

THE TERROR OF ROOKWOOD!



By
Owen Conquest.

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THE TERROR of ROOKWOOD!

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When Rookwood learns that the Head's nephew from Canada is coming to the school, they fully expect to see a youthful edition of Dr. Chisholm. But Rookwood get the shock of the term with the advent of Master Gunter, for he turns out to be an absolute terror!

CHAPTER 1.

A DILEMMA

CLASSICAL or Modern?

As the Prince of Denmark remarked long ago, that was the question!

It was a pressing question, an important question—in fact, a burning question. It was a question that disturbed the serenity of the rival sides at Rookwood.

It is true that the excitement was confined to the Junior Forms. Bulkeley, the captain of the school, did not seem worried about it. Though he was head of the Classical side, he did not seem to care whether the Head's nephew became a Classical or a Modern. Indeed, he gave no sign of ever having heard of the Head's nephew. It was the same with Knowles of the Sixth, the captain of the Modern side. He went on his way regardless, so to speak.

It was among the Juniors that the question burned. Possibly Jimmy Silver & Co., the Classical heroes, were not sorry to have one more reason for going on the war-path against their

old rivals of the Modern side. Possibly Tommy Dodd, the great chief of the Modern Juniors, welcomed another bone of contention.

Be that as it may, there was no doubt at all that Classics and Moderns were quite excited about the matter, and the question was a burning one—so burning that it was almost a conflagration.

Jimmy Silver laid down the law on the subject in the end study, with the hearty concurrence of his chums and study-mates, Lovell and Raby and Newcome. The Fistical Four of the Fourth were not always in complete agreement, but upon this burning question they agreed unanimously.

"You see," said Jimmy Silver oracularly, "the Head is rather an important person in a school—more important than the captain of the school, in a sense——"



"In a wrime!" agreed Lovell rather hesitatingly. It was not easy to admit that there could be a more important person at Rookwood than old Bulkeley.

"And so the Head's nephew is a chap a bit out of the common," pursued Jimmy Silver. "Of course, if he put on any side we should knock it out of him fast enough——"

"Hear, hear!" assented the Co.

"If he came the Head's nephew over us we should give him the kybosh before he could say Jack Robinson!" said Jimmy Silver. "But that isn't the point. The point is this, that the Classical side is top side at Rookwood——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And the Head must know it. Of course; it wouldn't do for him to say so; it would make the Moderns grouse. But it stands to reason that he ought to shove his nephew on the Classical side. It would be a proper recognition of the side. If his nephew becomes a Modern it is a whack in the eye for the Classics. It would be an insult to the side. If he passed us over like that I don't see how we could feel a proper respect for our headmaster any more. And a chap ought to respect his headmaster no end."

"He's bound to make him a Classic," said Ruby. "Of course, he can't say what he thinks about the Moderns, but he couldn't put his nephew among that worthless lot."

"It means a certain amount of kudos for the side that gets him," said Jimmy Silver. "It will show what the Head thinks. Naturally, he ought to be a Classic. It would be a proper recognition of the fact that we are the old, original school—the genuine Rookwood, which flourished for hundreds of years before any ass ever thought of instituting a Modern side at all. Those duffers over the way pretend that the Classical side are played out, and that they are 'it.' Which is——"

"Rot!" said the Co.

"Utter rot! But if the Head put

his nephew on their side it would back them up, and give them an excuse for their silly gas. So it's jolly well settled that the Head's nephew comes on our side. Of course, we don't want him in this study. I'm not gone on new kids in this study. But he's got to be a Classic, and that's final."

The Physical Four agreed that it was final.

The feeling was just the same on the Modern side. In fact, at that very moment Tommy Dodd & Co. were discussing the subject with equal warmth. Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three cheery youths who all rejoiced in the front name of Thomas, were quite unanimous about it.

"He's got to be a Modern," said Tommy Dodd. "You see, the Head couldn't have the face to put him on that mouldy old Classical side. It would be an insult to the really up-to-date and go-ahead side of Rookwood. That rotten Classical side is hundreds of years old—and looks it. I haven't the slightest doubt that before long that dusty old side will die of old age, and all Rookwood will be Modern."

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle together.

"We whop them at footer and cricket, and games generally," said Tommy Dodd, "excepting sometimes when they—when they——"

"Whop us!" said Doyle.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Doyle! Except sometimes when they manage to crawl off the field without a licking," said Tommy Dodd, frowning. "The fact is that the Classical side is going to pot, and the sooner it goes the better. We are the people!"

"We are!"

"We is!"

"If the Head shoved his nephew on that side it would be rank favouritism," said Tommy Dodd. "Now, favouritism is a rotten thing, anyway."

"Rotter!" agreed his chums.

"If he puts him on this side it will be a just tribute to the position of the Modern side of the school."

"Sure, it's eloquent ye are, Tommy Dodd!" said Doyle admiringly. "You ought to be in Parliament, be jabers! You could jaw their heads off."

"Not that I care tuppence about the chap himself," went on Tommy Dodd. "He may be a rank outsider, for all I know. All I know of him is that his name's Gunter, and he comes from America. I shouldn't wonder if he's a queer kind of animal, with all sorts of weird manners and customs—p'raps talks through his nose, and says 'I swear!' But the fact remains that he's the Head's nephew, and it's a leg-up for the side that gets him."

"Hear, hear!"

"So he's going to be a Modern," said Tommy Dodd determinedly. "That's settled."

Both sides having settled the matter to their satisfaction, they might have been expected to repose in peace and contentment. But they didn't.

For, although Jimmy Silver had declared that it was final, and Tommy Dodd asseverated that it was settled, they could not help having a lurking uneasiness about the Head's decision in the matter. They knew that in many matters Dr. Chisholm did not see eye to eye with their honourable selves.

Jimmy Silver felt that, in spite of the obvious reasons why the Head's nephew should become a Classical, Dr. Chisholm might, in a moment of aberration, put him on the Modern side.

Tommy Dodd was oppressed by a dread that, although it was perfectly evident to any fellow with sense that the Head's nephew ought to be a Modern, Dr. Chisholm might shove him among the Classics during a temporary lapse from sanity.

The result was that there were arguments on the subject and quite an unusual crop of swollen noses and enlarged ears.

So matters stood when it became known that the Head's nephew was actually arriving the next day. Then the excitement was at fever-heat,

What the Head's nephew was like, and whether he was the right sort or any other sort, nobody knew or cared; All they knew was that his name was Gunter, that his parents lived in a Far Western State in America, and that he was being sent to England to complete his education. But such points were of no consequence. What really mattered was that it would be considered a leg-up in the side that received him, and a "whack in the eye" for the side that did not receive him.

The Pistical Four held a hurried "pow-wow" in the end study. It was, as Jimmy Silver explained, a crisis. What was to be done was now the the question. Lovell and Baby and Newcome left it to Jimmy Silver. He was leader.

Fortunately, Jimmy Silver rose to the occasion.

"Come on!" he exclaimed suddenly, jumping off the table.

"Whither O King?"

"We're going to see the Head."

"The—the Head!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Yes! We're going to put it to him as a sportsman."

"My hat!"

"He's bound to feel flattered at our wanting his blessed nephew on our

"He's bound to feel flattered at our Silver.

"More likely lick us for our cheek."

"If you're funky about a licking, Arthur Lovell—"

"Oh, bow-wow! I'll come!"

"Then come on, and don't jaw!" said Jimmy Silver.

And Jimmy Silver started; and his chums, after exchanging a very, very dubious glance, followed him to the Head's study.

CHAPTER 2.

In Great Demand!

DR. CHISHOLM looked up, and said "Come in!" as a timid and modest tap came at his door. He looked slightly surprised as Silver of

the Fourth marched in, followed a little more slowly by Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

The Head's study was not an apartment that juniors generally visited of their own free will. That dreaded apartment was associated in their minds with swishings. But when it was a question of standing up for the honour of the side, Jimmy Silver would have entered a lion's den, and out-Danield Daniel.

"Well?" said the Head.

"Ahem!"

Jimmy Silver cleared his throat with a little cough. He wanted to put it very nicely to the Head, but under the somewhat severe gaze of Dr. Chisholm his self-possession was not so complete as usual.

"Well, Silver? You have something to say to me?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Please say it as quickly as possible."

"It's about Gunter, sir."

"My nephew?"

"Yes, sir. We—we hear that he's coming to Rookwood to-morrow, sir!"

"That is correct, but I really do not see——"

"We want him on our side, sir."

"Oh!"

The Head's face broke into a smile. The smile encouraged Jimmy Silver, though he did not see exactly what there was to smile at.

"We—we feel that he ought to be a Classical, sir. It would be an honour for our side, and we—we feel that we're entitled to it. We don't think Gunter would be comfortable on the Modern side."

"They're a bit rowdy on that side, sir," ventured Lovell.

"We should try to make him feel at home among us, sir," said Raby.

"We—we like new boys."

Jimmy Silver had a great deal more to say, but he did not say it.

The Head was laughing.

The heroes of the Fourth had never seen the Head laugh before—indeed, they would have doubted it if they

had been told that the Head of Rookwood was capable of such an everyday proceeding. True, it was a very short laugh, and quickly diminished into a smile. But there was no doubt that the Head was amused.

"I thank you!" said the Head, still smiling. "Your preference for my nephew is distinctly gratifying. As a matter of fact, I have just received a similar request from Dodd of the Fourth."

"Dodd!" stuttered Jimmy Silver.

It was all he could do to control his indignation. It was just like a Modern rotter to forestall him in this way, he reflected bitterly.

"But the question is not decided," said the Head. "My nephew is a stranger to Rookwood and to this country. He has never lived in England. He will go into the Fourth Form, but upon which side of the school I have not determined. I shall leave the decision until he arrives, when I shall be able to judge better. His own tastes will be my guide."

The Head made a gesture of dismissal.

"T-t-thank you, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

The Plaided Four retired.

Jimmy Silver carefully closed the door after him, and then he looked at his chums eloquently.

"The awful rotters!" he said, in measured tones. "They've had the cheek to ask the Head to put his nephew on the Modern side! The worms!"

"Horrid cads!"

"Sneaking in before us, too," said Lovell. "I thought we were ahead of them. But it's just what we might have expected of Moderns!"

"But they haven't bagged him," said Jimmy Silver exultantly. "The question ain't decided. His own tastes—you heard what the Head said. Well, if he's got any decent tastes at all, he must want to come on the Classical side. And I suppose he must be pretty decent, being the Head's

nephew. But—we're jolly well going to make sure!"

"Eh? How?"

"By nailing him before he gets to Rookwood, and educating his tastes!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We'll find out how and when he's coming, and meet him on the way, and—and nobbie him!"

"Bravo!"

The Pastical Four grinned triumphantly at the idea. Certainly it was a "dodge" for getting ahead of the unspeakable Moderns.

"Hallo! What are you plotting, you Classical worms?" asked a voice from the corner of the passage.

Tommy Dodd & Co. glared truculently at the Classical Four.

"They've been to the Head!" exclaimed Cook.

"Too late!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "We were there first. You Classical fossils are always getting left!"

"Just like you Modern cads to sneak in first," said Lovell disdainfully. "Much good may it do you! You won't get Gunter, all the same!"

"He's going to be a Classical!" hooted Raby.

"Tain't decided!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "It's going to be left till he comes. And when he sees the place, I know which side he will plump for. Besides, we wouldn't allow him to be a Classical. After all, he's the Head's nephew, and it's up to us to save him from that!"

"Why, you silly Moderns—"

"You Classical fathead—"

"You're going to keep off the grass, do you hear?" roared Lovell. "That cing Gunter is reading into our side!"

"Rats!"

"Sure, we know how to tag him!" chuckled Tommy Doyle. "We know—"

"Shut up!" said Tommy Dodd warningly.

"Why, you awful rotters!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "You've got a scheme for bawling him. Here, kick those rotters out, you fellows! What are

they doing on the respectable side of the school, anyway?"

"Back up!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

There was a rush and a wild struggle in the passage. In the excitement of the moment both parties forgot how dangerously near they were to the Head's study.

Bump! Crash! Tramp! Yell!

"Pitch 'em out!"

"Whop the cads!"

"Yah! Classical fathead!"

"Sock into 'em!"

The uproar was at its height, when the door of the Head's study opened, and Dr. Chisholm appeared.

The excited combatants did not observe him. Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd were collecting dust on the floor, locked in a deadly embrace. Tommy Doyle was sitting on Lovell's head. Raby and Newcome were bumping Cook on the floor with resounding bumps, and resounding roars from Cook.

In the din, the rustle of the Head's gown was not heard.

Dr. Chisholm gazed speechlessly on the scene for a moment or two; then his voice was heard. It resembled thunder.

"Boys!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The combatants separated with amazing suddenness. They jumped to their feet, dusty and flushed, and blinked at the Head.

The awful voice proceeded:

"Hold out your hands!"

Swish, swish—swish, swish, swish—swish, swish!

The Head returned to his study. There was no more ragging in the passage. Seven juniors went on their different way with their hands tucked under their arms, and woeful expressions on their faces.

And for at least half an hour afterwards the rivals of Rookwood forgot even the Head's nephew and their respective claims to him. They had more painful things to think about,

CHAPTER 2.

Rivals on the Warpath!

BUT the next day there was only one topic among the heroes of the Fourth.

That topic was the Head's nephew, and which side at Buckwood was to have the honour of receiving him.

The matter had now become a contest between the rival juniors, and if the Head's nephew had been a crook, neither side would have given up its claim to him. It was a question now whether Classics or Moderns were to score.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were prepared to carry off the new-comer by main force, kidnap him into the end study, persuade him with the poker and tongs until he swore to become a Classical.

The three Tommies and the other Modern heroes would willingly have headed him up in a barrel if there had been no other way of capturing him.

Those heroic methods certainly did not seem to be feasible; but on both sides the juniors were prepared to stick at nothing, or next to nothing. Somehow or other the youth from the Far West had to be bagged.

If that youth had known how highly he was prized, even before his arrival at the school, he might have felt extremely flattered. But there was really nothing for him to be flattered about. He was simply the bone of contention. If the Head's nephew had not existed at all, the Fistical Four and the three Tommies would have found some other reason for deadly warfare and raids and reprisals.

But, as it was, the Head's nephew filled the whole horizon, so to speak. After lessons the next day Jimmy Silver & Co. thought of nothing else. It was a half-day holiday that day, and they had all their time to bestow upon the important enterprise.

Jimmy Silver called a general meeting of the Classical Fourth in the end study after dinner. Juniors packed

themselves into the room, and put their heads together, and added their voices to the buzz.

Many and various were the schemes suggested. Kidnapping was the favourite idea. The choice of sides was to be left to Gunter himself.

Flyn of the Fourth argued that Gunter could be persuaded to plump for the Classics, once he was safe in the end study, with the Classical Fourth there to argue with him. Jones minor said he would listen to reason if hot water were poured down his back. Hooker suggested sticking pen-knives into his legs, while Blinn favoured the process of "batting."

But Jimmy Silver pointed out—what could not be denied—that persuasive as all those processes were, they would not make Gunter "enthusiastic" for the Classic side. They were more likely to put his back up.

"Taking it that he's a sensible chap, he only needs to have the facts of the matter pointed out to him," said Jimmy Silver. "What we've got to do is to get at him before he reaches the school, and tell him how matters stand. He's bound to be grateful to us for taking so much trouble about him."

"It's an ungrateful world," said Lovell doubtfully.

"I've been making some inquiries," said Jimmy Silver. "He gets here by the four train at Coombe, and Mack has to take the trap to meet him."

"Might tip Mack to take us in the trap, and meet him at the station," suggested Hooker.

Jimmy Silver smiled pityingly.

"Do you think the Modern cads haven't thought of that? Of course, a horde of the rotters will bike to the station."

"We can kick 'em out!"

"They might kick us out!"

"If you think we can't lick the Moderns, Jimmy Silver—" began several voices hotly.

Jimmy waved his hand.

"Peace, my infant! Of course we can lick 'em. But we don't want to be scrapping with a gang of Moderns when the new kid arrives. We've got to bag him, and we can lick the Moderns any day!"

"True, O King!" said Loyell.

"I've been thinking it out," resumed Jimmy Silver. "He gets to Coombe at four, and the Moderns are sure to be there. He's coming from London. But to get to Coombe from London you have to change at Latcham."

"That's a jolly long way from here," said Raby.

"All the better! The Modern cads are less likely to think of going there," said Jimmy Silver. "If we meet the kid at Latcham, and get into his carriage after he's changed trains, we can talk to him for half an hour without any Modern worms wriggling in to spoil it. In fact, we can help him to change trains, look after his baggage, and so on. Make ourselves obliging—carry his bags for him——"

"Catch me carrying bags for a new kid!" said Topham.

"Fathead! We want to bag him, don't we? That will make a good impression on him, and show him what ripping chaps we are! Then we jaw to him in the train, and stand him tarts and things—we'll get some in Latcham. By the time we get to Coombe, we'll all be sworn chums, and he will go straight to the Head and ask to be a Classical!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Newcome. "What about a train to Latcham?"

"Bike it," said Jimmy Silver. "No good throwing money away in these hard times. Besides, we shall want all our tin to stand treat to the kid. And we'd better get off pretty soon, or we shall be late at Latcham. Who's going?"

Topham yawned.

"I'll leave it to you chaps," he said. "I don't feel up to a bike ride of

fourteen miles. It's that, if it's an inch."

"If it were an inch you wouldn't feel up to it, you slacker!" growled Jimmy Silver. "We four can do it; but all you fellows had better turn up at Coombe at four. It's quite possible those Modern worms may have some scheme for collaring the kid—they're mean enough for anything. Every chap in the Classical Fourth has got to be at the station at four. Better tie knots in your handkerchiefs; you never know what may be wanted. A stump or two might be handy, too. As for that bike ride, it's nothing to us, though it would knock out some of you."

"Swank!" granted Townsend.

"But suppose the kid don't agree after you've carried his bags and fed him up with jam-tarts?" asked Oswald.

"Then we shall have to take care that he doesn't get out of our hands, that's all, and get him into the end sandy here, and talk to him," said Jimmy Silver.

"Hot water down his back——" began Jones minor.

"Don't be brutal, Jones! We're not going to rag the Head's nephew. But he won't get out of this study alive unless he swears to be a Classical!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

The council of war broke up, and the Fistical Four hurried away for their bikes. It was understood that the rest of the Classics were to be at Coombe Station when Mack, the porter, went there with the trap.

But Jimmy Silver sincerely hoped that physical force would not be needed. Only in the very last resource would hot water be poured down the back of the Head's nephew, or pen-knife stuck into his legs.

The four Classics wheeled out their machines. They passed the three Tommies as they made for the gates. The Modern chums stopped to stare at them, looking exceedingly suspicious.

"Weather bound?" called out Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, going for a spin, you know," said Jimmy Silver.

"Like us to come?"

"Sorry! We're rather particular about the company we keep."

And the four rushed their machines out, mounted, and pedalled away. Tommy Dodd wrinkled his brows in deep thought. The Moderns were on their way to the bike-shed, too.

"Blessed if I don't smell a mouse!" said Tommy Dodd. "Where are they biking away to all of a sudden?"

"Latham," said Cook, with conviction.

"Sure, they're after the new kid," said Doyle. "They've thought of the same where, Tommy darling! And if we go——"

"There'll be a scrap."

"Four against three, too!"

Tommy Dodd burst into a chuckle.

"They're off to Latham; but much doubt about that," he agreed. "Four of them! Go and call Towle and Webb and Lacy and Lobbs, Cooky!"

"But what——"

"They're coming with us. Then we'll be seven to four, and if we don't knock those Classic duffers out, you can use my head for a footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Cook rushed away, while Doyle and Dodd wheeled out seven bicycles. Five minutes later seven Modern juniors were riding gaily away from the gates of Rookwood—on the track of four Classics.

That great idea of meeting the new boy at Latham had occurred to the fertile brain of Tommy Dodd as well as to Jimmy Silver. The Classics had started first, but on this occasion it was not an advantage to be first in the field. For the Moderns were following with heavy odds on their side, and it was certain that there would be casualties when the rivals met at Latham.

CHAPTER 2.

A Stramash Fight.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. put on good speed, and the miles vanished under the whizzing wheels of the Classical bikes.

It was a pleasant ride through leafy lanes and shady woods; but the Classical four had no eyes for scenery just then. They had important business in hand, and they thought only of putting on speed.

Dusty and crimson, they rode into the country town of Latham, and jumped off their machines outside the railway-station.

Jimmy Silver grabbed a porter by the arm.

"London train in yet?"

"Ten minutes, sir."

"Oh, good!"

"Ten minutes before the boulder arrives here," panted Jimmy Silver, fanning himself with his straw hat. "Done to a 't.' We'll book the bikes for Coombe by rail—we can't leave 'em here. I'll do that while you get a bag of tarts and a cake, Lovell. Then we'll wait on the down platform, and greet him as he gets off the train."

"How shall we know him?" asked Raby. "Lots of people get down here. It's the junction."

"H'm!" Jimmy Silver hadn't thought of that so far. "H'm! Oh, we'll know him all right—he'll be in Etous, most likely. Anyway, we shall spot him. He'll have a bag or a box, too, you know. Buck up!"

Lovell, duly provided with cash, started for the nearest confectioners. Silver and Raby and Welcome wheeled four bikes into the station, and duly booked them for Coombe. Then they came out to meet Lovell.

Lovell came back to the station with three large paper bags. The Fistical Four, still breathing hard after their ride, sampled a tart each from one of the bags. They were thus engaged when there was a clatter in the street, and seven cyclists stopped before the station.

"Modern odds!" ejaculated Lovell.

"My hat! Tommy Dodd!"

The Pistical Four stared blankly at their old foes. The Moderns had arrived, and their looks showed that they meant business. They hooked their bikes to the kerb, and came towards the Pistical Four at once.

"Fancy meeting you!" said Tommy Dodd genially, and the Moderns chorried with great glee.

"What do you want here?" demanded Jimmy wrathfully. "If you're thinking of bagging the new Classical chap—"

"We're not. We're thinking of bagging the new Modern chap," chuckled Tommy Dodd. "We don't want to hurt you innocent kids. But if you don't clear off instanter we're going to wipe up the pavement with you, shove you in the gutter, and rag you till you can't stand. That's the programme."

"Look here—"

"Bow-wow! The train's due, and there's no time for talk. Are you going to clear off?"

"Nai!" yelled the Classical four.

"We shall jolly well clear you off, then!"

"You—you rotters!"

"Nuff said! The train's signalled," said Tommy Dodd. "Shove these Classical goats out of the way, kids."

"Linn up!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Give 'em socks!" shouted Cook.

The Moderns did not pause for a moment. There was no time to be lost and they had come there on business. They rushed at the four.

The four were some of the best fighting-men in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. But seven to four were long odds.

But the Pistical Four put up a terrific resistance.

It was a reward, the fight that ensued. Both sides were in deadly earnest, and the Rookwood heroes had never cared for hard knocks.

Porters came out of the station to look on. Cabmen gathered and passed cheery comments on the progress of the

battle. Urchins appeared from all quarters, and formed a cheering ring. In the quiet old town of Latham the new and unlooked-for excitement seemed to be greatly appreciated by the natives.

But the porters, at least, had to leave the thrilling scene before the result was decided—for the London express came in. In the express was the Head's nephew—the unknown youth who had travelled from a distant State in the Far West, little dreaming of the commotion his coming was to cause in the Lower School at Rookwood. But the London express and the Head's nephew were totally forgotten by the juniors engaged in deadly strife.

Pistical as the four were, they were overmatched by odds. They were down at last, and the Moderns sat on them, and kept them there. Sprawling on the pavement, Jimmy Silver & Co. panted for breath, pinned down by the victorious Moderns.

"Had enough?" panted Tommy Dodd.

"No," yelled Jimmy Silver. "I'll pulverise you! Hang on to 'em, kids, and they'll miss the train. Our fellows will catch the new kid at Coombe. Hang on to these rotters!"

"What ho!" panted Lovell. "Hang on!"

"Leggo, you Classical idiot! You're licked! What more do you want?"

"Leggo, be jabsers!"

The struggle went on—on the ground. An old lady was shrieking for the police, imagining that the daisy and furious juniors were a dreadful gang of hoodlums, who ought to be arrested at once. Fortunately, the police-force of Latham was not on the scene.

There was a shriek of a whistle, and the express rolled out of the station again. Tommy Dodd panted with wrath.

The local train for Coombe was timed to depart five minutes later. Probably the Head's nephew was already in it. Only a few minutes remained for the Moderns to join him in

the local, and the Classics, defeated as they were, were still hanging on!

It was distinctly exasperating. Like the man in the story, who was dead but would not lie down, the Classics did not seem to understand that they were beaten.

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Tommy Dodd. "You're licked, ain't you?"

"Hang on!"

"Stick to the ends!"

"Bump their nappers!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"You fellows hold them while we nab the new kid!" added Tommy Dodd strategically. "Come on, Tommy!"

Towle and Lary and Webb and Lobbs clung on to the four, and the three Tummies wrenched themselves away by main force. Tommy Dodd's collar was left in Jimmy Silver's grip, part of Cook's jacket remained to Lovell, and Raby retained a trophy in the shape of a necktie. But the three Tummies were free, and the Pistical Four were still pinned down and struggling.

Headless of their dusty and rumpled appearance, the three Tummies sped into the station. They rushed for the local platform. There was just time to take tickets for Coombe, and dash for the train.

Tommy Dodd looked wildly up and down the train. The Head's nephew must be in one of the carriages, but which? There was no time to seek him. But, fortunately, Tommy Dodd spotted a boy in Stens, with a silk hat, looking out of a carriage window.

"That's him!" gasped Tommy Dodd, breathlessly and ungrammatically.

The three Moderns rushed at the carriage, and tore the door open.

"Stand back!" yelled the guard.

The three Tummies would not have stood back if a herd of elephants had been rushing at them, instead of a railway-guard. They hoisted headlong into the carriage. They bolted

naturally, into the bay who already occupied the carriage, and knocked him flying. There was no time to think of trifles like that. They bundled in anyhow, sprawling over him and one another, and the guard—murmuring something very emphatic—slammed the door after them. The train was on the move.

Just as it vanished down the line four hatless and breathless juniors dashed on the platform. Jimmy Silver & Co. left one to one with their foe, had hurled the Moderns off at last, and dashed after their rivals, hoping against hope that they would be in time—to see the local train vanishing down the line.

They gazed after it dumbly for some moments, pumping in breath. Jimmy Silver was the first to speak.

"Done!" he gasped.

"Fairly diddled!" groaned Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Licked to the wids, and by Modern

retfers!" snorted Raby.

Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed.

"We're not licked yet. Come and get the bikes. We'll beat that crawling local to Coombe. All the fellows are there. We'll have the chap, if we have to yank him away by the hair of his head. Come on!"

They panted their way from the station. Outside, four Modern fellows looked at them leaguishly with discoloured eyes. Towle and the rest were not feeling chippy after that terrific combat. But they brightened up at the sight of the Classics' downcast faces. They realised that the three Tummies had bagged the prize.

"Hurrah for us!" chortled Towle. "Yah! Licked hollow! Go home!"

Manfully resisting the desire to give the Moderns another "whopping"—there was no time to waste in whopping Moderns—the Pistical Four wheeled out their bikes, and departed. They pedalled away determinedly. If hard riding could save the day, the Classics would not slack. But could it?

CHAPTER 3.

The Head's Nephew!

"YOU thundering idiots!"

A boy with a crumpled top-per and a rumpled collar sat on the floor of the carriage, gasped for breath, and glared ferociously at Tommy Dodd and Doyle and Cook.

The Modern three staggered to their feet.

In their haste in entering the railway carriage they had not had time to worry about what they bumped into. They had barely landed as it was. They stared at the stranger, and gasped for breath—they were a little hurt themselves. But it came back to Tommy Dodd's mind that it was necessary to be very nice to the Head's nephew, if this was the Head's nephew.

But was it?

Seeing a fellow in Etons and top-per at the carriage window, Tommy Dodd had concluded that this was the fellow. But now he asked himself whether it was or not.

The boy, being in Etons, was doubtless a schoolboy. But he did not look much like what they expected of the Head's nephew.

Of course, they had never seen that highly prized young gentleman. But they had dimly pictured a nice, neatly dressed, quiet and soft-spoken fellow, perhaps a little namby-pamby. A headmaster's nephew might naturally be expected to be something like that.

But this especial individual was not nice, or slim, or soft-spoken, and most decidedly not namby-pamby.

He was no older than Tommy Dodd, but he was bigger, much more heavily built, and evidently had no end of muscle and sinew. His skin was darkly sunburnt, and his eyes deep-set and gleaming hard. His features were large and irregular, his jaw very square and strong. His hands and feet were big, like the rest of him, only more so. His Etons did not fit him very well, and they were not of the cut that was expected of a Rookwood fellow. They were rather particular about their

clothes at Rookwood. This chap didn't seem particular at all.

His voice was loud and sharp. His temper was not angelic—not in the least what the temper of a headmaster's nephew ought to have been. His dark face was reddened with anger.

Tommy Dodd concluded that he had, so to speak, awakened the wrong passenger, and he decided not to waste any undue civility on the stranger.

"You blithering guys!" the stranger was going on. "What the thunder do you hurry into a pilgrim in that way for—eh?"

"Couldn't help it," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "In a hurry, you know, looking for a chap in this train. And not so much of your cheek. We don't allow saucy kids to slang us at Rookwood."

"Rookwood!" repeated the stranger. "You guys belong to Rookwood?"

Tommy Dodd changed his opinion again. The way the stranger caught at the name of the school was a pretty clear indication that he was going there.

"You going to Rookwood?" asked Tommy, more amicably.

"I guess so!"

The "guess" did it. The Moderns knew all about the Head's nephew having lived all his life, so far, in Western America. This was the chap, undoubtedly. They would have heard of it if a Yankee had been coming to the school.

The three Tommies exchanged glances, and smiled their sweetest smiles. The young stranger certainly hadn't made a good impression upon them. But they were prepared to take him to their hearts if he was the Head's nephew.

"Your name's Gunter?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Correct."

"You're our headmaster's nephew?"

"You've got it."

Tommy Dodd held out his hand.

"Give us your hat!" he said. "You're the chap we've come to meet."

"Oh, I am, am I?" said Gunter smiling. However, he took Tommy Dodd's hand and gave him a grip.

Tommy Dodd's face wore an extraordinary expression as that grip closed on his hand. It was the grip of a vice.

"Ow!" he gasped. "How—how do you do?"

"Top of the afternoon to ye!" said Doyle.

"Yow!"

"What's the matter with you?" asked Gunter, still gripping Tommy Dodd's unfortunate hand.

"Ow! Leggo! You're breaking my fingers!" wailed Tommy Dodd.

"You galoots are pretty soft, I should say," replied Gunter, with a sport. "That's how we give a grip in Texas."

He compressed his grip as he spoke, and Tommy Dodd fairly curled up.

"Ow—ow—ow! Yow! Oo-ooop! Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the new boy, as he released Tommy's hand at last. He sat down and roared with laughter. Apparently the anguish he had inflicted upon Tommy Dodd was his idea of a joke. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" Tommy Dodd collapsed upon the seat and rubbed his hand. "Oh, my hat! Oh, wince!"

Cook and Doyle did not offer to shake hands with the new junior. They looked as friendly as they could, but they drew the line at that. Tommy Dodd was looking quite pale and worn.

The new boy grinned at them, and took a case from his pocket. The three watched him with interest as he opened it and selected a black-looking cheroot. Evidently the Head's nephew was a smoker. There were giddy looks at Hookwood who smoked cigarettes when they were safe from a master's eye, but even the douchish Smythe of the Shell never ventured upon cigars. Gunter put the cheroot between his teeth, which were considerably yellow by hue, and lighted up. He blew out a

cloud of thick and pungent smoke that made the three Tommies cough violently.

"Gerroooh! Goooh!"

"What's the matter with you now, you galoots?"

"I—I say, fellows aren't allowed to smoke!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Eh? This is a smoking-carriage, ain't it?" demanded Gunter.

"I—I didn't notice it was. Yes, it is. But I mean, Hookwood chaps aren't allowed to smoke."

"I guess I shall start the fashion there, then," remarked Gunter, still puffing away.

"You—you smoke those things?" murmured Doyle with an awestricken glance at the black and strong cheroot.

"Yep. I don't smoke much. This is only the fourth since I left London."

"Only the fourth! My only stunt!"

One of those terrible-looking smokes would have turned Tommy Dodd inside out like a glove. The head's nephew had smoked four of them on his journey! Truly he had learned marvellous manners at the plains of Texas.

The chums of Hookwood sat and regarded him. This was the Head's nephew—this rough and raucous young ruffian! They had heard that he had lived in a remote district in a Western State, but they had never dreamed of a fellow like this. They were pretty certain that the Head had never dreamed of it, either. Dr. Chisholm had never seen his nephew yet, and he was likely to have an electric shock when he did see him.

Still, such as he was, he was the Head's nephew, and the Maderna had vowed to ban him from their rivals. After a long and thoughtful hesitation, Tommy Dodd broached the subject. The Head's nephew had astounded them, but they came up smiling, as it were.

"Quite new to Hookwood, of course?" remarked Tommy Dodd casually.

"I guess so, as I've never been in this over country before. And I guess I don't think much of it now I'm in it."

"But you are English?" hinted Tommy Dodd.

"I was raised in Texas."

Tommy Dodd guessed that "raised" was American for brought up. The new boy had his native language to learn at Rookwood, among other things.

"I suppose you're glad to see the Old Country, what?"

"Not particularly. Texas could lay over anything I've seen on this side so far."

"Oh. You know, perhaps, that we have two sides at Rookwood—Classical side and Modern side?"

"I don't know."

"We're Moderns," said Tommy Dodd. Gunter stared at him.

"Are you? Don't say much for the Modern side, does it?"

Tommy Dodd swallowed his wrath with difficulty. He was not there to give the Head's nephew a whipping, but never had he felt so keen a desire to whop a new boy.

"That's why we came to meet you," said Doyle, taking up the tale. "Sure we want you to join the Modern side."

"Why?"

"Oh, we want you, you know," said Cook. "We like you."

"Gammer!"

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Tommy Cook, as the new boy, taking the cheroot from his mouth, dropped the lighted end on his hand. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter.

"You—you blithering owl!" shrieked Cook, sucking at his scorched hand. "What did you do that for? Yow!"

"Ha, ha! To make you hop," grinned Gunter. "And, by gum, you hopped! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cook clenched his fist and rose to his feet. The new boy evidently had a peculiar sense of humour, and Cook meant to nip it in the bud.

But Tommy Dodd dragged him back to his seat.

"Chuck it!" he whispered. "Grin!"

"Why? What is there to grin about?"

"Good joke! Ha, ha, ha!" said

Tommy Dodd, keeping hold of the infuriated Cook. "You are a funny chap, Gunter! Ha, ha— Yooop!" he finished, as Gunter tapped him on the neck with the burning end of the cheroot. "Yab—h-h-h-h!"

"You burbling idiot——"

Gunter threw the end of the cheroot out of the window, and curled up with laughter in his corner seat. The three Tommies gazed at him speechlessly. They had beaten Jimmy Silver & Co., and secured the railway-journey with the new boy. They were beginning to think it would have been a greater triumph if they had let Jimmy Silver beat them.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Wanted!

GUNTER continued to chuckle, and the three juniors of Rookwood continued to stare at him. How they were to be nice to the new boy was a puzzle. Certainly, their tempers were getting into a dangerous state. In less than half an hour the Head's nephew had succeeded in making them detest him and long to scalp him. They had met him with the friendliest intentions in the world, and already they were breathing slaughter. They had caught the highly-prized new boy—and caught a tartar. How on earth were they to stand the fellow if they succeeded in getting him on the Modern side?

Gunter's next proceedings interested them. He opened a huge jack-knife and took out a plug of tobacco from a smelly pouch. They gazed at him as if mesmerised while he cut himself a "quid." The "quid" disappeared into his mouth, and he chewed with evident satisfaction.

"You—you—you chew tobacco?" gasped Tommy Dodd at last.

Gunter stared at him.

"Don't you?" he asked.

"Oh, my hat! No! I—I've heard

that sailors do sometimes," murmured Tommy. "I—I've never seen a boy do it."

"We all do it out there," grunted Gunter. "I guess I chewed tobacco before I could ride, and I could ride before I could walk."

"Do you—do you like it?"

"I reckon I shouldn't do it if I didn't like it."

"Isn't it bad for the teeth?" asked Cook.

"Oh, you make me tired!" said Gunter contemptuously. "Got any cards about you?"

"Kik-kik-cards!"

"Sure! I suppose you don't always spend a railway journey blinking at one another, do you? If you'd like a game—a game of cards—I'll show you how to play it if you've got some cards."

"We haven't any cards," said Tommy Dodd, "and we don't want to play cards. I may as well tell you that you'll be kicked out of Rookwood if you gamble, if you're the Head's nephew ten times over."

Gunter shrugged his shoulders.

"Must be a slow old shebang," he remarked. "Why, I used to play poker with the greasers on the ranch when I was a kid of six. I've got some cards in my bag up there. Let's have a game."

"Rats!"

"I'll lend you some money, if you haven't any. I guess I've got the rocks."

"More rats!"

"Well, I swear!" said Gunter. "For a set of spoozy lambs, you galoots take the cake. And you say you came to meet me."

"We didn't know exactly what we were going to meet," said Tommy Dodd dryly. "We shouldn't have taken the trouble if we had."

The three Tommies drew to the furthest side of the carriage. Tommy Dodd's eyes were gleaming.

"If that card comes on the Modern side," murmured Cook, "we'll scrag him and beat him in oil."

"We couldn't stand him," gasped Doyle. "Tare an' ounds! I could stand almost anything to beat the Classical spalpeens—but not that! It can't be did."

Tommy Dodd nodded, his eyes glimmering. He had come to the same conclusion as his chums.

"I've been thinking of that," he whispered. "We couldn't have that horrible rotter on our side, if he were a dozen times the Head's nephew. Silver wouldn't want him, if he knew."

"No jolly fear!"

"I've got an idea. These Classical cards will be at Coombe, ready to get him away if they can."

"Our fellows will be there, too, and we'll beat them hollow."

"No, we won't. We'll let them beat us," whispered Tommy Dodd, grinning. "Don't you see? Let them bag him. Then the cad will be planted on them, and we shan't have the horrid worm stuck on our side. He'll be a howling disgrace to whichever side he joins. We don't want him at any price. We'll put up a show of trying to keep him, and let them run him off."

Cook and Doyle burst into a chuckle at the idea.

They had planned and schemed to bag the Head's nephew, and they had him in their hands. But their feelings had changed right round. Now that they knew Gunter, they were only anxious about one thing—to make absolutely certain that he wouldn't be put into the Modern side at Rookwood. To get that raucous, unpleasant black-guard planted on Jimmy Silver & Co. would be the joke of the season. The Pistical Four were welcome to the Head's nephew.

"What's the cackle about?" broke in the raucous voice of the new boy.

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions," said Tommy Dodd blandly. "Why—ah!—oh!—you horrid rotter!"

Whoosh!

A stream of tobacco-jute caught Tommy Dodd fairly on the chin. It splashed brown all over his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gunter. "Take that for your sauce!"

His laughter was cut suddenly short. Tommy Dodd was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

There was no further need to conciliate the Head's nephew—the three Tommies had quite changed their minds about that. Tommy Dodd's long, pent-up wrath found full vent now.

He clutched the young rascal and dragged him from his seat, and got his head into chancery, and pommelled him furiously.

"There, you cad! There, you benighted heathen!" roared Tommy Dodd. "You disgusting blighter, take that! You—you blighter, take that! There, you worm!"

"You—aw—aw! I guess—yop! Yeh! Oh!"

Disgusting the new boy certainly was, but he had plenty of pluck. He grappled with Tommy Dodd, and hit out furiously. They rolled on the floor of the carriage, collecting up dust, struggling and hitting ferociously.

Doyle and Cook looked on. They had full confidence in their leader—and fair play was a jewel.

"Go it, Tommy!"

Bump—crash—yell! It was a terrific struggle, and Tommy Dodd found that he had his hands full with the new boy.

The whistle shrieked, and the train slowed down once more.

"Coombe!" shouted Tommy Cook. "Chuck it, you cripples—we're there!"

The train stopped. Tommy Dodd and Gunter separated, and staggered up. They were both dusty and panting and ruffled. Which of them had had the best of it was a puzzle. They both looked as if they had had the worst of it.

"Is this the station?" gasped Gunter, grabbing down his bag from the rack.

"Yes, you get out here for Rookwood, and then you can go and eat cake."

And the three Tommies jumped from

the train, without bestowing any further attention upon the Head's nephew—whom they had travelled so far to capture.

CHAPTER 7.

Victory?

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were riding hard that afternoon.

To beat the local train they needed to ride hard. They knew that it was a slow train, and stopped at half a dozen stations before it reached Coombe. There was a chance of beating it, and they did their best.

They had already ridden hard. Now they rode hard again. Only one of the four cracked up on the ride—it was Newcome. He dropped behind, calling out to his chums that he would see them at Rookwood. Silver and Lovell and Raby did not stop. There was not a minute to lose.

They came into Coombe village dusty, perspiring, crimson, and fagged out. But they were in time. When they jumped off their machines outside the little village station their legs almost refused to support them. They held on to their bikes and gasped.

Hooker and Topham and Jones minor were chatting there. Other Classical juniors were inside and outside the station. They had obeyed their instructions; they were on the spot. It was close on four. They stared blankly at the Classical trio as they arrived.

"Missed him?" exclaimed Hooker.

"Gang of Moderns at Latcham—done in!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "The local's not in yet."

"Not yet! I say, you must be duffers to—"

"Cheese it! The Three Modern cads will be with the Head's nephew when he gets in. He's got to be got away from them," snapped Jimmy Silver. "Pass the word round—mind they don't get him away!"

"Right-ho!"

The trap from Rookwood was already outside the station. Old Mack had dis-

appeared into the Rookwood Arms. Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed as he noted it.

"Get to the geegce, Lovell, and hold him ready," he muttered. "Mack's gone for a drink, and you know he takes long drinks. We'll borrow the trap and take the new kid up to the school. Raby can stay here and tip Mack, so that he won't cut up rusty."

"You bet!" said Lovell.

Raby nodded, and strolled across to the Rookwood Arms to be ready to intercept Mack if he came out. He was prepared to tip Mack, or to trip him up, as occasion demanded. It was no time for half measures.

Jimmy Silver, with a crowd of eager Classics, entered the station, prepared for anything. Gunter was to be got away from the Moderns—that was all they thought or cared about. And the train had come in.

Jimmy Silver slipped a shilling into the porter's hand, and led his flock on to the platform as the train stopped.

There were several Modern juniors there already, and they gave the Classics hostile looks. Jimmy Silver did not heed them. He looked along the train for the enemy.

"There they are!"

The three Tommies were alighting. After them came a fellow in Etons, evidently the Head's nephew. His looks certainly weren't what Jimmy Silver expected, but he had no doubt of the Junior's identity, as he had travelled with the three Moderns.

"Back up, Classics!" shouted Jimmy.

There was a rush towards the carriage. Jimmy Silver shouldered Tommy Dodd aside—with remarkable ease, as he noted afterwards—and caught the new boy by the shoulder.

"You're Gunter?"

Gunter stared at him.

"I guess so."

"We've come to rescue you from these Modern cads," said Jimmy Silver hurriedly. "They're rotters—awful rotters! You stick to us. Come on!"

"But I say——"

"This way!"

Jimmy Silver seized one of Gunter's arms, and Hooker the other, and Jones Junior relieved him of his bag. The astounded new boy was rushed away to the exit.

"Back up, Moderns!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Rally round, Classics!"

The Classics closed round the prize in a crowd, and Gunter was rushed out. Three or four Moderns strove to bar the way, and were knocked out of it.

Jimmy Silver rushed Gunter out of the station breathlessly. He was surprised at the ease with which he had robbed the Moderns of him. On the station platform the three Tommies doubled up with laughter as the Classics disappeared with the prize.

Leggett rushed up to Tommy Dodd excitedly.

"They've got him!" he yelled.

"Let 'em keep him!" chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"What!"

"We don't want him. We've found out that he's a low blackguard—a regular disgraceful blighter! We couldn't have such a blighter on the Modern side. We're planting him on the Classics! See!"

"Oh, scoundrels!"

"Yell for all you're worth, but don't get him away from them. Let 'em carry him off; they're welcome to the beast!"

Yell the Moderns did, as the word was passed round to them. Tommy Dodd's word was law, and, surprised as his followers were by his change of face, they backed him up. Jimmy Silver & Co. had rushed Gunter in the trap. They tossed his bag in, and helped Gunter in. The Head's nephew hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels, but in the trap he recovered his breath.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"We're rescuing you from these cads," stuttered Jimmy Silver. "We'll explain afterwards. Hurry up! Look after those bikes, Hooker!"

Jimmy Silver and Lovell jumped in. Jimmy took the reins, and the trap dashed away. The Moderns came streaming out of the station, yelling. Old Mack appeared in the doorway of the inn, shaking his fist. But Jimmy Silver did not heed. He drove on, and the trap fairly whizzed through the old High Street of Coombe.

Jimmy Silver slacked down when they reached the lane.

"Safe as houses!" he said breathlessly. "We've only rescued you, you know. Those Modern kids are awful rotters!"

"I guess I know that," said Gunter. "I reckon I've been scrapping with those galoots in the train."

Jimmy Silver was glad to hear it. It made the task of persuasion easier.

"Like to drive?" he said affably.

"Sure."

Gunter took the ribbons. He gave the horse a lash with the whip. It was a cruel lash, and it made the Rookwood juniors stare. The horse leaped forward as if he had been electrified.

"Here, draw it mild!" said Lovell, agitated.

"I guess I know how to handle a gee!"

"Look out; you'll have the trap over!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the new boy's peculiar sense of humour again—Jimmy's first experience of it. He lashed the horse, and cracked the whip, and they raced down the lane at a speed that was dangerous—especially to anyone they might chance to meet.

"My hat! Stop it!"

"Slow down, you silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter, cracking away.

The trap dashed on furiously. Rookwood appeared in sight in an incredibly short space of time. Gunter turned the horse in at the gates, and brought it, foaming, to a halt before the porter's lodge, and jumped down.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell followed him, panting. Their hearts had been in

their mouths. They stared at the new boy. The Head's nephew was a surprise to them.

"I guess I scared you—what!" chuckled Gunter.

"You didn't scare us, and you were a brute to hit the horse like that!" said Lovell indignantly.

Jimmy squeezed his chum's arm warningly.

"Come in with us, dear boy," he said. "Nearly tea-time. Come on!"

And Gunter was marched triumphantly into the School House.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had won the prize.

They rejoiced at first.

But the hilarity and apparent contentment with which the Moderns took their defeat made them suspicious a little later.

Gunter had promised them to become a Classical over tea, and that promise made them indignant to the fact that he spat on the floor and picked his teeth with a fork.

They had succeeded; the Moderns were beaten to the wide. It was later, that it dawned upon Jimmy Silver & Co. that that easy victory at Coombe had been "planted" on them, and that Tommy Dodd had been only too anxious to see them bag the Head's nephew.

They had bagged him! When they came into the end study again and found the new boy there, with his feet on the table, a cigar in his mouth, and the study walls newly decorated with tobacco-juice, they gave each other sickly looks. They had done Tommy Dodd, but not quite so much as Tommy Dodd had done them.

"I—I say, Gunter," murmured Jimmy Silver. "I—I think that perhaps—perhaps we were a bit high-handed in getting you here like this. If—if you've got any preference for the Modern side, we—we won't hold you to your word!"

Gunter grinned.

"But I haven't," he said. "I guess I'm up against those gaboots. I'll make 'em squirm, you bet! I like this study, too. I'm on this side to stay. I've told my uncle!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Have a cigar?"

"No, you rotter!"

Gunter chuckled, and blew out a pungent cloud of smoke, and the Fistical Four fairly scuttled out of the study.

They went to look for Tommy Dodd. They found him, and if Bulkeley had not arrived on the scene with a cane in the nick of time, there might really have been very little left of Tommy Dodd.

The Head's nephew was a Classical! The Classics had succeeded in catching a Tartar!

CHAPTER 3.

A Regular Outsider!

"I've got to be did!" said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver spoke determinedly.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome nodded their heads emphatically. All the Fistical Four, in fact, were looking very determined.

They were gathered near the end study in the junior passage on the Classical side. The end study was their study. The door was partly ajar, and from the opening a strong scent of tobacco came to their noses.

It was not the smoke of a cigarette. There were certain "giddy goats" at Rookwood who smoked cigarettes—in strict privacy, of course. But the scent that came from the end study was not that of a cigarette: it was the powerful, pungent smell of a strong and very rank cigar.

If the Head of Rookwood had known that a junior in the Fourth Form smoked cigars he would have been in danger of an apoplectic fit. And if he had known that the smoker was his own

nephew—well, in that case, his feelings could not possibly be imagined.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had been smoked out of their own study.

It was an extraordinary situation—simply extraordinary. That it had to come to an end the Fistical Four were fully agreed. As Jimmy Silver had remarked, it had got to be "did," and the sooner it was "did" the better.

Gunter of the Fourth was an amazing new boy.

The chums of the Fourth felt that they had themselves to blame for being "landed" with Gunter, and they nobly tried to be patient with Gunter. But patience was not a virtue for which they were greatly distinguished. Their whole stock ran out in a remarkably short space of time.

Talking to the new boy was no use. He only grinned and chuckled. He was evidently satisfied with himself and with his remarkable gifts. The end study reeked with stale tobacco. If a prefect had put his nose into it he could not have failed to make the discovery. That meant trouble—perhaps for every fellow in the study. But Gunter did not care.

Perhaps he relied upon his relationship to the Head for safety; perhaps he was simply reckless. Anyway, he did not care.

Naturally, the Fistical Four were soon fed up. They had bagged Gunter—and repeated it. Desperate diseases as Lovell remarked, with Shakespeare for his authority—required desperate remedies. Hence the present determined looks of the Fistical Four.

They had come to a decision. Haying talked to Gunter in vain, having argued till they were tired of arguing, they felt that they had done all they could, and that there was nothing left but to thrash him. A good thrashing, as Raby sapiently observed, was just what he wanted, and it would do him no end of good.

They were sorry to have to do it. The fellow was a regular outsider, but apparently he had been brought up like

that. But there was no help for it, and Jimmy Silver had brought on a cricket-stump for the purpose.

"Come on!" said Lovell. "It's got to be did—and it will do him good. But we'll give him his choice of going over to the Modern side if he likes. His uncle will let him."

"Otherwise—" said Newcome.

"Otherwise," said Jimmy Silver, "the ending of his life!"

"That's settled," said Lovell.

And Lovell kicked open the door of the study.

Gunter of the Fourth glanced carelessly at them.

He was seated in the armchair, which was tilted back. His boots rested on the study table. There was a black cheroot between his teeth, which were almost equally black from excessive smoking. His face was sallow from the same cause. His collar was not clean, and his hands were dirty—some of his fingers stained as brown as berries with tobacco-juice. Altogether he was not a pleasant object to look at.

The sight of him sprawling there and puffing out pungent smoke put up the backs of the Classical Four. And the smoke made them cough. The study was simply reeking with it. How a boy of Gunter's age could smoke such cigars without inward convulsions was a mystery. But Gunter had already told them that he had smoked as soon as he could walk, and chewed tobacco before he could walk. He said that that was not uncommon in Texas. But Jimmy Silver & Co. meant that it should be uncommon at Rookwood, at least in their study.

"Hallo!" said Gunter.

"Achoo-choo-choo!" said Lovell. Gunter chuckled.

"Don't you like the smoke?"

"No, you horrid ratter!"

"I reckon you'll get used to it."

"That's just what we're not going to do," said Jimmy Silver. "That's the last cigar you're going to smoke in this study, Gunter, and you're not going to finish it. See?"

"I guess—"

"We're fed up. See this cricket-stump?"

"Sure!"

"Do you want it laid about you?"

"Nope!"

"Then shove that cigar in the grate at once."

"I reckon not. You galoots fairly yanked me into this study," said Gunter. "You fairly roped me in like a steer. Now you can make the best of it."

"We thought the Head's nephew would be pretty decent," said Lovell. "How were we to know you were such a rank outsider?"

"If Dr. Chisholm knew what you were like I fancy he wouldn't have let you come to Rookwood," said Newcome.

"And you'd jolly well get kicked out if he could see you now!" added Baby.

Gunter shrugged his thin shoulders, and went on smoking. It was clear that he did not care a single button for the Fistical Four.

"It's true that we bagged you," said Jimmy Silver, "and for that reason we're willing to let you off lightly. How would you like to change over to the Modern side?"

"Nope."

"You'd be better off there, really, among those wasters and duffers," said Lovell. "Much more suitable."

"I guess I'm freezing on to this study."

"That's your last word, is it?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Correct!"

"Very well. If you're staying here you're going to be decent, or we'll lick you till you do. Put that cigar down!"

"Oh, come off!"

"Oh, collar him!" said Lovell impatiently. "I'm fed up with his cheek. Collar the smoky ratter!"

"Hyer, hands off!" roared Gunter, as the Fistical Four made a rush at him.

There was a terrific crash as the chair tilted over backwards, and Gunter went out of it over the back and sprawled on the floor with a yell. Before

he could gather himself up he was in the grip of the four.

"Yow-ow! Yow, I snow!" gasped Gunter. "Let up, you galoots! Yow-ow-ow!"

But the Fustical Four were not thinking of "letting up." They grasped Gunter hard, and they turned him face downwards on the carpet and held him there. Then Jimmy Silver's cricket-stump came into play—to an accompaniment of wild yells from Gunter.

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"

"Yow-ow! Oh, jumpin' Jerusalem! Yarcoop!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

CHAPTER 9. Pistol Practice!

JIMMY SILVER wielded the stump with a powerful hand. Indeed, he seemed to be under the impression that he was beating a carpet.

The stump rose and fell with terrific vim.

The dust rose from Gunter's trousers. Terrific yells rose from Gunter. He yelling might have excited the envy of a Comanche Indian on the plains of his native Texas.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Gunter struggled frantically. His cigar had fallen on the carpet, and was burning a hole there. But the juniors did not heed it. Lovell and Raby and Newcome held the Head's nephew pinned down. Jimmy Silver made rapid play with the stump. Gunter had long needed a lesson. Now he was getting it.

There was a crowding of juniors along the passage, to look into the end study. Hooker and Jones minor and Oswald were the first, then came Townsend and Topham, and Flynn and Lennox, and a crowd more. They crowded round the doorway, shouting with laughter.

Nobody had any sympathy to waste upon Gunter. He richly deserved what he was getting; indeed, the juniors

only wondered that Jimmy Silver had not taken him in hand before.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, Jerusalem! Oh! Ow! Yow! Let up!" shrieked Gunter.

Jimmy Silver paused for breath.

"Have you had enough?" he gasped.

"Yarcoop! Yep!"

"Will you promise not to smoke in the study any more?"

"Nope!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Chuck it! I mean yep!" howled Gunter.

"Honour bright?"

"Yep."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver. "I thought we could bring you to reason. Mind, there's plenty more where that came from, and if you ask for it you'll get it. Let the beast get up."

The Co. released Gunter, and he scrambled to his feet. Certainly he had been hurt, though whether it had done him good was another matter. He stood gasping for breath, his sallow face red with rage.

"Now we'll make a clearance of his muck," said Jimmy Silver. "Where are your cigars, Gunter?"

"Yow! Find out, hang you!"

"He's got a box of them here somewhere," said Raby. "We'll jolly well find them and burn them."

"Here they are!" sang out Newcome.

There was a yell from Gunter.

"I guess you'll let my cheroots alone, you galoots."

"Guess again!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're going to burn the lot, and we'll do the same with any more you bring into the study."

"That'll cost me four dollars," howled Gunter.

"Then it'll be a lesson to you."

Jimmy Silver grabbed up a handful of the cheroots, and began breaking them in pieces in the grate.

Gunter made a rush for a little bag in the corner of the study. He had always kept that bag locked, and the juniors did not know what was in it.

They discovered now. Gunter dragged it open and groped in it, and his hand came out—with something in it.

It was a revolver.

A revolver in a junior study at Rookwood was about as surprising as a machine-gun there. The juniors stared at Gunter's weapon with wide-open eyes. It was another of his Wild Western customs that the new boy had brought to Rookwood—though hitherto the revolver had been kept out of sight.

The librarian came up to a level, the muzzle bearing on the Patient Four.

"Let up!" rapped out Gunter.

"Why, you silly ass——" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Let those cheroots alone!"

"Rate!"

"I guess I'll wing you if you don't," said Gunter, glaring along the barrel; and really at that moment he looked as if he would keep his word. "I guess you wouldn't be the first I've drilled. Let up, I say."

"You foolhead! Do you think we believe it's loaded?" growled Lovell.

Gunter grinned.

"Look!" he said.

He changed the direction of the revolver, and levelled it at the clock and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

Smash!

The clock spun off the mantelpiece and fell into the grate. The bullet had smashed in the face, and was embedded in the works.

There was a yell of alarm from the juniors in the passage, and a scuffling of feet. They did not want to be near a fellow with a loaded revolver, who was so reckless in its use.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at the new boy, dumbfounded.

There was no doubt that the revolver was loaded, and that the youth from Rookwood was a good shot. It was a weapon of a small calibre, and the report was not loud. But in the confined space of the study it rang like thunder.

"Turn that thing some other way,

you dangerous idiot!" yelled Lovell, as the revolver bore upon the four again.

"I guess not. Put those cigars down."

Jimmy Silver held on to the box.

"You hear me, Jimmy Silver?"

"Yes. Go and eat coke!"

"You see this shooter, you galoot?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Jimmy Silver contemptuously. "You don't dare to use it."

"It—it might go off by accident, mumbled Raby.

"I guess it might," grinned Gunter.

"My finger's on the trigger—look!" The hammer half-rose, and Jimmy Silver started a little. There was death in that little tube that was looking at him, and it required only the slightest touch of Gunter's finger to send it speeding.

"Will you put that box down?" said Gunter.

Jimmy Silver's back stiffened. He would not have taken orders from Gunter to save his life if it had been really in danger.

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

"I reckon I'll shoot."

"Rate!"

Crack!

Jimmy Silver uttered a sharp cry as the cigar-box went spinning out of his hand. The bullet had struck it, and carried it away from his grasp. His hand was numbed by the shock, and for a moment he thought it had been shot away as well as the cigar-box.

"You hound!" roared Lovell. "Yop—"

"I guess he isn't hurt," grinned Gunter. "I'm a dead shot. I could clip off your eyelashes if I liked."

Jimmy Silver felt over his hand with the other hand. He was quivering with rage. The slightest deflection of the bullet might have cost him a finger.

"You—you savage!" gasped Jimmy.

"Put that pistol down."

"Ha, ha, ha! I guess you're scared."

"I'm not scared, you rotten ruffian. I'm going to take that pistol away from you," said Jimmy Silver, advancing upon him.

"Hold on, Jimmy!" gasped Lovell.

"You keep off, you galoot, or I'll swing you sure," said Gunter, the revolver bearing full upon Jimmy's breast.

But Jimmy Silver came on, his face white with anger. It was likely enough that the firearm might go off in the struggle, and that somebody might be hurt. But Jimmy Silver was reckless at that moment.

"Don't touch him, you ass!" shouted Raby. "The dashed thing will go off by accident!"

"I don't care!"

"Well, we care for you," said Lovell, and Jimmy Silver's three chums collared him and backed away to the door.

"Let go!" shouted Jimmy furiously.

"Rats! Come out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter. "Make tracks, you galoots! I guess I'm going to do some pistol practice."

Crack, crack!

There was a spatter of glass from the pictures on the wall. Lovell and Raby and Newcome rushed Jimmy Silver out of the study, and Gunter kicked the door shut after them. A few moments later a strong smell of tobacco was emanating from the end study. The new boy was at it again.

CHAPTER 14.

None for Adolphus!

THERE was a buzz of wrath and amazement in the Fourth-Form passage.

The new boy was the subject of discussion.

His manners and customs had astonished and disgusted the Fourth, but the last scene in the end study put the lid on, as Hecker expressed it.

Townsend, indeed, had started for Bulkeley's study to inform the head prefect of the fact that Gunter had a firearm in his possession. But Townsend was stopped. The matter was serious enough, but Jimmy Silver & Co. were down on anything that savoured of sneaking.

"We've got to deal with the retter

ourselves, without dragging prefects into the row," was Jimmy Silver's verdict.

"But he will be blowing somebody's head off next!" howled Townsend.

"Well, if it's your head, it won't be much loss," said Jimmy comfortingly. "There's nothing in it, you know."

"You silly ass—"

"The Head ought to be told," said Topham. "He's no right to dig up a nephew from an uncivilised country and plant him on us!"

"Anyway, he'll be bowled out soon," said Jones. "A lot of fellows heard the pistol go off, and thought it was fireworks in the study. If Bulkeley hears it—"

"Wait till he hears it," said Jimmy Silver. "We're not going to sneak about the beast, though he's a caddish beast."

"But we're not going to let him turn our study into a tap-room!" growled Raby.

"We're not," said Jimmy.

"Hallo, here he comes!"

Gunter came strolling along the passage. He walked with a swagger, his hands in his pockets. He had a stock-whip under his arm—one of the souvenirs of his former life which he had brought from Texas with him. It was a heavy and dangerous whip, and the new boy had been seen to perform many tricks with it. With a flick of the whip he could lift a cap from a fellow's head at a dozen feet distance, without touching the head in the cap. He grinned at the crowd of Classical Juniors, apparently quite unmoved by their looks of angry dislike.

He sauntered out into the quadrangle, and the buzz of angry discussion continued after he was gone.

The Fistical Four went into their study, and Jimmy Silver opened the window and waved a paper to clear off the smoke. He was thus engaged when Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in.

The captain of Rockwood was frowning.

"Who's been smoking here?" he demanded

"Snackin'!" revealed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. The other recks with it."

The Fistical Four were silent. Bulkeley assumed their faces angrily, and then his expression changed.

"The new kid, I suppose?" he said.
 "Bum! Well, that wasn't what I came about. Somebody has been letting off fireworks in the study, I hear. There's a smell of gunpowder here now. You know that's against the rules."

"Ahem!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I want to know who did it," said Bulkeley.

"Ahem!"

"Was it one of you?"

"No, Bulkeley."

"Then it was the new kid, I suppose?"

"Ahem!"

Bulkeley stared at them for a moment and then turned away. The Fistical Four grinned a little. Bulkeley was in an awkward position. He felt that he could not deal drastically with the Head's nephew, and yet he could not be guilty of favouritism. The juniors wondered what he would do.

"Where is Gunter now?" demanded the captain of Rookwood, looking back from the passage.

"In the quad, I think."

Bulkeley strode away. Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled after him. They were curious to see how the head prefect would deal with the remarkable new boy.

"Bulkeley don't like to report him to Rookles, as he's the Head's nephew," murmured Lovell. "But if he sees that shooter—"

"My hat!"

Bulkeley strode out into the quadrangle. There was the sound of a loud, sharp crack under the old beeches, and for a moment the Classical Four thought that Gunter was at his "pistol practice" in the quad. But it was only his stock-whip which rang like a pistol when he cracked it.

"My word!" gasped Baby. "Look!"

"Smythe! My hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, had encountered the new boy under the beeches. The look on Smythe's face was, as Lovell observed, worth a guinea a box. Gunter was amusing himself with the dandy of the Shell, and Adolphus was clearly in a blue funk.

"Keep that whip away, you young ruffian!" yelled Adolphus. "By gad, I—!"

Crack, crack, crack!

The long lash of the whip cracked round Adolphus' slim legs without touching them, and Smythe of the Shell hopped and danced in his frantic efforts to keep clear of the thong.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter, whose spirits were as exuberant as usual. "Ha, ha! Dance, you beggar, dance!"

"Help!" shrieked Adolphus.

Crack, crack, crack!

Smythe of the Shell made a wild rush to escape. The lash curled round his waist, and he was jerked off his feet. He came down with a bump on the ground, yelling. His handsome topper flew away. The junior from Texas disengaged his whip with a twist of his wrist, and caught the flying topper with the lash, and tossed it through the air. It did not improve the topper.

Smythe sat up, roaring.

"Yow-ow! Help! He's mad! Yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter.

Bulkeley strode upon the scene with an angry brow.

"Give me that whip, you young rascal!"

Gunter stared at him.

"I guess that's my whip!" he replied.

"If you don't hand it to me at once, I'll give you the licking of your life!" shouted Bulkeley.

Gunter hesitated a moment, and then handed over the stock-whip.

"Get up, Smythe! You're not hurt!" growled Bulkeley.

"Yow! I am hurt!" roared Smythe.

"And look at my hat!"

"Hang your hat!" Gunter, you've got to understand that you can't play

these tricks here!" said the captain of Rookwood. "If there's any more of it, you'll find yourself in trouble. I find that you've been smoking."

"Correct!"

"Don't you know that it's not allowed here?"

"Yep."

"And you smoke all the same, what?"

"I guess so. I'm used to it."

"You'll stop it!" said Bulkeley savagely. "I'll let you off this time, as you're a new boy. But if there's any more of it, I'll take you into my study and lick you till you howl. Understand that?"

Bulkeley strode away, taking the whip with him. Gunter started after him very unpleasantly. Then he glared at Jimmy Silver & Co.

"You kinder reckon that I'm going to chuck it now, I guess?" he said, with a sneer.

"You'd better," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, you'll see!" growled Gunter.

The chums of the Fourth did see. When they came into the end study to tea, the room was reeking with smoke again. Bulkeley's warning had evidently been without effect. The Head's nephew was going on his own way, regardless of the captain of the school, and regardless of his exasperated study-mates.

CHAPTER II.

A Little Game!

"SIMPLY a savage!" said Adolphus Smythe.

"A regular heathen!" agreed Tracey.

"A wild animal," said Howard.

Smythe & Co. were in their study, and they were discussing the Head's nephew. Smythe, with burning indignation, had related the scene under the beeches, and Tracy and Howard were properly sympathetic. Tracy indeed asked why Smythe hadn't waded in and thrashed the young

rascal; but Adolphus did not state his reasons for not having done so. Doubtless he had good reasons. Adolphus was not a fighting man when he could help it.

The "Giddy Goats" of Rookwood were having a pleasant evening now—what they regarded as a pleasant evening. They had hurried over their preparation, and were now smoking cigarettes and playing cards. As these little amusements had to be kept a strict secret, Adolphus had taken the precaution of locking the study door before the cards were produced.

Tap!

The nuts of the Shell gave a guilty start. It was not likely that a master or a prefect would come to the study, but it was always possible.

"Who's there?" called out Smythe.

The door-handle rattled.

"I guess it's me."

"The Head's giddy nephew!" grinned Tracy. "He's got the cheek to come here!"

"He jolly well won't come in!" growled Smythe.

Knock!

"Oh, clear off!" called out Smythe. "You're not wanted here, you wild animal."

"It's all O.K., chummy," came Gunter's voice through the keyhole. "I guess this hyar is a friendly visit."

"I don't want friendly visits from you!"

"I'm coming in. I heard that you have a little game in your study sometimes, and I'm open to take a hand. Things are rather slow in my study."

"Shut up, you idiot!" yelled Smythe, in dire terror lest the new boy's incautious words might be heard by the ears of someone in authority. It would have gone hard with the superb Adolphus if Bulkeley had learned of the "little game" in his study.

Gunter chuckled.

"Let me in, then, you galoot!"

"Clear off, confound you!"

"I tell you I'm open for a game."

"I'll teach you to play poker if you like."

"You—you crasse idiot, shut up!"

"Or I'll join you in a game of nap—"

"Let him in, for goodness' sake!" muttered Tracey. "The whole blessed school will hear him soon."

Smythe jumped to the door and opened it. Anything was better than showing the reckless new boy to talk like that in the passage.

Gunter came in grinning, quite impervious to the black looks of the nuts of the Shell. He was getting used to black looks at Rookwood.

"Quite comfy here, by gum!" he remarked. "I tell you it's slow in my study. The galoots cut up rusty if I smoke even, and as for a game of cards, they'd faint if I suggested it. So I've dropped in here."

"Well, and now you can drop out again!" snapped Smythe.

"You don't want me in your game?" growled Gunter, his look becoming threatening. He made a step towards Adolphus, who moved round behind the table.

"No, we don't!" cried Smythe.

But he spoke feebly. The new boy simply terrified the slacker of the Shell. Smythe did not feel equal to dealing with him.

"Money talks!" said Gunter. "Look hyar!" He produced a handful of money from his pocket. "I guess I can pay my footing, what!"

"You can get out," said Howard.

Gunter did not get out. He drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"Now, let's be sociable," he said. "You can lock the door, Smythey, if you feel safer that way. Not that I care. The Head can't sack his own nephew, what! And I wouldn't care much if he did. If I'd known how slow it was here I reckon I'd have stayed in Texas. The game ain't worth the candle."

"Eh—what game?" said Smythe.

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind what I mean," said Gunter hastily. "I guess my tongue runs away with me sometimes. Now, is it nap?"

"Look here—"

"Oh, sit down, and don't be ratty."

Smythe & Co. looked helplessly at one another. They were three to one, but they did not care for a scrap with the reckless young ruffian. And they realised that if they threw him out he might tell on them. And the sight of his liberal supply of money had awakened Smythe's cupidity.

"I—I don't know that I mind your joining us in a game," said Smythe hesitatingly. "Of course, we keep this dark, you know."

"You bet."

Smythe locked the door, and sat down again. After all, why shouldn't he relieve the new kid of the money that seemed to be burning a hole in his pocket. That was how Adolphus looked at it.

"Have a cigarette, Gunter?" he asked, passing his case to the visitor.

Gunter snorted.

"You galoots reckon you smoke?" he asked.

"Well, a little," said Smythe. "We're not slow in this study."

"Cigarettes ain't smoking. You smoke as much paper as baccy. Mine's a cigar."

"I—I—we haven't any cigars here!"

"That's all right; I've got plenty."

The Giddy Goats looked blankly at Gunter as he produced a big black cheroot and bit off the end. Smythe silently gave him a match, and he lighted it. The volume of pungent smoke that he blew out made the nuts cough. They prided themselves on being knowing blades. But their dog-gishness was evidently as nothing compared with that of the Head's nephew. Gunter's was the real thing. Smythe & Co. were only playing at black-guardism—Gunter was a genuine blackguard. And this was the nephew of the grave and severe reverend

gentleman who was headmaster of Rookwood! It was amazing!

"Whose deal?" asked Gunter.

"Mine," said Smythe.

"Go it!"

They played nap. Gunter, with an ostentatious manner, had laid two or three pound and ten-shilling notes and a heap of silver on the table before him.

"Bob a time," remarked Tracy, with a greedy glance at the money.

"Call that playing?" jeered Gunter. "Make it five!"

The Giddy Goats exchanged a quick glance.

"Five—all serene!" said Smythe.

The good-humour of the nuts was restored as they began to win the new fellow's cash. They were rather pleased now that Gunter had wedged into the study. It was likely to be a profitable evening for the Giddy Goats.

But a change came o'er the spirit of their dream.

For a few rounds the nuts seemed to have it all their own way. But when Gunter dealt fortune favoured him. He grinned as he raked in five shillings from each of the nuts. He had lighted a second cigar, the first being finished, and the Shell fellows wondered how his inside stood it, unless it was lined with leather.

Smythe shuddered as Gunter spat in the grate. Such manners had never been seen in Smythe's select study before, and the smell of the thick smoke was beginning to oppress the nuts. It was quite different from the airy fragrance of their own mild cigarettes.

And the new junior was winning now. However good the hands of the Giddy Goats were, nearly every time Gunter copped them. Smythe—who was sometimes guilty of helping fortune himself—began to grow suspicious.

"By gad!" ejaculated Adolphus suddenly.

He sprang to his feet.

Gunter stared at him.

"What's the row?"

"You cad!" shouted Smythe. "You rotten cad! Cheat!"

Gunter's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"I reckon you'd better be careful—" he began.

"Smythe, old man," murmured Tracy.

"I tell you he's cheating!" howled Smythe. "He's had a card on his knee, and I saw him slip it into his hand. He was keeping back a card."

"I reckon there's the right number of cards in my hand."

"Yes, because you've dropped one on the floor."

"Why, the rotten cad!" said Howard hotly. "We'll jolly soon see."

Howard and Tracy bent down to look under the table. There was no card to be seen.

"Move your foot, Gunter."

"Oh, rats!"

"He's got his foot on it!" howled Tracy. "He's been cheating. Give us our money back, you swindler!"

The three enraged nuts closed round Gunter, and the latter sprang to his feet. Then the card he had been concealing with his boot was revealed. It was the two of spades. Evidently the young rascal had discarded it for a better card he had been keeping in reserve since his last deal.

"Hands off!" said Gunter. "I guess—"

Smythe gave him a deadly look.

"You'll hand back every penny you've won, you young (ble!)!" he said, his voice trembling with rage. "If you don't we'll take it by force."

"I calculate you won't!"

"Collar the low cad!" shouted Tracy.

"Hands off!"

Gunter had whipped into his pocket and out again. Smythe & Co. jumped back, gasping, as a revolver looked them in the face. They stared at the new boy with starting eyes.

"A-a-a pistol!" said Smythe faintly. "He—he—he's got a pistol!"

"Oh, gad!"

Tracy dived under the table, with a gasp of terror. Howard grabbed at the key in the door and unlocked it. Smythe dashed behind the armchair and backed down out of sight.

"Go away!" he screamed. "Get out! You can keep the money! Help! Go away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter.

He jingled the money he had won in his pockets and swaggered to the door. Still chuckling, he disappeared into the passage.

"Is—is—he gone?" stuttered Tracey, under the table.

"He's g-g-gone!" panted Smythe.

"Oh, dear!"

"Oh, gad!"

With pallid faces the nuts looked at one another. Never had Adolphus & Co. suffered such a terrible fright.

"He—he—he's a wild desperado!" moaned Adolphus. "A murderous villain. He oughtn't to be admitted to the school. I'll tell Bulkeley!"

But Adolphus decided, on second thoughts, not to tell Bulkeley. For it would have come out about that little game in the study. But the fact that the new boy had a firearm in his possession was soon common talk in the Lower School, and nervous youths like Adolphus halted when they saw him coming in the passages or the quad. And the extraordinary new boy only seemed to enjoy the terror that he inspired.

CHAPTER 17.

The Midnight Raid.

"I RECKON I could handle them," Jimmy Silver & Co. sniffed and glared at Gunter. The Classical Four were talking in the Common-room the next day, and the subject was the check of the Modern Juniors. They agreed that it was time

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were given the kyboosh.

Gunter chipped into the conversation cheerfully. That was his way. Hey looks had no effect whatever on the youth from Texas.

That he was regarded with dislike and disgust by nearly every Junior at Rookwood, Modern as well as Classical, did not affect Gunter in the least. The exuberance of his spirits had suffered no diminution.

"I reckon I could make the galoots sing small," he went on. "You pilgrims ain't up to it. I had a row with those jays the day I came here, and they didn't get the best of it. I guess I'll show you how to do it."

"Conceded ass!" said Lovell, with a grunt. "Tommy Dodd would knock the stuffing out of you!"

Gunter grinned.

"I reckon I'll make them sing small!" he said.

"Rais!"

"What'll you bet on it?" grinned Gunter.

"Nothing," said Lovell, in disgust. "We don't bet."

"Oh, you're too good for this world," said Gunter, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder. "I don't know how you manage to live. This place makes me tired to death after what I've been used to."

"Pity you don't go back to what you're used to, then," said Raby.

"I guess I'm a sticker. I'm sent hyer, and hyer I'm sticking. Things would be a bit more lively if you'd let me show you how to play poker."

"That's a branch of knowledge we're not keen on," said Jimmy Silver sarcastically, "and if we were, we shouldn't learn from you. We've heard all about your swindling Smythe."

"I guess that jay was born to be a lame duck," said Gunter. "He calls himself a nut, and he hasn't so much sand as a kid of six in Texas. I guess I bluffed the whole study, and

can handle your Modern galoots just as easily, and not half try."

"We'll believe that when we see you do it," said Jimmy Silver disdainfully. "It's a go, then? You'll see it done?"

To which the Classical Four replied with the truly classic monosyllable, "Rats!" and walked away.

But Gunter's undertaking to "down" the Moderns was soon heard of and discussed, and the juniors wondered how he was going to do it. It was heard of on the Modern side, too, and Tommy Dodd & Co. grinned over it. They were prepared to make shaving of the Transatlantic youth if he tackled them.

Gunter did not seem in a hurry to begin. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle rather expected to see him that evening after hearing of what he had undertaken to do. But he did not appear on the Modern side.

"All gas—Yankee gas!" said Tommy Dodd when bedtime came. "Let him show his Wild Western nose over here, that's all! I'll increase the size of it for him, Head's nephew or no Head's nephew!"

But the nose of Gunter was not shown there, and the Modern juniors went to bed and forgot all about Gunter.

Tommy Dodd and the rest of the Modern Fourth were sleeping the sleep of the just when midnight tolled out from the clock-tower.

All Rockwood was fast asleep by that time.

The twelve heavy strokes sounded dully through the summer night. They did not awaken anyone in the dormitory. But a few minutes later Tommy Dodd was awakened. He opened his eyes to a sudden light.

The electric light was on.

Tommy Dodd, in great astonishment, sat up in bed. He wondered what duffer had turned on the light, and he blinked round him sleepily.

Then he sat frozen.

A figure stood within the doorway, and Tommy Dodd gazed at it, dumb and horrified.

The figure was draped in a black coat, and the face was covered with a black mask, through the eyeholes of which a pair of eyes gleamed and glittered.

From under the loose coat the intruder's right hand appeared, and in that hand was grasped a revolver.

There was no doubt about it. The light gleamed on the barrel of the weapon.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

The figure was advancing towards the row of beds.

"Wake up!" came a deep, rumbling voice.

"Oh, crumbs!" came from Tommy Cook's bed.

"Howdy Moses!" yelled Doyle.

"Who—who are you?" panted Tommy Dodd.

"Howdy Moses! It's a burglar!"

"Help!"

"Silence!" hissed the masked visitor. And the revolver made a threatening motion. "Silence!"

All the Modern Fourth were wide awake now. They sat up in their beds shivering. Tommy Dodd & Co. were plucky enough, as they had often proved. But a midnight visit from a masked man, revolver in hand, was enough to shake any fellow's nerve.

And the revolver was raised to a level, and it seemed to every junior there that it was pointing specially at him.

"I-t-urn that another way, please," said Tommy Dodd faintly.

"Get out of bed!"

"Wha-at for?"

"I give you three seconds. Out you get!"

The trigger moved a little. The Modern Fourth turned out of bed with one accord, and with a speed they

had never shown in turning out at rising-bell.

They stood shivering by their beds, their dilated eyes fastening in terror on the masked intruder.

"That's better!" growled the ruffian. "Not a yelp, mind, or you get it in the neck! I'd wing you as soon as look at you!"

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Doyle.

"I'm going to tie you up," growled the masked man, "and any kid who lifts a finger will get a bullet! Mind that!"

"B-but-but——"

"Hold your tongue!"

The masked ruffian advanced to Tommy Dodd. The chief of the Modern Juniors looked desperate. But the sight of the revolver was too deadly, and the great Tommy Dodd did not care to tackle it.

The intruder drew a length of cord from his pocket with his left hand, and jerked the end into a loop.

"Put your hands together!" he commanded.

Tommy Dodd hesitated.

"Do as he tells you, you yassoon!" whispered Doyle. "Don't be an ass!"

The muzzle of the revolver was thrust fairly against Tommy Dodd's chest. He gave a gasp and a shiver.

"I give you one second!" hissed the masked ruffian.

Tommy Dodd held out his hands. There was no help for it. The loop was placed over his wrists and drawn tight.

Cook was tiptoeing towards the door.

The masked man did not seem to observe him. Cook's idea was to get outside and shout for help. He found the door locked and the key gone.

The masked man swung round suddenly, and his revolver bore upon the junior fumbling with the door-handle.

"You've asked for it," he snarled. "now you're going to get it! Say your prayers!"

"Oh, howl! Moses!" stuttered Doyle.

"Ow! Don't! I—I—I'll be as quiet as a lamb. Oh, jimmies!"

"Come here!"

Tommy Doyle, shaking in every limb under the grim revolver, approached. His wrists were looped together in the same way as Tommy Dodd's.

The masked ruffian had come well supplied with cord. One after another the Modern Juniors were ordered to approach, and their wrists were tied in ten minutes the whole of the Modern Fourth had their hands bound.

They blinked at one another in horror and dismay in the electric light. What was the ruffian going to do next?

The ruffian lost no time. He returned his revolver to his pocket, now that all the juniors had their hands secured, and took out a long cord from under his coat. He knelt it round the ankles of the group of juniors, tying the knots tightly, and in a few minutes the Modern Fourth were all secured together by their feet. Then he collected handkerchiefs and pillow-cases, and gagged them one after another.

The Modern Fourth submitted like lambs. They were helpless, and they had to submit.

They blinked at the masked man, whose eyes gleamed through the holes in his mask at them. They expected that his next proceeding would be to go through the pockets of their clothes. His object, so far as they could see, could only be robbery. But that he did not proceed to do. He tied the end of the long cord to the leg of a bedstead, and then crossed to the door.

Was he going? What did it all mean? Tommy Dodd & Co. wondered whether they had to do with some lunatic.

They could not speak. They could hardly move. They could only gaze with dilated eyes at the masked intruder.

He turned at the door and burst into a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha! I guess you look a lot of jays."

Tommy Dodd jumped.

The masked man's hand went up, and he jerked off the mask. The face that was revealed in the electric light was the face of Gunter of the Fourth—the Head's nephew.

The boy from Texas chuckled and grinned.

"I guess you guys have been roped in. Ha, ha, ha! Good-night!"

He snapped off the light and unlocked the door. The door closed behind him. Tommy Dodd & Co. were left wriggling in their bonds, spluttering with their gags. It was a jape of Gunter's. He had kept his word, after all. But he couldn't intend to leave them like that! Before morning they would be chilled and cramped—he couldn't mean that!

But he did.

Long the Modern juniors struggled with the cords, but they struggled in vain. They chewed at the gags, but they could make no impression upon them. Becoming quite reckless at last, they endeavoured to make noise enough to attract someone to the dormitory. But they could scarcely move in their bonds, and their efforts were in vain. It was upon a cheerless and infuriated crowd that the first pale rays of the dawn looked in.

CHAPTER 12.

Something Like a Surprise!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. sat up in bed as the rising-bell clanged out. Gunter of the Fourth turned out with a chuckle.

"I guess I've done it," was his first remark.

"Eh? You've done what?" asked Hooker.

"Dished the Moderns!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell.

"Hop along to their dormitory and see!" chuckled Gunter.

"Oh, how-wow!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the Classical Fourth proceeded with their toilet without heeding Gunter. Jimmy Silver & Co. were the first down, but they did not see any of the Modern Fourth in the quad. And during the next ten minutes after they were down none of the Moderns put in an appearance, which was remarkable, for the three Tommies were always early risers.

"Where are the Modern bounders, I wonder?" Raby remarked.

"I guess you'll find 'em in their dorm," said Gunter. "Didn't I tell you I'd dish them? Well, I've done it!"

"No reason why they shouldn't come down if you have," said Jimmy Silver, with a stare.

Gunter choked.

"I reckon they can't."

"Why can't they?"

"Because they're all tied up like turkeys! Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gunter. Jimmy Silver looked at him aghast.

"You—you've done that?"

"Sure."

"But—but they let you—" howled Lovell.

"I reckon they couldn't help it. I guess they couldn't argue with a revolver!" chuckled Gunter.

"A-a-a revolver!" spluttered Jimmy Silver.

"Yep!"

"Come on!" muttered Jimmy to his chums.

And the Fistical Four rushed into the house again, alarmed and anxious.

Gunter followed them, still chuckling. Evidently he regarded his night's work as a triumph. The Fistical Four sped along the passages to the Modern side, and rushed into Tommy Dodd's dormitory.

"Great Scott!"

The sight that met their gaze rooted the Four Classics to the floor.

"Great Scott!"

The Modern Fourth, hunched together, were seated on the floor, shiver-

ing with cold, in their pyjamas. They looked at the Classics, but they could not speak. Not one of them had succeeded in getting rid of his gag. The new boy from Texas had done his work too thoroughly for that.

"My hat!" stuttered Lovell. "I say, cut them loose! They'll have a prefect after them if they're not down soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter. "I guess I've dished them some!"

Jimmy Silver turned on him, his eyes blazing.

"You cad! You've left them tied like that all night! You rotter!"

"I guess— Yo-o-o-op!"

Jimmy Silver's fist shot out and Gunter rolled on the floor, and his chuckle was changed into a roar of pain.

The four Classics rushed to the rescue. But as they began cutting the cords there was a heavy step in the passage, and Knowles of the Sixth strode in.

"Why aren't you young rascals down— began the prefect harshly. Then he broke off as he caught sight of the Modern Fourth. "Why—why— What—"

Words failed him.

The Classical Four cut loose the prisoners as fast as they could. There were moans and howls from the Moderns as they stretched their cramped limbs. Knowles gazed at them as if mesmerised.

"What's the meaning of this?" he gasped at last. "Who tied those fellows up?"

"Groogh!" came from Tommy Dodd.

His mumbled limbs were capable of no other response.

"Is this one of your larks, Jimmy Silver?"

"No," said Jimmy shortly.

"Then who did it?"

"Groogh!"

"Oh, dear! Ow!"

"How long have you been tied up there, Dodd?" demanded Knowles.

"Groogh! Half the night!" mumbled Tommy Dodd.

"Half the night!" shouted Knowles, in amazement. "And who did it?"

"Groogh!"

"Very well! You'll come with me to the Head, Silver—"

"It wasn't Silver!" said Tommy Dodd.

"It was that new cad!" shouted Leggett furiously. "He came in in the middle of the night with a mask on, and we thought he was a burglar!"

"Shut up!" muttered Tommy Dodd.

Much as he had suffered at the hands of Gunter, Tommy Dodd would not have given him away if he could have helped it.

But it could hardly be helped, for Knowles certainly had to report the matter to the Head. Even if Leggett had not spoken, the truth must have come out. But the sneak of the Fourth did not wait for it to come out.

"Gunter!" repeated Knowles. "The Head's nephew!"

"Yes."

Knowles looked very queer. It was Knowles' system to keep in the good graces of the Head, and he could hardly do that by reporting his nephew to him for such an outrage. Knowles supposed that the Head would hardly be pleased by such zeal on the part of a prefect.

"So it was you did this, Gunter?" he snapped.

"Yep!" he growled.

"You young rascal—"

"I reckon I said I'd dish the Modern gaboos, and I reckon I've done it!" said Gunter.

"And all you fellows let one Classical junior tie you up like that?" exclaimed Knowles, in surprise and contempt.

Tommy Dodd flushed crimson.

"That cad knows why we let him do it!" he exclaimed.

"He had a pistol!" shrieked Leggett. Knowles almost fell down.

"A-a-a what?" he stuttered.

"A revolver! He threatened to shoot me!" yelled Leggett. "I was afraid it would go off! And he had a mask on, and we thought he was a burglar! I'm going to tell the Head!"

"Gunter, have you firearms in your possession?" demanded Knowles.

"I guess so!"

"Hand it to me at once!"

"I reckon it's mine, and I'm keeping it!" said Gunter coolly. "You go and eat coke! You're only a Modern, and you can't order me!"

"You—you've got a pistol!" howled Knowles. "You desperate young scoundrel! Give it to me at once, and then come to the Head! By Jove, you'll be sacked from the school for this if you were the Head's nephew ten times over! Do you hear me?"

"Yep!"

"Give me that pistol at once!"

Knowles, gritting his teeth, strode at the junior from Texas. Gunter's hand whipped behind him.

"Hands off!"

Knowles staggered back. A levelled revolver was looking him in the face, with the young ruffian scowling behind it. The prefect seemed transfixed. His eyes almost started from his head as he gazed at Gunter.

"G-g-g-good heavens!" he gasped.

Then there was a sudden roar from Gunter. Jimmy Silver had made a leap at him, and he caught the junior's right arm and forced it down. The dangerous weapon pointed to the floor.

"Let up!" shrieked Gunter.

"Lend a hand!" shouted Silver.

Knowles sprang forward. He grasped the down-turned wrist and twisted it savagely till Gunter let go the weapon. Knowles almost panted with relief as he grasped the firearm and took it away.

"You young villain!" he said. "You'll be sacked for this! Come

with me to the Head at once! I'll take your pistol and show him!"

"I guess I'm not coming. You-ow!"

Knowles did not stand on ceremony, even with the Head's nephew. The fright he had had had enraged him. He grasped Gunter by the collar, digging his knuckles into the junior's neck. Gunter staggered fiercely, but he was swung away in the grasp of the powerful Sixth-Former.

With his boots clattering on the floor, he was dragged away to the Classical side, gasping and yelling.

"Hallo, what's up?" exclaimed Bulkeley, meeting them at the end of the passage and stopping as he saw a Classical junior struggling in the grasp of a Modern prefect.

"I'm taking this young scoundrel to the Head!" panted Knowles. "He has been threatening the fags with a revolver—this revolver!"

"Great Scott! Give me his other arm!" said Bulkeley.

And between the two prefects the Head's nephew was marched forcibly into the Head's study and into the august presence of Dr. Chisholm.

CHAPTER II.

Gunter Goes Through It!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. wondered what was passing in the Head's study. So did Temmy Dodd and the Modern juniors.

That the Head must have noticed already that his nephew hadn't the manners which stamp the caste of Vere de Vere, the juniors knew. Doubtless the doctor made every allowance for his early training on a ranch in a wild country.

But the news of the boy's true character could not fail to come as a shock to the Head. Now that it was out it was pretty certain to be all out. The sack was what the juniors expected for him, and Classical and

Modern agreed that that was the only thing that could meet the case. Keen as had been their rivalry for the Head's nephew before they knew him, both Classics and Moderns would have been glad to see him "booted" out of Rookwood.

There was a buzz of excitement in Rookwood that morning. The prefect's report to the Head was followed by a stern inquiry.

Gunter's belongings were searched, and there came to light, among other things, a box of cartridges, a bowie-knife, several packets of cards, several boxes of cigars, and a set of loaded dice.

The Head was simply aghast.

Some of the fellows who caught sight of him while he was superintending the search of Gunter's boxes and bags declared that he looked as if he were on the verge of apoplexy.

Unusual as he had observed his nephew to be, the old gentleman had never dreamed that he had harboured a ruffian and a thorough blackguard within the classic walls of Rookwood.

It was not only that he had cards—that was bad enough—but the cards were marked! It was not only that he had dice, but the dice were loaded. He was not only a gambler, but a cheat as well.

What the Head thought on the subject he kept to himself. The school waited for the announcement that Gunter was going.

During morning lessons the Head's nephew did not appear in class. He was locked up in the punishment-room! When the fellows came out of the Form-rooms they rather expected to hear that Gunter was no longer at Rookwood.

But he was still there. And when the order went forth to assemble the school for a public flogging to be witnessed the juniors crowded into Big Hall wondering whether the flogging was to be followed by the sack.

Gunter was brought in with the

strong hand of Sergeant Kettle on his shoulder. He looked sullen and defiant.

That flogging was a record. The Head did not run any risk of spoiling the child by sparing the rod. Gunter's yells rang through the Big Hall, and by the time the Head was finished all the defiance was gone out of Gunter, and he looked very limp.

Then the proceedings closed. It was not the sack. But after the school had been dismissed Jimmy Silver was called into the Head's study. He went, wondering.

He found Dr. Chisholm very grave.

"Silver," said the Head—and the troubled expression on his face went to Jimmy's heart—"as you know, I have become aware of the true character of my nephew, which I had never dreamed of suspecting before. I have thought of sending him back to his home. But I have taken into consideration the fact that he was brought up in a wild district in an unsettled country, where he has learned the extraordinary manners he has shown here. I have resolved to give him a chance to settle down here. Any recurrence of such conduct as he has been guilty of will lead to his expulsion from the school. But I hope that the lesson he has had will benefit him—I have endeavoured to make it a severe one."

Jimmy Silver suppressed a grin.

He thought that the Head had succeeded, too.

"He is in your study, Silver, resumed the Head, "and you are head boy in the Fourth Form. Silver, I wish you to use your influence to induce my nephew to—to conform to the manners of this school. I am sure that you can help him greatly if you wish."

"I—I—I'll try, sir!" stammered Jimmy, taken aback. It was the first time Jimmy Silver had ever been requested to play the part of bear-leader.

"Thank you, Silver. I rely upon you."

Jimmy Silver left the study, not knowing whether to be pleased at the high opinion the Head evidently entertained of him, or worried by the task that had been imposed upon him.

"Well—" said Lovell and Raby and Newcome together in the passage. Jimmy explained.

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

"We—we'll do our best," said Jimmy, looking doubtfully at his chums. "There may be some good in the chap, for all we know. And, anyway, there won't be any more cards or cigars or revolvers and things."

"We'll try," said the Co. heroically.

With good intentions in their breasts, the Physical Four proceeded to the end study, where Gunter was groaning over his castigation. He glared at them as they came in.

"I say, Gunter, old chap—" began Jimmy Silver, with his kindest smile.

"Vamoose!"

"Eh?"

"Get out!"

"But—but I say—"

Gunter made a jump for the poker, and another jump for the Physical Four. They executed a strategic retreat from the study just in time, and the door banged after them.

Gunter was still evidently Gunter!

CHAPTER 12.

Lovell's Little Mistake!

"**S**ISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, is the giddy postman coming?" Jimmy Silver asked the question.

The "Sister Anne" who he addressed was Lovell of the Fourth, who was looking down the road from the gateway of Rookwood.

Lovell was watching for the post-

man Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were filling up the time by chipping old Mack, the school porter. They were energetic youths, and did not like wasting the precious minutes.

"No, he's not coming!" growled Lovell. "I believe he's always specially late when we're stony."

The Physical Four of the Fourth, were in a state not uncommon among school-boys, that troubled state known as "stony." But Lovell was expecting a letter from his uncle. Upon that letter and its contents depended Jimmy Silver & Co.'s plans for the afternoon. Lovell was almost sure that his avuncular relative would turn up trumps; but he was not quite sure, and so the Classical chums were waiting anxiously for the arrival of the postman. The question before the meeting was: "Was there to be tea in the end study that day, or wasn't there to be tea?"

"It's too bad," said Raby plaintively. "Here we are, on our uppers practically, and that fellow Gunter in our study is rolling in oof, and we can't borrow any of him."

"Can't borrow of a worm like that," said Lovell.

"And he's got whole quids!" said Raby.

"Let him keep 'em!"

"He'd lend us some if we asked him," remarked Newcome.

Lovell snorted.

"We're not going to ask him. I don't quite see where he gets his quids, either. He's the Head's nephew, but the Head doesn't tip him quids, I know that. Hallo, here he comes!"

Gunter's flogging did not seem to have made much difference to him. He was the same reckless young rascal after it as he had been before it.

He nodded coolly to the Physical Four. The fact that that select circle strongly disapproved of him did not worry him in the least. He had been deaf to all hints and requests to change his study. The end study suited him, and he stuck. Whether it

sulted the original owners of the study for him to be there he did not care a Continental red cent, as he cheerfully assured them.

"Time that postman was hyar!" he remarked.

"Quite time!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "We're waiting for him."

"On the rocks?" asked Gunter.

"If that means stony, yes."

Gunter rattled a handful of money in his trouser-pocket.

"I guess I'll lend you a dollar or two, if you want it," he remarked.

"I ain't mean. How much?"

"Ahem!"

"We don't want any of your tin," said Lovell shortly.

"Thanks all the same," said Jimmy Silver.

Gunter shrugged his shoulders.

"Please yourself. You were ready enough to give me the glad hand when I came here. You've changed some!"

"You see, we expected the Head's nephew to be pretty decent," said Lovell, who was quite a painfully plain speaker sometimes; "as you've turned out nothing of the kind, we'd prefer your room to your company in our study. So?"

"I reckon I'm sticking to that study," said Gunter, with a grin, "and if you don't want to chum in with a galoot, I guess I can find somebody else. I've made some friends in Coombe already, a bit more goag than you fellows, anyway."

"The select company at the Bird-in-Hand!" smiled Lovell. "We know all about it. We've seen you with them. Racing blackguards. If the Head knew you were backing horses—"

"You can tell him if you like," yawned Gunter; "a galoot must do something to keep alive in this slow place. I haven't found a single chap in the school who knows how to play poker."

"And you're not likely to!" snapped Lovell. "Why can't you play football?"

"Too slow."

"Too decent, you mean?"

"Peace, my infants!" said Jimmy Silver, for the argument was waxing warm. "Here comes the merry postman."

There was a rush to the gate as the postman appeared. The Fistical Four surrounded him.

"My letter!" said Lovell impudently. "If you say you haven't got one for me, we'll have your other leg off, so look out."

The postman grinned. He was a retired Tommy, who had left a leg in Flanders. He fumbled in his bag.

"Sorry, Master Lovell, there isn't one."

"Well, my hat!"

"So much for your blessed uncle!" growled Raby. "Nice way to bring up your uncle, you duffer!"

"It's rotten," said Lovell indignantly. "I wrote him a long letter—three pages—and asked him about his rheumatism in a postscript. A fellow couldn't do more than that. He ought to have been pleased at my remembering that he's got rheumatism. Tain't every fellow who'd think of it."

"Black ingratitude!" growled Jimmy Silver. "It's enough to discourage the most affectionate nephew. Save you put that in?"

"Yes, rather. Remembered at the last minute, and put it in the postscript. I asked him to tell me how it was—not that I cared a brass button!" said Lovell, more in sorrow than in anger. "Catch me asking him about his rheumatism again. My hat!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now?" asked Jimmy Silver, as Lovell uttered that sudden ejaculation.

"Now I come to think of it, I can't quite remember whether it was rheumatism or lumbago," said Lovell.

"If I made a mistake, that would account——"

"You ass!" shouted Raby. "You ought to have made a note of it. Now we shan't have any tea, because you can't remember whether your blessed uncle's got rheumatism or lumbago. Of all the fatheads——"

"Well, I knew it was something," said Lovell apologetically. "Hallo, what's that, Tommy?"

"A postcard for you, sir," said the grinning postman.

"What the thump's the good of a postcard? Hallo, this is in my uncle's fist!" said Lovell. "Oh, crumbs! Read that, you fellows! What do you think of that?"

The chums of the Fourth read the postcard: It ran:

"Dear Edward,—Thank you for your letter. You will be pleased and relieved, I know, to hear that I have never suffered from rheumatism. My gout is unfortunately the same as usual.—Your affectionate uncle,

"E. A. LOVELL."

"Gout!" said Lovell. "It was gout after all. I remember now."

"Gout!" said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones. "Gout—and you couldn't remember whether it was rheumatism or lumbago, you ass! That postcard's sarcastic—sark from beginning to end. You fathead! Oh, bump him!"

"Here, I say—hold on!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcombe did hold on—to Lovell. That unfortunate mistake of the affectionate nephew meant that there would be no tea in the study, and they were naturally wrathful.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell. "I—I——"

Bump!

"Yarocop!"

Bump!

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Give him another!" roared Raby. "We'll teach him to remember that it's gout!"

"Yow-ow—yooop!" spluttered Lovell. He tore himself away from his wrathful chums and fled. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcombe shook indignant fists after him. On another occasion Lovell was sure to remember that it was gout his uncle suffered from. It had been severely impressed upon him.

CHAPTER 15.

The Letter from America!

"I GUESS there's one for me."

"What name, sir?" asked the postman.

"Gunter."

"Gunter," repeated the postman hesitatingly. "Yes, sir. Your letter will be delivered at the House, sir."

Gunter stared.

"You've got one for me, then?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Confound your hats!" said Gunter rudely. "Give me my letter!"

The postman shook his head.

"Not allowed, sir."

"What do you mean?" demanded Gunter angrily. "You've just given that galeot his postcard."

"Why can't you give Gunter his letter, Stumpy?" asked Jimmy Silver curiously.

Stumpy closed his bag.

"Dr. Chisholm's orders, sir. I've been told specially that all letters for Master Gunter are to be delivered at the House in the ordinary way. I can oblige you young gentlemen, but not Master Gunter."

Gunter turned red with anger. He had a heavy stockwhip under his arm—one of the belongings he had brought from Texas with him. He let it slip down his hand, and his jaw protruded.

"Give me that letter, you skunk!" he roared.

"Against orders, sir."

"I guess I'm going to have it!" said Gunter. "You'll hand me that letter, or I'll take it from you!"

Gunter blocked the way of the postman. His eyes were glancing with rage and his hand clenched on the stockwhip till his knuckles showed white.

"Chuck it, Gunter!" said Jimmy Silver. "If it's the Head's orders you've got to stand it. You shouldn't have such queer correspondents. I suppose it's because you had a letter from a bookmaker, and it was found out. It's your own fault."

"I don't want any chin-music!" said Gunter savagely. "I want my letter!"

"Why can't you wait till it's delivered at the House?" demanded Rabe. "Bootles will hand it out to."

"Perhaps there is some harm in it," remarked Newcome drily.

Gunter gritted his teeth. "It's a letter from America I'm expecting," he said. "Has that letter got the American postmark on it, Stumpy?"

"Yes, sir."
"Then you can give it to me!"
"I'm bound to take it up to the House, sir. Please let me pass."

"If you want this whip laid round you—" shouted Gunter, making the long lash crack in the air.

"Draw it mild!" interjected Jimmy Silver. "Let Stumpy pass, Gunter, or we'll jolly soon make you!"

"I guess he's not going to pass till I've got my letter, and I'll— Hands off, you galoots!"

Silver collared the junior from Texas and unceremoniously sent him spinning out of Stumpy's way. The one-legged postman stomped on up the drive. Gunter reeled against the gate, and for a moment seemed about to make an attack upon Jimmy Silver, but he refrained. He turned and darted after the postman. The long whip rang in the air.

Slash!

Stumpy gave a yell as the thong of the stockwhip curled round his

wooden leg and jerked it away. The postman came heavily to the ground.

"Ow! Oh! Ah!" he gasped, dazed by the sudden fall.

"Now gimme my letter, or—"

Three juniors with Modern colours in their caps were close at hand—Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cooke and Tommy Doyle. The Three Tommies rushed forward as if moved by the same spring and grasped Gunter.

"Leggo! I'll smash you—"

"Collar the rotten cad!" said Tommy Doyle. "We'll teach him to play rotten tricks on an old soldier! Yank him away!"

Tommy Dodd wrenched the stockwhip from Gunter's hand and lashed it away. Cooke and Doyle swept the struggling junior off his feet and pitched him on the ground. They did not handle him gently.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome came running up.

"The rotten cad!" panted Jimmy Silver. "Are you hurt, Stumpy?"

Stumpy sat up and gasped.

"Ow—ow—ow! Yes I'm 'urt!" he panted. "Eep me up, will you? Tain't so easy to get up with only one leg."

Jimmy Silver dragged Stumpy to his feet. The postman plodded on to the House, and the juniors, Moderns and Classics, gathered round Gunter.

Gunter staggered up, looking furious. But he could not pursue the postman. The six juniors were round him in a circle.

"Classical cad!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "Is that how you treat old soldiers on your side, Jimmy Silver?"

"Modern fathead!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "We can't help that cad being a Classic, as he was planked on us. But we'll jolly well teach him manners."

"Where's my whip?" panted Gunter.

"We'll give it to you," said Jimmy Silver. "Bring that whip here. It's just what he wants. Now, you cad—"

"I guess—"

"Do you know that Stumpy lost his leg in Flanders, fighting?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"I guess I don't care a cent!"

"Then we'll make you care! Hold on to his ears while I give him his blessed whip!"

Jimmy Silver grasped the big stock-whip in a businesslike manner. The other fellows held on to Gunter.

Lash!

The heavy thong curled round Gunter's legs, and as they were not wooden legs he felt that lash very keenly. He gave a wild yell.

"Yow! You galoot! Stoppt!"

"How do you like it, you worm?"

asked Jimmy Silver. "That's one for the one you gave Stumpy!"

"Yow! I guess——"

Lash!

"And that's one for yourself!"

"Yarbooch!"

"As for this whip, I'll take care of it," went on Jimmy Silver. "Old Bulkeley confiscated it once. I'm going to confiscate it for good!"

"Gimme my whip!" yelled Gunter.

"Oh, you want some more, do you? Here you are!"

Lash!

"Oh, Jumping Jehoshaphat!" shrieked Gunter. "Let up!"

"Is that enough?"

"Yow! Yep!"

"Let the cad go, you fellows. I'll take this whip to the wood-shed and chop it up. He's played his last rotten trick with it!"

Gunter ground his teeth, but he did not make any attempt to regain possession of the stock-whip. The juniors carried it off, and Gunter dashed away towards the House. He was still anxious about his letter.

In the wood-shed the big stock-whip was duly chopped. The fragments were left on the floor for Gunter to gather up if he chose. As Jimmy Silver said, the junior from Texas had played his last trick with that whip.

But Gunter was not thinking about

the stock-whip just then. His letter was occupying all his thoughts. The postman had disappeared into the Fourth. On the Form-master's table lay a letter with American stamps and the American postmark on it.

"Ah," said Bootles, "there is a letter for you, Gunter?"

"May I have it, sir?" said Gunter eagerly.

"The Head has requested me to exercise supervision over your correspondence, Gunter," said Mr. Bootles severely. "Owing to the extremely undesirable acquaintances you have formed——"

"But that letter's from home, sir—from Texas," said Gunter. "You can see the postmark, sir. Only family matters."

Mr. Bootles turned his glasses upon the letter.

"Yes, I see that it is as you state, Gunter. As the letter is from your home you may have it unopened."

"Thank you, sir!"

Gunter caught up the letter and fairly bolted from the study. He eased as he closed Mr. Bootles's door.

"By gum, what an escape!" he muttered. "Might have been fairly tressed, by gum!"

The new junior hurried away to the end study with the letter, where he opened it. It was written in a boyish hand.

Gunter uttered a sudden, fierce exclamation as he read it. His dark face became darker, and his eyes gleamed savagely.

"Waal, I sww!" he exclaimed. "The game's up!"

"Hallo!" said a cheery voice at the door, as Jimmy Silver looked in. "Has the favourite geegee come in elevenh, Gunter?"

Gunter crushed the letter in his hand.

"You spying hound!" he shouted. "Did you hear——"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"Better language, please!" he said sharply. "Do you think I care two-pence about your dirty betting?"

"Betting!" said Gunter. "This ain't betting! Oh, by gum!"

The dismay in his face struck Jimmy Silver, and the anger died out of his look.

"Not bad news from home?" he said. "If so, I'm sorry!"

Gunter laughed harshly.

"Bad news from home!" he repeated. "Ha, ha, ha! Suppose a white-livered galoot started to play a game, and lost his nerve and went back on you? Suppose he planted you fairly in it, up to the neck, and then weakened and decided to give you away, what would you do?"

"Blessed if I know what your talking about!" said Jimmy Silver, mystified.

"I'd lynch him if I could!" muttered Gunter. "Let him come, then! I'll make it hot for him!"

"Eh? Who?"

"Don't ask any questions and I'll tell you no less!" sneered Gunter. "It looks like a short life and a merry one for me here. Well, it's going to be merry, anyway. I'll make the fur while it lasts."

He crumpled the letter in his hand and stamped out of the study, banging the door after him. Jimmy Silver stared at the door, rooted to the floor in blank astonishment.

The Head's nephew had astonished the end study in many ways. He had been utterly unlike everything the fellows had expected of the nephew of the grave and reverend headmaster of Hookwood. But now, for the first time, it came into Jimmy Silver's mind that there was something much more shady about the Head's nephew than he had suspected. What did that letter from America, and Gunter's anxiety about it mean? Who was it that was coming, and why did Gunter evidently fear his coming?

Jimmy Silver could find no answer

to those questions. But he was puzzled and strangely suspicious. There was more in the Head's nephew than met the eye, and Jimmy felt instinctively that the mystery was one which would not bear the light.

CHAPTER IV.

There's Money a-Slip!

"TEA in Hall, I suppose!" grunted Raby.

The Pistical Four were in a morose temper.

Lovell's uncle having failed them—owing to Lovell's little mistake about the gout—the Classical chums were still stony. They had made several attempts to raise the wind—looking for old debtors and asking them to settle. But debts seemed very difficult to collect that afternoon, and the net result had been the sum of three-pence, which Jones minor had advanced as an instalment upon a half-crown that he owed Newcome.

Three-pence was not a sufficient sum to provide a study feed for four. The Classical chums were good managers, and they knew how to be economical, but a feed for four on three-pence was beyond their powers. There was nothing for it but tea in Hall—the last resource of hard-up fellows.

Tea in Hall was not a plentiful meal. Bread-and-butter—which the juniors alluded to as doorsteps—and tea which was almost too weak to come out of the pot according to Raby's description. Other comestibles the fellows were at liberty to provide for themselves if they wanted to. But in the present state of the money market the Pistical Four couldn't provide anything.

"Tea in Hall and three-pence-worth of bloater-paste!" said Jimmy Silver. "And it's all Lovell's fault!"

"Well, I forget the old boy had gout," said Lovell. "I knew it was something, but I forgot what it was."

"You fellows ready for tea?"

Oswald of the Fourth came up cheerily with that inspiring question. The Fistical Four brightened up.

"Corn in Egypt!" murmured Baby.

"I've heard you're stony," grinned Oswald. "Hooker told me you'd been trying to screw a bob out of him."

"It wasn't much use," said Jimmy Silver. "Are you rolling in tin, Oswald?"

"I've had a remittance, and laid it out. I've taken the tack into your study, and I've been looking for you," said Oswald. "I'm standing it this time, so if you're ready for tea——"

"If!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four fell upon Dick Oswald and hugged him. Oswald's kind hospitality came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

"Well, if you're ready——" said Oswald, laughing.

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Jimmy Silver.

In high spirits the five juniors proceeded to the end study.

"Gunter's gone out," Oswald remarked. "He was there when I took the tack in, but he said he was going out to tea."

"Good egg!" said the four together. They were pleased to hear that their peculiar study-mate was out.

Jimmy Silver threw open the door of the end study.

Then he gave a yell of wrath.

"My hat!" Look there!"

"The rotters!" yelled Lovell.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Modern cadst!"

The chums of the Fourth stared into the study in a fury.

The famous apartment was a wreck.

Evidently a raider had been there. The table was turned upside down, and the chairs were stacked on it, and the study carpet, torn up by the roots, so to speak, was draped over the pile.

Books and papers and inkpots had been added, and the pictures from the

walls, and the fender and the fire-irons. The crockeryware was there, too—most of it in a very damaged state.

Worst of all, the tack had been added to the pile. A broken lamp lay on the floor, and the jam was trailing over the carpet. Jam-tarts had been squashed, ginger-pop opened and allowed to run to waste, and a big cake was dripping with ink. Sardines, also, in an inky state, were scattered among the furniture.

The Fistical Four gazed on the scene of ruin with anguish. Oswald's mouth opened wide, and he stood with it open, in a state of utter dismay.

He had brought his friends there to feed, and that was what greeted them. The eatables in the study were not exactly in an eatable state now.

Inky inscriptions on the walls told only too plainly to whom the raid was to be ascribed:

"CLASSICAL CADS!

"DOWNS WITH THE CLASSICS!

"KIND REGARDS FROM

TOMMY DODD!

"GO AND EAT COKE!"

There were many such inscriptions on the walls, on the looking-glass, and on the floor. The supply of ink in the study had been used lavishly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"The awful rotters!" gasped Jimmy. "This is rather more than a rag! We never damage their props like this when we raid them."

"Beastly cadst!" hooted Lovell. "Let's go over to their side and scrag them!"

"We—we'll smash them for this!" howled Baby. "Tain't a joke, it's blessed hoodiganism! Everything mucked up! Look at my Latin grammar swimming in jam and ink!"

"Look at the tack!" growled Newcome. "And I'm hungry!"

"It's too bad!" said Oswald. "Let's go over and smash 'em."

"Yes, rather!" Jimmy Silver's eyes

glittered with the light of battle. "We'll give Tommy Dodd the walloping of his life for this! Come on!"

Tea in the study was evidently out of the question. Vengeance was the next best thing, and the Fistic Four wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly. Jimmy Silver led the way with a rush, and the rest rushed after him.

They rushed out into the quadrangle, prepared to immolate the three Tommies on the spot.

But the three Tommies were not out of doors.

"We've got to tackle the cads in their own quarters," said Jimmy Silver. "Come on!"

Brimming with just wrath, the five juniors rushed across to the Modern side. They slackened down, and assumed as innocent an appearance as possible as they came on Mr. Manders, the senior master on the Modern side of Rookwood. But when Mr. Manders was safely out of sight they rushed on again, and arrived breathless outside Tommy Dodd's study.

There was a sound of clinking tea-cups and cheery voices in that study. The three Tommies were at tea, and apparently thinking of anything but danger.

"Don't waste time on 'em!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Go for 'em and scrag 'em before some beastly Modern prefect comes and chips in."

"You bet!"

Jimmy Silver hurled open the door, and the Classical juniors rushed pell-mell into the study.

CHAPTER IX.

(Not Golly!)

THE three Tommies were seated round the study table enjoying their tea. The sudden rush of the Classics took them by surprise.

Indeed, the rush was so sudden that the charging invaders crashed into the study table, and sent it flying.

The table went into the fender, and tea and tea-chings went into the grate, and the three Modern youths were hurled right and left.

Before they could recover from their astonishment, Jimmy Silver & Co. were collarng them.

Two pairs of hands were laid upon each of the Modern juniors, and they were rolled over and bumped and squashed amid wild and weird howls and yells.

If an earthquake had suddenly struck Tommy Dodd's study the surprise and the havoc could not have been more complete.

"Go for 'em!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"Bump the cads!"

"Wreck the study!"

"We'll give 'em kind regards, the Modern warts!"

Bump! Bump! Crash! Bang! Yell! Shriek!

"Rescue, Moderns!" screamed Tommy Dodd. "Yarnooch! You lunatics, wharrer marrer? Great pip! Ow! Help!"

"Yurruagh!" gurgled Tommy Doyle. "Oh, howly murther av Moses! It's dooty they are intirely!"

"Yow! Help!"

Bump! Bump! Crash!

"Sit on 'em!"

"Pin 'em down!"

"Hold 'em while I scrape some soot out of the chimney!" yelled Jimmy Silver, seizing the fire-shovel.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd struggled desperately.

"Hold on!" he roared. "Yah! Classical cads! Two to one! Finks! Yah!"

"This isn't a fight," said Jimmy Silver sternly, as he scraped down soot. "This is a punishment—a case of making the punishment fit the crime! We're going to make this study a bit worse than you've made ours!"

"Buck up, or there will be a crowd of the cads in!" said Lavell.

"Shove his head this way! Here's the soot!"

"Hold hard!" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"You silly ass, we haven't done anything to your silly study!"

"Rats!"

"You've wrecked it, you rotter!"

"And mucked up our feed! We're going to make an example of you! You've got to learn to draw the line somewhere!"

"I tell you—groch—we haven't!" yelled Tommy Dodd, struggling in the grasp of Lovell and Oswald, and eyeing with horror and apprehension the shovel of soot. "Chuck it—I mean, don't chuck it, you idiot! We haven't been in your rotten—ow!—wouldn't be found dead in it! Yooop!"

Jimmy Silver held his hand—just in time.

"Honour bright?" he demanded.

"Yes, you idiot!"

"Then it was some of your Modern cads," said Raby. "Our study's a wreck!"

"Serve you jolly well right—yow—but we didn't do it, you silly asses!" roared Tommy Cook. "Leggo!"

"Let 'em have the soot!" said Lovell. "Somebody did it, if they didn't, and somebody's got to squirm for it! Give 'em the soot!"

"You thumping idiot!" roared Tommy Dodd. "I tell you—"

"Oh, give 'em the soot! They're Modern cads, anyway!"

But Jimmy Silver paused. Certainly the three Tommies were Moderns, anyway, and as such deserved to be sooted—from a Classical point of view. But Jimmy Silver resolved to be just before he was generous—with the soot.

"Hold on!" he said. "If they didn't do it, we've got to find out who did. It was some awful cad. Look here, Doddy, your name was scrawled on the wall with kind regards!"

"That shows it was Dodd," said Newcome.

"Shows it was somebody taking you in, you fatheads!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Smythe of the Shell, perhaps. Just one of his mean tricks. Isn't my word good enough for you, you Classical fat-heads?"

"Well, yes," said Jimmy Silver. "If you didn't do it, you needn't have the soot. We take back that ragging. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—yuu—yuu—"

"But who did it, then?" howled Lovell. "Somebody did, and it must have been a Modern cad, or Dodd's name wouldn't have been put there."

"Pax!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Sure, I'll smash yee whin I get loose!" howled Doyle.

"Then you won't get loose in a hurry!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Peace at any price, you chaps. Bump them till they make it pax!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pax!" shrieked the three Moderns in chorus.

"Good egg!" Jimmy deposited the soot in the fire-grate. "Sorry for this little mistake, Doddy; but your name was up in the study, you know."

"Some cad did that, knowing you were silly idiot enough to be taken in!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "If I hadn't made it pax, I'd—I'd—"

"But who did it?" demanded Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Oswald, with a jump. "Gunter!"

"Gunter!" yelled the Fistical Four.

"Yes, Gunter!" exclaimed Oswald excitedly. "He was in the study when I took the buck in, and I noticed he was grinning like a hyena. It's just one of his dirty tricks, too."

"Gunter!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "Well, you were a duffer not to think of that before!"

"Well, you didn't think of it."

"Oh, don't jaw, Oswald! Of course it was Gunter. He wanted to make us go for old Doddy, to pay us all out for handling him this afternoon." Jimmy Silver saw it all now—a little late. "Doddy, we're sorry!"

"If you don't clear out of my study I'll make you sorrier!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "If you hadn't made it pax—"

"You see—"

Tommy Dodd jumped for his cricket-bat.

"Buzz off, you Classical maniac! I

give you three seconds, and then, pax or no pax, I'll—"

The bat was brandished in the air, and Jimmy Silver & Co. retired hurriedly from the study. It was very much to Tommy Dodd's credit, under the circumstances, that he did not break the solemn compact of "pax."

The din in the study had brought a number of Modern fellows along, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had to scuttle hastily out of the passage. An orange followed them, and squashed behind Oswald's ear.

In the quad they paused, breathing hard after their great exertions, and in a towering rage.

"It was Gunter, of course!" said Jimmy Silver between his teeth. "When I come to think of it, Doddy wouldn't muck up our things like that. We'll find Gunter and scratch him bald-headed!"

"He's gone out," said Raby.

"Then we'll go after him! Come on!"

"Yew!" said Oswald. "I'm going to wash this orange off. It's squashed down my neck! Groch!"

"What about tea?" asked Raby.

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"Hang tea! We're going to scrag Gunter!"

Jimmy Silver's word was law. The Fistical Four marched off—on the war-path. It was too late now for tea in Hall, and tea in the study was completely mucked up, and the Fistical Four hunted for Gunter with deadly intent. There was likely to be a high old time for the Head's nephew when they found him.

CHAPTER 15.

Trapped!

"THERE'S the cad!" growled Lovell.

Gunter had been found.

The search had not been long, for Jimmy Silver remembered that Gunter, since his smoking at Rookwood had

been stopped, had been in the habit of going down to Penn's barn to "enjoy" his cheroots. In that direction they looked for him first, and, as they sighted the barn, they sighted Gunter. At the window of the loft over the barn the junior from Texas was sitting, with a big black cheroot between his teeth. Anybody crossing the fields might have seen him; but his recklessness was in keeping with his general line of conduct.

The Fistical Four stopped under the window, and shook their fists at the junior above. Gunter grinned down at them, and dropped some ash upon Lovell's upturned face. Lovell yelled. Some of it went into his eye.

"Rallo!" called out Gunter.

"You rotter!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"What's biting you now?" asked Gunter.

"You mucked up our study, and we went for the Modern cads—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I reckoned you would!" yelled Gunter in great merriment. "How did you find out it wasn't Tommy Dodd?"

"We're going to smash you, you worm!"

"Oh, you couldn't smash one side of me!" said Gunter contemptuously. "Come up here, and I'll make shavings of you!"

"What!"

"I guess you'd better vamoose," said Gunter. "If you know when you're safe, you light out!"

"You wait till we get at you!" spluttered Lovell.

Gunter's defiance was the last straw. The door was on the other side of the barn, and the Fistical Four raced round the building. Gunter chuckled and disappeared from the window.

"We'll simply pulverize the cad!" panted Lovell. "Get this blessed door open!"

The big door of the barn was closed. It was not locked, but it did not open as the Classical Four shoved at it.

"There's a wedge under it!" growled Jimmy Silver. "The beast knew we

should find him here, I suppose! Ease it open!"

The juniors worked the door open. A wooden wedge had been shoved under it, but by careful manipulation they forced it away, and the door opened at last. The chums of the Fourth, breathing vengeance, rushed into the barn.

A ladder led up to the trapdoor that gave admittance to the loft. They rushed for the ladder, and Jimmy Silver led the way up.

"Look out for him, Jimmy!" muttered Raby.

Jimmy was looking out. The trapdoor could easily have been defended by the fellow in the loft, and a frontal attack would not have been easy, though at that moment nothing would have stopped the enraged juniors for long. But Gunter did not appear at the trapdoor.

Jimmy Silver scrambled through, followed fast by his chums. They glared round the loft for Gunter.

He was not to be seen.

"The cad's hiding!" growled Lovell. "He's behind the straw somewhere! Hunt him out!"

Crash!

"The ladder!" yelled Raby.

They spun back to the trapdoor.

The ladder by which they had ascended was gone. It had been dragged away, and lay at full-length on the brick floor of the tern.

Twenty feet of sheer space was below the trapdoor now. And underneath stood—Gunter!

He grinned up at them.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him spellbound. They had expected to find Gunter in the loft, where they had seen him at the window.

A little later, it dawned upon them that he had descended, and that he must have been concealed in the lower room while they were negotiating the wedged door.

From his hiding-place he had watched them swarm up into the loft, and he had dragged the ladder away after them.

They were trapped in the loft.

There was no possible means of descent—they could not drop twenty feet upon a brick floor.

The Fletical Four glared down at Gunter with feelings too deep for words. The Head's nephew grinned and chuckled.

"All O.K. up there?" he asked, blowing out a cloud of smoke.

"Oh, you ratter!"

"Fairly cornered—what!" grinned Gunter. "I guess you'd have to get up early in the morning to handle me!"

"Put that ladder back!" howled Lovell.

"What for?" chuckled Gunter.

"So that we can come down and smash you!" roared Lovell.

"Hi, ha, ha! Not good enough!"

"We—we—well——"

"I calculate you can stay there and cool your heels," said Gunter. "Sorry I can't stop! I've got to see some friends in the village."

"Hold on!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "You've got to put that ladder back. We can't stay up here."

"Can't you?" chorled Gunter. "It seems to me that you can't do anything else!"

"You—you—you——"

"My pals will be waiting for me!" grinned Gunter. "I've spent a lot of time here waiting for you, you see! So—long!"

"Hold on, Gunter! We can't stay here. There will be a row if we're not in by locking-up!" shouted Raby.

"That's your funeral!"

"You mean to keep us up here after calling-over, you villain?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"You can stay there all night for all I care!" said Gunter coolly. "And all the week, for that matter! It doesn't matter a Continental red cent to me!"

"You cad! Let us down, and we'll let you off!" said Jimmy Silver with an effort. "We—we'll make it pay!"

"I'm not asking to be let off!" jeered Gunter. "And I guess I'm not letting you out, not if I know it!"

"Oh, you worm!" gasped Jimmy Silver, raging helplessly. "You outsider! We shall get into a row with Dootles if we're late for call-over."

"Serve you right!"

"We'll scrag you afterwards, you worm!" yelled Lovell.

"You don't seem to be making much of a success of the scragging!" grinned Gunter. "I guess I'll chance it. You see, I can't let you out. I'm taking my pals home with me, and I can't have you galoots foolin' round in the study. You wouldn't get on with my pals!"

"You—you're taking those ratters to Bookwood!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Why not?"

"You fathead! The Head——"

"Oh, blow the Head!"

"You'll get sacked!" shouted Raby.

"A short life and a merry one!" chuckled Gunter. "I'm going to take in my pals and stand drinks and smokes in the study."

"Wha-a-at!"

"You gnicoots can stay up there! If you stay out all night, my word, what a shine there'll be at Bookwood when you turn up! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunter turned to the door.

"Come back, you ratter!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Gunter walked out of the barn whistling, and slammed the heavy door after him. There was no doubt about it—he certainly meant to leave them there.

Jimmy Silver, breathing hard, went to the window. He sighted Gunter in the fields, walking away towards Coombe. Gunter looked back, waved his hand and grinned, and disappeared beyond the hedge.

CHAPTER 25.

Back or Nothing!

"WELL, this is a go!" said Raby distantly.

"Fairly distasteful, and by that said!" said Lovell with a snort.

"Dished and done!" said Newcome. "Now get us out of it, Jimmy Silver! You got us into it, you know!"

Jimmy Silver granted.

There seemed no way out.

Newcome had suggested shouting for help, but the proposal was negatived at once. The barn was a great distance from the farmhouse, and Farmer Penn, as they knew only too well, did not allow liberties to be taken with his property. If he found four Rookwood juniors in his loft, he was most likely to leave them there while he sent word to the school. It occurred to the juniors that their invasion of the barn would be regarded by Mr. Penn as trespassing, and Mr. Penn was not likely to listen to reason on the subject.

They needed help, but they did not want any help from that quarter. The less noise they made the better.

But, left to their own resources, there seemed to be no escape. There was nearly twenty feet of space below the trapdoor, and escape from the window was still more impossible. It looked out on a sheer wall.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome fixed significant looks on their leader. It was a leader's business to lead, there could be no denying that. It was up to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver admitted it, but he remarked that there was nothing doing. He admitted that he was an unusually clever chap, but he couldn't work miracles. Wings, or, at least, an aeroplane, were required, and such things could not be produced from Jimmy Silver's waistcoat pocket.

"We're waiting!" remarked Lovell, when half an hour had passed.

"So am I!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, what are you waiting for, fat-head?"

"Looks as if we shall have to wait till morning," said Jimmy Silver flippantly. "I dare say somebody will come to the barn to-morrow morning."

"The gates are locked at dark," said Lovell, "and it's a quarter of an hour from here to Bookwood! There's time

for you to think of a way out, Jimmy Silver, if you've got the brains!"

"Tain't brains that's wanted—it's a ladder or a pair of wings. I don't usually carry a twenty-foot ladder in my pocket," said Jimmy. "I forgot to bring one with me this afternoon. A fellow does forget things, you know."

"Don't you be a funny ass!" roared Lovell. "Ain't you study-leader? Haven't you told us so a dozen times—or a hundred times, rather? You've landed us in this. Now get us out of it in time for calling-over!"

"Nothing doing!"

"There will be something doing soon!" said Lovell darkly. "You've got to think of a way out, or we'll jolly well rag you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and Newcome.

"Look here, you ass——"

"Nuff said!" interrupted Lovell. "We'll give you another quarter of an hour. It's up to a leader to lead. Otherwise he gets it in the neck."

Jimmy Silver grunted again, and set his wits to work. Unless the juniors were to get into bad trouble at Rockwood, they had to get out of that peculiar trap.

Missing call-over would be serious enough, but staying out all night would be the limit. And they could not sneak. They would have to face the music, and leave Gunter to cackle.

Jimmy Silver nudged his brains. He looked from the window, and shook his head. A fly could have crawled down the wall, but Jimmy Silver was not a fly. He looked down the trapdoor, and shook his head again. A drop on the brick floor below meant broken bones, at least, and probably a broken neck, and naturally he desired to preserve it intact.

Lovell timed him with his watch. The Co. meant business. What the dickens was a leader for if he couldn't lead?

A quarter of an hour passed.

Jimmy Silver seemed no nearer a

solution of the problem. Lovell put away his watch with a business-like air.

"Got it?" he asked.

"Got what, fathead?" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"The way out, duffer!"

"There's the way out," said Jimmy Silver, pointing to the trapdoor. "It's all right. You jump out, Lovell!"

"Eh?"

"And I'll drop on you," said Jimmy. "That'll break my fall, and I shall get off with a bruise or two."

"And what about me?" shrieked Lovell.

"Oh, you'll break your neck, but those little things can't be helped. Try to fall with your head upwards!"

"Mum-mum-my head upwards!"

"Yes, so that I can drop on something soft!"

"You funny idiot!" yelled Lovell. "Collar him!"

The Co. were not in a mood for Jimmy Silver's little jokes. They rushed at him, and Jimmy dodged away along the loft.

"Chuck it, you rump!" he shouted. "I'm trying to think it out, ain't I?"

"Time's up!"

Jimmy dodged round the sawing trap.

"Hold on, I've got it!" he gasped.

Lovell panted.

"Out with it, then, sharp! Now, then——"

"There's always a way out of anything if you've brains enough to think of it," said Jimmy Silver, quite cheerfully. "There's a remedy for everything but death and taxes. Blessed if I know why I didn't think of it before! I suppose it was your late worried me, Lovell——"

"Get it out, you ass!"

"Simply a gym exercise," said Jimmy Silver, scanning the trapdoor. "There's about nineteen or twenty feet down there. Well, you hang on with your hands, Lovell——"

"What for?"

"I suppose you've got enough nerve?"

"My nerves all right, fathead. It's

only what we do in the gym. But what's the good of hanging there with my hands?"

"You're the biggest and strongest, likewise the heaviest, not to mention the fattest and fatheadiest——"

"Will you get on with the wadding, you chump?"

"Well, you hang there, and Raby will crawl over you, and hang on to your feet—they're big enough——"

"Never mind my feet, idiot! What good is Raby going to do hanging on to my feet?"

"Then I'll crawl down over both of you, and hang on to Raby's feet, and drop. I can drop the rest."

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Co. stared at Jimmy Silver. It was a risky and reckless scheme; yet it was no more than some of the gymnastics they had gone through in the Rookwood gymnasium. But there was a brick floor below instead of a net, and that made a difference. For a tumble meant—what they did not like to think of.

There was a short silence. The Physical Four looked very grave.

"We're game," said Lovell at last. "I suppose it's the only way, as they say in the play. I could stand the weight, though not for long."

"I'm not going to hang on permanently," said Jimmy Silver. "Only long enough to drop."

"Where do I come in?" asked Newcome.

"You can hold on to Lovell's ears and give him your support."

"Silly ass!"

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver.

It required some nerve. Fortunately, the Physical Four were famous for their nerve. It was a quality they had never lacked.

Lovell, with his face set grimly, lowered himself into the opening, and held on by the edge. Newcome took a grip on his collar—not his ears, as Jimmy had playfully suggested—and held him fast.

That was the easiest part of the proceedings.

Then came Raby's turn. Raby was much lighter than Lovell in weight. He grasped his chum, and lowered himself, his teeth set and his heart beating. Lovell kept his elbow on the floor of the loft, and Newcome held on to him. Raby went lower and lower, and swung on Lovell's legs.

All the flippancy had gone out of Jimmy Silver's face now. He knew that the expedient was a desperate one, and that there might be disaster.

But he did not falter.

He lowered himself from the side of the trap, and held on there for a moment before he shifted his grasp to his hanging chums.

"Steady!" he said.

They did not speak, their teeth were hard set.

Jimmy Silver gently changed his grasp from the trap-edge to Lovell. Lovell hung on grunly, hardly breathing.

Down went Jimmy Silver.

Down, carefully, methodically, till he reached Raby, and hung on to him.

Down lower, till he was clinging to Raby's knees with a grip that made Raby wince with pain, though he gave no sound.

One rapid glance Jimmy threw below. The floor of the barn was not far off now. The human chain above him had cut off half the distance.

He set his teeth and let go.

The relief from his weight came only in time for Lovell and Raby. Their strength was taxed to the utmost.

Bump!

Jimmy Silver landed on his feet and rolled over.

He was up again in a second. The fall had jarred him, but he was not hurt.

"Hold on while I get the ladder up!" he panted.

No reply. But the juniors held on. Raby could not have climbed up over Lovell to the loft to save his life. He had to wait for the ladder. His arms,

and Lovell's, had to bear the strain till the ladder was raised.

Jimmy Silver did not lose a second. He knew how precious seconds were—perhaps all the difference between life and death for his chums.

He grasped the heavy ladder, and exerted his strength, and reared it into its place.

Clump!

The head of the ladder dropped in its place, the rungs now were below Raby's feet as he swung, and he groped for them.

Jimmy Silver scrambled up the ladder and helped him to hold.

Lovell gave a faint gasp as Raby's weight was removed. Raby grasped the ladder and slid down to the floor of the barn, past Jimmy Silver. He collapsed on the floor panting.

Jimmy Silver mounted higher, and grasped Lovell, and drew him upon the ladder. Lovell did not speak; his face was white.

"Steady, old chap!" whispered Jimmy.

With infinite care he helped Lovell down the ladder to the floor. Then Newcome came sliding down.

"Oh!" gasped Lovell, leaning heavily on Jimmy's shoulder. "Oh, my arms—ow!"

For ten minutes, at least, the chums of the Fourth sat motionless on the hay in the barn, resting after their exertions. Lovell rubbed his arms at last, as if to make sure that they were still there.

"It was a strain!" he remarked. "We've done it!"

"And done, Gunter, the end!" said Raby. "Blessed if I'd like to go through it again! I thought I was going every second when that fathead Silver was hanging on to me."

Jimmy Silver rose.

"Come on!" he said. "We owe this to Gunter, and we're going to make him wriggle. I dare say he's got his precious pals in the study by this time. Come on!"

And the Pistical Four, still somewhat

subdued, left the barn and started for Rookwood. They had been in peril of their lives, but, the danger over, it was soon dismissed from their minds. They were thinking of Gunter now, and what was to happen when they found him.

CHAPTER XI.

Gunter's Little Party!

THERE was a crowd in the Fourth Form passage when Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived there.

Oswald met them with a startled, almost scared face.

"Jolly glad you fellows have come in!" he gasped. "You may be able to do something with him."

"Him! Gunter?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. He's in the end study——"

"Good!"

"He's got a gang of awful rascals with him; he brought them in," said Oswald. "They're smoking and drinking——"

"We'll see to him," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Come on, you chaps!"

The Pistical Four marched on to the end study with a crowd of the Fourth and the Shell at their heels.

Jimmy Silver flung the door open.

The atmosphere in the study was thick with smoke. Four fellows sat round the table. One of them was Gunter. The Head's nephew had a cigar between his yellow teeth, and a glass in his hand. There were bottles and glasses and cards and cigar-ash on the table. The room was still a wreck from Gunter's late doings there, but the festive party did not seem to mind.

Gunter's companions were such as had never been seen in Rookwood before. They were all young fellows, though some years older than Gunter—worthless characters who haunted the public-houses in Coombe and the neighbouring market-town. And all three of them were under the influence of drink.



"Help!" Mr. Bonitas hung at the end of the rope like a fish on a line. Jimmy Silver and Co., and Tommy Dodd made a rush, and a dozen juniors followed. Whizz! Crash! Gunter hurled down the line with unerring aim.

Gunter started as he saw the Fiskical Four at the door. His face was flushed; he had been drinking, too. The room reeked with the odour of spirits.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "So you got out?"

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver, "we got out."

"Come in and join the merry party," said Gunter. "Take a hand at nap. Make room for my study-mates, Bulger!"

"Ye gods!" murmured Lovell. "And that's the Head's nephew!"

Jimmy Silver looked hard at the young blackguard in the study. He remembered the letter from America, and the strange remarks that Gunter had made concerning it. A dim, half-formed suspicion was in the back of his mind. Was it possible that there was some trick—some swindle—and that this hardened young rascal was not what he seemed?

"Oh, trot in!" said Gunter. "Pass the rosy, Tadger!"

Tadger passed the whisky bottle. Jimmy Silver strode into the study, and knocked the bottle out of his hand, and it smashed on the floor.

"Stop this!" he said savagely.

Gunter sprang up.

"Get out of this study, Jimmy Silver!" he shouted.

"You're getting out, and your precious friends, too!" said Jimmy Silver, his voice trembling with rage. "You'll never set foot in this study again, you ead! We've stood you long enough because of the Head. We're not standing any more of it! Get out, the whole gang of you!"

"I guess I'm sticking!" grinned Gunter. "I'm the Head's nephew—ha, ha, ha!—and you can't turn me out! Stand by me, partners!"

"Kick them out!" roared Lovell furiously.

Smash—smash—smash! Bottles and glasses were hurled to the floor by the angry juniors. Gunter gave a yell of rage, and sprang upon Jimmy Silver. His tipsy friends backed him up at

once, and the Co. joined in, and Oswald and several more of the Fourth rushed into the fray.

There was a terrific struggle in the end study.

Tadger was the first to go. He spun into the passage and crashed down there.

Bulger followed him, roaring, and rolled over Tadger. Then Gunter, fighting like a tiger, was dragged to the door and pitched out. The last of the gang, in the grasp of the Fiskical Four, was whirled through the doorway, and sent sprawling over Gunter.

"Hooray!" chorused the juniors in the passage.

"By gad!" said Smythe. "Here comes Bootles!"

"Cave!"

Mr. Bootles rustled up the passage, his face aflame. He seemed petrified as he saw Gunter & Co. sprawling on the floor.

"Who—who—who are these persons?" he ejaculated faintly.

"Gunter's friends, sir," chirruped Smythe.

"Gunter, how dare you introduce such persons in the school! Gunter, you have been smoking—and—and drinking!" Mr. Bootles looked for a moment as if he would faint. "Gunter! Good heavens!"

"I guess there'll be a row now," said Gunter, as he scrambled up. "A short life and a merry one! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gunter," said Mr. Bootles faintly—"Gunter! You wretched, wicked boy! Follow me to the Head at once!"

"Oh, come off!" said Gunter. "I guess I'm not going to see the old boy now!"

"The—the what? The—the old boy?" stammered Mr. Bootles. "Bless my soul! Are you mad, Gunter? Bulkeley—Neville—some that wicked boy and bring him to the Head's study!"

The two prefects, who had followed

Mr. Bootles up the passage, promptly laid their grasp on Gunter. They marched him off, struggling.

"As for those disreputable characters," thundered Mr. Bootles, "tell the sergeant to come and see them off the premises at once, my boys!"

And Mr. Bootles rustled away after Gunter and the prefects.

"We needn't trouble Sergeant Kettle," grinned Lovell. "We'll see the bounders off the premises ourselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Pile in!"

The juniors seized upon Messers. Tagger & Co. The three blackguards were rushed, struggling and yelling, down the passage.

In the midst of an excited crowd they were hustled across the quad and hurled out of the gates. There they took to their heels and ran. It was likely to be a long time before any of Gunter's peculiar friends accepted another invitation from Gunter to a celebration inside the walls of Rookwood.

"That's the last of them, at any rate," panted Jimmy Silver, "and I should think it would be the last of Gunter, too."

"The Head can't overlook it, nephew or not," said Lovell. "He'll have to go. And a jolly good riddance for Rookwood!"

The juniors waited anxiously for news. What effect the report of his nephew's proceedings would have upon the Head they could hardly imagine. The news was not long in coming.

Gunter was in the punishment-room, confined there by order of the Head. The rascal of Rookwood had reached the end of his tether at last. On the morrow he was to leave Rookwood, expelled from the school.

And Jimmy Silver & Co., though they bore no malice, could not help feeling comforted by the news. They had had enough of the rascal of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 22.

Another Surprise.

CLANG! Clang! Clang! The rising-bell rang out in the clear, crisp morning. The Classical Fourth turned out at the first clang. Even Townsend and Topham, the slackers of the Form, turned out at once.

All the fellows were keen to know about the Head's nephew. There had been a rumour that he was to be taken away from Rookwood before any of the boys were down.

"By gad, I'd like to see him gone!" Townsend remarked; "and I'd like to know that he's gone!"

"Well, he's going right enough!" said Jimmy Silver. "The Head can't let him off after what he's done."

"Blessed if I feel so sure about it!" said Lovell. "He said last night there would be a surprise for us this morning."

"If the Head lets him stay we'll jolly well kick him out ourselves!" said Raby. "We're not standing him in our study, anyway!"

"No jolly fear!"

The Classical Fourth crowded downstairs, the Physical Four being the first down. Jimmy Silver & Co. made their way first to the punishment-room. The door was unlocked, the room was empty.

"He's gone!" said Jimmy.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" growled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver glanced round the room curiously. The bed was still made, and had plainly not been slept in. The window was wide open.

"My only chapman!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Look at that!"

He jumped to the window.

A bar of iron crossed the space of the window, but the bar was out of its place. It had been worked out of the rusty old socket on one side and twisted up. It must have taken time and patience to do that, and there could be only one explanation.

Gunter had left that room by the window!

Jimmy Silver put out his head and looked down. Below was the ivy-covered wall, fifty feet or more down to the quadrangle. Here and there the ivy was torn. Below Jimmy could see that loose leaves were scattered.

He drew a deep breath. It was almost incredible that a fellow could have been reckless enough to climb out of that window and trust himself to the ivy at the dizzy height. But there was little doubt that the junior from Texas had done it.

"He was at the window last night when we came here," said Jimmy. "You remember we heard him shut it, Lovell."

"My hat, it needed a nerve if he's climbed out!" said Newcome. "What did he do it for? Has the silly as run away instead of waiting to be turned out?"

"Looks like it."

The Physical Four left the punishment-room and went down. They caught a glimpse of Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth, speaking in low tones and looking very nervous. Mr. Bootles came along the passage with a portentous expression on his face and vanished into the Head's study.

"By gad! What's goin' on?" asked Smythe of the Shell. "Some of the fellows are sayin' that the Yankee kid's bolted."

"He's taken his things, too," called out Jones minor. "I've looked in his study—a lot of things are gone!"

There was a rush to the end study—which belonged to the Physical Four, and which Gunter had shared with them. The study was quickly crowded with curious and excited juniors.

Jones minor's news was correct—Gunter's property had certainly been removed. His box in the dormitory was corded up, and was still intact. But he had had a large bag in the study, locked ready to be taken away. The bag was now wide open, and half

its contents were gone. Jimmy Silver remembered that there had been a lasso among Gunter's belongings, which he had brought with him from Texas. It was not there now. A spirit-stove and other articles which Jimmy had seen packed into the bag the previous evening were missing. A coat and a rug were gone, too.

"He got out of the punishment-room by the window right enough," remarked Lovell. "Then he must have gone into the House and come here for his things. Bet you he was gone before Bootles came down."

"He can't be sacked now," said Oswald. "But he's gone, anyway."

"I suppose that's the surprise he was talking about," said Jimmy Silver. "Well, he's gone, and that settles it."

The excited juniors crowded downstairs again. Bulkeley was in the hall, and Jimmy Silver ventured to ask the great man of the Sixth a question:

"Has Gunter gone, Bulkeley?"

"Nobody knows what's become of him," said Bulkeley shortly. "He wasn't in the punishment-room when Mr. Bootles came down. The wonder is he didn't break his neck getting out of the window."

The Physical Four sauntered out into the quad. There they found a crowd of juniors from the Modern side, all curious to know what had happened. Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were almost as much interested in Gunter as the Classics among whom he had dwelt during his short and surprising career at Rookwood.

"So he's gone!" said Tommy Dodd. "Good riddance. I should say—the blessed young burglar!"

"Burglar!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose it was Gunter—the tuckshop's been burgled!"

"Great Scott!"

There was a rush for the tuckshop. Sergeant Kettil kept that little establishment, on the ground floor of the ancient, dismantled clock-tower of Rookwood. The new clock-tower, a

massive brick erection, was on the Modern side of the school.

The little diamond-paned window was broken. Sergeant Kettle was in the shop, looking very flustered and angry.

"Been burgled, sergeant?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Which I'd like to get 'old of the rascal!" he said. "Arf my stock taken away—good 'arf of it, by gum! A whole 'am and no end of tins. I ain't counted 'em yet—but a good 'arf."

"Was it Gunter?" yelled Smith of the Shell.

"Which I s'pose it was, as he's run away," said the sergeant. "But 'ow he could run away with that 'am and all them tins beats me. Not to mention cakes and tarts and ginger-beer, by gum!"

"Well, this beats the band!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as they left the school shop. "If he's run away, what did he want the sergeant's stuff for? How the dickens could he carry it off?"

"Must have been done for a lark," said Raby.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Jimmy. "What's that?"

He stopped suddenly, and stared up at the clock-tower, the modern clock-tower on the Modern side. From the iron railing that surrounded the little platform at the top of the tower a flag fluttered. Two or three cricket-stumps bound together formed a pole, which was bound to the railing, and from the top of the improvised flag-staff a flag fluttered in the breeze. It was not a large flag, being evidently manufactured of a couple of handkerchiefs pinned together. But the colour of it was startling. It was black—black as ink. In fact, it was undoubtedly in black ink that the handkerchiefs had been steeped, to produce that colour.

"The black flag!" stuttered Lovell.

"Gunter!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

A figure appeared on the top of the tower beside the fluttering flag.

It was the figure of Gunter, the Head's nephew, the rascal of Rookwood. He was not gone!

CHAPTER 23. HOLDING THE FORT!

GUNTER!" The amazed exclamation of the Pictorial Four drew glances from all sides, and a host of eyes were turned up to the clock-tower.

"Gunter!"
"The Head's giddy nephew!"
"He's not gone!"

There was a roar of excitement in the quadrangle. Fellows rushed from all sides towards the clock-tower.

Gunter, cool and reckless as ever, grinned down at them.

"Gunter," shouted Jimmy Silver, "what are you doing up there!"

"I guess I've been having brekker!"

"Brekker!" yelled the juniors.

"Sure!"

"Brekker on the clock-tower!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "But—but what are you doing there? What's this little game?"

"Holding the fort."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I guess you'll find the door locked down there—and screwed!" chuckled Gunter. "I reckon I was kinder busy last night while you galsots were snoozing. And I reckon they won't get me out of 'yer in a hurry—just a few!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You can wade in and try if you like," said Gunter. "I've got my hasso 'yer, and if you get in reach of it, I pity you. I've got tins of sardines, and tins of pineapple, and tins of salmon, and tins of goodness knows what, and I can spare a few for your nappers if necessary!"

"By gad!"

"You can go and tell Bootles I'm holding the fort!" grinned Gunter. "I've hoisted the 'Jolly Roger'!"

"The—the what?"

"The black flag, you galsots! I guess I'm going to have a high old time!"

"Oh, crumb!"

"He's potty!" gasped Townsend. "He

must be potty. The Head will simply skin him for this before he's sacked!"

"The Head's got to get hold of me first!" grinned Gunter. "I guess I'm sticking it. Will you take him a message from me?"

"What's the message?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Tell him he's an old mugwump, and that he can go and eat coke, with kind regards from his loving nephew!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Yes, I'm likely to take him that message, I don't think!" said Jimmy Silver. "You had better chuck this, Gunter. It will only make things worse for you."

"I guess not!"

"Look here, you're not on our side!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd indignantly. "We don't allow Classical rotters on our side. If you don't clear off that tower, Gunter, we'll come and fetch you!"

"Come on, then!" chuckled Gunter.

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle rushed to the door of the tower. But it was fast. The massive oaken door had been screwed, as well as locked and bolted. The three Tommies kicked at it, but they could do nothing else.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter. "Are you coming in, you galsots?"

"Here comes Knowles!"

Knowles of the Sixth, the head prefect of the Modern side, strode upon the scene. He stared up angrily at Gunter and the black flag.

"What are you doing up there, Gunter?" he shouted.

"Looking down at a silly idiot!" replied Gunter cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop your silly cackling, you young rascals!" exclaimed Knowles. "Gunter, come down at once!"

"Rats!"

"You young scoundrel— Oh, my hat! Yarooop!"

Gunter had reached behind him, and a tin of sardines dropped from his hand fairly upon Knowles' head. It was

fortunate for the Modern prefect that he was wearing a straw hat, for the tin hit him fair and square. In spite of the hat, it was a hard knock.

"Yarooop! Oh—ah!" stuttered Knowles, backing away with remarkable suddenness. "You—you dangerous young scoundrel!"

"Here's another!" yelled Gunter.

Whiz!

Knowles jumped out of the way, and the whizzing tin passed him, and caught Jimmy Silver on the side of the head. Jimmy gave a roar.

"Get back!" said Lovell hastily.

"The beast's dangerous. He might brain a chap with one of those tins!"

The Juniors crowded back, angry now. Sardine-tins hurled from a height were decidedly dangerous, and that specimen of Gunter's utter and ruffianly recklessness did not please them.

"Oh, my napper!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

He rubbed his head tenderly. A big bump was already forming there.

"The ruffianly beast!" said Raby.

"He ought to be scragged! Hallo, Knowles has had enough!"

Knowles of the sixth was striding away towards the School House. He went to carry the news that Gunter was not gone. The crowd in the quadrangle thickened. All faces were upturned, all eyes were fixed upon the figure on the top of the clock-tower.

The excitement that reigned was breathless. Gunter evidently enjoyed the sensation he was causing, and equally evidently he was completely reckless as to consequences.

Time had been when a barring-out at Rookwood—when Jimmy Silver & Co. had barred themselves in the turk-shop and held the fort against Mr. Manders. But that had happened during the absence of the Head, and because the Classical heroes were tyrannised over by a Modern master. That, as Lovell remarked now, had been a different matter altogether—very different from a young blackguard, who had been expelled for racially con-

fact, fortifying himself in the clock-tower, and denying the Head himself.

Mr. Bootles came out of the School House with Knowles, looking like a man in a dream. The surprising happenings of that morning had completely thrown Mr. Bootles off his balance.

The Fourth-Form master swept towards the clock-tower, and stopped, and blinked up at Gunter. The crowd watched him breathlessly.

"Gunter!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"Hallo, cockey!"

"I—I thought you had—had, in fact, departed," said Mr. Bootles. "I am glad that you have not been guilty of the disrespect of running away, Gunter. Kindly come down at once, and follow me into the House!"

"Cut it out!"

"Wha-a-ah!"

"Here's one for you!"

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver sprang forward and caught his Form-master by the arm, and dragged him aside just in time. A sardine-tin crashed on the ground at Mr. Bootles' feet. The master stared at it dazedly.

"What—what—" he stammered.

"Come back, sir!" shouted Jimmy.

"Silver—what—what—"

Gunter was taking aim again with another tin. Jimmy Silver forcibly dragged the astounded and confused Form-master back, and the tin crashed down within a foot of him.

"G-g-good heavens!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "The—the reckless young ruffian! He—he—he might have caused me a serious injury! Bless my soul! Thank you, Silver. I—I—I must go and report this to the Head! Bless my soul! What a very dreadful young reprobate."

Mr. Bootles, in a state almost of collapse, hurried into the House. There was a yell of derisive laughter from Gunter.

"Who's the next? You coming next, Jimmy Silver?"

Jimmy Silver did not accept the in-

itation. He would have been very glad to get within hitting distance of Gunter; but at long range Gunter had the advantage, and the Rookwood Juniors carefully kept out of range.

CHAPTER 24.

Gunter's Defiance.

"THE Head!"

Silence and awe fell upon the Rookwood crowd as the majestic figure of the Head swept upon the scene.

Dr. Chisholm's face, always severe, seemed like iron now.

Some of the fellows knew that he had been kind enough to his strange nephew when the latter arrived at Rookwood from the far-off plains of Texas.

He had been patient with him, and had pardoned him much. It could not be said that the doctor had erred on the side of severity in expelling his sister's son, for any other fellow who had done half as much as Gunter had done would have found the "chopper" come down much earlier. Without the rankest of favouritism, the Head could not overlook the conduct of his nephew. If it had been a blow to him, he had concealed the fact under a cold and contained exterior.

Certainly there was no mercy or kindness in Dr. Chisholm's face now. The time for pardon was past.

Under the stern, searching look of the headmaster, even the young rascal on the summit of the clock-tower showed some sign of being ashamed.

But he did not retreat from view. He stood leaning on the railing beside the fluttering black flag, and stared down.

Dr. Chisholm raised his hand.

"Gunter!"

"Yes, sir!"

It was not "Hallo!" this time.

"Come down immediately!"

Gunter grinned.

"I guess I'm sticking here."

"It is past the time arranged for you to leave Hookwood."

"Correct."

"Mr. Bootles is prepared to take you to the station."

"Good old Bootles!"

"You will leave this school, which you have disgraced, at once. Nephew of mine as you are, I should be guilty of wrong against the boys of Hookwood if I allowed you to stay here. Your parents have been communicated with. You will be placed in charge of a trustworthy person to be taken back to your home. I do not desire to inflict further punishment on you before you go. I command you, Gunter, to come down at once, and cease this absurd and insolent conduct!"

The Head's voice was deep and commanding.

The crowd watched Gunter. Would he obey, or would he defy the Head—the reverend and respected Head of Hookwood, at whose frown the juniors were accustomed to tremble?

There was an awful pause.

But the Head had to break it, for Gunter did not speak.

"Boy, do you hear me?"

"Yes!"

"Will you obey me?"

"Nope!"

The Head's lips came tightly together. It was a distinct defiance. The crowd looked on in silence and awe.

"Gunter, you have heard my commands. If you do not obey, I shall have you fetched down by force. In that case, I shall flog you before you leave!"

"Get on with the fetching, uncle!" All Gunter's cheek had come back; he had been abashed only for a moment. "I guess I'm planted hyer!"

Dr. Chisholm flushed.

"Gunter, what is your object in this absurd conduct? You are aware, surely, that you must leave the school?"

"I guess I'm fed-up with Hookwood, anyway, uncle dear. I guess the game is up, too, expelled or not, though you

don't know it yet. And I reckon I'm going to have a regular jamboree before I get the boot. I'm going to paint the school red, you bet. I've got grub here—hoope—all I want—and I'm holding out. I'm goin' to give Hookwood something to remember—just a few. Get on with the washing!"

Dr. Chisholm turned away. Then Gunter's impudence reached the climax. A chunk of cake whistled through the air. It struck the Head's mortar-board, and knocked it from his august head.

Dr. Chisholm was rooted to the ground for a moment.

He gazed almost dazedly at the fallen mortar-board.

Bulkeley of the Sixth sprang forward and picked it up.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head.

His face was crimson now.

He took the cap from Bulkeley's hand, and passed away to the House, his gown rustling.

He left a frozen silence behind him.

To the awed and astounded juniors it seemed that an earthquake ought to have happened next, or that lightning should have flashed from the blue morning sky to smite Gunter.

The Head's mortar-board knocked off by a chunk of cake! It was like unto the end of all things!

Their breath was taken away.

"Oh, my word!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "The young scoundrel!"

Bulkeley looked up at the tower. His look was grim. Gunter grinned down at him impudently.

Evidently the junior from Texas had no knowledge whatever of the fitness of things. The enormity of his action was quite lost upon him.

A bell rang, and the Hookwood crowd went in to breakfast. They went in in an awed mood. After what had happened, nothing could have surprised them. Gunter had checked the Head—he had knocked off his mortar-board. It required some getting used to.

After breakfast there was a crowd

round the clock-tower again. That some step would be taken to fetch Gunter down was certain; he would assuredly not be allowed to defy authority for long.

The juniors were anxious to see the attack begin. Nobody had any sympathy to waste on Gunter. His recklessness during night had earned a little admiration, had he not spoiled his own case by his effrontery. But the insult to the Head put the lid on, as Lovell expressed it. The fellow was an out-and-out cad.

"Just look at him," said Lovell. "What a giddy sight for Bookwood!"

It was indeed a sight for gods and men. Gunter was sitting on the rail at the top of the tower, quite careless of the fact that it was a dangerous position, and smoking. He was blowing out great clouds of smoke from a big black cheroot.

It was the last word in impudence.

Bulkeley and Neville, and Knowles and Prampton and Catesby, all prefects of the Sixth, came up to the tower, and the crowd looked on breathlessly. Was the band about to begin to play? They wondered.

The Sixth-Formers tried the caken door, and found it immovable. They looked at the window; but that was out of reach, and it was fast, too. Then they retired into the School House.

Gunter dropped some ash from his cigar upon Knowles while he was busy at the foot of the tower, and Knowles brushed it off with a savage look.

The bell for classes went a little later, and the juniors reluctantly enough went into their Form-room. If the band was going to play, they were not going to see the fun.

"Rotten hand lines!" growled Raby. "We want to see it! They ought to be a whole holiday to-day!"

"Better ask the Head for one!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

But Raby did not take his advice. The Fourth Form went into their class-room.

After first lesson, the Modern portion of the Form cleared off for their instruction in "stinks," otherwise the chemistry lesson, on the Modern side. Tommy Dodd & Co. looked eagerly towards the tower as they came out into the quadrangle.

But there was nothing doing. Gunter was yawning there, and there was no attack going on. The junior who had defied the school was being left to himself for the present. Tommy Dodd & Co. gave him a yell to which Gunter replied with a jeering laugh, and the Moderns went on to the laboratories.

Morning lessons finished, and the Bookwooders came eagerly out. Gunter was not to be seen; doubtless he was inside the tower somewhere.

"They haven't fetched him down yet," remarked Jimmy Silver, in disgust. "By George, if the Head left it to us, we'd jolly soon have him out!"

"We jolly well would!" agreed Lovell. "The prefects don't seem to be able to do anything. I suppose they're leaving him to get tired of it."

"He won't give in unless they make him," said Jimmy Silver sagely. "He's got plenty of nerve, and plenty of cheek. And the Head can't leave him there much longer; there's such a thing as discipline."

After dinner the Fishes! Four were free for the afternoon, as it was a half-holiday. They had arranged a "rag" on the Bagshot fellows for that afternoon, but with one accord they abandoned the idea now. They wanted to see how the Gunter affair progressed.

They put in time at footer practice; but a whistle from Jones minor warned them when a move was made against the rebel.

They rushed off the field at once. Mr. Bootles was bearing down upon the clock-tower, seemingly unconscious of the excited mob that followed him.

"Gunter!" he called out.

Gunter's head appeared over the parapet of the tower. He grinned down at his Form-master.

"Hallo, old cock!"

Mr. Bootles breathed hard.

"Gunter, you have been given time to consider the absurdity and rascality of your conduct——"

"Cut it out!"

"Will you come down?"

"I guess not!"

"Then force will be used," said Mr. Bootles.

"Wade in!"

Mr. Bootles retreated hastily, just in time to escape a whizzing sardine-tin. A buzz ran through the crowd as half a dozen prefects of the Sixth came up, Bulkeley and Knowles carrying a ladder.

It was the attack at last.

CHAPTER 25.

One Against Rockwood!

BULKELEY planted the ladder against the sill of the little window in the tower.

Gunter leaned over the parapet high above, and grinned. The shutters inside the window were closed and barred, and they were thick and strong. Bulkeley fumbled over the window, but it would not open from the outside. He drew a large hammer from under his coat.

Crash!

Broken glass flew in all directions.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The heavy hammer crashed again and again upon the window-shutters. Strong as they were, they were not planned to resist an attack of that kind for long. And once they were smashed, Gunter was not big enough to keep Bulkeley out, especially with the other seniors backing him up.

"It's the end of his tether now, by gad!" said Adolphus Smythe.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

It would have been the end of his tether for any fellow but Gunter. But the Junior from Texas was reckless and desperate, and he did not care how much damage he did.

Gunter leaned over the parapet high above Bulkeley's head as he stood on the ladder and wielded the hammer.

"Let up!" shouted Gunter.

Bulkeley did not reply. He crashed away with the hammer with all the strength of his powerful arm.

"Look out, Bulkeley!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

A large tin of biscuits, part of the plunder of the tuck-shop, was in Gunter's hands. It weighed several pounds, and he evidently intended to drop it on Bulkeley's head. There was a shout of alarm from the on-lookers.

Whiz!

Bulkeley looked up at the shout of warning, and swayed sideways on the ladder just in time. The tin missed his head, and struck him on the shoulder, and rolled to the ground and burst.

Bulkeley uttered a cry of pain.

The hammer fell from his hand, his right arm hung numbed at his side. He swayed on the ladder and lost his hold. Neville sprang forward and caught him as he fell.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Tins from above crashed down on both the prefects as Neville dragged the captain of Rockwood away.

Both of them were struck, and Neville wiped away a smear of red from his forehead as he laid Bulkeley on the ground.

Bulkeley was surrounded at once. His face was white, and he set his teeth to keep back a groan of pain.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Bulkeley, my dear fellow, are you hurt?"

"M-my shoulder!" panted Bulkeley.

"A—a bruise, I think."

"Come on!" roared Gunter from above. "Who's the giddy next? Who wants to be brained? Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young scoundrel!" roared Mr. Bootles, losing command of himself for the moment.

"Come on, old Boots!" yelled Gunter.

Bulkeley staggered to his feet. His face was twisted with pain.

"Help me in, old chap," he muttered to Neville, "and keep out of the reach of that young boogyman."

Bulkeley, leaning heavily on Neville's arm, went into the house. Gunter gave a jeering yell from the tower.

"There's one funk!" he shouted. "Why don't you try it, Jimmy Silver? Why don't you come, Tommy Dodd? Yah! Funks, the lot of you!"

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands with rage. He made a step towards the tower, and Mr. Bootles rapped out:

"Stand back, Silver! Keep back!"

"Let me try, sir!" exclaimed Jimmy eagerly. "Leave it to us, sir!"

"Silence! Stand back!"

Jimmy retreated unwillingly, and shook his fist at Gunter. The excitement was at fever-heat now. Bulkeley had been badly hurt, and his injury might have been very serious if the missile had struck him where it was intended to strike. The reckless savagery of the junior from Texas almost scared the Rookwood fellows. Most of them, however, were longing to get at him. But how to get at him—that was the question.

"What are we to do, sir?" muttered Knowles very uneasily. "A chap might be harmed by that mad young villain."

"I—I hardly know," gasped Mr. Bootles. "The wretched boy appears to be little better than a criminal. But he cannot be allowed to defy the school in this manner, Knowles. He must be seized."

Knowles looked up at the grinning young rascal, who had another heavy tin ready in his hands. He stood where he was. Knowles had too much respect for his head to put it under that threatening tin.

Neville came back, looking grim and angry. He did not hesitate. He picked up the hammer and mounted the ladder. The heavy biscuit-tin crashed down upon him, and he jumped off the ladder to escape it.

Crash!

A square tin of sardines smote the prefect on the forehead, and he reeled and fell. Knowles seized him and pulled him away.

"Don't be an idiot, Neville! There's nothing to be done!"

"I'll get at him!" panted Neville, staggering up. "I'll smash him!" He dabbed at his forehead with his handkerchief, which came away crimson.

"Come on!" roared Gunter,

"Keep back, Neville!" said Mr. Bootles hastily. "I forbid you to go into danger again. Keep back!"

"But, sir—"

"Stay where you are, Neville! I command you!"

Neville growled and dabbed his forehead. The attack had failed. Gunter was master of the situation. Mr. Bootles was at his wits' end. He could not allow the prefects to run the risk of serious injury, and yet it was imperatively necessary for the young rascal in the clock-tower to be seized.

Out of the range of Gunter's missiles the crowd looked on, wondering what was to come of it. Gunter was defying all Rookwood—with success.

To leave him there, in triumphant possession of the fortress, was manifestly impossible. But what was to be done?

While Mr. Bootles stood in doubt, and the boys waited and wondered, Gunter disappeared for a moment. He came into sight again, with a coil of rope in his hand. It was his lasso. He swung it round his head.

"Look out!" said Jimmy Silver. "He could rope one of us in at this distance!"

Whiz!

The lasso flew through the air, uncoiling as it flew. The juniors knew Gunter's skill with that peculiar weapon, and they crowded back.

But it was not at a junior that the lasso was aimed.

Mr. Bootles, greatly to his astonishment and alarm, felt a loose noose

settle over his head and slip over his shoulders.

"Goodness gracious!" he ejaculated.

He caught at the rope, but before he could deal with it, or indeed realize what was happening, it tightened, and the noose was like a band of iron round his body under the arms. A sharp jerk on the rope, and the Form-master was dragged off his feet.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Bootles.

It seemed to the unfortunate master that the quadrangle rose up and smote him. His cap went flying, his gown was tangled with his legs, his arms beat the air. Heels over head he was dragged towards the tower.

"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

The Pistical Four rushed forward. Mr. Bootles had bumped against the wall of the tower, and Gunter had taken a turn of the rope over the railing on the parapet. The four juniors seized hold of their Form-master, and held to him.

"We've got you, sir!" panted Lovell.

Whiz! Crash!

"Yaroooh!"

Sardine-tins from above crashed on the Classical Four. Jimmy Silver, half-stunned by a blow on the head, fell to the ground. Lovell roared as he caught a tin with his neck.

Other fellows were rushing forward to their aid, but they backed away from that shower of dangerous missiles. The Pistical Four let go—they could not help it. They dodged the missiles from above, not with much success, for Gunter's aim was good, and he had an unlimited supply of ammunition. Half-stunned and severely hurt, the Pistical Four dodged away from the whizzing tins.

Then Gunter dragged on the lassie. The rope whirled up over the rail of the parapet and Mr. Bootles was dragged from the ground.

Up he went, dazed and dizzy, the rope grinding on his ribs till he was six or seven feet from the ground. Then

Gunter made the rope fast, and left him hanging.

"Help!" panted Mr. Bootles feebly.

Gunter roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! What's the next?"

CHAPTER 26.

Up to Jimmy Silver!

"HELP!" Mr. Bootles called out in faint and quavering tones.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his head and gritted his teeth. He had had three or four hard knocks.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "Poor old Bootles! Look at him!"

"Help!"

Mr. Bootles hung at the end of the jasso like a fish on a line. The rope was too tight about his body for him to have a chance of loosening it. His heels beat against the brick wall as he hung. He had caught at the rope above his head with both hands, and hung on to ease the strain on his ribs. Mr. Bootles was not in a fit condition for exercises of this kind—his gymnastic days were long past. The quadrangle swam about him as he swung.

Gunter was roaring with laughter. He had missiles in both hands, ready for anyone who attempted the rescue of the Form-master.

Mr. Bootles hung, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. The look upon his face was extraordinary.

"Eased in, by thunder!" chorried Gunter. "I guess I'll keep him hanging there all the afternoon, by gum, as an example. Why don't you rescue him, Jimmy Silver, you funk?"

"I'm going to, you cad!" shouted Jimmy.

"Come on!"

"Hold on, Jimmy—he'll brain you

"We've got to chase it," said Jimmy Silver. "Back up, Classics!"

"And Moderns," grinned Tommy

Dodd. "He's our Form-master, too, ain't he? Shoulder to shoulder!"

Tommy Dodd and Jimmy made a rush for the ladder, and a dozen juniors followed them. Classics and Moderus rushed on, shoulder to shoulder. The ladder was dragged from the window and planted against the wall close to the wriggling and gasping Mr. Bootles.

Whiz, whiz! Crash, thump, bump!

Gunter hurled the tin with reckless hands and good aim. It was a deadly fire that the Fourth-Formers had to face.

But the Pistical Four and the three Tommies did not falter. They had to rescue their Form-master.

Jimmy Silver was first up the ladder, his open pocket-knife in his hand.

He slashed at the rope over Mr. Bootles' head.

The keen edge of the blade cut through it quickly.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Jimmy Silver was getting all the fire now. Tin after tin struck him, but he set his teeth and kept on.

The rope suddenly parted with a twang.

Mr. Bootles shot downwards, into the arms of the juniors below, and they collared him at once, and rushed him back from the tower.

Jimmy Silver bounded off the ladder, and followed.

He was dazed with the blows he had received, and there was crimson streaming down his forehead and his cheeks. His head had been badly cut.

Mr. Bootles lay gasping on the ground. It was several minutes before he was able to sit up.

"Thank you, my boys!" he panted at last. "Silver!" He uttered an exclamation of horror as he looked at Jimmy's face. "Silver! Good heavens. My brave lad, you are hurt!"

"Only a few cuts, sir," said Jimmy, as cheerfully as he could.

"Bless my soul! Boys, keep back from the tower—keep out of the reach

of that young desperado. Silver, come into the House at once!"

Jimmy Silver was glad to have his hurts attended to. There were several bad cuts, and when Jimmy appeared in public again he had a bandage round his forehead. Several other fellows had been hard hit, though not so severely as Jimmy. Rookwood was buzzing with excitement; but the fellows were giving the clock-tower a wide berth. The attack had stopped—for good, apparently.

Gunter could be seen smoking on the tower, and occasionally he yelled to the fellows in the quadrangle. They yelled back, but they did not go near him.

Smythe of the Shell advocated telephoning for the police. But Smythe did not suggest how Police-constable Boggs of Coombe was to get at Gunter—unless he brought an aeroplane with him.

It was a damaged-looking quartette that gathered in the end study for tea. Jimmy Silver was bruised and cut and bandaged. Lovell had a cut cheek, and Newcome a black eye, and Raby several bumps on his head. And the Pistical Four were breathing fury.

"They're letting him alone," said Lovell savagely—"letting the cad defy us all. They can't touch him."

"Blessed if I quite see how he's to be touched," said Raby, feeling his head tenderly. "I've got four bumps—big ones."

Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

"Keep smiling," he said. That was Jimmy Silver's usual advice, under all circumstances. "We're going to deal with the cad. Look at my chivvy. I shall be a sight for a week or more. The chap who makes my chivvy look like that is going to pay for it. Owl!"

"The Head seems to have chucked it up," said Newcome. "The rotter will have to be left there till he comes out of his own accord. Blessed if I can see how he's to be stopped from sticking it out for the whole term, if he chooses."

"We're going to stop him."

"I'm game," said Lovell. "But how?"

"It's up to us," said Jimmy.

"I've had enough of his blessed sardine-tins on my napper," said Raby. "The beast don't play the game. He don't care if he injures a chap. Might get your teeth knocked out."

"He's a blessed desperado, and no mistake," said Jimmy.

"And he's the Head's nephew!" grunted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"I'm not so jolly sure about that," he said. "There's something fishy about the fellow. You remember how alarmed he was when he got a letter from America the other day. He said something about the game here being up, and he seemed to ask for the sack—he got quite reckless. He knew he had got to go, anyway. It looks to me as if there's something shady about his coming here."

Lovell opened his eyes wide.

"You mean he's an impostor!" he ejaculated.

"I wouldn't say so; but it looks jolly like it from the things he's let drop, and the way he's acted," said Jimmy. "I know it seems a bit thick, but such things have happened. After he'd had that Yankee letter he said that the game was up, and a fellow he'd made an arrangement with had gone back on him, and was coming here. Then he shut up like an oyster—he'd said too much. What does that look like?"

"My hat!" said Lovell, with a deep breath.

"I know it sounds rather thick," said Jimmy, "but it's a bit thick to think that that ruffianly brute in Dr. Chisholm's nephew. But that isn't the question before the giddy meeting, anyway. The blimey is to yank him out of the clock-tower by his short hairs."

"And how?"

"We can't get near him," said Raby. "we don't want to be brained."

"He won't be able to aim so jolly well after dark," said Jimmy.

"After dark!"

"Exactly. A giddy night attack," said Jimmy Silver. "Us four—and we'll take the Head by surprise. The ladder's still here, and I've got an idea. They can't expect to handle him as this study would, you know."

"Ahem!"

"Leave it to me, and pass the muffins," said Jimmy Silver. "If we don't collar him and this evening, you can call me a Modern."

After which there was evidently nothing to be said.

CHAPTER 27.

The End Study Does It!

A RED spot gleamed from the top of the clock-tower, through the shadows of the old quadrangle of Rookwood.

It was the glowing end of a cigar.

Four juniors who slipped quietly out of the School House and approached the clock-tower in the deep dusk, noted that red glimmer, and grinned.

"He's there!" muttered Lovell.

"On the watch," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But he isn't a blessed cat—he can't see in the dark. Silence, my infants!"

The Fiscal Four almost tiptoed towards the tower. In the Common-room and the studies there was a buzz of excited talk—the sensation was still at its height. The Classical Four had slipped out quietly—on their own. They were going to prove to all Rookwood that Jimmy Silver & Co. were equal to the emergency—unless Gunter proved too much for them.

Silently as ghosts the four juniors arrived under the black shadow of the clock-tower. Nine strokes boomed out above their heads.

The ladder was still there, leaning against the brick wall. Four pairs of

hands grasped it and drew it quietly away.

With the ladder in their grasp Jimmy Silver & Co. trod cautiously along to the window.

"Now, then, all together!" whispered Jimmy Silver. "One good shove ought to do it, and when it's once open a dozen Gunters couldn't stop us."

"What-ho!"

That was Jimmy Silver's idea to use the heavy ladder as a battering-ram, and burst in the shutter with a terrific charge at it. Bulkeley's blows with the hammer had already damaged the shutter, though it was not broken. But the heavy ladder propelled by four strong young pairs of arms would tell a different tale. And until the crash made Gunter aware of their presence, they would not be under fire.

They retreated a little distance, and then, at a word from Jimmy Silver, rushed forward.

Crash!

The head of the ladder smote the window-shutter with a thundering concussion. There was a loud splintering. The charge had succeeded better than the juniors had expected. For the end of the ladder not only shattered the shutter and burst it open, but it shot through the now open window, and the four juniors tumbled forward as the resistance gave way.

There was a roar from Lovell as his head came into violent contact with Newcome's. The ladder had slipped from their grasp, but Jimmy seized it again instantly, and set it straight at the window.

"Follow your leader!" he panted.

There was a yell above, and a whizzing of missiles. Heavy tins crashed on the ground around them.

Gunter was on the defensive at once.

Crash, crash! A wild yell from Newcome, a howl of pain from Raby. But Jimmy Silver was head and shoulders through the window.

He pitched recklessly in, and Lovell was after him in a flash.

They picked themselves up on the dark stairs and rushed upward.

Crash, crash on the narrow spiral stair! Gunter had realised what had happened, and that feet were within the lower. He was hurling his missiles down the stairs with reckless hands.

But a maxim gun would hardly have stopped the Classical chums at that moment.

Raby and Newcome had scrambled in after them, hurt and furious. The four of them raced up the stairs.

Crash! Bang! Crash! Bump!

Jimmy Silver reeled as a heavy object smote him on the chest, but he kept on. He came out panting at the top of the stair.

"Gunter, you cad!"

"Silver, you fool! Take that!"

"That" was a whizzing tin of several pounds in weight, which would have felled Jimmy Silver if he had taken it. But Jimmy Silver dodged it swiftly, and it passed him, and the next second he was upon Gunter.

"Now, you cad!" panted Jimmy.

His grasp fastened on Gunter with a crash, Gunter fighting like a wild cat. But he had found his match in Jimmy Silver, and a little more than his match.

Jimmy's knee was planted on his chest.

"Got him!" he shouted. "This way!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome piled in breathlessly. They seized Gunter on all sides, grasping him where they could. Raby had one arm, Newcome the other, and Lovell fixed a stranglehold round his neck.

"Grooh! Let up!" screamed Gunter.

"Do you give in, you cad?"

"Nep! Grooh! Never! Oh! Oy!"

"We've got him!"

Certainly they had got him. Gunter was struggling still, but he had no chance. With a rush the Fisticul Four brought him hurtling down the stairs. Gunter, struggling, tumbled from step to step, and his yells showed that he did not find that mode of descent grateful or comforting.

There was a shout in the quadrangle—the crashing had been heard, and the fellows were streaming out of the House. A roar of voices rose round the clock-tower. The Fisticul Four reached the lower window with their prisoner.

"This way!" panted Jimmy. "Can't open the door—it's screwed! Shove him through the window! Hallo! Is that you, Bulkeley?"

Bulkeley of the Sixth blinked in at them in the gloom.

"Jimmy Silver! What—how——"

"Here he is!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bulkeley.

Gunter, kicking and yelling, was thrust through the window. Bulkeley's powerful grasp closed on him grimly. Then Gunter's struggles ceased. He was as an infant in the grip of the captain of Rookwood.

"Thank you, Jimmy Silver!" said Bulkeley. "You were a cheeky young rascal to do this without permission. But——"

"It was up to our study, you know," said Jimmy cheerfully.

Bulkeley laughed. He strode away towards the School House with an iron grasp on Gunter. Jimmy Silver & Co. slipped through the window one after another and found themselves in the midst of a crowd.

"By gad, they've done it!" said Smythe of the Shell. "Cheeky young rotters to chip in, by gad!"

"You wouldn't have done it, would you, Smythey?" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three cheers for us!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Hip, hip, hurray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrahy!"

The Fisticul Four marched back to the School House in the midst of a laughing and cheering crowd—Jimmy Silver waving high the black flag which had been hoisted on the clock-tower by the rebel and captured by the Fisticul Four. At that moment there was no doubt that the Fisticul Four were, to the Jimmy Silver's expression—it, They were absolutely, indubitably and undoubtedly—IT.

An hour later the Head's car rolled out of the gates of Rookwood with Gunter sitting in it, and Mr. Beetles on one side of him and Bulkeley on the other.

The rascal of Rookwood was gone.

Jimmy Silver wondered whether he would ever see him again, and whether the strange suspicions he had formed regarding the Head's nephew would ever be cleared up. The night express had carried Gunter away—far from Rookwood. Was Rookwood done with him? That was a question only the future could answer.

CHAPTER 25.

Declined Without Thanks!

AN eyeglass gleamed in at the doorway of the end study.

Behind the eyeglass was the languid and somewhat vacant countenance of Adolphus Smythe, the ornament of the Shell Form of Rookwood.

Seldom did the great Adolphus, the dandy of the Shell, condescend to visit a Fourth-Form study. It might have been expected, therefore, that the four Fourth-Formers in the study would have been duly impressed, and that they would have greeted the great Adolphus with marked respect.

But they weren't—and they didn't!

Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome, the Fisticul Four of the Fourth, were in deep discussion.

That afternoon Jimmy Silver had received a fiver.

Fivers were remarkably uncommon in the Fourth Form, and a junior with a fiver was a remarkable and much-to-be-respected youth, so long as the fiver lasted.

It was a great and unique occasion. The Pictical Four was holding a "pow-wow" concerning the disposal of the fiver. It was, as Lovell remarked, a day worthy to be marked with a white stone!

Naturally, they had no attention to waste upon Smythe when that elegant youth looked in and his monocle glittered condescendingly upon them.

"A car out for the afternoon," Raby was saying, "that's a good wheeze. Lucky it's a half-holiday."

"What price a first-rate picnic?" said Newcome.

"Or a run over to Northwood, and the cinema," said Lovell.

"Or all the blessed lot!" said Jimmy Silver lavishly. "We could stand the lot out of a fiver."

Whereupon the devoted chums ejaculated together:

"Hooray!"

Adolphus Smythe sniffed.

Adolphus Smythe might have been a stock or a stone for all the effect he had upon the cheery juniors in the study. They had not even observed him.

However, when he sniffed they looked round. They had heard the sniff.

"Hallo! What's that?" said Lovell, gazing at Adolphus as if he had never seen him before.

"Another escape from the Zoo!" said Raby.

"I've looked in to see you, Silver," said Adolphus rather savagely.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Better go over to the Modern side," he suggested. "That's the proper place for stray monkeys. Good-bye!"

"Yes, run away!" urged Newcome. "Can't you see we're busy? Now, we'd better start immediately after dinner, Jimmy——"

"I want to speak to Silver," said Smythe. "It's rather important."

"He's heard of the fiver," said Lovell in a stage whisper; and there was a chuckle in the end study.

Smythe frowned.

"If you've got a few minutes to spare, Silver——"

"My hat!" said Jimmy.

For the dandy of the Shell to ask a Fourth-Former if he had a few minutes to spare was really remarkable. There seemed to be no doubt that Adolphus had, in fact, heard of the fiver.

"Well, you can go ahead," said Jimmy Silver. "We're rather busy, but we can give you a minute or two. Fire away, Smythe!"

"It's you I want to speak to; not these kids!" said Adolphus, with a disdainful glance at Jimmy Silver's chums.

That was Adolphus' very tactful way.

"Why, you cheeky ass——" began Lovell warmly.

"You can speak to all of us, or you needn't speak at all, Smythe," said Jimmy Silver. "No blessed secrets in this study!"

"Well, I suppose these kids can be trusted not to blab," said Adolphus. "The fact is, Silver, we've got a little excursion on this afternoon, and we'd like you to come."

"Oh, crikey!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Howard and Tracy and I are going," resumed Adolphus. "We'd like you to make a fourth, if you'd care to come."

"By gum!"

Jimmy Silver had never been asked to join in the little excursions of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. As a matter of fact, and as he would have expressed it, he would not have been found dead in their select society. Still, it was a fact that he had never been asked, and Smythe's manner conveyed that he fully understood what an honour he was conferring upon Jimmy.

There was only one possible explanation. Adolphus had heard of the fiver.

"It will be rather interestin'," drawled Adolphus. "We're havin' a trap out—quite a good gee-gee and a dinky little

trap—holds five quite well. I'm goin' to drive. Will you come?"

"Sorry! I'm not insured."

"Eh?"

"If you're going to drive, Smythe, I'd prefer to get insured first."

"Look here——"

"And I can't come, anyway," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm going out with my own pals."

"I should jolly well think so!" said Lovell wrathfully.

Adolphus ignored Lovell.

"You'd find it rather interestin', Silver," he said. "We're goin' to have a really ripplin' time, you know. And we're meetin' a chap—the chap who used to be in this study before he left Rookwood—Gunler, you know."

"The Head's nephew!" exclaimed Lovell.

"He's stayin' in Coombe now," pursued Adolphus, "and we've arranged to meet him. I dare say you'd like to see him again."

"Blessed if I want to see a chap that's been sacked from the school for being a trusty blackguard!" said Jimmy Silver. "And what the deuce is he doing in Coombe? Old Bootles took him to London, and handed him over to the chap who was to take him back to America."

"Well, he hasn't gone," said Smythe. "He doesn't choose to go. He was a bit of a bounder here, I know, but he's sportin'—very sportin'. And we've fixed up the afternoon with him. It's goin' to be toppin'! The fact is, we're goin' to see somethin' rather entertainin'—Coombe Races."

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"You're going to the races!" he shouted.

"Yess."

"Well, you rotter!"

"You needn't do any bettin', you know," said Smythe, with a sneer. "You can sit on the trap and watch. It's worth seein', you know, and it's an experience. We should want you to pay your whack in the trap, that's all. It'll

come rather expensive—your whack in the exes will come to a couple of quid. If you can shell out you can come. In fact, we'll be glad to have you! What do you say?"

"I say that if you don't clear off this minute I'll bung this cushion at you!" said Jimmy Silver, picking up a cushion from the armchair. "You precious blackguard! You'd get the sack if you were found out!"

"If you're afraid of that——"

"I'm not afraid, you worm!" growled Jimmy Silver. "But I'm not going to play the giddy goat and rotten blackguard simply to show that I'm not afraid!"

"Oh, have a little pluck!" urged Smythe. "We don't often take the Fourth-Form kids along with us. It's a chance for you to have a good time in really decent company for once. You shouldn't miss it."

"Are you going, Smythe?"

"Now, look here, Silver—— Yahl Oh!"

Swipe!

Jimmy Silver kept his word. The cushion flew with unerring aim, and it caught Adolphus under the chin. Smythe of the Shell went spinning back into the passage as if he had been shot from a catapult.

There was a loud bump in the passage.

"Yahl! Ah! Wah!" stuttered Adolphus. "You cheeky young sweep—yooop! I'll thrash you—prooh!—within an inch of your—ow!—life! I'll—— Yow! Leave off, you young scoundrel!"

Jimmy Silver fielded the cushion, but he did not take it back into the study; he used it as a duster on Adolphus.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Smythe of the Shell scrambled away wildly, all his languid elegance vanishing. He fled for his life. Jimmy Silver, warming to his work, pursued him down the passage, swiping away with the cushion. Adolphus fled down the stairs, gasping and stuttering, and

Jimmy brandished the cushion after him from the landing.

"Now come back and have some more!" he roared.

But Adolphus of the Shell did not come back. Wild horses would not have dragged him back.

Adolphus' one object at that moment was to cover the greatest possible distance in the shortest possible space of time. Jimmy Silver returned breathlessly to his study.

CHAPTER 25

Knowles on the Track!

"GUNTER back!" said Lovell, with whistle.

And his chums whistled too.

It was astonishing that Smythe, the great chief of the "Giddy Goats," should have the nerve to ask Jimmy Silver of the Fourth to share in his questionable excursions. But the news that the nuts were going to meet Gunter was more astonishing still.

The Rookwood fellows had supposed that Gunter by that time was on board ship on his way to the western continent.

The news that he was in Coombe, the little village near Rookwood, astounded them.

What was he doing there?

"The silly ass!" said Jimmy Silver, referring to Smythe. "Gunter will get him into trouble. Smythey is only a silly, timid blackguard, but Gunter is a regular scoundrel. It would be his idea of a joke to land Smythey with the sack, too!"

"Serve him right!" growled Lovell. "My hat! Suppose Bulkeley spotted him going to the races!"

"They've done it before," said Raby. "Smythey thinks it sporting—or sport-in', as he calls it. Bulkeley never suspects anything. Well, I ain't our halibut. What about our little run this afternoon?"

"We'll settle on the car," said Jimmy Silver.

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got time to run down to the garage on our bikes before dinner, and fix up," said Jimmy. "Get a move on!"

The Fistical Four got a move on.

It was not often, in fact, it was very seldom, that the chums of the Fourth could afford to have a car out for an afternoon, and they were delighted at the prospect.

Tommy Dodd of the Modern side met them as they were wheeling their machines out. The Classical Four prepared to wheel the bikes into Tommy Dodd, who, as a mere Modern, was naturally to be set upon under all circumstances, according to the Classical view.

But Tommy Dodd held up his hand in sign of peace. He was looking very serious.

"Have you chaps heard about Gunter. He's been seen in Coombe. He's staying there—putting up at the Bird-in-Hand, that awfully low pub."

"Well, he doesn't belong to Rookwood now," said Jimmy Silver. "No business of ours."

"Isn't it?" said Dodd warmly. "He's the nephew of our headmaster, and everybody knows it. He ought to have gone home when he was sacked. My belief is that he's hanging out at Coombe simply to bring disgrace on the school, and on his uncle for sacking him."

"Well, it would be like him," agreed Jimmy.

"And I jolly well think he ought to be cleared out," said Tommy Dodd. "Knowles, our prefect, says—"

"Oh, blow Knowles!"

The Classical chums were very much "up against" Knowles, the head prefect of the Modern side of Rookwood.

"Knowles says," persisted Tommy Dodd, "that Gunter is keeping up some connection with a fellow in Rookwood, and that the Classical prefects ought to look into it. Gunter was a Classical

here, and so are his friends—whenever they are. Seems to me that Bulkeley is asleep, and that's a fact."

"Why, you cheeky Modern ass——"

"Our prefects don't go round spying and watching like your Modern prefects," said Lovell lightly. "Knowles always knows what's going on, because he's such a prying rorter! Bulkeley isn't!"

"Fathead!" said Tommy Dodd. "Look here, that fellow Gunter has no right to fix himself so close to Rookwood, and disgrace us! Suppose we go down there in a party and mop him up, and make him clear off."

"And what would the Head say if he knew we'd been in the Bird-in-Hand?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Well, we should have to keep that dark," said Tommy Dodd. "But if we don't go there will be trouble. Knowles has got his eye on him, and he'll spot the fellows who go to see him—Classical chaps, of course. Nobody on our side would touch the cad with a barge-pole."

"Knowles had better mind his own business," said Jimmy Silver. "The Classical prefects can look after our side!"

Tommy Dodd sniffed.

"They don't seem to be doing it," he said.

"Oh, rats!"

"Bulkeley ought to wake up——"

"Bang him over!" said Jimmy Silver.

Any aspersions upon Bulkeley, the head of the Classical side and captain of Rookwood, could not fail to put up the backs of the Physical Four. They promptly wheeled their bikes into Tommy Dodd, and the Modern Junior sat down in the quad.

"Oh, you silly rotters!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Yah! Oh! Rescue, Moderns!"

Cook and Doyle and a crowd of Modern Juniors came dashing up. The Physical Four, staying only a moment to wipe their boots upon Tommy Dodd, rushed their bikes down to the gates.

"After them!" roared Doyle.

Tommy Dodd, breathing wrath and vengeance, leaped to his feet, and led the rush in pursuit of the Classical Four. Jimmy Silver & Co. reached the gates barely ahead of the raging Moderns, and rushed their machines out and jumped on them.

"Go it!" panted Jimmy.

Tommy Dodd & Co. came sweeping out of the gates, with a wild whoop. But four pairs of pedals were whirling round, and the four cyclists shot away, leaving the Moderns panting in the road.

Jimmy Silver glanced round, and kissed his hand at the dusty and infuriated Tommy Dodd, who shook a frantic fist in reply.

Then the Physical Four rode on cheerfully. They had done their old rivals in that little encounter, and they felt that they deserved well of their country.

CHAPTER 10.

A Curious Find!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. came back in time for dinner. At dinner Jimmy glanced curiously towards the Shell table, where Smythe & Co. were conversing in low tones and looking decidedly "chirpy."

The nuts of Rookwood were looking forward to their afternoon's excursion. Bold blades as Adolphus & Co. fancied themselves to be, they had hitherto only "dabbled," as it were, in vicious amusements—a little card-playing in the study, a little betting on "gee-gees," a cigarette occasionally. They were, in fact, more ridiculous than bad. But under Gunter's auspices, they were pretty certain to become more bad than ridiculous. Gunter was an utterly reckless blackguard, and the nuts were looking forward to a high old time in his company—something quite out of the common.

Jimmy Silver did not often worry himself about Adolphus & Co. He regarded them as born idiots, and let them alone. If a fellow were ass enough to

play bridge instead of fooset, if he were duffer enough to damage his health by smoking. Instead of improving it by healthy exercise, it wasn't Jimmy's business. But on this occasion Jimmy was feeling rather concerned. It would be just like Gunter to get the foolish "Goats" into serious trouble, and with Knowles of the Sixth on the watch, the trouble would soon come home to roost.

Jimmy Silver knew only too well how glad the Modern perfect would be to catch Classical juniors outraging the laws of the school. It would be "one up" against Bulkeley—it would show that the Classical perfects were neglecting their duties, which in consequence had to be performed by a Modern perfect. Knowles would enjoy that.

Old Bulkeley was conscientious enough, but he was good-natured and un suspicious. Smythe & Co. found little difficulty in pulling the wool over his eyes. It was hard for good-natured old Bulkeley to suspect any fellow of being a rank rotter.

With Knowles it was different. Knowles' own conduct was not exactly estimable, and perhaps that helped to enlighten him.

After dinner Jimmy Silver joined the three nuts as they came out into the quad. He had determined to give Smythe a warning. It was not likely to be received amicably, but he meant to do his best.

"Smythe——" began Jimmy.

Adolphus turned his eyeglass upon the Fourth-Former.

"Yaas? Think you'd like to come, after all?" he asked.

Jimmy Silver was very welcome in the little party—with his five-pound note. Adolphus had schemed a cunning little scheme of "planking" the major part of the expenses on Jimmy Silver, hence his visit to the end study. To carry out that little scheme, Adolphus was willing to forget all injuries, and let bygones be bygones.

"Na. I don't think I'd like to come," growled Jimmy.

Adolphus froze at once.

"Time we were gettin' off, Tracey," he remarked, turning his back on Jimmy Silver.

"Listen to me," said Jimmy. "I don't want to interfere with your fat-headed goings on—'tain't my business. But——"

"Rippin' weather for a little run, Howard, ain't it?" said Adolphus, unheeding.

"Toppin'!" agreed Howard.

"I want to warn you, Smythe, that you may be booked for trouble if you go out with Gunter," said Jimmy. "Knowles is watching for a chance at you. Very likely he will spot you."

"I'm not likely to bother about a Modern cad," yawned Smythe, "and don't talk to me, Jimmy Silver. I don't generally mix with fags."

The great Adolphus walked away with his pals.

Jimmy Silver grumbled. He had done his best, but he could not feel that he had done much good.

"The silly ass is bound to run into trouble," he told his chums, when he rejoined them. "Can't he be helped?"

"Serve him right!" said Lovell.

"It's up against our side if a Modern perfect catches Classical out," said Jimmy frowning. "Still, it can't be helped. There go the silly duffers."

Smythe and Howard and Tracey were sauntering elegantly down to the gates. They were dressed to kill. Nothing could have exceeded the glossiness of their toppers and the set of their neckties, unless it was the beautiful crease in their trousers. Smythe & Co. disappeared—on their way to keep their appointment with the expelled nephew of the Head.

The car was not due for nearly an hour yet, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went to the end study to work through some "lines" they had on hand. Their imposition done, they could enjoy the afternoon with clear consciences, as Jimmy Silver put it. The lines were duly finished. A fragment of paper

slipped out of Lovell's "Virgil" as he was closing it.

"What's that?" asked Jimmy Silver, his eye falling upon the paper, and noting some of the words written on it.

"My bookmark," said Lovell. "What about it?"

"It's part of a letter."

"Yes; I picked it out of the waste-paper basket weeks ago," said Lovell with a stare. "No good, I suppose?"

Jimmy Silver picked up the slip. It was nearly half of a page of notepaper, and it was covered with writing in a sprawling, youthful hand. His three chums regarded him with surprise. Jimmy Silver's interest in that fragment of an old letter, which Lovell had used as a bookmark, astonished them.

"Have you looked at this Lovell?" Jimmy asked.

"No. Why should I?"

"It's a part of a letter—a letter to Gunter, I think," said Jimmy quietly. "Do you remember a short time before he left, he had a letter from America that upset him a lot? It was after that that he became such a thoroughly reckless rather. He said something about a fellow going back on him, after making an arrangement. Listen to this—"

Jimmy read out the fragment.

"I can't keep it up any longer, Sam, and that's the truth. I reckoned I should like it, but I don't. Besides, there's mopper and popper to be considered. It was a wild idea, and I reckon it won't do. You can expect me pretty soon after you get this, so it's no good writing. I guess—"

That was all.

"That can't be part of Gunter's letter," said Lovell. "Gunter's name isn't Sam."

"That letter came from America," said Jimmy quietly. "There's only one chap here gets letters from America, and that's Gunter."

"But how do you know?"

"It's written in the American language, my son. Mopper and popper are American for water and pater."

"You ought to be a giddy detective," said Raby admiringly.

"Then there's 'guess,' too," said Jimmy. "English people don't guess, except in guessing competitions. Now, how is it that a chap writing to Robert Gunter addresses him as Sam?"

"Ask me another," said Lovell.

"Gunter said something about the game here being up after he got that letter. You know we's a jolly queer kind of chap to be a nephew of Dr. Christobol. It's been in the back of my mind for a long time there was something shady about it," said Jimmy Silver.

"My hat! You—you don't think—"

"I jolly well do," said Jimmy Silver. "We know that the Head had never seen his nephew, who was born in Texas. He had never been in England before. I can't help thinking there has been a swindle—and it looks to me as if this letter proves it."

Lovell whistled.

"It sounds a bit thick," he said. "Not much good saying so outside this study, Jimmy. The fellows will think you're potty."

"I'm not going to say anything," said Jimmy, "because if it's as I suspect, the truth is bound to come out pretty soon. If it's as I think, it will be jolly good news for the Head, anyway. Let's go and look for that car."

The Fistical Four quitted the study, in a thoughtful mood. But the sight of a big car buzzing outside the school gates drove Gunter from their mind.

"Here it is," said Jimmy Silver. "Now we've got to get a hag-of-tuck, and we'll be off."

And a whole quid out of Jimmy Silver's fiver was expended in Sergeant Kettle's little shop for tuck to pack into the motor-car. And the Fistical Four packed it in, in great spirits.

CHAPTER 31.

HOWARD AGES FOR IT!

"S' TOP!"

The Fistical Four were on the point of starting. The chauffeur had, in fact, started the engine.

Knowles of the Sixth came hurriedly out of the gateway.

He waved his hand towards the car, and ran towards it. His face was excited. The Fistical Four eyed him.

Knowles, as a Modern fellow, had no right to interfere with Classics. Jimmy Silver & Co. had impressed that fact upon Knowles' mind more than once.

If there was one thing that put Classical backs up more than anything else it was interference from the other side of the school. The Fistical Four were the very last fellows likely to stand it.

So they looked grimly at Knowles. If the bully of the Sixth had any idea of stopping their water-run that afternoon, there was trouble to be expected. That would not be given up for a dozen Knowleses.

"Lucky you're here," added Knowles—"very lucky. I want that car."

"What!" ejaculated the Fistical Four, in chorus.

"You must lend me that car," said Knowles.

"My hat!"

"I don't see what you fags are doing in a car, anyway," said the prefect. "Have you your Form-master's permission to take a car out?"

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions," said Jimmy Silver deliberately. As a matter of fact, the Fistical Four had forgotten to ask Mr. Bootles to sanction the little run in the motor.

Knowles turned red with anger.

"None of your cheek, Silver. Get out of that car at once."

"Get out of it!" shouted Jimmy.

"Why, we're paying for this car."

Knowles laughed contemptuously.

"I'll pay you what you've paid," he said. "It isn't a question of money. But I'm in a hurry."

"Well, that beats the band!" said

Jimmy Silver. "Far sheer pure, unadulterated cheek, you take the cake, Knowles! If you want a car, ring up a lall."

"You know it would take too long," said Knowles.

"Then order a car in advance, and wait for it, as we've done," said Lovell hotly. "What the thunder! You're not going to have our car."

"Tell the shover to drive on!" said Baby.

Knowles put his foot in at the door.

Jimmy Silver hesitated to give that order to the "shover." If the car had started, Knowles would have had a bad fall; and after all, he was a prefect of the Sixth, although a Modern one.

"Take your hoof off, Knowles!" roared Lovell.

"Look here," said Knowles, in a voice of concentrated anger. "It's come to my knowledge that some young rascals have gone to the races this afternoon. I'm going after them to fetch them back. I've no time to waste, and I'm going to borrow this car. Now, get out of it!"

Jimmy Silver understood. Smythe & Co. had not been quite so secret as they had supposed. They could pull the wool over old Bulkeley's unsuspecting eyes. But Knowles was as keen as a razor, and he was "on" to the little game.

The expression on Jimmy's face as this thought flashed through his mind brought a sneering smile to Knowles' thin lips.

"Now you understand," he said, "so get out."

"It's no business of ours if some of your Modern cads have gone out playing the piddy goat," said Jimmy.

Knowles sneered again.

"They're not Moderns," he said. "We keep the fags on our side in order. They're Classics. Most of the blackguards are on your side of the school."

"Not the biggest one!" said Lovell, with a snort.

"Classical are they?" said Jimmy

Silver. "Well, then, what business is it of yours, Knowles? You're not the Classical prefect. It's Bulkeley's business, not yours."

"I'm a Buckwood prefect, anyway, and I'm going to see into it, as Bulkeley seems to be too busy," snapped out Knowles angrily.

Jimmy Silver wagged an irritating forefinger at Knowles.

"My advice to you is to mind your own business," he said. "No good comes of meddling in other people's affairs, you know."

"You cheeky little rascal!" roared Knowles.

"Snish! You can't expect us to help you do old Bulkeley's business for him. Go and tell Bulkeley about it!"

"I'm not asking you for advice," said Knowles, breathing hard through his nose. "I'm telling you to get out of that car and hand it over to me!"

"How-sow!"

Knowles' greenish eyes glittered with rage.

"Silver! I——"

"You're not going to have our car!" said Jimmy coolly. "It's like your cheek to ask! Take your hoof away!"

"Get out of that car, or I'll pitch you out!" roared Knowles.

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!" snarled Lovell. Knowles, gritting his teeth, made a leap into the car.

The Physical Four rose as one man to deal with him.

The Modern prefect's high-handed proceedings would have exasperated more mild and patient fellows than Jimmy Silver & Co., and they were not celebrated for mildness or patience.

To have their car taken forcibly away by a Modern prefect for the purpose of hunting down Classical fellows was a little too much.

They breathed wrath as they tackled Knowles.

Four pairs of hands fastened upon him at the same moment.

"Out you go!" panted Lovell.

Knowles struggled furiously.

He was a powerful fellow, but four juniors at once were a little too much for him. And the juniors were reckless and determined.

Knowles wasn't going to have their car, prefect or no prefect. He was going out of that car if they could put him out. And it looked as if they could.

Knowles clung to the door and struggled, but his grasp was loosened, and he went whirling through the door. There was a loud bump in the road as Knowles landed there.

"Drive on!" shouted Jimmy Silver breathlessly.

The car started.

Knowles lay for some moments, completely winded. He sat up at last, blinking and panting with rage. The car was gliding away.

Knowles staggered breathlessly to his feet and limped in pursuit.

"Stop!" he yelled.

"Good-bye, little yellow bird!" shrieked Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop, you young rascals! Stop, I tell you!" roared Knowles. "I'll skin you! I'll—I'll——"

The prefect halted, in a cloud of dust and a reek of petrol, behind the car. He could not overtake it.

Jimmy Silver waved his hand in farewell, and Knowles ground his teeth with rage. The car buzzed on merrily down the dusty road and vanished round the bend. Knowles, trembling with rage, limped back to the gates.

"Looks like another win for the Classic side!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "The cheek of it, to think he was going to have our car—our Classical car!"

"Modern fathead!" growled Lovell. "Let him mind his own business, if he wants something to do. I suppose he'll get something to take him—it'll take him an hour at least to get it, though."

"Meddling ass!" said Raby. "I don't wish that idiot Smythe much luck as a rule, but I hope Knowles won't catch him."

"Blow Smythe, and blow Knowles!" said Newcome. "We're off! Now for a ripping afternoon!"

"Hurray!"

CHAPTER 32.

At the Races.

JIMMY SILVER did not speak as the car buzzed on down the long white road.

His brow was wrinkled in thought.

Everything seemed to be going first-rate for the Classical chums, and that thoughtful wrinkle in their leader's brow puzzled the Co. Lovell demanded the reason at last.

"What are you looking like a boiled owl about?" he demanded.

"Eh?"

"Thinking of the row when we get home?" asked Raby. "Knowles won't make a fuss. He knows Bulkeley wouldn't back him up in trying to collar our car, especially considering what he wanted it for."

"We're all right," said Lovell.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that!" said Jimmy.

"Then what's the trouble? We've got the grub all right—lots!"

"Blow the grub!"

"You haven't lost your liver?" ejaculated Lovell, in alarm.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"No, ass! I changed it in the tuck-shop, and I've got four pound-notes quite safe. Tain't that!"

"Then what is it?" demanded the Co. with one voice.

Jimmy paused.

"Are you fellows specially set on the run, and the cinema, and the picnic?" he asked hesitatingly.

"That's what we've come out for, isn't it?" said Raby.

"Yes, but—"

"You don't mean to say that you're getting stinky in your old age?" said Lovell.

Jimmy blushed.

"You silly ass! It isn't that. The liver belongs to the whole study."

"Well, I knew it wasn't that. I was only pulling your fatherted leg," chuckled Lovell. "But what do you want to give up the excursion for?"

"I don't want to," said Jimmy. "but—but I've got a feeling that we ought to. That idiot Smythe has gone to the races—that cad Gunter's got him to go. Knowles has spied it out, and he's after him. He'll phone for a taxi, or something. Anyway, he'll get after Smythe."

"Let him."

"I know Smythe's doing wrong," said Jimmy, colouring. "I don't make any excuses for him. He's more of a fool than a rascal, though, you know that. And we don't want a Classical chap caught out and sacked from the school because of a prying and meddling Modern worm."

"Well, no. But—"

"I tried to give Smythe a tip before he started, but he wouldn't listen. But—but I think we ought to warn him," said Jimmy. "Knowles may be along any time looking for him, and he'll find him as sure as a gun. Well, suppose we run in the car to where he is and tell him Knowles is after him?"

"To the races?" yelled Newcome.

Jimmy nodded.

"Why, it means a Rogging or the sack if we're found out," said Lovell, aghast. "You know how down the head is on such things. If he found that a Rookwood chap had gone—well—"

Lovell finished with a whistle.

"I know," said Jimmy grimly. "It's a risk—a big risk. But we don't want a Classical chap sacked—even a totter like Smythe. Tain't only that, either. It will be up against old Bulkeley if a Modern prefect does his work for him. If it was Bulkeley after Smythe, we couldn't very well interfere. But a Modern prefect has no right to clip in. And we know that Knowles bets on horses himself. He's only doing this to get a score over old Bulkeley, and I think it's up to us to stop him if we can."

"Bulkeley is a bit sleepy," said Raby. "I wouldn't own it to Tommy Dodd,

but the old chap is a trifle too unsuspicious."

"No reason why Knowles should score over him."

"Oh, no! I'm game if the other are."

Lovell shrugged his shoulders.

"Jimmy means to have his way, anyway," he said. "In for a penny, in for a pound. Let's chance it."

"I don't want to drag you chaps into the risk, though," said Jimmy Silver anxiously. "If you'd like to drop out—"

"Rats!"

"I'd do it alone, and join you afterwards."

"Shut up!" roared Lovell.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"All serene! I'll speak to the shover, then."

Jimmy put his head over, and talked to the chauffeur. That gentleman looked rather serious when his destination was indicated to him.

Jimmy Silver understood his thoughts, and hastened to reassure him.

"It's all right," he said. "We're not going on the razzle, sonny. We're going to fetch back some of our chaps who are playing the giddy ox, and we're going to give them a hiding for giving us the trouble. We want you to find a trap with four young rollers in it—one slovenly cad, and three idiots dressed up like tailors' dummies."

"Yea, sir," said the grinning chauffeur.

The car buzzed on again, taking a new direction for the racemouse that lay about six miles from Cocurba.

The Fistical Four were serious enough now.

They were running a big risk to save Smythe & Co. from the consequences of their own folly, and they knew it. Their intentions were excellent, but their excellent intentions would not have saved them from condign punishment if their escapade had come to Dr. Chisholm's knowledge.

The car was presently in the midst of

a stream of vehicles all travelling in one direction, and crowds of pedestrians.

The crowded heath, with its shouting crowd and swarming stands, came in sight at last.

There the four juniors left the car. Jimmy Silver directed the chauffeur to wait for their return, and the Fistical Four plunged into the rowdy crowd in search of the trap that had taken Smythe & Co. there.

Lovell caught his arm.

"There they are!"

Jimmy Silver followed his pointing finger. In the packed vehicles, the trap was to be seen with three fellows in it—Smythe and Tracey and Howard of the Shell. The three young rascals had put on raincoats to conceal their Elons, but anyone could have seen that they were schoolboys. They were standing up, straining their eyes to watch the next race, which was starting. Smythe was using a pair of silver-mounted field-glasses.

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

The Classical chums wormed their way through the crowd, and came up behind the trap, from which the horse had been taken. The three nuts of the Shell were too busy to notice them. They heard Smythe's voice as they came near. Gunter was not to be seen, and Jimmy wondered whether the nuts had joined him after all.

"By gad, there he is!" Smythe was saying. "Three to one on Bonny Boy, Tracey!"

"Not takin' any, dear boys!" said Tracey. "Bonny Boy's goin' to win!"

"Well, I've got three quid on him with Hook," chuckled Smythe. "Hook didn't think he was a winner, with a stranger rolling."

"What would the Head say if he could see his giddy nephew now?" said Howard.

The three nuts chuckled in chorus.

They were staring at the little bunch of starters, and the Classical Four, puzzled by their remarks, stared in the

same direction. Then Jimmy Silver uttered almost a yell.

"Gunter!"

There he was—Gunter, once of the Fourth, sacked from Rookwood—Gunter, the nephew of the Head—in silver-and-blue, sticking almost on the neck of a horse—among the other jockeys! Gunter was riding in the race!

"Gunter!" gasped Lovell. "Riding! Oh, my hat!"

There was a roar; the horses were "off." Smythe's field-glasses followed them anxiously. He had backed Gunter's horse to win. But the field-glasses left his eyes, and fell into the trap with a crash, as he was suddenly jerked by the leg. He spun round and sat down on Tracey.

"What the merry dickens!" stuttered Smythe. "Oh! Jimmy Silver! Ha, ha, ha! So the good and spotless models of Rookwood have come to the races! Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've come to find you, you howling idiot!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Awfully good of you!" said Smythe.

"I'm busy! How's Bonny Boy goin'? I wonder? I've got three quids on Bonny Boy!"

"Silver-and-blue wins!" chorled Tracey.

"Smythe, you silly idiot," howled Jimmy Silver, "we've come here to warn you!"

"Keep your warnin', dear boy!" grinned Adolphus. "I know I'm on the giddy road to ruin—the downward path, by gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tracey and Howard, greatly tickled by Smythe's exquisite humour.

"We're goin' to the giddy bow-wows, and we like it!" chuckled Adolphus.

"We're paintin' the town red, and we ain't repentin'. Not by long chalks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll repent fast enough when Knowles gets to you!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've come to tell you that."

Smythe suddenly left off grinning.

"Knowles!" he stammered.

"Yes, Knowles. He's spied it out somehow that you're here——"

"You young end, you've sneaked about us!" shouted Smythe furiously.

Jimmy gave him a contemptuous look.

"That's not the truth!" he said. "We know about it because Knowles wanted to take our car. If we'd let him have it, he'd have been here by now, and you'd have been spotted!"

"Oh, by gad!" mumbled Adolphus.

"As it is, he's coming just as fast as he can, and he may happen along any minute," said Jimmy Silver. "If you want to be caught here, and marched back to Rookwood by the scruff of your neck, and expelled in the morning, just stay where you are. We came to give you the tip—not that you deserve it, you blackguard! Come on, you chaps—let's get off. We don't want Knowles to see us here."

"I—I say, hold on!" panted Adolphus.

Howard and Tracey were pale with terror now. The mere thought of being discovered there by a Rookwood prefect was more than enough to knock all the airy assurance out of the Giddy Goats.

"I—I say, you're not pullin' our leg, what?" stammered Howard. "Honest injun, you know?"

"Yes, you blithering idiot!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Knowles is comin'!" muttered Tracey. "Oh, by gad! The meddlin' Modern cad! I—I say, we've got to get out of this!"

"Wharrer we goin' to do?" mumbled Smythe helplessly. "The horse has been taken out, and—and we can't drive on, and—and if we delay—— Oh, gad! Waarrer we goin' to do?"

The "sack" loomed over the heads of the Giddy Goats. Never had goats looked less giddy than did Smythe & Co. at that moment. They were almost sick with apprehension.

"Leave the trap where it is and hook it!" said Jimmy Silver.

"But—but—— Oh dear! Suppose we meet Knowles! Oh dear me!" stuttered Howard. "Smythe, you silly idiot

"What did you drag us here for? We'll all be sacked! Oh dear!"

"And flogged!" mumbled Tracey.

"Oh, you idiot, Smythe!"

"Yes, put it all on to me!" howled Adolphus. "That's like you, you rotters!"

"How's Bonny Boy going on, dear boys?" asked Ruby sarcastically.

Smythe didn't answer that question. He had forgotten all about Bonny Boy and Genter in the saddle. His three quids on Bonny Boy did not worry him now. He would have given thrice three quids to be safe back in his study at Rookwood at that moment.

Jimmy Silver took pity on the wretched nuts.

"Jump down, and come with us," he said. "We've got a car on the road, and we'll give you a run."

Smythe & Co. fairly jumped at that generous offer. Hardly staying to snatch up his silver-mounted field-glasses, Smythe bundled out of the trap, and Tracey and Howard bundled after him. Keeping close to the Fiscal Four, they inquired a way through the crowd. As they left the heath there was a roar—the race was over. A raucous yell pronounced that Bonny Boy had won. Genter had ridden the winner. But Smythe did not dream of seeking Mr. Hook and claiming his three quids and his winnings. He almost babbled with joy as the car was reached and the juniors crowded into it.

"Let her rip!" he gasped,
And the car buzzed away.

CHAPTER 25.

A Licking for Threats.

"HALT!" rang out Jimmy Silver. The racecourse had been left miles behind, and Smythe & Co. were recovering their nerves. They had not been spoiled. Doubtless Knowles was on his way to the Combe races, but Jimmy Silver had been in good time. He had saved the nuts of

Rookwood. And as soon as the danger was over it was quite in accordance with Smythe's nature that he should assume a lofty and patronising air towards the juniors who had saved him.

"Dashed crowded in this car," the lofty Adolphus had remarked. "Do keep your boots away from my trousers, Newcome. You kids have such dusty boots."

"Shouldn't wonder if it was a false alarm, after all," growled Tracey. "Those cheeky fags may only have been pullin' our leg."

It was then that Jimmy Silver called halt.

The car stopped outside a roadside inn with a tea-garden. Jimmy Silver intended to have tea there. He also intended to rid himself of the egregious Smythe. He was quite fed up with Adolphus.

"Hallo! What are you stopping for?" asked Smythe. "This ain't Rookwood."

"Get out!" said Jimmy.

"Yaws, we can get a lift home from here," remarked Smythe. "I don't like being crowded with fags, anyway."

The nuts stepped out. The Fiscal Four followed them, looking grim.

"And now," said Jimmy Silver tersely, "put up your hands!"

Smythe jammed his eyeglass into his eye and stared at him.

"What!" he ejaculated.

"You've acted the giddy goat and the rotten blackguard, and we've risked getting the sack to yank you out of the scrape," said Jimmy Silver. "Now we're going to give you a lesson. Put up your paws!"

"By gad!"

If there was one thing the nuts of Rookwood didn't want to do, it was to put up their "paws" to the Fiscal heroes of the Fourth. But they had no choice about the matter.

Jimmy Silver tackled Smythe, Lovell decided on Howard, and Ruby started operations on Tracey. Newcome looked on; fair play was a jewel in the opinion

of the Fiscal Four, and they would not give the cads of the Shell anything else.

"Leave off!" roared Smythe. "Keep off, you young rotter! Oh, gad! My nose! I'll smash you—yarrooh! Oh dear! Yeeep!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in deadly earnest. The risk they had run, owing to Adolphus' raciality, made them angry, and the nuts had to go through it.

Finding that there was no help for it, the Giddy Goats put up a fight.

"They did their best."

But the three elegant slackers of the Shell had no chance. They were knocked right and left.

In three minutes, Smythe and Howard and Tracey were on the ground, and they refused for any consideration whatever to get off it.

They dabbed their noses and caressed their eyes, and rubbed their ears; but they would not get up. And as Jimmy Silver & Co. could not hit a fellow who was down, Smythe & Co.'s punishment had to come to an untimely end.

"Did you ever see such rotten funks?" growled Lovell, in disgust. "Get up, you worms! You can stand another round or two."

"Yow-ow-ow!" cried the nuts.

"I've only blacked one of your eyes, Smythe," remonstrated Jimmy Silver. "For goodness' sake get up and let me have a go at the other!"

"Wow-wow!" mumbled Adolphus.

"Hello!" roared Robj. "Knowles, by thunder!"

A taxi-cab came whirling up the road. Knowles of the Sixth was seated in it, evidently on his way to the races. Knowles jumped as he caught sight of the juniors in the road before the inn. The taxi halted.

Jimmy Silver raised his cap politely to the Modern prefect.

"Hallo, Knowlesy! Going to the races?" he asked pleasantly. "Naughtily! Naughtily!"

But Knowles was staring at the nuts,

who sat up and stared back at him. Much as they had suffered at the Fourth-Formers' hands, Smythe & Co. were devoutly thankful that they were there, and not on the racecourse. They could almost forgive the licking, as they realized what they had been saved from.

"Smythe!" stammered Knowles. "Tracey! Howard! I—I thought——"

"Oh, by gad!" stammered Smythe. "G-g-g-good-afternoon, Knowles!"

"Have you been to the races?" shouted Knowles.

"Races!" said Smythe. "What races?"

"The Coombe races."

"Do they have races at Coombe?" asked Smythe innocently.

Knowles almost choked. He felt that his prying into Classical affairs had led him astray for once. He was en route for the races, to catch the Giddy Goats in the act—and lo—and behold! here they were, "scrapping" with Jimmy Silver, five miles at least from the racecourse! Knowles felt that he was beaten. This time, at least, he would not score over the captain of Rockwood.

He scowled savagely at the juniors, and muttered something to his driver, and the taxi swung round and whirled back the way it had come. The meeting outside the inn had saved Knowles a journey, but he was not grateful. He was grinding his teeth as the taxi drove away.

Jimmy Silver chuckled gleefully.

"What a disappointment for Knowleser!" he remarked. "Life is full of giddy disappointments, my sons! Do they have races at Coombe? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! Do they?" roared Lovell.

Adolphus Smythe grinned as he dabbed his streaming nose.

He had shy'd up Knowles at all events. It had been a narrow escape for the nuts. But for the kindly interference of Jimmy Silver & Co., Knowles would infallibly have caught the precious trio on the racecourse, and

marched them back to the Head with a report where he had found them.

And that would have meant the "chopper" for the Giddy Goats of Rookwood, short and sharp.

But all that Knowles could report now was that he had found the Giddy Goats "scrapping" with a gang of Fourth-Formers at an inn near Coombe, and naturally Knowles would not bother to report that.

The meddling Modern prefect was beaten, and the nuts were safe and sound, but they were not troubled with any feelings of gratitude towards the Pistical Four. That would not have been like Adolphus and his select circle.

Their feelings, at present, were hurt. Adolphus had a swollen nose and a darkened eye. Tracey had a nose that looked, as Baby said, as if it had been through a mangle. Howard was quite a wreck. It was only just that the nuts should be punished for their rascality; and they had received their punishment, not from the Head, but from Jimmy Silver & Co.

They rubbed their eyes, they mopped their noses, and they caressed their ears, and they scowled.

The Pistical Four watched them cheerfully. They were ready to give Adolphus & Co. some more, if Adolphus & Co. wanted any more.

But Adolphus & Co. didn't. They had had enough.

"Let's get out of this, you fellows," said Adolphus. "Let's get away from these young hooligans, for goodness' sake. Suppose anybody we knew should find us along with them, by gad!"

"Horrid!" said Tracey.

"Do they have races at Coombe?" chuckled Lovell. "How would you like us to tell Knowles where we found you, Smythe?"

Smythe jumped.

"You—you won't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The chums of the Fourth roared. It was amusing to see the lofty Adolphus come down off his perch again so suddenly.

"Oh, come on!" said Adolphus, scowling. And the nuts tramped away on the road to the village.

"Now for tea!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Tain't been such a rotten afternoon after all. Knowles has been done in the eye, and Smythe's had a lesson. Let's hope it will do him good. Now for a feed!"

The Pistical Four, in a cheerful mood, sat down to tea on the grassy bank beside the road, with fresh tea from the inn, and an endless supply of tuck from the basket in the car. The afternoon's excursion was, after all, a success.

CHAPTER 32

Gunter's Little Camel

CLATTER, clatter, clatter!

"Hallo, somebody in a hurry!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had finished tea, and were discussing their next move, when that sudden clatter was heard on the hard road.

The Classical chums glanced along the dusty highway.

A trap, with a handsome horse between the shafts, was shaking at a reckless speed along the road. Two juniors recognized Adolphus Smythe's "turn-out," which the nuts had abandoned in their hasty departure from the raccourse. And they recognized the lad who was driving.

It was Gunter!

Gunter was driving recklessly, as he did everything. The wild junior was evidently in an excited and reckless mood. He seemed to enjoy the wrath of the startled cyclist and the alarm of the pedestrians, who jumped hastily out of his way.

He came up to the inn with a terrific clatter, and dropped in the almost foaming horse as he caught sight of the Classical chums.

"Whoa!" yelled Gunter. "Hallo, you galoots!"

"Hallo, you blunder!" said Jimmy Silver.

He looked curiously at Gunter. It was the first time he had seen the Head's nephew since the latter had been expelled from Rookwood.

"Fancy meetin' you!" grinned Gunter, holding in the snorting horse and looking down on the Rookwood juniors. "What a happy meetin'! How are you getting on at Rookwood? Same old slow and sleepy shebang—what!"

"Well, we're not mourning for you, anyway!" snapped Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha! I guess I was glad to get out; the place would have bored me to death if I'd stuck it out much longer," said Gunter. "It was a game while it lasted, but I guess I couldn't have stood it much longer. I reckon I'm on to something better now—just a few!"

"Riding in races," said Baby, with a curl of the lip.

"You've seen me!" grinned Gunter. "So you've been there—you, the spotless and immaculate models of Rookwood! Ha, ha, ha! Did you see anything of my pals, Smythe and his set? I've lost them."

"We saw you," said Jimmy Silver. "And we got Smythe & Co. to clear off. They've gone home to Rookwood. There was a prefect after them."

Gunter roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! They funk'd it! Why, I've got some pals there who'd have rolled the prefect, whoever he was, into the horse-pond, and half-killed him. They should have left him to me. You Rookwood chaps have got no sand. I guess I was surprised when I found them gone, and the trap left for me to bring home. I guess I'll talk to Smythe about this."

"You'd better let Smythe alone, unless you want to get him sacked!" growled Jimmy Silver.

Another roar from Gunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Why not? What's good enough for me is good enough for Smythe, I guess. I don't care a Continental red cent."

"What are you doing down here, anyway?" demanded Jimmy.

Gunter chuckled.

"I guess I'm fixed in Coombe," he said. "I've got friends there—the merry galoots at the Bird-in-Hand. We have a roaring time, you bet. I guess I'm there to make my beloved uncle squirm—see? He kicked me out of Rookwood. But I calculate I'm not going back to the States—not much. I'm going to stick in Coombe and paint the town red, and make his name and mine the talk of the neighbourhood. I guess that will make uncle sorry for himself—what!"

"You rotten cad!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha! I guess that's the little game!" chortled Gunter. "They kicked me out of Rookwood. Well, they can kick out some more after me—see? I'll show 'em up. I guess I can hang out where I like, and I choose to hang out in Coombe. If my beloved uncle doesn't like it, he can lump it!"

The Pictorial Four glared at Gunter. They had guessed that this was his motive in "planting" himself near the school—revenge upon the Head for sacking him, and upon Rookwood generally by bringing disgrace on the school. Such a reckless and rascally scheme was in keeping with Gunter's character.

The expressions upon their faces seemed to amuse Gunter. He roared with merriment.

"You can put that in your pipe and smoke it!" he chuckled. "You don't get rid of me so easily, I guess. I'm a stickler!"

Jimmy Silver looked at him steadily. The thought was in his mind of the fragment of the letter from America, which had turned up in the waste-paper basket in the end study.

"You may get shifted," he said quietly.

Gunter laughed.

"Who's goin' to shift me?" he demanded.

"The police, perhaps."

Gunter stared at him.

"Oh, come off!" he ejaculated. "I guess they can't touch me. I rather

reckon I'm too cute to give them the chance."

"Suppose" said Jimmy Silver deliberately—"suppose they found out that your front name is Sam, and not Robert?"

Gunter started violently.

"Then they might suspect that your surname isn't Gunter," said Jimmy Silver. "You might be lagged as an impostor."

"By gum!" said Gunter, staring blankly at Jimmy. "By hokey! I guess—" He broke off with a reckless laugh. "But you're bluffing. You don't know anythin'; you're only bluffing. You can't scare me worth a cent. That's how much I care for you and all Rookwood!"

Lash!

Jimmy Silver gave a sudden yell as Gunter lashed out with the whip. The thong caught Jimmy across the face, and he staggered back.

The next instant the whip fell across the horse, and the animal started with a leap, and the trap clattered away down the road, Gunter brandishing the whip and yelling with laughter.

Jimmy Silver, panting with rage, leaped out into the road, but the trap was already vanishing in a cloud of dust.

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy. "I—I—I'll smash him! I'll scrag him! The cowardly beast! Oh, crumbs! I'll—I'll—I'll—" Words failed Jimmy.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! The thunder of the recklessly-driven vehicle died away in the distance. Jimmy Silver stood in the road, and rubbed his face, where a red streak showed across his cheek. Gunter had vanished.

"So he's staying in Coombe!" said Lovell. "And he's come here to disgrace Rookwood as much as he can. And he's going to drag as many Rookwood fellows as he can into his dirty tricks, beginning with that idiot Smythe. A precious little game—if he's allowed to keep on."

Jimmy Silver's eyes glittered.

"He's not going to be allowed to keep

on!" he said. "The Head can't deal with him, but it's up to us, my infants. Gunter is going to have the whapping of his life, and he's going to be turned out of Coombe!"

"That's a big order!" said Raby, with a whistle. "Who's going to do it?"

"Us!"

"Oh!"

It certainly sounded like a big order. But the Co. did not argue; Jimmy Silver had made up his mind. And when Jimmy Silver had made up his mind, his resolution was like unto the laws of the Medes and Persians, that never changed. And when the Fistical Four came home to Rookwood there was a solemn and serious "pow-wow" in the end study to discuss the plan of campaign. It was Jimmy Silver against Gunter, and it remained to be seen which would have the upper hand.

CHAPTER 25.

Uncle Jimmy Does His Duty!

JIMMY SILVER sat up in bed.

There was a glimmer of moonlight at the windows of the Fourth Form Dormitory on the Classical side at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his eyes and blinked round him.

It was very quiet in the dormitory. From most of the beds came a low sound of steady breathing. It was half-past ten—the half-hour had clurred out from the clock-tower. Jimmy Silver listened. There was a faint sound of movement in the silence, a whispering voice.

"Put your boots on outside, Topham."

Low as the voice was, Jimmy Silver recognised the tones of Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth.

"Right-ho!" came Topham's whisper in reply.

Cautious feet in socks moved towards the door.

Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed. He had not been mistaken. The two slackers

of the Fourth were out of bed, and about to leave the dormitory upon a nocturnal excursion.

Properly speaking, it was none of Jimmy Silver's business. Certainly, he was the great chief of the Classical Fourth, but he had never set up as censor of morals in the Fourth Form. If Townsend and Topham chose to smoke cigarettes with Smythe of the Shell and the other nuts of Rookwood, if they played cards, and put surreptitious bobs on gee-gees, Jimmy Silver was not really called upon to chip in. He regarded the "Giddy Goats" and their proceedings with contemptuous scorn, and let them alone, as a rule.

But circumstances alter cases. In the present case, Jimmy Silver felt that he had good reasons for chipping in. He intended to chip in. And when Jimmy Silver meant to do a thing, he did it promptly and efficiently.

He slipped out of bed, and grasped his pillow.

Townsend and Topham were sneaking cautiously towards the door, never doubting that the rest of the Classical Fourth were fast asleep. Jimmy Silver's wakefulness came as a surprise to them.

Jimmy did not trouble to be cautious. With his pillow gripped in his hands, he made a rush towards the door, overtaking the two nuts just as they reached it. They spun round as they heard him.

Whop! Jimmy's pillow swept through the air at the two dim forms, and there was a gasping howl from Townsend as he caught it with his chin.

Crash!
"Yow! Oh! Ah!" howled Townsend.
"What the thunder——" gasped Topham. "Oh, you beast! Ah!"

Jimmy Silver's pillow smote Topham fairly on the napper. Topham went over with a yell, and landed on the floor, bumping.

"Oh dear! Ah! Yow!"
"By gad! Yaroooh! Oh!"
"What the dickens is the row?"

exclaimed Lovell, sitting up in bed, and from most of the beds came surprised and inquiring voices. The fall of the two nuts had awakened all the Classical Fourth.

"Who's up?"
"What the dickens——"
"Is it a Modern radd?"
Jimmy Silver chuckled.
"Only little me!" he said cheerily.
"Put a light on, Lovell."

A match scratched, and a candle-end was lighted. In the glimmering light, the juniors stared in amazement at the two sprawling and gasping forms on the floor, and Jimmy Silver standing guard over the door with his pillow.

"What the dickens——" exclaimed Eaby.

"Yow! You radd!" gasped Townsend, sitting upon the floor and blinking furiously at Jimmy Silver. "You interfering beast!"

"Ow! Yow! I'm hurt!" moaned Topham. "Oh, my napper! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Our dear young friends were going on the tiles," explained Jimmy Silver. "I've chipped in for their good. They are going to thank me nicely and get back to bed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Townsend and Topham were fully dressed, save for their boots, which they had carried in their hands. There was no doubt as to what their intentions had been. But there was very great doubt as to whether their intentions would be carried out. Jimmy Silver was a lion in the path.

"Rotten cads!" growled Newcome. "They'll get spotted by a prefect one of these times. Shouldn't wonder if Bulkeley's heard the row. You'll look pretty sick if he comes up and finds you dressed, you pair of dummies."

Townsend staggered to his feet.
"You interfering beast, Silver! What's it got to do with you, anyway? Let me pass! I'm going out!"

"So am I!" mumbled Topham.
"Well, this is the way out," said

Jimmy Silver, "and my pillow's ready. Come on!"

"Look here! What right have you got to interfere with us?" howled Townsend.

"None at all," said Jimmy. "But, bless your little heart, that doesn't bother me. I know your little game—the Bird-in-Hand, and Gunter's Belle party there—and I'm nipping it in the bud—see?"

"You meddling idiot——"

"Get back into bed!" said Jimmy apologetically.

"I won't!"

"Take off your clothes!"

"Shan't!"

"Little boys shouldn't say shan't!" said Jimmy Silver chidingly. "It's rude—especially to a kind uncle. Volunteers to help Giddy Goats to bed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were plenty of volunteers. Lovell and Raby and Newcome turned out at once, and Flynn and Jones minor and Oswald followed their example. Townsend and Topham simply panted with wrath. Going out on the razzle was, in the eyes of the nuts, a lofty and man-of-the-world sort of thing to do. Being undressed and put to bed like naughty children was humiliating. But there was no help for it.

"Lemme alone!" gasped Townsend, as Lovell and Oswald collared him. "Hands off, you rotters! Can't I do as I like, you beasts!"

"Hardly!" said Jimmy Silver. "Not while your Uncle Jimmy is around to look after you. I'm going to save you from getting the sack, dear boy. Yank off their clobber! It doesn't matter if you hurt them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crimps! Leggo! Ooooh!"

"By gad! Yah! Oh! Yah, you rotter! Oooop!"

The two nuts were in the hands of the Philistines. Their clobber was yanked off by disrespectful hands. There were sounds of tearing and rend-

ing, too, as the well-fitting clobber came off. The charms of the Fourth did not stand upon ceremony.

Townsend and Topham were soon reduced to a state of Nature, and they gasped and panted with helpless fury. Jimmy Silver took away their clothes, threw them into the cupboard at the end of the dormitory, locked the cupboard, and took out the key.

"You can have your clobber again in the morning," he remarked. "Even giddy goats like you won't want to go down to Coombe in your pyjamas."

The Fourth-Formers chuckled at the idea.

"Oh, you rotters!" moaned Topham. "Ow! Smythe's expectin' us! Oh, dear!"

"Smythe is, is he?" said Jimmy Silver. "All serene! We'll deal with Smythe next! Where is he?"

"Find out!"

"That's what we're going to do, my tulip. Take hold of Toppo's ears, Lovell, and twist them till he answers."

"Right-ho!"

There was a fendish howl from Topham.

"Leggo, you beast! Oh, dear!"

"Where is Smythe?" asked Jimmy Silver pleasantly.

"Tow-ow!"

"Give them another twist!"

Lovell gave Topham's ears another twist. Those ears were rather large, and Lovell had a good grip on them. Topham wailed with anguish.

"Ow—ow—ow! Wow! Leggo!"

"Where's Smythe?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Tow-ow! He's waiting for us at the end of the next passage, by the window," groaned Topham. "Leggo my ears! Ow!"

"Good! Put the dear little kids to bed, my sons, and spank 'em for getting up."

Townsend and Topham were bumped into their respective beds. Then there was a sound of heavy spanking. Townsend and Topham howled, though with suppressed howls, for they

were in deadly fear of drawing a perfect or a master to the scene. If old Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, had discovered their little game, their sufferings would have been much more severe.

"There, now, I think they're brought to a proper state of mind," said Jimmy Silver. "Don't you feel obliged to us, Towny, for saving you from playing the giddy ox?"

"Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Give him one more!"

Spank! Spank! Spank!

"Yaroooh! Leave off! Ow! Help!"

"Do you feel obliged now, Towny?"

"Oh, crumbs! Yes, yes, yes!" shrieked Townsend.

"That's better. Always thank your kind uncle nicely. Do you feel obliged, Tappy?"

"Yes!" gasped Topham. He did not wait for the extra spanks.

"Good! Now for Adolphus!"

Leaving Townsend and Topham moaning, and the rest of the fourth chuckling, Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome took their pillows, and slipped out of the dormitory. Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was waiting for the two nuts. He was going to meet the Pistical Four instead. And the meeting was certain to be a painful one for Adolphus.

CHAPTER 16.

Hidden in the Sudi!

"By gad, they're keepin' us waitin'!"

Adolphus Smythe made that remark in an indignant whisper.

Smythe and Howard and Tracey of the Shell were waiting in the window above. They were dressed, and had rubber shoes on, all ready for that little excursion to the Bird-in-Hand at Combe where they were to meet their old pal Gunter.

Townsend and Topham were to be members of the merry little party—at

least, that was what had been arranged. At the present moment the merriment of Townsend and Topham was at a very low ebb.

"Keepin' us waitin', by Jove!" said Howard. "Let's go without them. I dare say they've stayed asleep, the silly fags!"

The nuts of the Shell waited impatiently, straining their eyes along the dark passage. It was not safe for the Giddy Goats to hang about after getting out of their dormitory. Indeed, the whole excursion could hardly be considered safe; but the Giddy Goats were prepared to run the risk, for the sake of the high old time they had in prospect. But they were anxious to be off.

"Here they come!" murmured Howard, as there was a sound of cautious steps in the dark passage, and dim forms loomed up.

"You've kept us waitin', Townsend," mumbled Smythe.

"Sorry!" said a voice, that certainly was not Townsend's. "Got here as soon as we could, Smythe."

"Jimmy Silver!" ejaculated Smythe.

"Go for them!" howled Lovell.

"Why—what— By gad!"

The Pistical Four rushed forward with swiping pillows.

Crash! Smash! Bump!

Smythe & Co. staggered right and left under the swipes.

In their surprise and rage they forgot caution, and loud howls rang through the passage.

"Give 'em socks!" panted Jimmy Silver, swiping away. "That's one for your nob, Smythe! Pile in! Map the floor with 'em!"

"Yaroooh! Oh, by gad!"

"Run for it!" yelled Howard.

"Oh, my hat! Gerruff! Oh, dear!"

Swipe! Crash! Bump! Crash!

The Pistical Four might have been beating carpets by the way they piled in. Smythe and Howard and Tracey sprawled on the floor, and as fast as

they tried to pick themselves up the swiping pillows sent them rolling again.

The bumping and roaring rang down the passage and the stairs. It was uproarious enough to alarm all Bookwood.

A light flashed on the staircase.

"Bless my soul! What—what—"

It was the voice of Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

"Gate!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

The four juniors fled.

They vanished at top speed along the passage, and bolted into their dormitory and into bed like rabbits into a burrow.

Smythe & Co. picked themselves up, dazed and bewildered. The light was coming up the stairs, and the Form-master was with the light.

"Hook it!" stammered Smythe. "We shall be nabbed, by gad! Oh, that beast Silver!"

The Oldy Goats fled for their dormitory.

Half-dressed and wholly terrified, they bolted into bed. Jimmy Silver had assuredly "mucked up" that little expedition for that night, at least. The nuts were not thinking of the little party at the Bird-in-Hand now. They were only thinking of escaping detection.

Fortunately for them, Mr. Bootles was slow.

He arrived in the upper passage after the coast was clear. He listened, and frowned, and finally made his way to the Fourth Form dormitory. Probably his experience of the Fourth led him to guess that the disturbance was most likely to have proceeded from that quarter.

But when he looked into the dormitory all was quiet and calm. Townsend and Topham were quaking in bed, wide awake, but they closed their eyes. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked as if they were sleeping the sleep of the innocent babe.

Mr. Bootles shook his head, and retired.

Jimmy Silver waited till his footsteps had died away before he gave vent to the chuckle he had been suppressing.

"Narrow squeak that!" he remarked. "We couldn't have told Bootles that we were out as censors of morals, and it would have meant a galing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Co.

"I fancy Smythe won't be going out to-night!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "I fancy he will be fed up!"

"I fancy so!" chuckled Lovell.

"You rosters!" came a mumble from Townsend's bed. "We'll jolly well go another time, and be hanged to you!"

"There won't be another time!" said Jimmy Silver coolly. "That chap Gunter is going to be cleared out of this neighbourhood. You blithering ass, can't you see that his game is to get you fellows into trouble? He would be glad to see some of you sacked along with him."

"Oh, rats!"

"Did you say rats to me, Towny?" asked Jimmy Silver, putting one leg out of bed.

"I—I meant good-night, you beast!" stammered Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's better!" said Jimmy Silver, settling down again. "Good-night, dear boy!"

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled themselves to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

The Only Way!

JIMMY SILVER was a thoughtful look the next morning.

Smythe & Co. were sullen and savage looks. Their expedition had been nipped in the bud; they had been unable to keep their appointment, and it was all due to the extremely high-handed interference of Jimmy Silver.

It was not surprising that the nuts of Bookwood were savage and retty. If the noble nuts had been fighting

men Jimmy Silver would certainly have had several fights on his hands that day.

Jimmy Silver would not have minded. He thrived on "scraps." But the nuts were not looking for scraps. They contented themselves with scowling and muttering vengeance—the said vengeance being postponed to some indefinite date in the future.

Jimmy Silver was not bothering about the nuts. He had other and more important matters to occupy his thoughts.

Jimmy Silver had come to a resolution, in which his chums fully concurred. Gunter had to be got rid of.

True, Jimmy Silver had no right to dictate to Gunter whether he should live at Coombe or not. But Jimmy Silver felt that on certain occasions high-handedness was justified, and he had made up his mind that Gunter had to go.

After lessons that day Jimmy was still looking very thoughtful as he came out with Lovell and Raby and Newcome. It was up to Jimmy Silver, as leader of the Cu., to think out a plan for dealing with Gunter, and Jimmy had thought it out.

It had given him a good deal of mental exercise, but he had come to a decision at last.

"Well?" said Lovell and Raby and Newcome, in chorus, as Jimmy Silver halted in the quad.

"Well," said Jimmy. "It's settled. We'll speak to those Modern bounders; they can back us up."

"Oh, the Moderns are no good!" said Lovell, with a sniff. "Better keep it in our own hands."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"We're going to let Gunter see that all Rookwood's against him," he explained. "Moderns and Classics shoulder to shoulder, you know. Besides, he may have a gang of his precious sporting friends with him,

and Tommy Dodd is useful in a scrap. Come on!"

"Oh, all right!"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook, the heroes of the Modern Fourth, were coming out of the backshop when the Fistical Four bore down upon them. The three Tommies looked warlike at once. They had been making purchases for tea, and they scented a Classical raid.

"Rush 'em!" rapped out Tommy Dodd. "Hold on to the parcels and rush the cads!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver, as a sudden rush of the Modern trio sent the Classical Four spinning. "Yah! You silly ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies were through, and they sped away to their own side with their parcels, chuckling. Lovell picked himself up with a snort of wrath.

"After them!" he shouted. "Mop up the quad with the Modern rotters!"

"Hold on!" gasped Jimmy.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Fathead!"

"We'll mop up those cads, and then go and mop up Gunter without any silly Moderns to help us!" said Raby.

"Who's leader?" demanded Jimmy Silver ferociously. "Can't you follow your leader, you burlbers? Shut up and fall in and follow me!"

"Look here—"

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy.

"Bow-wow" was not really a satisfactory reply to the objections of his chums, but it had the desired effect, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed their leader, though with loud sniffs. Jimmy led the way at a sedate pace towards the Modern side, and they entered Mr. Mander's house, not on the warpath.

Jimmy Silver knocked at Tommy Dodd's study door and opened it. The three Tommies were chuckling in the study.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd

as his visitors appeared. "Those Classical duffers again! They haven't had enough! Hand me the treacle!"

"Hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver. "It's pax!"

"Oh!" Tommy Dodd put down the treacle-jar. "That'll save the treacle, anyway. It's a waste of good treacle to mop it on Classical fatheads!"

"You silly chump!" said Jimmy Silver. "I've a jolly good mind to wreck the study. But I want to see you on business, you shrieking fat-head! It's about Gunter!"

"Oh, Gunter!" said Tommy Dodd. "That sacked Classical! Not the only fellow on your side who ought to be sacked, if you ask me!"

"Well, I don't ask you!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "Look here, Gunter's hanging out in Coombe!"

"Yes, like his cheek. But some Classics have cheek enough for anything!" said Tommy Dodd disparagingly.

"He's not a Classical now, fathead—now he's kicked out of Rookwood! And he ought to have been a Modern while he was here——"

"Much more suitable on this side, a blackguard like that!" snorted Lovell.

Tommy Dodd picked up the treacle-jar again.

"PAX, you ass!" howled Jimmy Silver. "Don't I keep on telling you we haven't come here to lick you this time!"

"Lick us! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three Tommies, in chorus.

They were evidently determined to regard Jimmy Silver's remark as a good joke.

"Oh, let's get off!" grunted Lovell. "These Modern cads wouldn't be game enough, anyway!"

"Game for anything you're game for, anyway!" sniffed Tommy Dodd.

"What's on?"

"We're going for Gunter," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, that was my idea," said Tommy Dodd. "I suggested——"

"Well, it's my idea, too," said Jimmy, manfully forbearing to start another argument. "He's disgracing the school and his uncle, our respected Head, and he says plainly that's what he's there for. He will be run in by the police some day with his black-guardly goings-on, and then think of the disgrace. I believe that's his little game, as a matter of fact. He'd do anything to get even with Rookwood for kicking him out. We're going to shift him out of Coombe!"

"How?" demanded the three Moderns, with one voice.

"Go for him, and rag him, and make hay of him till he clears off," said Jimmy Silver unhesitatingly.

"Oh, scissors!"

"If you're game you can help us," said Jimmy. "If you're not, you can go and eat coke!"

"We're game enough," said Tommy Dodd. "But if it came out that we'd been to the Bird-in-Hand for any reason, it would mean trouble."

"We've got to risk that," said Raby. "I suppose you Modern bounders can risk it if we can?"

"I should jolly well say so!" said Tommy Dodd. "You won't find the top side of Rookwood backing out——"

"Top side! Why, you Modern ass——"

"You Classical duffer——"

"Order!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "You can jaw some other time. Is it a go? Are we going for Gunter?"

"It's a go!" said the three Tommies at once.

"Done, then!"

"Now we'll have tea," said Tommy Dodd. "Stay and feed with us, dear boys. Pax till after we've routed the enemy!"

"Right-ho!"

And the Classics and Moderns sat down to tea together quite amicably. Civil war was suspended till the common enemy had been disposed of.

CHAPTER 18.

Reckwood on the Warpath.

SEVEN juniors marched out of the gates of Rookwood after tea with very determined looks. The rivals of Rookwood were on the war-path—not against one another for once.

They were serious enough about it. Gunter, the sacked blackguard of the Fourth, was a denizen of the Bird-in-Hand, a low public-house on the outskirts of the village. That house was strictly out of bounds for all Rookwood fellows.

In any other circumstances Jimmy Silver & Co. would never have dreamed of entering such a place. They knew, too, that the penalty would be severe if the Head learned of it. Their excellent intentions would not save them from condign punishment.

But they were running the risk. For the sake of the school's good name, they were going to get rid of Gunter. There was only one way—the drastic method of ragging the young rascal till he cleared off. The Head might be angry if he learned of their proceedings, but there was no doubt that he would be grateful to hear that his nephew was gone. Jimmy Silver & Co. were, in fact, observing the injunction to do good by stealth.

Of the "scrap" that was probably before them, they thought little. Gunter would put up a fight, and his associates would probably help him; but the heroes of the Fourth were prepared for any amount of scrapping.

"Better en round by way of the towing-path," Tommy Dodd observed, as the party drew near the village. "We don't want to be spotted going in. If Knowles or Hakeley should be about—"

"Good idea!" assented Jimmy Silver.

The juniors cut down to the towing-path, which gave access to the low inn garden.

There was a gate in the hedge, and the juniors paused there to survey the enemy's territory before invading it.

Jimmy Silver uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"There he is!"

"Gunter, by Jove!"

"The rotten cad!" growled Lovell, in disgust.

Gunter was there, in full view, and his aspect was not edifying. There was a little summer-house at the end of the garden, and through the leaves the juniors could see into it. Three persons were seated at a small table—one of them Gunter, and the other two men some years older. Gunter had a cigar between his yellow teeth, and a bunch of cards in his hand. Cards were on the table and money, and glasses furnished with something stronger than ginger-beer.

The juniors looked on the scene in wrath and disgust.

This blackguard had been in the Fourth Form at Rookwood—he was still wearing a Rookwood cap, with the red badge of the Classical side. And here he was, the nephew of the reverend Head of Rookwood, smoking, drinking, and gambling, with Joey Hook the bookmaker, and "Tadger" Tagg the billiard sharper.

His insolence in still wearing the Rookwood cap enasperated the juniors more than anything else. It was part of his plan, of course; but they thought that even Gunter might have been decent enough to put that aside.

"I guess that pol's mine, pardners," remarked Gunter, with a chuckle. He spoke with the nasal twang the juniors knew so well. Rookwood had not changed Gunter in the least; he was still exactly the same fellow who had come from the far-off land of Texas, where his up-bringing had evidently been of the roughest and rudest.

Tadger Tagg muttered an oath.

"You 'ave good luck, Mister Gunter," said Joey Hook, with a somewhat suspicious look at the one-time Fourth-Former of Rookwood.

Gunter laughed as he raked in the stakes. Probably the two sharpers had not expected to meet their match in

the schoolboy. But Gunter was ahead of anything the quiet village of Coombe could produce in the way of rusticity.

"Time we clipped in," murmured Jimmy Silver. "We've fairly got him here!"

"What-ho!"

"Follow on!" said Jimmy.

He put his hand on the gate, and vaulted over, and ran towards the summer-house. His chums were after him in a twinkling.

Gunter sprang to his feet, as he saw them.

Tadger Tagg and Joey Hook rose also, looking surprised.

"Friends of yours, Mister Gunter?" asked Hook.

"I guess not," chuckled Gunter. "I reckon these galoots have come njar looking for trouble."

"We've come here looking for you, Gunter," said Jimmy Silver.

"I guess you've found me at home."

"We've got a bone to pick with you," said Tommy Dodd.

"If you ain't no business 'ere, young genta, you'll oblige by clearin' off," said Mr. Hook.

"But we have business here," said Jimmy. "Our business is with Gunter. Gunter, you've been long enough in Coombe. When are you going?"

"When I choose, I guess."

"That's where you make a mistake. You're going when we choose. We've come to tell you so."

"I guess you might have saved your breath," said Gunter. "I'm staying on. I guess your headmaster will be sorry he sacked me before I'm through. Now you can rascose the ranch, or I'll call the stable-hands to shift you."

"You're going!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "You've disgraced Rookwood enough. Now you're clearing."

Gunter laughed contemptuously, and sat down again.

"Mind," said Jimmy Silver. "we mean business. I don't mind saying out plain that I don't believe you're really our headmaster's nephew at all. If you were, you'd have some grain of decency

in you. I believe you're some rotten swindler. But anyway, you're going."

Gunter started.

"I guess you're talking out of your hat," he said. "Don't you calculate that Dr. Chisholm knows his own nephew?"

"I know he'd never seen him," said Jimmy. "I know you came here from Texas as his nephew. But I know, too, that you had a letter from America in which you were called 'Sam.' Sam isn't the name of Dr. Chisholm's nephew. I know you were scared by that letter, and you let out that you were afraid somebody was coming to Rookwood, and you said the game would be up. Putting two and two together, I conclude that you're not what you make yourself out to be."

Gunter shrugged his shoulders.

"I reckon you'll have to prove all that," he remarked.

"Not at all, I expect it will come out soon enough," said Jimmy. "and anyway, I can't prove it!"

"Then I guess you'd better shut your yap-trap," said Gunter, in the elegant phraseology he had certainly not learned at Rookwood. "You make me tired."

"We're here to clear you out," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "You can pack your bag and come with us to the station."

"What!" ejaculated Gunter.

"We'll see you off by the next train."

"By gum, will you?"

"Otherwise you'll get ragged till you're ready to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gunter, evidently greatly tickled. The young rascal had plenty of nerve, at least.

"I mean it!" said Jimmy. "Last night you tried to get some silly asses in Rookwood to break bounds. You didn't care if they got themselves sacked—or I rather suspect you'd have been pleased. We're putting a stopper on all that."

"We are!" said Lovell. "You've got to go!"

"On your feet, or on your neck, just

as you please," explained Tommy Dodd.

Gunter roared with laughter.

"I say, young gent, you'd better get out," said Mr. Hook. "You can't interfere with Mister Gunter like this 'ere!"

"You ring off!" said Jimmy Silver. "If you chip in here, Mr. Hook, you'll get hurt. Gunter, are you going?"

"I guess not!"

"Last time of asking," said Jimmy Silver. "Are you going?"

"Nup!"

"Collar him!"

There was a rush.

CHAPTER 24.

A Battle Royal!

GUNTER leaped to his feet.

His hands closed on the neck of a heavy bottle, and he swung it into the air. His eyes gleamed like a cat's.

"Hands off!" he shouted. "Hands off, or——"

There was no doubt that the rock-ets young rascal would have struck. But Jimmy Silver was upon him with the spring of a tiger before he could use the dangerous weapon.

Jimmy grasped his arm, and forced it back, and Gunter struggled in vain to release it, to strike a savage blow.

The next moment Lovell's grasp was on the bottle, and it was wrenched from Gunter's hand.

"Let up!" shrieked Gunter. "Hook, Tagg, stand by me! Call the stable-men!"

Gunter was struggling furiously in the grasp of three or four of the Rookwooders.

Joey Hook and Tadger Tagg advanced very gingerly to his aid. They were seized by the juniors, and hurled back unceremoniously. The Co. had no ceremony to waste on a pair of blackguards.

Tadger Tagg crashed into the shrubbery, and lay there gasping, and

Joey Hook crashed after him, and rolled over him.

They were hors de combat at once.

But Gunter was a tougher customer. He fought like a wildcat in the grasp of the Rookwooders.

With hands and feet, and nails and teeth, the young rascal resisted, and there were loud howls from the juniors, who suffered considerable damages in that mode of fighting.

But Gunter was borne to the ground at last, and his hands were held, and Jimmy Silver planted a knee on his chest.

"Got him!" panted Jimmy.

"Let up!" yelled Gunter. "By hokey, if I had a shooter here——"

"Elp!" yelled Mr. Hook.

"Merice!" muttered Tadger Tagg.

There was a shout in the garden, and two or three rough fellows came running from the direction of the inn.

"Get him out of here!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Duck him in the river!"

"Good egg!"

Gunter, still resisting desperately, was dragged away, bumping on the ground. Raby kicked the gate open, and Gunter was rushed out on the towing-path.

Right down to the gleaming river he was rushed, and then he was swung, yelling, into the air.

"One, two, three!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Go!"

And Gunter went.

There was a terrible splash, and Gunter disappeared into the shallow water, two or three yards from the bank.

"Hurrah!" panted Tommy Dodd.

Gunter's head came up. He scrambled to his feet in the shallows, smothered with mud.

The water surged round his chest as he stood. There was as much mud as water close to the bank, and Gunter was covered with it. His features were almost hidden by it. The juniors burst into a roar of laughter at the sight of him.

Gunter, grinding his teeth, came scrambling towards the bank. He

clutched at the rushes to drag himself out.

Jimmy Silver's boot interposed.

"Not yet!" said Jimmy coolly. "Have you made up your mind to clear off, Gunter?"

"No!" shrieked Gunter.

"Then you're not coming out!"

"I—I guess you—you—"

Gunter's voice was lost in his rage; he stammered with fury.

Jimmy Silver thrust hard with his boot, and Gunter went floundering back into the mud. He came up again, gasping.

"Look out!" rapped out Tommy Dodd. "Here come the enemy!"

Joey Hook and Tagg, and three rough-looking fellows from the Bird-in-Hand, were advancing upon the juniors from the inn garden. Jimmy Silver & Co. faced the foe at once. The two weedy, unlit sharpers were not dangerous; but the three roughs were another proposition.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. feared no foe. They were quite prepared for a battle.

"Keep your distance!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"You let Mr. Gunter alone, then!" howled Joey Hook.

"Master Gunter's our property!" said Tommy Dodd. "Master Gunter's staying in the mud for the present!"

And as Gunter was making another attempt to scramble out, Tommy Dodd promptly shoved him back with his boot, and Gunter floundered again in water and mud.

"Go for them!" raved Gunter from the water. "Pitch them in! I'll stand a quid to each of you chaps if you pitch them in!"

That was enough for the loafers of the Bird-in-Hand. They rushed to the attack.

"Line up!" shouted Lovell.

"Back up, Rookwood!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Hook and Mr. Tagg prudently kept in the background, urging the roughs on. They had apparently had enough. Three burly roughs and seven

determined juniors mingled in a fierce fight.

It was a fight of men against boys, but the schoolboys at least had the odds on their side, and they were full of pluck.

It was a Humeric battle.

The roughs were hitting their hardest, and the schoolboys were bowled over like skittles when the blows landed. But they were active; they were good boxers, and their blood was up. The roughs received at least as good as they gave. The wild scramble on the towing-path lasted several minutes, and Tommy Dodd and Cook and Ruby lay gasping on the ground; but by that time one of their enemies had been knocked into the water, another was down, with Jimmy Silver kneeling on his chest, and the third was fleeing, with Lovell and Newcome after him raging for gore.

Gunter came scrambling out, muddy, and breathing vengeance; but Tommy Doyle had an eye on him, and he met Gunter with a terrific drive on the chin that hurled him back into the river.

Tommy Dodd and Cook and Ruby were up again almost at once, very far from beaten. One of their foes had fled, another was scrambling out of the river and taking to his heels, and the fellow under Jimmy Silver's knee was howling for mercy.

Rookwood had won!

Mr. Tagg and Mr. Hook took a hurried departure. They did not want to argue with the victors.

"Lemme up! Lemme gerraway!" gasped the unfortunate gentleman whose nose Jimmy Silver was grinding into the towing-path.

He was allowed to "gerraway," and the panting juniors remained conquerors on the field of battle.

"Hurray for us!" panted Tommy Dodd. "Oh, my nose!"

"Ow, my eye!" murmured Cook.

"Oh, a black eye's nothing!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've licked them!"

"Yow! You haven't got one! Wow!"

"Look out! That cad's getting away!" shouted Raby.

Gunter had splashed along the bank to some distance, and was again seeking to crawl out of the water. The juniors made a rush to the spot.

Half a dozen hands closed on the muddy Gunter as he landed. He wriggled feebly; he was too spent to struggle.

"Not quite done with you yet!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Let up! Let up!" panted Gunter.

"Are you going?"

"No!" yelled Gunter.

"In you go again, then!"

There was a buzz of a bicycle-bell on the towing-path. The juniors did not heed it. But the cyclist halted and jumped down, and a sharp voice rapped out:

"Stop that at once!"

"Bulkeley!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

It was the captain of Rookwood. The juniors dropped Gunter as if he had become suddenly red-hot, and whirled round to face Bulkeley. Gunter squirmed and gasped in the rushes at their feet.

CHAPTER 40.

Not a Success!

BULKELEY looked at the juniors grimly.

The juniors looked at Bulkeley.

There was a short silence, broken only by the spasmodic gasping of Gunter.

"You've been fighting—eh?" exclaimed Bulkeley at last.

The question was really superfluous. There was not one of the band of heroes who did not show very plainly that he had been fighting. Seldom had even the Fishal Four and the three Tommies shown so many signs of combat all at once.

"Sort of — of — of scrapping. Bulkeley!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Is that Gunter?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing with him?"

"Ducking him."

"What for?"

"To make him clear off."

"My hat!" said Bulkeley.

The Rookwood captain stared at Gunter as that muddy youth dragged himself to his feet. Gunter was red with rage under the mud. He shook his fist at the juniors, and then at Bulkeley, and staggered away towards the garden gate.

There was a movement to follow him, and Bulkeley interposed.

"Stop!" he rapped out.

"We—we haven't finished yet," said Tommy Dodd.

"Get back to Rookwood at once, all of you!"

"I—I say, Bulkeley——"

"Shut up, and get off!"

There was no disputing with the captain of the school. Jimmy Silver & Co. marched off, somewhat weary and worn, and very much disappointed. They had not nearly finished with Gunter yet.

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Bulkeley followed them, wheeling his bike. He did not speak for some time, and the juniors wondered rather apprehensively what he was thinking about. He was head prefect of Rookwood, and he knew they had been in the Bird-in-Hand. True, he also knew their motive. They were thankful that it was not Knowles who had caught them. But what would Bulkeley do?

Not a word did Bulkeley speak till they were near the gates of Rookwood. Then he called to them:

"You young rascals!"

"Yes, Bulkeley?" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Let there be no more of this!"

"Oh, Bulkeley!"

"You'd get flogged if the Head knew where you'd been. It's really my duty to report you. I'll give you a chance if you'll promise me not to go near the place again, or to touch Gunter."

"But the fellow ought to be cleared off!" argued Jimmy Silver. "He's a disgrace to Rookwood, Bulkeley!"

"You can leave that to others older than yourself," said Bulkeley. "Now then, are you going to give me your word, or do you want me to march you in to the Head?"

"Oh, yes; certainly!"

"Now go and get yourselves clean," said Bulkeley. "You look more like a gang of hooligans than Rookwood fellows!"

Bulkeley wheeled his bike in, and Jimmy Silver & Co., after looking at one another uncertainly for a few moments, followed him.

"Just like all your rotten Classical wheezes!" groaned Cook. "I've got a black eye, and old Manders will be down on me; and we're jolly lucky not to be reported to the Head!"

"If we're jolly lucky, what are you grouching about?" mumbled Ruby.

"Look at my nose!"

"Blow your nose!"

"Well, blow your eye!"

"You Classical fathead——"

"You Modern worm——"

It looked as if the Hameric battle of

the towing-path would be followed by a Classical-Modern battle in the school quad. But the juniors were feeling too sore, and after an exchange of compliments they parted.

The Fistical Four bathed their faces in the dormitory on the Classical side. Their faces needed bathing badly.

"It was a jolly good idea!" said Jimmy Silver a little dubiously, however. "Jolly good! Bulkeley coming along spoiled it, that's all."

"That rotter Gunter wouldn't have gone, anyway," said Ruby. "Look at my nose."

"Dash your nose! I suppose after what we said to Bulkeley we can't rag Gunter any more," said Jimmy Silver dolefully.

"Of course we can't, fathead!"

"Still, it was a jolly good idea."

"Oh, ripping!" groaned Ruby. "Look at my nose!"

"I'll jolly well dot you on the nose if I hear much more about it," said Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "Go and eat cake!"

When the Fistical Four gathered in the end study to tea, however, they were feeling a little better. It was agreed that "going for Gunter" had been a ripping idea, though it had not turned out a howling success. It was agreed, too, that old Bulkeley was a brick not to report them. Jimmy Silver eagerly opined that Bulkeley sympathised with their little scheme, though, of course, as a prefect he couldn't say so.

The Fistical Four, upon the whole, were satisfied with themselves. But the question remained unanswered. How was Rookwood to get rid of Gunter? But, as it happened, that question was shortly to find an unexpected answer.

CHAPTER 41.

A Startling Discovery!

"G UNTER again, by Jove!"

It was the following Saturday afternoon. As it was a half-holiday, and the Fistical Four had

nothing better to do, they were sauntering down to Coombe to sample the good things in the bunshop there. They were thinking of anything but Gunter, as it happened—Jimmy Silver's "whereas" of going for Gunter was a thing of the past. Then they came in sight of the junior from Texas.

Gunter was sitting on a stile by the side of the lane with his usual cigar in his discoloured teeth. He was talking to Smythe of the Shell. The great Adolphus was standing in an elegant attitude, and he had a cigarette in his fingers.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged a glance.

"We've promised Bulkeley not to touch Gunter," said Jimmy. "But we can touch Adolphus—hard!"

"You bet!" said his chums.

Adolphus Smythe looked round in alarm as the Pistical Four came up.

"By gad!" he said. "Fancy meetin' you!"

"Sorry to interrupt the little pow-wow," said Jimmy Silver politely. "Don't you remember, Smythe, you've got strict orders to keep away from that blackguard."

"You cheeky ing!" gasped Adolphus, almost overcome with indignation at the idea of receiving strict orders from a Fourth-Former.

"Strict orders from your Uncle Jimmy, you remember."

"By gad!"

"Don't you remember, Adolphus?"

"You cheeky young sweep, be off!" exclaimed Smythe, with a wave of the hand.

"Not without you, dear," said Jimmy Silver. "Lay hold, you chaps—anywhere you like. Mine's his ears!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Mine's his nose!" said Raby.

"Mine's his chin," choriled Lovell.

"Gerooght! Leggo!" spluttered Smythe, struggling wildly as the Pistical Four grasped him and rushed him away down the lane towards Coombe.

But the Pistical Four did not let go; they had no intention of letting go. All

the kind attentions they were now debarred from bestowing upon Gunter they meant to bestow upon Adolphus. In that direction, at least, they could counteract Gunter's little game.

Wriggling and howling, the great Adolphus went down the lane in the midst of the laughing juniors. Gunter, on the stile, roared with laughter. He showed no sign whatever of going to the aid of Adolphus. He seemed to be amused.

"You cheeky young cads!" stammered Adolphus. "Lemme go! I'll lick you, by gad! I'll thrash you, you know! Oh, my nose! Leggo my hair! Yow-wow!"

"Ha, ha! Come on, Adolphus!"

Adolphus had to come on.

"We'll take him into Coombe, and put his head in the horse-trough," grinned Lovell.

"Good egg! Come on, Adolphus dear."

And to Coombe and the horse-trough the unfortunate Adolphus would infallibly have gone had there not come a sudden interruption. There was a wild clatter of a horse's hoofs on the hard road, and a trap came dashing round a bend of the lane ahead.

"Look out!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

The Pistical Four leaped out of the road in time, dragging Adolphus with them. The trap went whirling past.

"A runaway!" gasped Lovell. "That kid'll be killed!"

Quite forgetting Smythe of the Shell, the Pistical Four started after the trap. Its only occupant was a lad of about fifteen, who was dragging at the reins in vain, his somewhat weak face pale with terror. The horse was dashing along at top speed, completely out of control.

The trap from Coombe had passed the juniors in a flash; they had had no time even to think of rendering aid.

And it was impossible to overtake it at the speed at which it was travelling. They could only gaze after it in horror. The vehicle rocked from side to side of the rough road, and it seemed a miracle

that it kept in its wheels at all. A collision with a stone or the bank beside the road might have upset it at any moment, and the occupant would have been hurled out—probably to death.

Jimmy Silver's face was pale. Mechanically he began running after the trap, though there was no hope of getting near it.

"He's done for," muttered Raby, "unless somebody stops him——"

"He'll pass Gunter."

"Gunter! That cad!"

"My only hat!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Look!"

The Classical Four halted dumb-founded.

Gunter had looked up as the trap came thundering on towards the stile. He threw his cigar away, and slipped to the ground.

As the trap thundered up Gunter made a desperate spring at the horse's head.

The Juniors felt their hearts stand still as they saw it.

Had Gunter missed his grasp he would have crashed down into the road, fairly under the thundering hoofs, to be crushed out of life by the hoofs and the wheels. He seemed to be springing to his death.

But he did not miss his grasp. Rascal and blackguard as he was, Gunter was cool as an iceberg, steady as a rock. His grasp was on the bit, and the horse's head was dragged down.

Gunter hung on.

Still the trap thundered on, Gunter hanging to the horse's head, dragged along in its wild career.

But in a couple of minutes the weight and the iron grip of the junior from Texas told upon the excited horse. The wild pace slackened, and the trap slowed down.

Slower and slower, till the animal was dragged to a halt, and Gunter, covered with dust, bruised and shaken, but as cool as ever, stood upon his feet holding the horse.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were running their hardest. They were filled with

admiration for Gunter's pluck. They felt that that minute of courage and devotion had atoned for all the sins of the race of Rookwood.

They came up panting.

Gunter had stood for a full minute getting his breath. The horse, quiet enough now, was trembling in every limb. The weak-faced lad in the trap was still shivering. It was evident enough that his nerve was not like Gunter's.

"Waal, that was a close call, if you like, young 'un," said Gunter, raising his eyes to the boy in the trap.

Then he gave a sudden spring.

"You!" he yelled.

He did not see the Pistical Four racing up. He was staring, or rather glaring, at the white face in the trap.

"You!" he repeated. "So you've come at last. And I've saved your life—like a fool! Like a thumping fool, Bob!"

"Sam!"

"Saved your life!" repeated Gunter, with a hoarse laugh. "Oh, by hokey! If I'd let you break your neck, Bob, I could have played the game on to the end."

"You've saved my life, Sam," said the lad in the trap in trembling accents. "I—I should have been killed."

"That's a dead cert!" sneered Gunter. "You never had any pluck, Bob. If you'd had any pluck you'd never have let me bullyrag you into playing the game we played, I guess. You changed your mind after I'd left, though, you skunk, and you've gone back on me!"

"I—I couldn't keep it up, Sam—there was my father, you know——"

"You hadn't the nerve, you mean," jeered Gunter. "Oh, thumping fool that I was—why didn't I let you break your neck!"

"What the thunder do you mean?" shouted Jimmy Silver, seizing Gunter by the shoulder and shaking him. "Who's this ciao?"

Gunter laughed.

"That chap? Can't you guess?"

"Is it——" began Jimmy.

"The galoot who wrote to me that he'd lost his nerve, and couldn't keep up the game—the galoot who was coming to Rookwood to bowl me out and show me up—Bob Gunter, the Head's nephew."

"The Head's nephew! My hat!"

"It's true," faltered the lad in the trap. "I am Robert Gunter—I am the nephew of Dr. Chisholm. I'm going to Rookwood now to tell the truth."

"And who are you, then?" shouted Lovell.

The pseudo Gunter grinned.

"I guess I'm Sam Barker, and I was raised on Old Man Gunter's ranch," he said. "And I guess the game's up!"

CHAPTER II.

The Truth at Last!

JIMMY SILVER whistled.

He had vaguely suspected something of the sort; but it was startling to have his suspicions confirmed in this way. He had been right; the rascal of Rookwood was not the Head's nephew at all, and he had only been playing a part at the old school. Now that the truth was known a score of circumstances could be recalled which made the juniors wonder that the imposture had never been detected.

"I guess you can get on to Rookwood, Bob," said the outcast. "Give my love to uncle—ha, ha!—and say good-bye to him for me. Hyer, take the ribbons! My hat!" he added scornfully. "I guess you haven't the nerve to drive the boss now. I calculate I'll drive you."

The Head's nephew started.

"Sam, you wouldn't have the nerve to go to Rookwood again now!"

"Why not?" said Gunter recklessly. "I'm game!"

He jumped into the trap, gathered up the reins, and drove away. The Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Well, that chap takes the cake!"

exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Come on; we're going to see the end of this!"

The Fistical Four hurried after the trap.

The real Gunter sat in it, silent and pale, while the false Gunter drove on with reckless speed, and dashed up to the school gates with a flourish. He did not stop there. Without a pause he turned the horse in at the gates and went careering up the drive to the School House. There was a yell from the fellows in the quadrangle as they recognised the driver of the trap.

"Gunter!"

The junior from Texas cracked his whip and laughed, and drove recklessly on. The trap dashed up and stopped outside the School House, the horse in a foam. A crowd gathered round at once, joined by Jimmy Silver & Co., breathless after their race.

"Where's the Head?" shouted Gunter. "Hallo, Bulkeley! How are you getting on? Hallo, Knowles, still the same foxy-faced galoot—eh? Where's the Head? Tell him I've brought him his nephew."

"What!" shouted Bulkeley.

"Ha, ha! Bring the old boy out!" shouted Gunter.

Dr. Chisholm had already appeared on the steps of the School House. His severe old face was pale with anger.

"You have dared to return here!" he exclaimed.

The Texas junior nodded coolly.

"I guess so. I've brought you your nephew—the genuine article this time."

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"I guess you'd never seen him alive but for me!" chuckled Gunter. "The horse belted—Bob never did have any nerve—and I stopped him. Haven't I saved your life, Bob, you spoony skunk?"

"Yes," panted the unfortunate Bob.

"It's true, sir!" broke in Jimmy Silver. "We saw it, sir. Gunter might have been killed—it was an awfully narrow shave—Barker, I mean——"

"In Heaven's name, what does all

this mean?" exclaimed the Head blankly.

"This galoot is your nephew!" said the junior from Texas, flicking his companion with the whip. The wretched Bob flinched, and Gunter chuckled again. "Tell him you're his nephew, Bob. Blessed if he quite believes it now."

"I'm your nephew, sir, if you are Dr. Chisholm!" faltered Bob. "I'm your sister's son Robert, sir."

"Then—then this boy——"

Amazed as he was, relief flashed into the Head's face. That arrant, reckless blackguard was not his nephew, after all! It was a discovery that compensated for much.

"I guess it was my idea, from start to finish," said the so-called Gunter disdainfully. "I don't mind telling the yarn. I was raised on old man Gunter's ranch, and I was Bob's best pal, wasn't I, Bob?"

"Yes," faltered Bob.

"And when old man Gunter decided to send the kid to England, Bob didn't want to come; he was afraid, weren't you, Bob, you miserable worm? He was always in a blue funk."

"It wasn't only that," flashed out the miserable Bob. "You made me; you talked me over!"

"Well, so I did," admitted Gunter. "I bullyragged you, didn't I? You never did have any nerve. And I took your place and your name, and took the steamer instead of you, and gave your father's letter to the captain, and came here, and left you in Galveston, where you could have a topping time if you'd had the grit."

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "Buy—Robert—if you are my nephew, get down and come into the House. After this reprehensible trick I shall certainly not allow you to stay at Rookwood, and you will be sent home immediately. Go in at once, sir!"

The Head's nephew disappeared into the House. Dr. Chisholm fixed a stern gaze upon the impostor who had so cunningly played his part.

"As for you, whoever you are——"

"I guess I'm going. Good-bye, cocky!"

The Head, purple with wrath, turned hastily into the House. Gunter—or Barker—swung round the trap, and drove down to the gates, amid a buzzing crowd of excited Rookwood fellows.

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver, following the trap into the road.

"Hallo!"

"You're an out-and-out rotter, Gunter—I mean Barker—but you've got heaps of pluck!" said Jimmy. "Give us your fist before you go!"

The young adventurer looked at him queerly. Then he leaned over and held out his hand, and Jimmy Silver shook hands with him.

"I guess you're a good sort, Jimmy Silver," he said, and for a moment his reckless hardness seemed to be gone. "I reckon if I had my time here again, I'd play my cards a bit different. It's too late now. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and good luck!"

The trap dashed away. The juniors gazed after it till it vanished round the bend in the road. Then thoughtfully and sedately they turned back into the quad.

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In the bad old days men enlisted for life, and such were the rigours and hardships of soldiering then that not one in fifty returned. Though it meant gambling for life itself, the recruiting officer soon found men tumbling over themselves in their eagerness to get a chance to win a hundred guineas. Had he offered the full ten guineas bounty instead of five guineas and the chance in the sweep he would have been hard put to it to fill his ranks. As it was, the astute officer got his hundred men and pocketed four hundred guineas that was left over from the sum the authorities allowed him for himself!

Risking Life for a Shilling.

Another gamble prevalent in these dark days was that played when the savage military punishments were ordered. It was the custom when a regiment mutinied or ran away from battle to sentence one man in every ten or twenty to death.

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"Up, now, deuce, or else a tray,

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