a golden wig appeared on his head as if by magic, and then with both hands he dabbed at his face in rapid "make-up."

His swiftness was remarkable, and the result more remarkable still.

When he turned towards the staring juniors again Putty of the Fourth had utterly disappeared.

There was not a vestige of likeness to that hilarious junior left.

He looked like a lady of about thirty, dressed in a way that would have been youthful for one at twenty.

Not a feature seemed the same now that the skilful "make-up" had been applied by Putty's masterly hand.

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly blinked at him.

The metamorphosis had taken place under their own eyes; but they could scarcely believe that it was Putty who stood before them.

And when he spoke his voice was unrecognisable; it was now high-pitched and decidedly feminine.

"What are you little boys looking at?" asked Putty. "Can you tell me where to find my dear Roger?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, top-hole!" yelled Mornington. "But—but you'd never have the nerve to tackle Manders like that!"

"Wouldn't I just!" grinned Putty.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Oswald of the Fourth came in.

"I say—" he began. Then he stopped suddenly as his eyes fell on the startling apparition in the study. "Why, what—what—" Oswald stared.

"My dear little boy," said Putty. "Can you tell me where to find my dear Roger? He is a master at this school."

"Who—what—" stammered Oswald.

"Roger Manders—my dear, dear husband—"

"Oh!" gasped Oswald. "You—you'll find him on the Modern side, ma'am. I—I didn't know he was married, ma'am—"

Mrs. Manders pressed a little handkerchief to her eyes.

"He has deserted me," she sobbed. "But—but I forgive him! Take me to my dear Roger, you kind little boy."

"Certainly, ma'am!" said Oswald. "This way!"

Astonished as he was at finding Mrs. Manders in Putty's study, Oswald evidently took her for granted. He opened the door for the lady. Then there was a yell from Jimmy Silver & Co. They could not restrain it any longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks, Oswald, old top!" said Putty in his natural voice. "I won't visit dear old Roger just at present."

Oswald jumped.

"Eh! What? Where's Putty? Why, you—you—you—" Oswald fairly broke down in his amazement, and almost gibbered at Putty.

The study rang with merriment.

"Don't you fellows think it will do?" grinned Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"You—you're not going to—" stuttered Oswald.

"You bet!"

"Oh, my hat! Manders will boil you in oil if he finds out!"

"But he won't, old top!" said Putty serenely. "But mind! Not a word outside this study! This stunt has got to be kept dark!"

There was no doubt on that point. And Jimmy Silver & Co. preserved the secret with the most sedulous secrecy—till the morrow, when "Mrs. Manders" was to visit her dear Roger as a sort of New Year's surprise!

CHAPTER 3.

Mrs. Manders Calls on Roger!

MR. MANDERS stared out glumly into the Rookwood quadrangle on New Year's Eve.

He was not in a happy mood. He seldom was. True, there was a certain amount of satisfaction in filling, temporarily, the headmaster's place at Rookwood School.

But it was, after all, holiday time. He could not make his power felt as he could have done in term time. More than once he had been tempted to introduce lessons

—to prevent the Rookwood fellows wasting their time, as he regarded it. But even Mr. Manders stopped short at that; and having to stop short annoyed him.

And in spite of the fact that they had to pass their Christmas holiday at the school, far from the home fires, most of the Rookwooders kept up a seasonable cheerfulness.

That, somehow, annoyed Mr. Manders. Generally in a snappy and morose temper himself, he disliked seeing happy faces round him. Indeed, he really seemed to take cheerfulness as a sort of personal injury to himself.

He frowned into the misty quad from his study window. He could see Jimmy Silver & Co. there. The Fistical Four were marching along arm in arm, and smiling. Tommy Dodd, and Cook, and Doyle, the Moderns, met them in the quad, and smiled, too. From the distance Mr. Manders thought he could hear the cheery call: "Happy New Year, old bean!"

Possibly Mr. Manders wanted the New Year to be a happy one. But he did not look as if he did.

The merry laughter ringing on the frosty air annoyed him. Those idle juniors would be much better engaged in the Form-room, he considered, even in the Yuletide vacation!

Mr. Manders frowned, and bit his thin lip, and wrinkled his brows, and considered that question afresh—wondering whether he could venture upon so unpopular a step. Certainly that would put an end to the cheery brightness of Jimmy Silver & Co.—which, to the science master's mind, seemed a consummation devoutly to be wished!

A twinge from his favourite corn caught him, and Mr. Manders started and suppressed a yelp. He frowned still more darkly at the happy group in the quadrangle. A thought came into his mind, too, of what had happened on Christmas Eve—when a gentleman supposed to be a Harley Street specialist had called on him, and scared him almost out of his wits with alarm for his health.

That gentleman had vanished into thin air: he had not been heard of since. All Mr. Manders knew was that he had been "spoofed" by some person unknown.

He wondered whether any of the Rookwood juniors had knowledge of the spoof

—though certainly it did not cross his mind that Putty of the Fourth had played the part.

They were looking towards his study, and laughing—now! Yes, actually they were laughing—while they looked at his study! Of course, they could not see him—he was well back from the window! But they were laughing at him—Mr. Manders felt sure of that! Perhaps they were thinking of that Christmas Eve spoof: perhaps they were planning some more impertinence. He had stopped their precious comedy, anyhow!

Even Mr. Manders could not descend upon the merry juniors simply because they were laughing in the quadrangle. He fumed; but he had to consume his own smoke, as it were. But his attention was suddenly called to the distant gates, of which he had a partial view from his window.

A female figure was standing before old Mack's lodge, and old Mack was in his doorway. Mr. Manders blinked at that female figure. It was not tall, but it was striking. The lady wore an old-fashioned poke bonnet, which did not conceal an abundance of yellow curls—probably imitation.

Certainly they did not match the face, which was not beautiful, and looked thirty at least. In figure she resembled a dumpling. And beneath a short skirt showed striped stockings that caught what sunshine there was and reflected it finely. In the lady's hand was an umbrella of the gamp variety.

"Nonsense!" grumbled Mr. Manders. "What does Mack wish to have his foolish-looking aunt or sister here for on New Year's Day? Nonsense!"

And Mr. Manders frowned disapprovingly.

He would probably have jumped if he could have heard what the lady in the bonnet was saying that moment to the astonished Mack.

"Is my husband indoors, my good man?"

Mack looked at her.

"What is his name, ma'am?" he asked.

"Mr. Roger Manders."

"Wot!" stuttered Mack.

"Is he at home?"

Mack blinked.

"Ma'am, Mr. Manders is at 'ome certainly!" he stammered. "But—but are

you sure you ain't making a mistake, ma'am? Mr. Manders ain't married, ma'am."

"Has he never mentioned me?" asked Mrs. Manders tearfully.

"Not hever, ma'am, certingly!" The lady wiped her eyes, and Mack was touched. "I'll take you to Mr. Manders' 'ouse, ma'am, if you wish," he said. "But, recly, I feel struck all of a 'eap! Never knewed that Mr. Manders was a married gentleman!"

"Thank you so much!" said the lady gratefully. "You have such a kind face! I feel comforted already!"

Old Mack almost blushed.

He was not accustomed to compliments.

"Master Silver!" he called out.

Jimmy came up with his chums. They all capped the lady in the bonnet very respectfully.

"P'raps you wouldn't mind showing this 'ere lady to Mr. Manders' 'ouse!" said Old Mack. "I can't leave my lodge jest now."

"Pleased!" said Jimmy.

"You are a good boy!" said Mrs. Manders. "Are you one of my husband's pupils?"

"Eh! Oh! Your—your husband, ma'am?"

"Roger Manders."

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, jumped almost clear of the ground.

"My only hat! I—I beg your pardon, ma'am! Are you—are you Mrs. Manders?"

"Yes, my dear little boy."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Please come this way, madam!" said Jimmy Silver, with great gravity.

Mrs. Manders accompanied the captain of the Fourth, and Lovell & Co. exchanged little grins. Tommy Dodd stood gasping. Everybody at Rookwood had always supposed Mr. Manders to be a bachelor. Indeed, it would have been hard to make any Rookwooder believe that there existed any lady so wanting in taste as to accept Mr. Manders if he did propose. And now

"Mrs. Manders!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Oh, Jerusalem artichokes! Mrs. Manders! The old—old—old rip!"

"The ould spalpeen!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle indignantly. "Takin' us all in-takin' the Head in! The Head doesn't know!"

"He will!" chuckled Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "All Rookwood will know now! Sly old dog, Manders—what?"

The news spread like wildfire. Perhaps some fellows knew already! In amazingly short time nearly everybody at Rookwood seemed to know that Mr. Manders' wife—hitherto unacknowledged—had arrived!

Before Mrs. Manders—who walked rather slowly—had reached the house under Jimmy Silver's guidance—the quadrangle was swarming with eager, excited fellows. There was astonishment on all sides. Only Tubby Muffin declared that he had suspected something of the kind all along.

The amazing news was buzzed up and down and round about. It interested everybody. It was clear that Mr. Manders had been guilty of deception in posing as a bachelor at Rookwood.

Fellows wondered blissfully whether he would get the sack for this. They sincerely hoped so! Bulkeley of the Sixth heard loud and excited comments through his study window, and he came out into the quad, frowning.

"What's all this?" he demanded.

"Mrs. Manders!" howled Smythe of the Shell. "Ha, ha! Old Manders' better half has come home!"

"Don't talk such nonsense, Smythe!" exclaimed the Rookwood captain sharply.

"There she is!" said Smythe, pointing.

Bulkeley stared at the female figure that Jimmy Silver was guiding to Mr. Manders' house. He almost fell down.

"That—that Mrs. Manders! Impossible!"

"Looks more like Charley's Aunt—what?" chuckled Townsend, of the Fourth.

"But all the fellows are sayin'—"

"Stuff!" said Bulkeley.

The Sixth-Former crossed the quad at a run, intending to get to the bottom of this at once. He interposed just as Mrs. Manders and her kind guide reached the doorway of their destination.

"Excuse me, madam!" began Bulkeley.

"Yes, little boy!"

There was a chuckle from the numerous crowd gathering round, and Bulkeley coloured. He was not exactly a little boy!

"You—you have called to see someone, madam?"

"Yes—my husband."

"But—but you do not mean Mr. Manders?"

"I am Mrs. Manders."

Bulkeley looked bewildered.

"But, madam, it—it has always been—been supposed—"

"My dear little boy, I am an unhappy deserted wife!" said Mrs. Manders, applying her ready handkerchief to her eyes. "Cruel—cruel Roger has abandoned me. But I hope that his hard heart may be softened by Christmas, and I have come to beg him to do me justice. If he denies me, I shall appeal to the headmaster—"

"Dr. Chisholm is away, madam. But—but—"

"Where is my husband?"

"Oh, dear! Are you—are you sure, ma'am—quite sure—"

"My husband! He is there!"

Mrs. Manders stretched out her hands towards Mr. Manders' study window.

Mr. Manders had watched the female figure advancing towards his house with astonishment and annoyance. He had noted with still greater surprise the sudden swarming of the quadrangle with excited and hilarious juniors.

This general hilarity was not to be tolerated. Mr. Manders came to his study window, and threw it up. He intended to address the swarming Rookwooders, and demand to know what that scene meant. Instead of which he found himself addressed by the female in the bonnet.

"Roger!"

Mr. Manders jumped.

"Roger, are you not glad to see your own dear Amelia?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Dear Roger, I forgive you everything if you will do what is right!" sobbed Amelia.

Mr. Manders blinked from the window, his lean jaw dropping in his utter astonishment.

"Woman," he gasped, "what—what do you mean? Are you mad? Have you been drinking? Who are you?"

Amelia sobbed.

"Oh, Roger!"

"How dare you call me by my Christian name!" thundered Mr. Manders, greatly scandalised.

"My only husband—"

"What?" yelled Mr. Manders.

"Can you be so cruel to your little wife?"

Mr. Manders spluttered. From the crowd of Rookwooders, their tender hearts touched by Amelia's sobs, came a yell:

"Shame!"

CHAPTER 4.

Nice for Mrs. Manders!

MR. Manders clutched the window-frame and glared. He wondered dizzily whether he was dreaming. A hundred contemptuous and accusing faces looked at him from the quadrangle. Evidently the sympathy of Rookwood was on the side of Amelia.

Amelia's sobs were loud and long.

"Poor soul!" said Topham of the Fourth in a loud whisper. "It's simply shameful!"

"Rotten!" said Mornington.

"What an utter brute!" said Townsend. "I wonder he's got the neck to face us."

"Or her, poor woman!" said Howard of the Shell.

"Shame!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Woman, you are either mad or intoxicated! Go away at once!"

"Roger!"

"Shame!" yelled the juniors.

"Bulkeley, oblige me by conducting this—this female to—to the gates, and asking Mack to turn her out!"

George Bulkeley's eyes glinted.

"I shall do nothing of the sort, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What? What?"

"This lady claims to be Mrs. Manders, sir! It is your business to deal with her, not mine!"

"Do you mean to say that you are stupid enough to believe such an absurd story?" shouted Mr. Manders. "I have never seen the woman before in my life!"

"Oh, Roger!"

"She knows you, at all events, sir," said Bulkeley dryly.

"Woman, go—go!" roared Mr. Manders.

"Dearest Roger—"

"I deny the whole story! I have never seen the woman—" Mr. Manders almost babbled in his wild excitement and exasperation. "It is a trick—a plot—"

"Roger!" wailed Amelia.

"Are you quite sure of what you state, madam?" asked Hansom of the Fifth. "It—it isn't some other Mr. Manders—"

"That may be the explanation!" gasped the Modern master.

Amelia sobbed.

"I would know my dear Roger anywhere!" she exclaimed. "Gentlemen, I appeal to you all! My Roger has a scar on his neck—over the right shoulder!"

"That does it!" said Talboys of the Fifth. Mr. Manders almost fainted.

He had a scar on his neck, now hidden by his collar. Nearly all Rookwood knew he had it. They had seen it often enough in the summer, when Mr. Manders sometimes had charge of the swimmers as "ducker." How did this woman know, if she was not what she claimed to be?

There was condemnation in every face. Bulkeley gave the Modern master an icy look.

"Do you still deny it, sir?" he asked.

"Yes—yes—yes!" foamed Mr. Manders. "It is a trick—a falsehood—a plot—a scheme to obtain money from me—" He spluttered.

"Shame!" roared all Rookwood.

"Take me to him!" said Amelia tearfully. "Face to face he will not venture to deny his own lawfully wedded wife! Take me to Roger!"

"This way, ma'am!" said Jimmy Silver, choking down his emotions.

A crowd followed Mrs. Manders into the house. The Rookwood fellows wanted to see the meeting, and they wanted to see fair play. Old Manders was just the man to be a wife-beater, Tommy Dodd remarked to Cook. If he tried anything like that the Rookwooders were ready to lynch him. A swarm followed in the wake of Jimmy Silver and Mrs. Manders.

In his study Mr. Manders stood almost petrified.

Some dreadful woman—a woman he had never even seen before, so far as he knew—was claiming him as her husband! It seemed like some awful dream—some frightful nightmare. He almost wondered whether he was dreaming this. But the tramp of many feet approaching his study door told him that it was grim reality.

"Roger!"

As he heard that terrifying voice outside, Mr. Manders made a jump to the door to turn the key. But the door flew open. Amelia flew into the study with arms outstretched.

"Roger!" she shrieked.

Mr. Manders jumped back.

"Woman, begone!" he spluttered. "I—I do not know you! I am not your wife—I mean, your husband! I—I—I—"

"Roger, be kind to your little Amelia, and all shall be forgiven!"

"Go away!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Take her away! Oh, heavens!"

"Roger!"

Amelia flew at him, her arms outspread. Mr. Manders dodged desperately round the study table.

"Help!" he shrieked.

"Roger, kiss your little Amelia!"

"Yaroooooh! Go away! Help!"

Mr. Manders fled round the table, and Amelia pursued him. There was a roar from the passage.

"Go it, Mrs. Manders!"

"Give him the broil!"

Apparently that was Amelia's intention. The old poet has told us of the fury of a woman scorned. Amelia reached across the table with her umbrella as Mr. Manders fled, and there was a loud whack.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roger, stop!"

"Woman, leave my study! Help!"

"Here we go round the mulberry-bush!" chortled Lovell, in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" yelled Mr. Manders. "Call the police! Oh, heavens! The woman is mad! Help!"

He made a rush for the doorway. But it was blocked with juniors, and they did not stir. Behind him came the avenging Amelia.

Whack!

The umbrella came down on Mr. Manders' mortar-board. There was a terrific yell from the Modern master.

"Now, Roger—"

"Do the decent thing, Mr. Manders!" shouted Lovell. "Own up!"

"Give him jip, ma'am!"

Mr. Manders chased round the study again. After him went the lady in the bonnet with swiping umbrella.

"Woman, calm yourself!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "I—I will do—do anything you wish! I—I will— Oh, heavens! For goodness' sake, ma'am, calm yourself! Bless my soul! I beg of you—I beseech—"

"Will you admit the truth before these

gentlemen?" demanded Mrs. Manders, stopping in her wild career. "Will you acknowledge your wronged wife?"

"Oh, dear!"

Mr. Manders mopped his streaming brow. He turned to the door and glared at the juniors.

"Go!" he thundered. "How dare you press into my study in this way? Go at once, or I will flog you all! I desire to see this—this lady alone. Go!"

"He's going to own up!" said Hansom of the Fifth.

"Best thing the old rip can do!"

"Here, clear off!" called out Bulkeley.

"Now, then—" The Rookwood captain drove the crowd along the passage.

Mr. Manders, with his back to the door, turned a venomous eye on the lady in the bonnet. As he faced her his hands were behind him, feeling for the key in the lock. Unseen by Amelia, he extracted the key.

"Now, madam—" he said.

"You are going to own up and do justice, Roger?" wailed Amelia. "Refuse, and I leave you for ever!"

"Why, that's just what the old rip wants!" murmured Topham, down the passage.

But apparently it was not what Mr. Manders wanted. He had had time to collect his thoughts a little now. Back into his mind had come the "spoof" of Christmas Eve. This was another trick! Mr. Manders was not clever, but he was cunning.

"Madam, you have come here calling yourself Mrs. Manders!" he said. "You shall have every opportunity of proving your claim!"

With that, Mr. Manders whipped out of the study and slammed the door. He jammed the key into the outside of the lock and turned it.

From the lips of Amelia, in the study, dropped a rather unfeminine expression:

"Oh, crikey!"

"Knowles!" shouted Mr. Manders to the Modern prefect, who was in the crowded passage. "Knowles, go to the telephone at once! Ring up Coombe police-station! Ask them to send a constable here immediately!"

"Yes, sir!" said Knowles.

Knowles hurried away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one

another. They had no chance at Mr. Manders' study, with the door locked and the key in Mr. Manders' pocket.

In the quad the chums of the Fourth stared at one another in blank and utter dismay. At the window of Mr. Manders' study they caught a glimpse of a dismayed face under golden locks and a bonnet.

"Great pip!" gasped Lovell. "She—he—Putty's locked in, and a bobby coming from Coombe—"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, holy smoke!" mumbled Raby.

"It's all comin' out!" stuttered Newcome. "Poor old Putty! Oh, my only hat! What will happen now?"

That was a question that the Fistical Four could not answer. What was going to happen now could only be imagined in horrid surmises. Putty of the Fourth had played his little game—and played it well. But it was only too evident now that he had played it once too often!

CHAPTER 5.

The Abduction of Police-Constable Boggs!

"DON'T break his neck!"

"Bother his neck!"

"You see—"

"He's got to be kept away!"

said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I won't break his neck, if I can help it, but he's got to be kept clear of Rookwood this afternoon!"

The neck that Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Rookwood Fourth were discussing was the property of Police-Constable Boggs of Coombe.

P.-c. Boggs was coming along Coombe Lane towards the school, with a slow and stately tread.

Mr. Boggs had been telephoned for in a great hurry from Rookwood School. He was wanted there, very urgently, by Mr. Manders. But Mr. Boggs had his own ideas about that. The majesty of the law was not to be hurried or flurried.

There was absolutely no sign of hurry or flurry about Mr. Boggs, as he solemnly marched up the lane. He might have been an express-driver on a great railway, for any sign of haste that he showed.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the four heroes of the Rookwood Fourth, lurked in the lane. Raby was

holding the head of a rather fresh-looking horse that was harnessed in a trap. Jimmy Silver & Co. had engaged that trap at their own expense, for the special purpose of giving P.-c. Boggs a free drive!

This was such unusual kindness on the part of the Fistical Four, that ulterior motives might have been suspected.

Lovell was to drive the trap! Hence Jimmy Silver's fears with regard to the safety of Mr. Boggs' neck.

Lovell sat holding the reins. Raby held the horse—not without difficulty. The fiery steed did not seem to want to keep still.

P.-c. Boggs glanced at the juniors as he came along, with elephantine tread. Jimmy Silver raised his cap in salute.

"Here you are, Mr. Boggs!" he said. "Jump in!"

"What?" said Mr. Boggs.

"You had a telephone-call at the station from Mr. Manders at Rookwood?"

"I did!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Mr. Manders is in an awful hurry," said Jimmy, "so we've brought a trap for you, Mr. Boggs."

"My eye!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Just jump in! We thought you'd rather drive than have such a thumping long walk," said Jimmy.

The trap creaked as the considerable avoirdupois of Mr. Boggs settled down into it. Neither did the lively horse seem so anxious to start now. Mr. Boggs, in any vehicle, bore a resemblance to a sheet-anchor.

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome stood back.

"Go it, Lovell!"

"You bet!" said Lovell.

He cracked his whip.

"Careful with that 'orse, sir!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Oh, he's all right," said Arthur Edward Lovell confidently. "He would feed out of your hand, Mr. Boggs!"

Crack, crack, crack!

The horse started. He was rather fresh—in fact, the chums of Rookwood had selected him for that reason. In spite of the weight in the trap, the steed soon got going in great style. The trap rushed off in the direction of Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed at a trot.

The horse's hoofs clattered at a terrible rate on the hard road. Mr. Boggs held on and spluttered.

Lovell was not brandishing the whip

now. He had both hands gripping the reins.

In a very short time, the gates of Rookwood School were in sight. In the gateway appeared a crowd of the Classical Fourth—Mornington, Erroll, Oswald, Flynn, Courroy, and several more fellows. They all stared eagerly at the trap. Evidently there was some excitement going on at Rookwood that afternoon.

Horse and trap, Lovell and P.-c. Boggs, flashed past the gates of Rookwood like a meteor.

The trap rocked and swayed, the horse clattered, Lovell dragged on the reins, P.-c. Boggs clung on for dear life; and the whole show vanished from the sight of the Rookwooders, going strong.

"Spoof!" had changed into reality! Arthur Edward Lovell could not have stopped the horse now if his life had depended on it!

"My only hat!" ejaculated Mornington. "Lovell's going it! What's the odds on two funerals after this?"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome came panting up to the school gates. The trap had long been out of sight.

"They're gone?" gasped Jimmy.

"Ha, ha—yes!"

"Where are they now, I wonder?" panted Raby.

"Half-way to Penzance by this time, to judge by the way Lovell was going!" chuckled Mornington.

"Well, Boggy won't drop in this afternoon, anyhow," said Newcome.

"More likely to drop out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. went in at the gates. They felt, perhaps, a little concern for P.-c. Boggs' official neck. But, anyhow, the village policeman was engaged elsewhere for the afternoon—and Rookwood was not to receive a visit from him! Which was the most important consideration, just then, to Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 6.

Unladylike!

MEANTIME, Putty, raging in the locked study, in feminine attire, felt that it was all up with him. "Oh crikey! Oh dear! What a life!" groaned Putty dolorously.

Putty had often had great success in his

impersonating stunts. But it was only too clear now that he had done it once too often!

Certainly, the case was not likely to go before the magistrates. When the policeman arrived, Putty had only to own up, and certainly he would not be given into custody.

But owning up to Mr. Manders—the bare thought made him dizzy!

A flogging was the very least he could expect. It was certain that Mr. Manders would demand his expulsion from the school, when the Head returned.

What view was Dr. Chisholm likely to take of such an escapade? The Head could not be expected to sympathise with the juniors in their yearning to “rag” Manders.

Putty haunted about the study like a caged tiger.

He haunted the window—gazing frequently towards the gates, in dread of beholding the portly figure of Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe! He did not even know the masterly manner in which Jimmy Silver & Co. had planned to deal with Mr. Boggs and bear him off.

He thought of dropping from the window, gathering his skirts about him, and bolting. But outside the window Mr. Manders had stationed Knowles and Frampton of the Sixth, with strict injunctions to see that the unscrupulous female did not escape that way.

Putty was a helpless prisoner in the study.

A stir at the school gates caught his eye, and his heart wobbled. Was it Police-constable Boggs at last?

It was only Jimmy Silver & Co. coming in, in a crowd. Putty breathed more freely again. It was a respite, at least.

Knowles and Frampton, catching sight of him—or her!—at the study window, grinned. Like most of the Rookwood fellows, they had believed in the claim of Mrs. Manders at first. It seemed incredible that a lady in a bonnet could come to Rookwood claiming to be Mrs. Manders if she was nothing of the kind! But Mr. Manders' action had restored him in the eyes of the Rookwooders.

Certainly, if the obnoxious female had had a genuine claim on the Modern master, Mr. Manders would not have ventured to lock her in his study and send for a policeman. Evidently the prisoner in the study

was some unscrupulous and designing person, fit to be dealt with by all the rigour of the law! So Knowles and Frampton, fully sympathising with their master, kept watch and ward over the study window, prepared to stop Mrs. Manders if she attempted to bolt, and escape the legal penalty of her preposterous claim!

Little did they dream that under the fuzzy hair and bonnet, it was the face of a Fourth-Former of Rookwood—that looked out at them! Putty was so thoroughly disguised that his own parents would never have dreamed of recognising him.

Putty shook his fist at the two prefects in a very unladylike way, and they grinned again.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, madam,” said Knowles. “The bobby will be here pretty soon!”

“Forty bob or a month, ma’am!” grinned Frampton.

“Go and eat coke!” said Mrs. Manders.

“What!”

“Where did you get those features?” asked the unscrupulous female. “Are they features? Do you call that a nose, Knowles?”

Knowles blinked at the lady in the window. Putty was speaking in the high-pitched voice he had adopted as Mrs. Manders; he did not intend to give himself away till the last possible moment. He still nourished a faint hope of escape. But certainly his remarks to the two Modern prefects could not be called lady-like!

“Well, my only hat!” exclaimed Knowles. “You—you—impudent person!”

“Cheeky old cat!” said Frampton.

“Turn your face away, for goodness’ sake!” implored Mrs. Manders. “You oughtn’t to take that face about in the daylight, Frampton. Why don’t you wear a Guy Fawkes’ mask? Or perhaps you are wearing one!”

Frampton spluttered with wrath.

“You blessed old cat!” he roared.

“She seems to know our names pretty well!” muttered Knowles.

“Of course I do!” said Mrs. Manders, whose remarks were being listened to by a crowd of about thirty Rookwood fellows round the window. “I’ve seen you before. You’re quite a swell now, Knowles—quite a change from the time when you used to bring the fried fish home—”

"What?" gasped Knowles.

"Think I don't know you!" exclaimed Mrs. Manders scornfully. "Often and often I've given you a penny at the back door when you brought the fried fish from your father's shop."

Knowles turned purple, as there was a yell of laughter from the delighted crowd. Knowles was not popular, especially with the Classics.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hansom of the Fifth. "We're learning something! Do your people keep a fried-fish shop, Knowles?"

"You know they don't!" yelled Knowles.

Hansom shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know?" he said. "The lady says—"

"It's a lie!" howled Knowles. "She doesn't know me at all!"

"She knows your name!" grinned Smythe of the Shells.

"Not know him!" exclaimed Mrs. Manders. "I can tell you all about him! His front name's Cecil. How do I know that if I don't know him?"

"Got you there, Knowles!" yelled Talboys of the Fifth.

Knowles almost staggered. How on earth did this obnoxious female know that he was named Cecil? Certainly his front name had not been mentioned in her hearing!

"Don't I know him?" continued the dreadful female. "Don't his people live in Black Street, Limehouse? Haven't I often and often seen his father go round the corner to the Red Lion on a Saturday night, and come home uproarious?"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Knowles.

"His people made their money profiteering in fried fish in the war," said Mrs. Manders, addressing the yelling crowd of Rookwooders. "That's how he comes to be such a swell now. He'd like to forget about coming to my back door with the fried fish, and waiting for a penny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cecil Knowles gasped for breath.

The roars of laughter were too much for him. He hurried away through the crowd, and escaped into the house, leaving Framp-ton to keep watch and ward alone at the study window.

Mr. Manders came whisking out of the house, and waved a cane at the hilarious crowd.

"Disperse at once!" he exclaimed. "How

dare you swarm about the house in this way! Disperse! Go!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Roger?" exclaimed Mrs. Manders.

"Silence, woman!"

"Dear Roger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Close that window, woman!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"Close it yourself, Roger!"

Mr. Manders strode up to the window, and reached up and grasped it, to close it. At the same time, Mrs. Manders leaned out, umbrella in hand.

Swipe!

"Yaroooooh!"

He staggered back from the window.

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

"Come and have another, Roger!" shrieked the reckless female, brandishing the umbrella at the window.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Will that policeman never come? Oh dear! What—what—what an afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putty of the Fourth joined in the laughter. He could not help it. So artistic was Putty, so true an artist, that for the moment he had almost believed himself to be Mrs. Manders. But as Mr. Manders stood at a safe distance, rubbing his head and scowling, recollection returned, and Putty retreated back into the study, gasping.

"I've done it now!" he murmured. "Oh, my hat! If Manders finds me out after that! The sack—the merry sack! Oh, dear! Oh, crikey!"

And Putty of the Fourth, repenting of his too highly developed sense of humour, groaned.

CHAPTER 7.

Jimmy Silver to the Rescue!

"WHAT'S going to be done?"

"Echo," said Mornington, "answers what?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. had joined in the hilarity caused by the scene at Mr. Manders' study window. But they had cleared off now, to gather in a group under the old beeches, and hold a consultation upon the truly terrible state of affairs.

Somehow, Putty had to be rescued. But how? He had to be rescued with the truth undiscovered. But how? Even Uncle James of Rookwood was at a loss.

Police-constable Boggs certainly was not likely to arrive that afternoon to take Mrs. Manders into custody. Police-constable Boggs was still in company of Arthur Edward Lovell, continuing his wild career with that enterprising junior. Where Lovell and Mr. Boggs were by that time, Jimmy Silver could not even guess. Not quite so far as Penzance, as Moray had suggested; but at a safe distance from Rookwood. But it was only a respite! Putty was a prisoner, and Putty had to be saved from the consequences of his hare-brained "stunt." But how?

"If they find him out," said Jimmy, "he'll be sacked! No two ways about that! Biffing a master on the head is too thick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's funny!" agreed Jimmy, his face breaking into a grin. "And it's all right for Manders! He's mucked up the Christmas holiday even worse than the 'flu! But it's Putty for the long jump if it all comes out!"

"How the thump are we going to help him?" said Newcome. "The door's locked on him, and there's Manders and Framp-ton watching the window—even if he could jump down in those glad rags. What on earth's to be done?"

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brow in thought.

"Lovell's got Boggy away safe," he said. "We've got time to act. But—but—but what—"

"There goes Manders!" said Oswald.

Jimmy looked round. Mr. Manders was whisking away to the school gates, evidently anxious to see whether the policeman was coming up from Coombe. Like Sister Anne, he watched the road for Mr. Boggs, little dreaming that Mr. Boggs had passed the gates half an hour before at full gallop. The Modern master snorted with impatience as he watched.

"While Manders is out the house we might get at the study door!" suggested Raby.

Jimmy Silver brightened up.

"Good! I'll out in and see. You fellows stay here—a crowd would draw old Manders' eye on us."

"Right you are! Best of luck, old top!"

Jimmy Silver sauntered away with an air of assumed carelessness towards Mr. Manders' house.

Mr. Manders was still at the gates, looking through the bars. He had ordered old

Mack to lock the gates, being vengefully determined that the dreadful female in his study should not escape unarrested. After the amazing scene at the school, Mr. Manders felt that he was bound to prove, by legal process, that the lady was not what she claimed to be, in order to reinstate himself in the eyes of Rookwood. Only the clearest proof would convince the Rookwooders that there was "nothing in it."

Mr. Manders raged with impatience as P.-c. Boggs did not appear. He had no eyes for Jimmy Silver just then. The captain of the Fourth strolled into Mr. Manders' house and found himself in the midst of a crowd of Moderns. Tommy Dodd & Co. closed round him at once.

"Classical cad!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Collar him!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy hurriedly. "I want to speak to you, Diddy—and Cook and Doyle! Come up to your study! It's awfully important."

Jimmy Silver's earnestness impressed the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth. They dropped their hostile designs, and accompanied the Classical junior to their study.

"Now, what is it?" demanded Tommy Dodd suspiciously. "You fellows have been howling at old Manders like anything. He's a beast, I know, but he's our master, and we don't allow Classical cads to howl at our master."

"We've got to save Putty!" said Jimmy.

"Eh? What's the matter with Putty?"

"He's in Manders' study!"

"With that old girl?" asked Tommy Dodd in wonder.

"Fathead! The old girl is Putty!"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle blinked at Jimmy Silver. The three Tommies wondered for the moment whether Uncle James of Rookwood was wandering in his mind.

"Don't you catch on?" exclaimed Jimmy irritably. "It's one of Putty's stunts! He's Mrs. Manders!"

"Tain't possible!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Ass! It's true!"

"Howly mother av Moses!" howled Tommy Doyle. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies yelled as the truth dawned upon them. They yelled and roared and rocked.

"Oh, what a jape!" gasped Tommy Dodd, wiping the tears from his eyes. "Putty—Putty all the time! The cheeky

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 "as! Mrs. Manders! Ha, ha, ha! Just like a Classical jape, too, landing him like this! You chaps ought really to give up japing. You're no good, you know!"

"Any old thing," said Jimmy Silver. "But you'll stand by me to help him out? It's the sack for him if he's found out!"

"Yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd at once. "But what can we do? Burglar Manders' door?"

"That's what I was thinking. The coast's clear."

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"Suppose Manders comes in and catches us?" he asked.

"I'm ready to chance it," said Jimmy desperately. "We've got to have Putty out somehow. Look here, you fellows cut down and get the door closed, so that Manders can't come in. Look it and lose the key. I'll attend to Putty."

"We'll do it," said Tommy Dodd.

"Good men!"

The three Tommies, still chuckling, went downstairs. Jimmy Silver rummaged in Dodd's tool-chest, and then hurried to the corridor upon which Mr. Manders' study door opened. The corridor was deserted. Certainly Mr. Manders had no suspicion that any junior would venture to "burglar" his study door. He did not suspect that anyone had a motive for doing so!

Jimmy heard the big door close at a distance. He stooped and called softly through the keyhole to Putty Grace.

There was a jump within.

"Hallo! Is that you, Jimmy?"

"Yea. I'm going to burst the lock! I've got a cold chisel here. Get ready to bunk!"

"I'm ready!" said Putty fervently. "Oh, crikey! If I ever get out of this you won't find me japing Manders again!"

Jimmy Silver shoved the chisel between the lock and the door-post, and crashed the hammer on it.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Jimmy smote with all the strength of his arm. The chisel went in and he wrenched at it vigorously; and the lock fairly cracked. Putty, inside, was dragging at the door-handle to help.

Crack!

The door flew open quite suddenly.

Putty flew over backwards.

"Yow-woop!" howled Putty.

Jimmy laughed breathlessly.

"Cut!" he gasped.

There were footsteps at the end of the

passage. The din had brought someone along. Jimmy Silver turned and ran in the opposite direction, and cut up a back staircase. Knowles of the Sixth came stamping along the passage as he vanished—just in time to meet "Mrs. Manders" emerging from the study!

They met face to face! Putty stopped, dismayed for a moment. But he remembered that he was still "Mrs. Manders" to Knowles. He gripped his umbrella and rushed at the prefect!

"Here, keep off!" yelled Knowles. "Oh, my hat! Yaroooh! Help! Yooop!"

Knowles turned and fled as the umbrella swiped. It came down on the back of his head, and Knowles yelled again, and put on a speed that would have done him credit on the cinder-path.

Putty stopped, breathless. He turned and ran up the corridor the way Jimmy Silver had gone.

"This way!" called Jimmy softly.

Putty sprang up the back staircase.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped. "I—I say—they'll be after me! Where now?"

"Tommy Dodd's study!" gasped Jimmy.

"But—"

"Come on, you ass!"

Jimmy grasped Putty's arm and rushed him away. They sprinted into the Fourth Form passage, and met Cuffy of the Modern Fourth, who turned and fled at the sight of Mrs. Manders. A minute more and they were in Tommy Dodd's study, and Jimmy had locked the door.

"Now get those things off!" he gasped.

"Quick, for goodness' sake! Get those rags off! Stuff them in the cupboard! Wash that stuff off your face! There's some water in the kettle! Quick! Quick! Quick!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quick!" yelled Jimmy frantically.

And Putty was quick. He never was a slow youth, but on the present occasion he rivalled the lightning in his celerity.

CHAPTER 2.

The Vanishing Lady!

"O PEN this door!"

Mr. Manders had come back to his house. He found the big door closed, and it did not open to his touch.

He rapped savagely on the door.

"Let me in! Who has locked this door? Open it at once!"

"It's locked, sir!" came Knowles' voice, from within.

"Unlock it at once, then, you idiot!"

"The key's not here," said Knowles sulkily. "Somebody's locked the door and taken away the key!"

"Upon my word! I—I—" Worra failed Mr. Manders.

He whisked away, and whisked round the house to enter by the back door. The three Tommies, on the staircase, looked at one another.

"We've done our best!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "If they're not clear by this time—"

"Let's get up to the study," murmured Cook. "I don't want to meet Manders just now."

"Good idea! Hook it!"

The three juniors scuttled away to their study. But locked doors seemed to be the fashion in Mr. Manders' house that afternoon. Tommy Dodd's study door was locked on the inside.

"What the thump's this?" exclaimed Tommy wrathfully. "I say, who's in there? I'll give you a thick ear—"

"Is that you, Doddy?"

"Jimmy Silver, by gum! You cheeky Classical ass—"

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!"

Jimmy hastily unlocked the door. The three Tommies crowded in, and almost fell down at the sight that met their gaze. They stood transfixed while Jimmy Silver closed and relocked the door.

"He—she—he—" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

Mrs. Manders was in the study! Her bonnet and golden curls were gone, and her feminine attire was half gone. Under it appeared the Etons belonging to Putty of the Fourth! Half-way through his transformation, Putty was a remarkable sight. His face was still that of Mrs. Manders, though now the wig was gone Mrs. Manders looked as if she had had her hair bobbed.

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Stack the blessed rags away somewhere as he gets them off—into the cupboard—into the coal-locker—into anything!"

"Oh, crumbs!" spluttered Tommy Dodd.

"I say, Manders will—"

"Putty's got to be Putty again before

Manders sees him! Lend a hand, and don't jaw!"

The three Moderns played up loyally. It was no time for rags now; the crisis was too awfully serious.

Putty divested himself of his female attire at a great rate, and the articles were jammed out of sight hurriedly by the Modern juniors. He changed Mrs. Manders' shoes for a pair of Tommy Dodd's boots, and donned a collar and tie belonging to Cook. The basin in which the three Tommies were accustomed to washing up their tea-things was filled with hot water, and Putty proceeded to rub and scrub at his face to get the make-up off. Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd began to set the tea-table, and Doyle made the tea, while Cook cut bread-and-butter.

"You fellows came to tea with us, if anybody looks in—catch on?" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, good!"

"I wish I had some dashed soap!" spluttered Putty.

"No time to get soap now! Rub hard. I've got a boot-brush here, if you like—"

"Yah!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "That's old Manders' toot! He's found out that the giddy bird has flown."

Downstairs, Mr. Manders was simply raging. Knowles had informed him that the obnoxious female was out of the locked study, and Mr. Manders had fairly flown to the study to see for himself. The sight of the broken lock made him rave. Fortunately, he did not observe that it had been smashed from the outside.

"I heard an awful row, sir," said Knowles. "I came along, and she was just coming out! Must have smashed it with the poker!"

"The fearful creature!" spluttered Mr. Manders. "But the wretched creature cannot escape—the gates are locked! She cannot climb the wall, and the constable must be here soon. I will pursue her with the utmost severity of the law! She shall go to prison—to penal servitude—to the treadmill! Find the key of the front door at once, Knowles, and see if the constable is coming!"

The key of the house door was found—in a flower-pot—and Knowles opened the door. He could see across to the gates, and there he sighted a portly figure being admitted by old Mack. It was Police-constable Boggs at last!

Mr. Boggs strode across to Manders' House. He was looking breathless, and he was looking angry. Judging by appearances, he had not enjoyed his afternoon's drive, though it had been free, gratis and for nothing.

"The policeman's here, sir!" called out Knowles.

Mr. Manders came whisking up.

"Why did you not come before, constable?" he bawled. "It is hours—hours since I telephoned to you!"

"Which I couldn't 'elp it, sir!" said Mr. Boggs. "Young Master Lovell give me a lift in a trap, as there was a 'urry, and the bloomin' 'orse bolted, sir! 'Arfway to Bunbury we was, when a constable stopped the 'orse for us—and then it nearly got away again, owing to that young idiot. I took good care to drive back myself, sir, young Master Lovell worritin' me all the time to let him drive—"

"Enough—enough!" interrupted Mr. Manders. "As you are here, well and good. I require you to take into custody an impudent and unprincipled female, who has come here calling herself Mrs. Manders—"

"My heye!" said Mr. Boggs. "I didn't know you was married, sir!"

"I am not!" roared Mr. Manders. "This unprincipled female called herself Mrs. Manders without the slightest claim to the title. You are to take her into custody, to be charged with—with violence, and—and assault and battery, and—and blackmail, and—and felonious intentions, and—and—"

"That will do to go on with, sir," said Mr. Boggs. "Where is this here female, sir?"

"In the house, somewhere. I looked her in my study, but she has smashed the door, and escaped."

"Oh, 'cavens!" said Mr. Boggs.

"I will order a general search to be made. You will assist in it, constable. Take her into custody immediately you see her!"

"Yes, sir!"

The search was commenced at once. All the Modern Sixth were called upon by Mr. Manders to join in it. There was plenty of evidence that Mrs. Manders had not yet quitted the house, and Mr. Manders had all the doors locked to cut off the unprincipled female's escape.

Then a dozen Sixth-Formers and Mr. Manders and P.-c. Boggs searched through the house from end to end.

The ground floor was drawn blank, and they ascended to the upper regions. Room by room, study by study, passage by passage, the house was searched. The dormitories were examined. Mr. Manders ever looked under the beds. But there was no sign of the unprincipled female.

There was a sound of cheery voices and a clinking of teacups in Tommy Dodd's study when the search-party approached that apartment. Mr. Manders hurled open the door—it was unlocked now!

Three Moderns and two Classical juniors were seated round the table at tea. They rose respectfully as Mr. Manders entered.

"Have you seen that female?" demanded Mr. Manders.

"We haven't seen any female, sir," said Tommy Dodd.

"That dreadful woman——"

"Isn't she locked in your study, sir?" asked Putty of the Fourth, with an innocent look of inquiry upon his newly-washed face.

"I should not be inquiring for her here if she were!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Don't be a fool, boy!"

"Ahem! Certainly not, sir!"

"Can we help in looking for her, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Certainly! Come, all of you! She must be in the house somewhere!"

"I'll be very glad to help, sir!" said Putty.

Mr. Manders strode out, and the juniors followed, to help in the search. They helped industriously! Putty of the Fourth was the most industrious of all! High and low the hunt went on, but the obnoxious female seemed to have vanished into thin air. It was Putty—industrious and eager Putty—who suggested that the fugitive might have doubled back to Mr. Manders' study; and on that suggestion the search-party proceeded thither.

It was Putty—industrious Putty—who, rooting in the study, dragged over a screen to see if Mrs. Manders was behind it, and landed the screen on Mr. Manders' desk, sending it spinning. It was Putty who whirled the armchair out of the corner, and landed it against Mr. Manders' shins. It was Putty who knocked the telephone over, Putty who bumped the clock off the mantelpiece, and it was Putty who received a sudden, terrific box on the ear from Mr. Manders as a reward for his industry and zeal. And it was Putty who

gave a yell that rang across the quadrangle.

But the search was in vain. Mrs. Manders was not discovered. Police-constable Boggs mooted a theory that she had escaped up a "chimbley." Mr. Manders was utterly puzzled and floored. But it was only too evident that Mrs. Manders was no longer in the house, and was not to be found within the walls of Rookwood, and the search was given up at last in despair, and Police-constable Boggs departed without a prisoner.

And a little later there was a joyous party in the end study on the Classical side. Jimmy Silver & Co. were there, Arthur Edward Lovell was there, full of happy reminiscences of his drive with P.-c. Boggs. The three Tommies were there, and Putty of the Fourth was there—only too thankful to be there safe and sound. Putty of the Fourth had had the narrowest escape in his harebrained career, and, in his relief, he thoroughly enjoyed the great celebration in Jimmy Silver's study. But even Putty did not like to think of what would have happened if Mr. Manders had found out the identity of "Mrs. Manders."

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Manders Takes a Hand!

ROTTEN news!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Poor old Head!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth Form at Rookwood were quite concerned.

The new term had not opened auspiciously at Rookwood.

Mr. Manders was satisfied, but probably no one else in the old school shared his happy state.

The influenza epidemic which had detained the Rookwooders at school through the Christmas vacation was happily over. The Rookwooders had stood that with fortitude, especially the Rookwooders who hadn't been down with the flu.

Now that it was over, and the new term had started, Rookwood had expected to proceed upon the former even tenor of its way. Instead of which, there was more trouble.

Putty of the Fourth remarked that it

would have been more considerate of the Head to have had his influenza at the same time as the other fellows. Then he could have come back for the new term.

Unluckily the Head was beginning where the others left off, so to speak; and he wasn't coming back. It might be a week, or it might be months before Dr. Chisholm was seen at Rookwood again. In the meantime, Mr. Manders, as senior master, took the head of affairs.

Any other master would have been preferred. Jimmy Silver & Co., talking it over, agreed upon that.

"There's old Greely, the master of the Fifth," said Jimmy. "Pompous old bloater, of course; but we could have stood him. He's quite tame so long as you don't pull his leg."

"The Shell master isn't bad," said Lovell. "Of course, Mooney is a bit of an ass! But we could stand Mooney."

"Bohun of the Third is all right," said Raby. "He plays footer, for one thing. We could have stood Mr. Bohun."

"Even Wiggins!" said Newcome. "It would be a bit infra dig to have the Second Form master for Head; but we could have stood Wiggins at a pinch."

"Of course, our own Form-master ought to have been the man," said Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Dalton would have been IT!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. cordially.

"He's the youngest master," continued Jimmy. "Manders is the oldest. It goes by seniority. In a properly-constituted school it would go by juniority."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

"Dicky Dalton would play the game," said Jimmy. "Dalton's a good sort, and a sportsman. Manders is a beast!"

"The last word in beasts!" agreed Lovell.

"The masters don't like him, either. I've heard that he's been interfering with Mr. Greely in the Fifth: I saw Greely stalking along the corridor as red as a turkey-cock. Hansom of the Fifth said there was a row."

"He'd better not interfere with Dicky Dalton!" said Lovell warmly. "I'll back Dicky up against the old crow."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ahem!"

The Fistical Four were holding that little discussion outside the Form-room door a few days after the beginning of term. The cough that reached their ears warned them that their Form-master was coming along. The discussion ceased at once, and Jimmy

Silver & Co. glanced rather apprehensively at Mr. Dalton as he passed into the Form-room. Mr. Richard Dalton gave them a rather severe glance, but he went in without a word. Dicky Dalton could always be relied upon to take no notice of remarks that were not meant for his ears.

The Fourth Form—Modern and Classical—took their places in the Form-room. It was English History next; and on that subject the Moderns studied with the Classics. After English History, the Modern juniors had to clear off for German on the Modern side, while the Classics devoted their attention to Latin Syntax.

English History was well under way, when the Form-room door opened, and Mr. Roger Manders walked in.

Mr. Dalton saluted him politely, supposing that the Modern master had dropped in to speak about some casual matter.

He was mistaken in that.

Sometimes the Head of Rookwood dropped into a class-room and listened for a time to the lesson, and "chipped in" occasionally with a few words. By that means the Head kept both masters and boys well up to the mark. But the Head had tact and grace, and he could always drop in without giving offence, especially as his high position entitled him to do so. Mr. Manders, being temporarily in the position of the Head, was adopting Mr. Chisholm's manners and customs, without the prestige of his high authority, and, indeed, without excuse at all, for the other masters had nothing whatever to learn from Roger Manders.

"Proceed, proceed!" said Mr. Manders, with a slight wave of the hand, as if encouraging the young master who was in charge of the Fourth. "I am not going to interrupt—at present. I will take a seat."

Mr. Dalton looked at him.

"Do you wish to be present during the lesson, Mr. Manders?" he asked.

"Exactly."

"Surely you will find it rather tiresome?" said Mr. Dalton politely.

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Dalton."

The Fourth Form master coughed.

"The fact is," continued Mr. Manders, "I am not wholly satisfied with this Form, Mr. Dalton."

"Indeed!"

"I fear that there is considerable slackness among some of the boys, and I intend to satisfy myself upon that point."

Mr. Dalton's look at the Modern master became fixed.

"Dr. Chisholm honours me with his confidence, Mr. Manders," he said. "His belief is that I am quite capable of conducting my Form unaided."

The Fourth-Formers exchanged glances of satisfaction. Mr. Manders was "butting in," but they hoped, and believed, that Dicky Dalton would give as good as he got.

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Manders calmly. "But it is my duty to exercise some supervision, and that is my intention."

"With the single exception of the Head, sir, a Form-master is supreme in his own Form-room."

"Quite so. And as I am now in the place of the Head, I intend to carry out the Head's duties in his absence, Mr. Dalton."

Mr. Manders spoke in a tone of finality, and plumped himself down on a chair. The Fourth Form master looked at him grimly for some moments, and seemed to reflect. Then he turned away quietly, without answering, and proceeded with the lesson. It was his desire to avoid an unseemly altercation in the presence of the boys.

Mr. Manders looked on and listened, his sharp eyes scanning the juniors only too evidently in the hope of finding fault.

Unluckily, there was plenty of fault to be found. Some of the Fourth were well up in their subject, some weren't. Mr. Manders was not silent for more than five minutes. He chipped in with a remark, and then with another remark, and then with a third, all of which Mr. Dalton bore with exemplary patience. But the Fourth Form master turned to him at last.

"Really, Mr. Manders, I must remind you that I am conducting this lesson!" he said tartly.

"Not quite to my satisfaction, Mr. Dalton."

"So long as I satisfy the Head I am content."

"You will kindly regard me as head-master so long as I occupy the Head's position."

Mr. Dalton drew a deep breath.

"I cannot undertake to instruct my class

with another person interfering," he said, coming out quite into the open at last. "If you wish to conduct the lesson yourself, Mr. Manders, kindly do so."

Mr. Manders rose.

"The fact is, I think I had better do so," he said. "Some of these boys are shockingly backward—Muffin especially. Give me your book, Mr. Dalton. Now, you may listen to me for a time."

Mr. Dalton stood silent. The Modern master's intervention was in bad taste; yet the young man could not quite see how it was to be dealt with. For undoubtedly Mr. Manders was, for the present, in the position of headmaster; the Head's mantle had fallen upon him temporarily, so to speak. Tact and good taste would have made Mr. Manders extremely delicate in handling his new powers. But Roger Manders had never been famous for tact or good taste.

"Muffin!" he rapped out.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!" mumbled Muffin, preparing for the worst.

Mr. Manders had obviously selected Muffin, as the dunce of the class, in order to make out a case, as it were.

"I shall ask you a few questions, Muffin," said Mr. Manders.

"Thank you, sir!" mumbled Tubby.

"Kindly tell me the date of the Spanish Armada."

Tubby Muffin looked at Jimmy Silver helplessly. Tubby never was strong on dates—excepting the kind that were bought in boxes at the tuckshop. Tubby could have dealt with any number of dates of that kind. But historical dates worried him.

"Silver, you will not speak to Muffin!"

"Oh! Yes! No, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

"Answer me, Muffin!"

Tubby blinked helplessly. Then suddenly he yelped out:

"1588, sir!"

Mr. Manders ought to have looked pleased. As a matter of absolute fact, he looked disappointed. Every fellow in the Fourth could see that he had hoped to catch Muffin "out."

"Very good!" said Mr. Manders, whose expression really indicated that it was very bad. "I will try you on a few more dates, Muffin!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Muffin cheerfully.

Muffin's despondency, when called on by Mr. Manders, had left him. He looked quite merry and bright.

The reason was obvious to some of the Fourth, who grinned. Valentine Mornington was seated in the desk before Muffin. Morny had quietly jotted the required date on a piece of paper, and held it behind him—Morny was great on dates. Tubby Muffin, with a full view of the paper behind Morny's back, was therefore unusually well informed; while Mr. Manders, standing well in front of the class, was quite ignorant of what was going on. Mr. Dalton may have observed it, but it was no business of his to teach his instructor how to conduct a history class.

Mr. Manders paused a moment or two; in actual fact, he was not strong on dates himself. But he had the advantage of a book in his hand.

"The date of the English Revolution, Muffin?"

Tubby Muffin reflected—or appeared to reflect. He was gaining time while Morny scribbled a date on his paper, under his desk, and put his hand behind him again.

"1688, sir."

"Ah! Hem! Very good! Your memory seems to have improved, Muffin. You did not answer Mr. Dalton so readily. Now, give me the date of the—the Battle of Waterloo."

"1815, sir."

"Hem! The exact date, please!"

A slight pause.

"June 18th, sir."

"Very good! Apparently you can remember, Muffin, when you are dealing with a master who is not to be trifled with."

Mr. Dalton bit his lip.

"We will try your knowledge a little further, Muffin. Can you give me the year of the Reform Bill?"

"1832, sir."

"What king succeeded Richard the Third upon the throne?"

"Henry the Seventh, sir."

"Which king preceded Richard the Third?"

"Edward the Fourth, sir."

There was titter in the class, every fellow now being aware of the source of Tubby's remarkable stock of information. Mr. Manders proceeded:

"One more question, Muffin—the date of the Conquest?"
 Tubby Muffin's answer was astounding.
 "9901, sir."

CHAPTER 10.

Trouble in the Form-room!

NINE thousand, nine hundred and one!

That was Tubby Muffin's amazing answer, made with as much confidence as his previous answers.

Mr. Manders jumped. There was a giggle in the class.

If Tubby had said 1060, or 1070, or even 1266, it would have been comprehensible. But 9901 was too much—the present year of grace being only 1929. Tubby had post-dated the Norman Conquest much too extensively.

"What!" gasped Mr. Manders. "What did you say, Muffin?"

"Nine thousand, nine hundred and one, sir!"

"Is the boy mad?"

Tubby blinked in surprise. He had done well, so far, and he did not see what was wrong now. That 9901 had not yet arrived, and was not likely to arrive in Reginald Muffin's lifetime, he did not take into account. Dates, to Muffin, were horrid things that he had to remember somehow; he never connected them in his fat mind with realities. He did not see why 9901 would not do.

Probably it had never occurred to Muffin that 1066 was a real period, when things had actually happened; to him it was a "date." And one date was as good as another to Muffin, so long as he escaped "lines" or detention.

Mr. Manders glanced at Mr. Dalton. That gentleman shrugged his shoulders, leaving the Modern master to it. He had been superseded, and he declined to be drawn in. As a matter of fact, he could see perfectly what was going on; and was aware that Mornington, having scribbled "1066" on his fragment of paper and held it behind him, had inadvertently held it upside-down, so that the hapless Muffin read it as 9901!

"Is the boy out of his senses?" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "Or is this sheer im-

pertinence? Muffin, repeat your statement!"

"9901, sir!" stammered Muffin, less confidently than before.

"Are you aware, Muffin, that we are at present only in the twentieth century?" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Eh? Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And you tell me that the Conquest took place in the hundredth century!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

Tubby Muffin jumped.

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir!"

"What is 9901, then, you crass boy?"

"Eh? It's a date, sir!" stuttered Tubby.

"Upon my word!" Mr. Manders, in his wrath and excitement, strode towards the class to come to close quarters with Tubby. He had picked up Mr. Dalton's cane.

"Boy——"

"Ten sixty-six, sir!" suddenly yelled Tubby.

Mornington had realised what must have happened, and he had reversed his indicator. 9901 became 1066 just in time, and Tubby Muffin yelled it out in a great hurry.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Manders. "You were quite aware of the real date all the time, then?"

"Not all the time, sir—I've only just—I—I mean—I—I——" babbled Tubby helplessly.

"Your former answer was intended for impertinence, Muffin!"

"Oh, no, sir!" groaned Tubby. "I—I wouldn't be impertinent to you, sir. I—I'd rather be impertinent to a wild tiger in the jungle, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Manders.

Morny had slipped the paper on his form as Mr. Manders came near, and he sat on it to conceal it. Unfortunately a corner showed, and Mr. Manders' keen eyes spotted it.

"Give me that paper, Mornington!"

"What paper, sir?"

"The paper you are trying to conceal!" hooted Mr. Manders. "I think I can divine what has been happening—under my eyes. That paper—at once!"

Mornington, with a grimace, handed over the paper. Mr. Manders looked at the "1066" scribbled on it, and smiled bitterly.

"So that is how work is done in this Form-room!" he said caustically. "I am

scarcely surprised at this, Mr. Dalton. It is evidently high time that someone supervised work in this room!"

"Such a trick has never been played on me, Mr. Manders," said the Fourth Form master coldly.

"We shouldn't think of playing tricks on our own Form-master, sir," said Mornington, with cheerful coolness.

"Silence, Mornington! You will take a hundred lines, and you will do the same, Muffin!" Mr. Manders returned to his place before the class. "And now, Mornington, as you seem so well informed that you give information to others by trickery, we will test your knowledge."

Valentine Mornington had a dogged look. He was in nowise prepared to knuckle under to the interfering Modern master. Jimmy Silver, as he caught the expression on Morny's face, guessed that trouble was coming.

"I will ask you a few questions, Mornington. You are well up in dates, apparently," said Mr. Manders bitterly. "What is the date of the Battle of Sedgemoor, and who was in command on either side?"

"Nineteen-ninety, sir!" said Mornington coolly. "The French were commanded by General Foch, and the Abyssinians by Lord Roberts."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fourth, in great delight.

And even Mr. Dalton smiled at that answer. Mr. Manders seemed transfixed.

"Are you not aware that the Battle of Sedgemoor was during Monmouth's rebellion in England, Mornington?" he thundered.

"Was it really, sir? Wasn't it during Napoleon's campaign in Russia?" asked Morny innocently.

"This is impertinence, Mornington!"

"Oh, sir!"

"I will give you one more chance," said Mr. Manders, snapping his teeth. "You are probably aware that Queen Mary came after Edward VI. Who came after Queen Mary?"

"Philip of Spain, sir."

"What?"

"Isn't that right, sir?"

"You must be perfectly aware that Philip of Spain was never King of England, Mornington."

"You didn't ask me that, sir! You asked me who came after Queen Mary. Philip of Spain must have come after her, because she married him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Manders looked at the cheerful Morny like a basilisk. Evidently Morny was putting his own construction on the words "came after."

"Are you venturing to jest with me, Mornington?" gasped Mr. Manders at last.

"Jest so, sir!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

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

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "The—the wretched boy is actually venturing to—to—to make puns—frivolous and idiotic puns—in the course of a lesson! Is this how the class is conducted in this Form-room, Mr. Dalton?"

"Net by me, sir," said Mr. Dalton. "Doubtless you have your own methods. They are not mine."

"Mornington, stand out here!"

"What for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you with the utmost severity!"

"You're not, sir!"

"What?" spluttered Mr. Manders, scarcely crediting that he had heard aright. "What did you say? Repeat your words, Mornington."

"You're not, sir!" repeated Mornington calmly.

"Do you venture to disobey me, Mornington?"

"Just a few!" answered Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So this is the state of discipline in this class, Mr. Dalton!" thundered the Modern master. "This is a pretty state of affairs! But I will alter it, sir. I will see an improvement. Mornington, once more I command you to stand forth!"

"Who's to come first and second and third, then, sir?"

"What! What do you mean?"

"I mean, if I stand fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently it was another frivolous and idiotic pun, quite out of place in a Form-room in lesson-time.

Mr. Manders did not answer Morny's question. He made a furious stride at the dandy of the Fourth, grasped him by the

collar, and whirled him out before the class.

"Let go, confound you!" roared Mornington.

Whack, whack, whack!

The cane came down on Mornington's shoulders with terrific vim. Then there was a sudden wild howl from Mr. Manders as the infuriated Mornington hacked his shin.

The cane dropped to the floor, and Mr. Manders staggered back in anguish. He hopped on one leg, clasping the other with both hands.

The sight was too much for the Fourth. The Form-room fairly rocked with laughter.

"Oh—ah—ow! Groogh—wow!" spluttered Mr. Manders. "Upon my word, I—I have been assaulted, and—and battered! Oh—ow! The boy shall be expelled for this! Oh, dear! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Dalton, take that cane and administer a sound thrashing to that wretched, ruffianly boy!"

"I decline to do so, sir!"

"You support him in his insolence and violence!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "Very well, Mr. Dalton—very well—very well, indeed! I shall not overlook this, sir! I—I will deal with that—that young hooligan later! Ow!"

Mr. Manders was evidently not then in a state to deal with anything but his damaged shin. He limped out of the Form-room, gasping—doubtless in search of embrocation. He needed it.

"Silence!" said Mr. Dalton quietly, and the roar of laughter died away quite suddenly. "Mornington, go to your place. We will now—ahem!—proceed."

And they proceeded!

CHAPTER 11.

War!

"GOOD old Morny!"

That was the verdict of all the Fourth when Mr. Dalton's class was dismissed.

Even Tommy Dodd & Co., who as Moderns were more inclined to back up Mr. Manders, had nothing to say for him. The "cheek" of the Modern master in butting into Mr. Dalton's Form-room roused the indignation of all the Fourth. Even

slackers like Townsend and Topham joined in the general indignation.

"If there's any more of it," Jimmy Silver declared, "there will be trouble! We can't stand too much Manders!"

"There will be more of it!" said Mornington. "The old donkey is outside himself with his giddy new authority. He will be meddlin' with everybody until the Head comes back."

"Look out for squalls, Morny!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "As temporary Head, old Manders has the giddy power of the birch, you know. And you must have raised a bit of a lump on his shin."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"He won't flog me!" he answered.

"All very well to talk!" remarked Cyril Peel. "But Manders is boss now, and he'll flog you as sure as a gun."

Wilkinson of the Modern Third came into the Common-room, where the juniors were talking, and looked round.

"Mornington here?" he called out.

"Adsum!" said Morny.

"Mr. Manders wants you."

"Really?" drawled Mornington. "And what does he want me for? Is it an invitation to tea?"

The fag chortled.

"He's got the Head's birch on his study table," he answered. "Looks to me like a walloping."

"Give my kindest regards to Mr. Manders," said Mornington politely, "and mention that he can go and eat coke."

Wilkinson stared.

"If you want a message like that taken to Manders, you can jolly well take it yourself," he said. "I'm not going to ask for a record licking. Shall I say you won't come?"

"Say anything you like, my dear child, but certainly I won't come!"

Wilkinson departed whistling. There were grave faces now in the junior Common-room on the Classical side. Nobody knew exactly to what limits Mr. Manders' new powers extended. But it was to be presumed that, in the Head's place, he had the Head's authority to use the birch. Morny's defiance of his command was a rather serious matter.

Jimmy Silver looked round.

"The Form is standing by Mornington in this!" he said quietly. "It's a case of shoulder to shoulder."

"Yes, rather!" said Arthur Edward Lovell

emphatically. "There's bound to be a row sooner or later—and it may as well come soon as late. We've had trouble with Manders before, and he didn't get the best of it."

"Manders can't take that answer lying down," said Kit Erroll. "Wilkinson will bring another message, I expect—"

"Let him—a lorry-load if he likes," said Mornington indifferently.

The Fourth-Formers crowded out to the big doorway, anxious to see whether Wilkinson of the Third would return. In ten minutes or so the fag came through the mist in the quadrangle. He had a note in his hand.

"For me?" asked Morny, with a grin.

"No—for your Form-master."

"Oh! Take it, then."

The fag proceeded to Mr. Dalton's study. A dozen Fourth-Formers followed him, and they had an eye—or rather twenty-four eyes—on the study as the door stood ajar.

"Note from Mr. Manders, sir," said Wilkinson.

Mr. Dalton took the note, opened it, and read it quietly. The juniors in the passage would have given a good deal to see that missive.

It was a brief one. It ran:

"Kindly conduct Mornington of the IVth Form to my study. You are authorised to use force if necessary. R. MANDERS."

Mr. Dalton pursed his lips, and knitted his brows over that note. The young Form-master, naturally, did not approve of hacking a master's shins. But he disapproved also of Mr. Manders' interference with his class. He had no intention whatever of backing up the Modern master in his new assumption of lofty authority. After a few minutes' reflection he threw the note into the fire.

"You will tell Mr. Manders that I am sorry I cannot do as he requests, Wilkinson."

"Yes, sir."

Wilkinson marched out, and all the juniors in the passage grinned with satisfaction. Dicky Dalton was evidently standing up for his rights against the new tyrant!

"What next?" murmured Mornington.

The "next" was the appearance of Mr. Roger Manders himself with a frowning

brow, striding across the quadrangle. The Classical juniors hastily backed out of the doorway, and returned to the Common-room. They had a glimpse of Mr. Manders striding into the Fourth Form-master's study from a distance.

"Going to beard the giddy lion in his den!" murmured Lovell.

And some of the juniors ventured back along the passage as soon as Mr. Manders was in Richard Dalton's study. They could hear the loud, strident tones of the irritated Modern master, fairly booming in his wrath.

"What does this mean, Mr. Dalton? Am I to understand that you refuse me your support, which you are in duty bound to render?"

"I cannot consent to your interference between my boys and myself, Mr. Manders," answered the quieter voice of Richard Dalton. "If it continues, I shall have no alternative but to resign my duties here at least until the Head returns."

"Resign!" sneered Mr. Manders. "If you do not render me the support I have a right to expect, it will not be a question of resignation—I shall dismiss you!"

"I shall refuse to take my dismissal from you, Mr. Manders. I shall, however, resign my functions here until the Head returns, or his wishes are known."

"Very good, Mr. Dalton!" snapped the Modern master. "I shall make arrangements for taking the Fourth Form. I intend to reduce that Form to a proper state of discipline. I shall commence by flogging Mornington. I forbid you to enter the Fourth Form-room again, or to assume any authority over the boys!"

"I believe your position here entitles you to act so, if you choose, and I shall therefore accept your decision, so far," said Mr. Dalton. "Beyond that I shall not go."

Mr. Manders stamped out of the study and closed the door after him with a bang. There was a scuttling of feet in the corridor as the Classical juniors retreated to the Common-room.

"He's coming here!" squeaked Tubby Muffin, in great excitement, peering out of the Common-room doorway.

"Let him come!" said Mornington recklessly. "We can handle him!"

"Handle him!" said Oswald. "A—a master! Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Better keep him out!" he said.

He ran to the door.

Slam!

Mr. Manders jumped back. Then he jumped forward again as the key turned in the lock.

"Open this door at once!" he thundered. "Upon my word! I—I—" Mr. Manders spluttered. But the big oak door was fast, with a crowd of breathlessly excited juniors behind it, and for the present Roger Manders was baffled.

Most of the juniors were relieved when they heard his footsteps die away in the distance. Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"We've done it now!" he remarked.

And there was no doubt on that point. The Classical Fourth certainly had "done it," and it only remained to be seen what would come of it!

CHAPTER 12.

Jimmy Silver's Answer!

"UNTIL further notice, the Fourth Form, Classical Division, are detained for all holidays!"

"R. MANDERS."

Jimmy Silver & Co., of the Rookwood Fourth—Classical Division—read that notice on the board, and read it again, and re-read it, and re-re-read it.

Homer, that ancient and esteemed poet, commences his great epic with a description of the wrath of Achilles and its direful results. Without aspiring to rival Homer, we must begin with a reference to the wrath of Jimmy Silver & Co., of the Rookwood Fourth. For the celebrated wrath of Achilles, terrific as it no doubt was, was but a passing breeze to the wrath of Jimmy Silver.

"Detained for all holidays—until further notice!" said Jimmy Silver, almost dazedly. "Then what about the footer?"

Apparently R. Manders had completely overlooked the question of football. Jimmy gazed at the notice, in Mr. Manders' crabbed handwriting, as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"The thumping jackanapes!" said Jimmy. "What about the footer? We're playing Bagshot this afternoon! Has the burbling jabberwock never heard of footer?"

"Of all the cheek!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Sheer neck!" said Raby

"The giddy limit!" remarked Newcome. Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

The Fourth Form had endured much from Mr. Manders during the brief period in which he had had control of Rookwood. But there was a limit—and this, certainly, was beyond the limit.

"Tear it down!" suggested Mornington.

"Good egg!" agreed Lovell.

"Wait a bit," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, we're not standing it! But wait a bit! We'll go and speak to Mr. Dalton about this. He's our Form-master, and bound to stand up for us."

"Dickie will see us through," said Lovell, with a nod. "Let's go and put it to Dickie."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. looked for Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth. It was Saturday morning, and Saturday was a half-holiday at Rookwood. That afternoon Bagshot were coming over to play Rookwood juniors—a fixture which did not agree in the least with the surprising notice posted on the board by R. Manders.

Mr. Dalton was found in the quadrangle, walking under the old beeches, with a thoughtful and rather troubled expression on his handsome face. He ceased his pacing as six or seven Fourth-Formers came up with excited faces.

"What is it, my boys?" he asked kindly.

"That old goat—" burst out Lovell.

"Shurrup!" murmured Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell shut up reluctantly. Mr. Dalton did not appear to have heard his words. He fixed his eyes inquiringly on Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth.

"There's a notice on the board, sir—" began Jimmy.

"I have seen it," said Mr. Dalton.

"Well, sir, we've got a match on this very afternoon," said Jimmy. "Are we going to be detained by a Modern master—who really has nothing to do with our side?"

Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"I am afraid that I cannot interfere, Silver," he said.

"But as our Form-master, sir—" burst out Lovell.

"For the present, Lovell, I am not your Form-master," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "Until the Head returns, Mr. Manders is in control, and as I have found it impossible to work with Mr. Manders, I have

resigned. The matter will be settled when Dr. Chisholm returns. Until which time I have no choice but to leave Rookwood."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver in dismay.

"I am sorry—very sorry indeed!" said Mr. Dalton. "But I am quite powerless in the matter. But I beg you to remember that the Head left Mr. Manders in charge, and that it is your duty to show Mr. Manders all the respect you can. Doubtless he has some reason for inflicting this punishment—"

"We locked him out of the Common-room last evening, sir, when he came after Mornington."

Mr. Dalton smiled slightly.

"Probably Mr. Manders was very much annoyed," he said. "I am afraid that there is nothing to be done—"

"He had no right to cane Mornington, sir. He's not a Classical master. You are our Form-master."

"For the present, no, Silver."

"But we've got to play our match this afternoon, sir. What do you advise us to do?" asked Jimmy.

"I can only advise you to remember that Mr. Manders was left in charge by the Head, and to submit with as much patience as you can," said Mr. Dalton.

The juniors looked at one another.

That was really the only advice that it was possible for Richard Dalton to give them. But it was not advice that the Classical Fourth were likely to follow.

"Very well, sir," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Thank you for your advice, sir."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. walked back to the School House.

There was a fixed and grim expression on Jimmy Silver's face. His comrades could see that "Uncle James of Rookwood" had made up his mind.

Jimmy went first to his study, and he returned from the end study with a bottle of red ink and a camel-hair brush.

The Classical juniors gathered round him in a breathless crowd, as he approached the notice-board.

Whatever it was that Jimmy Silver had decided upon, his comrades were ready to back him up.

Jimmy dipped the brush in the ink, and commenced operations on Mr. Manders' notice. Slowly and carefully he painted in a large capital R.

"What the thump does that mean?" asked Lovell.

"Wait an' see!" grinned Mornington.

Jimmy did not speak; he went on painting. A capital A followed the R. Then came T, and the juniors guessed. There was a general chortle as Jimmy added the S.

Across Mr. Manders' notice, in large capital letters in red ink, sprawled the expressive word "RATS."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Good!"

"Rats!" chuckled Oswald. "Ripping! That will show the dear man what we think of him!"

"La, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away. Jimmy's answer was left to greet the surprised eyes of Mr. Roger Manders when he came along.

CHAPTER 11.

More Manders!

MR. MANDERS walked into the School House with his rapid, jerky step, and with a grim smile upon his hard face.

Classes were proceeding, and there was no one in the corridors or the hall. In the Fourth Form room the Classical Fourth were under the charge of Bulkeley of the Sixth. Mr. Dalton had just left—a trap had taken him away as far as Coombe. At Coombe he intended to remain until Dr. Chisholm returned to Rookwood, when the matter would be placed before the Head for decision.

Mr. Manders was glad to see him go. He hoped that the fall of Richard Dalton would act as a lesson to the other masters—most of whom were extremely annoyed and exasperated by Roger Manders' fussy interference in their spheres.

As for the Classical Fourth, Mr. Manders felt that he had dealt very effectually with them.

Detention for all holidays was a heavy punishment, and Mr. Manders charitably hoped that it would bring them to their senses. As a matter of fact, he had not overlooked considerations of football. He reckoned upon the compulsory cancellation of football fixtures as an additional method for bringing the juniors to their senses.

He paused before the notice-board, possibly to admire his handiwork stuck thereon.

Then he jumped.

Jimmy Silver had been surprised and enraged by Mr. Manders' notice on the board. In his turn, Mr. Manders was surprised and enraged by Jimmy's addition to his notice. In capital letters, in red ink, Jimmy Silver's answer stared him in the face.

"Rats!"

Mr. Manders fairly gasped.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated.

He turned his steps in the direction of the Fourth Form room. All was quiet and orderly there, as he looked in. Bulkeley of the Sixth was in charge; and excited as the Classical Fourth were, they were very meek and mild with Bulkeley. The captain of Rookwood was popular, and nobody had any desire to give him trouble. They more than suspected "old Bulkeley," indeed, of sympathising with their resistance to interference from the Modern side.

There was a catching of breath among the Classical juniors as Mr. Manders' lean and angry face was seen at the door.

The Modern master strode in.

Bulkeley glanced round, and compressed his lips. He had undertaken control of the Fourth at Mr. Manders' request. But he had no intention of being interfered with in his duties, any more than the Form-master before him.

"One moment, Bulkeley!" rapped out Mr. Manders. He picked up the cane from Mr. Dalton's desk.

Bulkeley looked at him rather grimly.

"Excuse me, sir," he said quietly but firmly. "You have asked me to take charge of this class. I understood that the class was to be left to me."

"Kindly do not be impertinent, Bulkeley!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"I am quite ready to retire, sir, if it is your wish!" said the prefect calmly. "But if—"

"You will remain where you are."

"Not unless I can act without interference, sir."

Mr. Manders breathed hard.

"I am here to punish some one of these juniors for an act of insolence and defiance," he said.

"Then I will leave the class in your hands, sir."

"Bulkeley!" shouted Mr. Manders, as the captain of Rookwood walked to the door.

Bulkeley did not answer, or turn his head. He walked out of the Form-room.

Mr. Manders snapped his teeth.

"Good old Bulkeley!" murmured Lovell. Bulkeley's retirement left Mr. Manders rather in a difficulty. He could not take charge of the Form himself, as he was wanted on the Modern side, to take charge of the Modern Fourth. His peculiar methods were beginning to give him trouble.

He fixed gleaming eyes on the silent juniors.

"Some member of this Form has had the audacity to scribble an insolent word upon my notice in the hall!" he said.

Silence.

"I command the—the delinquents to stand forward!" said Mr. Manders, swishing Mr. Dalton's cane.

Nobody stood forward.

"You hear me?" thundered Mr. Manders. Undoubtedly the juniors heard him. They looked at him without answering.

"I think you are probably the guilty party, Silver."

Jimmy did not speak.

"At all events, I hold you responsible as head boy of this Form," said Mr. Manders.

No answer.

"Unless you name the culprit immediately, Silver, I shall take it for granted that you are he, and shall punish you accordingly."

Dead silence.

"Stand out here, Silver."

Jimmy did not move. He was breathing hard, but his mind was made up. He was not going to be caned by a Modern master.

There was a long pause.

Mr. Manders was rather at a loss. He observed that Jimmy's hand, under his desk, was grasping a heavy ruler. It dawned upon Mr. Manders that that ruler would be opposed to his cane, if he began the attack. Mr. Manders had not come there for a single-stick match. Arthur Edward Lovell's fingers had closed almost convulsively upon an inkpot. Mr. Manders made one stride towards the class, and then halted.

"Silver! You heard my command!"

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy.

"You refuse to obey it?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well," said Mr. Manders, between his teeth. "You will be dealt with, Silver! I will enforce discipline in this unruly class, or I will know the reason why. You will come to my study this evening at six o'clock, Silver, and you will apologise for your insolence, and submit to an exemplary flogging. Otherwise, I shall send you to your home in charge of a prefect, and you will not be allowed to return to Rookwood. I trust that this example will have a salutary effect on the class. That is all."

And Mr. Manders whisked out of the Form-room.

A few minutes later Knowles of the Sixth arrived to take charge of the Fourth. Knowles was a Modern prefect; and the Classical Fourth were quite prepared to throw him out of the Form-room if he gave them trouble. But Knowles saw the signs of danger, and he was very circumspect. The morning passed off quietly, though there was thunder in the air.

CHAPTER 14.

Football!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. came out of the Form-room when lessons were over, and there was a rather excited meeting in the passage. Jimmy was quite cool and calm, and seemed to be quite indifferent to Mr. Manders' dire sentence. He had expected trouble, and he was quite prepared for it.

"Poor old Jimmy!" said Tubby Muffin sympathetically. "Flogging for you, old chap! Shall I get you some exercise books to stuff in your bags?"

"Fathead!" was Jimmy reply.

"You won't go?" asked Mornington.

"Of course not!"

There was a chuckle from Peele of the Fourth.

"Manders meant what he said," Peele remarked. "What'll your people say if you're sent home in charge of a prefect, Silver?"

"I shall not be sent home," said Jimmy coolly. "Manders has bitten off more than he can chew, and he will find it out sooner

or later. I shall not go to his study, I shall not be flogged, and I shall not be sent home. It's the Classical Fourth against Manders, and we're standing together."

"Hear, hear!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, draw it mild, you know!" said Townsend. "I don't want to be expelled, Silver! You can leave me out!"

"And me!" said Peele.

"Not a chap is going to be left out," answered Jimmy Silver coolly.

"You pair of rotten funks!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Do you want to kow-tow to a dashed Modern?"

"I'm not looking for the sack," said Peele, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"No fear," said Townsend.

Arthur Edward Lovell did not waste further words on them. He suddenly grasped Peele with one powerful hand, and Townsend with the other. Their heads came together with a resounding concussion.

Crack!

"Ow!" roared Towny.

"Yooop!" shrieked Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four walked on, leaving Towny and Cyril Peele rubbing their heads, and breathing vengeance.

There was no doubt that the greater part of the Classical Fourth were fervently backing up their captain, and the slackers did not count. Jimmy Silver, in fact, gave little thought to Mr. Manders and his threats. He was thinking of the afternoon's match.

The detention pronounced on the whole form by Mr. Manders would have stopped the match, of course, if regarded. The Classical footballers had no intention whatever of regarding it. After dinner Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Fourth came over to interview Jimmy Silver on the subject. They were looking very concerned.

"No need to scratch the match, Silver," Tommy Dodd remarked. "We can't stop Bagshot coming over as late as this."

"No fear!" assented Jimmy.

"Only Classics are detained," continued Tommy Dodd. "But we can make up a Modern team to meet Bagshot."

"A jolly good team," said Tommy Cook.

"Aisy!" remarked Tommy Doyle.

The three Tommies of the Modern Fourth had evidently thought matters out to their own satisfaction. Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Good idea—if we were looking for a licking," he said agreeably. "But we're not! The usual clever will play."

"But you're detained," said Tommy Dodd, with a stare.

"Not by a Classical master," said Jimmy. "We don't take any notice of Modern masters on this side."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Four Moderns will be playing," said Jimmy. "You three, and Towle. There will be seven Classics—little me, Lovell, Raby, Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, and Rawson. You can see the list on the board."

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"There'll be trouble with Manders!" he said.

"We'll try and survive it."

"But—but you can't do it, you know—"

"My dear chap, the match will be played as arranged. See that your men are ready at two-thirty."

"Manders will come down like a giddy wolf on the fold," said Tommy Cook.

Jimmy Silver's jaw set firmly.

"Let him!" he said. "Anybody interrupting the football match will be stopped—sharp!"

"Phew!"

"The fact is, we are taking no notice of Manders," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "He can keep his Mandering to his own side of Rookwood. Tell him for me to go and eat coke."

"I'm likely to!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

At two o'clock Monsieur Monceau, the French master, was in search of Jimmy Silver. He found him in the quad with his comrades.

"Mistair Manders give me detention class for zis afternoon, Silvair," said Monsieur Monceau. "Zo Classical Fourt go into ze Form room now."

Jimmy shook his head.

"We're going to give you a rest this afternoon, Mossoo!" he answered.

The French gentleman looked puzzled.

"But I take ze detention class," he said.

"There won't be any detention class," answered Lovell.

"But Mistair Manders say—"

"Manders is offside," explained Mornington.

Monsieur Monceau looked more puzzled than ever.

"Offside?" he repeated. "Vat is zat? I do not know him."

"Morny means that Manders is chirping out of his hat!" said Lovell.

"Manders he chirp!" exclaimed the astonished Mossoo. "Oh, zis English language! Is it not ze bird he chirp? Maister Man—"

"Mais, je ne comprends pas."

"Oh, yes—a merry old bird," said Lovell. "A bird with a beak, Mossoo. But we're going to clip his feathers."

"Mais, je ne comprend pas."

"You'll comprong some time," said Lovell. "Anyhow, we're not going into the Form-room, and you can tell Manders so, with our kind regards."

Monsieur Monceau drifted away in a state of great puzzlement. He drifted into the Form-room, where he found a very small detention class. Lattrey and Peele and Gower, Townsend and Topham, and Tubby Muffin had turned up—not caring to take the risk of open defiance of Mr. Manders. But the rest of the Fourth headed for the football ground. Monsieur Monceau debated in his mind whether he ought to report the absentees to Mr. Manders; but he decided to let the temporary headmaster of Rookwood find out the state of affairs for himself.

On the football ground Jimmy Silver & Co. were ready for Bagshot, and the Classics who were not in the team crowded round the field.

Pankley, Poole & Co. of Bagshot duly arrived, little dreaming of the peculiar conditions under which that match was to be played. Jimmy Silver won the toss and kicked off, and the game began; and the footballers, at least, forgot all about Manders. But fellows in the onlooking crowd did not forget him, and a good many looked over their shoulders from time to time, wondering when the obnoxious Modern master would appear in the offing.

As they heard the shouts from the football field Townsend & Co., in the detention class, rather regretted their docility. But they were glad of it again when Mr. Manders walked in.

The Modern master looked in, to make sure that his command of detention was being obeyed. He raised his eyebrows at the sight of only six juniors in the class.

"Monsieur Monceau! Where are the other boys?" he ejaculated.

Mossoo shrugged his shoulders.

"Zese are all zat come in, sair!" he answered.

"Muffin," thundered Mr. Manders, "where are the others? Where is Silver, Lovell, Mornington, Erroll? Where are they all?"

"Ow! Playing football, sir!" gasped Tubby, in dire terror of drawing Mr. Manders' wrath upon himself.

"Playing football!" stuttered Mr. Manders. "Pip-pip-playing football! Against my express commands!"

"Tain't my fault, sir," mumbled Tubby.

Mr. Manders' eyes glittered. He caught up a cane, and strode out of the Form-room. It was a crisis now! If Roger Manders allowed this open defiance to pass, his authority at Rookwood was at an end. It was now or never—neck or nothing; and Mr. Manders strode down to the football ground with the intention of bringing the rebellious juniors to book instantly and decisively!

CHAPTER 15.

An Exciting Game!

"GOAL!"
"Bravo, Morny!"
"Well kicked, sir!"

The first half of the Bagshot match was going strong. Jimmy Silver, at centre-half, was playing up at his very best, and his team backed him up in great style. The Rookwooders had brought the ball up the field, and burst through the Bagshot defence, and the leather went in from Morny's foot—and the Rookwood crowd roared.

The roar was ringing over Little Side—and to a good distance beyond—when Mr. Manders strode upon the scene.

Mr. Manders was almost stuttering with rage as he came sweeping on. The sight of the detained juniors playing football under his very nose was more than exasperating—it was infuriating.

The sides were lining up again when the Modern master appeared, and there was a buzz of excitement in the crowd of juniors.

"Here he comes!"

"Here's Manders!"

"Look out, you fellows!"

Mr. Manders strode through the crowd, his scanty hair bristling with wrath. The Bagshot fellows stared at him, not knowing what to make of it. Hansom of the Fifth,

who was referee of the match, stared too. Jimmy Silver compressed his lips.

Mr. Manders strode on the field of play, waving his cane.

"Stop this game instantly!" he thundered.

"My only hat!" murmured Pankley of Bagshot to Poole. "What sort of a circus do they call this?"

"The old bird seems ruffled!" remarked Poole.

"Stop! You hear me, Silver!" thundered Mr. Manders.

The Rookwood footballers looked at Jimmy. Had the captain of the Fourth weakened then all would have been over. But Jimmy Silver did not weaken.

He rapped out coolly:

"Line up!"

The footballers lined up.

Mr. Manders came striding on. Pankley, who was about to kick off, paused. The tall, thin figure of Mr. Manders was between the opposing ranks now, and Pankley did not want to "land" Mr. Manders with a muddy ball. The Modern master brandished his cane.

"Silver! Lovell! All of you! Leave this field at once!"

"Oh, gad!" murmured Hansom of the Fifth. "What—what—what's the trouble, sir? The game's only just started!"

"These juniors are under detention, Hansom. I forbid you to take any further part in these proceedings!"

Hansom of the Fifth looked at him. Mr. Manders addressed Hansom—a classical senior—as he might have addressed a Modern fag. The blood of all the Hansoms boiled in the veins of the referee.

"You forbid me, Mr. Manders?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, most decidedly."

"I take my orders from my Form-master, Mr. Greely, sir," said Hansom. "I do not take orders from the Modern side, sir."

"I am your headmaster at present, Hansom—"

"Headmasters don't butt in on the football field, sir."

"What? What?"

"I'll walk off this field, sir, if Mr. Greely tells me to," said Hansom. "If he doesn't I stay here."

Mr. Manders gave Hansom a glare. But he turned from the Fifth-Former to the

juniors, doubtless considering them easier to deal with.

"Silver, follow me at once!"

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"Will you get out of the way, Mr. Manders?" he asked.

"What?"

"You're interrupting the game."

"The—the game?" stuttered Mr. Manders.

"Yes, sir. You may get butted over if you stand there."

"Silver, leave this field at once!" roared Mr. Manders.

Jimmy looked across at Pankley.

"Waiting for you, old top!" he said.

"I don't want to hurry you, of course, but we're waiting for you to kick-off."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Pankley.

Pankley had never kicked-off in such circumstances before. But he kicked-off now, and as soon as the ball was in play there was a rush of the footballers.

Mr. Manders stood in the midst of the players, flourishing his cane, spluttering with rage, and utterly disregarded.

The Bagshot men made a rush, and bore the leather up the field, Jimmy Silver & Co. falling back to defend. Mr. Manders was left alone in his glory on the half-way line.

There was a roar of laughter round the field.

It stung the Modern master into action, and he gripped his cane and rushed up the field after the footballers.

But a change came over the game as Jimmy Silver & Co. rallied. Rawson skied the ball, and it dropped well over in the Bagshot half. Bagshot fell back promptly, and there was a forward rush of Rookwood. Mr. Manders found himself right in the midst of things again with a suddenness that took his breath away.

Somebody—he did not even see who—found Mr. Manders in his way, and shouldered him aside.

The long, lean figure went staggering.

Then he was in Jimmy Silver's way, and the captain of the Fourth unceremoniously shouldered him back again.

Mr. Manders spluttered. He whirled round on Jimmy Silver, and lashed out with the cane.

There was a wild howl from Jimmy. A football jersey was not much protection against a stinging lash from a cane.

Mr. Manders, finding solace in it, followed up his attack, lashing again and again. Mornington came at him, charging like a bull, and the Modern master went spinning.

Crash!

Hardly knowing what had happened to him, Mr. Manders sprawled in the field. His astounded eyes turned skywards, and something plopped on his long, upturned nose.

He hardly realised that it was the football. There was a rush of forwards after the ball, and a struggle for it, and it seemed to Mr. Manders that every fellow there was a centipede with all its feet shod in the largest and heaviest of football boots.

How many boots were planted upon Mr. Manders it would be difficult to say. But as the ball went goalward, with the field after it, Mr. Manders sprawled in a sea of mud, with an ache in every limb, and his brain in a state of utter bewilderment.

Amazing as it was to the tyrant of Rookwood, the game was going on regardless of his prohibition, regardless of his important self; indeed, Mr. Manders was getting a good deal of the game. He sat up, gasping and spluttering, hardly believing that this thing was real.

But it was real enough. It was no nightmare, but a dreadful reality. As Mr. Manders sat, winded and bewildered, there came a rush of the players, and he was overwhelmed again.

Something like a ten-ton steam hammer caught Mr. Manders on the chin. It was only Arthur Edward Lovell's boot. But Arthur Edward took a good size in football boots. It was not his fault that Mr. Manders' chin was in the way; he had not asked Mr. Manders to come there.

The Modern master yelled and roared and rolled over, and the rush of the game left him high—if not dry—again.

He staggered to his feet.

He was no longer thinking of using his cane, or of exerting his authority. He was only thinking of escaping from the dreadful football field.

But it is always easier to get into a scrape than to get out of one. Mr. Manders headed for the ropes at a staggering run; but the game was going on hard and fast. Morny, after the ball, shouldered Mr. Manders ruthlessly out of

the way, and the Modern master staggered and collided with a Bagshot forward, who rolled over him. Two or three other fellows rolled on the heap. Under a pile of struggling footballers Mr. Manders thought that his last hour had come.

But the pile dissolved as if by magic, and again the hapless master struggled up and fled.

Crash!

It was not a bomb that flew through the air and landed on Mr. Manders' left ear—it was a muddy football. But it seemed to the hapless Modern master like a bomb-shell. It bowled him right over, and he sprawled on the touchline.

"Oh, oh! Ow! Help!" he gasped. "Help!"

Three or four juniors rushed in to drag Mr. Manders off the field. Whether they wanted to help him was not quite clear. Certainly their help was rough and ready. Mr. Manders yelled and howled as he was helped. One fellow had hold of his ears—one of his hair—one of his legs. Yelling frantically, Mr. Manders was helped off, helped through the crowd, and dumped down.

His helpers turned their backs on him then, and resumed watching the game.

Mr. Manders sat up. He was breathless, exhausted, muddy, dishevelled, winded. He blinked and blinked and blinked, and as his vision cleared he saw the football match going on, as if the wide world did not contain such a personage as Roger Manders at all.

But Mr. Manders did not think of further interference. Wild horses would not have dragged him on the field of play again.

He staggered to his feet and limped away—gasping and mumbling. He disappeared into his house, and the footballers did not even cast a glance after him. The game went on, and the on-lookers shouted and cheered, and for the present, at least, the existence of Roger Manders was completely forgotten.

And when that great match ended, with Rookwood two goals to one, the Rookwood crowd cheered, and Jimmy Silver & Co. enjoyed their triumph without a thought of Mr. Manders.

CHAPTER 16.

No More Manders!

THERE were smiling faces at Rookwood School on that eventful afternoon.

Pankley & Co. had departed—defeated, but highly entertained by the humorous interlude Mr. Manders had unintentionally provided. All Rookwood was discussing the scene at the match—with smiles.

It was not only the juniors that grinned over it. Hansom roared with laughter as he described it to the Fifth, and the Fifth roared, too. Even the great men of the Sixth chuckled over it. Even the masters smiled. Mr. Manders' misuse of his "little brief authority" had made him so thoroughly disliked and objected to, that there was not a single soul in all the school to sympathise with him.

There was not a master whom he had not interfered with, since he had taken the head of affairs, and naturally enough his downfall entertained his disgruntled colleagues. All the Classical prefects had been lectured and worried by the fussy Modern master, and they were glad that somebody had given him what he had asked for. Even the Modern prefects were fed up with Mr. Manders' authoritative importance, and grinned in secret over his disaster, while the juniors on both sides of Rookwood openly rejoiced. Mr. Manders had got what he had been asking for—begging and praying for, as Arthur Edward Lovell put it. And if he wanted any more, Arthur Edward declared, he could have it.

Jimmy Silver & Co. seemed quite hilarious over tea in the end study, with five or six similar guests in that celebrated apartment.

It was true that the matter could not possibly rest where it was; Manders was bound, as Putty Grace remarked, to "do something." What he was going to do was a matter for speculation. Perhaps he was expecting Jimmy Silver to turn up in his study for a flogging, Lovell suggested with a grin. And there was a roar of laughter at the suggestion.

It was possible that he would come over to the Classical side with a cane. If he did, the Fistical Four were prepared to handle him, and nearly all the Fourth

were prepared to help. It was unlikely that the Classical prefects would intervene, and pretty certain that the other masters would have business elsewhere. But in any case Jimmy Silver & Co. were determined upon one thing—no more Manders. "No more Manders!" was the watchword of the Classical Fourth.

After tea there was a heavy tread in the Fourth Form passage, and a general movement of interest in the end study, as the juniors heard it.

"Here he comes!"

Tubby Muffin blinked out of the study.

"Tain't Manders! It's Knowles!" he squeaked.

"He's sent a giddy prefect to fetch you, Jimmy!" grinned Lovell. "Let Knowles try it on. We'll lynch him."

"Come in, Knowles!" roared half a dozen cheery voices, as the Modern prefect appeared in the doorway. "Waddle in, old duck!"

Knowles stopped in the doorway. He did not care to accept the invitation to enter. It was only too probable that he would have left again "on his neck."

"Silver!"

"Adsum!" smiled Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have not been to Mr. Manders' study for your flogging—"

"Did the dear old duck think I should come?"

"I have a message for you from Mr. Manders," said Knowles. "You'd better hear it quickly."

"Silence for the chair!" grinned Lovell.

"Trot out the message, old dear," said Mornington.

"After what happened on the football ground to-day, Mr. Manders regards Silver as a ringleader in rebellion—"

"Not far wrong!" assented Jimmy coolly.

"You are to pack your box to-morrow, Silver—"

"Go hon!"

"On Monday morning I am to take you home, and you are to be ready to leave Rookwood at nine o'clock," said Knowles. "I shall accompany you to your home, with Mr. Manders' explanation to your father."

"Anything else?"

"That's all!"

"Enough, too," said Jimmy Silver

cheerily. "You want an answer, I suppose? I'm not going to leave Rookwood. You're not going to have the pleasure of my company on a railway journey on Monday. If you come nosing over to the Classical side after me, Knowles, your nosy nose will be punched—hard! Do I make myself clear?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young bound!" roared Knowles.

Lovell jumped up.

"Kick him out!" he shouted.

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush. Knowles left the School House, sprinting, followed by derisive howls and hoots.

Mr. Manders had had his answer. It only remained to be seen what would happen when Monday came.

CHAPTER 17.

Quite a Surprise!

ON Monday morning Jimmy Silver sat up in bed in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood as the rising-bell rang out.

He sat up and yawned.

He seemed in no hurry to turn out. As a rule, Jimmy was one of the first out of bed in the Classical Fourth dormitory. On this especial morning he seemed to be taking it easy.

The rising-bell clanged and clanged, and stopped; and Jimmy Silver, instead of turning out, sat in bed and considered.

His chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, directed inquiring glances towards the captain of the Fourth.

"Well?" said Lovell.

"Well?" echoed Raby and Newcome.

Valentine Mornington sat up.

"What's the good of turnin' out?" he remarked. "We settled last night in the studies that the Fourth Form is goin' on strike."

"Hear, hear!"

"We're not standin' any more Manders!" continued Mornington. "That's agreed, isn't it, you fellows?"

"Quite!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We're goin' on strike till Dr. Chisholm comes back—"

"That's settled!" agreed Jimmy Silver.



Crash! Hardly knowing what had happened to him, Mr. Roger Manders was sent sprawling on the footer field. There was a rush of forwards after the ball, and a struggle for it, and the Modern master yelled and roared as innumerable boots were planted upon him. "Help! Ow! Help!" (See Chapter 15.)

"No more Modern masters for us. Manders is a back number. He's cut out!"

"Jolly good idea!" came from Tubby Muffin. "Another hour in bed is just what I want. Let Manders go and eat coken!"

The rising-bell had ceased to clang. In all the other dormitories at Rookwood School there was activity. But the Classical Fourth stuck to their blankets.

They did not go to sleep again, however. They were quite aware that their disregard of the rising-bell would have consequences of some sort, and they waited for the consequences.

There was a heavy tread in the corridor outside at last.

"Look out for squalls now!" murmured Raby.

"If it's Manders, let him have the pillows as soon as he puts his nose in!" directed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather!"

A dozen hands grasped pillows in readiness as the door was flung open. But it was not Mr. Roger Manders that appeared. It was George Bulkeley of the Sixth Form, the captain of the school.

The ready pillows dropped back. Nobody wanted to pillow "old Bulkeley" who was as popular as Mr. Manders was the reverse.

"Hallo, Bulkeley!" said Jimmy Silver amiably.

"Good-morning, old bean!" said Lovell.

Bulkeley cast a glance round the beds.

"What are you slacking in bed for?" he demanded brusquely. "You've heard the bell, I suppose?"

Jimmy Silver coloured. He did not like to be accused of slacking, especially by "old Bulkeley."

"We're not slacking, exactly," he answered.

"Looks to me like it! Turn out at once, all of you!"

"Look here, Bulkeley——"

Bulkeley had his official ashplant under his arm. He let it slide down into his hand.

"Are you going to turn out?" he inquired.

"Anything to oblige, old top!" answered Jimmy Silver, and he hopped out of bed.

His example was followed by the rest of the juniors. Bulkeley still eyed them grimly.

"I've got a few words to say to you youngsters," he said.

"Say on!" grinned Mornington, and there was a laugh from some of the Fourth.

"You've been kicking over the traces since Manders has taken charge," continued Bulkeley. "You, Silver, were to be sent home in charge of a prefect, but you refused!"

"I did!" assented Jimmy Silver cheerily. "And I'm jolly well not going! We're all sticking together in this, Bulkeley."

"Mr. Manders called a prefects' meeting last night," said Bulkeley. "He requested us to support his authority in the school. As prefects, we are bound to do so. I made one condition—that there are to be no expulsions while the Head is away. That sees you clear, Silver. So long as you behave yourself, you will be allowed to remain."

"I shall be allowed to remain, anyhow," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "We don't take any more notice of Manders."

"We've had too much Manders!" bawled Arthur Edward Lovell. "We're not taking any more. Savvy?"

"You will return to obedience, or take the consequences!" said Bulkeley. "The prefects are responsible for keeping order, and they will keep it. Whether we approve of Mr. Manders' methods is another matter. The Head left him in charge, and we are bound to support him. You kids will turn up in the Form-room as usual, and a prefect will take you until further arrangements are made."

Jimmy Silver looked at him.

"We shall not enter the Form-room until our own Form-master comes back to Rookwood," he said. "If Mr. Manders chooses to send for Mr. Dalton, and agrees to leave us entirely in his charge without interference, we shall toe the line. If not, we shan't!"

"You can't dictate terms to your headmaster."

"Whether we can or not, we're going to in this case!"

"And we mean business!" added Mornington.

"We do—we does!" said Lovell emphatically.

Bulkeley paused. As a matter of fact, he had a great deal of sympathy with the Classical Fourth, who certainly had suffered under the rule of Mr. Manders. But with Bulkeley discipline came first.

"This won't do!" he said at length.
 "It will have to do!" said Newcome.
 "We're not taking any notice of Manders."
 "Not the least little teeny-weeny bit!"
 said Raby.

"You can tell Manders so from us," said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want any trouble with you, Bulkeley, but we shan't allow the prefects to interfere in this."

"You won't allow!" roared Bulkeley.
 "No!"

"You, a Fourth Form fag, won't allow the Sixth Form prefects to interfere!" exclaimed the Rookwood captain, as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"Just that!" assented Jimmy Silver. "We're up against Manders and all his giddy works, and nobody will be allowed to chip in."

Bulkeley strode towards the captain of the Fourth. He swished his ashplant.

"I'm afraid I shall have to lick you, Silver. Hold out your hand!"

"Rats!"

"Wha-at?"

"Rats!" roared nearly all the Fourth.

Bulkeley did not waste any more time in words. He grabbed Jimmy Silver by the shoulder, and swung him round, and the ash plant whistled through the air.

Whack!

A yell ran through the Fourth-Form dormitory. Pyjamas were not much of a defence against a prefect's ash plant.

"Rescue!" roared Lovell. "Back up, Fourth!"

He seized a bolster from his bed, and rushed at Bulkeley. Raby and Newcome followed his example, and Mornington and Errol, Conroy and Flynn were only a second later. They were followed by a crowd.

A dozen pairs of hands were laid on Bulkeley of the Sixth. Powerful fellow as he was, the prefect had no chance against such odds. With two or three hands grasping each arm and leg, he was whirled along the floor doorwards. He went spinning into the passage like a top.

Slam!

Jimmy Silver slammed the door after him. And Bulkeley, wondering whether he was on his head or his heels, sat up in the corridor, and gasped for breath, with a feeling as if the whole universe were tumbling into pieces round him!

CHAPTER 18.

No Surrender!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. looked at one another. Raby thoughtfully turned the key in the lock.

"By gad," said Mornington, "we've done it now!"

"We have!" murmured Lovell.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath. There was no doubt that the Rookwood rebels had "done it." Handling Bulkeley of the Sixth seemed to them, somehow, an even more serious matter than handling Mr. Manders himself. They respected Bulkeley, and they did not respect Mr. Manders. Mr. Manders was a despot; while Bulkeley was only doing what he believed to be his duty—a mistaken belief, from the juniors' point of view.

"I'm sorry we've had to handle him," said Jimmy. "It couldn't be helped. If the prefects are going to back up Manders, we're up against the prefects!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo, there he is!" murmured Oswald.

The door-handle was shaken from without. Bulkeley's voice, choking with wrath, rang through the locked door.

"Silver—all of you—unlock this door at once!"

"Can't be did, Bulkeley!"

"You young rascal, Silver——"

Bulkeley shook the door-handle again, and then was heard to tramp away, down the corridor and down the stairs. It was first victory to the rebels, at all events!

"This means that all the prefects are against us!" said Mornington, with a whistle. "They hate Manders, but they'll back up old Bulkeley to the last ditch!"

"Let 'em!" growled Lovell.

"I can see the Fourth tacklin' the prefects!" sneered Cyril Peele. "Nice mess you've landed us into, Silver!"

"Prefects are prefects, you know!" said Townsend oracularly. "You are a bit too fresh, Silver—rather too fresh, you know."

"Too jolly fresh altogether!" concurred Topham. "I know I'm not fightin' with any hefty Sixth-Formers, for one!"

"Little me, for another!" said Gower.

And Lattrey nodded concurrence. The slackers of the Fourth were not keen on rebellion.

Jimmy Silver gave them a scornful look.

"We're up against Manders, and the prefects, too; and all the rest, if they chip

in!" he said. "The Head's away, Manders has sent off our Form-master, and we've got to look after ourselves!"

"Hear, hear!" bawled Lovell.

"Are you thinkin' of scrapping with the Sixth?" booted Peele. "They'll knock us all into a cocked hat!"

"If they get at us, I dare say they could," assented Jimmy Silver. "But if the Sixth back up Mr. Manders, there's only one thing for it—"

"A barring-out?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yes!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Townsend.

"Bar out your giddy grandmother!" said Peele. "It can't be done! Do you think the Sixth will let us turn them out of the School House, and bar them out of it?"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Not likely!" he said. "But we can hold the dormitory staircase against all Rookwood, and that's what we're going to do!"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Mornington.

"I—I say," spluttered Tubby Muffin, "what about brekker? All very well staying late in bed—I don't object to that—but if we don't go down at all we miss brekker!"

"Miss it, then, fathead!"

"Miss brekker!" yelled Muffin, in horror and consternation. "Why, you must be off your rooker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get dressed quick, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, unheeding Reginald Muffin.

There were more important matters to be considered just then than Tubby Muffin's breakfast—important as that seemed to Muffin himself.

The Classical Fourth fairly jumped into their clothes. They realised that there was no time to be lost.

Jimmy Silver had hoped that the prefects would stand aside in the dispute between the Fourth and the temporary Head, knowing well enough that they did not like Mr. Manders or approve of his ways. But Bulkeley's action had shown that that hope was ill-founded.

Force was to be brought to bear on the rebellious juniors; and they felt that they had gone too far to retreat—even if they had cared to retreat, which they did not.

Surrender meant the iron hand of Roger Manders, and rebelling could scarcely lead to anything worse.

With the exception of five or six slackers the Classical Fourth heartily backed up

Jimmy Silver. Force was to be met with force, but it was obviously necessary to avoid conflict in the open with muscular Sixth-Formers. But behind defences the Fourth-Formers could hold their own—at all events, they were sure that they could!

Jimmy unlocked the dormitory door and looked into the passage. It was deserted.

Bulkeley was gone, and he was probably leaving the affair till after breakfast. Undoubtedly he expected to see the juniors in the dining-hall for the morning meal.

There was time to act, though there was none to be wasted. Jimmy Silver, like a good general, thought out his plan of campaign rapidly, and gave succinct orders to his faithful followers.

The dormitory corridor was approached by a fairly wide staircase at one end. At the other were the backstairs, rather narrow. The latter staircase, however, had a strong open door at the top, which could be closed and locked. That door was promptly secured, leaving the juniors only one point to defend.

On the broad landing at the top of the front staircase Jimmy Silver & Co. began to stack the bedsteads, dragging them hurriedly out of the dormitory.

The landing was soon barred with a row of iron bedsteads, on which were stacked a second row, and on top of these a third row. The barricade was backed up by washstands and chairs.

It was quick work, but it was thoroughly done. In a very short time the barricade was completed.

Many hands made light work. Peele & Co. certainly seemed to prefer to look on and pass caustic criticisms of the whole proceedings. But there was no room in the rebel camp for slackers. Arthur Edward Lovell tackled Peele & Co. with a bolster, which seemed to have a powerful persuasion for them. They ceased to loaf and sneer, and took their part in the work.

While the barricade was building, two or three scouts were despatched down to the Fourth-Form studies, with great caution. The studies at that time in the morning were in the hands of the maids, and the scouts were not interfered with. They came back with a hurried collection of all the tuck that was to be found in the study cupboards, and stumps and fives bats to be used as weapons of defence. They were safe in their stronghold again before there was an alarm. It was break-fast-time before there was any movement

on the part of the enemy. Then it came in the form of Smythe of the Shell, who came upstairs with a message for the Classical Fourth.

Adolphus Smythe almost fell down with astonishment at the sight of the bedstead barricade.

"Oh, gad!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, Smythey!" Jimmy Silver looked at him over the barrier. "Have you come to join us, old bean?"

"My Aunt Matilda! Not quite!" gasped Adolphus. "I say, I've got a message from Bulkeley. He says that if you don't come down to brekker at once you won't get any."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Tell Bulkeley it's a barring-out!" he answered.

"A barrin'-out!" stuttered Smythe.

"That's it!"

"Oh, gad!" said Adolphus.

And he ambled back to the Hall with that startling news for the captain of Rookwood.

"And now," said Jimmy Silver, "look out for squalls!"

CHAPTER 19.

An Attack in Force!

THE squalls were not long in coming. From a window in the dormitory corridor some of the Fourth spotted Bulkeley crossing the quad. to Mr. Manders' house. Evidently the head prefect was going to report the new and startling state of affairs to Mr. Manders. A few minutes later he was seen again, returning to the School House, with the tall, angular form of the Modern master hurrying by his side.

"Here he comes!"

"And the giddy prefects——"

"On guard!" sang out Jimmy Silver.

The barricade was lined at once with juniors, with a flourish of cricket-stumps and fives-bats and pea-shooters and jugs of water. The garrison were ready.

Mr. Manders came whisking up the stairs, his gown fluttering round his long, thin legs, and his lengthy nose glowing red with anger and excitement.

He whisked up the stairs, and the Sixth-Form prefects followed him, armed with their ashplants. There were six Classical prefects, and four of the Modern Sixth—ten powerful fellows in all; certainly quite

able to deal with all the Fourth Form at close quarters. But Jimmy Silver had taken his measures to keep them from close quarters.

Most of the prefects did not look very happy in their task. Only Knowles and Carthew and Frampton anticipated any pleasure in handling the rebels and reducing them to obedience. It was only a strong sense of the necessity of discipline that induced the others to back up Mr. Manders at all.

Mr. Manders came whisking on to the top step, and brought up against the barricade of bedsteads.

He glared at the juniors over it.

"You insolent young rascals, what do you mean?" he thundered.

"You insolent old rascal!" retorted Lovell impudently.

"What, what?"

"Getting deaf?" asked Lovell politely.

"You—you—you——"

"Don't stutter, old bean!" said Mornington.

"I—I—I——"

"Dear man, he's afflicted with a stutter! Take a deep breath, and speak slowly!" suggested Morny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Manders gasped with rage.

"Remove these—these articles at once!" he spluttered. "I—I—I will flog you all for this! I—I will—I——"

"Go home, Manders!"

"Go back to the Modern side and stick to chemistry!" suggested Conroy. "You can't deal with Classicals, old scout!"

"Take your face away with you!" said Lovell. "You've no idea how it worries a chap!"

"Why don't you wear a Guy Fawkes' mask?" demanded Putty Grace. "You can buy 'em cheap. And you'd be ever so much better-looking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the prefects were grinning. But Mr. Manders did not grin. He stood and spluttered.

"Go away, Manders!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "You know our terms. We don't want Modern masters on this side of Rookwood. Mind your own business, and keep clear of us, and we'll let you off. But take your features away before they give us a pain."

Instead of doing as requested, Mr. Manders grasped the nearest bedstead to drag it aside.

Crack!

A cricket-stump came whacking down on Mr. Manders' bony hand, and it fairly cracked on his knuckles.

The yell that came from Roger Manders could have been heard from one end of Rookwood to the other.

He jumped back, and only Bulkeley's prompt grasp saved him from falling down the stairs.

Then Lovell felt that it was time to weigh in with a special egg. That egg had long ago seen its best days, and there was no doubt at all that it was decidedly over-ripe. He took careful aim, and the missile flew, and landed fairly upon Mr. Manders' long nose, and smashed there!

Squooooosh!

"Good!" roared Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well hit!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Right on the merry wicket!"

"Goooooh!" spluttered Mr. Manders. "Ooooooh! Wug-wug-wug!" The burst egg streamed over his face and his collar and his gown. And the scent that came from it was appalling. Lovell had fully believed that it was gamey. But it was more than that—it was heart-rending! Mr. Manders turned quite pale as he staggered against the banisters and mopped frantically at his face with his handkerchief.

"Gu-g-gug-gug! Goo-goo-goo!" articulated Mr. Manders. "Ooooooh! I am—ooch—I am pip-pip-poisoned! Groooooo-ooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A pillow whizzed over the barricade, and it was followed by a bolster. The pillow smote Mr. Manders on the chest, and the bolster curled lovingly round his neck.

He sat on the stairs with a sudden bump.

"Man down!" chortled Lovell. "Take the count, Bulkeley."

"Bulkeley—Neville—Knowles!" gasped Mr. Manders. "You—you know your duty! Remove that—that barricade, and—bring those young rascals down to the Form-room for punishment—at once!"

"Very well, sir," said the Rookwood captain.

He glanced at his fellow-prefects, and the whole ten of them began to move up the dormitory staircase. The task before them was a more hefty one than they had anticipated, but they did not hesitate.

Jimmy Silver held up a warning hand.

"Stand off, Bulkeley!" he called out.

"We don't want any row with the Sixth! If you come on there'll be trouble!"

"Will you come down to the Form-room at once?" demanded Bulkeley.

"No fear!"

"Then we shall have to make you!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Knowles impatiently. "What's the good of talking to the young rascals?"

"Well, I've warned you!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Back up!" shouted Lovell, as the prefects came on with a rush.

And then there began a terrific "scrap" unprecedented in the history of Rookwood!

CHAPTER 20.

Facing the Music!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. lined the barricade in a determined mood. Ten hefty Sixth-Formers were rushing to the attack, and once they were "over the top" there was little doubt that they could deal with the juniors. But getting over the top was not an easy task.

The juniors did not stand on ceremony. Stumps and fives-bats rapped and rang on the hands that grasped at the barricade. Knowles was the first to grasp—and the first to let go, with a howl of anguish, his hand nearly paralysed by a powerful swipe from Lovell's bat.

Bulkeley plunged headlong over the stacked bedsteads, heedless of raps and taps on his head and shoulders. A jug of icy water was emptied on his head as he plunged on, and he gasped and spluttered, but still came on.

Neville and Lonsdale and Jones major were close behind. Carthew baulked at a swiping bat, and jumped away—and Knowles was nursing his damaged hand and leaning on the banisters.

Frampton made a great show of coming on, but did not get within reach.

Blows rained on the prefects who were clambering over the stacked bedsteads. It was no time for half measures.

It was fortunate for all parties that the barricade had been thoroughly made, or the bedsteads might have toppled down the stairs with the assailants clinging to them. Fortunately, the barrier stood firm. Once at close quarters, the big seniors would have been irresistible; but as matters stood, the juniors had all the ad-

vantage. They swiped at every head and hand that came within reach, and the clambering prefects could not use their ashplants—they needed their hands for clambering. Neville dropped off the barricade, and rolled down the stairs, roaring, as he swept downwards.

Bulkeley plunged on.

But Morny was watching his chance. He had whipped the case off a pillow, and had it ready. Bulkeley's head came within easy reach, and the defenders hesitated to whack at it; but Mornington deftly slipped the pillow-case over it, and drew it tight round Bulkeley's neck. He knotted the tapes together while the captain of Rookwood struggled and spluttered helplessly.

"Bagged!" chuckled Mornington.

"Groooooooh!" came in muffled accents from within the pillow-case.

Bulkeley clutched at it with his hands, and his legs slid through the openings in the stacked bedsteads, and jammed there. He tore frantically at the pillow-case over his head.

"Back up, you fellows!" gasped Neville of the Sixth, scrambling up the stairs again. "Come on, Knowles!"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Come on, Frampton——"

"I—I'm coming on!"

Neville gallantly tackled the barricade again, and a hurtling boot caught him under the chin, and swept him back. He rolled once more. Knowles and Frampton and Jones major jumped back from swiping cricket-bats. Lonsdale dropped on the stairs, yelling.

The defence was too strong. Only Bulkeley had nearly got over the barricade, and he was jammed helplessly, with his head bagged, poked and cuffed by the juniors.

Mr. Manders, on the lower landing, almost danced with rage. He had fully expected the Sixth-Form prefects to carry all before them. But it was pretty clear by this time that the defence was too strong for the attack.

"Go on!" shouted Mr. Manders. "Knowles, how dare you come down? Go up at once! Neville, I command you to go on! Jones, are you afraid of rebellious Lower-school boys? Lonsdale, cease that unmanly whooping, and go on at once—I command you!"

"Try it yourself!" roared Lonsdale,

who was grasping a bruised wrist in great anguish.

"What—what! How dare you be insolent, Lonsdale?"

"Ow, ow!"

There was a bump as Bulkeley came off the barricade. He had succeeded in freeing his head from the bag at last; but lunging stumps and crashing pillows and bolsters fairly drove him back, and he rolled off to the stairs.

Neville grasped him, and saved him from rolling as far as the landing below.

Bulkeley sat on the stairs, and gasped for breath.

"What are you dawdling for?" shouted Mr. Manders, almost beside himself. "Are you all cowards? Are you frightened by a handful of rebellious Lower School boys? Shame!"

Bulkeley turned on him with a goaded look. It was really too much to be ragged and taunted like this by a leader who had kept carefully away from the front. Mr. Manders seemed to be able to bear with great fortitude the lashes of cricket stumps that fell on other heads than his.

"There's nothing to be done, Mr. Manders!" snapped Bulkeley savagely. "We've done our best. You can see for yourself that it's impossible to get across that barricade so long as the juniors hold it against us."

"Of course it is!" growled Neville.

Mr. Manders spluttered.

"Bulkeley, you are captain of the school! I command you to bring those juniors to obedience! I will not allow cowardice!"

Bulkeley breathed hard.

"It is your duty, sir, to bring the juniors to obedience," he said between his set lips. "There would have been no disobedience if you had played the game, as the Head expected of you when he left you in charge of Rookwood!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell above. "That's straight from the horse's mouth, Manders, old bean!"

Mr. Manders gasped for breath.

"You—you—you dare to—to speak thus to—to me, Bulkeley!" he articulated. "You—you dare! I—I——"

Words failed Mr. Manders in his wrath. He raised his clenched hand and struck the captain of Rookwood full in the face.

Bulkeley staggered back under the unexpected blow.

There was a sudden hush. Even the

rebels above hushed, and looked on, breathless, spellbound.

For an instant Bulkeley's hand clenched and his eyes blazed, and everyone present expected him to return the blow, and knock Roger Manders spinning.

But he did not.

His hand unclenched. He calmed himself with a tremendous effort. His voice, when he spoke, was quiet and subdued.

"That finishes it!" he said. "Mr. Manders, you've got the school into this mess. You can get it out again—if you can. I refuse to have anything further to do with it—or with you!"

And, passing the angry master, Bulkeley strode down the stairs, and the rest of the Classical prefects followed him.

It was clear enough that they were standing by Bulkeley. Knowles & Co., of the Modern Sixth, exchanged a stealthy glance, and quietly followed the Classical seniors.

Mr. Manders was left alone on the landing.

CHAPTER 21.

Trouble to Come!

"G O home, Manders!"

"Outside, you outsider!"

Mr. Manders stood trembling with rage. Perhaps he repented that hasty blow when it was too late. But it was done now, and his supporters were gone. He had no further aid to expect from the Classical prefects—at least, in quelling the tumult that his tyranny had roused.

He glanced up the staircase at the crowd of grinning, mocking faces looking down at him over the barricade.

"You've done it, Manders!" chortled Lovell. "Now you can go back to the Modern side and take it out of the Modern kids! Yah!"

Mr. Manders spluttered helplessly.

"Haden't you better send for Mr. Dalton, and ask him to take us in hand, Manders?" queried Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see by this time that you can't handle the Classical Fourth?"

Mr. Manders found his voice.

"I give you half an hour to come downstairs and return to obedience, and take your just punishment! I am going now to telephone for the police!"

"The—the what?" ejaculated Lovell.

"The police!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"If you are still in a state of rebellion when they arrive, they will deal with you. The ringleaders will be given into custody and removed to the police-station."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, gad!" said Mornington. "The merry old Manders-bird is goin' it!"

"You hear me?" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Sing it over again to us, old bean!" suggested Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have heard my last word!" gasped Mr. Manders, and he turned to stride away.

A pillow came whizzing over the banisters, and it landed on the back of Mr. Manders' neck. He plunged suddenly forward, with a howl, and finished his descent of the stairs in record time.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A couple of minutes later, from the corridor window, Mr. Manders was seen scurrying away towards the Modern side. Apparently, he was going to carry out his threat of telephoning for the police. There were grave faces now among the rebels of Rookwood.

"The police—in the school!" said Townsend. "What a shockin' disgrace!"

"Can't let it come to that!" said Peele.

"The bobbies!" said Tubby Muffin. "We—we shall be put in the cells. Our people will have to come and bail us out! Oh, lor'!"

"What are we going to do, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"Let them come!"

But there were grave looks among the garriçon. They had won the first round, but they realised very clearly that there was more serious trouble to come.

CHAPTER 22.

The Majesty of the Law!

"P EELERS!"

"It's a bobby!"

"Look out, you fellows!" said

Jimmy Silver quietly.

The rebels of Rookwood were looking out!

Never had the apparition of Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe, caused so

much excitement as it caused that afternoon at Rookwood School.

P.-c. Boggs came up the lower stairs with a heavy tread: the heavy official tread which, on the beat at midnight, warns the festive cracksmen that it is time to pack up and get moving.

Mr. Manders came up with him.

Mr. Boggs halted on the landing, and surveyed the barricaded stairs above, and blinked under his helmet at the garrison.

Jimmy Silver, over a row of stacked bedsteads, waved a kindly hand at him in greeting.

"Good-afternoon, Boggy!" he called out.

"Top of the afternoon, old tulip!" said Edward Arthur Lovell affably. "Mind the step, Boggy! If you started rolling, you'd never stop."

Mr. Boggs' plump red face grew redder. Mr. Manders set his thin lips in a tight line. He had counted upon the official uniform of Mr. Boggs to strike terror. But the rebels' greeting did not sound terrified.

"You see how the matter stands, Boggs!" he said, in his acid tones. "These boys—these young rascals—are in rebellion—open rebellion!"

"My word!" murmured Mr. Boggs.

"Kindly proceed at once, Mr. Boggs!" said Mr. Manders.

"Ho!" said Mr. Boggs.

He advanced two steps up the upper staircase. The stairs almost trembled under the official tread.

"You young rips, come out o' that!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Bow-wow!"

"In the name of the lor!" said Mr. Boggs.

"Oh, lor!" ejaculated Putty Grace, and there was a loud chortle.

"Which it will be the worse for you if you don't!"

"Take Silver into custody!" shouted Mr. Manders. "I will be responsible."

"Take Manders into custody, Boggs!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Wot?"

"I give him in charge," said Jimmy cheerily. "He is charged with butting into matters that don't concern him, and obstructing the Fourth Form in the execution of their duty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My word!" murmured Mr. Boggs. "You young rip! If you don't come out of that, I'll come for you and fetch you out!"

"Come on, Boggy!"

"Stand clear, Manders!" shouted Lovell. "We're going to roll Boggy down!"

Mr. Boggs came on valiantly, and reached the stacked bedsteads on the edge of the upper landing. He could no more have climbed over the barricade than he could have flown out of the window. He had far too much weight to lift. But the juniors did not wait for him to attempt to clamber over.

Bump!

Arthur Edward Lovell leaned over the barrier and smote with a bolster. Mr. Boggs' helmet went spinning, and Mr. Boggs sat down suddenly on the stairs.

He rolled down two or three steps, and clutched frantically at the banisters to right himself. A pillow whizzed, and a cushion followed it, and Mr. Boggs went rolling. He arrived on the lower landing, beside Mr. Manders, in a heap. He sat up and spluttered.

"Oooooooooooh!"

"Boggs—" shouted Mr. Manders.

"Wooooooo!"

"Do your duty!"

"Yow-ow-wooooo!"

"Don't sprawl malingering there!" raved Mr. Manders. "Get up, man! Get up at once! I will report you to your superiors! You hear me?"

Mr. Boggs certainly heard him—everyone at Rookwood heard him, for that matter.

The plump constable rose slowly to his feet. He blinked at Mr. Manders. He fielded his helmet, and arranged it on his head, grunting. Then he turned—not towards the upper stairs, but towards the lower.

"Boggs!" roared Mr. Manders.

"I'm going!" said Mr. Boggs, with dignity. "I've walked a mile 'ere, Mr. Manders, and I've never been asked so much as whether I was thirsty! This ain't my dooty! I'd come up 'ere any time, sir, to oblige Dr. Chisholm—the 'Ead's a gentleman, sir! It ain't my dooty to manage your school for you, Mr. Manders."

"Boggs! I shall report this insolence—"

"Report, and be blowed!" said Mr. Boggs.

"What? What?"

"I'm haff!"

And the heavy official tread thundered

down the lower staircase. Mr. Boggs had had enough!

And as a couple of pillows whizzed down from the rebels' stronghold, Mr. Manders felt he could not do better than follow him.

CHAPTER 23.

Mr. Manders Takes Measures!

ROOKWOOD SCHOOL was seething with excitement for the remainder of that day.

The sympathy of the whole school was with the rebels.

Even the masters were not displeased to see Mr. Manders "up against" an insuperable difficulty. Mr. Manders was rather in the hapless situation of the magician in the story, who succeeded in calling up the evil spirit, but could not control him when called.

The police—his last resource—had failed him. After the departure of Mr. Boggs, Mr. Manders telephoned to Rookham, to Inspector Sharpe. To his amazement and wrath, the inspector pool-pooled the whole business, and declined to interfere in it. He even hinted that Mr. Manders, for his own sake, had better get matters peacefully arranged before the Head returned!—just as if he thought that the trouble was Mr. Manders' fault—as no doubt he did!

There was one gleam of hope for Mr. Manders—and that was, that the rebels, having barricaded themselves upstairs, were cut off from food supplies. The "tuck" they had taken up from the studies was not likely to last a crowd of hungry schoolboys long.

By evening, he hoped that they would be famished into a mood of surrender.

But he had counted without Jimmy Silver, and the resourcefulness of that excellent general.

The rebels had plenty of friends outside their stronghold: and communication was easy. Mr. Manders, taking a walk round as dusk fell, came upon a startling scene. A large basket was hanging on a cord from a window of the Fourth Form dormitory. It was being pulled up by Arthur Edward Lovell—and evidently it had just been filled by Dodd, Cook, and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth, who were watching its ascent.

Mr. Manders spluttered with wrath.

"Dodd!" he shouted.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

"You—you—you have been assisting those—those rebellious young scoundrels!" exclaimed Mr. Manders.

"Only sending them up some grub, sir!" said Tommy Dodd meekly. "They let down the basket with some cash in it, sir."

"You have dared—" gasped Mr. Manders.

"No law against fetching a chap thing: from the tuck-shop, is there, sir?" asked Tommy Cook.

"Follow me to my study!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"What for, sir?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"I am going to cane you with the utmost severity."

"Are you?" murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Follow me instantly!"

Mr. Manders stalked away.

The three Tommies followed him, exchanging whispers—but only as far as the School House door. There they went in. A minute later they were scudding up the staircase.

"Jimmy Silver!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Hallo, old top!"

"We're joining up!"

"Good man!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth. "It's time you did! Hop over!"

And willing hands assisted the three Tommies over the barricade into the stronghold.

So far, the rebellion had been confined to the Classics. Tommy Dodd & Co. were the first recruits from the Modern Fourth.

But they were not the last.

Towle and Lacy and half a dozen other fellows followed their example, dropping quietly into the School House, and climbing over the barricade to join the defenders.

The feud between Classics and Moderns was quite forgotten—it was the whole Fourth Form now against the tyrant of Rookwood, and the hatchet was buried deep.

Mr. Manders, in his study, selected his stoutest cane; but he waited in vain for the three Tommies to arrive. He left his study at last, and called to Knowles of the Sixth in the corridor.

"Find Dodd and Cook and Doyle,

Knowles, and send them in to me at once!" he snapped.

It was a quarter of an hour before Knowles of the Sixth came in to report. His report was that the Modern juniors could not be found—and his surmise was that they had joined Jimmy Silver & Co.

Mr. Manders' feelings were too deep for words. His cane was of no use to him now. In his rage, he would have been glad to cane Knowles; but that was impossible.

As darkness descended that day, Mr. Manders paced his study, a great deal like a wild animal in a cage, fuming, and trying to think out a plan of campaign.

Force, and more force, was the only remedy Mr. Manders could think of. Like many gentlemen who have a very tender regard for the safety of their own personal skins, he was of the militaristic turn of mind, and believed in the strong hand, and plenty of it. Conciliation did not enter his mind at all. Force was the remedy, and the only difficulty was to command it and apply it.

Apparently Mr. Manders came to a decision at last, for he donned hat and coat, and left the school, and was absent for a couple of hours. When he came in, there was a grim look of satisfaction on his hard face. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, met him as he came in.

"One word with you, Mr. Manders," said the Fifth Form master. "May I ask what measures are being taken to deal with the—ah—unprecedented state of affairs at present obtaining in this school?"

Mr. Manders gave him a cold glare.

"You may not!" he answered curtly.

"Hem!"

"Measures are being taken," said Mr. Manders. "Measures of a drastic nature. That is all."

He made a sign of dismissal. But Mr. Greely did not go.

"This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue," he said.

"It will not be allowed to continue, Mr. Greely. But the matter is in my hands."

"Disorder is spreading in the school."

"I am aware of it. It is partly due to the fact that I have not received, from the masters, the support I had a right to expect."

"I do not agree with you, Mr. Manders. I have this to say—that unless order is restored, the staff cannot remain idle

spectators. I understand that the Head is now on the road to recovery from his illness. As soon as he is able to hear the news, I shall consider it my duty to acquaint him with this—this unheard-of state of affairs, if it is not ended."

"Mr. Greely!"

"I mean what I say, sir! The other masters are in agreement with me—we have discussed the matter in Masters' Session!" said Mr. Greely, with great dignity.

Mr. Manders compressed his lips.

"The lower Forms are becoming uncontrollable," said Mr. Greely. "Mr. Bohun has had difficulty in keeping certain members of the Third from joining in the barring-out."

"That is enough, Mr. Greely."

"We are of opinion, sir—"

"I do not desire to hear your opinion."

"Nevertheless, I shall state it," said Mr. Greely. "We are of opinion that Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, should be sent for, to deal with his Form."

"I have dismissed Mr. Dalton, and have no intention whatever of rescinding my decision," said Mr. Manders. "Good-evening!"

And Mr. Greely, choking down his wrath, went his ponderous way. In the Masters' Room, that evening, there were comments upon Mr. Manders which would have made that gentleman's scanty hair curl, if he had heard them. But Mr. Manders went to bed that night in a satisfied mood. He had taken his measures—drastic measures—and on the morrow the rebels of Rookwood were to be crushed. And Mr. Manders dreamed a happy dream of flogging the Fourth Form from end to end, and wearing out the Head's birch in the process!

CHAPTER 24.

The Army!

"CAMPING out, what?" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"And regular watches," said Lovell.

Supper was over in the stronghold of the Rookwood rebels. There had been a general "shell-out" of cash for supplies—and the supplies were ample, for a day or two, at least. Quite a large consignment had been smuggled in before Mr. Manders

discovered what was being done—and after, for that matter.

There was rather a crowd in the Classical Fourth dormitory. Most of the Modern Fourth were there now. And no bedsteads were available—they were all stacked up in the barricade on the staircase, with most of the washstands. But Jimmy Silver & Co. had camped out before, and they were ready to camp out again. There were plenty of blankets, at all events—and that was the chief thing. Beds were made on the floor of the dormitory, and cheerful rebels turned into them.

Sentries kept on the go during the night—nodding at their posts occasionally, perhaps. Still, they certainly would have been on the "qui vive" if anybody had attempted to clamber over the barricade. Nobody did. The night passed without alarm.

The garrison disdained to take notice of the rising-bell in the morning. Other Forms had to turn out—not so the Fourth! They yawned, and sat up in bed, and chatted, and did not turn out till a good half-hour after the rising-bell had ceased to clang. By that time even Tubby Muffin was ready to get up; he was getting hungry.

Breakfast in the corridor was a cheery meal that morning. There were half a dozen spirit-stoves for cooking, brought up from the studies, and there was a large grate in the dormitory—never used, it is true, but ready for use—and the rebels lighted a huge fire in it. Coal there was none; but the juniors had access to a box-room where there was lumber, and several old packing-cases were found and promptly confiscated. Between the wood fire and the spirit stoves in the passage, the cookery went on gaily, and the rebels enjoyed that rather disorderly meal, much more than they would have enjoyed a more orderly meal under a master's eye downstairs.

After breakfast, there was football in the passage—not very scientific footer, certainly, but very energetic and considerably noisy. It kept the rebels warm, and it gave them exercise. But Jimmy Silver was careful to see that a watch was kept on the barricade. He did not believe for a moment that Mr. Manders would, or could, allow matters to go on as they were; and he expected a move from the

enemy at any moment. Where Mr. Manders was to raise forces was a mystery, since the prefects had abandoned him, and the majesty of the Law had proved of no avail. But Jimmy Silver sagely opined that Manders had something up his sleeve; and the event proved that Uncle James of Rookwood was right.

It was about half-past ten in the morning when Arthur Edward Lovell, looking from the corridor window, uttered a shout.

"Come here, you fellows!"

There was a rush to the window.

"What's on?"

"Look!"

Lovell pointed across to the distant gates, which could be seen from this especial window.

A burly man in thigh-boots and a sou'-wester had appeared in the gateway. Mr. Manders was standing there, and old Mack had come out of his lodge. Even at the distance Jimmy Silver recognised the man in the big boots—he had seen him before. His name was Bill Harker, and he worked on the Latham barges. He was a brawny, powerful man, with a square jaw and a bulldog look, and much distinguished locally for his exciting career as a fighting-man. Bill Harker had been "run in" more times than he could remember; and it was probable that he would be run in many times more, before old age damped his ardent spirits.

Old Mack, the porter, blinked at Mr. Harker—as Jimmy Silver & Co. were blinking from the distant window. Mack would certainly not have opened the gates to Mr. Harker, though he was pulling at the bell. But Mr. Manders—evidently expecting the caller—had come along, and curtly ordered the porter to admit Harker.

"My hey!" murmured Mack.

He did as he was bid, and Mr. William Harker stamped in. He was followed by two other barges.

They were both powerful fellows, extremely rough and ready in their looks. They touched their hats awkwardly to Mr. Manders.

"Good-morning — good-morning!" exclaimed Mr. Manders.

"Mornin,' sir!" mumbled the three barges together.

"I am very glad to see you here. You understand what is required of you—"

"I've told my mates, sir," said Bill Harker. "They know what's on. Bless your 'eart, sir; we'll work the blooming oracle for you in two shakes of a blinking rat's tail, sir."

Mr. Manders coughed. Bill Harker's mode of address was really hardly suited to the scholastic precincts of Rookwood. Old Mack, staring at the three bargemen as if they were three horrid phantoms, backed into his lodge. He guessed now what the bargemen had come for, and Mack was shocked at Mr. Manders. It wasn't his place to tell Mr. Manders so; but he was shocked and he disapproved strongly.

"Of course, you are not to use—unnecessary violence," said Mr. Manders to his extraordinary recruits.

"Just so, sir!" said Bill Harker. "Just knock 'em about a bit, that's all, ain't it?"

"Hem! Not exactly that. Reduce them to obedience—force them to leave the place they have barricaded themselves in—"

"You leave that to us, sir," said Harker reassuringly. "Arter we've got among 'em, they'll be as quiet as lambs."

"They better!" said one of Mr. Harker's comrades. "Their blooming mothers won't know 'em arter, else."

"I believe you, Alf!" said the third.

"We're going to earn our 'arf-quid each, sir, don't you fret," said Bill Harker. "Let's git at the young blighters!"

"Ahem! Follow me," said Mr. Manders.

He led the three bargemen across the quadrangle. Bill Harker & Co. looked round them with interest, and with grinning faces. In their own rough way, they were good-humoured fellows, and they looked on their expedition to Rookwood as a rough sort of "lark." Certainly they were surprised at being called in by Mr. Manders. It was undoubtedly the first time in history that a Rookwood master had gone to the Red Cow at Latcham for help in dealing with rebellious Lower School boys. But Harker & Co. were quite prepared to earn half a sovereign each by thrashing a mob of naughty boys for Mr. Manders.

"Follow me, my men!" said Mr. Manders.

"We're arter you, sir!" said Alf.

And the grinning bargemen followed Mr. Manders up the staircase.

CHAPTER 25.

Fighting for It!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. exchanged glances.

At the sight of the bargemen at the gates, Jimmy had suspected the truth at once. But it really seemed too bad to be true. When Harker & Co. crossed the quadrangle with Mr. Manders, and disappeared into the School House below, there could be no further doubt.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a long, expressive whistle.

"Three giddy bargees!" he said. "My only Aunt Sempronia! Manders has been down to Latcham and tipped them to come up here for us."

"The awful rotter!" said Mornington. "What would the Head think of that, I wonder?"

"Probably he's rather anxious to get it over before the Head can hear anything," remarked Erroll.

"I—I say, wharrer we going to do?" exclaimed Tubby Muffin, in great alarm. "I—I say, Jimmy, there's time to dodge away before they get upstairs—yaroooooop!"

Reginald Muffin finished with a fearful yell as Arthur Edward Lovell smote him, and he went bumping on the floor.

"Good, man!" said Jimmy Silver. "Kick him, somebody!"

Conroy obliged. And there was another wild yell from Tubby Muffin. And Peele and Gower, who had been going to make remarks, refrained from making them. It was clear that Jimmy Silver & Co. were not thinking of surrender, and that they did not want to hear anything on the subject.

"They're hefty toughs, those three!" said Raby. "But we've got the advantage of position. We've icked the prefects! We can lick the bargees!"

"We can try, at any rate!" said Newcome.

"We're going to hold out to the bitter end!" said Jimmy Silver, between his teeth. "We're going to hold out, if Manders gathers up every hooligan along the river from Coombe to Latcham."

"Hear, hear!"

"Stand ready—bats and stumps!" said Jimmy. "We've got to hit hard! If those roughs get among us, there'll be damage done!"

Trump, tramp, tramp!

The heavy boots of the bargemen rang on the stairs.

Bill Harker, Alf, and George came tramping up, and they grinned more widely at the sight of the bedstead barricade and the row of determined boyish faces over it. Behind them Mr. Manders followed, with a cruel smile on his hard face. He had no doubts this time. These three hulking fellows could have made hay of the Sixth Form, let alone the Fourth. His only uneasiness was that they might get excited and do a little too much damage.

A few black eyes, swollen noses, and bruises would not matter—to Mr. Manders. But if teeth were knocked out, or anything of that kind, the matter would want a great deal of explaining away. But Mr. Manders felt that he had to chance that. The barring-out had to be crushed before the Head could hear of it, and this was "the only way."

"'Ere they are—wot?" grinned Bill Harker, halting on the landing, and staring up at the barricade. "These 'ere the coveys, sir?"

"They are the rebellious young rascals!" said Mr. Manders.

"Bless your 'cart, sir! We'll bring 'em to time!"

"I believe you!" said Alf.

"Jest about a minute and a narf!" said George.

"One moment!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "Silver—Lovell—all of you—listen to me!"

"Can't be done, sir!" interjected Mornington. "You're a boro, sir! And your voice isn't musical! Couldn't you oblige us, sir, by going back to the Modern side and doing your croaking there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the rebels.

Mr. Manders crimsoned.

"Listen to me!" he roared. "Unless you descend at once, and surrender, and return to your duty, these men will compel you to do so! I desire to avoid violence! I give you the opportunity to surrender. Take advantage of it! Now——"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Rats!"

"Go home, Manders!"

Bill Harker burst into a gruff chuckle.

"Leave 'em to us, sir," he said. "We'll 'andle them!"

"Do your best!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Do not—hem!—damage them more than you can help—I mean injuries of a serious

kind—you are empowered to thrash them without money——"

"Leave it to us, sir! Come on, mates."

"We're arter you, Bill."

Up the top staircase came the three barges, tramping heavily. Over the barricade, the Fistical Four and their comrades looked at them grimly. It was an unequal struggle—once the big barges were among the juniors, the latter certainly would not have the ghost of a chance. All depended upon holding the barricade, and stalling off the attack—and the rebels realised that this was a much more lofty task than in the case of the prefects or Mr. Boggs. When Bill Harker was on the war-path in the Latcham pubs, three constables were required to get him to the station. He was a most redoubtable foe for Lower School boys to tackle. But Jimmy Silver & Co. faced the enemy with cool determination.

"Stand back!" rapped out Jimmy, as the bargeman reached the barricade. He flourished a cricket stump.

"You 'it me with that there stick, and you'll never know arter wot's 'appened to you!" said Mr. Harker.

"I shall hit you fast enough if you come on!" retorted Jimmy Silver.

"We'll see about that there!" grinned Bill.

He grasped the barricade and came on; and he saw about "that there" very quickly indeed. Jimmy Silver brought the stump down on his head with a crash.

The roar that broke from Bill Harker would have done credit to the Bull of Bashan in the most strenuous period of his career.

He was hurt, but he was more surprised and enraged than hurt. He reeled on the stairs, cursing wildly. His flow of language was decidedly more suited to the Red Cow at Latcham than to Rookwood School. All the good-humour was gone from his rugged face now—he was in the mood now in which he was accustomed to make warm work for three policemen on a Saturday night. And his look told the juniors only too plainly what would happen to them if the ruffian came over the barricade, and even Peele and Gower and Townsend and Topham backed up desperately in the defence.

Bill Harker came clambering on, and his comrades clambered with him. The barri-

cade shook and trembled under their heavy weight.

Blows rained on them from within.

It was no time for ceremony or half measures. The rebels of Rookwood had to keep the enemy out, or to be knocked about with reckless brutality. Mr. Manders was a little dismayed as he saw the looks of his auxiliaries, and heard the fearful oaths they were growling and grunting out. But it was too late for Mr. Manders to repent his drastic measures.

Cricket-bats and stumps, fires-bats and pillows and bolsters and chair-legs, crashed and smashed on the bargemen as they clambered over. If the defence had weakened for a second, if the juniors had hesitated to do hard damage, the attack would have carried the day. But the desperate defence stood them in good stead.

Bill Harker, half stunned by the crashing blows he had received, rolled back off the barricade, and collapsed on the stairs.

Crash, crash, crash!

George was sent whirling back, with black bruises nearly all over him, and seeing more stars than ever glittered in the firmament.

Alf came on savagely, and clambered right over, in spite of raining blows, and dropped on the corridor landing.

Fortunately, he dropped headlong, and the juniors were able to tackle him before he could rise. Mornington jumped on him, landing in the small of his back, fairly squashing him to the floor. Lovell sat on the back of his neck, Raby on his head. Oswald and Flynn captured his arms and hung on to them.

Harker and George reeled back to the landing below, covered with bruises, with noses streaming red, swearing furiously. They had faced punishment at which many men would have balked, and they were hurt badly. And they were beaten.

"They're going!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Erroll.

"Fix up that brute!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Get a rope or something, quick—"

A cord was forthcoming, and as a dozen juniors held the struggling Alf, Jimmy Silver bound his wrists together behind his back, and then tied his legs at the ankles and the knees.

"Shove him into the dorm!" said Jimmy.

It had been a breathless struggle. But they had had the best of it. One of the

enemy was a prisoner; the other two, battered and bruised, were driven back. Mr. Manders was almost beside himself. He did not dare to "rag" his terrible auxiliaries. Bill Harker would have knocked him down the staircase without ceremony at a word.

"Perhaps—perhaps you had better go!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"We ain't going without Alf!" roared Mr. Harker. "And we ain't going till we've walloped that crowd of young 'ounds black and blue! George, my 'arty, you 'ike off to the Red Cow, and bring along some of our pals!"

"Wot-ho!" said George.

And he strode away.

Harker sat on the stairs to wait for reinforcements from the Red Cow. And Mr. Manders, in utter dismay, wondered what on earth was going to happen when they came!

CHAPTER 26.

Up Against It!

"MR. MANDERS!"
Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, planted himself directly in Mr. Manders' way, and the lean gentleman had to stop.

"Mr. Manders," rumbled the Fifth Form master, "this cannot go on."

"Enough, sir!"

"You have brought hooligans into the school to deal with the Fourth Form boys. Can you imagine for one moment that Dr. Chisholm would approve of any such proceeding?"

"Dr. Chisholm left me in control here!" snapped Mr. Manders. "I desire no criticism from my subordinates, Mr. Greely."

"I have consulted with my colleagues," said Mr. Greely. "Mr. Bohun, Mr. Wiggins, Mr. Flinders, are all of my opinion. This cannot be allowed to go on. You have dismissed the Fourth Form master. You cannot deal with the Fourth. We have decided to send for Mr. Dalton, and ask him to come back to the school to save further disaster."

"What?" stammered Mr. Manders.

"The juniors will obey their Form-master. I trust that you will see that this is the only thing to be done," said Mr. Greely.

"If you dare to take such a step, sir, I—I

will dismiss you also!" spluttered Mr. Manders.

The Fifth Form master shrugged his shoulders.

"I am prepared to answer for it to the Head, when he returns!" he answered. "I shall not answer to you, Mr. Manders. I have already sent a message to Mr. Dalton, at the Coombe Arms, asking him to return here for the sake of the school."

"This—this insolence——" Mr. Manders gasped. "I shall refuse to allow Mr. Dalton to set a foot within the precincts of Rookwood. I never approved of the Head engaging him in the first place; a man who has figured in the boxing-ring is not a fit person to take charge of a Form at Rookwood. I decline to allow him to return, Mr. Greely."

"You will not be consulted, sir."

"What? What?"

"This has gone too far, sir. As for Mr. Dalton having been an amateur boxer before he came to Rookwood, that is no affair of yours. I expect him, sir, to respond to my urgent appeal, and to arrive here. He will have the support of the whole staff in resuming his duties. Dr. Chisholm, I am sure, will approve, when he knows the facts. So I request you, sir, to save further trouble by dismissing, at once, your very extraordinary auxiliaries," said Mr. Greely, with a great deal of dignity.

There was a sudden yell from the quadrangle.

"Here we are, Bill!"

The bargees had arrived!

Mr. Manders looked out of the big doorway. George, the bargeman, had returned, and with him came five other muscular fellows, looking in a very hilarious mood. Apparently the bargees regarded their expedition to Rookwood as a sort of "spree." They came tramping across the quad, stared at on all sides by the Rookwood crowd.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Greely. "Mr. Manders, order these men to—depart at once!"

Mr. Manders gave him a bitter look.

"They will deal with the rebellious young rascals, and with Mr. Dalton if he should venture to return here."

"They—they shall be—be ejected at——"

"Eject them!" sneered Mr. Manders.

But that was a task far beyond Mr. Greely's powers. The portly gentleman, sniffing with indignation, retired hastily to

his study, as the hilarious bargees came tramping into the School House.

"Here they come!"

"Look out now!"

"We're up against it, and no giddy error!"

The barricade on the dormitory staircase was lined with faces. Cricket-bats and stumps and chair-legs were flourished. Jimmy Silver & Co., in a rather desperate mood, manned their defences, determined to resist to the last, though even Jimmy Silver had little hope of holding the fort against a force like this.

Bill Harker, with a malicious grin, put himself at the head of his reinforcements. His heavy boots rang on the dormitory staircase.

Mr. Manders, on the landing behind them, watched them with anxious eyes. He could see that the juniors intended to resist, and what might come of the struggle he could not guess.

Certainly there would be damage done—much damage. Bill Harker had been hurt, and he was in a savage and vengeful mood, and it was pretty certain that the rest of the gang would share his feelings as soon as the cricket-bats had begun to rap on their heads.

But they were fairly certain to rush the barricade successfully, and then the juniors would be knocked right and left once the muscular bargees were at close quarters.

That would have been very satisfactory to Mr. Manders in one way, but not in another. He had to give an account of his stewardship when the Head returned, and such items as missing front teeth or smashed noses would have looked very awkward in the account.

But Mr. Manders could not have controlled his allies if he had wanted to. Bill Harker & Co. had taken the matter into their own hands, and Mr. Harker was thinking only of revenge for his injuries, not of the money he had been promised in payment of his services.

The seven bargemen came tramping up the dormitory staircase in formidable array, headed by Bill Harker. Behind the barricade Jimmy Silver & Co. faced them grimly, though Peele and Lattrey, Gower and Towny and Toppy had already basely deserted their posts.

But Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern Fourth, backed up Jimmy Silver heartily,

and the defenders were very numerous. Jimmy held up his hand in warning as the assailants advanced.

"Keep off!" he called out. "There'll be broken heads if you come on, I warn you!"

"Come on!" roared Bill Harker.

And the bargees made a rush.

"Back up!" roared Lovell.

"Give 'em socks!"

The scene that followed was a wild and whirling one.

Jimmy Silver & Co. struck forcibly at every head that came within reach, and there were loud yells from the assailants as bats and stumps landed on heads and shoulders.

But the bargees came on resolutely, and three or four of them gripped hold of the stacked bedsteads, and dragged and pulled and wrenched with great effect. A bedstead was wrenched out of the barricade, and then the whole barrier reeled and trembled.

Two of the assailants went rolling down the stairs, yelling, and one of them struggled against the wall, clasping his damaged head with both hands and gasping.

But the rest came fiercely on, and Bill Harker plunged through the broken barricade, crashing the bedsteads away on either side of him, heedless of the hefty blows he received on all sides.

Crash, crash, crash!

A bedstead went rolling over the stairs, and crashed down from step to step, and reached the lower landing, Mr. Manders jumping out of its way with the activity of a kangaroo.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Bill Harker.

"Back up!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pile in! Keep the brutes off!" panted Lovell.

A drive from Mr. Harker's brawny fist at close quarters sent Arthur Edward Lovell spinning along the dormitory passage. Three or four juniors fastened desperately on to Bill Harker, and were tossed aside like so many infants by the big bargee.

"Come on!" roared Bill Harker. "We've got 'em now! Knock 'em out!"

"We're arter you, Bill!"

"Help!" yelled Tubby Muffin. "Police! Oh dear! Help!"

The barricade was fairly broken through now. Bill Harker was through it, and George was close behind, and two or three

assailants were clambering over the wreck. Jimmy Silver & Co. still resisted desperately, but they were fighting a losing game.

Then suddenly from the lower stairs a deep, clear voice rang out in the tones of command:

"Stop!"

A handsome, athletic young man had entered the School House, and he was coming up the stairs three at a time.

He passed Mr. Manders on the landing without heeding him. But Mr. Manders caught him by the sleeve.

"Mr. Dalton, how dare you return here

Richard Dalton shook off his hand impatiently.

"Go!" thundered Mr. Manders. "I order you to leave Rookwood at once, Mr. Dalton—"

"Hold your foolish tongue, sir!" snapped the master of the Fourth.

"What? What?"

"I shall resume charge of my Form, sir, with or without your consent, and answer to the Head when he returns!"

"I command you—"

"Nonsense!"

Shaking off Mr. Manders' grabbing hand again, Mr. Dalton ran up the dormitory staircase.

There was a yell of delight from Gaby, who spotted him first.

"It's Dicky! Old Dicky's come back!"

"Mr. Dalton! Hurrah!"

"Sock it to 'em!" Bill Harker roared.

Bill had grasped Mornington and Erroll by their collars, and was knocking their heads together with resounding cracks. Mr. Dalton grasped the big bargee by the shoulder and swung him round. Athletic as "Dicky" Dalton was, he looked a mere slip beside the powerful barge-man.

But there was the strength of iron in his grip. Bill Harker spun round in his grasp like a humming-top.

"Ere, wot—" he ejaculated.

"Stop this at once!"

"Wot? Who are you?" roared Harker.

"By gum, I'll knock your teeth down your throat if you chip in 'ere!"

"Let those boys go at once!"

Bill Harker let the dazed juniors go, to turn upon the young man who had intervened. His brawny fists were raised. There was a shout from George, the burgeman.

"Old on, Bill! It's young Dalton. Don't 'ammer 'im! 'Old on, I tell you!"

And George pushed the excited Mr. Harker back. The struggle on the landing ceased now—the moment, at least: Mr. Dalton's arrival had had the effect of stilling the combat. The juniors stood panting, and the bargemen gathered round their leader, Mr. Dalton facing the group of them coolly and unflinchingly. Harker glared at his pal George.

"You know this 'ere bloke?" he asked.

"Know him," said George. "I believe you!" He touched his forelock to Mr. Dalton. "I was in your battalion, sir. You remember George 'Addick, what you carried on your back out of No Man's Land, with a bullet in his leg. Ain't seen you, sir, since I was sent down the line more'n ten year ago."

Mr. Dalton nodded and smiled.

"I remember you, Haddick," he said.

"Look 'ere!" roared Bill Harker. "That's all very well, but that young feller ain't going to interfere 'ere. I'm going to wallop every young blighter 'ere till he's black and blue all over; that's what I'm a-goin' to do!"

"You're not!" said Mr. Dalton crisply. "You're going out of Rookwood as fast as you can walk, my friend!"

Bill Harker laughed derisively.

"Who's going to make me?" he inquired.

"I am."

"Oh lor'!" said Bill Harker. "Old me while I larf, somebody!"

"You chuck it, Bill!" said George sagely. "Mr. Dalton was the best boxer in the regiment—"

"You shut up, George! If you know the bloke, I'll give him leave to clear off, if he goes quick. But if he don't, I'll pitch him down the stairs on his neck, and mighty sudden!"

"Look 'ere—"

"You jest watch him go, 'ead first!" said Harker.

And he made a rush at Mr. Dalton.

What happened next was a surprise to William Harker. Mr. Dalton did not go down the stairs head first. It was Mr. Harker who crashed to the floor on his bread back, with a feeling in his stubbly chin as if a mule had kicked him there.

"Oh, well hit!" gasped Lovell.

CHAPTER 27.

Dicky Dalton Takes a Hand!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. gathered round eagerly on the broad landing. The sight of Mr. Dalton at Rookwood again delighted them. Not only because "Dicky" Dalton was very popular with his Form, and because his return was a defiance of the tyrant of Rookwood, but because he came at a critical moment as a much-needed ally. There was no master at Rookwood who could have stood up to the bargemen, but Mr. Dalton was quite different from Mr. Greely and Mr. Wiggins and the rest. They were gentlemen of great scholastic attainments. At Greek or Latin or the higher mathematics they could have played Bill Harker's head off, so to speak. But undoubtedly Bill Harker could have taken them in his brawny hands and knocked their learned heads together with ease. But Mr. Dalton was an entirely different proposition. Well did the Fistical Four remember how they had seen him box in the Bunbury Ring before he became a master at Rookwood. They had seen him knock the Bunbury Pet into a cocked hat. And they were confident that he could knock Mr. Harker into another cocked hat, though Bill was a much heftier gentleman than the Bunbury Pet.

"Go it, Dicky!" sang out Arthur Edward Lovell, and there was a laugh and a cheer from the rebels of Rookwood.

Mr. Dalton gave them a rather grim look. Bill Harker raised himself on one elbow, blinking. George Haddick, grinning, knelt down to help his pal. The other bargees looked on. It was obviously going to be a fight between Bill Harker and that handsome, athletic young master, and the muscular river men rather looked forward to seeing it, and they were prepared to see fair play. Rough though they were, there was no doubt about that. Every one of them had seen service in the war, and they had the British instinct of fair play. Not a hand was raised to touch Mr. Richard Dalton after he had knocked Harker down.

"Jolly glad to see you again, Mr. Dalton!" said Jimmy Silver, catching the young Form-master's rather stern eye.

"Welcome home, sir!" said Mornington.

"Good old Dicky!" bawled Lovell.

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Dalton.

"Wha-a-at?"

"This mutiny in the school must cease at once!" said Mr. Dalton. "I am going to resume charge of my Form, and leave the decision to the Head when he returns—"

"Hurrah!"

"No more Manders!" shouted Newcome.

"Mr. Manders will not be suffered to interfere in the Fourth Form room again," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "But I shall not allow him, or any master at Rookwood, to be spoken of disrespectfully. Remember that!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here——" began Lovell.

"Silence, Lovell!"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell looked rather rebellious. Certainly he was a great admirer of Dicky Dalton, and he was glad to see him at Rookwood again. But, as a matter of fact, the riot of the past few days had done a good deal of harm. Some of the juniors were unprepared now to submit to just authority. Lovell was ready to greet Mr. Dalton rather as an ally than as a master; and it was quite clear that Mr. Dalton was not thinking of anything of the sort.

Before anything more could be said, Bill Harker staggered to his feet. He looked a little groggy, and he was rather breathless. The expression on his rugged face was positively ferocious, but it was mingled with a new respect. Bill Harker could respect a man who was able to knock him spinning like a skittle.

Mr. Dalton met his savage stare coolly.

"Now, my friend," he said, "it's time for you to go."

"Not afore I've smashed your front teeth in," said Bill Harker. "Not afore I've knocked your eyes back into your 'ead."

"Come on, Bill!" murmured George Haddick. "It's been a spree, and now let's 'ook it. Some of you kids go and let Alf loose, and we'll travel!"

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver.

And he cut into the dormitory to release the prisoner of war, Alf, the bargeman, looked very cross as he emerged from the dormitory, and joined his comrades.

But George Haddick's remonstrances were lost on Mr. Harker. That worthy gentleman slowly and deliberately peeled off his coat, and rolled back his sleeves. He had

been knocked down, and nothing but vengeance was good enough for him. And of all the bargees only George was peaceably disposed. The rest urged Mr. Harker to "go it."

"You refuse to go in peace?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"Jest a few!" said Bill Harker satirically.

"Old Longlegs owes us 'arf-a-quid each!" growled Alf. "I reckon as 'ow I've earned my little bit."

"No doubt Mr. Manders will pay you what he owes," said Richard Dalton. "But you must really leave Rookwood at once!"

"Are you ready, young cockchafer?" asked Bill Harker.

"Certainly, if you insist upon trouble!" said Mr. Dalton quietly. "We will step downstairs, and your friends and mine will see fair play."

"That we will, sir!" said George Haddick heartily. "Fair play's a jewel. Come on, Bill!"

Bill Harker nodded surlily, and tramped down the stairs with George. The bargees followed with heavy tramp, and Mr. Dalton went with them. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"The game's up, so far as the barring-out goes!" remarked Valentine Mornington.

"We've won our point," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Mr. Dalton takes control again, and he's going to keep Manders off the grass. That's what we went on strike for."

"In fact, we've won!" said Raby.

"Yes, rather!"

"That's all very well," said Arthur Edward Lovell warmly. "But I don't see even Dicky riding the high horse——"

"Fathead!"

"We've downed Manders, and we could down Dalton, if it came to that!" exclaimed Lovell belligerently.

"My dear chap, if you whisper a whisper against Dicky, I'll bang your head on the wall till you see stars!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Enough's as good as a feast! We've won the game, and now the cue is to play up like little men, and show what really nice chaps we are——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, but——"

"Bother your butts! Come on and see Dicky wallop the bargeman!" said the captain of the Fourth.

The Fourth-Formers crowded down the staircase. They were keenly interested in the conflict that was inevitable between Richard Dalton and the big bargeman. And they were not the only ones interested. Nearly all Rookwood gathered in the quadrangle breathlessly to look on. As Jimmy Silver & Co. were crowding out of the School House they passed Mr. Manders, and that gentleman shouted to them. "The barring-out was over. That was clear. And Mr. Manders was under the impression—a mistaken one—that he was victorious, and monarch of all he surveyed."

"Boys! Into your Form-room at once!" he shouted.

Lovell glanced round.

"Hallo! Still burbling, old scout?" he asked pleasantly.

"Go into your Form-room——"

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke, Manders!"

Mr. Manders had a cane in his hand. He strode at the Fistical Four, gripping it hard.

"Bump him!" yelled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" shouted Mr. Manders, as the juniors closed round him. "Harker—Haddock—help—oh! Ah! Ooooooop!"

In the grasp of a dozen pairs of hands, Mr. Manders was swept off his feet. Bump!

It was the first time in the history of Rookwood School that a master had been "bumped" by Lower School boys. But it happened now!

Mr. Manders sat down on the hard, unsympathetic floor with a heavy concussion and a loud yell. He sat and roared—and busy hands stuffed his mortar-board down the back of his neck, and then the juniors left him, and swarmed out into the quadrangle, leaving Mr. Manders gasping and spluttering wildly.

CHAPTER 28.

A Fight to a Finish!

THE fight was already beginning. Jimmy Silver & Co. had to shove and elbow a way through a crowded ring to get a view, and there were loud and wrathful protests. The Sixth Form were there to a man—and Bulkeley had already told Mr. Dalton that they were

ready to help him clear the invaders out of Rookwood, if he gave the word—Manders or no Manders. But Mr. Dalton shook his head. He did not want a free fight in the Rookwood quad. From the window of the Masters' Common-room, Mr. Greely and the rest of the staff looked on at the scene with bated breath.

"Now, then, come on, you blinking whipper-snapper!" said Bill Harker, squaring up to the master of the Fourth.

"One moment," said Mr. Dalton; "I am quite willing to give you any satisfaction you desire, Mr. Harker, but——"

"Come on, then, and not so much jaw!"

"But I want it made clear that, when I have done so, you and your friends leave Rookwood at once."

Bill Harker laughed gruffly.

"You lick me, and I'll walk away like a lamb, and my friends with me," he said. "It's up to you! I'll go if I've got to go. That's me! Otherwise, I'm going to wallop all them cheeky young blighters till their own mummies won't know them. Catch on, to that!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Dalton quietly.

Mr. Manders came whisking out of the School House, dishevelled and breathless. "Harker!" he shouted.

"You stand off—I'm busy!" snapped Bill Harker.

"Put that man out of the gates!" exclaimed Mr. Manders, pointing a skinny finger at Mr. Dalton.

"Right you are, old son of a gun—I'll do that!" said Mr. Harker. "Now, then, young pippin, come on and take your gruel!"

And Bill Harker advanced to the attack giving his adversary no time for further words.

Mr. Dalton met him coolly.

The bargeman's attack was fierce and pressing, and the Form-master had to give ground a little. He side-stepped quickly, and avoided the ugly rush, and closed in again much more quickly than Bill Harker anticipated. His right and left came rattling on the bargeman. But Bill was accustomed to taking severe punishment in his frequent "rows" with other barges, and with the police, and he hardly flinched from the blows; hard as they were. The Form-master boxer had a foeman worthy of his steel in William Harker.

Round the combatants the crowd was

thick, and the prefects kept them back to give room for the fight.

There were no rounds in that fight; it was hammer-and-tongs from start to finish. Bill Harker was not accustomed to boxing by rules.

He had little science, but he had enormous strength, and plenty of bulldog pluck. Dicky Dalton was a master of the boxing art—and his skill stood him in good stead now.

Again and again he eluded his bulky adversary, at the same time dealing out punishment; but he did not have it all his own way. A brawny fist crashed into his handsome face at last, and there was a gasp from some of the onlookers. The young master went staggering, and Bill Harker followed up the attack fiercely, and a heavy body-blow laid Richard Dalton on the ground.

Bill Harker stood and panted.

"Pick 'im up!" he grinned.

But Mr. Dalton did not need picking up. His nose and mouth were streaming red, and his cheek was cut; but he did not seem to feel pain. He was on his feet with a spring, eluding the rush of the bargee, and in a second more he was fighting again. There was a roar of cheering from the Rookwood crowd.

"Bravo, Dalton!"

"Good old Dicky!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

Hammer-and-tongs the combatants went it now, and Rookwooders and bargemen looked on breathlessly.

"Ain't he a daisy?" ejaculated Arthur Edward Lovell. "Ain't he a real beaut? Let me hear any of you say a word against Dicky after this! Just a word!"

"Nobody has, excepting you!" grinned Mornington.

Crash!

Bill Harker went to grass, under a terrific drive from the Form-master boxer.

He lay on his back and gasped.

"Man down!" gasped Lovell. "Good old Dicky!"

"Pick him up!" grinned Newcome.

George Haddock helped his friend up. Bill Harker leaned on him, and spluttered for breath. His rugged face was not pleasant to look at now—there were half-a-dozen cuts, and bruises were forming all over it. One of his eyes was quite closed;

the other blinked feebly and painfully. And his nose had almost lost all resemblance to a nose.

"Chuck it, Bill!" murmured George. "Don't I keep on telling you he was the best boxer in the regiment?"

"Shut up, George! I'm going to smash him!"

And Bill Harker staggered to the attack again, looking extremely groggy. Mr. Dalton was looking rather "used up," too, but he was evidently in much better condition than his bulky foe. He met the groggy attack with cool determination.

For several minutes there was hard and close fighting, in which hard punishment was given and taken, and then Bill Harker went to the ground again, spinning from a hefty drive straight "on the mark."

This time he did not rise to George's helping hand. He gave a deep groan as Haddock bent over him.

"Going on, Bill?" asked George.

"Ow! Wow! Gow! Yow!"

Mr. Harker sat up at last, faintly and feebly. With his one half-open eye he blinked around him. The sea of faces danced before his dazed vision. Mr. Dalton stood, breathing hard, waiting for him.

"Bill's got it!" remarked Alf, and the bargemen nodded. It was evident that Bill had "got it."

"Ow, ow! Wow!" said Mr. Harker.

"Oh, my hey! Oh, my nose! That's some blooming prize-fighter, that bloke is. Ow! Wow! 'Elp me up, George, and don't stand grinning there like a blessed monkey! Ow!"

The big bargeman was helped to his feet. But he did not seek to renew the contest. He stood leaning heavily on his pal George.

He blinked feebly at Richard Dalton.

"You ready to go on?" he asked.

"Certainly!"

"Well," said Mr. Harker, "I ain't! You're too good for me, and I don't care who knows it! I'm goin', sir, as soon as I get my blooming breath. Ow! Three peelers couldn't have 'andled me like that! Ow!"

Mr. Dalton smiled, and held out his hand.

"You've put up a good fight, my friend," he said. "No malice on either side, I hope? Give me your fist."

Harker blinked at him, and hesitated. Then he put out his huge hand.

"You're a gentleman, sir!" he said. "Sorry we've 'ad trouble. All the fault of old Longlegs there! Well, I'm goin'! Come on, boys!"

"Old on!" said George. "Longlegs ain't squared yet!"

Mr. Manders had looked on at the fight with gathering wrath and bitterness. He had hoped to see the Fourth Form master completely knocked out by the burly bargeman. That hope had been disappointed. He scowled blackly as George Haddock came towards him.

"You owe us arf-a-quid each, sir—three of us," said George—"Bill, Alf, and me! We've done our job 'ere!"

"You will receive nothing from me unless you turn that man out of the school!" snapped Mr. Manders savagely.

"We've done our job—"

"Turn that man out!" exclaimed Mr. Manders, pointing to the master of the Fourth.

"That wasn't in the contract," said George, "and he's a bit too hefty for us, even if we wanted to—which we don't! Ain't he fought it out fair and square with Bill, and ain't fair play a jewel? You 'and out the quids, as promised—"

"Not a shilling—not a penny—unless—"

"Take it out of his 'ide, then!" called out Bill Harker.

"That I will, if he don't square!" said George indignantly. "We ain't come 'ere to be swindled by a skinny schoolmaster! You paying up, old bag o' bones?" And George exhibited a grimy set of knuckles under Mr. Manders' long nose, and the Modern master jumped back.

"I—I—I—" Mr. Manders stuttered. "I—I—I will certainly pay the sum agreed. I—I—I—"

"Pay up, then, and not so much chin-wag!" growled George.

And Mr. Manders paid up, as amiably as he could, lest worse should befall him. Then the bargemen started for the gates. Bulkeley and the Sixth had gathered round Mr. Dalton, lest there should be further trouble. But there was no sign of it. The champion had been beaten, and the barges abided by the bargain they had made. They went peaceably with the much-damaged Mr. Harker in their midst. And the Rookwooders were very glad and relieved to see them go. Even Mr. Roger Manders was glad to see the backs of his extraordinary allies. And when they had

tramped out into the road, old Mack popped out of his lodge like a cork from a ginger-beer bottle, and hurriedly closed and locked the gates.

"Good old Dicky!" chortled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Some fight—what?"

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Greely came out of the School House and shook hands with the master of the Fourth.

"Glad to see you back, Dalton," he said effusively. "Order will be restored now, I think. The whole staff will support you, if necessary, against any interference from Mr. Manders."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Dalton.

He turned to the crowd of juniors.

"My boys, I am in control again now, until the Head returns. I expect you all to return to your duty immediately."

"Certainly, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather, Mr. Dalton!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

Mr. Manders bustled forward.

"Mr. Dalton, I forbid your presence in this school. I forbid your interference with these boys! Boys, you will go into the Form-room at once! You are detained for the afternoon!"

"It is a half-holiday to-day!" said Mr. Dalton. "Boys, you will not go into the Form-room. I request you to restore order in your dormitory, and remove as far as possible all traces of the damage done on the staircase. After that you are free to do as you like."

"Certainly, sir!"

The once rebellious Fourth were as meek as lambs—to their own popular Form-master. Of Mr. Manders they took not the slightest notice. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked off, heedless of Mr. Manders' shouted command to go into the Form-room at once.

Mr. Manders fixed a furious look on the Fourth Form master.

"Once more, Richard Dalton, I order you to leave Rookwood!" he panted.

Without troubling to reply, Mr. Dalton turned his back on the Modern master. Roger Manders was left standing, trembling with rage and chagrin. His rule was over at Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co.'s barring out had been, after all, a complete success, and in a merry mood the rebels of Rookwood celebrated their victory.

CHAPTER 29.

Hands Off!

JIMMY SILVER smiled. Lovell and Raby and Newcome smiled also.

The Fistical Four of the Rookwood Fourth seemed to be in a merry mood that snowy February morning.

It was Mr. Manders who caused them to smile.

Mr. Manders was crossing over towards the School House. There was a black frown upon his brow. It grew blacker as he sighted the cheery chums of the Classical Fourth. And Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled!

Mr. Manders came on, still frowning blackly. The Fistical Four were still smiling as he came by—there was no law against smiling.

But their smiles had a very irritating effect upon Roger Manders.

He passed quite close to the Co., and as he passed, Lovell's smile grew broader and more irritating; and Mr. Manders, suddenly reaching out, gave Arthur Edward a resounding box on the ear!

Smack!

It rang like a pistol-shot; and it was followed by a terrific yell from Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy jumped back as Mr. Manders turned on him, evidently with a box on the ear ready for the captain of the Fourth.

"Hands off!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"You impertinent young rascal——"

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Lovell, rubbing his ear. "Oh, crikey!"

Mr. Manders strode on towards the School House steps, apparently somewhat solaced.

Lovell blinked after him in breathless wrath.

"The—the cheeky cad!" stuttered Lovell. "Banging me on the napper! Why, I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Words failed Arthur Edward Lovell. Besides, it was time for action, not for words.

He stooped and gathered up handfuls of snow. His ear was burning, and his eyes blazed.

With great rapidity Lovell kneaded a snowball. Really it was fortunate that there had been a fall of snow in that part of Sussex the night before. Lovell rose again with a big snowball in his hand.

"Go it!" gasped Raby, Whiz!

Mr. Manders, certainly not dreaming of vengeance from the junior he had cuffed, was mounting the steps of the School House, when Lovell let fly.

Buff!

The snowball landed fairly and squarely on the back of Mr. Manders' neck!

"Goal!" ejaculated Newcome.

Mr. Manders gave a sudden yelp, and pitched forward. He landed on his hands and knees on the steps. There was a yell of laughter from a dozen Classical fellows in the quadrangle.

"Well hit, Lovell! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Manders spun round, and sat on the steps, blinking. His hat had fallen off, and his scanty locks streamed in the wind.

"Give him another!" yelled Raby.

Lovell was already grabbing up snow for another missile.

Mr. Manders jumped up. His face was furious as he rushed towards the chums of the Classical Fourth.

"Give him beans!" shouted Jimmy Silver, as the Modern master came rushing on.

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

The four juniors all piled in together. A volley of snowballs met Mr. Manders as he came on, swashing and crashing all over him.

Whiz, whiz! Smash! Crash!

Mr. Manders staggered back and glared at the Classical juniors, but he was not thinking any longer of attack. He turned and ran for the School House.

"Follow on!" shouted Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, yelling with laughter, closed up behind the Modern master as he ran, keeping up a hot fire. Snowballs crashed all over Mr. Manders' back as he dodged up the steps and fled into the School House.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"The dear man has left his hat behind him. Pass it this way, Raby."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Raby "passed" Mr. Manders' hat, and Jimmy passed it on to Lovell, who passed in turn. In a few minutes nearly all the Classical Fourth were playing football with Mr. Manders' hat, and in a few more minutes what remained of the hat was certainly not suitable to adorn the head of a master at Rookwood!

CHAPTER 30.

Mr. Manders Puts His Foot Down!

MR. DALTON, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked up as his study door was flung violently open, and a hatless, snowy gentleman stamped in.

It was close on time for morning classes, and Mr. Dalton was preparing for the Form-room. His handsome face set a little grimly as the Modern master stamped in.

"Mr. Dalton—" Roger Manders gasped for breath. "You—you see—"

"I saw what occurred from my window, Mr. Manders," said the young Form-master quietly.

"You saw ~~me~~ attacked, assailed, assaulted!" ~~exclaimed~~ Mr. Manders.

"I saw you strike a boy of my Form, quite unprovoked," said Mr. Dalton. "Whatever followed was certainly your own fault. You have no right whatever to lay hands on a Classical junior, and certainly not in such a way."

Mr. Manders gasped.

"I might have expected you to uphold those young ruffians in their lawless conduct!" he spluttered.

"I shall not allow the boys of my Form to be interfered with," said Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Manders stared at him across the table. There was bitter dislike in his look, almost amounting to hatred. With an effort the Modern master calmed himself.

"I came over to speak to you, Mr. Dalton, before classes begin," he said. "I have something to say that you must hear."

Mr. Dalton glanced at the clock.

"Pray lose no time, then," he said.

"Will you be seated?"

Mr. Manders did not heed that invitation. He remained standing, glaring at the young man across the table.

"The Head left me in control of Rookwood," he said. "Not being satisfied with you, Mr. Dalton, I dismissed you. You have returned to Rookwood without my consent, and re-taken charge of the Fourth Form against my desire. You have no right in the school at all."

"That is for Dr. Chisholm to settle when he returns, sir."

"Nothing of the sort. I am determined not to allow it."

Mr. Dalton shrugged his shoulders.

"During your absence the Fourth Form broke into open rebellion," continued Mr. Manders. "I need not inquire who inspired it. It was a cunning move on your part, Mr. Dalton, to necessitate your return."

"That is untrue, sir, and you know it!" said the young master hotly. "I knew nothing of the proceedings until I received a message from the whole staff here, requesting me to return and do what I could to put a stop to the state of affairs. I felt it my duty to accede. Since my return, there has been perfect order—"

"Of which this outrage of a few minutes ago is a sample!" sneered Mr. Manders.

"You provoked it, sir."

"I will not bandy words with you, Richard Dalton. I am here to tell you that, having thought the matter out, I have decided that I will not allow you to retain the position you have usurped. I have determined to place a prefect—a Modern prefect—in charge of the Fourth Form for the present."

"The Fourth Form is in my charge, sir."

"I repeat that I shall not allow that to continue."

Mr. Dalton glanced at the clock again.

"I am afraid I can give you no further time, sir," he remarked politely. "I am due in the Form-room in a few minutes."

"I forbid you to enter the Form-room!"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Manders breathed hard.

"If you persist in this—this ruffianly and lawless course, you will take the consequences," he said. "I repeat that I shall send Knowles of the Sixth to the Form-room to take charge of the Fourth!"

"And I repeat, nonsense!" said Mr. Dalton coolly.

Mr. Manders clenched his hands. For a moment he looked as if he would whip round the table and lay hands upon the cool, good-looking young man who faced him calmly and contemptuously.

But he restrained himself. The long, lean gentleman was head and shoulders taller than the Form-master, but he was only too well aware that he would have crumpled up helplessly in Richard Dalton's athletic grip.

"We shall see!" he stuttered. "We—we shall see!"

And Mr. Manders flung out of the study. Richard Dalton shrugged his broad

shoulders again, and made his way to the Fourth Form-room. The young man's position at Rookwood was difficult enough; but he had quite made up his mind to tolerate no more interference from Roger Manders.

Jimmy Silver & Co., having finished playing football with Mr. Manders' hat, were coming into the School House for classes, when the Modern master strode out.

The whole crew of Classical juniors grinned and chortled as Mr. Manders passed them.

But Mr. Manders did not venture upon the boxing of ears. He had had enough of that! He strode out scowling, leaving the Classical juniors still chortling merrily.

"The dear old bird seems to have learned his lesson!" remarked Jimmy Silver, laughing.

And the Classics went on cheerily to the Form-room, quite satisfied with their victory over the former tyrant of Rookwood.

Mr. Richard Dalton's handsome face was unusually grave when his pupils saw him in the Form-room. Lessons began quietly, the Classical Fourth being on their very best behaviour. It was Jimmy Silver's idea to prove by exemplary conduct that the late barring-out had been caused only by Mr. Manders and his tyranny, and that the Fourth Form knew how to behave themselves with a master who had a right sense of duty. And Uncle James of Rookwood had his way, and the Fourth Form, lately in rebellion, were now as good as gold, and made Mr. Dalton's duties very easy. For some days peace, perfect peace, had reigned in the Fourth, and the juniors had supposed that that beatific state of affairs would last until the Head's return, which could not be long delayed. But they were to learn that Mr. Manders was not disposed to take his defeat "lying down." Lessons were quite lost on that obstinate gentleman.

First lesson was interrupted by the Form-room door opening without a knock. Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth stepped in.

Mr. Dalton glanced at him.

"What do you want, Knowles?" he asked.

Knowles' reply made the Fourth-Formers jump.

"I've come to take charge of the Fourth Form, Mr. Dalton, by Mr. Manders' orders!"

CHAPTER 31.

Nice for Knowles!

JIMMY SILVER exchanged a quick glance with his chums.

Lovell snorted.

"Manders is going it again," he murmured in Jimmy's ear. "We're not standing it—what!"

"No fear!"

"Let's chuck the Modern cad out."

"Hold on! Leave him to Dicky."

All eyes in the Classical Fourth were fixed on the Modern prefect and the Form-master. Mr. Dalton's face had set hard. There was an insolent smile on Knowles' face. No love was lost between the Sixth Form bully and the young Form-master.

Knowles walked coolly across to the master's desk. The Fourth Form waited breathlessly. Sharp and clear came Mr. Dalton's voice.

"Knowles, kindly leave the Form-room!"

"Sorry, sir," said Knowles coolly. "Can't be done! I'm in charge here now!"

Knowles' look showed how much he enjoyed this opportunity of being insolent to the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Dalton did not deign to argue. He pointed to the door.

Knowles did not heed.

"If you'll be kind enough to step outside, Mr. Dalton, I can get going," he remarked casually. "I cannot allow you to remain here during lessons, of course."

"You cannot allow!" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

"Not at all. Please leave at once!" said Knowles.

Arthur Edward Lovell half-rose. Jimmy Silver jerked him back into his seat again.

"Leave it to Dicky, you ass!" he whispered.

"We ought to back Dicky up!" murmured Lovell.

"Fathead! He will cut up rusty if we chip in," said Jimmy in an undertone. "Leave him alone!"

As a matter of fact Mr. Dalton was not in need of support from his Form even if he had desired it, which most certainly he did not. He was quite able to deal with the situation.

He strode across towards Knowles, with a gleam in his eyes.

"I shall not argue the matter with you, Knowles," he said crisply. "Mr. Manders'

authority is not recognised in this room. You will leave at once!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Knowles. "In fact, I insist upon your leaving at once, Mr. Dalton!"

"If you do not retire from this room, Knowles, I shall have no alternative but to remove you by force!" said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"Go it, Dicky!" yelled Lovell, quite irrepressible now.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Dalton swung round towards the class.

"Lovell," he rapped out, "how dare you! Take two hundred lines!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Arthur Edward. This was rather a surprising reward for his enthusiastic support.

"If you speak again I shall cane you!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Lovell.

He did not speak again.

Mr. Dalton turned to Knowles once more. The Modern prefect had seated himself at the master's high desk, and showed no sign of vacating the chair.

"You heard what I said to you, Knowles?"

"Oh, yes," answered the Sixth-Former carelessly.

"Retire at once!"

"Nothing of the kind!"

"Then I shall remove you!"

Mr. Dalton strode directly at the prefect. Knowles' greenish eyes glittered at him like a cat's. A powerful grasp on his shoulder jerked him from the desk, and he came spinning across the floor.

"Let go!" roared Knowles. "I shall hit out. I tell you! I have Mr. Manders' authority to—"

"Never mind Mr. Manders now. Will you leave the Form-room?"

"No, I won't!" yelled Knowles.

Without wasting more time in words, Mr. Dalton grasped the prefect with both hands and swept him towards the door. Knowles of the Sixth was a big fellow, and rather athletic, but he seemed like an infant in Richard Dalton's hands. He was swept along helplessly, his boots scraping on the floor. With a savage snarl Knowles struck at the Form-master, and the juniors fairly gasped as they saw his clenched fist land on Mr. Dalton's cheek, leaving a red mark there.

Mr. Dalton did not heed the blow. He swept Knowles right on to the door, threw it open with his left hand, his right gripping the prefect's collar. Then, with a swing of his strong arm, he sent the Modern prefect whirling into the corridor.

The door closed on Knowles.

Mr. Dalton came back towards his class. Save for the red glow in his cheek, he showed no sign of the struggle. He was not even breathing more quickly than usual. He had taken up his book to resume, when the door was hurled open and Knowles came rushing breathlessly in.

"Look 'ere—" yelled Knowles.

He had no time to finish. Mr. Dalton turned on him like lightning, and grasped him. This time Knowles was swept right off the floor and carried bodily out of the Form-room, with his arms and legs waving wildly. Mr. Dalton carried him down the corridor and across the hall and out into the quadrangle. There he sat Knowles down on the School House steps.

The prefect sat breathless, gasping, and blinking at him.

"I have done with you, Knowles," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "If you return to the Form-room again, I shall cane you!"

"C-cane me!" gasped Knowles.

"Yes. Take warning!"

Mr. Dalton went in again. Knowles staggered to his feet. He was aching from the powerful grip that had been placed on him. He made a step into the School House, and paused. Dicky Dalton was a man of his word, and the prospect of being thrashed before a grinning class of juniors did not appeal to Knowles. It was, he sagely decided, not good enough. And he turned back and tramped away to Mr. Manders' house to report progress.

Lessons finished in the Fourth Form-room that morning without further interruption from the enemy.

CHAPTER 32.

Up to Uncle James!

"THE Head's coming back!"

Tubby Muffin made that announcement after dinner. Jimmy Silver & Co. were interested at once, which was not often the case when Reginald Muffin imparted information.

"When?" asked Jimmy.

"This afternoon."

"And how do you know?" remanded Newcome.

"Had it from Leggett of the Modern Fourth," said Tubby. "Leggett heard Manders speaking to Knowles about it. The Head's telephoned to Manders that he's coming this afternoon. Trouble for somebody when he comes!" added Tubby. "I saw Manders. He's looking no end bucked. He expects the Head to back him up against Mr. Dalton, of course. I say, do you think Dalton will get the boot?"

"Rats!" growled Lovell. "Go and eat coke, fatty!"

"Well, he's rather a beast," said Tubby. "Not such a beast as Manders, but rather a beast. He gave me lines this morning, after the way I've backed him up, you know. So he did you, Lovell!"

"Why shouldn't he, if he chooses?" said Arthur Edward Lovell, rather unexpectedly.

"Well, he's a beast——"

"Ass!"

Lovell sat Tubby Muffin down in the snow and walked away with his chums. The news that the Head was returning that afternoon was important, from the point of view of the Fistical Four. How the dispute between Mr. Manders and Mr. Dalton would be regarded by the Head they did not know, and they were concerned for Dicky.

"The Head's a terrific stickler for discipline," Jimmy Silver remarked thoughtfully. "After all, he left Manders in control. He may be down on Dicky. Manders will make it look as bad as he can. Still, I think the rest of the masters will speak up for Dicky. Manders has worried them no end while the Head's been away. And there would still be a barring-out going on if Dicky hadn't chipped in. Dash it all, I hope Dicky will come through all right."

"Let's tell him," suggested Raby. "Manders won't mention it, you may be sure. Dicky ought to be put on his guard."

"Good!" assented Jimmy.

Mr. Dalton was standing on the School House steps, in conversation with Bulkeley of the Sixth. The Fistical Four approached him, and Mr. Dalton gave them a kind smile.

"We've just heard that Dr. Chisholm is

coming back this afternoon, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Indeed," said Mr. Dalton.

He glanced past the juniors at a lean figure that was coming across the quadrangle.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stepped back as Mr. Manders came up. They wondered whether Mr. Manders was coming himself with the information of the Head's return. But it was soon clear that that was not the Modern master's object.

"A word with you, Mr. Dalton!" he said, with a bitter look at the young Form-master. "This morning you turned out of the Fourth Form-room the prefect I sent to take charge of the Fourth."

"Quite so!" assented Mr. Dalton.

"It is my intention, sir, to take charge of the Fourth myself personally, this afternoon," said Mr. Manders.

Mr. Dalton did not speak.

"You are an intruder here, sir," continued Mr. Manders, raising his voice. "I shall tolerate your intrusion no longer. I

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shall assume control in the Fourth Form-room, and if you have the audacity, sir, to interfere, I shall be compelled to eject you."

There was a buzz from a score of fellows who overheard that threat. Mr. Dalton's look did not change.

"Well, sir, what is your answer?" snapped Mr. Manders.

"I shall allow no interference in my Form-room, Mr. Manders," said the young man. "I advise you not to enter it."

"I shall certainly enter it."

"You will be removed, sir."

Mr. Manders' eyes glittered.

"Very well!" he said. "Very well, indeed, Mr. Dalton. I assure you that I shall enter; and if you adopt any of your ruffianly tactics towards me, sir, I shall know how to deal with you. That is all, sir! I advise you, for your own good, to quit Rookwood at once."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

Mr. Manders snuffed and whisked away. There was satisfaction in his thin, bitter face now. Mr. Dalton went quietly into the School House, and Bulkeley strolled away looking puzzled and troubled. Jimmy Silver and Co. exchanged worried glances. They had taken Dicky under their wing, as it were, and they were greatly concerned for him.

"The awful rotter!" breathed Lovell, alluding to Roger Manders. "Don't you see his game? He's going to land Dicky fair and square. He wants a row to be going on when the Head comes back! He would like nothing better than the Head seeing Jimmy chucking him out of the Form-room. That would settle Dicky's account here."

Jimmy Silver nodded gloomily.

Now that he knew that the Head was due to return that afternoon, he could read quite easily Mr. Manders' cunning scheme.

Whatever accounts the Head might receive of the rights and the wrongs of the disputes during his absence, it was quite certain that a scene of violence between two masters would rouse his deepest anger and condemnation. If he came on the scene when Mr. Manders was being forcibly ejected from the Fourth Form-room—

He had left Mr. Manders in charge! His first impression would be the worst possible, for Mr. Dalton. The Head was a stickler for discipline—perhaps too severely so.

Such a scene, whatever explanations came afterwards, was pretty certain to have only one result—the dismissal of Richard Dalton from his post at Rookwood School.

On the other hand, Mr. Dalton could scarcely recede from the position he had taken up, and allow Roger Manders to order him out of his own Form-room. It looked as if the young Form-master was caught in a cleft stick, as it were, by his cunning enemy.

"It's rotten!" said Raby. "Manders knows the Head's time, of course, and he will time it for the row to be taking place just when Dr. Chisholm arrives."

"Sure to!" said Newcome.

"He will wait and watch for him," said Jimmy Silver. "Just when the Head's at the gates, Manders will come butting into our Form-room. And Dicky will either have to chuck him out or eat dirt—and he won't do that!"

"No fear!"

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"It's up to us!" he said at last.

"What can we do?" asked Lovell glumly. "Dicky won't let us handle the old bird."

"Not in the Form-room!" said Jimmy Silver. "But Manders isn't going to carry out this scheme."

"Dicky can't stop him!"

"We can, somehow."

"How!" demanded three voices in unison.

"I've got to think that out!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's half an hour to lessons yet. Your Uncle James is going to have a big think."

Jimmy Silver had a "big think" on the spot, and it did not take him long. Dicky was not going to be caught in Mr. Manders' trap—Jimmy was determined upon that. It only remained to decide what was to be done, and Jimmy felt himself equal to the occasion.

"Well," said Lovell at last, with a grin, "got it, Uncle James?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Got it!" he answered.

"Expound!" grinned Raby.

"It's a bit risky."

"Cut that out!" said Lovell. "What's the programme? We're game!"

Jimmy Silver proceeded to explain. His chums listened to him with deep attention, and they stared! But there was a general

nodding of heads among the Co. when Jimmy had finished.

"We're game!" said Arthur Edward Lovell again.

"Get on with it!" said Raby.

And the Fistical Four "got on with it"—whatever "it" was.

CHAPTER 33.

All Serene!

MR. MANDERS smiled. He was seated in his study, warming his toes at the fire; and he seemed to be in a mood of unusual satisfaction.

He was anticipating triumph.

The Head was to arrive at half-past two, and the Head was always a punctual gentleman; he could be depended on to the minute. And at half-past two Roger Manders was going to take charge in the Fourth Form-room. He knew that Mr. Dalton, whatever the consequences, would not "climb down" and submit. The interfering Modern master would be ejected. That, probably, would not be a pleasant process for him. But the Head would witness it, and that was more than a compensation for the discomfort of the process. Mr. Dalton would be asking for the "boot"—and he would get the boot on the spot. Mr. Manders had not the slightest doubt about that. So he smiled with satisfaction as he warmed his toes at the study fire.

He glanced round as his door opened without a knock. Then he started to his feet with an exclamation of angry surprise.

Seven fellows entered his study in a crowd. Who the fellows were Mr. Manders could not see, for every one of them had a Guy Fawkes mask fastened over his face. Their aspect was peculiar and startling.

"What—what does this mean?" stuttered Mr. Manders.

One of the party turned the key in the lock.

Then, without a word, the whole party rushed at Mr. Manders.

Before the Modern master quite knew what was happening, seven pairs of reckless hands were grasping him.

He came down on his hearthrug with a bump.

One wild howl escaped Mr. Manders, but only one. The next moment a bath sponge was crammed into his mouth.

A heavy knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down. A couple of his assailants stood on his wriggling legs. His arms were held, and one active fellow proceeded to wind a cord around his head and neck, to keep the sponge in its place between his lean jaws.

"Gerrrooooooogh!"

That sound came faintly from Mr. Manders; it was all that he could utter. The sponge crammed in his mouth choked speech.

Quietly, methodically, his assailants proceeded to tie up Mr. Manders. They jerked him into his armchair, and tied his arms to the chair arms, and his legs to the chair legs.

Not a word was uttered during that peculiar process.

Evidently the masked party—with an eye to the future—did not want to give Mr. Manders a chance of recognising their voices.

The Modern master was soon secured, and he sat quite helpless, glaring at the seven with burning eyes.

A faint mumble came from him, and one of the party gave further attention to the gag, and the mumble died away.

Then a card was pinned on his breast. It bore the simple inscription, in large block letters:

ENOUGH MANDERS!

Quietly the seven juniors quitted the study. The key was whipped into the outside of the lock. Mr. Manders heard it turned and withdrawn.

He sat silent, wriggling, with feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

No one was likely to come into the study. No one would be able to enter even if he came. Mr. Manders was booked.

Outside the study door seven juniors whipped off Guy Fawkes masks and slipped them into their pockets. The faces of the Fistical Four and of the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth were disclosed. They were grinning.

"Worked like a charm!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Right as rain!" whispered Tommy Dodd. "But let's hook it! Better not be seen hanging round here."

"You bet!"

The seven juniors melted away.

When the bell rang for afternoon classes at Rookwood, Jimmy Silver & Co. came cheerily into the Form-room. Mr. Dalton was already there, with a very grave face.

The young man understood, quite as clearly as Jimmy Silver & Co., what Mr. Manders' intentions were. He could not help feeling that that day was probably his last at Rookwood. Howsoever his case might be represented to the Head, it was certain that Dr. Chisholm could and would never forgive such a scene as Mr. Manders had planned to meet his eyes. But the young man was cool and calm, and quite determined to deal efficaciously with Roger Manders if that gentleman "butted" in.

Lessons began in the Form-room in an atmosphere of suppressed excitement. It was not easy for the juniors to keep their attention fixed on their work. All but seven of them expected every moment to hear the tread of Mr. Manders in the passage outside. Mr. Dalton expected it, too. But the tread did not come!

"When on earth is Manders coming?" murmured Tubby Muffin, who was apparently looking forward to a little excitement as a pleasant change from lessons.

But Tubby was disappointed. To the surprise and the great relief of all but seven, Roger Manders did not appear.

There was the sound of a car on the gravel drive without. A whisper ran through the class:

"The Head!"

Mr. Dalton stepped to the window and glanced out. Dr. Chisholm was stepping from his car at the door.

The young Form-master drew a deep breath.

The lesson went on quietly. Jimmy Silver exchanged a cheery smile with his six confederates.

Dr. Chisholm was met at the door by Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth. He went into his own house. Jimmy stole a look at Mr. Dalton's face, and he could read the involuntary relief there. The blow had not fallen. Mr. Manders had failed inexplicably to play his last card—a certain trump! It was inexplicable to Mr. Dalton, but it was a great relief.

It was close on time for the Form to be dismissed when a tap came at the door, and Mr. Greely entered. He gave the Fourth Form master a smile and a nod.

"Will you step into the Head's study, Mr. Dalton," he said. "I have—ah!—explained at some length to Dr. Chisholm the—unusual occurrences that have taken place here during his absence—ahem! He desires to hear your personal explanation."

"Mr. Manders—"

The Fifth Form master smiled.

"Mr. Manders has not chosen to put in an appearance yet," he said. "Possibly he feels that his case is a very bad one. You may depend upon the support of the whole staff, my dear fellow. But go and see the Head now; he desires to speak to you at once."

Mr. Greely was not blind to the advantage of saying the first word.

The amazing and inexplicable inactivity of Mr. Manders was making things easy for the master of the Fourth.

"Thank you very much!" said Mr. Dalton.

He dismissed his Form, and went at once to the Head's study. Jimmy Silver & Co. came out, smiling, into the quadrangle.

"Looks like a win for little us!" Jimmy Silver remarked serenely. "Dicky gets in the first version—what! And there wasn't any scene to meet the Head when he hopped in—what! I wonder what old Dicky would do if he hadn't kind uncles in the Fourth to look after him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. would have given a good deal to hear the conversation that went on in the Head's study. That was not possible, and they could only hope for the best. Certainly, the stern old gentleman heard, first, the explanation of Mr. Dalton, and the united testimony of the staff, while Mr. Manders said no word! When Bulkeley of the Sixth came out, and crossed over to Mr. Manders' House, the Classical chums could guess his mission—he was going to call Mr. Manders to see the Head. Bulkeley came back in a few minutes later looking perplexed. He had to report to the Head that Mr. Manders' door was locked, and that he could get no answer.

There was a surprise for Rookwood a little later.

The Head crossed over in person, with

a frowning face, to see Mr. Manders in his own house.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were very careful to keep off the scene, but a crowd of Modern fellows watched the Head tapping impatiently at Mr. Manders' study door, his annoyance changing to alarm at last. The door was forced finally, and Mr. Manders burst upon the Head in all his glory.

Dr. Chisholm had been surprised by Mr. Manders' failure to put in an appearance. He was still more surprised when he beheld the Modern master tied in his chair, wriggling, with a bath sponge in his lean jaws, and a ticket pinned on his gown, which announced "ENOUGH MANDERS!" With a grim face the Head watched him released by Knowles of the Sixth; with a grimmer face he listened to Mr. Manders' spluttering account of an outrageous case of assault

and battery. That evening the prefects were seeking up and down Rookwood for seven juniors who had Guy Fawkes masks in their possession—and Jimmy Silver & Co. were feeling very pleased that they had made a bonfire of seven Guy Fawkes masks in the wood-shed before classes!

Exactly what the Head thought of the conflicting accounts he received of the happenings during his absence Jimmy Silver & Co. never knew. But they know that Mr. Manders—probably on a hint from on high, as it were—took a holiday of several weeks, after the Head's return, and with that the affair dropped. So Uncle James of Rookwood and his chums had reason to be satisfied with their success in backing up Dicky Dalton!



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But there was one fellow who had a good run for his money. He was a bell-buoy on duty in the river off Buenos Aires, but evidently this life held no appeal for him, so forthwith he broke loose and wandered off. For a year he was voyaging, then the desire to be once more within hearing distance of land proved too strong, and he came, one fine day, bobbing cheerily into the harbour of Fremantle, in Western Australia. Then, alas, the harbour authorities hooked him in, and told his owners, back in the Argentine!

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The Buenos Aires buoy was a very untidy fellow when he was found. His light had gone out, and festoons of seaweed were wrapped round him, but after a good scraping he came up as good as new.

Another bell-buoy soon tired of warning voyagers, and decided to have a voyage all to himself. This one was stationed off Hartlepool. He took french leave one Christmas Eve, some years back, and cruised round the North Sea, finally coming to rest on the west coast of Jutland. The Danes, instead of returning it, sold it by auction as it lay. It is not known what its ultimate fate was, but the bell was taken away and given to a convalescent home.

There is a buoy on the Canadian coast that ran away and cruised about the North

Atlantic for quite a good while. Then he, too, succumbed to the fatal lure of shore life, and finally came into the Firth of Clyde, near Port Glasgow! Imagine the surprise of the river authorities when they discovered his light still burning!

Besides the bell-buoys there are also the whistling buoys. One of these was washed ashore during a gale at Eastbourne in January, 1920, and a few weeks previous to that another buoy, a six-ton gas one, broke loose and wandered down the River Medway. But he was nabbed and cruelly returned.

Home, Sweet Home!

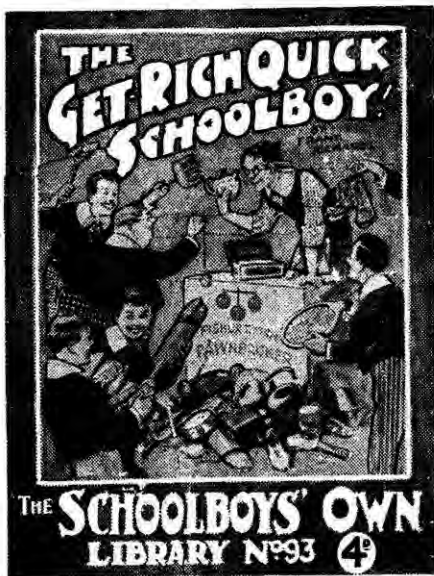
It is in the partly-submerged hull of the buoy that the oil or gas, used for the light, is stored. This storage tank is refilled once every fortnight, without taking the buoy from the water. Then, as for the light, the sun does it! On one side of the top rim of the covering of the buoy, which protects the burner, is a sun-valve. Directly the sun disappears, on flashes the light, then, when the sun comes out again, the lamp automatically dies down.

Then the buoys have to be cleaned. Periodically they are brought to the cleaning station. Then all the marine growth that they have attracted are scraped off and the rusty ironwork repainted and examined. If they pass the test, they are once more sent back to their stations to continue the good work of safeguarding the ocean travellers.

And as each boat passes the buoy's dirty hull, rocking with the waves, the crew of the passing vessel hardly notice the lonely sentinel with its squat form, looking very unromantic. But "buoys" will be "boys," and the guardians of our shores do not always intend to lead a humdrum existence.

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