

THE FOURTH FORM REBELS!

By
OWEN CONQUEST



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G R E A T N E W S



THE FOURTH FORM REBELS!

By
Owen Conquest

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against authority ! This mag-
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CHAPTER 1. Impertinent!

DR. CHISHOLM started.

He was astonished, and, to judge by the dark frown that settled upon his scholastic brow, he was wrathful.

The Head of Rookwood had entered his study, not expecting to find anything out of the common there. And almost the first thing that caught his eye was an inscription on the glass doors of a bookcase. And it ran, in large letters:

"WE WANT DICKY!"

Dr. Chisholm blinked at that inscription, inscribed there by some lawless hand in his absence.

"Upon my word!" murmured the Head.

The letters were white and for the moment the Head supposed that they had been chalked there. But on a closer inspection he found that they had been daubed in white paint. And as the paint was now

dry, there was a laborious task ahead for somebody to get it off the bookcase. Most of the letters were on the glass panels, but here and there they sprawled over the polished oak woodwork.

Dr. Chisholm looked round the study.

Save for the inscription on the bookcase, there was no sign that an intruder had been there. Whoever had left that message for the Head had been careful to leave no other trace behind.

The doctor's face darkened more and more as he gazed at that impertinent message from the Fourth Form.

He knew that it came from the Fourth; for "Dicky," evidently was a fancy name for Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, recently dismissed from Rookwood School.

His offence was that he had been unable to see eye to eye with the headmaster in a certain matter. The Head had ordered him to cane the entire Fourth Form. It was a hasty order given in a moment of wrath.

But when Richard Dalton had ventured a firm but respectful protest, the Head's obstinacy had been aroused.

Dr. Chisholm repeated his order, and "Dicky" Dalton had quietly refused—with the result that he was dismissed on the spot by the angry Head.

The Fourth missed their popular master; the Head knew that, though he attributed no importance to it. It was very probable that they wanted Mr. Dalton back. In fact, the Head knew that they did. But the wishes of mere juniors of the Lower School passed by him like the idle wind, which he regarded not.

Who had done this?

A glint came into Dr. Chisholm's eyes. He touched the bell to summon Tupper, the page. Tupper's bullet head was inserted into the open doorway, and Tupper's eyes almost started from the said bullet head at the sight of the inscription on the bookcase. He stared at it.

"Tupper!" rumbled the Head.

"Oh, Yessir!" gasped Tupper.

"Who has done this?" With a majestic wave of the hand, the Head indicated the inscription.

"I dunno, sir!"

"Do you mean that you do not know, Tupper?"

"Yessir!"

"Then kindly say what you mean, and do not make use of expressions that are unintelligible."

"Oh, yessir!" stuttered Tupper.

Tupper realised that the Head was in one of his "tantrums," and that it behove him, Tupper, to be very wary.

"Have you seen any Fourth Form boy lurking about my study this morning?"

"No sir; I've been in the boot room and the kitchen, sir."

"You do not know who has been guilty of this act of impertinence?"

"Which, sir?"

The Head made an impatient gesture.

"You are stupid, Tupper!"

"Yessir. Is that all, sir?"

"Do you know who has painted those words on my bookcase?"

"Oh, no sir!"

"Kindly ask Bulkeley of the Sixth Form to step here."

"Yessir!"

Tupper gladly retreated from the study. When the Head was in one of his tantrums nobody liked catching his eye. Tupper was

quite pleased to pass him on, as it were, to Bulkeley of the Sixth Form, the captain of Rookwood.

The Head sat with a grim face waiting for Bulkeley.

He was deeply annoyed.

The dismissal of Mr. Dalton had caused him a good deal of annoyance in one way or another. A new Form master had not yet arrived, and the Fourth were in an unruly state.

Jimmy Silver, head of the Fourth, might have been expected, as head boy, to give what assistance he could in keeping order. The Head, at least, expected it. Instead of which, the Head had discerned that Jimmy was the ringleader in this impertinent agitation for the return of the dismissed master.

That this agitation was impertinent the Head had no doubt. It was in opposition to his lofty will and pleasure. Therefore, it was impertinent.

Buzzzzzz!

The sudden buzzing of the telephone bell made the Head start. He turned with an irritated gesture and took up the receiver.

"Well?"

"Are you there?" came a voice over the wires—a voice the Head did not know.

"Yes."

"Is that Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood School?"

"Dr. Chisholm is speaking."

"Good! We want Dicky!"

"Wha-a-at!" the Head almost dropped the receiver. "What did you say?"

"We want Dicky!"

"Bless my soul! Who—who—who is speaking?"

But there was no reply to that question. The unknown interlocutor had already rung off.

Dr. Chisholm replaced the receiver on the hooks, breathing hard. It was some fellow in the Fourth who had telephoned; he was certain of that. But the voice had been disguised—he did not recognise it.

"You sent for me, sir?"

George Bulkeley of the Sixth Form stepped into the study as the Head turned a flushed face from the telephone. Dr. Chisholm controlled his wrath, with an effort, and answered in quiet tones.

"Yes, Bulkeley! Do you know anything of this?" He waved his hand towards the bookcase.

"Certainly not, sir."

"It is the work of some Fourth Form boy."

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"I have just received a similar insolent message on the telephone, Bulkeley."

"Have you indeed, sir?" murmured Bulkeley.

"I am afraid that the Fourth Form are in a somewhat unruly state at present, Bulkeley—no doubt the result of Mr. Dalton's methods."

Bulkeley shifted uncomfortably. He liked Mr. Dalton, as everybody at Rookwood did. He had been sorry when the gates of the school had closed behind "Dicky" Dalton.

"Well, sir, the juniors miss him," said Bulkeley honestly. "They want him back, sir; and they make no secret about it. There was no trouble in the Fourth while Mr. Dalton was here, so far as I know, sir."

"Indeed!" said the Head, in freezing tones.

"I admit there's been plenty of trouble since he left, sir," said Bulkeley.

"Which must be put a stop to," said the Head icily. "I am making arrangements for a new master to take the Fourth; until then, I rely upon my prefects to keep order."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"As head prefect, Bulkeley, I leave it to you to discover who placed that insolent inscription in my study."

"I will do my best, sir."

"You will also ascertain what boy in the Fourth has been out of gates since morning classes. Some boy must have been out of gates in the Fourth. Bless my soul!"

Buzzzzzz!

The Head took up the receiver again.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes!"

"We want Dicky!"

Dr. Chisholm jammed the receiver on the hooks, so violently that he very nearly sent the telephone spinning.

"That—that—that is the same insolent boy, Bulkeley!" he exclaimed.

"He must still be out of gates! Call the Fourth together at once, and ascertain what boy is missing!"

"Very well, sir."

And Bulkeley left the study, leaving the Head fuming.

CHAPTER 2.

An Investigation under Difficulties.

JIMMY SILVER of the Fourth Form stepped out of Mr. Dalton's old study, and glanced cautiously to right and left.

Then he scudded away. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were waiting for him at the foot of the big staircase.

"All serene?" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell, as the captain of the Fourth joined them.

"Right as rain," said Jimmy. "I got through twice to the Head's study, on Dicky's phone."

The chums of the Fourth chuckled.

"There'll be a row!" remarked Raby.

"Let there be!" answered Jimmy Silver indifferently. "I fancy there'll be a good many rows until Dicky comes back."

"Yes, rather!" said Lovell emphatically. "Anyhow, the Head knows by this time that we want Dicky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here comes Bulkeley!" murmured Newcome.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, with a very grave expression on his face, bore down on the Fistical Four. He scanned the four cheery heroes of the Fourth keenly.

"Oh! Not one of you, then!" he remarked.

"One of us!" repeated Jimmy.

"Some Fourth fellow has been telephoning to the Head from somewhere."

"What a neck!" said Lovell gravely.

"Awful cheek!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Now, I wonder what fellow at Rookwood has cheek enough for that? Are you certain it was a Fourth Form chap, Bulkeley?"

"Well, the Head thinks so," said Bulkeley.

"More like the Sixth, to my mind," said Jimmy, with owl-like gravity. "The Sixth have got cheek enough for anything."

Bulkeley frowned and then laughed.

"Don't be a young ass! Call the Fourth together in the Form-room, Silver—at once!"

"Certainly."

From all quarters the Fourth were called in—from the quad, the studies, and the playing-fields. Classical and Modern, the whole Form gathered in the Form-room, under the eye of the head prefect. In the Form-room Bulkeley called the roll.

"Adsum," was answered to every name he called.

The whole of the Fourth were present. Obviously, no member of that unruly Form was out of gates.

The juniors grinned quietly at the prefect's puzzled face. There was no public telephone within half a mile of the school gates; anyone who had gone out to telephone could not have returned in time to obey the call to the Form-room. Yet all were there.

It dawned upon Bulkeley's mind that one of the school telephones must have been used.

He further remembered that there was a telephone in Mr. Dalton's study—a room unoccupied till the new master of the Fourth should arrive at Rookwood School.

Bulkeley compressed his lips.

"One of you young rascals has been using the telephone in Mr. Dalton's study!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Bulkeley!"

"Was it you, Silver?"

"Was it you, Bulkeley?" retorted Jimmy.

"What?"

"Well, you asked me one question, so I ask you another," said Jimmy cheerfully. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

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

Bulkeley breathed hard. Under Mr. Dalton's rule, certainly, the Fourth never had ventured to talk to a prefect like this. But since Dicky had left Rookwood, disorder had been the order of the day. The Fourth were prepared to submit to authority as personified by Mr. Richard Dalton. Apparently they weren't prepared to submit to authority in any other shape or form.

"There is another matter I have to look into," said Bulkeley, after a pause. "Some young sweep has been painting up an insolent message in the Head's study."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In the Head's study!" exclaimed Putty of the Fourth, in tones of exasperated horror. "Didn't the skies fall, Bulkeley?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Bulkeley, his temper beginning to rise. "Look here, if you young sweeps are looking for trouble with the headmaster you'll get more than you bargain for. Someone went to the Head's study during the morning recess—it must

have been done at that time—and painted up a cheeky message."

"What was the message, Bulkeley?" inquired Conroy, and the whole Form chuckled.

"Never mind that. I want to know who did it."

"He wants to know who did it," said Mornington. "Did you do it, Rawson?"

"He wants to know who did it," said Rawson. "Did you do it, Towny?"

"He wants to know who did it," said Townsend. "Did you do it, Toppy, old bean?"

"He wants to know——" began Topham, amid roars of laughter.

"Silence!" shouted Bulkeley.

"He wants to know——"

"Silence! The Head has ordered me to inquire into this," said Bulkeley, breathing hard.

"The Head has ordered him to inquire into this, Silver!" said Mornington, taking up the "rag" again.

"The Head has ordered him to inquire into this, Lovell!" said Jimmy Silver, in his turn.

"The Head has ordered——" commenced Lovell.

"Will you keep quiet?" roared Bulkeley.

"Will you keep quiet, Erroll?" asked Mornington.

"Will you keep quiet, Conroy?" asked Erroll.

"Will you keep quiet, Pons?" asked Conroy.

Bulkeley of the Sixth stood by the Form-master's desk, staring at the raggers. The Fourth Form were making open fun of him—him, head prefect of Rookwood, and captain of the school. It was almost incredible, but there it was. Evidently the Fourth Form were getting very much out of hand.

"Silver!" gasped Bulkeley, at last, as the hubbub of voices continued. "You are the ringleader in this! I shall cane you! Bend over!"

Bulkeley picked up a cane from the desk, and came towards Jimmy. Jimmy Silver faced him without flinching.

"Better cut it out, Bulkeley," he said.

"What?"

"We're not going to be canded," Arthur Edward Lovell explained. "We're jolly well going to rag any prefect that chips in. See?"

"Bend over, Silver!"

"Bend over, Bulkeley!" retorted Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the last time, Silver——" roared Bulkeley.

"For the last time, Bulkeley——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley, quite losing his temper at this point, grabbed at Jimmy Silver's collar. The cane swished in the air.

"Rescue!" roared Jimmy.

"Collar him!" yelled Lovell.

A dozen pair of hands grasped Bulkeley at the same moment. He was a powerful fellow, but he had no chance in the grasp of a dozen excited juniors.

"Bump him!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, my hat! Let go! I—I—I'll——" panted Bulkeley.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Don't bump him! Bulkeley's a good sort! Walk him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You young sweeps——" gasped Bulkeley.

"Take him up tenderly, treat him with care!" sang Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in the grasp of a crowd of juniors, Bulkeley of the Sixth was forcibly walked to the door of the Form-room, and pushed into the passage. There he was released, and he stood gasping for breath, and glaring at the juniors.

They crammed the doorway, laughing. Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, came along, and stopped to stare at the scene. There was a yell from Lovell.

"There's Carthew! Collar him!"

"Rag him!"

Carthew, Sixth-Former and prefect as he was, vanished round the nearest corner at top speed. He had no desire whatever to try conclusions with the rebellious Fourth. A howl of derisive laughter followed him.

"You—you—you—you young rotters!" gasped Bulkeley. "If I report this to the Head——"

"Report to the Head and be blowed!" retorted Lovell.

"Tell the Head we want Dicky, and we won't be happy till we get him!" roared Mornington.

"Hear, hear!"

Bulkeley turned away and strode along the corridor. He repaired to his study to brush his hair and tie his tie before he returned to the Head. He reported to Dr. Chisholm that he had failed, so far, to discover which member of the Fourth,

it any, had been guilty of those heinous acts of impertinence. He did not add any description of the scene in the Form-room. Bulkeley's view was that there was likely to be trouble enough between the Head and the mutinous Fourth, and he did not want to add fuel to the fire.

CHAPTER 3.

Something Like a Rag!

FRENCH this afternoon!" remarked Lovell.

Some of the Fourth Form fellows laughed.

During the absence of a Form master for the Fourth, there had been necessary changes in the class work; the Fourth working sometimes with the Shell, sometimes under a prefect, and filling in the time with extra French and mathematics. In the Shell-room they made Mr. Mooney yearn for the return of Dicky Dalton; and when they took extra French, Monsieur Monceau felt that his few remaining locks were growing greyer minute by minute.

A whole afternoon at French would have been a bore, at the best of times. But a whole afternoon at French because the Head had dismissed Mr. Dalton—unjustifiably, in the opinion of the Fourth—was really too much to stand.

The mutinous Fourth had no intention of standing it. French that afternoon was to be a long-continued rag.

The state of affairs in the Fourth threw extra work on some of the masters. The Head did not appear to think that that mattered in any way. But in the masters' Common-room there were subdued remarks on the subject that would have made Dr. Chisholm's hair curl, almost, had he overheard them.

Monsieur Monceau came into the Form-room almost in fear and trembling.

The juniors did not dislike Mossos; in fact, they liked him, and they respected him as a member of the great nation. But Mossos was taking them instead of their own Form master, now dismissed, and that was a cause of war. The hapless Mossos had to answer for the lofty methods of the Head.

Monsieur Monceau gave the class his graceful little Parisian bow, and hoped for the best—with a misgiving that it was the worst that was going to happen. Before he

had a fair chance of starting on French irregular verbs, Mornington rose to his feet.

"Excuse me, sir——"

"Vat is it, Mornington?"

"We want Dicky, sir!"

"Comment!"

"I'm sure you'll excuse my mentionin', sir, that we want Dicky," said Mornington, so gravely and respectfully that Monsieur Monceau stared at him in perplexity.

"Mon Dieu!" said Monsieur Monceau.

"But zis Dicky, as you shall call Monsieur Dalton, he is parti—he is gone! It is viz me zat you shall take ze lesson zis after-middy, Mornington."

"Perhaps, sir, you would prefer to dismiss the class!" suggested Mornington. "We should be willin' to play football instead of doing French."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

Monsieur Monceau looked bewildered.

"Mais, Mornington, zat is not permit," he said. "It is ze ordair of ze headmaster zat I give you French instruction."

"Very well, sir; it's your look-out," said Mornington, and he sat down.

"Mes garçons——"

"We want Dicky, sir!" said several voices.

"Taisez-vous!" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau. "You must not speak of zis Dicky in class. Maintenant——"

"Nous voulons avoir le Dicky!" said Lovell, putting it into French—Fourth Form French.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tais-toi!" snapped Monsieur Monceau, showing signs of excitement. "It needs to keep ordair is zis class. Ciel! Who is zat zat stamp ze pieds?"

Stamp! Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!

From the back of the class came the rhythmical sound of stamping feet on the floor. It was steady, it was continuous, and it made instruction in the beautiful language of la belle France impossible.

"Silence!" shouted Mossoo.

Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!

Putty of the Fourth produced a mouth-organ. Almost under the nose of the French master, he proceeded to produce fearsome music from it. Monsieur Monceau began to gesticulate. Rags were far from uncommon in the French class; but these proceedings were beyond the limits of a rag.

"You, Grace!" Mossoo shouted at Putty. "You put him away, isn't it!"

Putty continued to blow fearsome blasts.

A tin whistle, somewhere at the back of the Form, added to the musical honours.

Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!

Monsieur Monceau began to tear his hair. It was a rash proceeding, for he had very little to spare.

"Vill you be silent?" he roared. "Vill you keep ordair, or is it zat I comes to you viz cane?"

"We want Dicky!"

"Go home, Mossoo!"

"Bonjour, et partez vite!" howled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monsieur Monceau grabbed a cane. He advanced upon his class, cane in hand, and the juniors all jumped up. From somewhere a jet of ink came from a jerked inkpot, and it missed Mossoo by half an inch. He jumped back in a hurry.

Every fellow in the Form was ragging, and Mossoo, cane in hand, glaring at them, uncertain which to begin upon. He could not very well cane the whole Form; and he was aware, too, that the Fourth would not allow him to proceed to that length.

"Grace!" he shouted at Putty. "Putty zat zing away viz you."

A blast from the mouth-organ answered.

"Stand out before ze class, zen."

The mouth-organ hooted defiance.

Mossoo made a jump at Putty of the Fourth. With Mossoo's grab on his collar Putty Grace came out before the class, sprawling. Then the cane whacked.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Putty.

He tore himself away from Mossoo, and dodged behind the Form-master's desk. Mossoo rushed after him.

"Go it, Putty!" yelled the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop!" shrieked Monsieur Monceau. "Grace, if you do not stop viz you, I punishes you severely."

"Bow-wow!"

"Oh, mon Dieu!"

Monsieur Monceau chased round the desk after Putty.

"Here we go round the mulberry-bush!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

Finding that he could not catch the elusive Putty, Monsieur Monceau, in a state of great excitement now, lashed at him across the desk. The cane landed on the desk with a force that nearly cracked it. Whether the cane touched Putty or not

Mossoo hardly knew, but the next moment there was a fearful yell from Teddy Grace, and he fell on the floor with a crash and lay still.

CHAPTER 4.

Rough on Mossoo!

"H E'S dead!"
 "Mossoo's killed him!"
 "Fetch the police!"

Monsieur Monceau stood transfixed, staring down at the still form of Putty Grace.

Putty lay motionless on his back, and there was a stream of crimson on his face. To the horrified eyes of Monsieur Monceau it seemed that blood was streaming from some terrible wound in the unfortunate junior's head.

"Mon Dieu!" stuttered the hapless French master. "Boy! Garçon! Mon cher! Zat you get up!"

The juniors crowded out from the forms. They gathered round Putty with exclamations of horror.

Jimmy Silver knelt by Putty's side, and felt over his chest. Mossoo gazed at him, dumbfounded.

"He is not keel!" gasped Mossoo at last. "It is not possible. Zat is too terrible!"

"I cannot feel his heart beat, sir!" said Jimmy Silver, in a subdued voice. That was perfectly true, as Jimmy had his hand on Putty's shoulder, where Putty's heart certainly could not be expected to beat.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Lovell.

"He's dead!"

"Poor old Putty!"

"Helas!" wailed Monsieur Monceau. "But it is pas possible! I do not strike him so hard as zat."

"You see, you struck a fearful blow, sir!" said Mornington. "We all heard it."

"It fairly rang through the room sir," said Peele.

"But zat was ze cane zat strike ze desk. I zink."

"You tell the coroner that, sir!" said Mornington encouragingly. "Of course, we shall be bound to say what we know at the inquest."

"Ze coroner! Ze inquest!" said Mossoo dazedly. "Oh, ciel! Oh, non, non, non!"

"Shall I go and telephone to the police-station, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver respectfully.

"Ze police-station?"

"I suppose you're going to give yourself up, sir?"

"Mon Dieu!"

"No good hooking it, sir," said Lovell. "You see, as the matter stands it's only manslaughter!"

"Ciel!"

"But if you hooked it, it would look like murder!"

Monsieur Monceau gave a howl of desolation. He pushed his way through the juniors, dropped on his knees beside the motionless, if not lifeless, form of Teddy Grace.

There was no movement from Putty of the Fourth. His eyes were closed, his features still; not a muscle twitched. The crimson stream on his face was dripping to the floor.

"Helas! It cannot be!" moaned Monsieur Monceau. He felt over Putty's chest. "Ciel! Ze heart he beat!"

"Really, sir—" murmured Raby.

"He is alive!" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau joyfully. "Grace! My poor boy, pauvre garçon—ouvres les yeux!"

Putty's eyes opened.

"Where am I?" he murmured feebly.

There was a gasping sound from the Fourth-Formers who crowded round. Per- it indicated grief and sympathy. But it sounded more like suppressed laughter.

Monsieur Monceau stared round.

"Gower, you laff!"

"I, sir!" exclaimed Gower.

"You laff viz you. Is zis a laffing mattair?" exclaimed the French master.

"Tais-toi, for shame, you heartless boy!"

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Gower.

"Where am I?" moaned Putty.

"Pauvre garçon! Is it zat you suffain moodh?" asked Monsieur Monceau tenderly. "I am sorry that I strike you so hard viz cane. I am enrage—zat is, I have been enrage! C'est terrible! I am sorry. But—"

Monsieur Monceau broke off suddenly, and an extraordinary expression came over his face.

He had made a startling discovery.

The crimson fluid that gave Putty's face so ghastly an aspect was not, as he had supposed, blood. It was red ink! On a close inspection it was undoubtedly red ink!

For a moment or two Monsieur Monceau was transfixed. Then he jumped to his feet, his face crimson with wrath.

"L'encre!" he gasped. "Ze ink—ze ink rouge! Zis is one trick! Zis is one choke!"

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

"Vere is zat cane?"

Monsieur Monceau glared round for the cane. All his sympathetic concern for Putty vanished at once when he discovered that the supposed stream of blood was harmless red ink, and realised that the whole affair was a jape, planned from the beginning by the humorous Putty.

"Look out, Putty!" yelled Lovell.

Putty of the Fourth was looking out. He leaped to his feet as the French master rushed at him, brandishing the cane.

"Run for it!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

Whack! Putty ran for it, but the cane found him as he ran. It came across his shoulders with a terrific smite, and Putty yelled.

Whack, whack, whack!

Putty of the Fourth dodged among the desks, and after him went the exasperated French master, whacking away with the cane as if he were beating a carpet.

Putty's yells rang through the Form-room and down the corridor without. The whole Fourth were yelling, too, with laughter; but there was no merriment in Putty's yells. The matter had suddenly become a very serious one for Putty.

Fortunately, Peele put a foot in Mossos's way at last, and Mossos sat down among the desks with a bump.

"Ink him!" shouted Mornington.

"Oh, mon Dieu! Helas! Ciel!"

A dozen inkpots swooped their contents on Mossos as he scrambled among the desks.

The hapless gentleman scrambled to his feet. He was dazed and bewildered, and streaming with ink. He glared round at the Fourth-Formers, still grasping the cane. From all sides jets of ink came at him.

"Zat you stop it!" shrieked Mossos, almost beside himself. "I goes to ze Head—I fetch ze Head to you—Mon Dieu!"

Monsieur Monceau fairly raced for the door. He tore it open, and rushed into the corridor. At top speed, scattering ink-drops as he ran, Mossos fled for the Sixth Form room.

"He's gone for the Head!"

"Phew!"

Sudden seriousness fell on the Fourth Form rebels. They were "up against" the Head; but the Head of Rookwood was a terrifying personage to Lower boys.

"I—I say, you fellows will remember that I hadn't anything to do with it, you know!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"What?" roared Lovell.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Tubby. "I hadn't—I didn't—I—I wasn't—Yooooop!"

Tubby yelled as Lovell up-ended him, and sat him on the floor with a heavy bump.

"Anybody else didn't have anything to do with it?" roared Lovell, glaring round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, the Head's coming," said Conroy. "It's up to you, Jimmy—what's the game when the Head butts in?"

"Clear!" said Jimmy.

"Good! I'd rather not see the Head just now," chuckled Conroy.

All the Fourth agreed with Conroy on that point. The juniors swarmed out of the Form-room. Jimmy Silver lingered a moment, to put the key on the outside of the door. Then he vanished after his Form-fellows.

CHAPTER 5.

Locked In!

"REGARDEZ done!"

Dr. Chisholm fairly spun round and glared. The Sixth-Formers stared and grinned.

"Regardez done!" shrieked Monsieur Monceau.

Everyone in the Sixth Form room "regarded" him; there was no mistake about that. In his present state, Mossos would have been the cynosure of all eyes, anywhere. Streaming with ink, dusty and dishevelled, he presented a really startling aspect.

"What—what—what—" stuttered the Head. "Who—who—is that you, Monsieur Monceau?"

"C'est moi! Regardez done!" yelled Monsieur Monceau. "Is it zat I am treat in zis manner? Is it to endure zis? Regardez l'encre—viz ink I am smother! I take zat Form no more! I am assault—I am batter—I am keel! Mon Dieu!"

"Calm yourself, Monsieur Monceau!"

"Mais regardez!" shrieked Mossos.

"Do you mean to tell me that the Fourth Form boys have treated you in this manner, Monsieur Monceau?"

"Mais certainment! Zey tell me zat zey want Deekey—and moi, mon Dieu, I wish nozzing better—I wish zey had zeir Deekey. Moi, I take zem no more! It is ze life of one dog."

"That will do, Monsieur Monceau! I will inquire into this matter," said the Head coldly.

He rustled past the agitated French master, and swept down the corridor. The wrath in his face was terrible. The most reckless fellow in the Fourth Form might have shrunk from facing the Head at that moment.

Dr. Chisholm arrived at the door of the Fourth Form room. He hurled it open, and strode in.

"Boys!" he exclaimed, in a thunderous voice.

Then he blinked round him.

The Form-room was empty.

Two or three forms were overturned, a cane lay on the floor, with a dozen inkpots and many scattered papers. There were all the traces of a scene of wild disorder. But there was not a junior to be seen.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

"Where——"
Slam!

The Form-room door, pulled from without by an unseen hand, suddenly closed.

Dr. Chisholm spun round towards it.

Click!

The key turned in the lock.

For a moment Dr. Chisholm gazed blankly at the locked door. He could hardly realise that he had been locked in the Form-room, in spite of the evidence of his senses.

He breathed hard and deep as he strode to the door, and grasped the knob, and pulled.

The door did not open.

Outside, there was a sound of hurriedly retreating feet. Whoever had locked the door on the Head was departing hurriedly.

With deep and concentrated wrath in his face, the Head of Rookwood tugged at the door. But it did not open. Obviously, it was locked. Amazing, incredible as it was, one of the Fourth had locked the headmaster in the room.

Dr. Chisholm struck on the panels with his hand.

"Open this door at once!" he thundered. There was no reply. If the junior was within hearing, he took care not to heed.

"Boy! Do you hear me?"

No reply.

The Head breathed hard and deep! This was rebellion, with a vengeance—he realised that! He had "sacked" Richard Dalton on the ground that Mr. Dalton did not enforce due discipline in his Form. But nothing like this, assuredly, had ever

occurred at Rookwood while "Dicky" was in charge of the Fourth.

Twice again the Head struck on the door with his knuckles, and then he ceased. He crossed over to the windows, and looked out. In the distance, in the quadrangle, he could see a good many of the Fourth. They were punting a football, and seemingly enjoying their unaccustomed holiday.

"Upon my word!" murmured the Head.

The stately old gentleman stood non-plussed. He was quite at a loss. His word was law at Rookwood School; but a locked door would not open at his bidding. He was a prisoner in the Fourth Form room—a prisoner, until someone should arrive and release him. All the same, the Sixth would be waiting for him, wondering why he did not return.

A quarter of an hour passed. It was immensely below the dignity of the headmaster to hammer on the door and attract attention that way. He could imagine the look of Tupper, or any of the servants, who came up and found him locked in the room.

But after a quarter of an hour had elapsed, dignity seemed a slighter consideration to the Head. He had to get out of the room somehow. And it was really impossible for the Head to climb down from a high window like a venturesome fag.

He took up the cane, and knocked on the door, steadily and loudly. Knock, knock, knock!

Mr. Bohun, the master of the Third Form, though busy with the fags, became conscious after a time of a sound of steady knocking in the distance. Mr. Bohun noticed it at first with surprise, then with annoyance, and then with growing exasperation. His room was not very far from the Fourth Form room, and so he had most of the benefit of that continuous hammering sound. The Third Form fags wondered what the matter was, and grinned at one another as they noted the deepening frown on the brow of Mr. Bohun.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bohun, at last. "This is really intensely annoying. Most irritating, in fact."

He opened the door of his Form-room, and looked out into the corridor.

A little gentleman came down the passage, with a pale, agitated face. It was Monsieur Monceau, fresh from a bath-room. He had left the dust and the ink behind, but his agitation was still with him.

"Monsieur Monceau! You are not with the Fourth!" exclaimed Mr. Bohun. "I understood—"

Mossoo gesticulated wildly.

"I am not viz zem! I am finish—done! I r-r-r-refuse to have somezing more to do viz zem, mon Dieu!"

"Then the boys are left to themselves—"

"Je ne sais pas—I know not, care not! It is to finish!"

"There seems to be some sort of disturbance going on in the Fourth Form room—"

"Ciel! Zat is not to surprise me! I hear him, and he is very noisy," said Monsieur Monceau. "Somevun bang viz himself on ze door, isn't it? Laissez faire—I know not, and care not! I am finish viz zem—I, moi qui vous parle, monsieur!"

And Monsieur Monceau walked on, waving his hands in excited gesticulations as if he were actually washing his hands of the Fourth Form.

Knock, knock, knock, knock! came from the Fourth Form room. Mr. Bohun breathed hard. Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell, joined him in the passage.

"This is most disturbing, Mr. Bohun," he remarked.

"Extremely so, Mr. Mooney. Monsieur Monceau seems to have deserted his class, and some sort of a riot is going on in the room."

"Perhaps one should call the Head—"

"Hem!"

The two junior masters exchanged dubious looks. Neither wished to seek the Head in the Sixth Form room—bearding the lion in his den, as it were.

"Possibly a word from us would restore order!" suggested Mr. Mooney, as a second thought.

"Possibly."

"Let us try, at least! This din is most—most unnerving."

The two masters walked along to the Fourth Form room, little dreaming that the Fourth were absent there, and the Head present. They were to discover that.

Mr. Mooney tried the handle of the door. It did not, of course, open.

"Locked?" said Mr. Bohun.

"Yes!"

"Dear me!"

Knock, knock, knock! Crash!

Mr. Bohun tapped on the door.

"Cease that noise immediately!" he shouted.

The knocking stopped as if by magic. Encouraged by that instant obedience, Mr. Bohun pursued:

"You noisy rascal—"

"Wha-a-a-t!" came a gasping voice.

"You insubordinate rascal, keep silent!" exclaimed Mr. Mooney, following his colleague's lead. "If there is any more of this disturbance I shall chastise you!"

"Bless my soul!"

Two masters gave a simultaneous jump, in utter horror, as they recognised the voice of the Head of Rookwood!

CHAPTER 6.

No Key!

"D R. CHISHOLM!"
"The Head!"

Mr. Bohun and Mr. Mooney fairly stuttered. How the head-master came to be locked in the Form-room was a deep mystery to them. But there was no mistaking his voice. It was the Head! It was the Head, and he was wrath!

His voice came through the door in a tone of thunder.

"Who is that? Who is speaking? How dare you—"

"I—I—I— Oh dear!"

"Really, sir— Oh dear!"

"Let me out of this room at once!" roared the Head. "I am locked in! Some young rascal has locked the door on me!"

"Is it possible?" gasped Mr. Bohun. "I—I—I imagined that some—some noisy junior was making all this noise!"

"Pooh!"

"I assure you, sir—really, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"Hem! I—"

"Unlock this door, Mr. Bohun!" shouted the Head.

"I—I—I—"

"Will you unlock this door, Mr. Bohun, or will you not unlock this door?" demanded the Head, in concentrated tones.

"Really, sir, I—I cannot—"

"Stuff! Nonsense! Turn the key!"

"But there is no key in the lock!"

"What!"

"There is no key! Is not the key inside?" gasped Mr. Mooney.

"Do you suppose, sir, that I should have remained a prisoner in this Form-room, sir, if there had been a key in the lock, sir, on this side of the door, sir?" asked the Head.

"Oh! Ah! No! Certainly not, sir!" stuttered Mr. Mooney.

"Then kindly do not talk nonsense!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes!"

"Is there no key on the outside of the door, Mr. Bohun?"

"None, sir," answered Mr. Bohun, venturing to smile, with a thick oak door between him and the Head. Mr. Mooney caught his smile, and smiled, too. Possibly both the junior masters found something entertaining, even solacing, in this blow to the dignity of their autocratic headmaster.

"Upon my word! The young rascal must have taken away the key when he locked the door! Find him at once!"

"Who was it, sir?"

"How should I know?" snapped the Head. "He did not allow me to see him, whoever he was!"

"No doubt, sir; but without knowing who has the key, sir, how am I to find him?" asked Mr. Bohun.

"It is some boy in the Fourth Form. They are all in the quadrangle. Obtain the key at once!" fumed the Head.

"Oh, very well, sir! Have I your permission to leave my Form unattended?"

"Eh? Yes! Of course! Do not be absurd!"

"Very good, sir!"

Mr. Bohun walked away to the quad; Mr. Mooney, smiling, returned to the Shell room. In the Fourth room the Head walked up and down and fumed, as he waited for the key and rescue. Mr. Bohun did not hurry himself. He had been far from approving of the dismissal of Mr. Dalton; and he did not see why the consequences of that dismissal should fall upon him. Certainly if the juniors refused to give up the key, Mr. Bohun had no intention of entering into a contest with them. The Head had chosen to dismiss Mr. Dalton, in his high-handed way; and the Head could see the matter through. That was how the Third Form master looked at it.

He found a crowd of the Fourth in the quadrangle, and noted that they grinned at one another as he came up.

"Silver!" called out Mr. Bohun, and he spoke quite civilly. He did not want any

of Monsieur Monceau's experiences for himself.

"Yes, sir," said the captain of the Fourth.

"Someone has locked the headmaster in your Form-room."

"Indeed, sir!" said Jimmy innocently.

"Dr. Chisholm has asked me to obtain the key, to release him, Silver."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"Doubtless the key is in your possession, Silver," hinted Mr. Bohun. "If so, please hand it over to me."

"The key is not in my possession, sir," said Jimmy Silver demurely. He did not add that the Form-room key was reposing in the fountain in the quad. There was no need to tell Mr. Bohun that.

"The key is required at once," said Mr. Bohun. "Has any boy present the key in his possession?"

"No, sir!"

"Not at all, sir."

Mr. Bohun looked at the juniors, and the juniors looked at Mr. Bohun, smiling.

"The Head cannot remain in the Form-room, Silver," said the Third Form master at last. "The Sixth are waiting for him, too, I suppose."

"Dear me!" said Jimmy sympathetically.

"That's hard on the Sixth, isn't it, sir?"

Mr. Bohun coughed.

"Perhaps you could find the key, Silver."

"Perhaps, sir."

"Will you kindly endeavour to do so, Silver?"

"I will look for it if you like, sir," said Jimmy.

"Thank you, Silver!"

"Not at all, sir!" said the captain of the Fourth politely. "Only too happy to oblige you, sir."

Mr. Bohun coughed again, and walked back to the School House. Jimmy Silver was as good as his word. He looked for the key. As he did not look in the fountain, however, naturally he did not see it.

The Third Form master had no expectation of the key being delivered up. He went back to the Form-room, within which the Head was pacing to and fro like a caged lion. He tapped discreetly on the door.

"Dr. Chisholm—"

"Have you the key?"

"No, sir!"

"Why not?" articulated the Head.

"The juniors deny that it is in their possession, sir—"

"Which means that they have thrown it away, that is all!" exclaimed the Head.

"Very possibly, sir! Do you wish me to search for the key, which they have doubtless thrown away, or shall I resume lessons in my Form-room, sir?" asked Mr. Bohun politely.

Dr. Chisholm breathed hard. To search for a key within the extensive precincts of Rookwood School, was a search resembling that for a needle in a stack of hay. Certainly the Head did not wish to remain a prisoner in the Form-room during so extensive and prolonged a quest.

"Kindly call the sergeant, Mr. Bohun, and request him to bring tools to force the door!" gasped the Head at last.

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Bohun walked away, and walked across the quad, to Sergeant Kettle's house. Dr. Chisholm, white with anger, resumed his hurried pacing of the Form-room. A scraping sound at the door drew his attention; his glance fell on a slip of paper that was pushed into the room under the door. In great surprise the Head picked up the slip of paper. A message was inscribed on it in capital letters:

"WE WANT DICKY!"

Dr. Chisholm stared at that message, and then, with an enraged gesture, crumpled the paper in his hand.

Five minutes later heavy footsteps without announced the arrival of Sergeant Kettle. Ten minutes more, and the Form-room door was opened, and the prisoner was free.

Dr. Chisholm, his face set and his eyes glinting, rustled away. Lovell, from a corner of the corridor, spotted him, and scudded away with the news to his comrades in the quad.

"The Head's out!"

"And now," said Mornington, with a grin, "look out for trouble."

And the trouble was not long in coming.

CHAPTER 7.

The Hand of Authority!

WHAT next?" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I wonder?" remarked Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four, of the Rookwood

Fourth Form, were finishing tea in the end study.

Most of the Classical Fourth were in the studies along the passage, and there was an almost incessant buzz of voices.

All the Form, in fact, were discussing that extremely interesting question—"What next?"

"Something's bound to happen!" remarked Newcome sagely.

"Bound to!" said Raby.

"But what?" said Lovell.

"Goodness knows!"

There was a patter of feet in the passage, and the door of the end study was opened suddenly. Tubby Muffin put a red and excited face into the doorway.

"Jimmy!" he gasped.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver quietly. He spoke with elaborate calmness. It was "up" to the captain of the Fourth to keep cool in moments of crisis.

"The Head!" gasped Tubby.

Lovell jumped up.

"Coming here?"

"Yes; you're for it!" said Tubby breathlessly. "He's coming to this study. He's got the prefects with him. Look out!"

And Tubby Muffin, having delivered that warning, and lingered for a moment to enjoy the sensation he had caused in the end study, scudded away. The Head of Rookwood, backed up by the Sixth Form prefects, was coming to Jimmy Silver's study, and evidently Muffin did not want to meet the distinguished visitors there.

Four juniors looked at one another blankly. Jimmy Silver was still calm. He made it a point to be calm. But his comrades showed excitement and alarm.

"The Head here!" murmured Raby.

"Tain't fair!" said Lovell hotly. "We're all in it—the whole Fourth Form against the Head! 'Tain't fair play to pick out this study!"

"Divida et impera!" said Jimmy.

"What? What are you spouting Latin for now, you silly ass?" hooted Lovell.

"Divide and conquer!" said Jimmy.

"The Head don't know how to handle the whole Form, so he's picked on us. Of course, he knows that we're the leaders."

"But—" stammered Newcome.

"Here he is!"

"Oh!"

The Fistical Four were all on their feet. Into the study doorway loomed the majestic figure of Dr. Chisholm, the headmaster of Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver faced him—with a self-possession worthy of "Uncle James," of Rookwood. But undoubtedly Lovell and Raby and Newcome seemed to be trying to make themselves as small as possible. The Fourth Form were "up against" the Head, and the end study had taken the lead. Nevertheless, the headmaster was an awe-inspiring personage, and it was difficult for a Lower boy to face his stern glance without blenching.

Behind the Head came Bulkeley and Neville and Lonsdale of the Sixth Form—three muscular prefects. Apparently the Head was prepared for possible trouble in the end study.

There were some moments of dead silence. The Head looked at Jimmy Silver & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at the Head. Their hearts were beating fast. Bulkeley and the other prefects filled up the doorway, and along the passage behind them a subdued buzz of voices broke out. At a safe distance the Classical Fourth were gathering, to look on, wondering what was going to happen.

"Silver!" said the Head at last, in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy.

"You and your companions here are, I believe, the ringleaders in the trouble that has occurred in the Classical Fourth Form."

"Indeed, sir!" said Jimmy.

"Since I had occasion to dismiss your late Form-master, Mr. Richard Dalton, there has been incessant trouble in the Fourth!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"Yes, sir, that is so."

"There seems to be a foolish, rebellious notion among the juniors that by giving me a sufficient amount of trouble, I may be induced or driven to recall Mr. Dalton," said the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

The Head started a little.

"You admit that, Silver?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Jimmy.

"We——" began Lovell. But he broke off. He had been going to recite the watchword of the Fourth—"We want Dicky!"—but under the Head's grim glance his heart failed him.

The three prefects in the doorway looked at one another. The Head seemed at a loss for a moment.

"There has been continual insubordination since Mr. Dalton left," resumed the Head at last. "It culminated this after-

noon when I, your headmaster, was actually locked in a Form-room."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"I do not know which boy in the Fourth Form was guilty of this act of brazen rebellion," said the Head. "I suspect, however, that he may be found in this study."

Jimmy Silver did not answer. Certainly he had no intention of giving the Head any information on that point.

"I have considered," went on the Head, "whether to administer a flogging to the whole Form."

There was a buzz down the passage, where the Head's deep voice was clearly heard by an excited crowd of Fourth-Formers. It died away as Dr. Chisholm went on:

"I have decided, however, not to take so drastic a measure at present. The ringleaders in this rebellion are to be found in this study, and it is my intention to make an example of this study. I have come here for the purpose."

The Fistical Four breathed hard and deep.

"In the presence of your Form-fellows"—apparently the Head was aware of the crowd in the passage—"each of you will be flogged—you, Silver, the most severely. Bulkeley, kindly place a chair for Silver to bend over."

Bulkeley stepped into the study and obeyed. From a fold of the Head's gown the birch appeared.

"Now, Silver——"

Jimmy did not move.

"Bend over, you young ass!" whispered Bulkeley.

Still the captain of the Fourth did not stir. His face was a little pale, but his eyes were gleaming.

"You hear me, Silver?" said the Head harshly.

"I hear you, sir! I'm not going to be flogged!" said Jimmy Silver quietly.

And for a full minute after that answer a pin might have been heard to fall in the end study.

CHAPTER 8.

Going Through It!

DR. CHISHOLM recovered himself at last. There was a crimson flush in his cheeks, and his eyes glinted like polished steel.

"Bulkeley!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir!"

"You will hold Silver while he receives his punishment."

"Very well, sir."

Bulkeley of the Sixth stepped towards Jimmy—reluctantly, but quite resolutely. He was there to carry out the orders of his headmaster. Jimmy backed away.

"I shall resist, Bulkeley!" he said, between his teeth.

"Don't be a young ass, Silver!" advised the prefect. "You're for it! Take it quietly!"

"Rats!"

Bulkeley grasped him, and whirled him towards the chair. Jimmy Silver was as good as his word. He hit out, and his clenched fist crashed on the senior's chest, sending him staggering.

"Oh!" gasped Bulkeley.

He released Jimmy as he staggered, and the captain of the Fourth sprang away.

"Back up, you fellows!" he gasped.

Only for an instant did Lovell & Co. hesitate. Then, as Bulkeley grasped Jimmy Silver again, they rushed on Bulkeley.

There was a wild and whirling struggle under the astonished and scandalised eyes of the Head.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Chisholm. "Silver—Lovell—Raby—Newcome—cease this instantly! Are you out of your senses? Do you hear me? Neville—Lonsdale! Help Bulkeley at once!"

"Back up, the Fourth!" roared Lovell.

There was a shout in the passage.

"Rescue!"

It was Mornington's voice.

Dr. Chisholm stepped into the doorway with a thunderous brow. Some of the Fourth were crowding towards the end study; but even the reckless Mornington stopped at the glare of the Head.

In the end study the struggle continued. The table rocked as the combatants crashed on it, and crockery went crashing to the floor. Chairs were knocked right and left.

But the three big prefects were much too powerful for the four juniors. Lonsdale grasped Raby and Newcome by the collars, and held them in a corner of the study. Neville backed Lovell up into another corner, and held him pinned there. And Jimmy Silver, in Bulkeley's grasp, was forcibly bent over the chair.

Dr. Chisholm swished the birch.

Again there was a loud murmur in the passage—the voices of Mornington, Conroy, and Putty of the Fourth were heard. But the habit of respect was strong, and the

juniors did not venture to "rush" the Head.

Whack!

The first lash of the birch rang through the end study, and echoed down the passage.

"He's laying it on!" murmured Tubby Muffin. "Jolly glad it ain't me!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The Head was indeed "laying it on" with quite an athletic arm. Jimmy Silver wriggled under the infliction, but the strong grasp of George Bulkeley held him helpless.

The birch descended again and again. Dr. Chisholm felt that it was a time for severity, and he did not spare the rod.

By the time he ceased, Jimmy Silver was very pale, and he had ceased to struggle.

"Put him aside!" said the Head.

Jimmy Silver leaned against the wall of the end study, breathing hard and deep. He had had the flogging of his life; and, for the time, he was "done."

"Lovell!" said the Head.

Arthur Edward Lovell resisted, but his resistance was in vain. He had to bend over, and the birch rose and fell again.

"Raby!"

Raby went through it philosophically. There was no help for it now, and he took it as calmly as he could. His castigation was lighter; perhaps the Head's arm was tiring a little.

"Newcome!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Arthur Newcome's yells rang along the passage. Newcome was not quite so hardy as his comrades.

The birch ceased at last.

Four unhappy juniors wriggled and mumbled before the stern eye of the headmaster.

"I trust," said Dr. Chisholm quietly, "that this will be a warning to you, and will help you to realise that discipline must be maintained in the Lower Forms at this school. In the event of any further mutiny it may be necessary for me to make an example by expelling the offender from Rookwood! Bear this in mind!"

Silence.

"Your new Form-master, Mr. Carker, arrives at Rookwood this evening. He will take charge of you to-morrow, and I trust that he will be shown every respect and obedience. I address you especially, Silver, as you have a great influence over your Form-fellows, both for good and for evil.

I expect you to set the others an example of cheerful obedience. That is all!"

The Head swept away.

The prefects followed him.

Jimmy Silver, pale and shaken, detached himself from the wall of the end study, and closed the door.

The Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Ow!" said Lovell. "Wow! I'm hurt!"

"Same here!" groaned Raby.

"Mmmmmmmmm!" from Newcome.

"We've been through it!" said Jimmy Silver. "But—a flogging's only a flogging—"

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"Yow!"

"We're not giving in——"

"Oh, dear——"

"Those rotters out there ought to have backed us up!" groaned Lovell. "All the Fourth are in it! They ought to have stood by us! Ow!"

"Next time they will; we'll see to that! We've got a new Form-master now—in the place of Dicky! We're going to make him sorry he came to Rookwood!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

Tubby Muffin's voice was heard outside.

"I say, they're yowling like anything! Come and hear them yowling, you fellows!"

Arthur Edward Lovell found energy enough to drag himself into the passage and kick Reginald Muffin. Then he limped back into the end study, and groaned. And for quite a long time little was heard in the end study but "yowling."

CHAPTER 9.

The Straight Tip!

"YOU understand?"

"Perfectly!" said Mr. Carker.

The new master of the Fourth Form sat in the Head's study, where he had listened to an explanation from Dr. Chisholm. The Head had told him how matters stood with the Fourth Form at Rookwood, and Mr. Carker, probably, had been a little surprised. But he did not seem at all disturbed. He was prepared to handle the rebellious Fourth, and bring them to their senses.

He was a hard-featured, rather grim-looking gentleman of forty—hard as nails, from his looks, with thin-set lips and grey eyes like flint. Certainly he looked hard

enough to tackle a junior Form, however mutinous. Indeed, there was a gleam in his eyes that indicated that he would rather enjoy the task of breaking in rebellious spirits.

Dr. Chisholm was satisfied. Mr. Carker was apparently the right man in the right place, and when Mr. Carker left his study, Dr. Chisholm felt that all would be well.

Mr. Carker walked down the corridor with a firm and heavy stride. He had not been presented to his Form yet; that was to come in the morning. But he had been introduced to the other members of the masters' Common-room—and the Common-room had not taken a liking to him. It was to the Common-room that Mr. Carker now directed his steps; and he found several other members of the staff there.

Mr. Mooney of the Shell gave him a polite nod—Monsieur Monceau, the French master, wished him "Bon jour!" Mr. Greely of the Fifth kept his purple nose in his evening paper. He did not like Mr. Carker's looks, and did not intend to cultivate his acquaintance.

Mr. Carker, dropped into an armchair, and Mr. Bohun, the master of the Third, entered into talk with him. Good-natured Mr. Bohun thought he would give the new man some points regarding affairs at Rookwood, and he gently suggested dealing with the recalcitrant Fourth tactfully. There was not a member of the Common-room who approved of the dismissal of "Dicky" Dalton. The judgments of the Head were not regarded as infallible by the staff. But Mr. Carker was evidently sufficient unto himself. He received the Third Form master's well-meant hints with a derisive smile that was scarcely polite.

"There will be no trouble in my Form," he said in a decided tone. "No doubt the late master was slack."

"Not at all!" interposed Mr. Mooney of the Shell. "Mr. Dalton was an excellent—a most excellent—Form-master, generally liked here."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Bohun.

"We all very much regret the Head's decision to dispense with his services," growled Mr. Greely, over the top of his newspaper.

"Mais c'est vrai!" said Monsieur Monceau.

Mr. Carker smiled sarcastically.

"Probably the Head knows best," he remarked. "He would not be flattered to

know what seems to be the general opinion here."

Upon which masters' Common-room shut up at once like an oyster. They realised that Mr. Carker was unreservedly on the Head's side, in which case it was not safe to express opinions too frankly before him. Such opinions, repeated to the Head, might have caused trouble, and nobody wanted to follow Mr. Richard Dalton out of the gates of Rookwood.

Mr. Carker did not mind the general silence that fell on the Common-room. It gave him a feeling of consequence. He knew that he had made himself a little feared.

In the silence the telephone-bell buzzed.

Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Second Form, was nearest the instrument, and he rose and took up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Is that masters' Common-room, Rookwood?" came an inquiring voice over the wires.

"Yes, What is wanted?"

"Mr. Carker."

"Hold on!"

Mr. Wiggins looked round.

"Someone is asking for you on the telephone, Mr. Carker."

"Thank you!"

The hard-faced gentleman came over to the receiver. Mr. Wiggins returned to his armchair.

"Mr. Carker!" came the voice.

"Mr. Carker speaking."

"So you've come?"

"What?"

"Are you going to take the Fourth Form to-morrow, Mr. Carker?" asked the unknown voice.

"Eh, what? Yes."

"I warn you to do nothing of the kind."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Mr. Dalton is master of the Fourth. No other master will be recognised."

Mr. Carker jumped. He guessed by this time that it was a member of his new Form who was speaking. A deadly glitter came into his deep-set eyes.

"Who is speaking?" he asked in a grinding voice.

"Never mind that, Carker." The unknown interlocutor dropped the "Mister" most disrespectfully. "You see, Carker

"How dare you!" gasped Mr. Carker.

"You see, Carker," went on the voice, "the job you've come to take on belongs to

Mr. Dalton. I'm sorry, but we don't want you. Will you clear out of Rookwood?"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Mr. Carker.

"Clear out of Rookwood."

"You young rascal!"

"You old rascal!" came back the answer.

"Upon my word!" muttered Mr. Carker.

He regretted very much that there was the length of a telephone-wire between him and the unknown junior who was speaking.

"We don't know what you're like yet," went on the voice. "Judging by your voice, I should say you were not a nice man."

Mr. Carker gritted his teeth.

"But, nice or nasty, you're not wanted at Rookwood. I'm giving you the tip to clear. Catch on?"

The other masters were all looking very curiously at Mr. Carker. They realised from what that gentleman said into the transmitter that this was a very unusual sort of conversation over the telephone wires.

"I take it," said Mr. Carker, "that you are a member of the Fourth Form, whoever you are?"

"You've got it, Carker?"

"Your name?"

"Find out!"

"I order you to give me your name."

"Go on!"

"You insolent young villain——"

"Chuck it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Chuck it! Cut it out, old man!"

Mr. Carker fairly gasped over the telephone. Mr. Wiggins, who was seated close to the instrument, caught a few words and smiled. His smile had a very exasperating effect on Mr. Carker.

"That's all," went on the voice. "I've tipped you the wink, old bean, and if you're a wise man you'll hook it before you hit trouble. Good-bye!"

"Boy——"

But the unknown had rung off. Mr. Carker stood with the receiver in his hand, and a black look on his hard face. A good-tempered man might have been annoyed by that talk on the telephone, and Mr. Carker was anything but a good-tempered man.

He waited a few moments, and then rang up the Exchange at Latcham.

"Put me on to the supervisor, please!"

In a minute or two more Mr. Carker was through to the Latcham supervisor.

"I have just been rung up," Mr. Carker explained, "and I was suddenly cut off. I

should be very much obliged if you could tell me where the call came from."

The gentlemen in the Common-room exchanged glances. Mr. Wiggins had strolled across the room and exchanged a few words in low tones with the other masters. They were all aware now that Mr. Carker was being interviewed—at a safe distance—by some cheeky member of the Fourth, and they were all smiling. Had Mr. Carker been a different sort of gentleman, his colleagues would have sympathised with him in his difficult task of taking over Mr. Dalton's Form. But as matters stood they had no sympathy to waste upon him, but found his position rather entertaining than otherwise.

The supervisor's reply came through to Mr. Carker at last.

"The call came from Rookwood School."

"Thank you!"

Mr. Carker hung up the receiver. He had guessed that the unknown junior had used one of the school telephones, and he only wanted to be sure.

He looked round at his smiling colleagues and frowned. But he did not stop to speak. He left the Common-room and hurried away to the study that had once been Mr. Dalton's. That study now belonged to Mr. Carker, and in taking possession of it he had observed, of course, that a telephone was installed there; and he considered it probable that that was the instrument that had just been used. At all events, it was worth investigating. Mr. Carker was very anxious to begin his reign over the Rookwood Fourth by making an example of the junior who had cheeked him over the wires.

He almost ran along the corridors to the study.

CHAPTER 10.

Hard Hit!

VALENTINE MORNINGTON of the Classical Fourth put up the receiver in Mr. Dalton's old study, and grinned.

Morny was quite satisfied with his "interview" with Mr. Carker.

Jimray Silver & Co., still feeling severely the effects of the flogging in the end study, were, for the present, out of the campaign. They were in too painful a state just then to take any interest in the new master of the Fourth. So Morny had taken up the trail, so to speak, at the point where the Fistical Four had dropped it.

Having seen Mr. Carker leave the Head's study and walk to masters' Common-room, Morny had repaired to the deserted Form-master's study, and rung him up from there.

He grinned cheerfully as he turned away from the telephone.

Mr. Carker had been given the "straight tip," though he was hardly expected to act upon it. But, at all events, the position had been made clear to him. The Fourth were at war with their new master, and he knew what to expect when he took charge of that unruly Form.

Morny glanced round the study. There were some bags in the room, and some packages of books on the table. Mr. Carker had not finished unpacking yet. Morny considered whether he should do some unpacking for him. A ragging in the new master's study seemed to him a good idea. But he paused. After all, Mr. Carker had given no offence yet, and he was not to blame for the fact that the Head had dismissed Dicky Dalton and engaged a new master.

So, after a few minutes' hesitation, Mornington shook his head, deciding to leave raggings over for the present.

He crossed to the door and opened it, and looked cautiously out into the passage before stepping out. It was just as well not to be seen leaving the master's study.

The next instant he jumped back.

His glance into the corridor had shown him the rather muscular figure of Mr. Carker coming round a corner towards the study.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Morny.

Mr. Carker was coming to the study almost at a run. Mornington could not leave without passing right under his nose.

He closed the door silently and quickly.

Morny's brain worked with rapidity. He guessed that Mr. Carker knew, or surmised, whence the telephone-call had come. He would have no doubt on the point if he found Morny in his study. And there was no escape.

The hurried footsteps of the new master were almost at the door when Mornington decided what to do. To face the angry gentleman was to ask for a licking, which Morny did not want. There was an alcove behind the bookcase in the corner of the study, and into that alcove Morny squeezed himself.

He was out of sight when the door opened and Mr. Carker came in.

He stood silent, scarcely breathing.

Mr. Carker looked round the study. For the moment he was disappointed. His eyes glittered angrily.

"Not here!"

Morny heard him murmur the words, and smiled behind the bookcase. He hoped that Mr. Carker would go.

But Mr. Carker did not go.

He stooped and looked under the table. Then he looked behind the screen by the fireplace. Morny heard the screen moved, and his heart sank. The beast was searching the study.

Footsteps came towards the bookcase.

Morny's heart thumped.

A hard face and two gleaming, baleful eyes looked round the bookcase, and fixed on the junior squeezed in the corner. Mornington met the new master's eyes as calmly as he could. A grim smile came over Mr. Carker's hard face.

"You may come out!" he said, and stepped back.

Mornington came out of his hiding-place. The game was up now. He cast a glance towards the door, and Mr. Carker promptly stepped between the door and Mornington.

He had picked up a cane from the table, and he stood bending it in his hands, as if testing it ready for use.

"Your name?"

"Mornington."

"Form?"

"The Fourth."

"I thought so. You telephoned to me a few minutes ago?"

Mornington did not answer.

"I asked you a question, Mornington of the Fourth Form!" said Mr. Carker.

"You've no right to ask me, sir," said Morny. "It's up to you to find out what you want to know. You can't ask fellows to give themselves away."

"Indeed! Will you answer my question—'Yes' or 'No'?"

"No, I won't!" said Mornington.

"Very good! Hold out your hand!"

Mornington hesitated, and looked longingly past Mr. Carker to the door. But there was no escape for him, and his hand came out very slowly.

Swish!

"Oh!" gasped Mornington.

It was a savage cut. His hand dropped to his side, and the cry escaped him involuntarily.

"The other hand!"

Swish!

"Now will you answer my question, Mornington?" asked Mr. Carker, with an agreeable smile.

Mornington breathed hard. He understood now that the new master intended to cane him till he answered. Mr. Carker swished the cane like a man who delighted in its use.

"I did telephone!" muttered Mornington savagely.

"I thought so. You had the insolence to insult your Form-master on his first day in the school."

"I—I didn't mean that. I was giving you the tip," said Mornington. "We don't want you!"

Mr. Carker laughed.

"That is a matter upon which you will not be allowed to express an opinion," he said. "Dr. Chisholm has explained to me how matters stand in the Fourth Form here. He has requested me to restore order. I shall make an example of you, Mornington!"

Morny squeezed his aching palms together.

"You will mention to your Form-fellows, Mornington, that they will be wise to submit to authority, and to render me every respect and obedience," said Mr. Carker. "Otherwise, it will be the worse for them. And now bend over this chair!"

Morny set his teeth.

"You hear me?"

Morny's reply was a rush towards the door. In an instant a grasp that seemed like iron was on his collar, and he was swung back.

"Let go, you rotter!" shouted Mornington recklessly.

Mr. Carker did not speak. With iron strength he forced the junior down over the chair, and held him there by the back of his collar.

Then the cane rose and fell.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

For some minutes Valentine Mornington stood it in silence with gritted teeth. But the pain was too severe, and loud yells were soon ringing from Mr. Carker's study. And still the cane swished and swished.

Morny wriggled and struggled. But he was held as in a vice, and the cane lashed hard and harder. A Head's flogging was nothing to it. The Head was a severe man, but Mr. Carker was a cruel one.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Mr. Mooney's startled face looked in.

"Mr. Carker!" he exclaimed.

The lashing paused for a moment.

"Do you want anything here?" asked Mr. Carker calmly.

"I have heard this boy's cries," said Mr. Mooney indignantly. "What he may have done I do not know; but you are going far beyond the bounds of proper punishment, Mr. Carker."

"Do you think so?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then I am sorry to disagree with you," said Mr. Carker coolly. "Shut the door, please."

Swish, swish, swish!

"Mr. Carker! I do not desire to interfere with a colleague, but if you do not release Mornington instantly I shall go to the headmaster!" exclaimed Mr. Mooney.

"You will please yourself about that, Mr. Mooney."

Swish, swish, swish!

"Upon my word!" spluttered the indignant master of the Shell. "Mr. Carker, I protest—I—"

"Ow! Help!" yelled Mornington.

Mr. Bohun of the Third Form hurried up. He glanced into the study, and then stepped in past Mr. Mooney.

"You had better stop, I think, Mr. Carker," he said.

Mr. Carker's lip curled.

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Bohun!" And the cane swept up into the air again.

Mr. Mooney, plump and flustered, blinked on indignantly; but Mr. Bohun, who was a young man, a boxer, and a footballer, was not flustered, and did not blink. He stepped up to the new master and grasped the descending arm.

"Stop!" he said tersely.

"Release me, sir!" shouted Mr. Carker, his hard face crimson with rage.

"You shall not touch that boy again."

"Sir! I—I—"

"If you do not release him, sir, I shall be driven to compel you to do so," said the Third Form master.

For a moment Mr. Carker glared defiance at him, and then he quailed. Cruelty is a form of cowardice; and under the Third Form master's cool, determined look, the craven in Mr. Carker showed. He released Morny's collar, and the junior staggered away.

"Go, Mornington!" said Mr. Bohun

quietly, and the hapless dandy of the Fourth limped from the study.

"I shall acquaint the Head with your interference with me in my duties, Mr. Bohun!" hissed Mr. Carker.

"You will do as you think fit," said the Third Form master contemptuously, and he left the study with Mr. Mooney.

Masters' Common-room was in a buzz of excited and indignant comment that evening. And in the passage inhabited by the Classical Fourth there was a louder buzz, more excited and more indignant. The gauntlet had been thrown down, and taken up; and the Classical Fourth were fairly on the war-path now.

CHAPTER 11.

Up Against Carker!

DR. CHISHOLM entered the Fourth Form room the following morning with Mr. Carker. The Classical Fourth were all in their places. Dr. Chisholm's face was severe; that of Mr. Carker was hard and stern. The juniors eyed the two masters in grim silence.

The flogging in the end study and the savage punishment of Mornington had not been without effect on the rebels. The Head was in deadly earnest and the new master was a hard man to handle—and the juniors realised it. If the campaign was going on there was danger ahead. But Jimmy Silver & Co. and Valentine Mornington, and the more determined spirits in the Fourth, were determined that it should go on. Dicky Dalton had been "sacked" for standing up for their rights, as they viewed the matter, and they were not going to desert his cause.

What Mr. Dalton himself would have thought of their championship they did not know. As he was no longer at Rookwood he could not tell them.

In a few brief, severe words Dr. Chisholm presented the new Form-master to the Fourth.

He added a few more words of advice to the juniors. His counsel was heard in an icy silence.

Then the Head rustled away, and Mr. Carker was left to carry on.

Most of the juniors looked at Jimmy Silver. Some of them were ready to follow his lead in immediate mutiny: more, prob-

ably, were disposed to hesitate. But Jimmy gave no signal.

The morning passed quietly.

As Jimmy Silver gave no signal for trouble the Form were on their best behaviour. But good behaviour did not save them from Mr. Carter's heavy hand. He was not a pleasant gentleman, and he liked severity, not only for the sake of discipline, but for his own sake. The cane was used oftener during that morning than it had been used in a week under Mr. Dalton. Tubby Muffin was caned for bringing aniseed balls into the Form-room, Rawson for shuffling his feet, Townsend for forgetting a book, Putty of the Fourth for a careless answer, other fellows for other reasons. Jimmy Silver was caned, apparently for no better reason than that he was head of the Form, and Mr. Carker considered it judicious to give him a lesson.

By the time the Fourth were dismissed Mr. Carker was quite satisfied that he had the Form well in hand, and that insubordination in the Fourth was a thing of the past.

And undoubtedly his methods had a strong effect upon a good portion of the Form. Tubby Muffin trembled at his frown, Peele & Co. sagely decided not to look for trouble with him, Townsend and Topham only wanted to avoid catching his baleful eye. But there were harder spirits in the Fourth; and in the end study there was a meeting of those harder spirits to discuss the situation. The Fistical Four and Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Rawson, and Putty Grace gathered there, and a council of war was held in fierce whispers.

"It's not only Dicky Dalton now," said Morny. "But we're not standin' Carker, even if Dalton hadn't been sacked. Carker's too thick."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head wouldn't stand such a brute at Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "But he's got his jolly old back up with us, that's how it is. I hear that he's wigged Mr. Bohun for interfering with Carker yesterday when he was whacking Morny."

"He's got to pay for that whackin'," said Morny.

"Only how?" asked Lovell.

"I've got a wheeze!" said Jimmy.

"Go it, Uncle James!"

And there were breathless chuckles in the end study as "Uncle James" of Rookwood propounded his scheme.

After dinner that day a number of the Fourth were busy.

Mack, the porter, missed a bucket of tar from the wood-shed. Fortunately, he did not guess that it had been annexed by a party of the Fourth, and never dreamed that it had been drawn up by a cord to the window of the box-room at the end of the Fourth Form passage. Tupper, the page, was astonished to receive a liberal "tip" for furnishing a couple of old feather pillows from the servants' quarters. What the heroes of the Fourth wanted with those old pillows Tupper could not guess; but he did not bother about that.

Had anyone looked into the box-room, he might have observed a bucket of tar behind a box in a corner, and a stack of loose feathers near it. Also some coils of box-rope placed in readiness. But even so, no one would have been likely to guess for what those articles were intended.

When the bell rang for classes the Classical Fourth gathered in their Form-room—but not all of them. Six members of the Form were absent from their places; and as soon as Mr. Carker came in he noted the fact at once.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy.

"Where are Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Mornington, Rawson, and Grace?" It was Mr. Carker's first day with the Fourth, but he had all the names pat.

"In the box-room, sir," said Jimmy.

Mr. Carker stared at him.

"What are they doing in the box-room, Silver?"

"They're not coming in to lessons, sir."

"What?"

Mr. Carker picked up his cane. His Form was not so well in hand as he had supposed.

"Silver! I leave you in charge here, and if there is a sound—even a whisper—I shall cane you when I return."

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy meekly.

Cane in hand, Mr. Carker strode to the door. At the door he turned his head for a moment.

"Which box-room, Silver?"

"At the end of the Fourth Form passage, sir."

"Very good."

Mr. Carker strode from the Form-room. In spite of his warning, there was a buzz of voices as soon as he was gone.

"What's the game, Jimmy?"

"What's up in the box-room?"

"They'll get lammed, you know," said Townsend. "Carker's glad of the chance to pitch into them."

"Let him," said Jimmy.

And he left the Form-room, followed by Erroll and Van Ryn and Oswald. Mr. Carker was already going up the staircase. They caught sight of him on the landing. Quickly but quietly the juniors followed on.

Quite unconscious of the fact that some of his class were following in his track, Mr. Carker strode along the Fourth Form passage. After him trod Jimmy Silver and his companions.

The new master reached the box-room door. It was closed, and he hurled it open.

Crash!

Bump!

And a wild yell!

"Come on!" panted Jimmy Silver.

And he raced up the Fourth Form passage, to join in the wild and whirling struggle that was taking place in the box-room.

CHAPTER 12.

Tar and Feathers!

MR. CARKER strode into the box-room, cane in hand, with a glitter in his eyes. It was his intention to thrash the truants there and then, and send them into class in a state of obsequious repentance. But it did not happen like that.

As he entered the box-room a cushion whizzed through the air and smote him under the chin. Mr. Carker, in surprise, staggered under the shock.

And as he staggered Mornington was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

He tackled Mr. Carker Rugby fashion, and the Form-master came to the floor with a terrific crash.

"Back up!" panted Morny.

"Hurrah!" gasped Lovell. "Go for him!"

Mr. Carker's iron grasp closed on Mornington, and it would have fared hardly with the dandy of the Fourth had not his comrades piled in to the rescue. But Lovell and Raby and Newcome were upon the master at once, dragging him away. Rawson and Putty grasped him, and he struggled furiously in half a dozen pairs of hands.

It was a struggle of six to one; but, even so, Mr. Carker gained his feet, staggering

up with the juniors clinging to him like terriers. He was over-matched, and his cane had been torn away, but he hit out savagely on all sides. And then Jimmy Silver arrived with a rush, with Erroll and Van Ryn and Oswald at his heels. The four juniors jumped into the fray without an instant's pause. There were now ten Fourth-Formers grappling with Mr. Carker, grasping him wherever they could get a hold—by his arms, his legs, his collar, his ears, and his hair. And under that attack the master went crashing down again, and this time he did not succeed in rising.

He sprawled under the grasping, clinging juniors, gasping for breath, and panting out threats.

"Got him!" breathed Mornington. "Lock the door, somebody!"

Newcome jumped to the door and turned the key.

"Release me!" panted Mr. Carker. "You young ruffians—scoundrels—rascals—Grooogh!"

"Bring the rope here!" gasped Morny.

Morny's knee was planted on Mr. Carker's neck, pinning him down. Lovell sat on his head, Raby on his waistcoat, and two or three fellows trampled wildly on his legs.

Putty dragged up the box-ropes and proceeded to fasten them carefully round Mr. Carker's ankles and wrists.

In a few minutes the tyrant of the Fourth was quite helpless.

Then the juniors released him, and he lay on the floor gasping for breath and glaring up at them.

"Our game!" said Mornington coolly.

"Where's his cane?"

"Here you are!"

"Good! Roll him over!"

"You will never dare—" shrieked Mr. Carker, his crimson face paling as he realised Mornington's intention.

"Dear man, you dared lick me yesterday!" smiled Mornington. "I'm still feelin' it. You're rather fond of handlin' the cane! Now you're goin' to have some of your own medicine—what?"

"You—you—you—"

"Roll the cad over!"

Mr. Carker was rolled over in a favourable position for punishment. Then Valentine Mornington began with the cane.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Go it, Morny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish, swish, swish!

Mr. Carker was soon yelling at the top of his voice. His wild and frantic yells rang through the Fourth Form passage, and far beyond.

But Morny still swished! He intended to give the tyrant what the tyrant had given him. That was justice, in Morny's view! And he laid on the strokes as if he were beating carpet.

"Help! Mercy! Help! Oh, stop! Help!" raved Mr. Carker.

"My hat! They'll hear this all over Rookwood!" said Lovell.

"Let them!" said Morny.

Swish, swish, swish!

Mr. Carker was shrieking now. Tubby Muffin could not have made more fuss under a flogging.

"They'll hear him in the Sixth Form room!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"We shall have the Head up here soon!"

"The door's locked all right," murmured Putty.

Swish, swish, swish!

"There!" gasped Mornington. "I think that will do! Do you think it will do, Carker?"

"Owl! Yow! Wow! Yooooop!" roared Mr. Carker.

"Here comes the Head!"

"Phew!"

There was a footstep outside. Apparently the Head had tracked the outbreak of amazing uproar to its source. The door-handle was tried, then there was a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" thundered the Head.

The juniors did not answer, but Mr. Carker spoke up.

"I am here, sir! I am tied with a box-ropel I have been assaulted—beaten! Help——"

"Shut up, you!" said Morny.

"Help! I—— Grrrrrrrgh!" gurgled Mr. Carker as Mornington shoved a handful of feathers into his mouth.

"Open this door instantly!" thundered the Head.

No one answered. The rebels of the Fourth were not finished with Mr. Carker yet.

He had had his licking, but the tar and feathers remained. Putty pulled the bucket over towards him.

"Sit him up!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Carker writhed in utter horror as he was sat up and the bucket of tar was lifted

over his head. But there was no escape for him.

The bucket was up-ended, and the tar streamed down over the hapless master. It engulfed his head, it clotted his hair, it covered his ears, it oozed into his mouth, it ran down inside and outside his collar. Mr. Carker disappeared from human knowledge. In his place writhed a horrid object as black as the ace of spades.

"Now the feathers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump! came Dr. Chisholm's angry knuckles on the door.

"Let me in immediately!"

Putty started with an armful of feathers. They streamed upon the tarry head and shoulders of Mr. Carker, and stuck there. The other fellows piled in with handfuls and armfuls till the whole supply had showered upon Mr. Carker.

His aspect by that time was startling.

Knock! Knock! Knock! came at the door. The Head was in a state of towering wrath.

"Unless this door is opened instantly every boy present shall be expelled from Rookwood!" he thundered.

The door was not opened.

"Grooogh—ooogh—ugggg!" came from Mr. Carker, with his mouth nearly full of mixed tar and feathers. "Ug! Ug! Ugggggg! Gugg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now I think we'll let him go," said Jimmy Silver. "He ought to entertain the Head in this state!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker's bonds were cut. He was free—but he was not thinking of giving any more trouble now. He was only yearning to escape from the clutches of the heroes of the Fourth.

Putty quickly unlocked the door.

Mornington flourished the cane, and gave Mr. Carker a cut across his tarry shoulders as a warning.

"Now get out!" he said. "We're fed-up with you, Carker! Get out of the room—and get out of Rookwood! Shift!"

Putty drew the door open. The hapless Carker, streaming with tar and feathers, with the cane lashing across his back, made a desperate rush to escape from the box-room.

At the same moment the Head, finding the door opened before him, strode in.

Crash!

"Bless my soul! Oh!" gasped Dr. Chisholm.

He staggered back under the impact. Mr. Carker staggered, too; but he threw his arms round the Head to save himself. The two masters staggered across the passage.

"Oh, what—what— Tar!" gasped the Head. "You—you—is this—what—you are smothering me! Bless my soul! I—I—" "Grooogh!"

"Release me!" shrieked the Head, and he pushed Mr. Carker violently away.

The embrace had transferred a considerable quantity of the tar and some of the feathers to the Head. His wrathful face was daubed with black. There was tar on his nose and in his mouth—he was smothered with it. He dabbed at it with his hands, and his hands came away black and sticky.

"Good heavens!" gasped the Head.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Mr. Carker, reeling against the wall. "I—"

"Keep your distance!" shrieked the Head. "Do not touch me again! Keep away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the box-room.

The Head glared into the room.

"Silver! You are the ring-leader in this! The others will be flogged! You, sir, are expelled from Rookwood! Go and pack your box at once!"

And then the Head strode away, tarry and furious. After him limped Mr. Carker, leaving a trail of dropping tar and feathers behind him as he went.

CHAPTER 13.

Under Sentence!

"SACKED!"

"Jimmy Silver?"

"Phew!"

"Bunked, you know," said Smythe of the Shell. "Bunked from Rookwood. Fact is, I'm not surprised. Cheeky young rotter, you know."

"Jimmy Silver—sacked!"

The news spread like wildfire through Rookwood School. Adolphus Smythe of the Shell stated that he was not surprised; but, as a matter of fact, the whole school was surprised, and a little incredulous.

Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth—junior captain of the school—sacked!

The Fourth and the Third and the Shell

buzzed with the news. Even the great men of the Fifth and Sixth discussed it.

It was almost the one topic at Rookwood.

"The Head's going it!" remarked Hanson of the Fifth. "First he bunks Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth; now he bunks Jimmy Silver! What next, I wonder?"

"What's Silver done?" inquired Talboys of the Fifth.

"Some row with Carker, his new Form-master! The Fourth have been kickin' up a dust ever since Mr. Dalton was bunked. The fact is," said Hansom seriously, "the Head is a bit of a Tartar. Dicky Dalton was a good man, and Carker is a bit of a rotter. I'd have kicked if I'd been in the Fourth."

"Still, these dashed fags have to be kept in order!" said Talboys, shaking his head.

"Oh, yes!" said Hansom at once. "No doubt about that!"

That was a point upon which all the Fifth could agree.

While Rookwood School buzzed with the startling news, Jimmy Silver & Co. sat in the end study in the Fourth with grave faces. Jimmy was grave, but quite cool; Lovell and Raby and Newcome were dismayed. The Fistical Four were waiting; they expected that Jimmy would be sent for. In times of emergency, "Uncle James" of Rookwood was always cool; but his chums marvelled at his coolness now.

"We're up against it, and no mistake!" Arthur Edward Lovell remarked for about the tenth time.

"It was bound to come," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "We've agreed on a Form strike till Mr. Dalton comes back. This is only a move in the game."

"But—" said Raby.

"The Head won't give in!" said Newcome.

"And we won't," said Jimmy. "Mr. Dalton stood up for our rights, and was sacked. The Head's too high-handed. We're bound to stand by Dicky Dalton, as he stood by us."

"But the sack—" murmured Raby.

"Of course, Jimmy's not going," said Lovell. "The whole Form will stand by him. I'll jolly well wallop any fellow who doesn't!"

"But—" said Raby again.

To juniors, as a rule, the Head appeared as a dread personage clothed with irresistible authority. That resistance to that authority might be followed by expulsion from the school was a fact known to all

the rebels of Rookwood, and they had risked it. But when the blow came, it seemed to most of the fellows an overwhelming one.

Mornington of the Fourth looked in on the solemn conclave sitting in the end study. Morny was not looking grave; he was smiling, as if he found entertainment in the present critical state of affairs. No doubt he did.

"Well, the chopper's come down, Jimmy," he said cheerily. "Of course, you're not goin'."

"No!" said Jimmy.

"We're all backin' you up, of course."

"Of course!" agreed Jimmy.

"The Head will send a prefect for you, I suppose," said Mornington. "Shall we collar him and roll him down the stairs?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"No; it will be Bulkeley, most likely; and we don't want a row with Bulkeley. If the Head wants to see me, I'll go."

"And tell him who's who, and what's what," said Lovell. "Leave it to Jimmy."

"Well, we're ready, if you want us," said Mornington, and he strolled down the passage, whistling.

Tubby Muffin looked into the end study a few minutes later. Muffin gave the Fistical Four an agreeable grin.

"Sorry for you, Jimmy," he said.

"Thanks!"

"I hear you're going to-night," said Tubby.

"I dare say you've heard that," assented Jimmy.

"It's a bit rough," said Reginald Muffin.

"I'm really sorry, and all that. Still, you might have expected it."

"I might."

"There you are, anyhow," said Muffin.

"There'll be room for another fellow in this study when you're gone. This is a better study than mine. I'm thinking of changing."

Lovell & Co. glared at Tubby Muffin. Jimmy Silver grinned.

"You haven't packed yet?" asked Tubby.

"Not yet."

"Better get your things together, old man," advised Muffin. "The fact is, I'd like to move my things in here as soon as possible, before somebody else bags the study. I shall get on all right here with Lovell and Raby and Newcome. In fact, some fellows might think they'd made a change for the better."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've asked Mr. Carker," said Tubby. "He says I can change into this study when you're gone, Jimmy."

"You've asked Carker!" roared Lovell.

"Yes. Of course, I don't like Carker any more than you do. But, after all, he's master of the Fourth, isn't he?" said Tubby. "Now, I don't want to hurry you, Jimmy."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all, old fellow. But really, I wish you'd get a move on. As you're sacked, you won't want the study any more, so I may as well move my things in at once. Will you come and help me, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward Lovell rose to his feet. The expression on his face might have warned a less fatuous youth than Reginald Muffin that trouble was coming. But Tubby never saw trouble till it came.

"That's right," said Tubby. "Come on, old man. I've asked Putty to help me bring my things along, and he only told me to go and eat coke. Now, you— Oh, my hat! Wharrer you up to! Yaroooooh!"

Lovell grasped the fat Classical by the collar and swung him round. Then he planted his right boot on Tubby's tight trousers, with a terrific concussion. The yell that Tubby Muffin gave might have been heard on the other side of the Rookwood quad.

"Whoooooooop!"

Tubby Muffin flew through the doorway. He landed on his hands and knees in the passage, and rolled over and roared.

"Yoo-hoo-hooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come back and have another!" roared Lovell.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!"

Instead of going back and having another, Reginald Muffin scrambled up and fled along the Fourth Form passage. One, apparently, was enough for Reginald.

CHAPTER 14.

To Go or Not to Go?

"HERE'S Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came into the end study with a very grave face. The Fistical Four eyed him.

"The Head's sent me for you, Silver," said the captain of Rookwood.

"I'm ready."

"I'm sorry for this, kid," said Bulkeley kindly. "But you must have known that it would come, after the way you handled your Form-master."

"Carker isn't our Form-master!" snapped Lovell. "Dicky Dalton is our Form-master and Carker's nobody!"

Bulkeley did not reply to that.

"Come along, Silver!" he said.

"Hadh't we better come with you, Jimmy?" asked Lovell anxiously.

"No, old chap; it's all right."

"Mind, you're not going out of Rookwood!" said Lovell.

"No fear!"

Bulkeley glanced curiously at the Co., but he said no more, and Jimmy Silver followed him from the end study. In the passage most of the Classical Fourth were gathered, in a state of great excitement. A dozen voices shouted to Jimmy Silver.

"Buck up, Jimmy!"

"We're standing by you, old chap!"

"We'll roll Bulkeley downstairs if you like, Jimmy!" shouted Putty of the Fourth.

"Collar him!" roared Conroy.

"Kick him out of our passage!"

There was a crowding round of the rebels of the Fourth. Bulkeley's face set grimly. Big and hefty Sixth-Former as he was, he had no chance against the crowd of juniors, and the rebels could have handled him as they chose. But Jimmy Silver's pacifying voice was heard.

"Chuck it, you fellows! It's all right."

"You're not going to be sacked!" exclaimed Rawson.

"No, it's all right!"

And Jimmy Silver walked on with the prefect, through the buzzing crowd, to the stairs. They passed down the stairs and entered the Head's corridor. There Bulkeley paused for a moment, and fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver.

"What's all this nonsense, Silver? You're bound to go now you're expelled."

"I'm not going, all the same."

"It's hard cheese," said Bulkeley, "but it's no good kicking. You should have thought of all that earlier. The Head's written to your father already to expect you home in the morning."

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"If the other fellows make trouble, I'm afraid your expulsion may be followed by others," said Bulkeley uneasily. "The Head's got his back up over this business. If you've got any influence over the

Fourth, Silver, and you wish them well, you'd better try to persuade them to take it quietly."

"We're all standing together in this, Bulkeley," answered Jimmy Silver. "It's agreed that if one goes, we all go!"

"That's rot!" said Bulkeley sharply.

"We don't think so."

"Well, come on!" said Bulkeley sharply, and he led Jimmy Silver on to the Head's study.

He tapped at the door of that august apartment and opened it.

"Silver, sir!" he said.

"You may enter, Silver!" came Dr. Chisholm's deep voice.

Jimmy Silver entered, and Bulkeley drew the door shut and walked away with a deeply troubled brow. Bulkeley of the Sixth, like a good many others at Rookwood, felt that the Head was acting in an extremely high-handed manner, which was not for the good of the school. But the Head was the Head, and his word was law at Rookwood, and George Bulkeley did not see what was to be done.

Jimmy Silver's heart beat a little faster as he stood in the Head's study, under the stern eyes of the headmaster. But he was still quiet and self-possessed.

Mr. Carker, the new master of the Fourth, was also in the study. His face was pale, and his hair was still sticky with tar from his late handling by the rebels. He gave Jimmy Silver a venomous look. Jimmy did not heed him; he looked at the Head.

Dr. Chisholm's face was hard and stern. Whether the Head had any regrets for his harsh treatment of Mr. Richard Dalton nobody knew but himself. But assuredly there was no doubt that he intended to crush the rebellion in the Fourth, which had followed the dismissal of the popular Form-master.

"Silver"—his deep voice was like the roll of distant thunder—"I have already told you that you are expelled from this school."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"You have ventured to lay hands upon your Form-master—Mr. Carker—even to the extent of entrapping him in a box-room and coating him with tar and feathers!"

"Yes, sir."

"Every other participant in that outrage, Silver, will be flogged after prayers to-morrow morning! Of you, as the ring-

CHAPTER 15.

A Loyal Chum!

leader, I shall make an example. You leave Rookwood in the morning!"

Jimmy did not reply to that.

"For to-night," continued the Head, "you will be confined to the punishment-room. I regard your influence over your Form-fellows as dangerous, and you will not be allowed to hold any further communication with them before you leave."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I have already written to your father, informing him of the circumstances. He will expect you at home to-morrow."

No reply.

"That is all, Silver," said Dr. Chisholm. "I may add, however, that I should be glad to hear you express some regret to Mr. Carker for your rebellious and disrespectful treatment of him."

Jimmy smiled faintly.

"But I don't regret it, sir!" he answered.

"What!"

"Mr. Carker is a bully and a brute, sir!"

Mr. Carker made a movement. The Head's brow darkened.

"So you are keeping up your insolence till the last possible moment, Silver!" he exclaimed.

"I don't mean that, sir. We all respect you," said Jimmy. "But we can't respect Mr. Carker. He is a rotter!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

"Very well, sir. But I'm bound to tell you," said Jimmy Silver quietly, "that the whole Fourth Form are in this, and that I shall not submit to be expelled from Rookwood."

Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet.

"This is too much!" he said. "Mr. Carker, kindly take this rebellious boy to the punishment-room, and lock him in."

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Carker.

"You will remain in the punishment-room, Silver, until nine o'clock to-morrow morning, when Mr. Carker will take you to the station. Have you packed your box?"

"No, sir."

"I gave you instructions to pack it, Silver. Why have you not done so?"

"Because I'm not leaving Rookwood, sir."

Dr. Chisholm compressed his lips.

"Take him away, Mr. Carker!" he said, almost gasping. "Take him away at once!"

And with Mr. Carker's hand gripping his shoulder, Jimmy Silver was led away from the Head's study.

JIMMY SILVER sat on the edge of the little iron bed in the punishment-room and yawned. At half-past nine, bedtime for the juniors, a prefect had stepped into the room and extinguished the gas. Jimmy Silver had turned in obediently; but as soon as the prefect was gone he had turned out again and dressed himself. He had no intention of sleeping that night in the punishment-room.

Under sentence of expulsion from the school, locked in a room far from his comrades, Jimmy Silver was still confident. He knew that he could rely upon his chums. Even without aid from outside, Jimmy had little doubt of being able to get out of his present quarters, and he was sure that aid would come.

As he sat on the edge of the bed he heard a muttering of voices on the landing, and recognised Bulkeley's voice, and then Neville's. The two prefects were evidently on guard outside. He did not catch all the words, but he knew that the seniors were agreeing that it was unnecessary to watch the punishment-room any longer. Indeed, they could scarcely have been expected to keep it up through the night.

"The fags are all asleep by this time," Jimmy heard Lonsdale remark, "and I'm fed-up with this."

"It's all right," said Bulkeley. "I'll give them a look in at the dormitory. Anyhow, if a silly fag sneaked up here and whispered through the keyhole, I can't see that it would hurt."

"Let's clear," mumbled Jones major.

And Jimmy heard footsteps receding.

Ten o'clock had rumbled out from the clock-tower of Rookwood. Jimmy did not think of sleep.

He waited for some sign from his friends; he was sure that it would come.

As it happened, he had not long to wait. It was not yet half-past ten when there was a faint tap at the door and a whisper:

"Jimmy!"

It was Lovell's voice. Jimmy Silver jumped up and crossed hurriedly to the door, and whispered back through the keyhole:

"Hallo, Lovell!"

"Oh, you're not asleep?"

"No fear!" chuckled Jimmy.

"There's nobody watching now," Lovell went on. "I've sneaked up from the dorm

to see. We're going to have you out, Jimmy. I'll go back and call the fellows, and bring something to bu'st in this lock, Jimmy. We'll have you out jolly soon."

"Hold on!" breathed Jimmy.

"What——"

"Better manage it quietly, old man," said Jimmy through the keyhole. "If there's a shindy, the masters will come up, and the prefects, and there will be trouble."

"I don't care!" growled Lovell.

"But we want to get through this time, old chap. A shindy outside won't do me any good."

"Oh, we'd lick the lot!" said Lovell confidently.

Jimmy Silver smiled in the darkness. Arthur Edward Lovell's confidence was evidently undiminished by defeat.

"But it would spoil the whole game, Lovell, if there was a row," said Jimmy. "There's a lot to do after I get out, you know. Look here, the window of this room is over the window of the top box-room."

"Yes?"

"If I let down a string, you can tie a rope on it, and I can pull it up and come down to the box-room window."

"My hat! It's sixty feet from the ground, Jimmy."

"That's all right."

"In the dark, too!"

"That's all right. That's the wheeze," said Jimmy Silver. "I'll wait for you to jerk the string as a signal, and then I'll pull it up. Catch on?"

"Right-ho! But——"

There was a creak and a footstep, and a light flashed on Lovell as he bent outside the punishment-room door. Mr. Carker's harsh voice broke on the ears of the juniors.

"You young rascal!"

"Oh, my hat! Carker!" exclaimed Lovell, springing up.

"What are you doing here? How dare you leave your dormitory?" exclaimed Mr. Carker angrily. "You were speaking through the keyhole to Silver, Lovell. Don't attempt to deny it!"

Lovell gave an angry snort.

"I'm not going to deny it," he answered.

"Come with me. I shall take you to the Head!"

Mr. Carker's hand dropped on Lovell's shoulder. For a moment Arthur Edward was tempted to kick the master's shins and resist; but he thought better of it. His comrades were far away in the dormitory

and alone, Lovell had no chance in the hands of the Fourth Form tyrant.

"Good-night, Jimmy!" he called out.

"Good-night, old chap!"

"Silence! Come!" snapped Mr. Carker.

Arthur Edward Lovell was led away. Mr. Carker led him direct to the headmaster's study. Dr. Chisholm blinked in surprise at the junior, who was clad in pyjamas and trousers and felt slippers.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "What does this mean, Mr. Carker?"

"I considered it judicious, sir, to keep an eye on the punishment-room," said Mr. Carker. "I found this boy speaking to Silver through the keyhole."

Dr. Chisholm knitted his brows. His hand strayed to his cane, and Lovell breathed hard. He felt that he was "for it," and he knew by experience how the Head could lay it on when he liked. But Dr. Chisholm did not pick up the cane. His glance, as it rested on Lovell, was not unkindly.

"You left your dormitory to speak to Silver?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Lovell quietly.

"I have no doubt that you are concerned about a boy who has been your friend, and who is to leave the school in the morning," said the Head. "Silver is separated from the rest of the school for good reasons, Lovell. You are very well aware that you should not have acted as you have done. But I can make allowance. I shall excuse you."

"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Lovell, quite taken aback.

Mr. Carker set his lips hard. He by no means shared the merciful view of the Head. But it was not for him to speak.

"I shall excuse you, Lovell. But do not leave your dormitory again to-night, or I shall be compelled to punish you severely," said Dr. Chisholm. "Mr. Carker, please see Lovell safely back to the Fourth Form dormitory."

Mr. Carker opened his lips and closed them again. In silence he obeyed the Head's injunction.

Lovell followed him back to the dormitory. Mr. Carker opened the door of that apartment, and turned on the light. He gave a bitter glance up and down the long room. All the Classical Fourth were awake. Then his hard eyes fixed on Lovell.

"Go to bed, Lovell!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Lovell.

He turned in. Mr. Carker looked up and down the room again, with a black brow, and turned out the light and retired.

As soon as he was gone there was a buzz of voices in the dormitory.

"What's up, Lovell?"

"Licked?"

Arthur Edward Lovell explained.

"The Head really isn't a bad old sort," he concluded. "I thought I was for it, and no mistake! You should have seen Carker's face when the Head let me off." Lovell chuckled. "The Head's a good sort in his way; but he's not going to bunk Jimmy Silver, all the same."

"No jolly fear!" said Mornington.

"But how are we going to get at Jimmy, with the Carker-bird on the watch?" asked Rawson.

"That's all right. I fixed that up with Jimmy before Carker happened along," chuckled Lovell. "It's right as rain!"

A quarter of an hour later Lovell opened the dormitory door softly, and looked out and listened. All was dark and silent outside. Even the Sixth were in bed by this time; and, though lights still burned in masters' Common-room and some of the masters' studies, there was no gleam of light above the dormitory staircase.

Lovell trod softly out to the box-room. He reached it in a few minutes; and then, for a little while, he was busy plaiting box-ropes into a thick rope that would have stood the weight of half a dozen juniors. Then he opened the windows, and groped outside in the dim moonlight, and caught a string that hung and floated from the window of the punishment-room above. A few moments more and he had tied on the rope and given the signal to Jimmy Silver.

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Carker Asks for It!

JIMMY SILVER had waited long and patiently. He had made a string by tying together strips from the sheets of his bed, and that string dangled from the window of the punishment-room. It was a small window, but large enough for a junior to pass through, though certainly no one had ever dreamed that a junior would think of passing through it, as it opened on a sheer drop of at least sixty feet. At the open window Jimmy Silver waited patiently. He knew that sooner or later

Lovell would carry out his instructions, and it was only a question of time.

There came a jerk at the string at last. It was the signal, and Jimmy drew it in. Below, dimly in the moonlight, he could see Lovell's head projecting from the box-room window.

The plaited rope came within his reach, and he drew it in. There was an ample length of it. Lovell had not done his work by halves. Jimmy drew the end across to the bed, and made it fast there.

Then he returned to the window.

With a cool and steady head, and taking care not to look downwards, Jimmy climbed out on the sill.

He grasped the rope, tested it carefully, and then trusted his weight to it.

Below, at the box-room window, Lovell looked upward, watching him breathlessly. Hand-below-hand, Jimmy Silver came down, slowly and steadily.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Lovell, as Jimmy reached the level of the box-room at last.

He grasped his chum, and drew him in. Jimmy Silver slid in over the sill, and stood in the box-room, breathing hard and deep.

"All serene, old chap?" asked Lovell anxiously.

"Right as rain!"

"Good! The fellows are waiting for us in the dorm."

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

In the darkness the two juniors crept silently along dark passages, and reached the dormitory of the Classical Fourth. As Lovell opened the door, there was a foot-step on the stairs.

"Quick!" he breathed. "It's Carker again, I fancy! He's doing the night-watchman stunt to-night."

The two juniors entered the dormitory, and closed the door softly. Two or three whispering voices were heard.

"That you, Lovell?"

"Jimmy—"

"Shush!" breathed Lovell. "Carker's coming up!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Cut into bed, Lovell!" said Jimmy hurriedly.

"But you—"

"That's all right."

Arthur Edward Lovell bolted into bed as a hand was heard on the door. He had barely drawn the blanket over him when the door opened and the light was switched on.

Mr. Carker stood in the doorway staring grimly into the dormitory. Evidently the new master of the Fourth was suspicious. His eyes sought Lovell's bed at once. But Lovell was there, and the Form-master looked up and down the room, watchfully and suspiciously. Two or three snores were heard—in Tubby Muffin's case quite genuine. But in some of the beds the juniors sat up and blinked at Mr. Carker in the sudden light.

Jimmy Silver was not to be seen. He had drawn close to the wall, and the door, in opening, had hidden him from sight.

Behind the door Jimmy Silver stood silent, scarcely breathing, while the Form-master looked about him suspiciously. That Mr. Carker suspected some nocturnal attempt to rescue Jimmy was certain; but equally certainly he did not suspect that Jimmy was in the dormitory at that moment, within three feet of him.

"Do you want anythin', sir?" asked Mornington politely, as he met the master's suspicious glance.

Mr. Carker knitted his brows.

"I heard a sound as I came here," he said. "Someone opened or closed the door. Who has been out of the room?"

There was no reply from the Classical Fourth. If Mr. Carker wanted to know that he had to find it out.

Jimmy made no sound. He hoped that Mr. Carker would be satisfied and would go. But Mr. Carker was not easily satisfied. He came over towards Arthur Edward Lovell's bed.

"Have you been out of the dormitory, Lovell?"

No answer.

"Do you hear me, Lovell?"

"I hear you, sir," said Arthur Edward.

"Then answer me—truthfully! Something has been going on here," said Mr. Carker savagely. "I believe there is some scheme for getting Silver out of the punishment-room. Answer me at once!"

"I've nothing to say, sir," said Lovell.

Mr. Carker had a cane under his arm. He let it slide down into his hand, and took a businesslike grip on it.

"Get out of bed, Lovell!"

"What for?" grunted Lovell.

"I am going to cane you."

Lovell set his teeth.

"You're not!" he answered.

Swish! The cane came down across Arthur Edward Lovell, and he gave a gasp and a jump. The bedclothes fell back,

revealing the fact that Lovell was fully dressed.

Mr. Carker's eyes glittered at him.

"I thought so," he said. "You are dressed. You have been out of the dormitory again, Lovell! The Head excused you last time. This time I shall not take you to him, but shall deal with you myself. Stand up and hold out your hand!"

Lovell jumped out of bed, but on the opposite side from Mr. Carker. Mornington and Rawson, Conroy and Putty Grace turned out at the same moment with grim looks. Oswald and Raby and Newcome followed their example at once.

Trouble was imminent.

Click!

The dormitory door closed suddenly, and the key was turned in the lock. Mr. Carker swung round towards it in amazement, and his eyes almost started from his head at the sight of Jimmy Silver standing by the closed door.

"Silver!" he stuttered.

"Little me, sir!" said Jimmy coolly.

"Collar him, you fellows, and keep him quiet!"

And Jimmy Silver led the rush.

CHAPTER 17.

The Plan of Campaign!

MR. CARKER lashed out with his cane as the Classical juniors rushed on him. There was a yelp from Raby and a gasp from Putty of the Fourth. But the next moment Mr. Carker went staggering across Lovell's bed, with half a dozen hands grasping him.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Collar the cad!" grinned Mornington.

"Sit on his head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the other side of the bed Lovell threw his arm round Mr. Carker's neck and dragged him down as he strove to rise. "Got him!" chuckled Lovell.

Newcome tore the cane from Mr. Carker's hand. Conroy and Raby grasped his wrists.

Mr. Carker struggled savagely. But as he realised that he could not release himself, he opened his mouth to yell for help. Jimmy Silver was ready for him. As Mr. Carker's mouth opened, a cake of soap was jammed into it, and driven home hard.

"Cggrrrrrrrrrh!"

Mr. Carker spluttered and gurgled, but he did not yell. It was not possible for him to yell now.

He gurgled and gasped.

"Sorry, old bean!" said Jimmy Silver politely. "You would butt in, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Keep him tight, you fellows, and mind that he doesn't kick up a row," said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want the Head and the prefects up here."

"We've got him!" chuckled Lovell.

Mr. Carker struggled desperately. Morny picked up the cane from the floor and flourished it.

"Keep quiet, Carker!" he rapped out.

The enraged master still struggled. The cane came down with a lash across his whirling legs. There was a gasp of spluttering anguish from Mr. Carker.

"Takin' it quietly now?" asked Mornington. "There's more where that came from, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker's struggles ceased. Evidently he did not want any more of the cane.

"Now, what's the game, Jimmy?" asked Mornington. "Are we going to keep the Carker man here?"

"Yes, and keep him quiet," said Jimmy Silver.

"Better roll him downstairs," said Lovell.

"Fathead!"

"Now, look here, Jimmy——"

"Shush!"

Jimmy Silver proceeded to cut strips from a sheet. With those strips he secured the wrists and ankles of Mr. Carker. Then the cake of soap was mercifully withdrawn from Mr. Carker's mouth, but it was replaced by a handkerchief, stuffed in and secured into place by a string tied round Mr. Carker's head.

The juniors watched those proceedings in amazement. Mr. Carker was still more astonished. Possibly he feared a repetition of his previous experience of tar and feathers, for his look was very apprehensive. But having secured him, Jimmy Silver took no further heed of the new master of the Fourth.

He crossed to the electric light switch and turned it off. The dormitory was plunged into darkness.

"What's that for?" demanded Lovell.

"The light might be seen from the windows," said Jimmy. "We've got some candles here."

"What does it matter, anyhow?" demanded Arthur Edward. "There'll be a row over this, and we're up against the beaks. May as well come now as any other time."

"Jimmy's leader," said Mornington.

Lovell grunted. Four or five candle-ends were lighted, shedding a dim and glimmering light through the long, lofty room.

All the Classical Fourth were wide awake now, and all out of bed, with the exception of Tubby Muffin. Tubby was sitting up and blinking at the scene. Peele and his friends were looking uneasy. They did not like the new master any more than the other fellows did, but they were far from keen on entering upon a campaign against the Head. But the great majority of the Form were heart and soul with Jimmy Silver, and prepared to follow his lead whithersoever he should lead them.

All eyes were fixed on Jimmy. Mr. Carker, bound and helpless, wriggled unregarded on Lovell's bed.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Mornington. "Give it a name, Jimmy."

"Is it going to be a barring-out?" asked Lovell.

There was a murmur of applause.

"Good egg!"

"That's the game, Jimmy!"

"Lend me your ears, gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said the captain of the Fourth. "It's agreed that the whole Form are up against the beaks till Dicky Dalton comes back."

"Hear, hear!"

"It's agreed that if any fellow is bunked the whole Form stands by him and doesn't let him go."

"What-ho!"

"It's war now," went on Jimmy Silver. "I'm booked to go to-morrow morning, and some of you fellows will follow if you don't give in."

"We're not giving in!" growled Lovell.

"Then it's a fight to a finish," said Jimmy Silver. "And now it's come to that, a barring-out is the only way."

"Bravo!"

"If the whole school were in it that would be the simple way," went on Jimmy Silver, "but it's only the Classical Fourth. Even the Modern Fourth are not in this with us. We're only a handful, and we shall have all the Sixth against us—perhaps the Fifth, too, and a barring-out inside the school isn't practical politics. The fact

is that we're on strike till Mr. Dalton comes back, and we can't go on strike inside Rookwood."

"But what—" ejaculated Lovell.

"Then where—" said Mornington.

Jimmy held up his hand.

"My idea is for the whole Classical Fourth to retreat from the school," he said quietly. "To-morrow morning the Head will find Carker here, but he won't find us."

"Great pip!"

"Phew!"

There was a murmur of amazement among the juniors. Jimmy Silver's plan almost took their breath away.

"But—but where are we going?" exclaimed Lovell. "We could bar them out from the dormitory—"

"We should be starved out in a day," said Jimmy.

"Ye-es, but—"

"What about barricading the Fourth Form passage?" asked Raby.

"The same thing applies, old chap. We should have to have time to get ready and lay in grub and all that, and there's no time. The other side are too strong for us at close quarters, and we can't bar them out and then surrender as soon as we get hungry."

There was a chuckle among the juniors.

"We're getting out of Rookwood," went on Jimmy. "The Head has sacked me. I'm to go to-morrow. Well, I'm going to-night, and all the Classical Fourth are coming with me."

"Phew!"

"But where?" persisted Lovell. "This isn't the time of year for camping out in the jolly old fields, you know."

"No fear!" said Tubby Muffin.

"I've thought all that out," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I thought out the plans while I was waiting in the punishment-room. We're going to bar out the Head, not in Rookwood, but on the island in the river."

"The—the island?"

"That's it! It will mean roughing it, of course. But I suppose we're all ready to rough it sooner than give in?"

"Yes, rather!"

"There's the old hut on the island—the old Army hut, you know—that will be our headquarters. We can get in a supply of grub before anybody can get at us there. We can take our camping stuff along with us. That won't take long to pack. To-

morrow morning there won't be any Classical Fourth Form at Rookwood."

"Poor old Rookwood!" murmured Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but—" stuttered Lovell.

"The Head will be bound to come to terms in the long run," said Jimmy Silver. "Before the barring-out has gone on a week it will be the talk of the county. The school governors will hear of it. There'll be no end of a shindy. All we've got to do is to hold out till the enemy come to terms."

"Bravo!"

Mr. Carker heard, though he could not speak. His eyes grew wide with amazement.

"I—I say," stammered Tubby Muffin, "I—I think I'll stay here, Jimmy. It's co-co-cold on the island, you know."

"I'm jolly well not goin'!" exclaimed Peele hotly. "We shall all get the sack."

"Awful rot!" said Gower.

Jimmy Silver glanced round quietly.

"The whole Form are standing in," he said. "We're bound to stand together. Two or three or half a dozen could be expelled, but they can't sack a whole Form. We must stand together, Peele."

"There's another point," drawled Mornington. "Any fellow who stays behind will have the pleasure of seein' Carker every day. Carker will take it out of the fellows he can get at, I fancy. You'd really be better off on the island, Peele, with the rest."

Cyril Peele seemed to realise the force of that remark, for he said no more.

"And we're goin' to-night, Jimmy?" asked Mornington, his eyes gleaming with the anticipation of excitement.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver, "and we're losing no time. Carker can tell the Head all about it in the morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Lovell.

There was a footstep outside. It was followed by the turning of the handle of the door. The juniors suddenly silent, scarcely breathed.

There was a sharp rap at the door.

"What's going on here? The door's locked! Open this door at once!"

It was the voice of Bulkelev of the Sixth.

"That settles it," murmured Peele. "Bowled out, by gad!"

"Shut up, Peele!"

Bulkeley knocked again.

"Open this door! Is Mr. Carker here? Let me in at once, you young sweeps, or I shall call the Head!"

"We'll let you in, Bulkeley!" called back Mornington, after a whispered word from Jimmy Silver.

"Buck up, then!"

Jimmy Silver gave hurried instructions in whispers. It was a critical moment, for had the alarm been given then the planned retreat from Rookwood certainly could never have been carried out. But Jimmy Silver was equal to the emergency.

The candles were blown out, and seven or eight sturdy juniors gathered by the door. Then the key was turned back and the door opened.

Bulkeley of the Sixth blinked in in the dark.

"What——" he began.

He made a step into the room, groping for the electric light switch. At the same moment Jimmy Silver & Co. fastened upon him.

Bump!

Almost before he knew what was happening, the captain of Rookwood was on the floor, helpless in the hands of his assailants. Jimmy Silver jammed a sponge into his mouth, and Bulkeley gasped and spluttered. He struggled savagely, but he struggled in vain. A cord was knotted round his arms, a strap buckled round his legs. Utterly helpless, the captain of Rookwood was lifted, carried to a bed and laid thereon.

Jimmy Silver bent over him.

"It's all right, Bulkeley! Keep smiling!"

"Mmmmmmm!" came faintly from Bulkeley.

"And now get a move on," said Jimmy Silver.

And the Classical Fourth, in deep but subdued excitement, promptly got a move on. The remainder of the night was a busy time for the rebels of Rookwood.

Dr. Chisholm, in the comfortable belief

that trouble in the Fourth was now at an end, slept the sleep of the just. He little dreamed that the morning was to bring him the astounding news of the retreat from Rookwood.

CHAPTER 18.

The Head is Wrathful!

CLANG! Clang!
The rising-bell rang out over Rookwood School in the spring morning.

In the various dormitories in the School House there were sounds of movement and activity. From one dormitory after another Rookwood fellows came down, crowding the staircases and the passages. But, strange to relate, from the dormitory of the Classical Fourth Form not a single fellow emerged.

As a rule, Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Classical Fourth were among the first down, after the rising-bell had ceased to clang. On the present occasion Jimmy Silver & Co. were conspicuous by their absence.

No one, certainly, expected to see Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, in the passages or the quad. For Jimmy Silver was supposed to be shut up in the punishment-room, under sentence of expulsion from the school, by order of the Head. Jimmy's disappearance from the throng of Rookwooders that morning therefore would have excited no remark. But his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome were not to be seen—neither were Mornington and Erroll, Townsend and Topham, Putty of the Fourth and Tubby Muffin—in fact, not one fellow belonging to the Classical Fourth.

Shell fellows and fags of the Third and Second remarked on the peculiar circumstance, and wondered what it meant. If the Classical Fourth had overslept themselves, it was odd that their new Form-master, Mr. Carker, had not routed them out. But Mr. Carker himself, as it happened, was not to be seen, either. Bulkeley of the Sixth, as head prefect, might have been expected to take some note of the matter in Mr. Carker's absence. But Bulkeley of the Sixth did not appear to be on the scene—indeed, in the Sixth Form passage a group of seniors were de-



The prefects leapt ashore, but the juniors were ready for them. In a moment a terrific battle was in progress, several of the prefects being hurled backwards into the river!

bating that subject and wondering what had become of George Bulkeley.

Matters certainly were not in their usual state in Rookwood that morning. The old school was not proceeding on the usual calm tenor of its way.

"There's somethin' up!" Smythe of the Shell remarked sapiently; and Smythe's friends agreed that it was so.

"There's the Head!" whispered Hansom of the Fifth. "My hat! He looks in a royal wax!"

All eyes were turned on Dr. Chisholm, as he came rustling along the lower Hall. His face was set and his eyes glinted. He was quite calm—the Head was always perfectly calm—but the Rookwood fellows knew the signs. When that glint shone in the eyes of the Head of Rookwood it boded trouble for somebody.

"Neville!"

Neville of the Sixth hurried up.

"Neville's for it!" whispered Smythe to his friends. "A prefect of the Sixth, too. Jolly glad it isn't little me."

Nobody envied Neville, as that youth answered the call of the headmaster. Neville himself looked, and felt, uneasy. There was wrath to fall upon somebody—some person or persons unknown—and Neville devoutly hoped that it was not to fall upon his own devoted head.

"Neville, I have visited the punishment-room to speak to the junior who is under sentence of expulsion from the school. I did not find him there. Silver is gone."

"Indeed, sir!" gasped Neville.

"The door was locked as usual," said the Head in a deep voice. "The boy appears to have left the punishment-room by a rope from the window. This cannot have been done without assistance—someone was acting in collusion with Silver."

"Oh, sir!" said Neville.

"Is anything known of this, Neville?"

"I—I don't know anything, sir."

"Then it is your duty, Neville, to know something of it, as a prefect of the Sixth Form!" said the Head grimly.

And he rustled on, leaving the hapless Neville with a crimson face, the cynosure of all eyes.

Dr. Chisholm rustled on to Mr. Carker's study—once the study of Mr. Dalton, the former master of the Fourth. He tapped sharply at the door and opened it. The room was empty.

"Pish!" said the Head.

He turned back into the corridor.

"Smythe!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Smythe of the Shell.

"Have you seen Mr. Carker this morning?"

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Bless my soul! He is down, I suppose."

"I—I haven't seen him, sir!"

"Go up to his room at once, Smythe, and tell him that Dr. Chisholm is waiting in his study to speak to him."

"Certainly, sir!"

Smythe of the Shell fairly flew up the staircase. In less than a minute he was thumping at Mr. Carker's bed-room door.

There was no answer from within.

Smythe of the Shell turned the handle and opened the door.

"Mr. Carker!" he called breathlessly.

No reply.

Adolphus Smythe ventured into the room. The blinds were drawn; it was dusky in the room. But it was light enough for Smythe of the Shell to see that the room was vacant, and that the bed had not been slept in.

Smythe blinked helplessly at the bed. It was evidently impossible to deliver the Head's message.

"My only aunt!" murmured Smythe.

He descended the stairs again and approached Mr. Carker's study in a very gingerly manner. The headmaster was not a pleasant person to face in present circumstances. Smythe was almost trembling as he looked into Mr. Carker's study and caught the Head's steely eye.

"Well?"

"Mr. Carker isn't there, sir!" stammered Smythe.

"Then he is down?"

"The—the bed hasn't been slept in, sir," said Smythe.

"What!"

"I—I—"

"Nonsense! You may go!"

Smythe was very glad to go. Dr. Chisholm rose and ascended the stairs himself. There was a buzzing crowd in the passages now. All the fellows realised that there was something very unusual in the wind. Every eye was fixed on the Head when he came down the staircase with a brow like thunder.

"Where is Bulkeley?" called out the Head.

"We—we don't know, sir," stammered Neville.

"What?"

"He's not in his room, sir, and we haven't seen him."

"What does this mean, Neville?"

"I—I don't know, sir!"

Dr. Chisholm, more thunderous than ever, swept away to the Sixth Form passage. Bulkeley's door was open; Lonsdale and Smith major were discussing matters in the doorway. They made room at once for the Head to enter. Dr. Chisholm glanced at the bed in the alcove; it had not been occupied the previous night, that was clear at a glance.

"Do you know where Bulkeley is, Lonsdale?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"He cannot have been absent from Rookwood last night."

"It—it looks like it, sir."

Dr. Chisholm left the study, his majestic brow growing blacker and blacker. He glanced over the buzzing crowd of Rookwood fellows, and the buzz ceased as if by magic.

"Does any boy present know where Silver of the Fourth Form is to be found?"

There was no answer. Nobody had any information to give, and all tried to avoid catching the Head's keen, inquiring eye. That keen eye noted that no members of the Classical Fourth were to be seen.

"Neville, are not the Fourth down yet?"

"I haven't seen them, sir. I think not."

"This is very extraordinary! Go to the Fourth Form dormitory, Neville, and if Silver is there, bring him to my study."

And Dr. Chisholm swept away, little dreaming of the amazing news that the prefect was to bring him from the Fourth Form dormitory.

CHAPTER 19.

The Rebels in Camp!

"JIMMY!"

"Hallo, Tubby!"

"What about brekker?" asked

Tubby Muffin anxiously.

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

It was past the usual breakfast-hour; but Jimmy Silver was not thinking chiefly

about brekker. There were plenty of other matters to occupy the mind of the leader of the Rookwood revolt.

The Fourth Form of Rookwood—at least, the Classical portion of the Form—were in revolt against the Head. And under Jimmy Silver's cool and skilful leadership the revolt had been, so far, carried out successfully.

In the dark hours of the night the retreat from Rookwood had been accomplished. Every member of the Classical Fourth had quitted the School House. Most of them were keen enough to follow Jimmy's lead; and those who were not keen felt it judicious to throw in their lot with the rest. As one man, the Classical Fourth had shaken the dust of Rookwood from their feet.

By the glimmer of the moon they had marched away from Rookwood, with all the goods and chattels it had been possible to carry, to camp out on the island in the river.

To most of the rebels it seemed a tremendous lark, and certainly it was a great adventure.

What the Head would think and say when he found the Classical Fourth missing from the school, they could hardly imagine; and it was a comfort to know that they were out of the reach of his wrath.

There had been little sleep for the rebels that night; it had been a busy time. Jimmy Silver's own skiff had been abstracted from the boathouse, to ferry the rebels across to the island, and the ferrying had taken a great deal of time. But they were all safely landed at last on the little island in the river, and the skiff drawn up on the shore. And then Jimmy Silver & Co. mapped out the camp.

The island was small, wooded in places. In the summer-time it was a favourite spot for picnics, and the Rookwooders knew every inch of it. In the middle of it, among the trees, stood an old Army hut, long deserted and falling into disrepair. It had been used for some purpose in the war-time, and never used since. Now the rebels of Rookwood were making it their headquarters.

Camping materials had been brought along in great quantities; ground-sheets and rugs and blankets were ample. There were spirit-stoves and an oil-stove, and nota

and kettles. The equipment of the Rookwood Boy Scouts had come in very useful. It was cold weather for camping, but the old hut gave accommodation for sleeping quarters, and the rebels were prepared to rough it.

As the spring sun rose on the glimmering river, Arthur Edward Lovell started a camp fire. At all events, he started starting a camp-fire. There was plenty of wood on the island, but it was decidedly damp, and Arthur Edward Lovell found his task a difficult one. But he stuck to it manfully.

Mornington and Raby had been despatched in the skiff down the river to Coombe. The rebels had pooled their financial resources, and Morny was supplied with cash for shopping in the village. Extensive shopping was to be done, as soon as the village shops opened, and the skiff was to return laden with provisions and other supplies. Jimmy Silver cast several anxious glances down the shining stream, hoping to see the messengers returning. The supplies were very much needed, if the rebels were to stand a siege on the island in the river. And assuredly they did not expect to be left there to camp in peace.

"Jimmy, old man," persisted Tubby Muffin, "they'll be going into class at Rookwood now."

"Let 'em!" grunted Jimmy.

"It's jolly late for brekker," said Tubby. "Of course, I'm backing you up like anything, Jimmy. Rely on me. But I told you to be jolly careful about the grub, didn't I?"

"Dry up, Tubby!"

"That's all very well!" exclaimed Reginald Muffin warmly. "But you remember I told you to be careful about the grub. I suppose a fellow can't miss his brekker, can he?"

"Well, he might," said Jimmy.

"Miss his brekker!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin, quite aghast at the bare possibility.

"Yes, and his dinner, too."

"His—his—his dinner, too!" said Tubby faintly.

"And his tea," said Jimmy Silver.

"His tut-tut-tea!"

"And his supper," pursued Jimmy Silver ruthlessly.

"His supper! Oh, Jimmy!"

"And his brekker next morning!" went on the captain of the Fourth.

Tubby Muffin stood rooted to the ground. These dreadful possibilities dumbfounded him. Jimmy Silver pointed down the river in the direction of the distant village.

"There's no brekker till the boat comes back, fathead," he said. "So you'd better hope that Morny will manage it all right."

"But, I say, the Head may get on to it. The boat may be stopped!" gasped Tubby.

"Possibly," assented Jimmy.

"What are we going to do, then?"

"We're going to do without, in that case, old fat top!"

"Without grub!" yelled Tubby.

"Just that."

"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver turned from the bank and walked towards the hut, in front of which Arthur Edward Lovell was labouring with the obstinate camp-fire. Lovell's face was red and smoky, and he seemed to be in an exasperated frame of mind. Lovell had taken charge of the camp-fire, on the ground that he could do it best; but he was not making much of a success of it so far.

"Getting it going, old man?" said Jimmy cheerily.

A thick column of smoke was rising from a stack of damp wood; but there seemed no sign of a blaze.

Lovell looked up and rubbed his eyes, which were red and watering from an overdose of smoke.

"It's getting on," he said. "Can't do everything at once. Rome wasn't built in a day."

"Is that camp-fire going to take as long as the building of Rome?" inquired Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly, cheeky ass!" roared Lovell. "Do you think I don't know how to light a camp-fire?"

"I don't think—I know!" answered Putty cheerily. "I know you've jolly well nearly smoked us off the island. Are you going to try to boil the kettle with smoke?"

There was a chuckle from a crowd of juniors round the hut. Arthur Edward Lovell did not answer Putty's question in words. After an hour's desperate struggle with damp wood, Lovell's patience was wearing a little thin.

He picked up a billet of wood and made

a rush at Putty. That humorous youth promptly fled.

"Come back, you cheeky ass!" roared Lovell.

"Easy does it, old man!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Shall I give you a hand with the fire?"

Lovell glared at him.

"Do you think I need any help? If I did, do you think you've got sense enough to be of any use?"

Evidently Arthur Edward's temper was suffering.

"Well, we want a fire, don't we?" said Newcome. "It's a bit parky here, you know!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Look here, Lovell——"

"Cheese it! How's a fellow to light a fire with a lot of silly asses standing round grinning and cackling?" demanded Lovell hotly. "Where's the paraffin? I suppose somebody had sense enough to bring along that can of paraffin!"

"You hadn't!" remarked Oswald.

"Shut up, Oswald!"

"Here's the paraffin, old man!" said Jimmy Silver. "Go easy with it! We want it for the oil-stove, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Lovell. "I know without your telling me! Teach your grandmother!"

"Lovell, old chap——"

"For goodness, sake get out of the way, and let a fellow get this dashed fire going!"

Lovell swamped paraffin on the smoking wood. A thick, black column of smoke rose and soared over the trees on the island. It might have been a signal to half the county of Hampshire.

The juniors crowded back from it. Lovell fumbled in his pocket for matches. He had already used several boxes of matches; but, fortunately, there were plenty more.

"Look out!" yelled Jimmy. "Keep clear, Lovell, if you're going——"

"Oh, let a fellow alone!"

"But——"

"Rats!"

Lovell struck a match and threw it upon the pile. There was a roar of blazing flame, and Lovell leaped back, gasping and spluttering. Flames soared and roared, and Lovell yelled and clawed at his scorched face.

"Ow—ow! Yow! Wow! Ow!"

"The silly ass!" gasped Erroll. "Lovell——"

"Ow—ow! Wow!"

Jimmy Silver rushed to him, quite alarmed. Fortunately, Lovell had escaped with singed hair and eyebrows.

"It's all right!" he gasped. "Ow! Oh dear! It's all right! Bit scorched——"

"You might have blinded yourself, you howling idiot!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Rot! Where's the paraffin can?"

"Let it alone!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver——"

Jimmy jerked away the can. Lovell's performances with a dangerous inflammable fluid were a little too exciting, in Jimmy Silver's opinion.

"You ass, I've got to feed it now it's going!" roared Lovell. "Perhaps I'd better put on some methylated spirit, though!"

"Sit on him, somebody!" shouted Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's the methylated?" shouted Lovell.

"If you touch the methylated, Lovell, we'll tie you to a tree!" said Rawson. "You're too jolly dangerous!"

"You silly ass——"

There was a shout from Putty of the Fourth beyond the trees.

"Look out! The giddy enemy!"

And as the alarm rang over the island, even Lovell forgot the obstinate camp-fire, and there was a rush to see the enemy.

CHAPTER 20.

A Surprise for the Head!

"MR. CARKER, what—what——"
Dr. Chisholm fairly blinked at the new master of the Rookwood Fourth.

Mr. Carker came into his study, untidy, dishevelled, pale—in a state that no Rookwood master had ever been seen in before. And the Head, who was an extremely punctilious old gentleman, stared at him with amazement and strong disapproval.

"Mr. Carker, what—what does this mean?"

The Form-master sank into a chair.

"I have just been released!" he gasped.

"Released!"

"I have spent the night, sir, tied up!"

"Tied up!" said the Head blankly.

"In the Fourth Form dormitory."

"What!"

"I—I was seized!" gasped Mr. Carker.

"I found that Silver had left the punishment-room and was in the dormitory. They set on me—"

"Bless my soul!"

"They seized me and tied me to a bed!" gasped Mr. Carker. "Bulkeley, who came up to the dormitory, was served in the same manner!"

The Head gasped.

"We have only just been released. Neville came up, and the Fourth Form are gone!"

"Gone!" stuttered the Head.

"Gone!" said Mr. Carker.

"What, in the name of all that is absurd, do you mean?" thundered the Head. "How can the Fourth Form be gone? You do not mean that they have left Rookwood?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Impossible!"

"The whole of the Classical Fourth, sir! They went during the night—leaving me tied up in the dormitory!" gasped Mr. Carker. "I heard them making their plans, without being able to interfere. Their intention is to camp out on the island in the river—"

"The—the island in the river!" repeated the Head dazedly.

"And there, sir, defy all authority," said Mr. Carker. "According to their ring-leader Silver, they will refuse to return to the school until their former master—Mr. Dalton—returns to Rookwood."

"Upon my word!"

Dr. Chisholm set his lips. Hitherto he had regarded the dismissal of Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, as a thing that was ended and done with—a closed chapter! He had dealt with a firm hand with the trouble in the Fourth that had followed the dismissal of the popular master. Jimmy Silver was sentenced to be expelled from the school—some of his comrades to a flogging, which was to have taken place that very morning!

And now—

Evidently the affair was not a closed chapter as the Head had supposed. The trouble, which he had believed suppressed, had spread—far and wide.

"Mr. Carker," gasped the Head at last,

"do you seriously tell me that the Classical Fourth Form are no longer in the school?"

"Not a single one, sir!"

"It is incredible," said Dr. Chisholm. "Such disobedience—such unparalleled audacity—Bless my soul! I must deal with this matter at once. They must return without delay! You do not appear, Mr. Carker, to possess the necessary authority over your Form. Fortunately, my authority is not likely to be questioned. I shall order these young rascals to return to the school immediately. You are sure that they have gone to the island?"

"That was their plan, at least, sir!"

"We shall see—we shall see!"

Dr. Chisholm hurried out of the study. He had not breakfasted yet, but he was not thinking of that. He found the whole school in a buzz. The revolt of the Fourth was known on all sides now—the School House was buzzing with it. Over in Mr. Manders' house, the Modern fellows were discussing it breathlessly.

Excitement reigned in Rookwood School from end to end.

"Neville!" Dr. Chisholm called to the prefect in the corridor. "I am told that the Classical Fourth have left the school. Are you aware—"

"It seems to be so, sir," said Neville blankly. "Bulkeley says—"

"They must be found at once. It appears that they had some foolish idea of camping on the island in the river. Kindly ascertain at once whether a boat has been taken. Report to me in my house."

Dr. Chisholm, in great wrath and agitation, hurried away to his house. He had sat down to breakfast when Neville of the Sixth was shown in, and made his report.

"A skiff belonging to Silver has been taken, sir."

"Then it is possible—"

"Somebody is certainly on the island," said Neville. "I could see the smoke of a fire over the river."

"Very well, Neville."

Dr. Chisholm finished his breakfast very rapidly. The amazing outbreak of the Fourth Form had to be dealt with at once, and effectively. If the revolt continued, the Head almost shuddered to think of the possible consequences. It would get into the papers—the local papers, at least—the board of governors would hear of it—the boys' parents would hear of it—the consequences would be really overwhelming. It

would reflect most seriously upon his head-mastership. What would the governors think?

But before leaving the school in search of the missing Form, the Head carefully saw to it that classes began as usual. In the present state of excitement it seemed probable that neither masters nor boys would give the usual attention to lessons. But discipline had to be maintained; and, above all, the example of insubordination had to be prevented from spreading. Sixth and Fifth, Shell and Third and Second, went into the Form-rooms as usual; in the lab on the Modern side, Mr. Manders went on the even tenor of his way. And then Dr. Chisholm walked out of the gates of Rookwood, reddening under the curious glance of old Mack, the porter.

By the tow-path along the river, the Head of Rookwood walked up to the island. Over the trees on the isle a thick column of smoke was rising.

Evidently the rebels were there. It was too early in the year, and too early in the day for that matter, for a picnic party. Incredible as it seemed to the headmaster, the rebels of Rookwood were camped on the island—in open rebellion.

Dr. Chisholm stopped on the towpath, opposite the island, and looked across. There he was spotted by Putty of the Fourth, who gave the alarm; and a minute later, the shore of the island was crowded by the Fourth-Formers.

Across the intervening channel of the river the Head and the rebel Form looked at one another. Jimmy Silver set the example of capping the Head respectfully.

"Good-morning, sir!" called out Newcome.

"Top of the morning!" sang out Flynn.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy.

"You no longer belong to Rookwood!" said the Head. "You have no right among Rookwood boys. You are expelled, sir!"

"Not at all," answered Jimmy.

"What?"

"We've all agreed, sir, to stand together, and if you want to sack anybody, you must sack the lot," said Jimmy coolly.

"Hear, hear!" roared the rebels.

"Silver! I—I—"

"No disrespect to you, sir," went on Jimmy Silver. "We're on strike till Mr. Dalton comes back to Rookwood. That's all."

"We want Dicky!" roared Lovell.

"Hear, hear!"

"Silver, I—I will not bandy words with you! You are expelled from Rookwood, and will not be allowed to come back to the school. Every other boy here will be severely flogged. Boys, I order you to return to the school at once!"

"And be flogged, sir?" inquired Putty.

"Assuredly!"

"What a giddy inducement!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have a boat there, I understand," went on the Head. "You will row across at once. I shall wait here, and see you all back to the school—with the exception of Silver. Lose no time."

"Dear old man!" murmured Lovell. "He really thinks that we're going to do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head waited.

It seemed so impossible to him that his personal authority could be disregarded; that undoubtedly he expected his order to be obeyed on the spot. He waited.

But he waited in vain.

CHAPTER 21.

Rank Rebellion!

"HALLO, there's Morny!"

From the direction of Coombe a boat appeared on the shining river, with Valentine Mornington and Raby of the Fourth pulling at the oars. The boat was fairly stacked with packages and parcels. Morny had done his shopping, and apparently had done it on a huge scale. Tubby Muffin rubbed his fat hands.

"Come on, Morny!" he shouted. "Buck up, Raby!"

Dr. Chisholm glanced at the boat as it approached the island. The stack of packages puzzled him for a moment; but in another moment he understood. The rebels were preparing to stand a siege on the island; it was serious business with them!

The Head raised his hand towards the boat.

"Mornington!" he called out.

Morny glanced round as he pulled.

"Hallo, that's the jolly old Head!" he remarked. His voice carried to where the Head stood, and Dr. Chisholm reddened.

"Mornington! Bring that boat here."

"Edge a bit closer, Raby," murmured Mornington. "Not near enough for the old sport to jump, though! I don't want to have to biff him with a boathook!"

Raby chuckled. The boat edged in between the island and the river-bank, keeping a safe distance, however, though really it was not probable that so dignified a personage as the headmaster of Rookwood would take a flying leap into it.

"Anythin' we can do for you, sir?" asked Mornington politely.

"Bring that boat ashore!"

"'Fraid that can't be done, sir! Anythin' else?"

"Obey me at once, Mornington!"

"If you haven't had brekker, sir, we can stand you some. We've got a lot of stuff here," said Morny cheerily. "Three kinds of jam——"

"Boy!"

"Lots of marmalade, and whole stacks of butter——"

"Mornington!"

"Bread galore and sardines and ham and cold beef—apples and oranges and nuts, sir."

Dr. Chisholm appeared on the point of suffocating.

"Mornington! Raby!" he gasped. "I command you——"

"Has Mr. Dalton come back to Rookwood, sir?"

"Mr. Dalton! Certainly not!" thundered the Head.

"Then I'm afraid we can't do business, sir!" said Mornington affably. "Pull for the jolly old island, Raby!"

The boat bumped on the island. A dozen fellows dragged it up the shore. Morny and Raby jumped out. Dr. Chisholm stared across the intervening strip of water, like an old gentleman who could not believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Boys!" he stuttered at last. "If you do not immediately return to Rookwood, force will be used!"

"Carry on, sir!" answered Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it possible, Mornington, that you venture to disregard the authority of your headmaster?"

"Barely possible, sir! Just a few!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you will be expelled as well as Silver, Mornington!"

"Thank you, sir! You're very kind!"

"Anything for little me?" yelled Lovell. "You are expelled, Lovell!" thundered the Head.

"Me, too, sir?" howled Putty of the Fourth. "Make a clean sweep of it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head stuttered. He realised that he was cutting a somewhat undignified figure in this parley with rebellious Lower boys. And it was borne in upon his mind that obedience was at an end.

He stood for some moments staring at the juniors on the island, and then found his voice again.

"Force will be used!" he gasped. "Unless you are all back at Rookwood within an hour, force will be used."

And with that the Head turned and strode away along the towpath. Jimmy Silver caught at the wrist of Higgs, who had picked up a turf to hurl.

"Stop that!" snapped Jimmy.

"Look here, I can bag his hat!"

"Chuck it, you ruffian!"

Higgs glared at the captain of the Fourth. "Ain't this a rebellion?" he roared.

"Yes, you ass, but there's such a thing as respect, all the same. Put that turf down."

"Shan't!" howled Higgs.

Bump! Alfred Higgs sat down violently in damp grass, and the turf squashed on his head. Jimmy Silver left him roaring as he walked back to the camp-fire with the rest. By the time Higgs scrambled up the Head fortunately was out of range.

Tubby Muffin was already busy on the supplies in the boat. He had sliced a loaf, and a packet of butter, and opened a tin of salmon, and was going strong. He grinned at Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"This isn't half bad, Jimmy," he said. "Quite as good as brekker in school, in fact! I'm backing you up, Jimmy."

"So long as the grub's good, eh?" growled Lovell.

"Of course," said Tubby innocently.

"Why haven't you fellows lighted a camp-fire?" asked Raby. "It's jolly parky here."

"Lovell's been at it for hours."

"Only an hour!" snapped Lovell. "And I'd have got it going long ago but for a pack of dashed asses butting in. Where's the methylated?"

"Where you won't find it, my son," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "We don't want

a prairie fire or a burnt offering of half the Fourth. Leave the fire to me."

"If you think you can light a camp-fire better than I can, Jimmy Silver——"

booted Lovell.

"Bow-wow!"

Apparently Jimmy had some skill that was wanting in Arthur Edward, for in a few minutes he had the fire going. A kettle was swung over it from an overhanging branch of a tree, and the fire was soon glowing red under the kettle, which began to sing—a cheery sound. Among the shopping sorted out from the boat were a number of tin crocks—jugs and cups; not quite so nice as the school crockery-ware, but likely to last longer in camp life. There was an enormous coffee-pot, and a tea-pot and tea and coffee galore. Quite a cheery crowd gathered round the camp-fire, now burning with a ruddy glow, for breakfast. All the Rookwood rebels were hungry, and more than ready for the feast "al fresco." Even Townsend and Topham ceased to think of their clothes in thinking of brekker.

"Primo!" said Putty of the Fourth. "I say, this beats lessons in the Fourth Form-room, you fellows."

"What-ho! Pass the ham."

"Even lessons with Dicky Dalton!" said Raby. "My hat! I wonder what Dicky Dalton would say to this!"

"Well, we shouldn't be here if Dicky had stayed at Rookwood," remarked Mornington, "and I suppose we shall chuck it if the Head fetches Dicky back."

"At once!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't see that!" exclaimed Higgs. "Now we're in for it, let's make it last."

"Fathead!"

"By gad, you know, it's quite fun, you know," remarked Townsend. "Like some picnicken' we did in the jolly old Alps once, eh, Toppy?"

"Only it's rough on a fellow's clothes, Towney," said Topham.

"Never mind, we're not givin' in, clobber or no clobber," said Townsend heroically.

"Never mind the clobber, so long as the grub's all right," said Tubby Muffin. "Somebody said once, you know, that an army marches on its stomach. There's a lot of truth in that. Did you fellows think of bringing any jam-tarts?"

"I thought of it," said Raby.

"Good! Where are they?"

"I only thought of it," explained Raby, with a grin, "but we didn't bring any."

"You silly ass! Any toffee?" asked Tubby anxiously. "Dash it all, you ought to have brought some toffee. I say, this tea is a bit rotten, you know. I'll have coffee."

"I'm making the coffee, and you'll have it when it's ready!" growled Lovell.

Tubby Muffin wore a pleased smile as he sat on a stump and fed. He had eaten enough for two fellows, and was still going strong. Fresh air gave a keener edge to his appetite, which really did not need it. So long as the commissariat did not fail, the Rookwood rebellion had an enthusiastic supporter in Reginald Muffin.

All the fellows enjoyed breakfast under the sunny spring sky. Of course, there were drawbacks—the tea was rather a wash-out, and in the coffee there were certainly grounds for complaint. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable feast, and everybody agreed that it was ever so much more agreeable than grinding Latin in the Form-room at Rookwood.

After breakfast there was washing-up, a ceremony that most of the fellows seemed inclined to pass over. But Jimmy Silver had established discipline in the camp, everything was to proceed in an orderly manner. After the work of the camp was done, studious fellows like Rawson and Erroll turned to the school books they had brought with them. More of the juniors, however, turned to several "Holiday Annuals" which Lovell had brought along with him. Others roamed about the island, and Gower and Peele looked in the trees for birds' nests—fortunately without finding any. Jimmy Silver watched for the approach of an enemy: he had no expectation whatever of the day passing without some move being made by the Head.

Jimmy had shown great generalship in selecting the island as the rebels' stronghold. It was a strong position, and there were plenty of defenders. But it was quite certain that the Head would lose no time in rounding up the rebel Form; the struggle could not be long deferred. Jimmy Silver was confident in the result, and his loyal followers shared his confidence. Indeed, most of them were anxious for the trouble to begin.

On the shining surface of the river a boat appeared in sight in the direction of the school.

Jimmy Silver watched keenly. Four oars were pulling, and he soon recognised the oarsmen as Rookwood prefects—Bulkeley and Neville, Smith major and Lonsdale. Four other fellows were in another boat—Jones major, Carthew, and Scott of the Classical Sixth, and Knowles of the Modern Sixth.

"Line up, you fellows!" called out Jimmy Silver.

There was a shout from the rebels.

"The prefects!"

"Let 'em all come!" chuckled Lovell.

"I—I say, Jimmy—" stammered Tubby Muffin. "I—I say—" At the sight of eight hefty Sixth Form prefects, Reginald Muffin felt his enthusiasm for the rebellion oozing out at his fat finger-tips.

"Shut up, Muffin!"

"Come on, you Sixth Form bounders!" roared Lovell. "If you want a jolly good whooping, come on!"

Without answering, the Rookwood prefects came on, and the boats shot up to the island.

CHAPTER 22.

The Fight on the Island!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. stood ready on the island shore. All of them were armed for the fray, some with cricket-stumps, some with sticks cut from the thickets, or various other weapons. They looked a determined band, as they stood waiting for the enemy. Tubby Muffin had vanished from sight, and Peele and Gower were not to be seen; but there were plenty of stout hearts to back up Jimmy Silver, and the absence of a few slackers did not matter.

Jimmy Silver raised his hand as the prefects' boat ranged up to the island.

"Halt!" he called out.

Bulkeley gave him a look, but did not speak. The boat glided on.

"Stop!" roared Lovell.

"You can't land here, Bulkeley!" called out Jimmy Silver. "I warn you to keep clear!"

"Head's orders to take you all back to the school!" rapped out Bulkeley.

"Rats!" roared Lovell.

"Excepting you, Silver. You're to be taken to the railway-station, and I'm to take you!" said Bulkeley.

"Not this morning!" said Jimmy. "Sorry

if you get hurt, Bulkeley, but we mean business, and we shall resist!"

"We shall see!" grunted the captain of Rookwood.

The boats shot on to the island. A whizzing volley of turfs and fragments of wood greeted them, and there were loud and wrathful exclamations among the Sixth-Formers.

But they did not pause. The boats crashed on the bank, and Bulkeley sprang ashore, leading the attack.

Probably the Rookwood prefects did not suppose that a mob of juniors would venture seriously to resist so strong a body of seniors. They had strict orders from the Head to shepherd the Classical Fourth back to Rookwood, and they did not anticipate any great difficulty in carrying out the orders. But a surprise was awaiting them.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell and Raby, Newcome and Mornington, rushed on Bulkeley as he landed.

"Stand back!" shouted Bulkeley.

"Down with the Sixth!" roared Lovell.

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

Bulkeley lashed out right and left with his ashplant. There were yells from the juniors. But Jimmy Silver dodged under the lashing cane and threw his arms round the Sixth-Former, and Morny hooked his leg at the same time. Bulkeley of the Sixth went down with a heavy crash.

Knowles and Lonsdale were ashore the next second. But they went staggering under a rush of the juniors, and Knowles splashed backwards into the shallow water. Lonsdale, with half a dozen juniors clinging to him like cats, collapsed in the rushes, roaring.

"Go it!" yelled Lovell.

The seniors were scrambling out of the other boat. Knowles emerged, dripping and furious, from mud and water. Each of the prefects had his cane, and laid about him vigorously; it was no time to consider where the blows fell. It dawned upon them that the matter was serious, and that they were booked for a struggle.

Loud howls and yells rang over the island and the river. Sticks and cricket-stumps crashed against canes and on shoulders and arms and heads. The Rookwood prefects discovered that they were far from having matters all their own way.

"Smash the cheeky young cads!" yelled Carthew, the bully of the Sixth. "Oh! Ow! Yoooooooooh!"

Carthew went staggering back under a charge, and crashed into the water. A moment later Knowles followed him in again, spluttering. The other six struggled hand-to-hand with the juniors. Each of them was equal to at least two of the Fourth—but each of them had three or four to deal with; and the prefects' ashpant had lost its terror now. The fight waxed fast and furious.

Knowles and Carthew clambered out of the water into the boat. But at the same time Rawson gave it a shove and sent it rocketing out into the river. Two of the enemy were out of the fight for a time. And Bulkeley & Co., fighting hard on shore, found that they were over-matched by the numbers of the rebels.

Bulkeley was down again, with two juniors sitting on him; Neville went splashing headlong into the water; Jones major and Lonsdale were dragged down by numberless hands, and Smith and Scott had to back away, into the trees to escape being driven into the river by lunging stumps and cudgels.

They backed off, panting for breath, glad to get out of the melee for a few minutes.

"Licked!" shouted Lovell, dabbing a crimson-streaming nose with his handkerchief.

"Hurrah!"

"Here comes Knowles again! Look out!"

Knowles and Carthew brought the boat to the shore again. But a volley of missiles crashed on them, and they yelled and backed the boat away. The fire was too hot for them.

"They're running!" yelled Oswald.

"Down with the Sixth!"

"Give them some more!" howled Lovell, in wild excitement, hurling his stick after Knowles in the boat.

"Yaroooooh!"

"You young villains!" panted Bulkeley. "Lemme gerrup! I—I—I'll smash the lot of you! I—I—I'll—"

"Chuck him out!" shouted Lovell.

"I—I— Oh, my hat!" gasped Bulkeley.

"Sorry, old man!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Outside, Bulkeley!"

Half a dozen pairs of hands dragged the struggling captain of Rookwood to the water's edge. In spite of his fierce resist-

ance, he was huried headlong into the river.

Splash!

"That much for Bulkeley!" chuckled Putty of the Fourth. "Now send the others after him!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz! All kinds of missiles flew at the boat, and Knowles and Carthew backed off further. Bulkeley came to the surface, swimming. As he did so, Lonsdale of the Sixth splashed headlong into the water.

Jones major and Neville were struggling wildly and breathlessly in the grasp of a horde of juniors. Still struggling, they were hustled down to the water's edge and pitched in. They came up, and made for the boat, swimming; they seemed to have had enough of the island.

"There's two more somewhere!" panted Lovell. "Where's Smith major—and Scott? Collar the cads!"

Bulkeley made an attempt to get ashore. As he came breathlessly scrambling out of the water, Putty of the Fourth charged him with a long branch. It caught Bulkeley under the chin, and sent him sprawling backwards. There was a terrific splash as he went into the water again. Neville, half in the boat, grabbed at him and dragged him up. In a dazed state Bulkeley sprawled into the boat.

Only Smith major and Scott of the Sixth were left on the island now, and they were fleeing as a mob of juniors came whooping in pursuit of them. Jimmy Silver & Co. still guarded the landing-place; but a dozen excited juniors chased the two hapless prefects. Tubby Muffin now emerging from his hiding-place to take a hand, and Peele and Gower making themselves quite prominent. Scott stumbled over a root and fell, and in a moment more was in the hands of the rebels. He was dragged back to the water and pitched in, and Bulkeley and Neville hauled him into the boat. In that boat there were now seven of the prefects, drenched, muddy, breathless, looking—and feeling—beaten to the wide. On the island, Smith major was still dodging and running, with a mob at his heels.

The hapless Smith was run down at last. In the grasp of six or seven fellows, he was carried bodily to the water's edge.

"Chuck him in!" roared Lovell.

"Ow!" gasped Smith major. "Oh, my hat! I—I say— Yaroooooh!"

Splash!

"That's the last!" shouted Arthur Edward Lovell. "I say, Bulkeley, are you coming back to have some more?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh-groogh-hooch!" spluttered Smith as he came to the surface. "Ow! Ow! Gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smith major swam desperately for the boat, with clods splashing in the water round him. Bulkeley grasped him by the collar and dragged him in.

"Get going!" he muttered

"Are we leaving those cheeky young cads there, Bulkeley?" gasped Lonsdale. "Head's orders—"

"What can we do?" growled Bulkeley.

"Nothing, I suppose."

"Ow! Ow!" groaned Knowles. "I've got a bump as big as an egg on my head! Ow! Ow! Look at my nose! Ow!"

"Look at my eye!" groaned Jones major.

"Oh dear! Ow!"

"We'd better get back and report to the Head!" growled Bulkeley. "Get going!"

The boat glided away down the sunny river, the prefects leaving the other boat behind them. Loud yells of triumph and unmusical catcalls followed it from the triumphant rebels on the island. Clods dropped into the water, splashing behind it.

"Won't you come back and have some more, you Sixth Form duffers?" yelled Lovell.

"Yah!"

"What price the Sixth now?" chuckled Mornington.

"Twopence—and dear at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With crimson cheeks, the defeated prefects pulled away down the river. They had come, like Caesar, to see and conquer. Like Caesar, they had come and seen, but certainly they had not conquered. They were defeated, they were tired, they were damaged, they were muddy and wet, and they were glad to get clear of the rebels.

"Our win!" chuckled Mornington as the boat disappeared along the winding river. "The Head will have to try something better than that. The jolly old Sixth is on the down grade."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And on the island the Rookwood rebels rejoiced in their victory, while the hapless prefects pulled dismally home.

Dr. Chisholm looked from his study

window. Classes were over, and the quadrangle swarmed with Rookwood fellows, all of them discussing the rebellion of the Fourth and the expedition of the Sixth Form prefects.

The Head was looking for the return of the prefects, with the rebels in their care. His birch lay on his study table ready for use, and the Head intended that birch to have some very considerable exercise.

There was a shout in the quad.

"Here they come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a crew!" gasped Hansom of the Fifth.

The Head stared. He could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw eight dreary, dismal, bedraggled seniors marching wearily across the quad to the School House.

Loud laughter greeted them on all sides from the Rookwood crowd. It was only too clear that the Sixth Form prefects had not gone forth to victory. Dr. Chisholm leaned from his window.

"Bulkeley, what does this mean? Where are the boys?"

"On the island, sir."

"You—you—you have failed to—to—to—"

"We, couldn't help it, sir! We—we—"

"Bless my soul!"

Bulkeley & Co. tramped into the house. Dr. Chisholm stepped back from his study window, his face extraordinary in expression. And in the crowded quadrangle for quite a long time there were loud sounds of merriment.

CHAPTER 23.

A Surprise for Mr. Dalton!

"DICKY!"

"It's Dicky Dalton!"

At Rookwood School classes were in progress; all Forms, excepting the Classical Fourth, were in their Form-rooms. But there was one Form-room that was empty; one Form-master who was idle that sunny spring morning. Jimmy Silver & Co., the rebels of Rookwood, were out of bounds.

The Rookwood rebellion was "going strong."

For several days the Classical Fourth Form had been camped on the island, nearly a mile from the school, and, so far,

at least, the Head had not succeeded in rounding up the rebels.

Jimmy Silver & Co. remained cheerfully in camp, waiting for the Head's next move. It seemed a long time coming.

Probably Dr. Chisholm was perplexed. It was an unprecedented state of affairs. The juniors were content to wait. Camping-out was, as Arthur Edward Lovell declared, better than grinding Latin in the Form-room. How the affair was going to end, even Jimmy Silver did not profess to know; all Jimmy knew was that the Classical Fourth were not going to give in.

On that point all the rebels were agreed. It seemed improbable, on the other hand, that the Head would give in. So what would be the outcome of the rebellion was an interesting problem.

Arthur Edward Lovell, sitting on a branch of a tree overhanging the water, was the first to spot a boat pulling up the river from the direction of Coombe. An athletic young man was pulling, and Lovell recognised him at once.

It was Mr. Richard Dalton, formerly master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, lately dismissed by the Head.

"It's Dicky!" sang out Lovell. "Old Dicky's heard about it, and he's coming to pay us a visit."

"I don't think!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "It's Dicky Dalton right enough, though."

"Might be coming to join us!" said Lovell, from the branch above.

"Fathead!"

"Well, why not?" demanded Lovell. "We're backing up against the Head because he sacked Dicky. We're on strike till Dicky comes back to Rookwood. He didn't want to go, did he? Well, then, why shouldn't he come and take a hand?"

The juniors under the tree chuckled. It was true that the rebel Form were backing up Dicky Dalton, in their own original manner. But certainly it was not likely that the dismissed Form-master would think of taking a hand in a schoolboy rebellion.

"You're an ass, Lovell, old man!" remarked Raby.

"Well, he's coming here," said Lovell. "What's he coming here for if he's not backing us up? You'll see that I'm right."

"Bow-wow!" said Newcome.

"Look here, Newcome—"

"You look out, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'll be off that branch in a

jiffy, and taking a bath with your clobber on!"

"Rats!" retorted Lovell.

The juniors watched the boat as it came up against the current. Mr. Dalton was not looking towards the island; he seemed to be unaware of the group of juniors standing under the trees on the island shore. As the news spread that Dicky Dalton was coming, more and more of the Fourth-Formers came along from the camp in the centre of the little island, and joined Jimmy Silver & Co. by the water's edge. All of them watched the advancing boat with keen interest.

"He's coming here!" repeated Lovell.

"He isn't!" said Mornington. "Look!"

The boat swerved to pass the island. Evidently Mr. Richard Dalton was not intending to call at the rebel camp—even if he knew that the Rookwooders were there, which was doubtful.

"He's going on!" said Tubby Muffin.

"I'll hail him, then!" exclaimed Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell sat astride of the branch, holding on with his legs, and put both hands to his mouth to make a trumpet, and shouted:

"Boat, ahoy!"

Mr. Dalton glanced round.

"Dicky Dalton, ahoy!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The young man in the boat stared towards the island. The astonishment in his face was very evident.

"This way!" shouted Raby.

The boat swerved again, and Mr. Dalton pulled towards the spot where the juniors stood. Jimmy Silver & Co. "capped" him with great respect. To their minds, he was still their Form-master, and they owed him respect, the Head's dismissal of "Dicky" notwithstanding.

"Comin' ashore, sir?" called out Mornington.

"Oh, do!" said Putty of the Fourth. "We'll stand you lunch in our camp, Mr. Dalton!"

"Yes, rather!"

The boat bumped on the rushes, and stopped. Mr. Dalton stood up. He was still looking astonished.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What does this mean, Silver?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"What does what mean, sir?" asked the captain of the Fourth.

"How comes it that you are here? You

should be in your Form-room at Rookwood at this hour!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"Then you haven't heard, sir!" exclaimed Lovell.

Mr. Dalton looked up at him. Lovell was swaying rather perilously on the branch over the river. But it was useless to warn Arthur Edward Lovell to be careful. Arthur Edward always knew best.

"Heard of what, Lovell?"

"We're on strike, sir!"

"What!"

"We've cleared out of Rookwood, and we're not going back till the Head comes to terms. It's a sort of barring-out," explained Lovell.

"Nonsense!"

"Not at all, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We mean business. The prefects have tried already to shift us, and they were jolly glad to get away."

"What-ho!" chuckled Lovell.

Mr. Dalton stared at the juniors, his brows knitted. He seemed very puzzled and very distressed.

"But what is all this about, Silver?" he asked. "I hoped that matters would go smoothly after I left Rookwood. I suppose you have a new Form-master—"

"There's a rotter, but we don't own him!" said Mornington.

"Mornington!"

"Well, he is a rotter, sir," said Morny cheerfully. "In fact, a rank rotter!"

"You have had trouble with your new Form-master, Silver?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"Lots," said Jimmy. "But that isn't all. We're on strike till the Head fetches you back to Rookwood, sir! We're not going to have any other Form-master!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Absurd!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "You are acting very wrongly and very rebelliously."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell from above.

"Shut up, Lovell!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're not to cheek your Form-master, you ass!"

"Sorry!" said Lovell.

"Nonsense! I am no longer your Form-master!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "You owe respect and obedience to your head-master."

"That's all right when he toes the line," said Conroy; "not till he toes the line, though."

"No fear!" said several voices emphatically

"Come ashore, Mr. Dalton, and stand in with us!" said Lovell encouragingly. "We'll make you leader."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You foolish boy!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "If I have any influence left over you, I beg you to return to Rookwood at once and apologise to your headmaster."

"Can't be did, sir!"

"My boys—"

"I thought you were coming to join us when I spotted you on the river," said Lovell.

"Nonsense! I did not know you were here. I am staying with a friend at Latcham, and came out for a pull on the river," said Mr. Dalton. "I had no idea that anything of this kind was taking place. Silver, according to what you say, you seem to have been inspired by some regard for me in taking this action—"

"Just that, sir!"

"Then I beg you to stop it at once and return to Rookwood."

"Impossible, sir! We're not giving in till the Head agrees to fetch you back."

"Absurd! Besides, the Head never would agree. Do you think your headmaster will allow himself to be dictated to by Lower boys?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"I hope so, sir," said Jimmy cheerfully. "Anyhow, we can't give in now if we want to—and we don't want to. The Head's threatened to sack half a dozen of us, and he will jolly well keep his word if we given him the chance. We're all standing together till he comes to terms."

"If you properly express your regret—"

"But we haven't any regret, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, sir," said Lovell, "we think we've done right. In fact, we know we've done right."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head will have to chuck it in the long run," said Lovell confidently. "He can't have this going on for ever. It will get into the papers. The governors will come down on him. You join up with us, sir, and we'll see you through."

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Dalton sat down and picked up his oars.

"Won't you come ashore and lunch, sir?" asked Mornington.

"I cannot countenance your lawless proceedings in any way," said Mr. Dalton sternly. He pushed off from the island.

"Good-bye, sir! We're backing you up, all the same."

"Best of luck, Dicky!"

The boat glided out into the river again.

"Tell us where to send you a message when the Head gives in!" bawled Lovell.

Mr. Dalton did not reply to that. He pulled away from the island without a backward glance.

"Dicky's a good sort, but he's a bit of an ass," said Lovell. "I think that—"

"Look out!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"I'm all right, Jimmy, you ass! Think I don't know how to sit on a branch—"

"It's cracking—"

"Oh, my hat!"

Crack!

There was a yell from Arthur Edward Lovell as he shot downward into the water. Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell came up, spluttering. He crawled through shallow water and thick mud to the shore. A roar of laughter greeted him.

"Ow!" gasped Lovell. "Ooooh! This mud is filthy! Groogh! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Lovell. "There's nothing to cackle-at, is there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently the juniors thought that there was something to cackle at. At all events, they cackled.

Arthur Edward Lovell crawled away to clean himself, leaving them cackling.

CHAPTER 24.

Mr. Carker's Plan of Campaign

"M R. CARKER!"

"Sir!"

"Something must be done, Mr. Carker!"

Dr. Chisholm spoke in an exceedingly dry manner. Mr. Carker's rather fishy, greenish eyes glistened, but he made no reply.

"This has gone on too long, Mr. Carker," said the Head.

"I agree, sir."

"You were appointed master of the Fourth Form here, Mr. Carker."

"Quite so, sir."

"Your Form has been in revolt ever since your arrival. This is not what I expected."

The Head's manner was severe. His

manner often was autocratic in dealing with his staff. The staff did not like it; and Mr. Carker, the latest addition to the staff, did not like it any more than the older hands.

But he did not think of arguing with the Head. Mr. Richard Dalton had argued with the Head, and had been dismissed. Mr. Carker did not want to be dismissed.

So he did not point out to the Head, as he might easily have done, that the Form had been in revolt before his arrival at Rookwood, and that the cause—the dismissal of Mr. Dalton—had no connection with him at all.

Mr. Carker, like the rest of the staff, had the impression that the Head had asked for trouble, and had got it! But it would never have done to tell the old gentleman so.

If the Head chose to lay the blame on Mr. Carker, it was up to Mr. Carker to let him do so—to give him his head, as it were. Mr. Carker's only solace was the prospect of "taking it out" of his Form—as soon as he had an opportunity.

The Head paused, like Brutus, for a reply; but Mr. Carker did not speak. So the Head went on.

"The present state of affairs is disgraceful. Mr. Dalton, your predecessor here, was dismissed for insubordination. But, in justice to him, I am bound to say that his Form gave no such trouble as this in his time at Rookwood. If you are not able to handle a junior Form, Mr. Carker, there is no reason why you should not say so candidly."

Mr. Carker breathed hard.

"I trust that I am fully capable of handling the Form, sir," he answered, goaded, as it were, into resistance. "But the Form was not in a normal state when I took control. I understand that—"

Dr. Chisholm raised a thin, white hand.

"We need not go into that, Mr. Carker! The question is—can you deal with the Fourth Form, or can you not?"

"I shall certainly try, sir," said Mr. Carker, with a gasp. "I have been thinking the matter out—indeed, I have made some tentative arrangements, and, with your approval, I shall proceed—"

"Very good! The boys must be brought back to their duty at once," said the Head.

"That is essential."

"They will yield to nothing but force, sir," said Mr. Carker. "They have already refused to obey your personal order to

return to the school." Mr. Carker could not resist giving the Head that little thrust.

Dr. Chisholm frowned.

"If you have a plan, Mr. Carker, you

"I have, sir. The Sixth Form prefects have tried to remove Silver and his associates from the island and failed. It will be necessary to use greater force—"

"No doubt. But in what way?"

Mr. Carker coughed.

"My idea is to engage a number of men from the neighbourhood, sir, and pay them a moderate fee for their services. A dozen grown men will be able to deal with the rebels."

The Head frowned again.

"I do not like the idea, Mr. Carker! Rough measures may be necessary, but they should not be too rough. I cannot run the risk of any of the boys being injured."

"I shall give instructions to that effect, of course."

"It will cause great discussion in the neighbourhood," said the Head. Dr. Chisholm was not a lover of publicity.

"The affair is already the talk of the neighbourhood, sir," said Mr. Carker, showing his teeth again as it were. "It is discussed in Coombe, and on all the farms, I believe, as far as Latcham."

The Head winced.

"If you think your plan will be efficacious, Mr. Carker, you may proceed with it. I am now due in the Sixth Form room."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Carker left the Head's study with a frowning and grim brow. In the Form-room corridor he came on Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, hurrying to his Form-room.

Mr. Greely paused for a moment with a smile on his plump face. No member of the Rookwood staff liked Mr. Carker; he was, indeed, looked on in masters' Common-room as a spy, and the masters were very careful of what they said in his presence. Careless remarks, repeated to the Head, were likely to come home to roost.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Carker! Still enjoying a rest?" asked Mr. Greely with smiling sarcasm.

"The Fourth Form are still in rebellion, if that is what you mean!" said Mr. Carker sourly.

"A great trouble for you," smiled Mr. Greely.

"Hard lines on me, at any rate!" said

Mr. Carker. "The Head seems to lay the whole blame on me, Mr. Greely—yet he is well aware that the trouble started before I came."

"Indeed?" said the Fifth Form master.

"It is scarcely just. Had I found my Form in order I should have kept it so!" grumbled Mr. Carker. "Now that the juniors have cleared out of the school, it is for the Head to bring them back. Don't you think so?"

"I have not thought about the matter, Mr. Carker," answered the Fifth Form master blandly.

"I am beginning to agree with you that the Head is somewhat high-handed, Mr. Greely."

"I do not remember ever expressing such an opinion to you, Mr. Carker," said Mr. Greely, not to be drawn. "Indeed, it is scarcely a topic that I could discuss with you."

And Mr. Greely whisked on to his Form-room.

Mr. Carker scowled and went on his way. He had no sympathy to expect from the other members of the staff; he had made himself too much disliked and distrusted for that. And now that the Head was unsympathetic, Mr. Carker felt a little lonely and forlorn. He was beginning to understand that his post at Rookwood depended on bringing the Fourth Form to heel; which was hardly fair on him. And even the measures he used were likely to be severely criticised by the Head as too rough and too ruffianly—though what other measures would serve his turn, the Head did not suggest. Mr. Carker gritted his teeth. At least, he would "take it out" of the rebel juniors as soon as they were in his power—his hard, spiteful eyes glittered at that thought.

Mr. Carker walked down from Rookwood to Coombe, and stepped into the local train for Latcham. From Latcham Station he walked down towards the bridge, which overlooked the wharves where the barges were moored. A handsome young man came up the steps from the boathouse near the bridge, and met Mr. Carker face to face.

"Mr. Dalton!" ejaculated the new master of the Fourth.

It was Richard Dalton, returning from his long row up the river. He stopped.

"You, Carker!" he said. "I never expected to see you here!"

"Neither did I expect to see you," said

Mr. Carker with a sneer. "Why are you hanging about this district? If you think you are likely to get back into your place at Rookwood, you are making a mistake!"

Mr. Dalton gave him a sharp look.

"What have you to do with Rookwood?" he asked.

"Didn't you know that there was a new master of your Form there?" grinned Mr. Carker.

"You are not——"

"I am!"

"You are master of the Rookwood Fourth?"

"Yes."

"Then I need not be surprised that the trouble has increased, instead of diminishing, since I left!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "I cannot believe that the Head would have taken you into the school had he been well acquainted with your character."

Mr. Carker shrugged his shoulders.

"He cannot know that you were once dismissed from a school for cruelty——"

"I fancy, in his present temper, that would be rather a recommendation in his eyes," said Mr. Carker. "He is not feeling tender towards the boys who are defying his authority, and making him look ridiculous to the whole school!"

Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"And who are you to throw stones?" added Mr. Carker with a sneer. "At least I have never been a professional boxer—and that, I believe, was your calling before you became a master at Rookwood. Perhaps the Head did not know he was engaging a 'pug.'"

"The Head knows all about me that is to be known," said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"And he sacked you?"

"That is no business of yours!"

Mr. Dalton was passing on when the Fourth Form master touched his sleeve and detained him.

"Your Form have revolted, and are demanding your return to the school," he said. "Of course, you know that—no doubt you had a hand in it——"

"I knew nothing of it till this morning."

"That is as it may be!" sneered Mr. Carker. "At all events, it will not succeed. I am taking measures here to put down the rebellion. Before dark the boys will be back at Rookwood—some of them, probably, in a state which will make them wish that they had never rebelled!"

"You are taking measures—here?" repeated Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Carker pointed from the bridge to a barge moored at the wharf. A thick-set man, with a stubby nose, smoking a pipe on the barge, removed the pipe from his mouth, and waved it to Mr. Carker in sign of recognition.

"An hour or so from now that barge will be at the island," said Mr. Carker with a grin. "It will have eight or nine barges on board—rough fellows, I can assure you. How long do you think your young friends will stand against a gang like that?"

Richard Dalton started violently.

"You will not use such measures as——"

"Indeed!" sneered Carker.

"Some of the boys may be injured——"

"That is their look out!"

"Carker! Surely you will not try——"

Mr. Carker laughed.

"There may be some hard knocks," he said. "That should not be such a shock to you—who have lived by giving and taking hard knocks in the ring. Good-afternoon!"

He went down the steps from the bridge to the river. Mr. Dalton stood by the parapet, staring after him.

CHAPTER 25.

An Advance in Force!

"ONLY a barge!" said Lovell. "Keep an eye open, all the same!" said Jimmy Silver sagely. "The jolly old enemy might come in a barge. They're not likely to swim."

"Oh, I fancy the Head's fed-up!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "He started the prefects on us, and we walloped them. I dare say he's thinking out the terms of surrender now."

"Not likely!" said Mornington.

The juniors on the island watched the barge idly. A boy with a horse on the tow-path was towing the great, heavy vessel. Down by Latcham barges were numerous on the river; but it was seldom that they came as far up the river as the island past Rookwood. Down by Latcham it was a wide stream, with muddy wharves and warehouses on its banks; higher up by Rookwood it dwindled in size, and ran clear and pellucid under green trees. The juniors watched the barge, and wondered a little to see seven or eight men on board, all of them staring towards the island and grinning.

"They've heard of us, and come out to see the giddy sight!" suggested Lovell.

"Looks like it!" said Conroy.

Jimmy Silver looked at the approaching barge intently. He did not yet suspect that it was the "enemy" that had arrived; but he was on his guard.

The horse plodded on along the tow-path, and the barge passed between the island and the bank of the river. Then a stubby-faced man called out to the boy with the horse, and he halted the animal. The barge came to a standstill.

Eight men were in sight on the barge now, lining the side towards the island, and staring at the juniors. Arthur Edward Lovell cheerfully waved a hand to them.

"What have they stopped for?" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"To get a good look at us," said Lovell.

Jimmy shook his head. He was beginning to suspect mischief now. An angular, hard-faced man came out of the barge's cabin, and there was a yell from all the Rookwooders as they sighted him.

"Carker!"

It was Mr. Carker. He stood on the barge and surveyed the crowd of juniors with an unpleasant smile.

"Shy something at him!" said Flynn.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "If he's only come to talk, let him rip!"

"Can't have come for anything else," said Lovell. "He wouldn't like to tackle us on his own, I fancy."

Mr. Carker called across to the juniors.

"Boys!"

"Man!" answered Lovell, and there was a laugh from the Rookwood crowd on the island.

"I am here to take you back to Rookwood."

"Go hon!"

"You will all be taken on this barge and towed down to the school," said Mr. Carker.

"I don't think!" said Lovell.

"If you venture to resist—" went on Mr. Carker.

"No 'if' about it, old bean," said Valentine Mornington. "You put a foot on our island, and you'll see!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Take your face away, Carker!" shouted Putty of the Fourth. "Bury it, old man! You oughtn't to take a face like that about in the day-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the bargees chuckled, and Mr. Carker scowled savagely.

"If you venture to resist, force will be used, and some of you may be hurt!" he shouted.

"Who's goin' to hurt us?" inquired Mornington. "Not you, old man. You can give us shocks with your features; but that's your limit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker made a gesture towards the grinning bargees.

"These men have been engaged to take you back to Rookwood," he said. "If you resist, you will take the consequences—and I warn you that they will be painful."

"Oh, gad!"

"Phew!"

"That gang?" said Mornington, with a whistle. "Old infants, we shall have to pull up our socks now; this is rather a different proposition from the giddy prefects that we beat."

Jimmy Silver's face was very grave.

The Rookwood prefects had been defeated and driven off in an attack; but a gang of hefty bargees was, as Morny said, quite another proposition. The odds, certainly, were on the side of the schoolboys; they were more than three to one. But the odds were not likely to count very much in a struggle with a gang of rough and tough bargees. Each of the bargeemen looked quite capable of dealing with half the Fourth Form of Rookwood on his own.

Silence fell on the juniors. Tubby Muffin made a strategic retreat into the thickets. His example was followed by Peele and Gower and Lattrey; and one or two other fellows seemed to wander away. But Jimmy Silver did not stir; and his comrades stood firm around him.

"I trust," said Mr. Carker, with an unpleasant grin—"I trust, Silver, that you will have the sense to realise that resistance is out of the question."

"I haven't got that kind of sense," answered Jimmy Silver quietly. "We're in this till the finish; and if you bring your roughs on this island we shall do our best to throw them into the river."

"Yes, rather!" roared Lovell, brandishing a cricket-stump. "We're ready for you, Carker!"

"I give you a few minutes to think it over," said Mr. Carker.

"Not needed!" said Raby.

"Go and eat coke, Carker!" roared Lovell.

"Come on!" yelled Conroy.

"I advise you—" shouted Mr. Carker.

"Keep your advice!"

"Run away and play, Carker!"

"I advise you," shouted Mr. Carker, "to yield peaceably and return to Rookwood. These men will not deal gently with you if you dare to raise a hand against them."

"That's so, guv'nor," grinned the stubby man. "You leave them to us, guv'nor! We'll make pictures of 'em!"

"Take the barge across to the island now, Mr. Pugson."

"Wot!" said the stubby gentleman.

"I warn you to keep off!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "We shall not allow you to land on this island!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Pugson. "He won't allow us! That there grasshopper won't allow us! Not that there whipper-snapper! Ha, ha!"

"Resist, and you must take the consequences!" exclaimed Mr. Carker. "For the last time, I repeat—Yarooooooop!"

Mr. Carker did not mean to say that; he said it as an apple, old and overripe, squashed on his prominent nose. It was hurled by Putty's unerring hand, and it landed fairly.

"Goal!" shouted Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! Hooch—hooch!" spluttered Mr. Carker, grabbing at the squashed apple. "Oh, dear! You young scoundrels—Ow! Men, get on the island at once—oooh!—and take them—thrash them—thrash them severely! Ow!"

"You leave them to us, guv'nor," said Pugson.

The tow-rope was cast-off, and the barge swerved across the narrow channel to the island. Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

"We've got to keep them off!" he said. "Get hold of something, all of you, and stand to it!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Blow wind, come wrack, at least we'll die with harness on our back!" quoted Mornington cheerily.

"Fire!" grinned Lovell.

And clods of earth flew, crashing on the barges as they toiled the heavy vessel across to the island. Loud exclamations, and expressions of great potency, came from the bargemen, as the missiles smote them right and left. By the time the barge bumped on the island, Mr. Pugson and his

men were in extremely bad tempers, and no longer grinning, but evidently in a mood to handle the Rookwooders roughly enough.

"Go for 'em mates!" shouted Mr. Pugson. And he jumped ashore, taking the lead, which Mr. Carker resigned to him, apparently not caring for it himself.

"Back up, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

And the juniors rushed at the enemy.

CHAPTER 26.

Something Like a Scrap

"BACK up, Rookwood!"

"Give 'em beans!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat! Leggo, you beast!"

"Ow! My nose!"

Splash!

Mr. Pugson, in the grasp of a dozen juniors, was hurled back headlong into the water. But seven other hefty bargemen came scrambling ashore, and they fairly drove a way through the Rookwood crowd. Pugson, wet and muddy, scrambled out of the water.

"Go for 'em!" he roared.

It was a terrific combat.

The Rookwooders, armed with cricket-stumps and cudgels, resisted desperately, and there was not a member of the barge party that did not receive severe punishment. The juniors did not stand on ceremony; they hit often and they hit hard.

The bargemen had entered on the business with grinning good-humour; but they were angry and savage now, which was perhaps not to be wondered at in the circumstances. They were all powerful fellows, and they hit out recklessly and powerfully. One punch from a big bargeman was generally enough for a Fourth-Former of Rookwood—the hapless rebels, fighting hard, were fairly strewn on the grass.

Some of them lay dazed where they had fallen, others scrambled up to fight again, some retreated into the trees towards the old Army hut, round which the schoolboy camp was formed. Mr. Carker, from the barge, watched the combat anxiously.

He had no doubt about the result—the rebels were hopelessly over-matched; that did not worry him. But he was worried, all the same. In that fierce combat it was quite possible that severe injuries might be

received—a bargeman's punch was no joke. And certainly the Head of Rookwood would have been shocked and horrified to see a battered crew of wrecks shepherded back to Rookwood, with streaming noses and missing teeth, and perhaps worse damages. That was a worry to Mr. Carker, for he had not ventured to explain precisely to the Head what methods he had intended to use. The Head had left it to him, with a very plain hint that if he did not succeed he would have to go; and Mr. Carker did not see what other means could be efficacious. But he was rather troubled.

The Fistical Four were the last to make a stand against the overpowering enemy. Jimmy Silver, Raby, Lovell, and Newcome stood together, fighting hard.

But a rush of the bargemen sent them spinning, and they sprawled in the grass, panting.

Mr. Pugson mopped a heated brow and a nose that streamed crimson.

"I reckon that job's hover!" he said. "It was 'ot—otter than a bloke expected! I reckon this 'ere job was worth more than ten bob a man, I does! But we done it!"

"Bring them into the barge!" shouted Mr. Carker.

"Right-ho! guv'nor! Let a cove dror his breath fust!" snorted Mr. Pugson. "We've done 'em!"

But Mr. Pugson was mistaken; he was far from having "done" the rebels of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver scrambled up. He was hurt, there was no doubt about that, but he was not beaten yet. He called to his chums and raced for the trees.

Some of the Rookwooders were still sprawling about the bank, too dizzy and breathless even to pick themselves up. But fifteen or sixteen fellows, panting and sorely knocked about, gathered in the old hut with Jimmy Silver.

"We're not done yet!" gasped Mornington.

"No fear!"

"Oh, my hat! What a day!" groaned Lovell, feeling his nose to make sure that it was still there. "I—I say, I never thought they'd use a dodge like this—setting blessed barges on us!"

"The Head wouldn't!" said Jimmy. "But that cad Carker—"

"The awful rotter!" mumbled Conroy. "Look at my nose! But we're not done yet."

"Come out of it!" roared the voice of

Mr. Pugson, as he came tramping towards the hut.

There was no door to the old Army hut on the island. But the juniors were hastily jamming the doorway with anything they could lay their hands on. Several old benches and boxes made a slight barricade, and behind it the rebels of Rookwood crowded, to face the enemy again.

Mr. Carker was on the island now. Like his followers, he supposed that the struggle was over, and that it only remained to round up the juniors scattered about the little isle. He came striding towards the hut with the bargemen.

He stopped as he saw the barred doorway, with the flushed, war-like faces of the Rookwooders looking over the barrier.

"Come out at once!" he snapped.

"Come and fetch us out, Carker!" roared Lovell.

"You young rascal!"

"You old rascal!" retorted Lovell.

"This way, Carker!" shouted Mornington. "Don't hide behind the giddy barges! Come on, Carker!"

But Mr. Carker did not come on. He scowled at the juniors, and snapped out an order to his followers.

"Get them out of the hut!"

"Easy enough!" grinned Mr. Pugson. "Come on, mates!"

The bargemen made a rush.

But it was not so easy as Mr. Pugson anticipated. The barrier in the doorway stopped the rush of the bargemen, and, over it, the juniors lashed out with their weapons. They were hitting hard, and Mr. Pugson and his comrades backed off.

"Keep on, men!" shouted Mr. Carker. "Pugson—Pugson! Do you hear 'me, Pugson? If you run away—if you do not get them on the barge, I shall pay you nothing."

"Wot's that?" roared Mr. Pugson, who was rubbing a bump on his head where a cricket-stamp had landed.

"I tell you—"

"You talking to me?" asked Mr. Pugson, showing a knuckly fist fairly under Mr. Carker's nose.

It might have been a rattlesnake by the way Mr. Carker jumped back.

"I—I— You—I—" he began to stutter.

"You 'old your jor!" roared Mr. Pugson. "I don't notice you taking a 'and very lively! You 'old your jor!"

And Mr. Carker decided to hold it; his

rough-and-ready followers were not in a mood to be nagged by Mr. Carker.

"I've said I'll do the job, and I'll do it, blow me!" added Mr. Pugson. "I'll 'ave 'em out if I 'ave to smash 'em into pancakes! But don't you give a bloke any of your lip! I ain't taking it—see? You 'old your jor!"

He called to his comrades.

"Ere, you back me up, mates! One rush will do it, and it don't matter 'ow much you 'urt them!"

"They're comin'!" said Mornington coolly. "This will finish it, Jimmy—but we'll go down fightin'!"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and set his teeth. With Mr. Pugson in the lead, and Mr. Carker looking on from a safe distance, the bargemen came on with a terrific rush. And they had almost reached the barricaded doorway when a sharp voice shouted:

"Stop!"

"Dick!" yelled Lovell.

It was Mr. Dalton!

CHAPTER 27.

Mr. Dalton Takes a Hand!

MR. DALTON hurried on the scene. His handsome face was flushed, and his eyes sparkling. In the excitement of the attack and defence no one had had eyes for the boat that approached the island from the direction of Latcham; no one had seen Mr. Dalton jump ashore. His sudden arrival was a surprise to both parties.

"Stop!"

There was authority in Mr. Dalton's voice, and Mr. Pugson and his comrades stopped and stared round. Mr. Dalton strode between them and the doorway of the hut.

"Who the thump are you?" snapped Pugson. "Wot are you butting in for, I'd like to know?"

"Stop this at once!" snapped Mr. Dalton. Mr. Carker ran forward, his face red with rage.

"Mr. Dalton, get out of this at once! How dare you interfere?"

Mr. Dalton's eyes flashed at him.

"How dare you set these roughs on the schoolboys?" he thundered. "You are amenable to the law, sir!"

"Mind your own business! Men, throw him into the water if he will not go!" gasped Mr. Carker.

With a long stride, Mr. Dalton reached the master of the Fourth. His right fist shot out, and caught Mr. Carker on the point of the chin.

Crash!

The new master of the Fourth went spinning, and landed on his back in the grass.

"Well hit!" roared Lovell.

"Bravo, Dick!"

Mr. Carker lay where he had fallen. He did not care to get up while Mr. Dalton was near him.

The young man turned to the bargemen.

"Get back to your barge!" he snapped.

"Wot's that?" snarled Pugson.

"Get back to your barge! You may be thankful if you are not charged with assault and battery for what you have done."

"We're followin' that bloke's horders," said Mr. Pugson. "He's a schoolmaster, he is, and can't keep his kids in horder. We're a-doin' of it for 'im. See? You clear!"

Mr. Carker sat up.

"Throw him into the water!" he spluttered. "Men, I—I—throw him into the water! Beat him to a jelly! I—I—"

"You getting out of the way, young man?" asked Mr. Pugson. "We're going for them kids, we are!"

"You are not!" said Mr. Dalton grimly. "It is my duty to interfere here, and I warn you, Carker, that the Head of Rookwood will learn of your brutal methods. Stand back there!"

"Rush him!"

"I warn you, before you proceed," said Mr. Dalton quietly, "that at one time I was a boxer in the Ring, and that I have not forgotten how to use my hands. You had better go!"

"Blinking prize-fighter, what?" sneered Mr. Pugson. "Well, I dessay I can give you as good as you 'and out; and if I can't, my mates can! Rush him, boys, and chuck him into the water!"

And with that the truculent Mr. Pugson led the way, and there was a fierce rush.

What followed was rather an eye-opener for the bargemen of Latcham. Mr. Dalton did not give an inch, he stood like a rock, and his fists played like lightning. The astonished Pugson found himself fairly flying through the air, weighty as he was, and he came down with crash on Mr.

Carker, feeling as if a steam-hammer had smitten him. A second later Mr. Dalton's left sent another man crashing down. Then he was fighting hand-to-hand with the rest.

"Come on!" yelled Jimmy Silver. The Rookwood rebels were not likely to see their old Form-master facing the enemy single-handed. They scrambled over the barricade and rushed to his help.

Another and another of the bargemen went down under Richard Dalton's terrific drives; but four hefty fellows were clinging to him and dragging him down. Wonderful fighting-man as Mr. Dalton was, it would have fared hard with him had not the Rookwooders rushed to the rescue. But the rush of Jimmy Silver & Co. settled the matter.

They dragged at the bargemen, dragging them off Dicky, and Mr. Dalton, who was nearly down, recovered himself. He did not waste a moment—he sailed in with right and left.

The tables were turned now.

Mr. Pugson staggered up, holding his stubby jaw with both hands. He did not utter a word, or even look at the Rookwooders; he limped away to the barge, holding his jaw as if he were holding it together. He rolled dismally into the barge, and after him went his comrades, driven now in headlong retreat by the victorious Rookwooders.

"Our win!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, as the last of the gang tumbled on board the barge.

"Shove 'em off!"

"Hold on! There's Carker!"

"Collar Carker!"

Mr. Carker fairly howled with terror as a crowd of the Rookwooders collared him.

"Frog's march!" shouted Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Release me!" shrieked Mr. Carker.

"Let go! Owl! Young rascals! Oh! Yarcooh! Yooop! Whooooop!"

"Chuck him in!"

Mr. Carker was hurled headlong into the barge. He sprawled over Mr. Pugson, who turned on him and smote him hard, and he rolled off again. The Rookwooders shoved the barge off from the island, and it floated away on the current. Further down the river the hapless Pugson caught on to the tow-rope, and the barge went towing back to Latham, unregarded by the rebels of Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gathered round Mr. Dalton. He had saved them—only his intervention had saved them from defeat. Never had the dismissed Form-master been so popular with his Form.

But his face was grave and stern.

"You have nothing to thank me for," he said, interrupting the juniors. "I was told of Mr. Carker's intention. I came along to see that no harm was done, and seeing what I did, I was compelled to interfere. But I repeat what I said to you boys this morning—I urge you to return to Rookwood, and to your duty."

The battered, bruised juniors looked at one another. With the exception of Tubby Muffin, and Peele, and a few other slackers, all of them had been damaged, some severely. And there was no doubt that but for Mr. Dalton's intervention, damage would have been done that would have led to serious consequences. But the rebels of Rookwood had come through, and they were unconquered. They heard Mr. Dalton with respect, but he did not succeed in changing their determination.

"We're up against the Head, sir, till you come back to Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver at last. "We're not chucking up."

"No fear!"

Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"Then I have nothing more to say," he said. "I have no authority over you, and cannot give you orders."

He turned and walked away to his boat.

"Mr. Dalton!" said Jimmy.

"Dicky!" called out Lovell.

Mr. Dalton did not heed. He stepped into his boat and pushed off. The falling dusk on the river swallowed him up in a few minutes.

"Dicky means well," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, he feels bound to talk to us like that. But we're sticking it!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh! my nose!" murmured Lovell. "I—I feel as if I've been through a giddy mangle. Wow!"

"Same here!" groaned Newcome.

Till quite a late hour that evening the Rookwood rebels were busily attending to their damages, and groaning over them. Nearly every fellow was on the casualty list; swollen noses were seen on all sides, and black eyes were almost as common as blackberries.

But damaged as they were, their determination remained unchanged. The Rookwood rebellion was going strong—and it

was going on! Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite resolved on that.

Dr. Chisholm was pacing his study, with a moody, knitted brow, when a tap came at the door.

The Head paused in his walk and faced the door, his eyes glinting over his spectacles.

"Come in!" he rapped.

Mr. Carker entered.

He looked tired and worn, and there was a mark on his face where Mr. Dalton's knuckles had landed. His manner was almost cringing as he came in.

"Well, sir?" said the Head in a deep voice.

"The—the boys have not been brought back from the island, sir. I—I should have succeeded but—"

"But what?"

"Mr. Dalton interfered, taking the side of the rebels," said Mr. Carker. "I have no doubt that he has had a hand in the whole proceedings from the beginning. It is his object, of course, to force you to reinstate him here—"

"I do not believe so for one moment."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Carker.

"Mr. Dalton was dismissed from this school for a—a disagreement of opinion. Certainly he is incapable of instigating a rebellion in the school. Neither do I believe that you really think so, Mr. Carker."

"Oh, sir!" stuttered Mr. Carker.

"No, sir! I have received a message from Mr. Dalton. He thinks—and I agree with him—that it was his duty to warn me of the methods you were using in dealing with my boys—methods, sir, that might have caused legal proceedings to be taken; methods that might have made the name of Rookwood a by-word!" thundered the Head in great wrath.

"You left the matter in my hands."

"I did not authorise you to gather a party of roughs, sir, from Latham. But enough! You are not suited, Mr. Carker, for a Form-master's duties here, and evidently you cannot deal with the Fourth Form. I shall be glad, Mr. Carker, if you find it convenient to leave Rookwood to-morrow!"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"You have said enough, sir, and I have said enough!"

"Then I am dismissed?" snapped Mr. Carker.

"You are, sir!"

Mr. Carker's eyes glittered. Even the worm will turn, and there was nothing left for Mr. Carker to cringe for.

"Very well," he said, "I will go! I shall not be sorry to go. No member of your staff, sir, would be sorry to go. And if they ventured to tell you their opinion—as I am doing now—they would tell you, sir, that you are a high-handed and unreasonable old fool, sir!"

With that Parthian shot Mr. Carker retreated from the study, and closed the door after him with a bang.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head.

He sank into a chair, and for quite a long time he sat and stared at the closed door. Perhaps he was wondering whether Mr. Carker was right.

CHAPTER 28.

The Heads' Lucky Day!

"MR. DALTON!"

Dr. Chisholm started.

"Mr. Dalton?" he repeated.

"Yessir!" said Tupper.

There was a brief hesitation on the part of the Head of Rookwood. Then he said:

"You may show Mr. Dalton in."

Dr. Chisholm knitted his brows in troubled thoughts as the page retired. Classes were over for the day at Rookwood; in the quadrangle many voices could be heard, and the sound of shouting on the football ground. Rookwood School was going on much as usual during the absence of the Classical Fourth Form.

For a long time the retreat from Rookwood of the rebel juniors had been the one topic of discussion. What the Head would do; what the Board of Governors might do, had been questions of burning interest. But the school was getting used to it now. Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern Fourth, envied the Classical Fourth their freedom; more than once, on the Modern side, it had been discussed whether the Modern Fourth should join the rebels, but nothing had come of it. The fags of the Third and Second would gladly have joined up under Jimmy Silver's banner; but certainly they had not ventured to make the attempt.

There was no Fourth Form master at Rookwood. The Head felt that he could

scarcely engage a new master for a Form that was entrenched on an island in the river a mile from the school. Assuredly such a master would have expressed great surprise on arriving at Rookwood.

The Head was feeling keenly the extraordinary position in which he was placed.

Several attempts had been made to round up the rebels, but all had failed. Yet the situation could not last.

The rebels' demand that the Head should reinstate Mr. Dalton, their old Form master, was one that Dr. Chisholm could not comply with. He could not take orders from a junior Form. That was impossible.

Yet the Head had come to the conclusion that in dismissing Mr. Dalton he had made a mistake.

The whole staff thought so. They did not venture to tell the Head so, but Mr. Greely and Mr. Bohun and Mr. Wiggins and the rest scarcely hid their opinion.

Opposition, as a rule, made Dr. Chisholm more resolved. There was a strain of uncommon obstinacy in him.

But, as a matter of fact, he had liked and respected Mr. Dalton, and he could not help feeling that the loyalty of the Fourth to their dismissed master was a tribute to his character, exasperating as was the shape that loyalty had taken.

And the position was growing critical; for the strange state of affairs had now reached the august ears of the governors of the school, and the astonished ears of many of the boys' parents! On the Head's desk lay a stack of letters, which he had waded wearily through. There were a dozen from parents of Fourth Form boys, there were three or four from members of the Governing Body, there was even one from an enterprising London evening paper, proposing to send a reporter to interview the rebels on the island.

It was all gall and wormwood to the Head, and which ever way he looked he saw only trouble before him.

True, he could explain fully to the governors. But he knew that the view of these great men would be that such things ought not to happen at Rookwood. A headmaster who could not, or did not, maintain discipline should resign—that was what the governors would think, and the Head knew it. And he had no desire to resign the headmastership of Rookwood—and no intention of doing so.

He could not make terms with the rebels that would be too severe a degradation of

his dignity. And he could not overcome their resistance and march them back to the school—that was out of his power. A barring-out in the school might have been overcome; but the rebels were impregnable on the island in the river. The Head had hoped that they would tire of the rebellion. But they showed no sign whatever of tiring.

He was astonished when Tupper brought in Mr. Dalton's name to him. The dismissed master was calling upon him, and he wondered why.

He could not be coming to ask to be reinstated—that would not be like Mr. Dalton at all. He had taken his dismissal with quiet dignity, and he had gone. Dr. Chisholm had expected never to see him again. He was conscious now that he was glad to see the young master once more. Nothing would have induced the old gentleman to admit that he had acted hastily and inconsiderately in dismissing Mr. Dalton. But he was, in his heart of hearts, quite conscious of the fact.

The athletic figure of the young master appeared in the doorway. Dr. Chisholm rose and gave him a distant bow.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Dalton," he said dryly.

Mr. Richard Dalton coloured a little.

"I have taken the liberty of calling upon you, Dr. Chisholm," he said. "If, however

"Pray be seated, Mr. Dalton."

"Thank you, sir."

Richard Dalton sat down.

"I should not have called, sir," said Mr. Dalton, "but for the fact that I am shortly leaving England."

The Head started a little. Rather to his own surprise, he realised that he was sorry to hear this.

"Leaving England, Mr. Dalton?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir. I have been offered the position of games master in a school in Canada, which I have decided to accept," said Mr. Dalton. "I find no opening in England, and I shall not be sorry to see a little more of the world. But for this circumstance. I should not have called, as my visit might have been misunderstood."

"I hardly think that I should have misunderstood you, Mr. Dalton," said the Head courteously. "We found ourselves unable to agree on all points, but I have always entertained a very deep respect for your character."

"Thank you very much, sir! I can now speak freely, at all events. I have been staying with a friend in Latham, and, as you know, I think, I have become aware of the peculiar state of affairs in my old Form here. The boys seem to have taken my departure to heart, and though I am deeply grateful to them for their attachment, I, of course, condemn most strongly the insubordination that has been the outcome."

"I am sure of that."

"The boys have acted thoughtlessly, from a sense of loyalty to a master they liked," said Mr. Dalton. "This state of affairs is, of course, a bad thing for Rookwood, and must be giving you great trouble. I offer my assistance in bringing it to a close."

"In what way, Mr. Dalton?"

"Silver and his friends have gone on strike, as they call it, in the hope of inducing you to reinstate me here," said Richard Dalton. "That is impossible. They do not understand that a headmaster could not possibly accept dictation from them. But if they learn, from me, that reinstatement is now out of the question—that I am shortly leaving for Canada—the object of their rebellion disappears. They have no further motive to continue it."

"Dear me!" said the Head, his clouded brow clearing a little. "That is certainly very true, Mr. Dalton."

"I am sure, sir, that you would prefer the boys to return to their duty, rather than take measures of great severity in dealing with them."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head.

"With your sanction, then, sir, I will visit the boys on the island, and explain to them how matters stand," said Mr. Dalton. "I hope that it may cause them to return to the school immediately."

Dr. Chisholm glanced at the stack of letters on his desk. The proposed solution of the difficulty came as an immense relief to him. It was like a gleam of light in darkness.

"There is one more point, sir," said Mr. Dalton respectfully. "I learned from the boys that some of them, including Silver, were to be expelled as ringleaders of this revolt. If such is to be their fate, they may feel that they have nothing to lose by continuing this rebellion, and persuading the others to continue it. If you, sir, can offer them forgiveness in return for immediate submission—"

Mr. Dalton paused.

There was a long silence.

"Mr. Dalton," said the Head at last, "you have come to my assistance in this difficult matter in the most kind and generous way. I shall certainly not make difficulties in the way of your self-imposed task. I recognise, also, that the motive of these rebellious boys was a loyal one, though mistaken. You can assure them that, if they return to Rookwood this day, all shall be forgotten and forgiven."

"Then I have little doubt of success, sir," said Mr. Dalton, rising. "At least, I shall do my best."

Tap!

The door of the Head's study opened; and to the amazement of the Head, Peele of the Fourth looked in.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm. "Is—is—is that you, Peele?"

"Yes, sir," said Peele.

Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet. His eyes gleamed over his spectacles. He was glad of Mr. Dalton's assistance in a matter that had now passed out of his control. Nevertheless, he would have been glad to dispense with assistance from a dismissed master. He did not precisely enjoy the process of having coals of fire heaped on his head. At the sight of a Fourth Form boy he jumped rather hastily to the conclusion that the rebellion was over, and that the rebels had returned.

"So you are here, Peele! And the others—"

"They're still on the island, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm, taken aback.

Peele glanced at Mr. Dalton, and Mr. Dalton looked at him very keenly.

"Pray let me detain you a moment, Mr. Dalton," said the Head. "Perhaps it would be better for you to hear what this boy has to say."

"Very well, sir."

"You have returned to school, Peele. Am I to understand from this that the others are following later?"

"No, sir. They're not givin' in," said Peele. "I dodged them this afternoon, and swam off from the island. I—I'm tired of it, sir. I never wanted to go in for it at all, but Silver and the rest made me. I—I think they ought to be brought back to the school, sir."

Dr. Chisholm eyed him.

"That is quite correct, Peele," he said rather dryly.

"I—I am willin' to help, sir."

"Indeed. In what way?"

"You know, sir, they've got wire round the camp, and nobody can get at them now," said Peele, breathing rather hard. "Well, sir, they keep watch for anybody landin' on the island; but a fellow inside the camp could cut the wire after dark, and leave a place open for anybody to get through. I only want a pair of wire-cutters. I—I'm willin' to do it, sir, and then the prefects could come along and bag the whole lot after dark."

"Bless my soul!"

"Of course, sir, I—I'm only offerin' to do this from a sense of duty," said Peele meekly.

Mr. Dalton's lips curled, but he did not speak. Dr. Chisholm's eyes were fixed on Cyril Peele.

"A sense of duty, Peele?" said the Head. "I fear, Peele, that your motives are very different from that. Doubtless by the means you suggest this revolt could be effectually dealt with. But how dare you, sir, suppose that I could make use of such means? How dare you propose to me to take part in what amounts to an act of treachery? I repeat, you wretched boy, how dare you?"

The Head's voice rose in his wrath, till it seemed to the hapless Peele to reverberate like thunder. The cad of the Fourth stood with his knees knocking together. To his mean and cunning mind, it had seemed, without doubt, that the headmaster, puzzled and perplexed to know how to deal with the rebellion, would fairly jump at this chance. He realised his mistake now.

"Since you have returned here, Peele," resumed the Head, "you will not be allowed to leave the school again. I hope and trust that this unhappy rebellion will soon be ended; in any case, you will take no further part in it. Not a word, sir! Silence!"

The Head turned to Mr. Dalton.

"Mr. Dalton, I have accepted your offer of aid, and I hope you will be successful. Successful or not, I am deeply obliged to you, and, whether the boys return or remain on the island, I hope to see you again before you leave for Canada."

"Certainly, sir, if you wish," said Mr. Dalton.

And he took his leave. After he was gone the Head gave his attention to the miserable Peele.

"Follow me!" he snapped.

Cyril Peele followed him. In a few more minutes he was locked in the punishment-

room; the Head feeling, quite justly, that he could not be trusted to remain within bounds. Peele, with feelings that could not be expressed in words, sat on the edge of the bed in the punishment-room, and stared at the little patch of blue spring sky outside the window.

CHAPTER 29.

The End of the Rebellion!

"SEEN Peele?"

"No!"

"Well, he's gone!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

The river flowed red in the sunset, and the Rookwood rebels, round the camp-fire on the island, were sitting down to supper—an appetising supper turned out by the masterly hand of Tubby Muffin.

Lovell came up, after making a round of the island.

"Gone!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"I had an idea that he meant to bolt," said Lovell. "I was going to keep an eye on him. I've looked for him all over the island, and he's gone. The boat's still there, so he must have swum for it."

"Playing billiards at the Bird-in-Hand, I suppose," said Newcome. "Unless he's deserted."

"Well, if he's deserted, good riddance to him," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We shan't miss him."

"I'll jolly well punch him if he comes back!" growled Lovell.

There was the sound of an oar on the river. A boat was pulling towards the island.

"Hallo, is that the deserter comin' back, or the jolly old enemy?" drawled Mornington.

Oswald shouted through the thickets:

"It's Dicky!"

"My hat!"

All the rebels jumped up, forgetful of supper. There was a rush to the wire fence. On the sunlit river a boat glided up to the island, with Mr. Richard Dalton pulling at the oars. It bumped on the shore, and the young master jumped out.

"He's coming to join us, after all," said Lovell.

"Fathead!"

"Hallo, Dicky!" sang out Putty of the Fourth. "Welcome home, old man!"

"Shut up, Putty!"

Mr. Richard Dalton looked about him,

and then came by the path under the trees. He arrived at the stretched wires, behind which the Rookwood rebels were crowded. Jimmy Silver & Co. capped him very respectfully.

Mr. Dalton's face was serious and a little stern. Doubtless he was pleased by the loyal attachment of his Form, which had led to the Rookwood rebellion. But certainly he was not pleased by the rebellion, and did not approve of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s drastic measures in the very least.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Jimmy demurely. "Jolly glad to see you again, sir!"

"Thank you, Silver! I have come to say good-bye," said Mr. Dalton.

"Say au revoir, but not good-bye!" sang Putty of the Fourth softly; and some of the juniors laughed.

"That's all right, sir," said Lovell. "You hang on at Latcham, sir, till the Head comes to his senses. We're going to win!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We want you back, sir," said Mornington. "We're not goin' to give in till the Head sends for you to take us back to school as meek as woolly lambs."

"Next week," said Mr. Dalton quietly, "I am leaving for Canada."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"You—you don't mean that sir?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in great dismay.

"I do mean it, Silver." Mr. Dalton smiled slightly. "I am not a rich man, my boy, and cannot afford to spend many weeks in idleness. I have received an offer of a post in Canada, and shall accept it. I shall be required to start almost at once, and am, in fact, leaving Latcham for London to-morrow morning. I should have been sorry to go without saying good-bye to you all."

"Oh, Mr. Dalton!"

"Rotten!"

The Rookwood rebels were all grave enough now. It was for the reinstatement of Mr. Dalton that they had gone on "strike." And now he was going to Canada! The rebels felt as if the bottom had been knocked out of the whole thing.

The Rookwood rebellion, which had been going so strong, and in which the rebels had counted confidently upon success, had suddenly lost its purpose and its meaning.

If Mr. Dalton was not available for reinstatement at Rookwood, there was nothing to "strike" for. Mr. Dalton's unexpected communication gave Jimmy Silver & Co. ample food for thought.

"My boys," went on Richard Dalton, after a pause, "you know very well that I strongly disapprove of your rebellion against your headmaster's authority. Your motive is very flattering to me personally, but you have acted hastily and wrongly."

"We don't see it, sir," said Lovell stubbornly.

"We need not discuss the point," said Mr. Dalton. "In a week's time I shall be on the sea, and I should like to see this unhappy trouble at an end before I go. I am empowered by your headmaster to offer you all full pardon if you return to Rookwood at once. He is prepared to make every allowance for you, and, in fact, to forget and forgive. You have no reason now for refusing this offer."

"Oh, rotten!" said Raby.

"You do not wish, Silver, to rebel simply for rebellion's sake. I hope?"

"Oh, no! Certainly not," said Jimmy.

"We—we want you back, sir."

"That is now impossible," said Mr.

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Dalton kindly. "I urge you to take advantage of the headmaster's offer, and to return to the school. You have now no reason for continuing this revolt."

"I—I suppose we haven't," said Lovell, rather blankly. "I—I say, this is a bit rotten, Mr. Dalton. If you'd hang on, we'd jolly well make the Head take you back!"

"You are a foolish boy, Lovell, to suppose that I would consent to return to Rookwood on such terms, even if the Head should be agreeable."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

Mornington gave a rueful laugh.

"The game's up," he said. "I suppose we're not goin' to camp on this island for ever, like jolly old Robinson Crusoe. If Mr. Dalton's goin' to Canada, we can't get him back to Rookwood, and the sooner we chuck up the better. I shall be glad to get some clean collars, anyhow."

"Only we're not going to be flogged, or sacked, or anything of that sort," said Higgs suspiciously. "We can hold out here as long as we jolly well like, and the Head can put that in his pipe and smoke it!"

"The Head offers complete pardon if you all return to your duty at once," said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"That's all right, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We can trust the Head, and we can trust you. But—but this is rather a knock-out blow for us, sir."

"Yes, rather!" grunted Lovell. "We wanted to march you back to Rookwood with colours flying, sir."

Mr. Dalton smiled.

"Well, I will march back with you, if you will leave camp and march at once," he said.

"I—I suppose we may as well."

"I will leave you to discuss the matter," said Richard Dalton. "I hope you will follow my counsel."

And the young master walked back to his boat.

There was deep discussion in the rebel camp. The Fistical Four, deeply disappointed as they were, were for taking Mr. Dalton's advice. They saw no object in continuing a revolt which had, in point of fact, lost its object. Mornington agreed reluctantly—Erroll and Lawson agreed emphatically. Tubby Muffin was of opinion the rebellion should be kept up so long as the supply of grub lasted. After that, in Tubby's valuable opinion, it could not end too quickly. But nobody heeded Reginald Muffin.

"I don't see it," grumbled Higgs. "We're here, and they can't touch us. We're keeping out of classes, and we're making the Head look a fool. I'm for keeping it up."

"But we only went on strike to get Mr. Dalton back," said Jimmy Silver, "and now he can't come back."

"Oh, blow Mr. Dalton!" said Higgs. "It's a lark, anyhow."

"We didn't bar the Head for a lark, fathead!"

"Oh, rot."

Higgs held to his opinion, evidently reluctant to face the prospect of grinding Latin again in the Form-room. But most of the other fellows realised that the game was up, and there was "nothing doing" now that Mr. Dalton could not, in any case, return to the school. Higgs was left alone in his opinion, and Lovell offered to leave him alone on the island, if that would suit him. But that did not suit Alfred Higgs, and he began to pack up his belongings along with the others.

The wire was cut, and Jimmy Silver went down to the landing-place. Mr. Dalton glanced at him.

"We're going back to Rookwood, sir," said Jimmy.

"I'm very glad to hear it, Silver," said Mr. Dalton, greatly relieved. "It is a great pleasure to me to see the end of this unhappy trouble before I leave."

"I—I wish you weren't going, sir."

"That cannot be helped now, Silver."

And for the next hour or so the rebels of Rookwood were very busy breaking camp and ferrying across to the river-bank. The Rookwood rebellion was over at last, and it had ended in neither victory nor defeat for either side, which was, perhaps, as satisfactory an ending as could have been looked for.

CHAPTER 30.

The Return of the Rebels!

SNOOKS of the Second came bolting into the School House at Rookwood with a face full of excitement. Snooks of the Second was bursting with news.

"They're coming back!" roared Snooks. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, portly and solemn, was chatting with Mr. Mooney of the Shell. He turned a portentous frown upon the excited Snooks.

"Boy!" boomed Mr. Greely.

"Oh!" gasped Snooks. "I—I didn't see you, sir. But they're coming back—Jimmy Silver, sir!"

There was a buzz at once from all of Snooks' hearers, and even Mr. Greely forgot to look portentous.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Greely.

"Comin' back—hay?" grinned Smythe of the Shell. "They're chuckin' it up at last, the cheeky fags! Now there's goin' to be weepin' and wailin' and gnashin' of teeth! The Head will put in some hefty exercise with the jolly old birch!"

"About time he did," said Hansom of the Fifth. "It's lasted a long time. Bound to give in in the long run, though."

"Oh, bound to!" said Talboys of the Fifth.

Mr. Greely rolled to the big doorway, to look out into the quad. The dusk was deepening over Rookwood, but there was still light, and a crowd of juniors could be seen marching up from the school gates. Bulkeley of the Sixth looked out at them, and his look was one of relief.

"Thank goodness it's over!" he said to Neville. "We should have had the governors down here soon, and no end of a shindy. I'm jolly glad to see the cheeky young beggars coming back."

"Same here," agreed Neville. "Can't quite understand it, though. I really thought they'd hold out."

Bulkeley nodded.

"Yes. I'm afraid they'll have to go through it now. After all, a licking will do them a lot of good."

"Oh, lots!" assented Neville.

"I say," panted Snooks, "Dalton is with them. Is Mr. Dalton coming back to Rookwood, Bulkeley?"

"Not that I know of, young 'un."

"Well, he's with them!"

"By Jove, he is!" remarked Neville. "There's Dicky Dalton, Bulkeley—walking beside young Silver! I'd be glad if he was coming back!"

Fellows crowded round on all sides to stare at the returning rebels.

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched into the House. The news had spread that the Head had granted an amnesty; and it was soon known that as Mr. Dalton was going to Canada, the "causous belli" had disappeared, and then all Rookwood understood how it was that the rebellion had come to an end.

"Rotten!" said Tommy Dodd, in his

study in Mr. Manders' House. "Utterly rotten! Sickening, in fact! We might have been with them on that jolly old island all the time, and never paid the piper! Might have had weeks off from classes and blessed old Manders, and walked home without a scratch! We've missed something this time, my sons! But who'd have thought that the Head would show so much boss-sense? Couldn't foresee that!"

And the Modern fellows agreed that that couldn't possibly have been foreseen.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome strolled into the end study in the Fourth Form passage. They got the fire going, and Lovell cut down to the tuckshop for supplies, in the old style. It had been exciting and adventurous and agreeable in its way, to camp on the island in the river, under the flag of rebellion. But the Fistical Four looked round their old study with great satisfaction.

"It was all right on the island," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "But—but I'm jolly glad to be in the old study again."

"Same here!" said Newcome; and Raby, with his mouth full, nodded.

"Topping!" said Jimmy Silver. "The only fly in the ointment is that we've not got Dicky back. But we've done our best. And we haven't given in!"

"We'd have beaten the Head," said Lovell. "But we can't beat Dicky. If he won't come back, he won't. I say, this is a ripping old study! I can't say I'm sorry it's all over. I wonder what sort of a master we shall get in the Fourth now? Somethin' better than that man Carker, I hope! Pass the muffins!"

The Fourth Form passage, long deserted, wore its old familiar aspect that evening. The Rookwood rebellion was over—and, on reflection, most of the Classical Fourth were glad of it.

CHAPTER 31.

All Serene!

"COME in, Mr. Dalton!"

Dr. Chisholm spoke very courtously. From his window, in the dusk, he had seen the Classical Fourth march in, and the relief the sight gave him was intense. He did not regret that he had offered a free pardon to the rebels. He was only too glad to see the end of the dispute, and to be able to reply to inquiring governors and inquiring and criti-



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cal parents, that the little trouble at the school—purely of a temporary nature—was quite, quite over, and that there was no occasion for either governor or parent to come down to Rookwood to look into it.

"Come in, Mr. Dalton! You have succeeded, I see!"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Dalton. "I am glad to say that the boys decided to act sensibly. They are now in their old quarters."

"That is a great relief, Mr. Dalton. I confess that I was a little perplexed how to act in the peculiar circumstances."

"No doubt, sir."

"I owe it to you, Mr. Dalton."

"That is nothing, sir. I have been long enough at Rookwood to have the interests of the school at heart. I have spent many happy days here," said Mr. Dalton. "And now, sir, good-bye!"

Mr. Dalton was standing, prepared to shake hands before departing. But the Head made no motion to shake hands.

"You are looking forward to a new life in Canada?"

"Yes, sir. It has its attractions."

"No doubt," said the Head—"no doubt! But, if this offer, Mr. Dalton, had been made to you while you were on the staff at Rookwood, may I inquire whether you would have resigned your post here to accept it?"

Mr. Dalton smiled.

"I hardly think so, sir!"

"Now, I am going to speak frankly, Mr. Dalton," said the Head. "So long as the boys demanded your reinstatement here as a condition of surrender, I could not possibly take it into consideration. The position is altered now that they have surrendered."

By this time, apparently, the Head had satisfied himself that the rebels had surrendered. Jimmy Silver & Co. were far from looking at it in that light. But the old gentleman had his own way of looking at things. Mr. Dalton made no remark.

"I am now free to act," continued the Head, "and I willingly admit, Mr. Dalton, that in parting with you I parted with the most valued member of my staff."

"You are kind, sir," said Mr. Dalton, looking very embarrassed.

"I will say, further, that after you were gone, I desired very much to find some means of accommodation," said the Head. "You have now rendered me a great service, Mr. Dalton."

"Not at all, sir."

"A great service," repeated the Head obstinately. Even in trifling matters the old gentleman did not like to be contradicted. "I regard it as such. I regard it as bridging the differences that existed between us. If you desire, Mr. Dalton, to accept and take up this new post in a new country, I have nothing more to say. If, on the other hand, it should be your desire to resume your old position at Rookwood—"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"In the latter case, Mr. Dalton, I can only say that I should welcome you back, and should make it a point to obliterate completely any recollection of any difference that may have occurred!" said the Head impressively.

Mr. Dalton stood silent.

"The boys of your Form are greatly attached to you, Mr. Dalton, and perhaps I may say that I have some regard for you," said the Head. "On these grounds, I think you may accept my offer without misgiving. If we part, we part friends; but if you elect to remain, I shall regard myself as greatly obliged to you."

This was a tremendous concession from the Head of Rookwood. For some minutes Mr. Dalton stood in deep thought. Then he looked frankly at the Head.

"You are very kind, sir. I shall not post a letter which I had intended to post this evening—it must be re-written now—to Canada."

Dr. Chisholm smiled.

"Then you remain at Rookwood, Mr. Dalton?"

"I shall be glad to do so, sir."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. were glad, too, when they heard of it. On the following morning the Classical Fourth found Mr. Dalton was to take them in class, in the old Form-room, and they rejoiced greatly. The whole Form stood up and cheered for a full five minutes—even Peele joined in the cheering, and Tubby Muffin contributed an enthusiastic squeak. The Form-room and the School House rang with it, and for full five minutes Richard Dalton failed to restore silence. After that the Fourth Form settled down to work, and no one, looking into the Fourth Form room, would have dreamed that Jimmy Silver & Co. had ever been the rebels of the school.

AIRMEN'S LUCK.

LUCK, so the saying goes, always runs in streaks. In the air, it's certainly that way. Any experienced pilot can tell you he has flown for months on end without a single mishap of any nature. Then suddenly comes a break, and every time he takes off for a flight he runs bang into trouble. His motor conks out, he runs into fog, or makes a bad landing.

Queer Mascots.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that airmen often get superstitious. That explains why so many of them carry mascots—and very queer ones at that. One pilot on the Imperial Airways service, for instance, never flies without a little toy black cat in the pocket of his flying kit; another, this time one of the German Luft-Hansa line staff, always carries a little bag of dried bones and other cheerful odds and ends presented to him by an African witch-doctor to whom he once did a good turn.

Even the mighty Dornier Do. X, biggest flying boat in the world, has its mascot. This is a horse-shoe picked up on a battlefield during the Great War by one of the crew of the aircraft. It is said to have been cast by a horse of some British cavalry during a retreat.

Not that the horse-shoe has brought the Do. X much luck, however. On one occasion fire broke out aboard her, destroying one wing. At other times she has mysteriously been unable to get off the water at the start of a flight, even when carrying a light load.

The Lucky Joystick.

Of course, there's the other side of the story, too, and here's an instance of a mascot appearing to bring all the good luck in the world.

The incident concerns a British pilot in the Great War who always carried what he called his "lucky joystick"—really an ordinary spare joystick taken from a broken-up 'plane.

While on active service, this pilot was scouting over the German lines when he was

spotted by an enemy two-seater 'plane. There was a thrilling dog-fight, in the course of which the British 'plane was shot down. It landed behind the German lines.

Although his machine was almost out of control, the British pilot managed to make a fair landing. His 'plane was badly crumpled up, but he himself was almost unhurt. Noticing the enemy aircraft was about to land—presumably to see if the "dead" pilot carried any maps or papers of value to the Germans—the Britisher decided to lie doggo. He watched the Hun machine land, and its occupants hurry across to the wreck. Then he jumped up in his cockpit, shot both the Germans before they could draw a bead on him, and bolted for the enemy 'plane.

When Luck Fails—

Taking off, the intrepid Britisher flew his stolen machine back to his own lines—being plentifully spattered with the Allies' anti-aircraft gunfire on the way—and landed bang in one of his own aerodromes. Naturally, he was met with a ring of bayonets, the aerodrome officials having seen the black crosses on his 'plane: but when he was recognised he was naturally warmly congratulated on his bravery, later receiving a decoration for it.

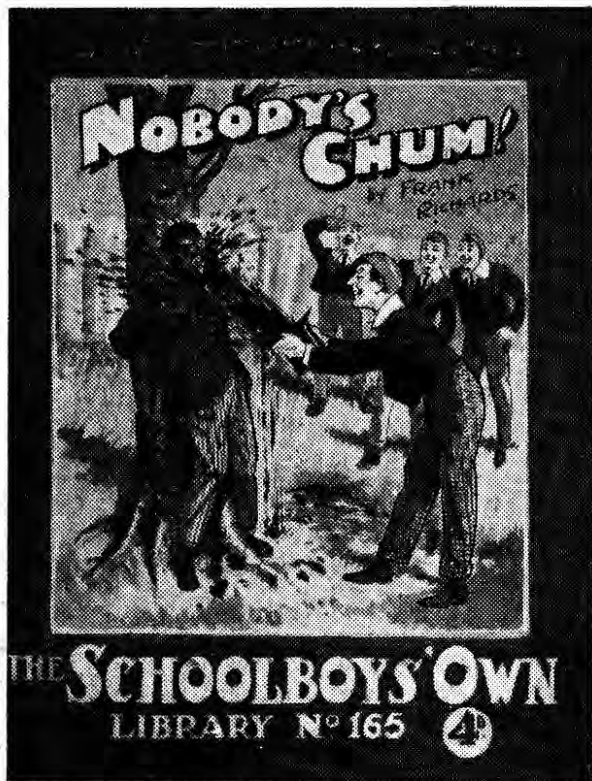
Shortly afterwards, that pilot was killed in the most ordinary manner while making a forced landing due to engine failure. And when he met his death he wasn't carrying his lucky joystick, this having been left behind in his wrecked 'plane behind the German lines!

A similar fate overtook Captain Ball, V.C., one of the bravest officers in the Royal Flying Corps, as the Royal Air Force was known in the days of the Great War. Victor of more than 100 air-fights, said to have shot down nearly fifty enemy airmen, Ball was killed in a commonplace forced landing. An unlucky end, if you like, for an airman who on at least one occasion attacked single-handed twelve German 'planes, shooting down two and compelling the rest to take to their heels!

S.S.

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