

THE FIFTH FORM REBELLION!

by OWEN CONQUEST



SCHOOLBOYS' OWN
LIBRARY No 226

4^p

CRICKETERS' LUCK!

WATCH a first-class county cricketer when he is well-set at the wicket. Cool, confident, untroubled by even the best of the bowling, he makes those flashing cuts and drives to the boundary look mere child's play. The bare idea that luck had anything to do with the making of that brilliant innings would strike the crowd as comic, and yet the batsman himself may be feeling certain that it was the black cat he saw that morning that has put him bang on top of his form and given his wicket a charmed life.

Cricketers, almost to a man, have a big bump of superstition; the game seems to breed it. Is it so surprising, after all, when you consider how often victory or defeat has turned on a single stroke of luck? The spin of a coin, a sudden change in the weather, a dropped catch at a critical stage of the match—the seasoned cricketer knows how much can depend on chance, unpredictable things like these, and so, in many and peculiar ways, he sets out to win Dame Fortune's smiles.

Left or Right?

Jack Hobbs, England's most famous batsman, has one pet superstition that has clung to him all through his record-making career—he always puts on his right pad first. Nothing more than a habit to begin with, perhaps, but with his two-hundredth century in sight this season, "J.B." isn't likely to drop it now!

A. E. R. Gilligan, the big-hitter and former England captain, was also very careful about getting ready for the field. He admits that if he found that he had forgotten to put on his left boot first, then he expected something disastrous to happen to his day's game—and it usually did.

The luck of the toss is a queer thing,

and never more so than when the result of a Test Match may hang on it. Some skippers' luck with the coin has become proverbial; others seem to have been dogged by a hoodoo that turned what should have been an even chance of calling right into something like a hundred to one against.

The Luck of the Toss!

Herbert Collins—Woodfull's predecessor as captain of Australia—had some amazing runs of luck with the toss. Only once during the 1924-5 Tests did it fail him, and that was when, in a burst of generosity, he mixed his lucky two-shilling piece with four others and allowed the England skipper to choose which he should toss with. Tempting Providence!

A half-sovereign that he found in his piece of Christmas pudding during the England team's Australian tour of 1924 is A. P. F. Chapman's greatest luck-bringer. He has pinned his faith to it ever since the great day in 1926 that saw him captain of England for the first time. It won the toss for him, and England won the match.

The Rubber Kangaroo!

Without a doubt the most widely-travelled animal in the world is the lucky kangaroo that has accompanied many Australian teams—only, it happens to be a rubber one. It is blown up at the start of a match, and one of the party has the important job of keeping it at the correct pressure. In 1921, when the Australians lost the first match of their tour at Eastbourne, the kangaroo was found to be punctured and very near collapsing point. Twelfth man hunted everywhere for a repair outfit without success, and nothing would shake the Aussies' conviction that the mishap to their mascot had lost them the game.

THE FIFTH FORM REBELLION!

BY OWEN CONQUEST



There's great excitement at Rookwood when the Fifth Form, in support of Mr. GREELY who has been wrongfully dismissed, march out of Rookwood in revolt and take up their quarters at a rival school.

CHAPTER I.

Not a Laughing Matter!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. smiled. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth Form, frowned.

The chums of the Fourth were adorning the steps of the School House, when Mr. Greely came out to stroll in the quad in morning "quarter."

Perhaps it was not quite respectful to smile. It was Mr. Greely's nose that did it.

Mr. Greely's nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. It was also swollen beyond its usual size. It was always a prominent feature in Mr. Greely's face. Now it was more than prominent; it was striking—it caught the most casual glance. Mr. Greely looked as if he had had the worst of a fistical encounter; if so majestic and ponderous a gentleman

as the Fifth Form-master could have been supposed to have engaged in a fistical encounter with anyone.

The explanation was quite simple.

Mr. Greely was accustomed to punching the ball for exercise before breakfast. On this particular morning he had punched not wisely but too well, and a rebounding ball had fairly crashed on his nose.

Hence the highly tinted and blossoming aspect of Mr. Greely's nose. It was perfectly simple; an accident that might have happened to anybody. But there was no doubt that it looked a little odd, and that it drew general attention. All over Rookwood fellows were making their little jests about Greely's beautiful boko, and Greely's prize proboscis. Some of the fellows shook their heads, and said they had heard that punch-ball story before.

There was no doubt that Mr. Greely was sensitive about the state of his nose. He comprehended the misconceptions to which it might give rise. In the Fifth Form Room that morning he had been very tart and irritable; he had suspected that the Fifth were thinking more of his prize nose than of their lessons—as probably they were. If two fellows exchanged a whisper Mr. Greely felt certain that they were commenting on his nose.

Generally, Mr. Greely's plump and chubby face was quite good-tempered in expression—now it was quite cross. He wondered incessantly what Dr. Chisholm would think of his nose when he saw it. So far, he had kept it out of the Head's view, but the Head was bound to see it sooner or later. And Mr. Greely felt deeply perturbed at the anticipation of the Head's glance of cold surprise.

So when he emerged from the House, and four Fourth Formers on the steps smiled, it was really the last straw—it put the lid on, as it were.

Jimmy Silver & Co. meant no offence. But the Fifth Form-master was in a mood to take offence where none was intended.

Instead of passing the Fistical Four with his usual lofty and pompous stride, Mr. Greely turned on them, frowning darkly.

The chums of the Fourth became grave at once.

"Well?" said Mr. Greely in his deep and fruity voice.

"Hem! Good-morning, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Nice morning, sir!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

But the soft answer did not turn away wrath.

"You are disrespectful!" said Mr. Greely.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Raby.

"Not at all, sir!" said Newcome.

"The manners of some of the Lower boys in this school are simply shock-

ing," said Mr. Greely. "You, I think, are the very worst."

"Oh, sir!" said Jimmy.

Really, this was a lot of fuss to make over an involuntary smile. If Mr. Greely did not want fellows to smile, he should not have taken such a nose about in public. That was how the Fistical Four looked at it.

"If you were in my Form," continued Mr. Greely, "I should cane you severely for your bad manners."

"Hem!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather glad that they had not the privilege of belonging to Mr. Greely's Form.

"As you are not in my Form," went on Mr. Greely in his ponderous way, "I shall report to your own Form-master."

"What have we done, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Greely did not answer that question.

He rolled ponderously down the steps and approached Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, who was taking the air in the quad.

The chums of the Fourth exchanged glances.

"Poor old Greely!" murmured Lovell. "It's his own fault; he shouldn't spring a nose like that on fellows suddenly."

"He shouldn't!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"I wonder how he got it?" remarked Raby. "Peele says he was scrapping at an inn last night. Of course, that's rot."

"Muffin says there was a row in Masters' Common-room, and Greely and Mr. Bohun came to punching," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Bosh! It was a punch-ball accident, of course——"

"Well, that's a pretty old story, isn't it?" said Lovell. "I've heard that more than once."

"Hallo! There's Dicky wanting us!" groaned Raby.

Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was beckoning to the four cheery members of his Form. He had listened to Mr. Greely's complaint, and was obviously going to take official notice of it.

Reluctantly Jimmy Silver & Co. approached their Form-master. Mr. Dalton looked very grave, and Mr. Greely stood frowning portentously, his damaged nose glowing in the sunshine.

"Mr. Greely complains that you four boys have treated him with disrespect," said Mr. Dalton severely.

"Not at all, sir," said Lovell. "We didn't mean to, anyway, sir."

"If laughing in a Form-master's face is not disrespect, sir, I do not know the meaning of the word!" said Mr. Greely. "I repeat, sir, that I do not know the meaning of the word."

Mr. Dalton's lips twitched a little.

His own opinion was that Mr. Greely was making an absurd fuss over a mere trifle, which it would have been more judicious to pass over unnoticed. In fact, he found it rather difficult not to smile himself when his eyes rested on Mr. Greely's blossoming nose—that damaged feature looking so odd upon a ponderous old gentleman like Mr. Greely.

But discipline was discipline, and it was clear that the thoughtless juniors had smiled, if they had not laughed. And Mr. Greely was too majestic a gentleman to be even smiled at with impunity.

"I regret that any of my boys should have given offence by thoughtless want of manners," said Mr. Dalton. "You will take fifty lines each, and you will hand them to Mr. Greely personally by three o'clock. You may go."

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir!"

The Fistical Four went. Mr. Greely grunted; he considered this punishment absurdly lenient. It was not as if any other member of Dr. Chisholm's

staff had been smiled at. It was Mr. Horace Greely who had been smiled at. That made the incident a serious one.

The chums of the Fourth felt that Dicky Dalton might have found some other method.

They did not want to see Mr. Greely in his study, and to listen to the pompous and long-winded reprimand which he was certain to deliver when they took their impots. They did not want to admit the Fifth Form-master to any sort of authority over them. Really, it was too bad of Dicky.

In third lesson they did not seem quite so merry and bright as usual. Mr. Dalton did not seem to observe it.

After class Jimmy Silver & Co. came out with the rest of the Fourth, and Mornington joined them in the passage.

"What about that spin to Bunbury?" he asked. "We shall have to wheel out immediately after dinner."

"It's off," grunted Lovell. "Off so far as we're concerned. We've got lines."

"That's all right—you can chance it with Dalton," said Morny.

"It's not Dalton—it's Greely."

Mornington stared.

"Don Pomposo can't give you lines," he said. "What do you mean?"

Jimmy Silver explained.

"It's too bad," said Erroll. "We'll wait till you've done your impots, if you like."

"No, don't do that," said Jimmy. "We'll make it another day. No need to spoil your spin. I wish now we'd looked the other way when Greely brought his blessed nose along. Bother his boko!"

"Here he comes!" murmured Putty of the Fourth.

Mr. Greely was coming along from the Fifth Form Room, solemn and stately, with his damaged nose glowing fiery red.

The group of Fourth Formers were very careful not to smile. But it seemed to Mr. Greely that every eye there was fixed on his unfortunate

nose. It glowed like a beacon, and was really more striking than ever.

He halted, and looked at the Fistical Four, frowning. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked as grave as judges.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy restively. Really, if Mr. Greely was going to begin again, Jimmy felt that his patience would give out.

"I shall expect your lines at three o'clock."

The Fistical Four breathed deep and hard. Mr. Greely spoke as if he had been their Form-master and had authority over them. And he hadn't—nothing of the kind, excepting on this one occasion, by order of their own master.

"I shall expect the lines to be well written, not in the slipshod style which, I fear, is somewhat customary in your Form," said Mr. Greely. "If your imposition does not satisfy me, I shall order you to write the lines over again. Take care!"

With that warning Mr. Greely sailed on.

"Well, that's the limit!" said Mornington. "Does the pompous ass hink he's master of the Fourth?"

"I jolly well wouldn't do the lines at all for Greely!" exclaimed Peele.

"I jolly well wouldn't!" agreed Gower.

"Don't do them, Silver, and let him rip!" said Higgs.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away in silence with deep feelings. They were strongly disposed not to write lines at all, and some of the Fourth seemed to expect them to stand up against this interference from "old Greely."

"It's too thick!" breathed Lovell. "Giving us orders; let him order the lines to be written over twice, that's all! I know I jolly well won't take any notice if he does."

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"It's just cheek," he said. "Greely's always butting into something or other—there isn't a master that he doesn't

advise and worry with his interfering cheek—and now Dalton's given him an opening he's taking it on himself to order us about! I've a jolly good mind —"

Jimmy paused.

"Let's get out on the bikes with Morny and Erroll, and blow the lines," suggested Lovell.

"I've a good mind to. But——"

"He, he, he!" Tubby Muffin joined the Fistical Four in the quad. "I say, that's rather rotten for you fellows. I wouldn't stand it!"

"Wouldn't you, Tubby?" growled Lovell.

"No fear!" said Muffin. "I'd jolly well tell Greely to mind his own dashed bizney, I would! Who's Greely? You fellows can take orders from him if you like, but I can tell you that I jolly well wouldn't! Yaroooh! If you kick me again, Lovell, you beast — Yooop!"

Reginald Muffin jumped away.

"Yah!" he hooted. "You can jolly well kick me, but you're funky of old Greely! Yah!"

And with that Parthian shot Tubby Muffin fled.

"That does it!" said Lovell savagely. "I'm not going to do the lines, Jimmy. I'm not going to be called a funk by a fat tick like Muffin."

"Don't be an ass, old chap," said Raby. "Muffin would do the lines, in our place."

"I know he would, but I'm not going to. Blow Greely!"

"It means trouble with Dicky Dalton."

"Blow Dicky Dalton, if it comes to that!"

Arthur Edward was evidently in a truculent mood.

"I'm not going to knuckle under to Greely, and that's the long and the short of it," he said.

And from that rebellious determination Arthur Edward Lovell refused to depart.

CHAPTER 2.

Lovell's Wheeze!

"I've got it!"

Arthur Edward Lovell whispered the words to Jimmy Silver at the dinner-table.

Lovell had been thinking, and, to judge by the grin on his face, his thoughts were of a humorous nature.

Jimmy had asked him to pass the salt; but Lovell, deeply occupied by his own reflections, had not even heard him.

"I've got it!" he breathed in Jimmy's ear.

"You've got it?" asked Jimmy, a little puzzled.

"Yes, rather!"

"Pass it along, then."

"Eh? Pass what along?"

"The salt."

"Salt!" repeated Lovell. "Salt! Who's talking about salt?"

"I am. You said you'd got it."

"You silly ass! Blow the salt! Look here, I've got it—a wheeze—a tip-top wheeze to dish old Greely! I'll tell you——"

"Not quite so much talking at the table, please!" came in Mr. Dalton's quiet voice.

Lovell checked himself. It was no time or place to inform his chums of the great wheeze he had thought of. Certainly, it would not have done to allow Mr. Dalton to catch a whisper of it.

Lovell was eager for dinner to be over. As soon as the Rookwood fellows went out he caught Jimmy by the arm.

"Come up to the study."

"Well, we may as well get on with the lines now," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"That's it, the jolly old lines!" grinned Lovell.

"Eh? Didn't you say you weren't going to do them, Lovell?" asked Newcome.

"Never mind that. Come up to the study. I've got a wheeze."

Lovell dragged his comrades away

to the end study in the Fourth. There he shut the door in quite a mysterious way before he imparted his wonderful wheeze. He was grinning widely. His comrades, on the other hand, were quite serious. As a matter of fact, they had had some experience of Arthur Edward's wheezes, and did not think much of them, as a rule.

"I've got it," said Lovell. "We're going to do those lines—fifty each. But it wasn't specified what lines we were to do."

"Eh? It's always Virgil, unless it's specified otherwise," said Jimmy Silver. "Fifty lines of Virgil, of course."

"I know that, ass. Still, we can make it fifty lines of something else if we like."

"I—I suppose we could," assented Jimmy dubiously. "Blessed if I see why we should, though."

"What about Shakespeare?"

"Shakespeare?"

"Shakespeare isn't Latin."

"Mr. Dalton didn't say Latin," rejoined Lovell.

"No; but it's understood."

"We needn't understand it for once if we choose."

"Blessed if I see what you're driving at, Lovell," said Raby, in wonder. "I'd rather write out Virgil than Shakespeare myself. We're more used to it."

"You don't seem to see the point yet."

"Oh, you're coming to a point?" asked Raby innocently.

"Yes!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, all right! Get on to it, then."

"We're going to write our lines from 'Love's Labour's Lost,'" said Lovell. "You remember we had an act of it in class one day?"

"I remember. But why——"

"I've got it here," said Lovell, sorting over the bookshelf. "Here it is! Wait a minute. Listen!"

And Arthur Edward read out from the ballad at the end of that Shakespearean play:

"When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

Lovell closed the volume with a snap.
"Got it?" he asked.

"Nunno! Not quite. What——"

"That's the line: 'And Marian's nose looks red and raw!'" Lovell chuckled. "We've got fifty lines to do, and if we like to write the same line over and over again that's our business. We're going to write out that line fifty times."

"My hat!"

"Got it now?" grinned Lovell.

"Phew!"

Lovell's chums stared at him.

They had "got it" now certainly. They had fifty lines each to write, and fifty lines from Shakespeare might, perhaps, pass muster instead of fifty Latin verses. It might possibly be conceded that the same line might be written over fifty times, instead of fifty distinct lines—possibly, but not probably.

But that particular line——

"We're not bound to guess that Dicky Dalton meant Latin lines, or that he meant fifty different lines," said Lovell argumentatively. "That line's good enough for Greely, I suppose. That's the line I'm going to write; you fellows can please yourselves."

"But——" gasped Jimmy Silver.
"But——"

"Greely will know it's an allusion to his jolly old boko!" exclaimed Raby.

"Of course he will. If he didn't it wouldn't be a wheeze!"

"He will be frightfully wild," said Newcome.

"That's what I want."

"Hem! But——"

"What can he do?" demanded Lovell. "If he makes a fuss it will be all over the school; he will be

chortled to death. If he's got any sense he'll just shove the impots in the fire and say nothing. We shall score over him, and—and there you are!"

"But has he got any sense?" murmured Newcome.

"Anyhow, we score! Look here, it's no end of a wheeze. Fancy his face when he looks at the impots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of merriment in the end study. The thought of Mr. Greely's face, when he looked at those unusual impots, made the chums of the Fourth roar.

But—there was a but—it might be a feast of humour, but after the feast came the reckoning!

But though his chums felt doubtful, Arthur Edward Lovell was not to be deterred. Indeed, dubiety on the part of his comrades had its usual effect of confirming him in his determination. Lovell sat down at the study table with a pen and a sheaf of impot paper and began.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

That was how Lovell's impot started, and that was how it continued. Jimmy Silver looked at it and chuckled.

After all, it was worth a little risk. It was really a great jest, and was certain to be howled over by all Rookwood if Mr. Greely made a fuss about it. Even in Masters' Common-room there would be chuckles over that extraordinary impot. Besides, that line from Shakespeare referred, distinctly, to Marian's nose—not to Mr. Greely's nose. Mr. Greely would have

no real right to suppose that there was any reference to his own nose.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome sat round the table and started writing. And all the lines they wrote referred to the redness and rawness of Marian's nose.

Putty of the Fourth looked into the study while the four were going strong.

"You fellows busy?"

"Yes, rather! Lines for Greely," said Jimmy Silver without looking up. "They've got to go in at three."

"Take a squint at 'em," said Lovell.

Putty of the Fourth took a "squint," and uttered a yell.

"That's for Greely?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Putty.

And Putty of the Fourth rushed away to tell the news along the passage. Before those impots were finished Jimmy Silver & Co. had received at least a dozen visitors from the Classical Fourth, who stared at the growing impots and chuckled explosively. It was agreed on all hands that it was a great jest, and this unanimity of opinion greatly bucked Arthur Edward Lovell. It was not always that his wheezes caught on like this. It was agreed, also, that the Fistical Four were asking for a licking if they handed those impots to Horace Greely; but that could not be helped. Now that the thing was public Jimmy Silver & Co. felt that it was up to them.

And when the lines were done the four juniors started for Mr. Greely's study to deliver their impositions as commanded by their Form-master.

CHAPTER 2.

On the Carpet!

"COME in!" snapped Mr. Greely. It was close on three o'clock, and as a tap came at his study door Mr. Greely supposed that it

heralded the arrival of the four delinquents of the Fourth with their impositions.

As a matter of fact, it did not. Jimmy Silver & Co. had not arrived yet. Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, had arrived.

The Head opened Mr. Greely's door and entered. Mr. Greely had a lofty frown on his lofty face, all ready for the juniors, to impress upon them that it was their duty to enter his impressive presence in fear and trembling. The headmaster had the full benefit of that majestic frown as he entered.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Greely.

He jumped up in confusion.

"Dr. Chisholm!"

The visit was entirely unexpected. Like a flash it passed through Mr. Greely's mind that, when he had avoided the Head in the quad that morning he had not, as he had supposed, quite succeeded in keeping his flaming nose from observation. Dr. Chisholm's eyes were very keen; that nose had struck him, even in distance, and Mr. Greely knew, he felt, that the Head had dropped into his study for closer inspection.

It was very confusing to Mr. Greely, especially as his brain, though no doubt a powerful one, did not work very quickly. It was really not easy to switch off at a moment's notice from the majestic dignity of an offended master to the sedulous respect of a member of the staff in the presence of his chief.

Mr. Greely stood blinking at the Head, his cheeks almost as crimson as his nose.

"Pray excuse my interrupting you, Mr. Greely," said Dr. Chisholm in his politest and coldest tone.

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Mr. Greely. He was conscious that the cold, icy gaze of the Head was fairly boring into his swollen and inflamed nose, almost like a gimlet. "Will you—hem—pray be seated, sir. This is—

hem—an unexpected pleasure, sir. May I offer you—hem—a chair?"

The Head remained standing, grimly regardless of Mr. Greely's anxious and confused courtesy.

"I shall not detain you more than a few minutes, Mr. Greely."

"Very good, sir—that is—I mean—"

It was always rather annoying to Horace Greely that he felt awed in the presence of the Head. He felt that he ought not to feel like that. He was a much more majestic and ponderous personage than the Head; he was heavier by several stone, he was taller, he was wider—undoubtedly wider. Yet he was always awed, in spite of himself, by the headmaster of Rookwood, and it chafed him. Often and often had Mr. Greely resolved that he would deal with his chief as man to man, but in the Head's presence that old, uncomfortable feeling of uneasy awe always would revive.

"I could not help observing you this morning, Mr. Greely, when I passed you at a distance in the quadrangle."

"Oh! Yes! Quite so! An accident—"

"You cannot fail to be aware, Mr. Greely, that your present—hem—aspect—is very—very unusual in a member of my staff. I have no desire, no right to interfere in the slightest degree with your private concerns. But certain things—a certain regard to appearances—are naturally expected of a gentleman holding such a position as that of master to a Senior Form at Rookwood School."

Mr. Greely's face might have been a freshly boiled beetroot, to judge by its complexion.

"Yes, sir. An accident—"

"Boxing," said the Head, ruthlessly interrupting Mr. Greely, "is a very healthy form of exercise, I believe. Among the boys I think it should be encouraged to every reasonable extent.

In a middle-aged gentleman, Mr. Greely, a certain restraint is advisable."

"I—I was not—it was not—that is—you will see—" Mr. Greely was a little incoherent.

"A bruised and swollen nose on a Form-master is likely—I may say certain—to cause something in the nature of risibility among the boys, Mr. Greely."

Mr. Greely was only too painfully aware that it had already caused a good deal in the nature of risibility among the Rookwood fellows.

"I should not like to use the word ludicrous," said the Head, and immediately proceeded to use it. "If you will take the trouble to glance into your mirror, Mr. Greely, you will see for yourself that such an aspect, in a gentleman of your years, can only be described as ludicrous."

"Sir! I—I—"

"It may give rise to an impression—doubtless unfounded, I trust quite unfounded—that you, a Rookwood master, have engaged in some kind of an encounter at fisticuffs," said the Head.

"An accident—"

"Quite so, quite so!" With a wave of his hand the Head waved aside all explanations. "I understand, quite so. But you do not need me to tell you, Mr. Greely, that such accidents should be carefully avoided by a gentleman of your years and in your position. Such accidents are liable to cause the most unfavourable and disrespectful comment."

Mr. Greely gasped.

He wondered whether the Head actually suspected that he had been fighting somebody, like a fag of the Lower School.

"That is all!" said the Head. "I felt compelled to mention the matter, Mr. Greely. I—"

Knock!

The door opened again, and four juniors of the Fourth Form marched in with impots in their hands, little

dreaming that they were marching into the presence of their headmaster.

At the sight of Dr. Chisholm the four stopped dead.

The Head glanced at them.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in a silent row, impots in hand. It was within a minute or two of three o'clock, but certainly they would have postponed their visit had they known that the Head was with Mr. Greely. But it was too late now.

Mr. Greely gave them an unhappy glare.

"Place your lines on the table!" he articulated.

"Yes, sir."

"One moment." The Head's voice interposed, cold as steel and as hard. "Have these Fourth Form boys brought impositions to you, Mr. Greely?"

"Yes—as you see, sir."

"I fail to understand. It is a rigid and unbroken rule at Rookwood that no Form-master interferes with the duties of another. Am I to understand that you have imposed lines upon boys in Mr. Dalton's Form, Mr. Greely?"

The Fistical Four stood red and uncomfortable. Mr. Greely had annoyed them extremely, but they could feel for him now.

"You are to understand nothing of the kind, sir!" said Mr. Greely, goaded, as it were, into resistance.

"What?"

"These boys were guilty of disrespect to me, sir, and Mr. Dalton imposed the lines, and ordered them to bring them to me."

"A very unusual proceeding," said the Head coldly, "and a very unusual imposition. Give me that paper, Silver."

"I see nothing unusual in the imposition, sir," said Mr. Greely. "Fifty lines is not unusual."

Mr. Greely had not seen those lines yet, but the Head had had a glimpse of the papers.

"Do you hear me, Silver?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

Lovell's wonderful wheeze was not working out as per programme. Even Lovell would scarcely have dreamed of writing out that line from "Love's Labour's Lost" had he been able to guess that the impots would be handed over to the headmaster.

Dr. Chisholm took the paper from Jimmy, and fixed his eyes upon it. The juniors stood quite still.

"Upon my word!"

Dr. Chisholm looked at the juniors. At a sign from him, Lovell and Raby and Newcome handed over their impots. The Head scanned them in a terrible silence.

Still silent, but with thunder in his brow, he placed the sheets on the table before Mr. Greely.

The Fifth Form-master looked at them. He looked, and stared, and blinked. He had expected to see Virgilian verses, probably beginning with "Arma vrumque cano." Instead of which he saw:

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw."

And so on, and so on, covering the sheets in four varieties of handwriting.

Mr. Greely gazed and gazed, his plump face growing more and more crimson, till it was purple as a ripe grape. The silence in the Fifth Form-master's study could almost have been cut with a knife.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Greely at last in a faint voice.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"Were these the lines set you by Mr. Dalton?"

"Mr. Dalton did not specify what lines we were to write, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "We—we decided on a—a—a line from—from Shakespeare, sir!"

Jimmy Silver made that explanation as the only possible one, painfully aware all the time that it was, so to speak, a chicken that would not fight.

"Is it customary, in writing impositions for your Form-master, to repeat the same line ad infinitum?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"I thought not! Have you selected this line from a play of Shakespeare's as an impertinent reference to—hem—Mr. Greely's present state, the result of an accident?"

The junior did not answer. No answer, in fact, was needed. They waited for the thunderbolt.

"Very well," said the Head very quietly. "I shall speak of this to your Form-master. You may go."

The juniors were glad to escape from the study.

Mr. Greely wiped perspiration from his purple brow.

"This is—this is unheard-of insolence, sir!" he said, gasping. "This is—is an occasion for severe punishment!"

"I do not agree with you, Mr. Greely," said the Head coldly. "The boys have been impertinent. By appearing in public, sir, with the aspect of a—I cannot say less—the aspect of a prize-fighter——"

"Sir!"

"The aspect of a prize-fighter, you have provoked this impertinence. You have only yourself to thank, Mr. Greely!"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"I make no inquiry into the cause of the injury you have received, Mr. Greely. That does not concern me. But I beg of you, sir, to bear in mind that such accidents are to be avoided.

The impertinence of these juniors should be a warning to you on that point."

"Sir! I——"

"That is all, Mr. Greely."

Dr. Chisholm sailed out of the study. He swept past four rather troubled juniors in the corridor. Mr. Greely, perspiring, wiped his brow, and stared at the door that had closed after the Head. He respected the Head, but he had sometimes been intensely exasperated by him. Now he was exasperated to such an extent that he trembled with resentment.

He had been called over the coals—really rated, as if he had been a boy standing before an incensed Form-master—he, whose deep, fruity voice dominated the Masters' Common-room; he, who in his heart of hearts felt entitled to the succession of the head-mastership when Dr. Chisholm should retire—a date which, in the best interests of Rookwood might well have been hastened, Mr. Greely considered. And he had stood all this because a punch-ball had rebounded on his nose.

The Head had not even allowed him to mention the punch-ball—the Head, doubtless, would have regarded punch-ball exercise as frivolous. Certainly it was difficult to imagine the Head himself punching the ball.

"I will not endure this!" gasped Mr. Greely.

Did the Head think he had captured that nose in a fight with a potman? he wrathfully asked himself. Really, one might have supposed so from the way Dr. Chisholm had addressed him. True, such an adornment was lamentably out of place on the countenance of a senior master at Rookwood; no one was more sensible of that than Mr. Greely himself. But accidents will happen; he had not deliberately planned to let the punchball rebound on his nose! Did the Head suppose he had?

"It is not to be borne!" said Mr. Greely. "A little more of this—a very

little more—and I shall hand in my resignation!"

The worm will turn. And Horace Greely was not a worm, by any means.

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Greely Going Strong!

"UPON my word!" said Mr. Greely. He stopped in sheer astonishment.

It was the following day, and a half-holiday. Mr. Greely knew that Sir George Hansom, a wealthy baronet and the father of Hansom of the Fifth Form, was coming down from London that afternoon, and he had started out to meet him on his way from the station. Mr. Greely was a personal friend of Sir George, whose tutor he had been at Oxford, and he was rather proud of that friendship with the wealthy baronet.

It was quite a warm day, and Mr. Greely felt very warm indeed as he rolled along at an unusually rapid pace. He was glad to enter into the shade of the trees in Coombe Wood.

He kept on the footpath, keeping his eyes well ahead, to sight Sir George Hansom at the earliest possible moment. And so it was that a sudden, startling scene dawned upon Mr. Greely's amazed eyes.

A tall figure in a shining silk hat met his gaze in the distance. It was Sir George Hansom. He had stopped on the path, and as Mr. Greely sighted him Sir George took off his silk topper and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. Apparently he, like Mr. Greely, felt the warmth of the afternoon. He was facing the Rookwood master as he stood, but did not see him, being busy wiping his forehead, which was bedewed with perspiration. That, of course, was not what startled Mr. Greely. What startled him was the view of two flashy-looking men on the footpath behind Sir George, creeping on him stealthily.

The baronet was obviously quite unconscious that there was anyone near him. He mopped the perspiration from his broad, bald forehead, at peace with himself and all the world. And the two racing roughs, tiptoeing on the grassy path, approached him from behind without a sound—their eyes fixed on their intended victim, and not dreaming that, in the distance, a Rookwood Form-master's eyes were fixed on them.

Mr. Greely fairly gasped.

One of the roughs had a short length of lead-piping in his hand, obviously for use as a weapon. An attack was about to take place—an attack by a couple of footpads on that eminent and wealthy gentleman, Sir George Hansom, in a lonely spot far from all help—had not Mr. Greely been at hand!

But Mr. Greely was there!

For a few moments he stood dumbfounded at what he saw, taken so aback that he simply stood and gazed. Mr. Greely's brain did not, perhaps, work very quickly.

But as he realised what was happening, he started forward, and gave a hoarse shout.

Sir George glanced up.

At the same moment Smithy and Tadger reached him, and Tadger's arm was flung round the baronet's neck from behind. Before he knew what was happening, Sir George Hansom was down on his back in the grass, and Smithy was brandishing the lead-piping over his head.

Mr. Greely bounded towards the spot.

His face was aflame, his eyes glinting. He did not hear what was said, but he knew that a threat was uttered and disregarded. He saw the baronet strive to tear himself loose, and saw the ruffian's weapon descend, stretching the unfortunate gentleman in the grass, shrieking as he fell. Mr. Greely panted and bounded on.

He was a plump gentleman, he was a

middle-aged gentleman, and he was rather short of wind. But he was not short of courage, and he did not pause for an instant to reflect that he was rushing upon two dangerous ruffians, likely to turn upon him like wild beasts if interrupted in their work of robbery. Like a fat Paladin, Horace Greely rushed into the fray.

"Look out, Smithy!" panted Tadger.

Smithy, with an oath, spun round towards the newcomer, the lead-piping grasped in his hand. It was fortunate for Mr. Greely that the rascal stumbled over a trailing root in his haste.

Before he recovered the Rookwood master was upon him.

Crash!

A fist that was like a leg of mutton crashed on Smithy, and sent him spinning. His weapon flew into the bushes, and Smithy crashed on the ground, yelling.

Tadger was coming at Mr. Greely the next moment like a wildcat.

The Fifth Form master faced him gallantly.

His plump fists went up, and he met the rough with left and right in great style. Mr. Greely was glad now of the regular punch-ball exercise in which he indulged of a morning. Certainly he was not exactly in form for a rough-and-tumble scrap; that was not to be expected of a gentleman of his years. But he was in very good form considering his age and avoirdupois.

He held his own gallantly against Tadger, giving and receiving punishment in great style.

Tadger captured what Mr. Greely was accustomed to giving to his punch-ball when he took his daily exercise, and, to judge by his looks, he did not like it. But he gave back more than Mr. Greely's punch-ball had ever given back in its most obstreperous mood.

Mr. Greely's damaged nose had caused smiles all over Rookwood for days. But in a couple of minutes it was in a state to which its former

damage was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

It streamed crimson under Tadger's savage blows, and both his eyes blinked wildly and painfully as dirty knuckles jammed in them.

But Mr. Greely was busy, too, and Tadger backed away, badly marked, and, had the ruffian been alone, undoubtedly Horace Greely would have been the victor in that strenuous scrap.

But Smithy was on his feet again now, with a face like a demon. He stared round savagely for his weapon, but it was lost in the thick bushes, and he rushed at Horace Greely with his fists up.

Mr. Greely, following up the retreating Tadger, had to retreat again, his hands more than full. Both the roughs pressed him fiercely.

Sir George Hansom sat up dazedly, with his hand to his head. He strove to rise, but sank back again against a tree, groaning. With dazed eyes and a swimming brain he watched the unequal combat in which he could not intervene.

"Out 'im!" muttered Tadger.

Mr. Greely gave ground rapidly now. He was fighting hard and bravely, but the two roughs were too much for him. His plump face was a picture of damages. He could hardly see out of his bruised eyes, and his nose gushed red, his mouth was cut, his lips bruised. He gasped and panted, and spluttered for breath, almost at the end of his strength, but still game. Mr. Greely had his faults and foibles, but he was a Briton to the backbone, with all his little weaknesses, and it did not even cross his mind to run and leave Sir George Hansom to the robbers. The ruffians would have been glad enough to see him go, but Mr. Greely did not think of going. He had to give ground, but he gave it with his face to the enemy, fighting his hardest.

But it could not last.

Mr. Greely was almost exhausted, and the two roughs were pressing him

under, with savage blows, which he was no longer able to guard or to return. He went down heavily at last. "Rescue, Rookwood!"

It was a shout on the footpath as the Fifth Form master fell. Jimmy Silver & Co. came tearing up at racing speed.

Smithy's knee was on Mr. Greely's chest—Tadger had gripped him by the throat. They stared round savagely at the shout of the Rookwood juniors, and jumped up from their victim.

"Go for 'em!" roared Lovell.

"Thank Heaven!" gasped Mr. Greely.

Mr. Greely forgot at that moment that he did not like the chums of the Fourth. Never had he been so glad in his life to see Rookwood faces.

The rush of the four brought them upon the two ruffians, and there was a wild and whirling melée.

Mr. Greely staggered to his feet.

Rescue had arrived in the nick of time, and the Fifth Form-master was not done yet.

As the two roughs struggled and fought with the four juniors, Mr. Greely piled in again with renewed energy.

The odds were too heavy against the two footpads now.

They realised that it was time to go, and they were thinking now only of getting loose and getting away. But Mr. Greely's heavy fist stretched Smithy in the grass as he struggled with Raby and Lovell, and the rascal went down with the two juniors clinging to him like wild cats. Once on the ground he had no chance of rising again; the Rookwooders took care of that.

Tadger was reeling to and fro in the grasp of Jimmy Silver and Newcome. He went down, and they sprawled over him, and Jimmy planted a knee on his chest.

"Hold them!" panted Mr. Greely.

"We've got 'em, sir!"

"Right as rain!" grinned Lovell. "We can handle the cads, sir!"

Mr. Greely leaned against a tree and panted. And the Fistical Four of the Fourth held the two footpads securely until the Fifth Form-master got his second wind.

CHAPTER I.

Horace Greely—Here!

"MR. GREELY!"

"Sir George!"

Mr. Greely, having recovered his wind, helped the baronet to his feet. The two damaged gentlemen shook hands.

Smithy and Tadger wriggled in the grass, with a stream of unpleasant remarks. But they could not get loose. Four sturdy Rookwood juniors were quite equal to the task of holding them down. And as Smithy became too emphatic, Lovell grasped his ears and jammed his head on the ground, as a warning to be quiet, and Smithy howled and gave in.

Sir George and Mr. Greely looked at one another.

The baronet had a big bruise on his head, and as for the Fifth Form-master, his face was so bruised that it was really not easy to recognise him. Both of them gasped painfully, and looked dazed and dizzy. Jimmy Silver & Co. were not much the worse for the scrap, hot as it had been; but, naturally, middle-aged gentlemen felt its effects more severely.

"Are those — those men safe?" gasped the baronet.

"Quite, sir," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We've got them all right!"

"Hold them securely," said Mr. Greely. "They shall be handed over to the police."

"Certainly," said Sir George.

"I was coming to meet you, sir," went on the Fifth Form-master. "Owing to—hem!—a certain delay, I was too late to reach the station in time. But fortunately——"

Sir George grasped his hand again.

"Mr. Greely, you have behaved

splendidly, sir! You have acted like a hero, sir!"

"My dear sir——" purred Mr. Greely.

"Splendidly—heroically!" said Sir George. "Those scoundrels must have followed me to rob me. I remember having seen them in the train on my way down. I should have been robbed—probably severely injured—but for your gallantry, Mr. Greely. I shall never be able sufficiently to express my obligation, sir."

"Not at all, Sir George—not at all!" murmured Mr. Greely, wishing from the bottom of his heart that the Head of Rookwood could have been present to hear this.

"I shall never forget it, sir—never!" said Sir George impressively. "We have always been friends, Mr. Greely, since you were my tutor at Oxford. I have always respected you, but never so much as now."

"Oh, Sir George!"

"Where do we come in?" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell to Jimmy Silver.

Certainly Mr. Greely's conduct had been admirable, and the baronet was right to be grateful. But equally certainly the chums of the Fourth had turned the tide of battle, so to speak; both the elderly gentlemen would have been seriously damaged had not the Fistical Four arrived on the scene. But they seemed quite overlooked, all the same.

"But you are injured, Sir George," went on Mr. Greely. "You must get medical attention at once."

"And you, Mr. Greely."

"Merely a few bruises, sir," said Mr. Greely airily, though he winced as he spoke. He was hurt, and he knew that he was going to have a pair of black eyes—an alarming prospect for a Form-master in a Public school. But it could not be helped, and even Dr. Chisholm could scarcely complain when he learned how the Fifth Form-master had received his honourable scars.

"It's not very far to Dr. Bolton's

house, through the wood, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We can show you this way."

"Thank you, my boy," said Sir George, becoming aware, as it were, of the Fistical Four's existence. "You are Rookwood boys, I think."

"Yes, sir."

"You have acted very courageously—quite in accordance with the traditions of your school," said the baronet graciously. "I shall certainly mention this to your headmaster. Mr. Greely, we had better, I think, proceed to the doctor's at once. I am feeling very, very upset, and doubtless you are feeling the same."

"I must confess that I am, sir," said Mr. Greely. "I keep myself fit, sir, but age will tell—age will tell. I have to remember that I am not an undergraduate now."

"Quite so," assented Sir George. "But those rascals——"

"We'll take care of these blighters, sir," said Lovell. "We'll tie up their paws and take them to the police-station."

"Let a bloke go!" whined Tadger.

"We had better remain while the boys secure these scoundrels, Mr. Greely."

"Certainly."

It did not take Jimmy Silver & Co. long to secure the two footpads.

They were rolled over in the grass, and their hands bound behind their backs with their own handkerchiefs securely knotted round their wrists.

Then they were allowed to rise.

"You can leave them to us now, sir," said Raby.

"You show Mr. Greely the short cut through to the doctor's, Raby, while we look after these brutes," said Jimmy Silver.

"Right-ho!"

"Take no risks with the rascals," said Sir George. "One of them had a weapon, with which he struck me. It should be found and taken to the police."

"A length of lead piping, I think," said Mr. Greely.

"We'll find it, sir."

Smithy's weapon was looked for, and retrieved from the bushes. Then Raby led the way through the wood, and the two gentlemen followed him, very anxious to get to Dr. Bolton's at the earliest possible moment. Jimmy Silver and Newcome and Lovell remained in charge of the two footpads, and they started them along the footpath towards Coombe Lane.

As soon as Mr. Greely and the baronet were out of sight and hearing, Smithy and Tadger stopped dead.

"Now you let a cove go!" said Smithy savagely between his teeth. "You hear me? Let my 'ands loose and let me go, or it will be the worse for you, my young rips!"

"Get a move on!" said Jimmy.

"I ain't moving a step!" snarled Smithy.

Arthur Edward Lovell flourished the lead pipe, of which he had taken possession.

"Think again!" he suggested.

"You young 'ound!" said Smithy, eyeing him savagely.

"Are you going?"

"No!" snarled Smithy.

"If you don't stir your stumps, old bean," said Lovell cheerfully, "I shall help you—with a tap on the napper, like that!"

Rap!

"Yaroooh!"

"And another—like that——"

"Ow!"

"And that——"

"Stop it!" yelled Smithy. "I'm going, ain't I?"

And he went.

"I thought you'd change your mind, old thing!" smiled Lovell. "Always ready to help you if you change it again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smithy and Tadger tramped on savagely, with the three Rookwood juniors. The party came out into the road and walked on towards the

village, heading for the cottage of Police-constable Boggs, which was the substitute for a police-station in Coombe. They were near the village when they came on three Fifth Formers of Rookwood—Hansom, Talboys, and Lumsden. The trio stopped to stare at the odd-looking party.

"Well, what the thump's this game?" asked Hansom of the Fifth. "Is this a Lower School lark, or what?"

"We've arrested these footpads," said Arthur Edward Lovell loftily. "We're taking them to the police-station."

"Rot!" said Hansom.

"Fact, old man," smiled Jimmy Silver. "They went for your pater in the wood, and old Greely—ahem! I mean, Mr. Greely—came up and did heroic stunts—regular old Berserker! Of course, we had to weigh in and deal with the situation. I really hardly know how Rookwood would get on at all without the Classical Fourth."

And the juniors chuckled.

"What rot!" said Talboys.

"I say, though, my pater was coming down to the school this afternoon," said Hansom. "I've got to get in in time to see him. Look here, Silver, if you're pulling my leg——"

"Honest Injun!" said Jimmy. "You'll find your pater at Dr. Bolton's by this time, and Greely is with him, with a face like a Turkey carpet. Get on, you chaps—we've got to deliver the goods."

And the juniors marched their prisoners on, leaving Hansom & Co. staring after them blankly.

Two scowling roughs, with their hands tied, and three cheery Rookwood juniors in charge of them, attracted considerable attention in the village street. By the time the Co. arrived at Mr. Boggs' residence, all the rising generation of Coombe seemed to be following them, and quite an army arrived with them.

Mr. Boggs received them in great astonishment.

"I've jest had a telephone call from

Dr. Bolton's," he said. "My eye! Are these the blokes?"

"These are the blokes!" answered Jimmy Silver. "We hand them over to you, Boggy. And remember that anything you may say will be taken down in writing and may be used in evidence against you."

And with that playful remark, the captain of the Rookwood Fourth handed over Smithy and Tadger into the official charge of Mr. Boggs.

CHAPTER 6.

Dismissed!

HORACE GREELY, master of the Fifth, arrived at the gates of Rookwood in the sunset.

He was feeling satisfied, in one way; but considerably upset in other ways. He had acted gallantly, and he had won the gratitude of his old friend and patron, Sir George Hansom. That was satisfactory. But he had a nose like a beetroot newly boiled, and two black eyes, and dark bruises all over his face, and a general feeling as if he had been under a motor-lorry. These details were not so satisfactory.

He had left the baronet at Dr. Bolton's. Sir George Hansom was feeling the effects of Smith's blow severely, and it had been arranged for him to remain at the doctor's house for the night. His son had arrived there, and was remaining with the baronet till lock-up at Rookwood.

Sir George's grateful praises still echoed in Mr. Greely's ears, with a very pleasant echo. But he wished, he deeply wished, that he had not borne away so many honourable scars from the combat. The scars were honourable, there was no doubt about that, but Horace Greely had been startled and shocked by the sight of his face in the glass. It could not be helped, but his aspect was most unbecoming for a Form-master at Rookwood.

Many people had stared at him as he

walked back to the school, and as he came in, old Mack, the porter, not only stared, but almost fell down in his astonishment.

Mr. Greely frowned and walked on, leaving old Mack rooted to the ground, staring after him as if mesmerised.

As it was close on lock-up, a good many Rookwooders were coming in, and every one of them stared at Mr. Greely. They were accustomed to Mr. Greely's blossoming nose by this time, but his black eyes were new to them—new and startling.

Mr. Greely's face was crimson as he marched across the quad to the House.

It was unfortunate—it really was unfortunate. Of course, the facts would become known later. But Mr. Greely could not stop and explain to the Rookwood fellows how he had come by these honourable scars. That he had been fighting was clear, and the Rookwooders who had never seen a Form-master with blackened eyes before, simply gasped as they looked at him. There were fellows who had affected to doubt the punchball story, by which Horace Greely had accounted for the former damaged state of his nose. Now, really their doubts seemed to be justified; it was clear that Mr. Greely had been scrapping during his walk that afternoon, and it could not be supposed that he had been punching the ball out of gates. He left a crowd of fellows in a buzz behind him as he walked to the House.

"Well, this is the limit!" said Mornington of the Fourth.

"It's the giddy limit!" said Smythe of the Shell. "There's the Head at his window. Look at his chivvy!"

Dr. Chisholm was standing at his study window, gazing pensively at the rich sunset, when Mr. Greely dawned upon him.

The Head's eyes fixed on Mr. Greely's disfigured face. His gaze seemed to be frozen there. His brow was like thunder.

He had accepted Mr. Greely's ex-

planation of a punch-ball accident. He had been bound to accept it, but he had been annoyed and shocked. What was he to think now?

The man had been fighting this time. That was indubitable. Fighting! And a Rookwood Form-master! No explanation, no feeble story about a punch-ball, could account for this. Olympian wrath gathered on the Head's brow.

Mr. Greely tramped into the House. Bulkeley of the Sixth met him at the doorway and fairly jumped.

He tramped on, and almost tramped over Snooks of the Second. Snooks, catching a full view of Mr. Greely's face, was so astounded that he stood stockstill, his startled eyes glued on the Fifth Form-master. Mr. Greely frowned portentously and boxed Snooks' ear as he passed, and Snooks of the Second yelped, and scudded away to spread the news in the Second Form that old Greely had just come home from a prizefight.

Mr. Greely was going up the staircase when Tupper, the page, hurried up to him.

"Skuse me, sir! Dr. Chisholm wishes to see you in his study, sir, pertickler!" gasped Tupper, with a mesmerised stare at Mr. Greely's startling features.

Mr. Greely swung round and started for the Head's study. He would have wished to postpone the interview, but he was bound to explain to the Head sooner or later. Possibly he anticipated receiving from the Head some such gratifying remarks as he had received from Sir George Hansom. He was quite conscious that he had acted well, that he had acted finely, that he had received injuries in defence of the parent of a Rookwood boy; that he had done, and more than done, his duty as a Rookwood master. He was prepared for sympathy and congratulation from the headmaster as soon as he had explained the circumstances.

He entered the Head's study.

A steely glance almost transfixed him as he entered. Dr. Chisholm stood facing him, still, stony, steely. Mr. Greely opened his lips, but an imperious gesture from the Head stopped him.

"Mr. Greely, this is disgraceful!"

"Sir!"

"Your present state, sir, can only be accounted for by the fact that you have been engaged in a fight, a personal encounter with some person."

"Quite so, sir! I——"

"Kindly do not interrupt me, Mr. Greely. For several days you have presented an aspect utterly unbecoming in a Rookwood master. I accepted your story of an accident. Now, sir, I find that you have been fighting again. You have the temerity, sir, to walk across the quadrangle with blackened eyes; to parade yourself, sir, in the sight of all the school with the appearance of a prizefighter. This is too much, Mr. Greely."

"Sir, I will explain."

"No explanation is necessary or adequate. You may have your own reasons for this extraordinary conduct. I do not dispute it. I only say that such proceedings cannot be tolerated at Rookwood. I shall be glad to receive your resignation, Mr. Greely."

"Sir!"

"On the spot!" said the Head grimly.

"Sir," Mr. Greely spluttered, "I refuse to resign! I refuse! I will explain I protest! I—I——" He grew incoherent.

"Then you are dismissed, sir," said the Head icily. "Not a word, sir! There is no occasion for words, and I decline to enter into a dispute. You are dismissed, Mr. Greely!"

"Sir, I—I——"

"Have the kindness to leave my study, Mr. Greely. You are no longer a master at Rookwood!"

Mr. Greely almost staggered to the door. At the door he turned like a lion—a very plump lion—at bay. His indignation was too great.

"Sir, I refuse to accept dismissal at your hands! I resign, sir! I resign my position here! I fling my resignation, sir, in your teeth—in your teeth, sir!" bawled Mr. Greely.

And with that the Fifth Form-master strode from the study, closing the door after him with a slam that rang through Rookwood like a cannon-shot.

CHAPTER 7.

Olympian!

THE startling news soon reached the Fourth Form. Tubby Muffin had overheard Mr. Greely's thunderous and defiant resignation of his post, and being a prize retailer of tittle-tattle, made the most of it.

Jimmy Silver, of course, knew how Mr. Greely had bagged that prize nose of his, and was not slow in telling the story of the thrilling happenings in Coombe Wood that afternoon. The story of Mr. Greely's heroism, coupled with that of his resignation—or dismissal—caused a buzz up and down Rookwood. But nowhere did the boys create such a sensation as in the Fifth Form.

"Dismissed!"

Hansom of the Fifth uttered that word dazedly.

Mr. Greely was dismissed.

The news was not to be doubted, for it transpired that Mr. Greely had been seen gathering his possessions, with a view to packing, and he had let drop certain remarks which hinted at an early departure from Rookwood, though he had not gone into details. Moreover, it was known that changes were being made in the time-table, so far as the Fifth was concerned: Mr. Greely was not taking them in class the following day.

It was amazing and incredible, but it was true. Mr. Greely was sacked, and Hansom of the Fifth boiled with indignation. Sacked, as Morny of the Fourth put it, for turning up at Rookwood like a prizefighter in bad

luck. But it was in defence of Hansom's pater that Horace Greely had gathered up those damages and disfigurements, and Hansom naturally considered that he could not have gathered them up in a better cause.

"It's cheek!" said Hansom hotly.

"Check?" repeated Talboys. "Of the Head, do you mean?"

"Yes, that's what I mean. And I tell you this, if Greely goes, I'll ask my father to take me away from Rookwood!" said Hansom, in great wrath.

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap."

"Isn't it high-handed injustice and tyranny?" snorted Hansom. "The Head must be off his rocker. He can't know the facts. Why doesn't he ask a man a plain question before booting him—what?"

"He must know," said Lumsden. "It's the talk of Rookwood."

"Oh, you know the Head—like jolly old Jupiter on the top of Olympus!" grunted Hansom. "He's waxy, and nobody's dared to breathe a word to him. He's cut them short if they have. The fact is, he never pulled well with Greely—they've had their differences before."

"Greely was always a bit too pompous, I thought," agreed Lumsden.

"Oh, rats! Pompous or not, he saved my father from having his head caved in with a lead pipe!" hooted Hansom. "If the Head knows he ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself, and I wouldn't mind telling him so—and if he doesn't know he's got to be told!"

"Why hasn't Greely told him?"

"Hasn't had a chance, perhaps. Or—or he might be too proud, after being jumped on."

"Too jolly pompous, you mean!"

"No I don't!" roared Hansom. "What I mean is that he played up like a white man to help my father, and I'm standing by him—and I'll punch any fellow's head that calls him names, so there!"

"Easy does it, old chap," said Lumsden soothingly. "Don't rag with your old pals, Cabby. We're all standing by Greely—if there's anything we can do. I'm sorry he's going—"

"He's not going!" said Hansom savagely. "I'm jolly well going to see the Head and make jolly sure that he knows the facts!"

"Cabby, old man——"

Edward Hansom stamped away without waiting to hear the remonstrances of his chums.

He headed for the Classical Fourth passage, and looked into the end study, where Jimmy Silver & Co. were at prep.

The Fistical Four jumped up at sight of Hansom's red and excited face in the study doorway. From Hansom's looks they supposed for a moment that the captain of the Fifth was on the warpath. They had had many little troubles with Hansom. Arthur Edward Lovell picked up a ruler and Raby annexed a big Latin dictionary.

"Don't be young asses!" snapped Hansom. "I haven't come here for a row. I want you to come with me, Jimmy Silver."

"Taking me to the pictures, old scout?" inquired Jimmy innocently.

"Don't be an ass! I'm going to the Head, and I want you to come," snorted Hansom. "He's sacked Greely—Mr. Greely, my Form master—and he can't know how old Greely—how Mr. Greely got his chivvy bashed. As you were a witness, I want you to come with me and tell him. See?"

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"Keep clear," said Newcome sagely.

"Oh, I'll chance it!" said Jimmy. "After all, even the Head can't eat me. I'm ready, Hansom, if you like."

"That's right," assented Hansom. "Come on. He's bound to listen. And after all, he's not a bad sort—he's bound to do Greely justice when he knows the facts."

The Fourth-Former walked away with the captain of the Fifth on terms of unusual amity. The fact was, Hansom's concern for his Form-master did him credit. Perhaps his affection and concern for his father led Hansom to exaggerate Mr. Greely's merits a little. Still, the affection for one's father was a very creditable thing, and naturally made a fellow think all the more of Hansom for it. Undoubtedly, Horace Greely had performed a signal service for Sir George Hansom, and it was very decent of Hansom of the Fifth to feel it as he did.

They arrived at the door of the Head's study, and there Jimmy Silver hesitated a little. He respected the Head, but his respect was greatly mingled with awe. Few Rookwood fellows liked facing the calm, lofty gaze of Dr. Chisholm, which grew so steely and unnerving when he was angry. But Edward Hansom did not hesitate. He knocked quite sharply on the door.

"Come in!"

Dr. Chisholm eyed the senior and junior as they entered his study. He frowned.

"What is it?" he asked, in a deep voice.

"I've come to tell you about Mr. Greely, sir," said Hansom.

"I desire to hear nothing about Mr. Greely, Hansom. You may leave my study!" snapped the Head.

"I'm bound to tell you, sir——"

"Silence! Mr. Greely leaves Rookwood, Hansom. Take care you do not leave also. A little more impertinence, and I shall have to consider whether I can allow you to remain in the school!"

"You don't know the facts, sir!" exclaimed Hansom. "I've brought Silver here to tell you. He saw the fight——"

"The what?" exclaimed the Head.

"The fight. Mr. Greely——"

"Is it possible, Silver, that you were a witness of the disgraceful

affray in which Mr. Greely was so disgracefully disfigured?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. "But——"

The Head waved his hand.

"I desire to hear nothing about it. You should not have brought this junior here, Hansom. How dare you suppose that I should desire to listen to any such details?"

"But, sir," said Jimmy hurriedly, "it happened——"

"Silence! You appear to have come here, Silver, under the influence of this Fifth Form boy, and I shall not, herefore, cane you. You will take two hundred lines of Virgil. Now go!"

Jimmy Silver gave Hansom a hopeless look and backed out of the study. In the Head's present mood there was nothing doing—that was clear.

Hansom lingered.

"Look here, sir," he blurted out, "you don't understand how the matter stands. I'm bound to tell you——"

"Another word, Hansom," said the Head icily, "and I shall expel you from Rookwood!"

Hansom choked.

He followed Jimmy Silver from the study and closed the door. In the corridor, he stared at Jimmy.

"What do you think of that?" he gasped.

"It's a bit thick," agreed the captain of the Fourth. "The beak's a bit of a giddy old autocrat. But it can't rest here. I'm going to tell Mr. Dalton about it—he will put in a word. The Head will listen to him."

"Too jolly lofty to listen to anybody, I fancy!" growled Hansom. "But I can jolly well tell him there will be trouble if Greely has to go!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

Hansom nodded and they proceeded together to the study of Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth. Mr. Dalton listened to them with a very thoughtful expression. As a matter of fact, he had heard the whole story already, and, respecting the headmaster

as he did, he was distressed and grieved by the old gentleman's lofty obstinacy. It was not the first time that that strain of obstinacy and Olympian loftiness in the Head had had unfortunate consequences at Rookwood School.

"I will speak to Dr. Chisholm," said Mr. Dalton, at last, and the Fifth Former and the Fourth Former left his study, leaving it at that.

It was some time before Mr. Dalton made up his mind to call on the Head. He felt that it was his duty, but it was a decidedly disagreeable duty. However, he proceeded to the Head's study at last. He found Dr. Chisholm leaving his study to proceed to his own house to spend the remainder of the evening in the bosom of his family. The headmaster paused in the corridor to hear what Richard Dalton had to say.

"Will you excuse me, sir, if I speak on the subject of Mr. Greely?" asked the young Form-master.

"Kindly make no reference to Mr. Greely, sir," said the Head stiffly. "That matter is closed."

"But you seem to be under some misapprehension, sir——"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Mr. Greely received his injuries in a struggle——"

"In a disgraceful struggle, witnessed, as it appears, by at least one junior boy of Rookwood," said the Head, with bitter scorn. "Such conduct is unheard of—unprecedented—almost unthinkable in a Rookwood master. Nothing more, Mr. Dalton—I cannot listen to you."

With a curt nod the Head rustled away down the corridor. Richard Dalton walked back to his own study with compressed lips. The Head was the only person at Rookwood who was in ignorance of the true story; and, really, it looked as if he must remain in ignorance of it, while Mr. Greely left, unjustly dismissed. It was an extraordinary situation, with a touch of the ridiculous about it; the Head's attitude of Olympian wrath and dignity.

founded upon a misconception, was just a trifle ludicrous. But there it was. And all the Rookwood staff, discussing the matter in the Masters' Common-room, agreed that they did not see what was to be done.

CHAPTER 8.

Glorious Prospects!

"MY dear Greely!"

There was comfort in that hearty, friendly greeting to the sorely-tried master of the Rookwood Fifth.

Sir George Hansom was sitting up in bed, with a bandaged head, in his room at Dr. Bolton's house.

The baronet was in no state to return to London that night, and he had accepted the hospitality of the village doctor—that gentleman being only too pleased to oblige the wealthy baronet, who had lately purchased a large property in the neighbourhood.

Sir George looked a little pale and worn. But he was evidently very glad to see Mr. Greely.

"Don Pomposo" of Rookwood was to Sir George his old tutor, who had been kind and helpful in his Oxford days, and whom he always remembered with respect and gratitude. There was, perhaps, a tincture of patronage in Sir George's regard for his old tutor, but that was only natural in a gentleman of Sir George's great wealth and position. Between the baronet of thirty thousand a year and the Form-master in a school there was a great gulf fixed—bridged, however, by Sir George's kindness of heart and his esteem for his old tutor. And indubitably Mr. Greely had repaid his friendship that day—his face was a mass of damages received in defence of the wealthy baronet.

"Sit down, old fellow," said Sir George. "I'm glad you've found time to walk down and say good-night to me! Feeling knocked up, what?"

"A little," said Mr. Greely. "That

is a matter of no moment, however. How are you feeling?"

Sir George made a grimace.

"Rotten! I suppose your injuries have caused a lot of comment at the school! It's hard—very hard for you, Greely!"

"I am dismissed from my post, sir," said Mr. Greely.

"Eh?"

"The Head has chosen to dismiss me," said the Fifth Form-master. "Seeing me in this state he has jumped to the conclusion that I have been—I hardly care to say the words—that I have been engaged in some disgraceful affray unworthy of a man of my years and position. Without hearing a word from me he has dismissed me from my post."

"Upon my word!"

"I do not judge him!" said Mr. Greely, with lofty magnanimity. "I am aware that black eyes and swollen features are out of place in a Form-master at a Public school. Very much so! No doubt it would have been essential for me to avoid the public gaze for a time. But——"

Sir George Hansom gave a sound like a snort.

"Dismissed?" he said.

"Dismissed!" said Mr. Greely. "Rookwood, where I have spent the best years of my life——"

His voice faltered.

"Dismissed!" roared Sir George. "It's a shame! It shan't happen! By gad! I'll talk to him! Without asking what had happened! Why, sir, the man must be a fool! Did he want you to stand by while those footpads beat in my head with a gas-pipe? By gad! Give me that telephone!"

"My dear Sir George——"

"Give me that telephone!"

Sir George Hansom was a somewhat choleric and emphatic gentleman. He was not accustomed to contradiction—few of his associates had any desire to

contradict a gentleman of thirty thousand a year. He stretched out an angry hand for the telephone. Sir George was occupying Dr. Bolton's own room, given up to the distinguished guest, and the doctor's bedside telephone was at hand. Mr. Greely passed the instrument to him.

Sir George almost snorted into the transmitter.

He was some little time in getting through to Rookwood. Mr. Greely would have spoken, but the baronet waved him to silence. He was going to give Dr. Chisholm a piece of his mind, and he did not want interruptions even from his valued old friend and tutor.

He was through at last, and Dr. Chisholm's voice came along the wires. Sir George knew the voice. He had met Dr. Chisholm a good many times, and, in point of fact, had not "pulled" with him any more than one autocratic gentleman could be expected to pull with another.

"Dr. Chisholm! Sir George Hanson speaking! What is this I hear? My old friend—my former tutor—dismissed from Rookwood! Is this a fact?"

"Quite!"

"I protest against this, Dr. Chisholm!"

"Indeed."

The Head's voice was icy.

Possibly he desired Sir George to understand that he was not to be hectored even by a baronet of thirty thousand a year.

"Yes, sir, indeed!" hooted Sir George. "I owe Mr. Greely my personal gratitude! I have obligations to him that I can never repay! I insist, sir, upon your hearing Mr. Greely in his own defence before proceeding with this act of injustice—of absurdity—of—of— Are you there, sir? I repeat, are you there?"

Dr. Chisholm was not there! He had cut off.

"Sir! Are you there?" roared Sir George into the transmitter.

Silence!

"Upon my word!" gasped Sir George.

He slammed the receiver back on the hooks. Mr. Greely took the instrument from him and set it on the table again.

Doubtless the headmaster of Rookwood, quite as autocratic a gentleman as Sir George himself—if not more so—had not been pleased by hearing his action described as unjust and absurd. Certainly he had cut off the conversation with ruthless sharpness.

"I will take my boy away from Rookwood!" gasped Sir George. "By gad! Am I a man to be treated like this? Are you, Greely? Who is this fellow—this dashed autocrat—who refuses to listen to a few words—refuses to listen to a calm and friendly explanation? By gad! Greely, my old friend, you shall leave Rookwood! But Dr. Chisholm shall be sorry for this!"

Sir George winced and rubbed his head. His angry excitement was not good for him, with a big bruise on his head.

"Calm yourself, my dear Sir George," said Mr. Greely.

"I am quite calm, Greely!" hooted Sir George. "Did I not speak calmly to Dr. Chisholm? Did I not address him with a patience that was almost humble, by gad? Humble, by Jove! Greely, you have suffered this on my account. You are made to suffer for having acted with a courage and gallantry that very few younger men could equal! Young men are not what they were in our time, Greely. But you shall not be the loser."

Mr. Greely made a gesture.

"Do not speak of that, Sir George! Your friendship and sympathy—"

"You cannot live on friendship and sympathy, my dear fellow! Listen to me!" said Sir George impressively. "You know I came down here to see a

property I have lately purchased—old Coombe Manor House, between this village and Rookwood. Do you know what struck me, Greely, when looking over that property a few days ago? It struck me how excellently it would serve the purpose of a school—like Stowe, you know! That thought came into my mind as a proposition. Now, sir, I am not only thinking of it, but I have determined on it."

"A—a—a school!" repeated Mr. Greely.

"A school that will rival Rookwood—or Eton and Harrow for that matter!" said Sir George. "A school of which my old friend, Horace Greely, will be the headmaster."

"What-a-at?"

"Of which my son will be the first pupil!"

"Sir George!"

"Not a word! It is settled! As soon as I am up and about we will go into the matter together. Details can be arranged with ease. As a business proposition, I believe it will pay. Whether it pays or not I do not care a single button."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Greely.

His black eyes gleamed.

Mr. Greely fancied himself in the role of headmaster. He had always had a secret conviction that he was better fitted for that high post than Dr. Chisholm! He had never doubted that the governors of Rookwood School had shown a strange want of judgment in appointing Henry Chisholm, when they might have secured the services of Horace Greely.

Headmaster of Manor House School—another Stowe, in fact—a new Public school with new and improved traditions!

"Oh, Sir George!" gasped Mr. Greely.

He had not expected anything of the kind. He had not dreamed of it. At the most he had hoped that Sir George's powerful recommendation

would help to secure him another post as Form-master. He was overwhelmed.

An hour later Mr. Greely walked back to Rookwood as if he were walking on air.

Headmaster!

The word rang pleasantly in his ears as he walked. He no longer felt the throbbing in his damaged eyes—the twinges in his swollen nose! Even towards Dr. Chisholm he was no longer angry. Headmaster! He could have thanked Dr. Chisholm from the bottom of his heart now! Headmaster!

Mr. Greely dreamed pleasant dreams that night.

CHAPTER 5.

Straight from the Shoulder!

"SILVER!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

It was the following morning, and Dr. Chisholm, looking out of the doorway after breakfast, called to the captain of the Fourth, who was in the quad. Jimmy approached him with some misgivings, wondering whether he was to be asked for his lines.

"Silver, your Form-master, Mr. Dalton, made me acquainted with certain facts this morning," said the Head quietly. "I desire to hear from you a description of what occurred yesterday afternoon in Coombe Wood."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Kindly tell me what you saw—and be brief!"

Jimmy understood.

Richard Dalton had evidently found a propitious moment, and had made the Head aware of the true circumstances of Mr. Greely's case. The Head was undoubtedly autocratic and quick to anger, but he was a gentleman; he was anxious to commit no injustice. Obviously, he wanted an account from an eye-witness before speaking to Mr. Greely.

Jimmy Silver was glad enough that the matter was to end so satisfactorily. He proceeded to give his account of the struggle in Coombe Wood, not omitting to give Mr. Greely full credit for the courage he undoubtedly had displayed.

"I was not aware of this," said the Head. "Thank you, Silver!"

He dismissed the junior with a gesture.

The majestic old gentleman stood in thought, looking out into the sunny quad. He had been hasty, and he had been unjust. He realised it now—he knew all the school must have realised it long since.

But he knew what he ought to do, and he intended to do it. And he was glad to see Mr. Greely come along to the doorway, with a bag in his hand. Mr. Greely was going—but the Head was there to stop him.

"Mr. Greely!"

"Sir!"

"I have to express my regret, Mr. Greely," said the Head, in his most stately manner.

"Indeed, sir!" said Mr. Greely.

"I am now aware of the circumstances under which you received your injuries, Mr. Greely. So far from blaming you, it is my duty to commend you."

"Indeed!" repeated Mr. Greely, with a tone of sarcasm.

"Yes, sir," said the Head. "I express my regret—and I, of course, rescind your dismissal, Mr. Greely. I hope, sir," added the Head, with stately courtesy—"I hope that you will forget this unhappy incident, and continue to give Rookwood the benefit of your very valuable services."

It was the *amende honorable*; it was an immense concession from so Olympian a gentleman as the Head of Rookwood.

But it was in vain.

Other and brighter prospects had opened before Horace Greely. A Form-

mastership at Rookwood was no longer a great thing in his eyes.

Already he felt himself a headmaster—the equal of the majestic gentleman who was now offering to reinstate him as a Form-master! Form-master! The position seemed very small fry to Mr. Greely just now!

He smiled, with sarcasm.

"You are very kind, sir," he said.

"My intention is to be just, Mr. Greely," said the Head, with unusual mildness.

"I repeat, sir, that you are very kind. But I am bound to remark that I am not in need of kindness on your part."

"Mr. Greely!"

"I have other views, sir!" said Mr. Greely grandly, and he raised his rolling voice a little, to give several Rookwood fellows the benefit of hearing him.

"I have other views, sir! If you have repented, sir, of your inconsiderate haste and injustice, I am glad of it! I repeat that I am glad of it! But I have other views, sir, and I regret—I very much regret, sir—that I am unable to remain a member of your staff, Dr. Chisholm."

And Mr. Greely rolled grandly on—having the unspeakable satisfaction of leaving Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, standing rooted to the ground, with a crimson face, absolutely dumbfounded!

CHAPTER 10.

Something Like a Send-Off!

"HURRAH!"

"Good old Greely!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

It was a roar in the old quadrangle at Rookwood.

Dr. Chisholm started.

He stood in the big doorway of the House, looking out into the sunny quadrangle.

In the distance the portly figure of Mr. Greely was to be seen rolling along the gravel path to the gates.

Mr. Greely, no longer master of the

Fifth Form at Rookwood, was taking his departure, shaking the dust of Rookwood from his feet, so to speak.

His brow was lofty, his stride even more majestic than usual as he went. There was, as the poet has described it, "pride in his port, defiance in his eye!"

And round Mr. Greely, as he headed, slow and stately, for the school gates, gathered a crowd of Fifth Form fellows.

There were a dozen at least, headed by Hansom of the Fifth, and right under the eyes of Dr. Chisholm, staring from the House, they cheered the dismissed Form-master.

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Greely!" roared Hansom.

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

The Fifth did not care if the Head heard them. Rather, they wanted the Head to hear them.

They wanted Dr. Chisholm to know what they thought of his dismissal of their Form-master.

From that enthusiastic roar the Head undoubtedly learned what they thought, and the knowledge did not seem to please him. His brow grew dark and darker as he stared at the procession going down to the gates. Mr. Greely, dismissed but undaunted, escorted by the cheering Fifth

Dr. Chisholm made a step forward as if to descend into the quadrangle and interfere personally to put an end to this unusual scene. But he checked himself and glanced round at a group of Fourth Form juniors who were standing near the House steps.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir."

"Go and tell Hansom of the Fifth Form to come to me at once!"

"Ye-es, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy hesitated, with a dubious glance at his comrades—Lovell and Raby and Newcome. As a matter of absolute fact, the sympathies of the Fourth Form quartette were rather with Horace Greely. Indeed, they had felt rather disposed to join the Fifth

in cheering him. Still, he was not their Form-master, so they let Hansom & Co. have the dismissed gentleman to themselves.

The Head's message to Hansom of the Fifth meant that there was trouble in store for that youth, the ringleader in this enthusiastic send-off. So Jimmy hesitated.

Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes on the junior. It really was not safe to hesitate when the headmaster of Rookwood gave a command.

"Silver, do you hear me?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

There was no help for it. Jimmy Silver started at a trot for the crowd of Fifth Formers who converged round their Form-master on his slow and stately way to the gates.

"Hansom!" called out Jimmy.

He was not heeded.

Mr. Greely, near the school gates, had paused, and was looking round on the cheering Fifth.

There was emotion in Mr. Greely's plump face.

The hearty demonstration from his Form moved him, touching him deeply. He had never dreamed that he was so popular in the Fifth.

He saw himself the hero and the idol of his Form, and he was deeply moved. He could not go without saying a few words.

"My boys."

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, sir. Speech!"

"My boys, I am touched to the heart—deeply touched. I feel that you will miss me when I am gone."

"Hear, hear!"

"We're sorry we're losin' you, sir!" exclaimed Talboys.

"It's a shame, sir!" said Lumsden.

"Shame!" roared Hansom, loud enough for the headmaster to hear across the quad.

"Hansom!" called out Jimmy again, wedged in the crowd of big seniors.

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!"

"Kick the fag, somebody!"

"Go it, sir! Speech! Hear, hear!"

"Boys, I am going," said Mr. Greely. "Dr. Chisholm has been pleased to dismiss me from my post in this school."

"Shame!"

"I make no complaint, I make no comment!" said Mr. Greely, with dignity. "In justice to Dr. Chisholm I must tell you that he has offered this morning to reinstate me. I have refused."

"Oh!" ejaculated Hansom.

"I am bound to place my personal dignity even before my desire to serve Rookwood and to remain with the boys who are so attached to me," said Mr. Greely. "I am going. But I am not going far."

"Eh?"

"I remain," said Mr. Greely, "at Coombe. Shortly, by the munificence of Sir George Hansom, a new school will be opened in the vicinity—Manor House School. I shall be the headmaster."

"Oh!"

This was startling news to the Fifth.

"My boys who desire to keep in touch with me will, therefore, be able to do so," said Mr. Greely. "I trust that some of them, at least, will be sent to me by their parents."

"Hear, hear!"

"I shall hope so," said Mr. Greely. "I shall trust so. And now, farewell! From the bottom of my heart I thank you, my boys, for this testimony of your high, your flattering opinion of me! I shall not forget you. I am sure you will not forget me. Farewell!"

Mr. Greely rolled majestically out of the gates, raising his hat to the Fifth, who waved their hats and cheered vociferously as he went.

Jimmy Silver caught Hansom by the arm.

"Hansom, the Head's sent me——"

"Blow the Head!"

"He wants you."

"Let him want!"

Edward Hansom, captain of the Fifth, was evidently in a reckless and rather rebellious mood.

"Well, I've told you," said Jimmy.

"Go and eat coke!"

Jimmy Silver scudded off.

"Line up, you fellows!" shouted Hansom. "Once more!"

The Fifth crammed into the wide, old gateway, and sent a thunderous cheer rolling after Mr. Greely down the road. The Fifth Form-master glanced back, and raised his hat again, and the Fifth cheered once more. Leaving them at it, Jimmy Silver returned to the House.

Like a bronze image, the Head stood on the top step. He had not stirred, but the glinting of his eyes under his contracted brows showed how intense was his anger.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"You gave Hansom my message?"

"Yes, sir. He's coming," said Jimmy diplomatically.

Certainly Jimmy had no intention of reporting Hansom's reply to the headmaster. Moreover, it was fairly certain that Hansom was coming, in spite of his reckless and rebellious words.

"Very good!" said the Head, compressing his lips.

And he waited grimly. Jimmy Silver & Co. waited, too, wondering what was going to happen to Edward Hansom when he came.

CHAPTER 11.

Hansom Asks For It!

"IT'S simply rotten!" said Hansom. "Quite the limit!" agreed Talboys.

"Too thick altogether!" said Lumsden.

And there was a murmur of assent from the other Fifth Form fellows.

Mr. Greely was gone.

Rookwood School was to know no more the portly form, the majestic brow, the deep, fruity voice of Horace Greely.

In other circumstances the Fifth would not perhaps, have missed him very much. But in the present circumstances they felt resentful, especi-

ally Hansom. Mr. Greely was a hero—perhaps only a temporary hero—in the eyes of the Fifth. At the height of his popularity the Head had dismissed him. True, it seemed that he had offered to rescind the dismissal, and that it was Mr. Greely who had refused to compromise. Nevertheless, the Head had been hasty, high-handed—in fact, tyrannical—in the opinion of Hansom & Co. Their Form-master was bereft from them just when—for the first time in his history—they were thinking highly of him. It was rotten; it was too thick; it was the limit!

Hansom was emphatic that it was so. And most of the Fifth agreed with Hansom. In his resentment and wrath, Hansom had almost forgotten that the headmaster had sent him a message. Talboys reminded him. After all, the Head was the Head, and had to be regarded by the most resentful fellow.

"The Beak's wantin' you, you know," remarked Talboys.

"Blow the Beak!" said Hansom.

"Better go, old chap."

"Oh, I'll go!" said Hansom, in the tone of a fellow making a generous concession.

And he went.

Most of the Fifth followed him. Hansom of the Fifth started with an independent stride, his chin well up, with the idea of showing the headmaster of Rookwood that he, Edward Hansom, was not to be frightened by a frown, like some fag of the Third or Second. But as he came within the radius of Dr. Chisholm's icy glance, Hansom's manner became more subdued and respectful, almost unconsciously. By the time he stood before the Head he was quite meek.

"You sent me a message, sir?"

"Yes, Hansom. Why did you not come at once?" snapped the Head.

"I was seeing Mr. Greely off, sir."

"Is that a reason for delaying when I have sent for you, Hansom?"

The Fifth-Former did not answer.

He was still feeling rebellious and exasperated; but undoubtedly there

was something very subduing in the Head's cold, stern glance. Somehow, it was exceedingly difficult to "back up" against those icy eyes.

"You have been taking part in an absurd scene, Hansom," said Dr. Chisholm. "Indeed, almost a riot."

"We think a lot of Mr. Greely, sir," said Hansom sulkily.

"Indeed!"

"Mr. Greely got damaged sir, in helping my father. My father——"

"I have no intention of discussing that, Hansom. You will be detained on Saturday afternoon, as a punishment for your lack of respect. If there is any recurrence of this disorderly conduct I shall punish you more severely."

Edward Hansom breathed hard.

"What disorderly conduct, sir?" he blurted out.

With the eyes of the Fifth, and of a crowd of juniors, upon him, Hansom felt that he was bound to speak up for himself. After all why should he be called over the coals like this.

The Head was turning away. He turned back.

"What did you say, Hansom?"

"I don't see that I've done anything, sir," said Hansom sturdily. "We think a lot of Mr. Greely, and we're sorry he's gone."

"Hansom!"

"We think he oughtn't have gone, sir," said Hansom, growing bolder. "In fact, we think——"

"Silence!" said the Head in a deep voice. "Lovell!" He turned to the group of juniors. "Lovell, fetch the cane from the desk in my study!"

"Oh!" murmured Lovell.

"At once!" snapped the Head.

Arthur Edward Lovell went into the House.

Hansom fairly trembled with indignation. He was to be caned—there, in open quad, before all the fellows, in the sight of all Rookwood! He, Edward Hansom, captain of the Fifth! And the Fifth never were caned, excepting in very exceptional circumstances indeed. The Head might as well have

thought of caning a prefect of the Sixth Form—in Hansom's opinion.

There was a breathless hush.

More and more Rookwood fellows were gathering round. They looked on in silence, at Hansom's crimson, angry face, and the Head's cold, impassive visage. Albert Edward Lovell came back with the cane.

"Hansom, you have been impertinent, and I shall cane you!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"Sir!" gasped Hansom.

"Hold out your hand!"

Hansom panted with wrath.

To be told to "bend over" under the eyes of such a crowd would have been humiliating; but to be told to hold out his hand, like a fag, was even worse.

He stood with his hands at his sides, breathing hard, and his look showed that he was thinking of refusing to obey. Many of the fellows looked anxious. Hansom might think of disobedience; but, in reality, disobedience was impossible. A disobedient junior would be flogged; a disobedient senior would be expelled. Rebellion meant being "bunked" from Rookwood.

"You hear me, Hansom?"

Slowly Edward Hansom's hand came out.

Swish!

"Let that be a warning to you, Hansom!" said the Head.

And he tucked the cane under his arm, and walked into the House.

A murmur broke out as soon as he was gone. Hansom of the Fifth stood crimson and furious.

"Rotten!"

"Cheek!"

"We're not standing this, you fellows!" said Talboys, in rather a subdued voice, lest the Head should still be within hearing.

"Canin' the Fifth, by Jove!" said Lucas. "What's Rookwood coming to, I'd like to know. Canin' the Fifth like fags!"

"Well, Hansom really asked for it, you know," said Lovell of the Fourth.

Really, it would have been more

judicious for a Fourth Form fellow to make no remark at all at that tense moment. But Arthur Edward Lovell never hesitated to make his opinion known. Doubtless he regarded it as worth knowing.

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!" snapped Lumsden.

"Kick that fag, somebody," said Hansom.

Two or three of the Fifth obliged. There was a roar from Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Yarcooh! You cheeky rotters! Wow! My opinion is that the Head jolly well ought to cane the lot of you! Whoop! Leggo my ear, Hansom, you cad!"

Instead of letting go Lovell's ear, Hansom pulled it hard. After his caning from the Head, he seemed to find solace in it.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell. "I'll hack your shins!"

There was a yell from Hansom as Lovell hacked.

He released Arthur Edward's ear, and then he jumped at Arthur Edward. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome promptly rushed to their comrade's help, and three or four of the Fifth collared them at once.

"Back up, the Fourth!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Rescue!"

Mornington of the Fourth rushed into the fray, followed by Erroll and Conroy and Oswald and Putty, and three or four other fellows. There was quite a battle round the House steps.

Mr. Dalton, master of the Fourth, came striding out.

"Cease this at once!" he thundered. "Do you hear me? Stop this disturbance instantly."

"Go and eat coke!" roared Hansom. Hansom, caned and with his shins hacked, and his nose punched by a Fourth Form fist, was in a wildly wrathful mood, and not disposed to obey a junior Form-master.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"You're not my Form-master!" snorted Hansom.

Mr. Dalton did not argue that point with the angry Fifth Former.

He grasped Hansom by the collar and, with a swing of his powerful arm, swept him off his feet.

The Fourth Form-master was an athlete. Hansom was rather a hefty fellow, but he was an infant in Richard Dalton's grasp.

Mr. Dalton fairly carried him into the House by his collar, as if he had been a baby, Hansom gasping and wriggling wildly as he went.

At the door of the Fifth Form Room, Richard Dalton sat him down, breathless and dazed and flustered.

"Calm yourself, my boy," said Mr. Dalton kindly. "This will not do, you know. Go into your Form-room."

And Hansom gasped and tottered into the Fifth Form Room.

CHAPTER 12.

Reactions in the Fifth.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. went to their Form-room in a rather excited mood.

They had rather sympathised with Hansom & Co. of the Fifth, and with the dismissed Form-master. They had freely admitted that the Head had been rather high-handed in dismissing Mr. Greely. But that scrap with the Fifth had somewhat changed their sentiments.

In a few minutes the juniors had been rather roughly handled by the seniors; Hansom & Co. had found them useful to expend their wrath upon. So at the present moment the general opinion in the Fourth was that Hansom hadn't been caned half enough and that the Head would do well to cane all the Fifth, one after another, from the top to the bottom of the Form.

Arthur Edward Lovell, rubbing his ear, declared that he was backing up the Head. What kind of backing Lovell could afford the Head, and what benefit

the Head was likely to derive from it, did not become clear. But it was clear, at least, that Arthur Edward was very much down on the Fifth.

The Fifth, loftily indifferent to the opinion of Lovell or any other fellow in the Lower School, went to their Form-room excited, wrathful, and in a mood for trouble.

Mr. Greely was gone, and he had left too suddenly to be replaced. For the time being, the Fifth were without a Form-master.

Something had to be done; the Form could not be left to their own devices, and they guessed that the headmaster had made some arrangements. What those arrangements were, the Fifth did not know; but they knew one thing with absolute certainty—that they were going to do their best to make the arrangements a failure.

There was an excited discussion in the Fifth Form Room, without any master present so far. If a junior Form-master came in to take them, the Fifth were agreed that they would make that junior master tired of life before they had done with him. And if the Head had the cheek, as Hansom expressed it, to put them under a prefect, they would make that prefect fairly hop.

They waited in a warlike mood for the new authority to put in an appearance.

The Form-room door opened, and all eyes in the Fifth turned upon the newcomer.

It was Carthew of the Sixth Form—a prefect.

Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, was a terror to Second Form fags. He was no terror to Fifth Form fellows, and he realised that. His manner was quite conciliatory as he came into the Form-room.

"Well, here we are, you fellows," said Carthew, with an uneasy geniality. "I say, the Head's asked me to take charge here for a bit. I hope we shall get on all right."

Had Mark Carthew attempted to

carry matters with a high hand, probably he would have failed. But he was absolutely certain to fail when he tried the propitiatory method.

The Fifth were not in a mood to be propitiated. Moreover, they despised Carthew; indeed, it was on record that Hansom of the Fifth had once actually licked him.

"The Head asked you—what?" said Hansom.

"To take charge here, Hansom. Now, sit down, you fellows, and let's get going," said the prefect.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hansom.

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the Fifth taking their cue from their leader. Nobody went to his place.

"Head's orders, you know," said Carthew feebly.

"Do you really think you can take a senior Form, Carthew?" asked Hansom banteringly. "Do you think we shall take any notice of you?"

"Not really, Carthew, surely?" jeered Lumsden.

"This is one of Carthew's little jokes," declared Lucas. "He's come here to do a funny turn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom pointed to the door.

"You see that door, Carthew?" he asked.

"Eh! Yes."

"Will you oblige me by getting on the other side of it?" asked Hansom, with elaborate politeness.

"Now, look here, Hansom——"

"You see, we don't want any of the Sixth here," explained Hansom. "You specially, Carthew. Your face worries us."

"And your manners!" said Lucas.

"Get going while the going's good, old man," suggested Brown major.

Carthew set his lips.

"Look here, you fellows, I'm here to take the Fifth this morning," he said. "It's Head's orders! I understand that he's making arrangements as quickly as possible for Mr. Greely to be replaced. You know as well as I do that

you can't slack around till you get a new Form-master. I've got to do my duty here, and you know it. Now, play up and be decent."

Hansom looked at his watch.

"I give you one minute," he said.

"Look here——"

"Open the door for him, Lummy."

Lumsden grinned, and set the Form-room door wide open.

"I tell you——" snapped Carthew.

"Twenty seconds gone!" said the captain of the Fifth, unheeding.

"If you lay a finger on me——"

"Thirty seconds!"

"You'll have to answer to the Head!"

"Forty seconds!"

"Take your places at once," exclaimed Carthew, with a desperate assumption of authority. "Do you hear? Every fellow here——"

"Fifty seconds!"

"If I have to report you——"

"Report and be blowed!" said Lumsden.

"I can tell you the Head will——"

"Sixty seconds!" said Hansom. He slipped the watch back into his pocket. "Time's up, Carthew! Are you going?"

"You cheeky ass, you know I'm not going!" howled Carthew in uneasy anger. "The Head sent me to you——"

"Then we'll jolly well send you back to the Head!"

"Hands off!" roared Carthew, as the Fifth-Formers closed round him.

"Outside!"

"Kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew of the Sixth was collared on all sides. In an unlucky moment for himself he hit out. Hansom gave a roar as he caught Carthew's knuckles with his nose. The next moment the Sixth Former was swept off his feet, and he came down on the floor with a heavy bump and a yell.

"Roll him out!"

"Dribble him back to the Head!"

"Hurrah!"

The Fifth were absolutely uproarious now. Carthew, dizzy and be-

wildered, hardly resisted as he was rolled and hustled to the door and pitched into the corridor.

"Outside!" roared Talboys.

"Dribble him back to the Sixth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick him out!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Carthew. He picked himself up amid a forest of boots and fled for his life.

With a rush and a roar the Fifth followed him down the corridor. Only Hansom got near enough for another kick; Carthew was putting on a really wonderful speed.

He headed for the Sixth Form Room as fast as his legs could go.

Hansom & Co. did not "dribble" him as far as that apartment. The Head was there with the Sixth, and prudence restrained them. They crowded back to the Fifth Form Room, excited and hilarious.

"That much for Carthew!" said Hansom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fancy the Sixth won't be keen on takin' us!" grinned Lumsden. "If Bulkeley comes next, we'll serve Bulkeley the same."

"Hear, hear!"

"But the Head!" murmured Jobson.

"Oh, shut up, Jobson! Who's afraid of the Head?"

Nobody in the Fifth was afraid of the Head for the moment. They were rebellious, reckless, and defiant. And their rebelliousness, recklessness, and defiance were likely to last until the precise moment when the Head should appear in the doorway of the Fifth Form Room.

CHAPTER 12.

A Fight with the Fifth!

HORACE dropped from Dr. Chisholm's hand.

The Sixth had settled down to Q. Horatius Flaccus, when the door was hurled open and Carthew rushed in.

He rushed in, breathless and panting.

The Fifth Formers had chased him to within a dozen yards of the door, and Carthew's impression was that they were still at his heels.

The Sixth stared. The Head stared. Carthew stopped, pumping in breath, and stared round to the doorway. It was not crammed with vengeful Fifth-Formers as he had expected. The Fifth were gone.

"What does this mean, Carthew?" exclaimed the head angrily. "You have interrupted me, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Carthew.

"Why have you come here? Why do you rush into the room in this unmannerly way? Explain yourself, sir!" thundered the Head.

"They—they——"

"Who—what? What?"

"The Fifth!" gasped Carthew. "They—they've turned me out!"

"Turned you out!" repeated the Head.

"Yes!" panted Carthew. "They—they've pitched me out of the Form-room! They—they refuse to be taken by me! They—they——" He broke off, gasping for breath.

The Head's brow was like thunder. Most of the Sixth were grinning. The interruption annoyed the Head extremely, but it did not seem to annoy the Sixth Form. Possibly they found Carthew more entertaining than Q. Horatius Flaccus.

"Can I believe my ears?" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm.

Carthew did not answer that question. He expected the Head to take the matter in hand at once and proceed to the Fifth Form Room and visit condign punishment upon the offenders. But he did not know the Head.

"Carthew, you are a prefect of the Sixth Form!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"I have specially invested you with authority over the Fifth Form to-day!" exclaimed the Head. "Doubtless you did not make that clear to them!"

"I—I——"

"Return to the Fifth Form Room at once!"

"Eh!"

"Inform the Fifth that I have sent you, that you are in charge of the Form, that any rebelliousness will be punished severely by me personally!"

"But, sir——" gasped Carthew.

"If you cannot make yourself respected as a prefect, Carthew, I shall have to consider very seriously whether to allow you to retain that rank in the school."

"But, sir——" stuttered the hapless Carthew.

Dr. Chisholm waved his hand impatiently. He was angry and he was anxious to resume with Quintus Horatius Flaccus. Really it was intolerable for that ancient gentleman's sublime odes to be interrupted in this way.

"Enough, Carthew! You have heard my commands!"

"But, sir——"

"Go!"

Carthew almost groaned. But he had no choice but to obey. Dr. Chisholm was already getting under way with Horace again, taking no further notice of the unhappy prefect. Dr. Chisholm's view was that a Sixth Form prefect ought to be able to make his authority respected, especially when he had the special orders of the headmaster. He left it to Carthew, and that wretched senior was strongly tempted to throw up his prefectship on the spot rather than face the excited Fifth again.

He looked round at the Sixth. All of them were grinning. There was not even any sympathy for him in his parlous state.

Dr. Chisholm glanced round again.

"Are you not gone, Carthew?"

"Oh, I—I—I'm going, sir!" groaned Carthew.

And he went.

Dr. Chisholm promptly forgo his existence as he resumed with the Sixth. But it was probable that the Sixth Form

of Rookwood bestowed less attention upon the sublime ode that was being dealt with than upon wondering how Carthew would be getting on among the Fifth.

Slowly, very slowly, Mark Carthew took his way back to the Fifth Form Room.

His steps lagged more and more as he approached the dreaded apartment.

The Fifth were there. The door was open. He could hear them talking and laughing. And he had the Head's strict orders to venture once more in among them—like Daniel going into the lions' den. It was a case of daring to be a Daniel, and Carthew really was not equal to the test. His knees knocked together as he stopped at the doorway and looked in.

The Fifth-Formers did not observe him for a minute or two. Carthew hesitated at the doorway.

He had to go in. But he knew that the moment he was inside, the Fifth would deal with him drastically. Sagely he decided to let the inevitable happen while he was still outside the Form-room, with space for running.

If the Head expected him to stand up to the Fifth in single combat, the Head was going to be disappointed. Really, it was asking too much.

Carthew coughed.

In a moment the eyes of Hansom & Co. were upon him.

"My hat! He's come back!" ejaculated Hansom.

"He wants some more!" grinned Lumsden.

"Trot in, Carthew!"

"Waitin' for you, old bean!"

"Come in and have some more, dear man!"

"Look here, you fellows," mumbled Carthew. "The Head's sent me back. He's sent special orders that you're to toe the line, and he will deal with you if there's any trouble. Now, look here. I'm not going to rag you. I'll give you an easy time in class. But I've got to take charge of you; the Head says so."

Hansom chuckled.

"Well, come in and take control," he said; "we're waiting."

"Waitin' and ready!" chuckled Talboys.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew made a step into the Form-room. The Fifth waited for him, grinning gleefully. It was only too clear that if Carthew ventured into their hands his last state would be worse than his first, and he stopped. Yet it was impossible to return to the Sixth Form Room and face the stern glance of the headmaster with another tale of woe. Carthew felt rather flattered when the Head had picked him out that morning to take the Fifth. It was really a compliment. Now he felt that he could have dispensed with the compliment gladly.

"Aren't you comin' in, old bean?" cooed Hansom.

"Look here!" mumbled Carthew helplessly.

"If you're not coming in, we'll come out to you," said the captain of the Fifth, chuckling. "Come on, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom led the rush.

Carthew skipped backwards into the corridor, thankful that he had not ventured farther in, in spite of the Head's strict orders.

"Collar him!"

"After him!"

Carthew fled along the corridor. What the Head expected of him in such circumstances he really could not guess. He ran hard, with the hilarious Fifth whooping at his heels. Gladly Carthew would have escaped to his own study and locked himself in, but he had no time. Hansom, putting on a spurt, reached him before he had taken a dozen steps and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Ow!" gasped Carthew.

He wrenched himself loose, tore open the nearest door, and rushed into the Fourth Form Room.

There was a yell of surprise from the Fourth, a startled exclamation from Mr. Dalton.

"Carthew!"

"What——"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Lovell.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "Carthew, what—— Upon my word! Bless my soul! This—this——"

Carthew did not heed the Fourth or the Fourth Form-master. He rushed frantically round behind Mr. Dalton's desk.

"Keep them off!" he yelled.

"Come out of that!" roared Hansom, in the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth, crowding behind Edward Hansom. The doorway was crammed with them.

"Oh, gad! This is rippin'!" exclaimed Mornington of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the Fourth were on their feet now in a buzz of excitement. They had been doing English history; but history vanished from their minds now. This was better than history.

"Hansom," exclaimed Mr. Dalton, angry and amazed. "I understood that you were in charge of the Fifth this morning! What does this disturbance mean? Why have you come here?"

"Pretty plain why he's come here!" murmured Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Carthew, answer me! What does this mean?"

"We're waiting for Carthew to take us!" chortled Lucas of the Fifth.

"They—they—they're after me, sir!" gasped Carthew. "They've been ragging me! I—I—I——"

"Will you come out?" roared Hansom.

"No, I won't!" gasped Carthew.

"Then we'll jolly well fetch you!"

"Hansom, how dare you intrude in this Form-room!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton in a voice of thunder. "Leave immediately!"

But the Fifth were quite out of hand

now. Hansom strode in, evidently with the intention of collaring Carthew, cowering behind Mr. Dalton's desk. His excited comrades followed him. Mr. Dalton strode in the way, and, to his amazement and wrath, was hustled aside by three or four big Fifth Form fellows.

That was enough for the Fourth—more than enough. A row with the Fifth—a terrific scrap in the Form-room—was infinitely preferable to English history. And they were bound to stand up in defence of their Form-master, actually hustled by Fifth Form fellows. At all events, they decided that they were so bound, though Mr. Dalton probably would have held a different opinion.

"Come on, you fellows!" roared Lovell.

"Pile in!"

"Hurrah!"

"Boys," shrieked Mr. Dalton, "keep your seats! Keep your places! I command you! Bless my soul! I command—" His voice was lost in the terrific hubbub.

Carthew was already struggling in Hansom's grasp. Mr. Dalton grasped Hansom to force him to release his hold, and some of the Fifth shoved at Mr. Dalton to make him release Hansom. And then came the rush of the Form, nearly every fellow in the Form piling in.

"Down with the Fifth!"

"Keep off, you fags!"

"Kick them out!" shouted Raby.

"Hurrah!"

It was a terrific scrap. Size and weight were on the side of the Fifth, but the Fourth had the advantage of numbers. Moreover, many of the juniors had caught up books and ink-pots, which they used freely in the fray. In the midst of the wild and whirling combat Carthew of the Sixth dodged out of the room and fled. He did not flee to the Sixth Form Room, however; he ran for his own study and locked himself in. His escape was

hardly noticed in the wild excitement that reigned in the Fourth Form Room.

"Down with the Fifth!"

"Kick them out!"

"Order!" roared Mr. Dalton, almost beside himself with wrath and dismay. "Boys, cease this instantly! I command you!"

Words were futile. The excitement was too great. Mr. Dalton proceeded to drastic action.

He clutched up the cane from his desk, and lashed out on all sides, bestowing his attentions equally upon the Fourth and the Fifth.

There was a sudden shout from Tubby Muffin.

"Here comes the Head!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Hansom.

"Hook it!"

The Fifth swarmed out of the Form-room. Perhaps they had had enough, anyhow. Certainly they did not seem to want to wait for the Head's arrival. With a rush they fled for their own Form-room, leaving the Fourth victorious, and the room in a state of wild disorder. And in that state it met the stern gaze of Dr. Chisholm as he arrived.

CHAPTER 14.

Desperate Measures!

DR. CHISHOLM stared into the Fourth Form Room.

The rebellious Fifth had escaped just in time. In their own Form-room wild excitement reigned among the Fifth—mingled with well-founded apprehension now that they knew that the Head was on the war-path. In the Fourth Form Room a mob of excited and dusty and breathless juniors met the gaze of the incensed headmaster.

"Mr. Dalton"—the Head's voice was deep and stern—"what does this mean? What is this riot? I have been disturbed—actually disturbed—in the Sixth Form Room! What does this riot in your Form-room mean?"

"The blame is not mine, sir," said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"This is not the state in which I expect to find a Rookwood Form-room, sir!" rapped out the Head.

"This Form-room has been invaded by the Fifth, apparently in chase of the prefect you placed in charge of them," answered Mr. Dalton.

"What—what! Where is Carthew?"

"He is gone!"

"Bless my soul! Do you seriously tell me, Mr. Dalton, that the Fifth Form boys have chased—actually chased—Carthew?"

"Certainly!"

"That is no reason why your Form-room should be in this state, Mr. Dalton." The Head glanced round the room, littered with books and inkpots. "Boys, go to your desks!"

The Fourth Formers went back to their places like lambs.

"Mr. Dalton, I am surprised—I am bound to say that I am very much surprised—at this!"

"Really, sir——"

"You need say nothing, sir. I am surprised, very much surprised! Even if the Fifth Form have forgotten all sense of decorum in the absence of a Form-master, that is no reason why your Form-room should be turned into a bear-garden! You boys appear to have been engaged in a rough-and-tumble struggle. I repeat that I am very much surprised."

"Sir, I——"

"Enough, Mr. Dalton! I leave it to you to correct your Form. With the Fifth I shall deal personally!"

And the Head sailed majestically away.

Mr. Dalton looked at his Form. They looked at him. If they expected Richard Dalton to be grateful for the manful assistance they had rendered him, the Fourth were doomed to disappointment.

"Silver, Lovell, Mornington, stand out before the class!" said Mr. Dalton. "You are the ringleaders in this riot.

I shall cane you. Every boy in the Form will take two hundred lines!"

"Oh!"

"We thought we ought to back you up, sir," said Mornington.

"If you thought so, Mornington, you were mistaken; and a caning will perhaps help you to avoid a similar error on another occasion," answered Mr. Dalton. "Bend over that chair."

Swish, swish, swish!

"Lovell——"

"We think, sir——" began Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Bend over that chair, Lovell!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Now, Silver——"

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy Silver resignedly.

Swish, swish, swish!

"We will now resume," said Mr. Dalton.

English history was once more the order of the day. Most of the Fourth were wishing, by that time, that they had not been quite so prompt to back up their Form-master. Really, Dicky Dalton seemed rather ungrateful for the loyal assistance so promptly rendered.

Meanwhile, the Head was sweeping along the corridor to the Fifth Form Room.

Lumsden of the Fifth, peering out of the doorway, saw him coming, and turned a rather scared look on his comrades.

"It's the Head!" he said.

"We're for it!" murmured Lucas.

Some of the Fifth sneaked into their places. Others stood where they were, aware that there was no escaping the storm that was about to burst. Probably a good many of them regretted that they had dealt so drastically with Carthew of the Sixth.

Hansom hesitated. All eyes were upon him! He was the leader in the outbreak. So far as pluck went, Hansom was a good leader; but certainly he did not seem much given to reflection. That the handling of Carthew

would be followed by the personal intervention of the headmaster had been as certain as anything could well be; but Hansom evidently did not know how to deal with the situation now that it had taken the inevitable turn.

A rustle was heard outside; the rustle of the Head's gown as he came. Hansom made a jump to the door.

Slam!

The Fifth Form door closed almost on the nose of the headmaster. A second more, and the key turned in the lock.

Hansom stood breathing hard. He had locked out the Head—and the inevitable was at least postponed.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Talboys. "I—I say——"

The knob turned.

The door did not open. The handle was shaken, and then shaken again impatiently.

The Fifth Formers stood watching the door as if fascinated. The Head was outside—locked out! Hansom, half scared at what he had done, stood silent, dismayed.

Shake, shake!

"Bless my soul! The door is locked!"

It was the Head's voice, in tones of angry amazement.

Knock, knock!

He was rapping on the panels now. The Fifth Formers looked at one another, but no one spoke. They almost held their breath.

"Boys, this door is locked! Unlock it instantly!"

No reply.

"Boys! Hansom! Lumsden! Do you hear me?"

They heard; but, like the celebrated gladiator, they heard but they heeded not! Not a word was spoken.

"Open this door at once!" thundered the Head. "Am I to believe that I am deliberately locked out of a Rookwood Form-room?"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Talboys. "I—I say, Hansom——"

"Shut up!" whispered Hansom.

"But—but I—I say——" Talboys was quite scared.

"Cheese it!" said Hansom desperately.

"Will you obey me?" thundered the Head. "Will you admit me instantly to this Form-room?"

His voice was formidable.

Jobson of the Fifth made a movement towards the door. Hansom did not speak to Jobson, but he kicked him—hard. There was a howl from Jobson, and he retreated among the desks.

"For the last time!" The Head's voice was deep and almost terrible. "Hansom, as head boy of the Fifth, I hold you responsible for this! I order you, personally, to unlock this door and admit me!"

Hansom made a movement. Then he stopped. All eyes were fixed on him. A dogged look came over Edward Hansom's face.

"Better do it, old man!" whispered Lumsden anxiously.

Hansom shook his head doggedly.

"But we can't back up against the Head, you know," muttered Talboys. "All very well handling the Sixth. But the Head——"

"He's going!" breathed Brown major.

The Head was heard to depart. His swishing gown was heard to rustle away. With what feelings he went the Fifth Formers could guess.

"Well," said Lumsden, with a deep breath, "we've done it now!"

And the Rookwood Fifth realised that there was no doubt about that. They had!

CHAPTER 16.

Brought to Order!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. heard the news when the Fourth came out of their Form-room.

It startled them.

It startled the other fellows when they heard it. From the Sixth to

the Second there was amazement and burning interest and curiosity as to what would happen next.

"The Fifth are locked in their Form-room! They've locked the Head out."

It was incredible, but it was true.

Fellows of all Forms congregated in the Form-room passage by the Fifth Form door, which indubitably was locked. Other fellows crowded under the Form-room windows, where rather scared faces occasionally looked out.

"Cheek, you know!" Arthur Edward Lovell commented. "Fancy the Fifth backing up against the Head because he's bunked their Form-master! They never thought much of old Greely, either, till just lately."

"I don't suppose they really want him back, either," said Mornington.

"From what he said, I fancy he doesn't want to come back," said Jimmy Silver. "He's got the offer of a head-mastership. Hansom and his crowd are simply playing the goat!"

Rookwood School was in a buzz of excitement.

Many of the fellows had expected the Fifth to give some trouble, left without a Form-master, and excited by the dismissal of Mr. Greely. But nobody had expected this; not even the Fifth themselves. Indeed, most of the Fifth realised by this time that they were, indeed, as Jimmy Silver expressed it, "playing the goat." They had never intended their revolt to go to this unheard-of length; Hansom, their leader, had never intended it. One step had led to another, and the fellows had been too excited to stop to think. They were not sorry now that they had handled Carthew and ejected him. But that had led inevitably to collision with the head-master—and now they were fairly up against it. Hansom, trying to think out the matter, found that it was difficult either to advance or to retreat—an extremely unpleasant position for any leader to be placed in.

Dinner was announced, and all Forms but the Fifth went in to dinner. The Fifth remained locked in their room.

After dinner Jimmy Silver & Co. walked along the Form-room passage, and heard excited voices from the other side of the Fifth Form door.

From what they could hear, it seemed that a good many of the Fifth were expressing their feelings by slanging their great leader.

"It's all rot!" came Lumsden's voice. "Look here, I'm jolly hungry! We can't stick here!"

"Of course we can't!"

"We've got to get a move on sooner or later. We've missed dinner now. I'm jolly well not going to miss tea! You're an ass, Hansom!"

"Locking out the Head won't bring Greely back! Besides, we know he doesn't mean to come back. And, besides, we don't really want him."

"It's all bosh!"

"Look here, Hansom——"

"As for a barring-out, don't talk out of your silly hat, Hansom! What are we going to bar out for?"

"Yes; drop that, for goodness' sake, Hansom! You don't seem to know what an ass you are!"

Jimmy Silver smiled at his chums. Lovell and Raby and Newcome chuckled.

"Hansom's getting it rather in the neck!" murmured Jimmy. "They all seem to see that they've gone too far now. Silly owls, you know!"

"Look here, Hansom, I'm fed up with this!" roared Brown major. "I'm jolly well not sticking here! What's the good?"

"Unlock the door, Hansom, you ass."

"I jolly well won't!" said Hansom.

"We're for it now, I tell you! The Head's treated Greely badly. He's treated us badly. If we don't make terms, it means a flogging and perhaps the sack. My idea is——"

"Oh, you haven't any ideas! Chuck it!"

"The fact is, we've gone over the limit," said Lumsden. "I'm as keen as anybody on ragging the Sixth; but we can't rag the Head. I'm jolly well not going to be bunked from Rookwood."

"Here comes the Head," murmured Lovell.

The Fistical Four backed away as Dr. Chisholm came sweeping along the Form-room passage. Taking no heed of the juniors, the Head tapped quietly at the Fifth Form door.

"Hansom!" His voice was quiet, dangerously quiet. "Hansom, I offer you a last opportunity to cease this reckless and foolish rebellion. If the door is immediately opened I shall cane every member of the Fifth Form. Otherwise, I shall send for the porter to force the door, and you will be expelled instantly from Rookwood. Decide at once."

There was a brief silence in the Fifth Form-room.

Jimmy Silver & Co. and a crowd of other fellows waited, wondering how the affair would terminate.

The silence was broken by the sound of a key being jammed into a lock. It turned.

The Fifth Form door opened.

It opened wide, revealing the Fifth, grouped in the Form-room, with scared and anxious faces. There was still a trace of defiance in Hansom's face, but it vanished as the Head's glance fixed on him.

Dr. Chisholm gazed at the Fifth-Formers, and they gazed at anything but the Head. No one seemed to want to meet his steely eye.

The Head had a cane under his arm. He let it slip down into his hand.

"You first, Hansom."

For a brief second Hansom hesitated, then he advanced.

Swish!

Hansom passed on, caned.

One by one the Fifth left the Form-room as the Head called name after name. Each, as he passed, received a severe swish.

A crowd of fellows in the Form-room passage looked on in silence.

Swish, swish, swish!

The last of the hapless Form passed out at last, and the cane was still. With flushed and gloomy faces, the Fifth-

Formers disappeared from sight. Dr. Chisholm placed the cane under his arm, and walked away, his face expressionless. The crowd broke up in a buzz of excited comment.

"So much for the jolly old fightin' Fifth!" murmured Mornington. "They're done!"

It seemed that Morny was right. That afternoon Bulkeley of the Sixth was appointed to carry on in the Fifth Form Room. Bulkeley, captain of Rookwood, was not a fellow to be handled like Carthew at any time; but, as a matter of fact, the Fifth gave him no trouble at all.

But that evening, in the Fifth Form studies, there was deep discussion, murmurs not loud but deep. The trouble was over, for the time; and the Head undoubtedly believed that it was over for good—that he had finished with Mr. Greely, and brought Mr. Greely's Form to order. But there was to be a rude awakening for the head of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 16.

Too Thick!

"IT'S too thick!"

Thus Edward Hansom of the Rookwood Fifth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth, though seldom in agreement on any point with Hansom of the Fifth, agreed that it was too "thick."

So did most of the fellows who were gathered before the school notice-board, looking at a paper newly posted there.

The notice was written in Dr. Chisholm's hand, and it was signed by the Head. It was brief, but to the point.

"Coombe Manor House and all the district on the north side of Coombe Lane are placed out of school bounds."

That was the new order from the headmaster of Rookwood School, which moved the ire of Hansom of the Fifth.

"It's too thick!" repeated Hansom, looking round.

"It jolly well is!" said Lunsden of

the Fifth. "Why, we were going over to the Manor House this very afternoon."

"That's why!" growled Hansom.

"We're not standing this!" said Talboys of the Fifth.

Hansom nodded emphatically.

"We're going, all the same!" he said. "Why, I've told Mr. Greely we're coming over to see him. What right has the Head to butt in like this?"

"Echo answers, what?" said Lumaden.

"Out of bounds!" said Hansom wrathfully. "Why, my pater's there with Mr. Greely. Can't a fellow go to see his own pater on a half-holiday?"

"It's a shame!"

"It's too thick!"

"We're not standin' it!"

It was quite a chorus from the crowd of Fifth Form fellows. Jimmy Silver and his friends of the Classical Fourth exchanged smiles. There had been a good deal of trouble in the Rookwood Fifth since the dismissal of their Form-master, Horace Greely. But though Hansom of the Fifth "talked big," and his faithful followers echoed his big talk, Jimmy Silver's impression was that Hansom & Co. would "stand it," "thick" as it was. Dr. Chisholm, the headmaster of Rookwood, really was not to be argued with.

But Edward Hansom was in a war-like mood, possibly due to the fact that his headmaster was nowhere near at hand.

He groped in his pocket and produced a pencil.

"I'm jolly well going to show the Beak what I think of that!" he declared. And across the Head's notice Hansom inscribed, in large, prominent letters, the disrespectful and expressive word:

"RATS!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Lovell of the Fourth. "You silly ass, Hansom!"

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!"

"I—I say, that will make the Beak frightfully wild," murmured Talboys.

"Let it!" said Hansom recklessly.

"Look out!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Here comes your Form-master."

"Who cares?" said Hansom, still reckless.

But some of the Fifth seemed to care, even if Edward Hansom did not. The new master of the Fifth Form, who had taken Mr. Greely's place, was coming along the corridor. The rather noisy crowd in front of the notice-board had evidently drawn his attention. Mr. Quail, the new master, was a slight, slim gentleman, a decided contrast to the portly, majestic Mr. Greely, who had lately held sway in the Rookwood Fifth. He lacked, too, Mr. Greely's determination and rather overwhelming personality. In Masters' Common-room he was generally quiet and a little nervous; in the Fifth Form-room he did not err on the side of severity. The Fifth had an idea that he was afraid of them, and undoubtedly he was anxious to avoid trouble. Still, a Form-master was a Form-master. Though unimpressive personally, he had all the weight of the Head's authority behind him.

Mr. Quail approached the group with a smile on his face that the Fifth knew well. It was a pleasant and rather uneasy smile, the smile of a man uncertain of his ground and wishful to placate.

Hansom wondered whether Mr. Quail had seen him scrawl across the Head's notice. If so, Mr. Quail was bound to take official note of the act. But Hansom was pretty certain that Mr. Quail would affect ignorance of what had been done if he possibly could.

"Hem!" said Mr. Quail. The new Form-master always began a remark with a nervous little cough.

"Hem!" came from among the Fifth Form fellows, in imitation of Mr. Quail, and there was a laugh.

Mr. Quail coloured a little.

In the days of Mr. Greely, a fellow who had ventured to mock his Form-master in that manner, would have been called to a prompt and strict

account. But the Fifth knew how far they could go with Mr. Quail.

"Hem!" he repeated, and went on hastily. "The Head has directed me to speak to you, Hansom, as head boy of the Fifth Form."

"Has he?" said Hansom.

"Yes, yes. You have seen the notice on the board, of course?"

"Oh, yes!"

Had Hansom of the Fifth answered "Oh, yes!" in that casual way to Mr. Greely there would have been something like an earthquake at Rookwood. But Mr. Quail did not seem to heed.

"Well, well," said the new master of the Fifth, "the Head wishes you to understand that this—this new order must be very strictly observed. Any boy disregarding it will find the consequences very unpleasant indeed. You, Hansom, as head of the Fifth, are expected to set an example of obedience to the rest of the Form."

"Am I?" yawned Hansom.

"Yes, yes. Certainly."

Mr. Quail blinked at Hansom, and blinked past him at the notice on the board, and gave a little start. It was clear to all present that he had seen that disrespectful word "RATS!" scrawled across the Head's paper.

There was a breathless hush. Even Hansom felt a twinge of uneasiness.

For a second the crowd of Rookwood fellows wondered what would happen.

Nothing happened.

Mr. Quail's eyes rested for a brief second on that disrespectful inscription and immediately left it.

He made no remark on the subject.

"Er—hem! You will remember what I have said, Hansom," said Mr. Quail awkwardly. "I am bound to see that the Head's orders are carried out. You will appreciate that, I am sure."

Hansom laughed.

It was a scornful laugh. Obviously the new Form-master was afraid of his Form. The Fifth had suspected it

before, and now they knew it. There were fellows in the Rookwood Fifth hefty enough to have picked up Mr. Quail and up-ended him along the corridor. A strong personality was required to deal with fellows like that. And the hapless Mr. Quail seemed to possess no personality at all.

"You see, sir," said Hansom, with deliberate impertinence, "it's rather awkward. Most of us were going over to the Manor House this afternoon to see our late Form-master—Mr. Greely."

"Yes, yes, I quite understand; but the Head's orders——"

It was the last sign of weakness. The man who should have used sharp commands was actually descending to argument. It was a striking change from Mr. Greely's methods. From the bottom of their hearts the Rookwood Fifth despised the man who did not know how to handle them.

"Never mind the Head's orders sir," said Hansom, ruthlessly interrupting Mr. Quail.

"Really, Hansom, really——"

"The Manor House has been turned into a school," went on Hansom. "My pater's behind it. He's backing up Mr. Greely. They've had an army of workmen there, and the place is ready to open. My father's there to-day. Mr. Greely has kindly invited me and my friends to see the place now it's in order. Naturally, we're going!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Fifth Form fellows.

"So that's how the matter stands, sir!" yawned Hansom.

"But the Head's orders——"

"That's what we think of the Head's orders," said Hansom, and he pointed to the inscription on the notice-paper. Mr. Quail crimsoned.

With his attention thus drawn to it he could not pretend ignorance of what had been done.

He stood in unhappy indecision. Jimmy Silver felt quite sorry for the poor man; the Fifth were grinning.

"Hansom!" exclaimed Mr. Quail at last. "This is—is—is disrespect to the Head!"

"Go hon!" said Hansom mockingly.

"What—what did you say, Hansom?"

"I said 'Go hon!'"

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

"Hansom, take five hundred lines!" exclaimed Mr. Quail.

"Any old thing!" jeered Hansom.

"Remain in the Form-room this afternoon, and write out your lines, and bring them to me before tea," said Mr. Quail, with an attempt at authority.

"I don't think!" said Hansom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd of Fifth Form fellows walked away, turning their backs unceremoniously on Mr. Quail, and laughing as they went.

Mr. Quail blinked after them over his spectacles.

Perhaps he realised that in taking on the Rookwood Fifth he had taken on an order too large for his capacity.

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled away. Looking back, from the distance, they observed Mr. Quail standing before the notice-board, busy with an india-rubber.

"My only hat!" murmured Lovell. "See his game?"

"Poor beast!" said Raby.

"His life won't be worth living in the Fifth after this," remarked Newcome.

Really, Mr. Quail's proceedings were amazing, considering that he was a Form-master. He was rubbing out Hansom's pencilled inscription on the Head's paper. Obviously, his desire was to keep that little matter from Dr. Chisholm's knowledge, and thus avoid being called on the carpet by that formidable old gentleman for his lack of firmness in dealing with his Form.

"Great Scott!" said Jimmy Silver, with a whistle. "That's the giddy limit! Why, they'll fairly scalp him after this! Poor man!"

And the Fistical Four sauntered out into the quadrangle for morning "Quarter," leaving the unhappy Mr. Quail still busy with his india-rubber.

CHAPTER 17.

Out of Bounds!

"TO go or not to go, that is the giddy question!" said Arthur Edward Lovell after dinner that day.

It required thinking out.

On the one hand there was the Head's prohibition; Mr. Greely's new school was distinctly placed out of bounds for all Rookwood fellows. The mere thought of Horace Greely seemed to annoy the headmaster of Rookwood.

That, as Arthur Edward Lovell observed, was all very well. But the Head couldn't expect all Rookwood to agree with him. If he expected that, he was booked for a disappointment, that was all.

"Only a few weeks ago the Head ficked me because he heard me refer to Greely as Don Pomposo," said Lovell.

"When father says turn, we all turn!" grinned Newcome. "You can call Greely anything you jolly well like now."

"Well, he's a priceless ass. I always said that," remarked Raby. "But I think the Head was rather hard on him, and I think he's got a right to start a school of his own if he chooses, and if Hansom's father cares to back him with his money. And I jolly well think we've a right to go and have a squint at the place if we like."

"We have," said Lovell emphatically.

Jimmy Silver looked dubious.

He agreed with his chums; but then, the Head was the Head, and school bounds were school bounds.

It might be high-handed, even tyrannical of Dr. Chisholm, to place the Manor House, and the whole region in which it stood, out of bounds. But he had done so, and there it was

"Hansom's going!" said Mornington, joining the Fistical Four in the discussion. "A lot of the Fifth are going over."

"It means trouble with the Head," said Jimmy Silver.

"Hansom doesn't seem to care."

"He will care when the chopper comes down," said the captain of the Fourth sagely. "The Fifth kicked up a shindy when Greely went, but they toed the line fast enough when the Beak took them in hand."

"Oh, blow the Fifth!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Look here, it's about us. Are we going?"

"I am," said Mornington. "I want to have a look at Greely's new show. They say the old Manor House has been knocked into wonderful shape—rooms turned into class-rooms, dormitories, Form-rooms. All the studies partitioned off and got up in style, electric light installed—everything ready down to the last button. It will be worth seeing, Jimmy."

Jimmy nodded.

He was rather curious to see Manor House School himself. All Rookwood, in fact, were very curious to see the place, which had been so swiftly metamorphosed from an old manor house into a modern school. The unbounded wealth and energy of Sir George Hansom had worked almost miracles.

"Hansom's father is a downy bird," went on Morny. "I dare say he will make a good thing out of it, you know. I've heard Hansom say that he's got on the right side of the scholastic agencies, and fixed up good notices in the Press, and so on. Hansom says that there's already a waiting list of fellows for Manor House School."

"Hansom talks out of his hat a good deal," remarked Lovell.

"My belief is that they've got a scheme for getting Rookwood fellows there," said Morny. "Old Hansom is bound to send young Cabby, for one. Hansom won't stay here, I should think,

with his father's giddy school only half a mile away. Other fellows may follow suit. I hear that the fees are going to be lower than at Rookwood, and everything else just as good, if not better."

"Oh, rats!"

"Bosh!"

"What about their giddy traditions? Old Hansom can't telephone to the stores for traditions along with the desks and the inkpots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say they can rub along without 'em," said Morny. "After all, Rookwood was a new school once upon a time."

"If Greely is going to set up to rival Rookwood, he's off-side and a silly ass!" said Jimmy Silver. "Otherwise, I wish him luck. Look here, I dare say we might chance it this afternoon. I want to see the place."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

"I fancy half Rookwood will be chancing it!" grinned Mornington. "I know I'm jolly well goin'."

And so that was settled.

But the Fourth Form fellows who had determined to visit the forbidden Manor House were cautious in their proceedings. Nobody wanted to bring down Dr. Chisholm's wrath upon his devoted head.

The Fistical Four strolled out of gates in the direction opposite from Coombe, and crossed several fields before they started for the Manor House. It was probable that masters and prefects had their eyes specially open that afternoon, and it was necessary to be careful.

Cricket practice on Little Side was quite abandoned that day. Fellows walked out in twos and threes.

Old Mack, the porter, cast suspicious eyes on most of them as they went. But, though he probably suspected their destination, he could not interfere. There was nothing to keep the Rookwooders within gates on a half-holiday, if they chose to go for a walk.

Jimmy Silver & Co. reached the Coombe road by a roundabout route, out of sight of Rookwood School.

The Manor House lay a good hundred yards back from the road, on the north side. Great bronze gates, standing wide open, looked towards the road. The building was half-hidden from view by the ancient oaks and beeches that adorned what had once been an extensive country estate. Once upon a time it had been inhabited by an old Hampshire family; but, like many old family mansions since the war, it had had to go into the market, and Sir George Hansom had been the buyer.

"I suppose we can walk in," said Lovell. "The jolly old gates are open. Why, there's Greely!"

"Good old Greely!"

Mr. Horace Greely, once Fifth Form-master at Rookwood, now headmaster of Manor House School—a school without pupils, so far—came into view.

He was walking, in his well-known majestic way, with his plump hands clasped behind him, across the green expanse that had been laid out as a cricket-field near the Manor House.

Even in the distance the juniors could see the pleased smile that illumined Horace Greely's plump features. Undoubtedly Horace Greely was feeling pleased with himself and things generally. His dismissal from Rookwood was turning out a good thing for him, owing to the munificence and enterprise of his friend and patron, Sir George.

"The old scout looks no end bucked!" grinned Raby.

"Let's go in."

"Let's!"

And the chums of the Fourth crossed the road, to head for the open gateway of the new school.

"Silver! Stop!"

"Eh—what?" Jimmy looked round hurriedly. "Oh, my hat! Bulkeley!"

"Sold!" murmured Newcome.

Bulkeley and Neville, two prefects of

the Rookwood Sixth, were pacing the road, like police-constables on duty. They had their official ash-plants under their arms, doubtless having foreseen that they would be required.

"You know this is out of bounds, Silver!" said Bulkeley.

"Ahem!"

"Look here, has the Head set you to watch this giddy road?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell indignantly.

"Exactly!" assented the captain of Rookwood.

"Well, I think that's a jolly rotten way for prefects to spend a half-holiday!" growled Lovell.

"Perhaps I agree," said Bulkeley cheerfully. "We're not keen on it, anyhow. But here we are! You four are out of bounds! Hands!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Now get back to Rookwood, and stay within gates for the afternoon," said Bulkeley. "Head's orders!"

"Oh, dear!"

Sorrowfully the heroes of the Fourth took their way back to the school. All their care and caution in approaching Mr. Greely's establishment had been wasted. They had not foreseen that Sixth Form prefects would be parading the Coombe road, on the lookout for breakers of bounds.

"It's too thick!" growled Lovell. "Too jolly thick altogether. Rookwood won't stand this, you fellows!"

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"Looks to me as if Rookwood will have to," he said.

"Hallo! Here's Morny."

Mornington, and several other Fourth Formers came in sight. Jimmy Silver waved to them to stop.

"What's the trouble?" asked Mornington.

"The jolly old road's watched!" groaned Raby. "Two beastly prefects, with beastly canes! Ow!"

"Oh, gad! What a swindle!"

"I say, lots of the Fifth have started," said Putty of the Fourth.

"Do you think they'll turn back for prefects?"

"I wonder!" said Jimmy.

"I fancy there's going to be some fun," said Morny. "I'm goin' to watch for it. Keep on the safe side of the road and watch—what?"

"Good egg!"

And on the side of the Coombe road that was within school bounds there was soon a numerous congregation of Rookwood Juniors, watching with keen interest for the arrival of Hansom & Co. of the Fifth. And there was a thrill of excitement when Putty, from the branches of a tree, sighted the Fifth, and gave the warning:

"Here they come!"

CHAPTER 18.

Mr. Greely's Guests

EDWARD HANSOM, captain of the Rookwood Fifth, walked along the Coombe Road at his ease. He had taken no precautions in the matter like the juniors. From the gates of Rookwood he had started directly for Manor House School, and after him went a good portion of the Fifth Form. Fifteen or sixteen fellows, at least, came trooping up the road towards Mr. Greely's school—in full sight of Jimmy Silver & Co. lounging among the trees on the south side—in full sight of Bulkeley and Neville, parading their beat on the north side.

Hansom & Co. observed the two prefects. Some of the Fifth exchanged rather dubious glances.

Hansom did not doubt or hesitate. He strode right on, and his followers went with him.

The Rookwood Fifth rather ridiculed themselves on being unawed by Sixth Form prefects. They were not Lower School fellows, mere juniors, to be awed by a Sixth Form frown.

Still, the prefects represented the Head, and the Head was a hard nut to

crack. Some of the party, on seeing Bulkeley and Neville, rather wished that they hadn't come. But there was no retreat. Hansom, to judge by his looks, feared no foe, and where he led his comrades were ready to follow.

Right towards the open gates of Manor House School marched the Fifth, and Bulkeley and Neville closed up in their way.

"Stop!" rapped out Bulkeley.

The Fifth stopped.

"Anything worrying you, Bulkeley?" asked Hansom politely.

"You're out of bounds here, Hansom," said the captain of Rookwood curtly.

"Really? Are you going to tell me to bend over?" inquired Hansom, with pleasant sarcasm.

There was a laugh from his followers. Bulkeley shook his head.

"No. Head's orders are to cane and send back any juniors who come this way, and to take the names of any seniors and report them."

"Well, we want to oblige you, old man, we're so fond of our prefects," said Hansom. "We'll hold on a minute or two while you take our names."

"Certainly," said Lumsden.

"Go ahead with the giddy list!" grinned Lucas.

"Anybody got a pencil to lend Bulkeley?" asked Hansom, still pleasantly sarcastic. "Got enough paper about you to take down all the names, Bulkeley? I'd have brought some impot paper if I'd known."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley made no reply. He was taking down the names of the crowd of Fifth-Formers in his pocket-book.

"Finished?" asked Talboys, as Bulkeley closed the book.

"Yes; you can get back now."

"Get back!" repeated Hansom.

"We're not gettin' back, old bean. We're goin' on."

"Yes, rather!" said Lumsden, with emphasis.

"You're not!" said Bulkeley tersely.

"You're going back. Head's orders are to take your names and send you back."

"You've taken our names," grinned Hansom. "Sendin' us back is a different sort of proposition. How are you goin' to do it, if a Fifth Form chap may put a respectful question to a Sixth Form man?"

Bulkeley raised his hand.

"Get back!" he said.

"Rats!"

"You've got to go, Hansom! I shall shift you if you don't!" said the captain of Rookwood quietly. "I'm bound to do my duty and carry out the Head's orders, as you know jolly well!"

"Carry 'em out!" said Hansom carelessly. "I fancy the job's rather above your weight. But go ahead!"

Hansom walked on.

Bulkeley of the Sixth did not hesitate for a moment. He grasped Hansom by the collar and swung him back across the road. The captain of the Fifth staggered away and collapsed in the dust, with a yell.

"My hat!" Edward Hansom scrambled up, red with rage. "My only hat! I'll jolly well lick you for that, Bulkeley, prefect or no prefect!"

"Stand back!"

"Rats!"

Hansom rushed on valorously. Bulkeley dropped his ashplant and put up his hands and met the captain of the Fifth with left and right. Edward Hansom was a hefty fellow and a plucky one, but he was no match for the captain of the school. It would have fared ill with him had he been left to deal with George Bulkeley alone.

But the Fifth-Formers were not likely to stand idly by while their leader was licked. They rushed on in a mob.

"Collar 'em!" roared Lumsden.

"Stand back, you duffers!" shouted Neville of the Sixth.

Neville was on the ground the next moment, overwhelmed by the rush of the Fifth. Bulkeley, fighting gallantly, was overborne, and went sprawling across Neville.

"Down with the Sixth!" yelled Lucas.

"What price prefects now!" hooted Brown major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leave 'em there!" chuckled Hansom. "Come on, you fellows!"

The Fifth-Formers walked on, chuckling, leaving the two prefects sprawling dizzily in the dust.

Bulkeley sat up. Neville followed his example. Both of them were dazed and breathless. They stared after Hansom & Co., walking in merrily at the gateway of the new school. They saw the lodge-keeper step out to speak to the new arrivals, and then wave them on respectfully. Hansom & Co. marched on towards the Manor House School.

"Are—are—are we going after them?" asked Neville, gasping.

George Bulkeley rubbed his nose. It was hurt.

"Blessed if I know!" he confessed.

The two prefects staggered up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley looked round quickly. In a meadow at a short distance across the road he sighted a crowd of the Fourth, the Third, and the Shell—quite a representative swarm of the Lower School of Rookwood.

Valentine Mornington waved his hand to the captain of the school. Every junior there was grinning, evidently greatly entertained by the ignominious downfall of the great men of the Sixth.

"The young sweeps!" muttered Neville.

Bulkeley turned his back on the chuckling crowd of juniors and stared in at the gates of Manor House School.

Hansom & Co. had arrived at the great door of the new School House, where, on the wide granite step, Mr. Greely stood, a majestic figure.

Horace Greely was greeting his visitors. Obviously, he was glad to see the Rookwood Fifth. He shook hands with the whole crowd one after another, beginning with Hansom. Then he appeared to be making a little speech—

the echo of his deep, fruity voice reached as far as the road.

"This won't do," said Bulkeley at last. "We've got the Head's orders. And I suppose Mr. Greely can't very well back up those silly asses in cheeking their headmaster."

"Are we going after them, then?"

"Yes."

"Oh, all right!" said Neville rather dubiously. And the two dusty prefects tramped in at the gates of the new school and tramped on doggedly towards the House.

Mr. Greely observed them when they were close at hand, and his fruity voice ceased. He blinked at them.

Hansom & Co. exchanged glances. They had dealt with the prefects once, and were ready to deal with them again.

"Ah! Bulkeley! Neville!" said Horace Greely. "I am glad to see you here—I am glad to see you!"

"Thank you, sir," said Bulkeley, rather taken aback. "But——"

"You are very welcome!" said Mr. Greely, with a hospitable wave of a large hand. "All Rookwood boys are welcome to visit my establishment. I trust that many boys who belong to Rookwood at present will shortly elong to Manor House School. Parents are being approached——"

"Oh!" murmured Bulkeley.

"The curriculum," said Mr. Greely, "will be the same as at Rookwood, with improvements—with several improvements. My own ideas will be carried out. At Rookwood there was, perhaps, little opportunity for improvement; here I have a free hand. You especially, Bulkeley, are welcome here. If your parents should decide to send you to me you would undoubtedly hold your present position as captain of the school—captain of Manor House School. I shall——"

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Bulkeley. "But I'm not thinking of anything of the kind, sir; I've come here——"

"You have come to view my estab-

lishment," said Mr. Greely, waving his large hand again. "Quite so! Enter!"

"I mean——"

"Sir George Hansom is momentarily absent. I expect his return. Many things have been done; many remain to be done. Sir George is a very busy gentleman. But I am here to welcome you; to explain all that you desire to know. Enter!"

Mr. Greely's hospitality was effusive and almost overwhelming. And obviously he was under a misapprehension as to the purport of Bulkeley's call.

"The fact is, sir——" said Bulkeley

"Enter!" boomed Mr. Greely. "Refreshments have been prepared for all visitors. Enter!"

"Oh, good!" murmured Lumsden.

"The fact is, sir, we—we're not exactly visiting!" gasped Bulkeley. "The Head has placed this show out of bounds for Rookwood, sir!"

"Indeed! Another example of Dr. Chisholm's tyrannical methods!" snorted Mr. Greely.

"Of course, I can't discuss that, sir," said the captain of Rookwood. "I'm ordered to see that Rookwood fellows don't come here."

"Absurd!"

"These Fifth Form chaps have to go back at once——"

"Nonsense!"

"I don't think!" grinned Hansom.

"I'm sure, sir, you will not encourage them in disregarding their headmaster's orders," urged Bulkeley.

"With Rookwood I have now nothing to do," said Mr. Greely. "If Dr. Chisholm's tyrannical methods should drive boys away from his school, if his boys should be driven to ask their parents to transfer them to Manor House School, Dr. Chisholm must take the consequences."

"Hear, hear!" said Hansom.

"Well, they've got to go, sir," said Bulkeley, much perplexed. "Will you order them to return to Rookwood, sir?"

"Certainly not!" boomed Mr. Greely.

"Bulkeley, you are welcome here as a

guest. You are not welcome as a representative of Dr. Chisholm, interfering with my other guests."

"But, sir——"

"Do you remain here as a guest, Bulkeley?"

"I can't, sir! You see——"

"Then take your departure!" boomed Mr. Greely. "Take your departure, Bulkeley! If you are not here as a guest you are here as a trespasser. I command you to depart!"

"These chaps, sir——"

"Enough!"

"Kick 'em out!" roared Lucas.

There was a hostile movement from the Fifth-Formers. Mr. Greely intervened hastily.

"Hold! Bulkeley, Neville, I advise you to go at once peaceably."

"Not without those silly asses, sir," said Bulkeley. "We're bound——"

"Then you will be removed! Hansom, and the others, kindly do not interfere. These trespassers will be removed."

"Oh, good!" chuckled Hansom.

Bulkeley and Neville stood undecided and dismayed. Certainly, they could not, on their own, shepherd that crowd of Fifth-Formers back to Rookwood. But the Head's orders were explicit. While they debated what they should do, in the peculiar circumstances, Mr. Greely called and beckoned, and the lodge-keeper came up with two gardeners and a chauffeur.

"Remove those two boys!" said Mr. Greely, with dignity.

"Look here——" exclaimed Neville.

"You had better go!" said Mr. Greely.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth, as Bulkeley and Neville were hustled away towards the gates.

"Enter, my young friends!" said Mr. Greely, as he disappeared into the House with the crowd of Fifth Formers.

Bulkeley and Neville, hustled and pushed towards the gates, were soon fighting with the hustlers and pushers. But the odds were against them, and they went out of the gateway flying.

They sprawled once more in the dust of the Coombe road, and the four men grinned at them from the gateway, as well as a mob of Rookwood juniors from the meadow across the road.

The two prefects picked themselves up breathlessly. The task the Head had set them was obviously beyond their powers; and they did the only wise thing they could do—they turned their backs on Manor House School, and walked away to Rookwood.

"Going—going—gone!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley and Neville disappeared.

Then Jimmy Silver & Co. came out into the road in a chuckling swarm. The coast was clear now.

"We're jolly well going in to see Greely!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "What?"

"What-ho!" said Morny.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

And the Rookwood fellows swarmed in.

Mr. Greely had almost innumerable guests that afternoon at his new school. Refreshments had been provided, as he had stated; and his numerous guests did full justice to the refreshments. The Rookwooders roamed over the new school, and explored class-rooms and studies, and generally had quite an entertaining afternoon.

It was not till they were on the way back to Rookwood, in the dusk, that Arthur Edward Lovell remarked:

"What will the Head say?"

"I wonder!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

And all the Rookwooders wondered. They realised—a little late—that after the feast came the reckoning.

CHAPTER 18.

Brought to Book!

"HEAD'S taking Roll!"

"Oh!"

"More trouble!" sighed Jimmy Silver.

"Well, we've asked for it!" grinned Mornington. "But, after all, even the

giddy Beak can't whack all Rookwood. And I fancy more than half the school went over to see Greely to-day."

"The fact is, I'm getting rather fed-up with the Head!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell. "It's too thick, you know. I've a jolly good mind to ask my pater to send me to Greely."

"Rot!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwood fellows crowded into Hall, many of them feeling uneasy. Roll was taken in Big Hall at Rookwood, generally by a master, sometimes by a prefect. Only on very important occasions did the headmaster himself call over the names. Evidently this was an important occasion.

It was, in fact, clear that the Head knew all about the exodus from Rookwood to Manor House School that afternoon, and that the vials of his wrath were to be poured on the offenders.

All eyes turned on the Head; his face was calm, grave, and severe. He called the names sharply, and every fellow was in a hurry to jerk out "adsum" in response. Every fellow was anxious to avoid, if he could, catching the headmaster's eye.

Roll was finished; but the usual signal to dismiss was not given. There was something more to come.

"Now for the fireworks!" murmured Mornington. "See the gleam in the old scout's eye!"

Some of the Fourth chuckled rather nervously.

"Silence!" rapped out Bulkeley.

There was a hush.

The Head was about to speak. His deep voice, not loud, but clear, rolled through Big Hall.

"It has come to my knowledge that a number of Rookwood boys, disregarding my special order, have gone out of school bounds this afternoon. All boys who have been out of school bounds will remain in Hall. The others are dismissed."

There was an uneasy stirring among the Rookwooders.

Certainly, more than half the school

had been out of bounds, since the Manor House had been placed outside the limit. The drawing-in of bounds had been generally regarded as a high-handed act on the part of the headmaster, and fellows who were usually law-abiding had let themselves go on this occasion. The Fifth Form had transgressed, almost to a man, and at least half of every other Form had given Mr. Greely's new "show" a look-in. If the Head was going to deal with all the offenders, he was likely to have his hands full.

Those who had not offended quietly left Hall. They were followed by some of the offenders, who hoped that their transgression had not been observed or reported.

But most of the offenders stood fast, as ordered. Hansom & Co. stood in their places; Jimmy Silver and his comrades of the Fourth did not move. Carthew of the Sixth stood by the big door, scanning the fellows as they went out. Jimmy Silver, glancing at him, guessed that the bully of the Sixth had been on the watch that afternoon in the vicinity of the Manor House, taking notes.

"Muffin! Jones minor! Stop!" rapped out Carthew.

Jones minor sneaked back to his place, crestfallen.

"Get back, Muffin," said Carthew, with a sour smile. "You were there."

"I—I wasn't exactly there, Carthew," mumbled Tubby Muffin. "I may have just looked in——"

"Go to your place!"

Tubby Muffin rolled back dolorously to the ranks of the Fourth.

"Higgs! Smythe! Selwyn! Snooks!"

Carthew rapped out the names.

Obviously, he had been on the watch, and made a very complete list of the Rookwood fellows who had gone into the Manor House.

The hapless offenders who had hoped to escape undetected had to return to their places.

The Head waited in grim silence.

Less than a third of the school left.



Mornington looked down on the enraged headmaster of Manor House. "You were no great shakes as a Form-master at Rookwood," he said cheerily; "and as a headmaster here, old bean, you cut no ice whatever!" "Why, you—you young rascal!" gasped Mr. Greely. "Come down at once, and I will flog you!" "Rats!"

Hall. The rest remained, and the big door closed again.

Dr. Chisholm glanced over the assembly. Probably he was surprised by the number of the offenders.

His deep voice was heard again.

"Am I to understand that all the boys present have defied my strict order and gone out of school bounds this afternoon?"

There was no reply; but silence gave consent. Apparently the Head was to understand just that!

"I am surprised at this!" said the Head. "I am shocked, and pained. I had never dreamed that there would, or could, be rebelliousness to this extent in the school of which I have been so long headmaster."

Silence.

Nobody felt disposed to stand forward and explain to the Head that his latest order had been generally regarded as "too thick"; that he had, as Morny expressed it, gone over the odds.

Dr. Chisholm was not a gentleman to be argued with.

"Every boy who has disobeyed my commands will be adequately punished," said the Head, in a deep voice. "But in an act of rebellion to this unheard-of extent there must have been a ringleader. I call on that ringleader to stand forth."

Hansom of the Fifth stirred in his place and breathed hard. So far as the Fifth, at least, were concerned, Hansom undoubtedly was the ringleader. And certainly, but for the Fifth having driven off the prefects, the juniors would never have got into Manor House School that day. The fags' would never have ventured to tackle the Sixth Form prefects, howsoever much inclined to do so.

So it was upon Edward Hansom's shoulders that the responsibility rested—a rather heavier responsibility than he had anticipated.

Under the glinting eyes of the Head, Hansom of the Fifth did not seem to be in such a fighting mood as when he had been dealing with the prefects.

He stirred and shifted uneasily, and kept his eyes on the floor.

There was a long, long pause. Many fellows looked at Hansom, but he did not look at them. The old oak floor seemed to interest him at present; at all events, he kept his gaze fixed upon it.

"I repeat," said Dr. Chisholm, "that I call upon the ringleader to stand forth. Some boy of evil influence has led the others from their duty and inspired them with the spirit of disobedience and disrespect for proper authority. Of that boy I shall make an example. He will be expelled from the school."

"Oh!"

It was a breathless exclamation.

Hansom turned quite pale.

The "chopper" was coming down with a vengeance now!

"Every boy who transgressed school bounds this afternoon will be caned by his Form-master," said Dr. Chisholm. "The ringleader I shall expel from the school. I call upon him once more to stand forth!"

Nobody stood forth, and there was another long and terrible pause. Edward Hansom licked his dry lips.

Then the Head rapped out his name:

"Hansom!"

The captain of the Fifth started almost convulsively.

"Hansom!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the Fifth Former.

"Stand forward!"

Hansom of the Fifth limped forward, his pale face flushing crimson under the sea of eyes.

Dr. Chisholm fixed a steely glance upon him.

"Hansom, I have every reason to suppose that you were the ringleader of this outbreak of rebellion in the school. Did you go outside school bounds this afternoon?"

"The—the new bounds, sir——" faltered Hansom.

"Did you visit the Manor House?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Did you use force against the prefects, whom I directed to turn back any Rookwood boys who were going out of bounds?"

Hansom gasped.

"Yes."

"Do you deny that you were the leader?"

Hansom set his lips. He was "for it"; there was no doubt about that. But he was not likely to attempt to save himself by denying what every fellow in Big Hall knew to be the fact.

"No!" he snapped.

"Very well," said the Head. "You will leave Rookwood——"

Before the Head could proceed further there was an interruption. The big oak door swung open to admit a newcomer.

Every fellow looked round.

"Hansom's pater!" whispered Lovell.

"Phew!"

The Head turned a freezing stare on the gentleman who had entered. Hansom stared at him blankly. There was a hush as the tall baronet walked coolly up the hall.

CHAPTER 20.

Exit Hansom!

SIR GEORGE HANSOM bowed to the Head.

Dr. Chisholm made the slightest inclination in response.

The Rookwooders stared on breathlessly. Sir George gave his son a cheery nod, which, however, did not seem to cheer Hansom very much. He wondered whether his father knew he was "sacked."

"Pray excuse my interrupting you, sir!" said the tall baronet breezily. "I called, Dr. Chisholm, and was told——"

"It is not usual, sir, for a visitor to interrupt proceedings here, Sir George!" said the Head freely. "I am honoured by your visit; but I must request you to wait elsewhere until I am at leisure."

"Quite so!" said the baronet, unmoved. "In ordinary circumstances I should naturally do so. In the present circumstances I am bound to speak to you without delay. I have lately returned to Manor House School from London, and was informed by Mr. Greely——"

"Really, sir——"

"Informed by Mr. Greely that a number of Rookwood boys, including my son, has visited him this afternoon. I therefore——"

"With Mr. Greely and his so-called school I have nothing to do!" said the headmaster of Rookwood icily. "I cannot discuss the matter—above all, not here and now! I must request you——"

"Allow me, Dr. Chisholm!" interrupted Sir George coolly. "This matter will not wait! Mr. Greely's impression was that you would inflict punishment upon the boys who visited his school——"

"That impression was a correct one, sir!" said the Head. "Every boy who has broken school bounds this afternoon will be severely punished."

"I gathered as much, also, from the talk I have heard among the boys outside," said Sir George. "In this punishment, I take it that my son is included."

"Quite so."

"That was my impression, and is my reason for interrupting you," said the baronet. "Now, sir, Mr. Greely is my old friend, and was my tutor in my Oxford days, and I have a great respect for him. I regard his dismissal from Rookwood as an act of hasty injustice——"

"Sir!"

"I am therefore backing him, with every means in my power, in his new enterprise," said Sir George calmly. "I hesitated to take my son away from Rookwood, though it was my desire to place him with my old friend Mr. Greely. But I am bound to say, sir, that if my son is not allowed free access to the Manor House, and the im-

proving and beneficial acquaintance of his old Form-master, I shall remove him from Rookwood."

"Sir!" gasped the Head.

"And I request you, sir, not to punish him for his visit to Mr. Greely this afternoon, a visit that has my whole-hearted approval."

Dr. Chisholm seemed to breathe with difficulty.

Thirty years before Sir George had been a Rookwood fellow himself. But for the lapse of those thirty years, undoubtedly Sir George would have been booked for a Head's flogging.

"You—you request——" stuttered the Head.

"Exactly, sir."

"I—I——" the Head gasped.

"Any punishment in this case, sir, I should regard as an act of injustice," said Sir George Hansom. "I should regard it as a reason for removing my son from this school, which I have, so far, hesitated to do!"

There was a brief pause. Thunder gathered on the Head's brow. Hansom of the Fifth stood at ease now. The Head's thunders no longer had any terrors for him. He even winked at Lumsden in the ranks of the Fifth.

The unexpected arrival and support of his pater bucked Edward Hansom tremendously. He was immensely proud of the tall, cool gentleman who faced the headmaster of Rookwood with matter-of-fact calmness, bearding the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall, so to speak, without turning a hair.

"Sir!" said the Head at last. "This intervention—this unheard-of interference—this insolence! Sir, do you imagine for one moment that I shall endure dictation! Your son has disobeyed me! He has been the ring-leader in what amounts to a rebellion! For that offence I have expelled him from Rookwood!"

"Stuff!" said Sir George.

"What—what did you say?"

"Stuff!"

The Head gasped.

"I have expelled this boy! I was pronouncing sentence upon him when you forced your way into this hall. Hansom of the Fifth Form leaves Rookwood School to-morrow morning——"

"My son leaves Rookwood, not to-morrow morning, but this evening!" retorted Sir George. "Edward!"

"Yes, dad," murmured Hansom.

"Go and pack your things at once!"

"Yes, rather!"

"My car is waiting," said Sir George. "You will leave Rookwood with me, Edward. I shall take you to Manor House School. You will be placed with Mr. Greely. I hope my example will be followed by other parents of Rookwood boys! Lose no time!"

"What-ho!" grinned Hansom.

He walked cheerily down the hall, nodding to the Fifth Form fellows as he passed.

"You fellows write home and get your people to send you along after me!" he called out.

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

Hansom of the Fifth walked out of Hall. The Fifth stood silent. They were still in the hands of Dr. Chisholm, and they did not venture to make a sign.

"Now, sir," said Dr. Chisholm, fixing his glinting eyes on Sir George Hansom. "Now, sir, your son is gone—expelled from Rookwood——"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Sir George. "My son is taken away from Rookwood—taken away by me, because I am not satisfied with Rookwood and not satisfied with the headmaster!"

"I will not bandy words with you, sir!" gasped the Head. "I request you to take your son and yourself immediately away from the school!"

"That I shall proceed to do at once!" said the baronet. "My business here is finished! Good-evening, Dr. Chisholm!"

And the tall baronet walked down Big Hall and the oaken doors closed behind him.

In the breathless silence that followed the Head gave the signal to dismiss. The Rookwooders poured out of hall.

"Well, this beats it!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a deep breath. "Who'd have thought it?"

"What a giddy circus!" grinned Mornington.

"Let's see old Hansom off!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"

Most of Rookwood gathered to see Hansom of the Fifth off. Sir George's big car stood on the drive, and Edward Hansom's possessions were already being stacked in it. The Fifth Form turned up to the last man to say good-bye to Hansom. For a fellow who had been "sacked," Hansom of the Fifth was looking remarkably cheerful. He stepped into the car with his father and waved his hand to the Rookwood crowd.

"Good-bye, you fellows! See you again soon!" he called out.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good old Hansom!"

"Bravo, Cabby!"

The car rolled away amid a roar of cheering from the Fifth. Dr. Chisholm, in his study, heard that roar; he was intended to hear it, and he did. The car rolled away, and the gates of Rookwood closed behind Hansom of the Fifth and his father.

"Well, Hansom's gone!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "But we're here—and to-morrow morning there's whackings all round!"

"It's getting too thick!" said Lovell darkly. "The Head had better jolly well mind his p's and q's, I can jolly well tell him!"

"There'll be trouble!" said Mornington.

The Head, having expelled the ring-leader and sentenced the mass of the offenders to condign punishment, had the impression that the trouble was over, but he had that impression all to himself.

CHAPTER XI.

The Fifth Mean Business!

"NO jolly fear!"

Lumsden of the Fifth was the speaker.

In the Fifth Form Room at Rookwood that morning there was excitement—more than in the other rooms.

The Fifth, in fact, were on the verge of mutiny.

The Fifth were seniors, and, as a rule, not to be caned. Only on special occasions, and by the headmaster himself, was a Fifth Former subjected to the unpleasant process of "bending over."

Now the whole Form was to be caned by their new Form-master, Mr. Quail. No doubt the Head disliked the idea of conducting the execution personally. Indeed, one old gentleman, howsoever fit, could scarcely have put in all the caning that was to take place that morning at Rookwood. So the punishments were left to the Form-masters.

And the verdict in the Fifth, voiced by Lumsden, was:

"No jolly fear!"

Even if the Head himself had undertaken the task there must have been some trouble in the Fifth Form Room.

As for Mr. Quail, the new Form-master, the Fifth despised him to a man.

He was an uncertain and rather nervous gentleman, who might have been quite a successful master in the Second Form, but was quite unable to deal with the unruly spirits of the Fifth.

He was, as a matter of fact, afraid of his Form, an unusual but by no means unknown state of affairs in a Public school. Only, as a rule, a Form-master knew how to conceal any inward misgivings of trepidations, and Mr. Quail did not.

Between the Head, who expected him to keep the Fifth in order as Mr. Greely in his time had kept it, and the Fifth, who were resolved not to be kept in order by their new master, Mr. Quail

was in a decidedly unpleasant position—between the devil and the deep sea, so to speak.

His desire was to lead a quiet and peaceful life, a desire that was not likely to be gratified at Rookwood in the present circumstances.

He had a pathetic wish to be popular in his Form, a wish well known to the Fifth and which they repaid with ruthless contempt. A strong man they could have respected, if not liked; a feeble man they despised from the bottom of their hearts.

On one side of the hapless Mr. Quail was the Head, lofty and unbending; on the other side the Fifth, unruly, scornful, mutinous.

Between the Scylla of the Head and the Charybdis of the Fifth Form it was very probable that Mr. Quail would come to shipwreck.

Morning quarter was passed by the Fifth in loud discussion in their Form-room, and their voices could be heard far along the corridor.

At third lesson the execution was to make them all bend over one after another. They, the Fifth, a senior Form, had to go through it like fags, and the verdict of the Fifth was "No fear!" If Mr. Quail thought that he was going to carry out that programme, as Talboys remarked with great wit, it was Mr. Quail who would have to be carried out.

Had Hansom of the Fifth still been there, it is likely that the Form would have taken some drastic step; but they missed their reckless leader, and Lumsden did not fill the place as Hansom had filled it. But the Fifth were ripe for mutiny.

The bell had rung for third lesson now, and the other Forms were going in. Soon there would be whacking of canes in the Second, the Third, the Fourth, and the Shell.

But Mr. Quail seemed in no hurry to come to the Fifth Form Room.

Doubtless he shrank from the task before him.

"He's not coming!" said Lucas of the Fifth. "He don't dare to come here and bring a cane with him."

"Let him, that's all!" said Lumsden.

"Canin' us!" said Talboys. "Us, you know! Why, we wouldn't let the Head himself!"

"But he did, the other day," said Jobson.

"Oh, shut up, Jobson!"

"Well, he did, you know——"

"Buzz something at him, for goodness' sake!" said Lumsden. And two or three inkpots were promptly "buzzed" at Jobson, who thereupon retired into a corner and made no more unwelcome remarks.

"Hallo, here he comes!" exclaimed Lumsden, looking out into the corridor again.

It was Mr. Quail at last, ten minutes late for his class.

Grinning faces looked out at him as he came along to the Fifth Form Room—a slight, obviously uneasy gentleman with a cane under his arm.

"He's got the cane!" ejaculated Brown major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Little ass!" said Lumsden.

Mr. Quail came into the Form-room. He blinked at the Fifth over his spectacles, and smiled uneasily. Never had any gentleman been set a more unwelcome task than Mr. Quail that morning. He felt a good deal like Daniel in the lion's den, only more so.

He coughed.

"Well, my boys——" he began.

"You're late, sir!" said Lumsden, with a wink at his comrades.

"Dear me! Am I late, Lumsden?" said Mr. Quail. "Dear me! I am very sorry I am late, Lumsden."

"Our last Form-master never kept us waitin', sir!" said Lumsden.

"Indeed! Indeed, Lumsden!"

"He never brought a cane into the Form-room, either, sir," said Lumsden. "You see, sir, the Fifth are never caned. You being new here, sir, I dare say you'd like to be told anything you

don't happen to know about Rookwood customs. Seniors are never caned, and we look upon a cane in this room as an insult to the Fifth, sir."

"H'm! I shall now carry out the Head's instructions," said Mr. Quail. "Here is a chair, Lumsden; I shall begin with you."

"Will you?" grinned Lumsden.

"Bend over that chair!"

"I don't think!"

"You hear me, Lumsden?"

"Oh, quite!" yawned Lumsden.

"I trust, Lumsden, that you do not intend to disobey a direct order from your Form-master?"

"I've already explained to you, sir, that the Rookwood Fifth are not caned," said Lumsden.

"The Head's orders, Lumsden—the Head's orders."

Lumsden yawned.

Mr. Quail's eyes roamed over the defiant crowd. They rested on Jobson of the Fifth. Jobson, the "sap" and "swot," was not a fellow to enter into defiance of authority, if he could help it. Jobson had one object in life—to get into the Sixth, and bag a scholarship to the University. It was a laudable ambition, but did not receive much sympathy in the Fifth. It occurred to Mr. Quail that if one fellow gave in the rest would probably follow, as a flock of sheep will follow where one sheep is led or dragged. And he fixed his eyes on Jobson as commandingly as he could.

"Jobson! I shall—hem—begin with you! Bend over that chair, Jobson!"

Jobson glanced rather uneasily at his fellow Fifth Formers, and moved towards the chair.

Mr. Quail's weak face lighted up. There was one fellow, at least, who was prepared to obey his orders.

He intended to let Jobson off with the lightest of flicks, as an encouragement to the others. All he wanted was to be able to report to the Head that he had caned his Form as directed.

But the Fifth were not in a mood for

the slightest of flicks. Mr. Quail did not understand them in the least. They would rather have endured the soundest thrashing from a man they respected than the merest flick from a man they despised.

"Chuck it, Jobson!" said Lumsden menacingly.

"Silence, Lumsden!" exclaimed Mr. Quail.

Jobson hesitated.

While he hesitated, Lucas grabbed him by the collar, and two or three of the Fifth hacked his shins. There was a howl of anguish from the surrenderer, and he went sprawling along the Form-room floor.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quail.

"Are you goin' to bend over, Jobson?" grinned Lumsden, standing over the sprawling Jobson with both fists clenched.

"No!" gasped Jobson.

"That's better!"

Jobson crawled away.

"Lumsden, I order you to bend over that chair!" exclaimed Mr. Quail, stung into something like courage. "Now then! At once!"

"I'm not goin' to be caned!" yawned Lumsden.

"I command you——"

"Bow-wow!"

"What—what did you say, Lumsden?"

"I said bow-wow, sir! I'll say it again if you like! Bow-wow!"

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

"Do you wish to be reported to the Head, Lumsden?"

"Any old thing, sir."

"You—you impertinent young rascal—— Oh!" yelled Mr. Quail suddenly, as an inkpot flew through the air.

It impinged upon Mr. Quail's nose, and it was full of ink. The ink splashed over Mr. Quail's face and collar and gown.

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

"Good shot! Give him another!"

"Upon my word! I—I—I——" spluttered Mr. Quail.

A Greek lexicon whizzed across the Form-room and smote Mr. Quail with a mighty smite.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pelt him!" yelled Talboys. The Rookwood Fifth were quite out of hand now.

Mr. Quail had no strength of character, but he had a temper. Like most weak men, he could only act severely when he was in a rage. He was in a rage now, boiling with it. He gripped his cane and rushed at the Fifth, and Lumsden gave a fiendish yell as he caught the cane.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Mr. Quail was lashing out right and left.

The Fifth Formers scattered. They had looked on Mr. Quail as a sort of tame rabbit, to be baited and worried as much as they liked; and they had not expected the rabbit to be suddenly transformed into a tiger.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yarcooh!"

"Whoop!"

"Tackle him!" yelled Lumsden.

Whack, whack, whack!

Crash!

Mr. Quail's leg caught in a thrusting foot, and he came with a crash to the floor.

Before he could pick himself up he was pinned down by three or four of the Fifth.

Lumsden grabbed up the cane.

"Now, then—keep clear!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Whack!

It seemed like a horrid dream to Mr. Quail.

He was actually being whacked, in his own Form-room, with his own cane, by a member of his own Form!

The cane fairly rang on him in the hand of the enraged Lumsden.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him jip, the cheeky little beast!"

"Give him some more!"

"Oh! Help! Help!" shrieked Mr. Quail. "Help! I shall report this; you will be expelled—flogged— Bless my soul! Stop it! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Now ink him!" shouted Lumsden.

"Ow! Oh! Wow! Grooogh!"

Five or six inkpots were up-ended over Mr. Quail. He staggered to his feet, streaming.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Form-master's aspect made the Fifth yell. For a second or two he stood glaring at them, crimson, breathless, dusty, streaming with ink. Then he whisked out of the Form-room and vanished.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumsden of the Fifth flung the cane into the passage after the fleeing Form-master.

"Well, that does it!" he said.

"It does—it do!"

"I—I say, it will be the sack!" murmured Talboys, a little scared. "Whack-in' a Form-master—phew!"

"He asked for it."

"Yes, but——"

"The Head can't sack the lot of us!" said Lucas. "We're all in this! Let's get out."

The Fifth Form cleared out of the Form-room, still excited, but some of them feeling very uneasy. While the rest of Rookwood were still in class the Fifth marched out into the quad, where Dr. Chisholm, glancing from the Sixth Form windows, saw them, with amazement and wrath.

CHAPTER 22.

Red-Hot Rebellion!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. looked at one another in the Fourth Form Room during third lesson.

From the distance came the sound

of the uproar in the quarters of the Fifth, audible to all the Fourth, and probably to other Forms as well.

Evidently there were ructions in the Fifth that morning.

There had been no ructions in the Fourth. The Fourth had taken their canings meekly enough. Richard Dalton was not a man to be trifled with.

Mr. Quail was, plainly, another kind of man. The Fifth were more than trifling with him.

Fourth Form fellows had always been rather proud of their Form-master, whom they affectionately spoke of as "Dicky." But on this especial morning they were not pleased with him. Really, they would have preferred to deal with a master of the Quail brand, whom they could have hooted and cat-called, and at whom they could have "buzzed" inkpots and grammars and lexicons.

They envied the Fifth.

They knew that the Fifth were having a high old time, and they could guess easily enough that no punishment was being administered. Life in the Fourth seemed stale, flat and unprofitable in comparison.

They heard, at last, flying feet pass their Form-room door—the flying feet of an inky Form-master speeding for his life! Soon afterwards they heard the Fifth Form tramp by.

Mr. Dalton tried to keep the attention of his Form pinned to the subject in hand. But it was in vain. Lines fell in unusual plenty; the pointer came into use several times. But the Fourth were too excited to care for either line or pointer.

Richard Dalton was glad enough when the time came to dismiss his eager and excited class.

The Fourth poured out of their Form-room and crowded down the corridor with an excited buzz of voices.

"There they are!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell. "There's the giddy rebels. They've cut the lesson."

"I jolly well wish we had, too!" growled Mornington.

"Dicky isn't the man to stand it!" said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head. "What's the good of asking for trouble with Dicky? Besides, he's a good man, and we all like him."

"That's all very well," grunted Lovell. "But it's getting too thick for me, and I've a jolly good mind to write home about it."

"Oh, forget it!" said Jimmy.

"That's my game, anyhow," said Mornington. "I'm jolly well goin' over to the Manor House School, if I can fix it. I'm fed-up with the Head and his giddy whackings all round. He's takin' it out of us because Greely's got his goat—that's what it amounts to."

"Let's clear off there this afternoon, instead of going in to class!" suggested Lovell recklessly.

"Fathead!"

"Draw it mild," said Newcome.

"Let's see how the Fifth can get out of it," said Cyril Peele shrewdly. "They seemed to have scalped the man Quail; but they're up against the Head now. They were up against the Head when Hansom was here, and the old scout brought them to heel fast enough."

"So he will again," said Raby. "They've asked for more, and they'll get it."

Bulkeley of the Sixth came out of the House.

His face was very grave.

He walked across towards the Fifth Form fellows, who were standing in a group near the fountain, engaged in discussion.

"Bulkeley's chippin' in," said Morny. "I don't fancy they'll take much lip from Bulkeley, head prefect as he is. Let's watch."

Most of the juniors crowded after Bulkeley to hear what he had to say to the Rebels. Lumsden and his comrades eyed the captain of Rookwood

as he came up surlily and suspiciously. It was true that they were not in a mood to take any "lip" from the Sixth Form prefects. They were in a mood to defy the headmaster himself, for that matter.

Now that they had had time to get over the excitement, and to reflect a little on what they had done, they were not feeling very comfortable. "Whacking" a Form-master with his own cane was so very serious a thing that obviously it could not be passed over. Floggings, at least, would be handed out, and very probably the "sack" to two or three of the rebels; and the Fifth had resolved that they would not submit.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came up, affecting not to observe the surly looks of the Fifth Formers.

"Message from the Beak?" asked Lumsden, with a sneer.

"Yes. You're all to go back into your Form-room," said Bulkeley. "You're to wait there for the Head."

"I don't think!"

"Lumsden, old man," said the captain of Rookwood quietly, "let me advise you. You seem to have handled your Form-master, and the Head's naturally very ratty. But, if you're careful, you may all get through this without any sacking. You don't want to follow Hansom."

"Don't we?" said Lumsden. "I can tell you and the Head, too, that if Hansom doesn't come back to Rookwood, there will be a lot more trouble here. We're not having a pal turned out of the school for nothing. I can tell you. The Head's a jolly good deal too high and mighty, and you can tell him so from me."

"I'm not likely to give him that as a message," said Bulkeley, with a faint smile. "Let me tell him you're going back to the Form-room, there's a sensible chap."

"We're not."

"No fear."

"Your Form-master will come out and round you up if you don't," said Bulkeley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him!"

"He's welcome!"

The Fifth roared. Bulkeley of the Sixth turned and walked back to the House. Arthur Edward Lovell winked at his chums.

"Now look out for the fireworks," he said.

And the fireworks, as Arthur Edward called them, were not long in coming. Mr. Quail—no longer inky, but rather pale of countenance—stepped forth from the House and advanced towards the Fifth—evidently with stern orders from the headmaster to shepherd them back to their Form-room.

Jimmy Silver & Co. watched him with deep interest.

Lumsden & Co. watched him a good deal like bulldogs. Rookwood fellows of all Forms were crowding round now. The tug-of-war was coming between rebellion and authority, and there was not a fag of the Second Form who was not keenly interested in the result.

Mr. Quail came out of the House quite briskly. But his pace slackened as he walked across the quad towards the fountain.

By the time he was near the waiting Fifth his steps lagged so much that he was fairly crawling.

"Buck up, sir!" called out Snooks of the Second Form from the back of the crowd of onlookers, and there was a laugh, and the red came into Mr. Quail's pallid cheeks.

But he affected not to hear. So low had the hapless master fallen in the estimation of the school that even a fag could lift up the heel against him with impunity.

Mr. Quail arrived at the mountain at last. Lumsden of the Fifth, lounging against the great granite basin with his hands in his pockets, eyed him coolly and contemptuously.

"Hem!" That was poor Mr. Quail's usual beginning. "Hem!"

"Hem!" repeated a dozen of the Fifth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut it out, Quail!" called out Lucas. "We're not having any from you! Hook it while you're safe."

"That's right," drawled Lumsden. "Go while the going's good, sir."

"Lumsden! This language—to a Form-master——"

"Oh, rubbish!" said Lumsden.

"Some Form-master, what?" murmured Mornington, and the Fourth Form fellows chortled. They could not imagine Dicky Dalton cutting so sorry a figure in open quad under the eyes of all Rookwood.

"Hem! The Head will deal with you, Lumsden, and—and with you others!" gasped Mr. Quail. "You will now return to your Form-room."

"Rats!"

"I have orders to take you there at once!" exclaimed Mr. Quail. "Now, then, go—all of you—immediately!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Lumsden derisively. "Here, hook it, or it will be the worse for you! We're fed-up with you and the Head, too! Are you going?"

"What! What! No! Certainly not! I——"

"Rag him!"

"Duck him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush for Mr. Quail. In a moment he was struggling wildly in the grasp of half a dozen burly Fifth Form fellows. Still struggling, his arms and legs swaying wildly, he was swept into the air.

"Splash!"

"Oh, great Scott!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Quail plunged headlong into the great granite basin, and the water almost flowed over him. He scrambled up in the fountain, drenched, dripping, gasping for breath, dizzy and dazed.

"Oh! Oooogh! Grooogh! Gug-gug!"

The Fifth roared with laughter. Mr. Quail scrambled wildly out of the fountain and rolled, drenched, to the ground.

"Duck him again!" yelled Lucas.

"Collar him!"

"Give him another!"

Mr. Quail did not wait for another. He picked himself up and fled for the House. The crowd of Rookwooders, roaring with laughter, opened to give him room to pass, and he fled through them, squelching out water at every step.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him!" roared Lumsden.

Fear lent wings to the hapless Mr. Quail. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as he raced for the House, followed by shrieks of laughter. He reached the steps and went up them without a pause, leaping as if for his life, and rushed blindly into the House.

"Mr. Quail!"

It was the Head.

The Fifth Form-master staggered breathlessly against the door.

"Dr. Ohlsholm! I—I——" He broke off, panting under the cold, hard, steely stare of the headmaster of Rookwood.

"Mr. Quail! Is this how you maintain discipline? What does this mean, Mr. Quail?"

"I—I—I——" spluttered the hapless man.

"You have assumed a position, sir, that is beyond your powers," rapped out the Head. "You are not fit to be a Form-master at Rookwood, sir."

Even the worm will turn. The goaded Mr. Quail turned on the Head.

"I resign my position at Rookwood, sir! I refuse—yes, sir, I distinctly refuse—to be responsible for the Fifth Form one minute longer! I refuse——"

"Really, Mr. Quail——"

"I did not expect, sir, to be placed in charge of a mob of young ruffians,

“sir!” hooted Mr. Quail. “I resign, sir! I repeat that I resign! I will quit Rookwood, sir, as soon as you please! I shall be glad, sir, to go!”

“Very good,” said the Head quietly. “Obviously you are unsuitable for your post here. You will suit your own convenience in the matter, Mr. Quail. I shall now deal with the Fifth!”

Mr. Quail limped and squelched away, and the Head of Rookwood, with a grim brow, descended the steps into the quad to deal with the rebel Fifth.

CHAPTER 23.

Exodus!

“THE Head!”

It was a tense whisper among the fellows crowded in the quad. Lumsden and his comrades, chuckling over the ignominious flight of Mr. Quail, ceased suddenly to chuckle.

The most reckless spirit in the Fifth realised that the matter was awfully serious now that the headmaster himself was personally concerned in it.

The Head, tall, stately, impressive, advanced from the House, his grim glance fixed on the rebel Form.

The Fifth drew together.

“This is where they sing small!” Mornington remarked to the Fourth Form fellows, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

Jimmy Silver shook his head. More than once the personal authority of the Head had sufficed to quell insubordination in the Fifth. But matters had reached a more serious pass now. The rebels, in fact, had gone too far to retreat; and the expulsion of their leader, Hansom, had caused so deep a resentment that they had no inclination to retreat. The Head had not the slightest doubt that his mere presence would suffice to quell this riot. Jimmy Silver had very strong doubts.

Slow and stately, the Head drew nearer, with all eyes upon him. The

rebel Fifth drew together, and backed away towards the gates. Close by the gates old Mack the porter stood, staring on at the scene. Sergeant Kettle had come out of his little shop; even the gardener was staring over the fence of the Head's private garden, and a chauffeur's cap was peering round a corner. It seemed that almost every soul at Rookwood was intensely interested in what was going forward. Jimmy Silver even fancied that he could discern the faces of housemaids at the windows.

As the Head advanced, the Fifth Formers backed more and more in a rather disorderly array.

Not the wildest spirit in the Fifth dreamed for a moment of ducking the headmaster, as they had ducked the Form-master. No one dreamed of laying a finger on the sacred person of the Head. But, even while they backed away uneasily, dogged resistance was growing in the looks of the Fifth. The climax had been reached, and the magic of authority had lost its spell. The Head did not know it; but he was soon to know.

He raised his hand as the Fifth moved back.

“Stop!”

Lumsden and his comrades exchanged glances and drew to a halt. Doggedly they stood and faced the Head. Of all the Fifth, Jobson only was absent; the rest of the Form stood together as one man.

“Lumsden, and the rest, go into your Form-room at once!” said the Head in a low, but very distinct voice.

The Fifth did not stir.

“You hear me, Lumsden?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Obey me at once!”

Lumsden shifted uneasily. But he drew resolution from the dogged looks of his comrades. He remembered, Hansom, too. All the Fifth had sworn to stand by Hansom. It was now or never, neck or nothing; and Lumsden of the Fifth stood firm.

There was a dramatic pause. Dr. Chisholm broke the tense silence. Until he spoke a pin might have been heard to drop in the Rookwood quadrangle.

"Lumsden, am I to understand that you hesitate to obey my commands?"

Lumsden gasped.

"You see, sir——"

Dr. Chisholm pointed towards the House.

"Go to your Form-room this instant."

No movement from the rebel Fifth. They breathed hard, and stared at the headmaster.

"We want to know how we stand first, sir," said Lucas as Lumsden seemed rather tongue-tied under the steely stare of the Head.

"What! What do you mean, Lucas?"

"You've sent old Hansom away, sir——"

"I have expelled Hansom of the Fifth Form," said Dr. Chisholm icily. "I shall expel the ringleaders in this lawless outbreak as soon as I discover their identity. I shall administer a severe flogging, personally, to all the Fifth Form. Now go to your Form-room."

"No takers!" murmured Mornington to the Fourth, and some of the juniors chuckled breathlessly.

"So that's the programme, is it?" broke out Lumsden. "Well, sir, it's not good enough! We're going!"

"What?"

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted Lumsden. "Sacking and flogging aren't good enough. Come on, and let's go after Hansom."

"Yes, rather!"

"Bravo!"

With a shout the Fifth surged away towards the gates. Dr. Chisholm, taken by surprise, stared after them. Old Mack, standing in their way, stared at them, too, blankly. Lumsden caught the old fellow by the collar.

"Unlock the gates, Mack!"

"Ow! Can't, without 'Ead's orders, sir!" gasped the astonished Mack.

"Unlock the gates, you old donkey, or we'll bang your silly head on them!" snapped Lucas. "Now, then, sharp's the word!"

"Oh, sir! Ow! Leggo! Oh, crumbs! Oh, lor!" spluttered old Mack, as he was hustled away to the gates.

With an iron grip on his collar, old Mack hurriedly unlocked the gates. He had no mind to have his ancient head banged on the metal bars.

Three or four fellows grasped the gates and swung them wide open. Dr. Chisholm was striding after the Fifth now.

"Stop!" he thundered.

The rebels of Rookwood did not heed. They began to stream out at the school gates into the road.

That was the programme that the rebel Fifth had discussed, and agreed upon. If the Head did not come to terms, they were going to march out of Rookwood, march across to Manor House School, and take up their quarters there with Mr. Greely. So far, they were thinking of that programme as a temporary measure—to give the Head time to come to his senses, as Lumsden expressed it. If Mr. Greely could arrange the matter with their parents, it was probable that the temporary measure would become a permanent one.

Anyhow, they were not going to be flogged, their leaders were not going to be sacked, and they were not going to desert "old Hansom." On those points the rebel Fifth were absolutely determined. The Head had driven them a little too hard, and they had turned. To all the Rookwood Fifth, just then, Mr. Greely's new school seemed a happy refuge.

"They're goin'!" exclaimed Mornington.

"Stop!" thundered the Head.

The Fifth Formers did not stop. Dr. Chisholm strode after them to the

gates; he stood in the old gateway, his face pale with wrath, while the Fifth gathered in the road outside.

"Boys," he thundered, "I have ordered you to go to your Form-room! Will you obey my command? Enter the gates again at once!"

"Rats!" yelled two or three of the Fifth. Safe outside the school gates, they ventured to address the Head as they had never ventured before.

"What? What?"

"Bosh!" shouted Brown major.

"We'll come back when old Hansom does!" exclaimed Lumsden. "Do you want us to fetch him back, sir?"

"What? No; certainly not!"

"Then we're going."

"I command you——"

"Rats!"

The Fifth Form marched down the road. The Head stood gazing after them, dumbfounded. Never for a moment had he imagined that his authority would be disregarded; and now it had broken in his hands, like a rotten reed. The Rookwood Fifth were going—marching off in defiance under his eyes. It was too much.

Dr. Chisholm strode out into the road and went to Lumsden. He grasped the ringleader in the mutiny by the collar.

The next moment—no one knew exactly how it happened, but it did happen—the Head was sitting in the road.

He sat and gasped.

His dazed eyes, as he sat, blinked after the Fifth, streaming away down the road towards the Manor House School.

"Bless my soul!"

A strong hand helped Dr. Chisholm to his feet. It was Bulkeley of the Sixth who had come to his aid. Once on his feet, Dr. Chisholm shook the prefect's hand aside. His face was crimson; his eyes scintillated with wrath.

"Bulkeley," he panted, "follow those—those young rascals—follow them, and warn them, in my name, that if

they do not instantly return to Rookwood they will not be allowed to return—everyone of them is expelled!"

"But, sir——" stammered Bulkeley.

"Will you do as I tell you, Bulkeley?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Bulkeley, much against the grain, followed the Fifth with that drastic message. Dr. Chisholm strode in at the school gates. He passed through a crowd of Rookwood fellows, all of them with grave faces. He was glad, for once, to escape from the observation of the school—glad to get away from the sea of eyes into the shelter of the House.

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"It's getting thicker and thicker," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Sacking a whole Form! Phew!"

"All right if they come back with Bulkeley," said Jimmy.

"They won't!"

Lovell was right; they didn't! Bulkeley of the Sixth came in—alone—with a clouded face, and went into the House to report to the Head. And all Rookwood knew that the Fifth Form were gone, with the exception of Jobson, whom nobody regarded; they were gone—for good—and there was no longer a Fifth Form at Rookwood School.

And Arthur Edward Lovell opined that if the Head did not soon come down off his high horse, as Arthur Edward expressed it, soon there would be no other Forms at Rookwood, either. But that remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 24.

Morny Looks for Trouble.

MR. RICHARD DALTON, master of the Fourth Form, wore a rather worried look the following morning.

He anticipated trouble.

The Head's latest order, gating the whole of the Lower School, obviously

for the purpose of cutting off all communication with the rebels at the Manor House, was endlessly discussed and commented upon.

Even the Sixth Form, though they were not "gated" like the Lower boys, considered it rather "thick." All the junior Forms thrilled with indignation.

In Masters' Common-room, where the headmaster was much more freely discussed by his staff than he ever realised, comment was extremely unfavourable.

The opinion in Masters' Common-room was that it would lead to more trouble. Indeed, no Form-master could be oblivious of the wrath and resentment in the Lower Forms.

Mr. Richard Dalton was well aware of it.

He was well aware that Mornington, the most turbulent spirit in the Fourth, was planning mischief; well aware that nearly all his Form were in a restless and dissatisfied state, and that there was danger of the Fourth following the example of the Fifth.

Mr. Dalton was debating in his mind that morning whether he should or should not remonstrate gently with the Head.

In morning "quarter" he looked from his study window and saw his Form gathered in groups in the quadrangle, deep in discussion, which was obviously of an excited character.

Even Tubby Muffin was moved to wrath. Mr. Dalton, at the open window, could hear the fat voice of Reginald Muffin in the distance.

"I can tell you it's too thick, you fellows! Who's going to stand being gated for nothing?"

"Can't be helped, fatty!" That was Jimmy Silver's voice on the other side of the big beech that stood opposite Mr. Dalton's window.

"It jolly well can be helped! It's up to you to put your foot down, as captain of the Form, Jimmy!"

"What can I do, ass?"

"Well, you can jolly well speak to Dicky Dalton!" come in Jones minor's

voice. "He ought to put it to the Head! What about a deputation of the whole Form to Dicky Dalton?"

"N.G.!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, I'm fed-up!" said Jones minor.

"Same here!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm not standin' it!" said Cyril Peele. "I'm goin' out, all the same!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I jolly well know I am!" said Mornington.

Richard Dalton stepped back from his study window and closed it quietly. He did not wish to overhear the discussion of his Form.

His face was grave.

What he had heard showed him how enraged the Fourth were, if he had not known it before. There would be trouble that afternoon if the gating order stood. And Mr. Dalton made up his mind to speak to the Head and get that exasperating order rescinded if he could.

He found the Head in the Sixth Form-room—the Sixth not being in yet. Dr. Chisholm was busy at his desk, but he looked up quite genially at the Fourth Form-master. But at the mention of the gating order his face hardened and the genial expression vanished at once.

He raised his hand.

"I am afraid I cannot discuss my decision on that point, Mr. Dalton," he said. "That matter is closed."

"There is a great deal of dissatisfaction, sir," Mr. Dalton hinted.

"No doubt! The boys have themselves to thank, as I cannot trust them to keep within school bounds if they are allowed out of gates."

"If they should break bounds, sir, the usual punishment could be inflicted. But——"

"But I do not choose to allow any Rookwood boy to defy my authority, Mr. Dalton. I will allow no communication whatever with Mr. Greely. My view is that he has acted with the greatest insolence in opening a school

so near to Rookwood. It is intended as an affront to me personally, I am assured of that." The Head coloured a little. "The order must stand, Mr. Dalton."

"I fear, sir, that it will not achieve its object," said Mr. Dalton. "Many of the boys will, I fear, disregard it."

"The punishment of any such boy will be very severe," said the Head. "I shall administer a flogging in each instance, and shall not hesitate to expel any boy who persists in disobedience."

Mr. Dalton suppressed a sigh.

He liked and respected his chief, but he knew from of old that Dr. Chisholm, when he had mounted the "high horse," was not to be reasoned with.

"Very well. I will say no more, sir," he said.

"Quite so, Mr. Dalton."

And the Fourth Form-master retired from the unprofitable interview. He proceeded to his own Form-room, where it was close on time for third lesson.

Four fellows came in promptly enough for class: Jimmy Silver and Raby, Lovell and Newcome. They went to their places, but it was some minutes before Conroy and Putty of the Fourth followed them in, some minutes more before Oswald and Jones minor and Higgs and Tubby Muffin followed on. In ones and twos the Classical Fourth came in, and the last lot—Peele and Lattrey and Gower—were a good ten minutes late. Mornington, last of all, followed them in, and lounged to his place with his hands in his pockets.

Mr. Dalton appeared to observe nothing.

He knew that the unsettled state of the school and the successful rebellion of the Fifth could not fail to produce consequences in the other Forms. He was by no means a weak master, but in the present state of affairs he desired to avoid adding oil to the flames, if he could.

But for Jimmy Silver's influence, there would have been something more than slacking in the Fourth that day. But the captain of the Fourth was doing his best to keep the fellows in line.

Prep had been scamped in most of the Fourth Form studies the evening before, as in most other studies at Rookwood. Almost every fellow had turned in a shockingly bad "con" in the morning; but Mr. Dalton had been unusually easy-going. Now he did not seem to observe that the Fourth came in late, though he was generally very severe on the question of punctuality.

Most of the Fourth, realising that their Form-master was dealing as gently with them as he could, felt a little compunction. After all, they had no quarrel with "Dicky" Dalton. But there were some restless spirits in the Fourth who were only encouraged by concession. Peele & Co. jumped to the conclusion at once that their Form-master was afraid of them—that he feared to see the example of the Fifth followed in his own Form-room. That was more than enough for Cyril Peele and his friends. Valentine Mornington, too, was in a turbulent and troublesome mood. In a corner of the Form-room, Morny and Peele and several other fellows kept up a whispered conversation, apparently oblivious of the fact that classes were on.

"Mornington!"

Mr. Dalton had to speak twice to the dandy of the Fourth before he received an answer. Then Morny turned his head lazily:

"Yes, sir! Did you speak?"

"I spoke twice, Mornington," said Mr. Dalton sharply.

"Indeed, sir!" said Morny.

"Have you finished your paper, Mornington?"

"No, sir; haven't started it."

"The papers have to be handed in at the end of the lesson," said Mr.

Dalton quietly. "Any boy who has not finished his paper will be caned."

Mornington's eyes glittered, but he made no answer.

Peele & Co., suddenly awakening to the fact that their Form-master was not, after all, afraid of them, hurried to get on with their papers. They fairly slogged at them to get finished in time.

Not so Mornington. He leaned back in his seat lazily, and did not even touch his pen. Morny had the courage of his faults, at least. He had not touched his paper, and was not going to touch it now.

Perhaps he expected an altercation with Mr. Dalton; but the Fourth Form-master, having given him a warning, paid no further attention to him. Promptly at twelve o'clock he signed to Jimmy Silver, as head boy of the Form, to go round collecting the papers.

Jimmy brought the stack of papers and laid them on Mr. Dalton's desk. Peele & Co. had scrambled through somehow. Valentine Mornington's paper was a beautiful blank.

"Mornington!"

"Hallo!" said Morny.

"You have written nothing."

"Just that much, sir," assented Morny. And there was a grin in the Fourth. Morny's coolness was always rather entertaining when he was engaged on a rag.

Mr. Dalton picked up his cane.

"Come here, Mornington!"

"Certainly, sir!" The dandy of the Fourth lounged forward.

"Bend over that chair!"

Morny eyed the Fourth Form-master and did not obey.

"You hear me, Mornington?"

"I'm not goin' to be caned, sir," said Mornington, "and I warn you, sir, that if you touch me I'm goin' to clear out of Rookwood and go over to Mr. Greely!"

"Morny, you ass!" breathed Erroll.

There was a gasp from some of the Fourth. They wondered for a moment

how Richard Dalton would deal with Mornington's defiance.

He was prompt to deal with it.

Without answering the dandy of the Fourth, Richard Dalton grasped him by the collar and, with a twist of his sinewy arm, bent him over the chair. Then the cane rose and fell.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

It was "six," and a severe six. Valentine Mornington uttered no sound, but his face was quite pale when he rose after the infliction.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Dalton.

"That does it, sir!" said Mornington. "I'm done with Rookwood, and with you, too!"

And before Mr. Dalton could speak Mornington left the Form-room. The Fourth marched out after him, leaving the Form-master with a dark and troubled brow.

CHAPTER 25.

To Go or Not to Go?

DEEP excitement reigned in the Rookwood Fourth after dinner that day.

The half-holiday had commenced, and the whole Form had to remain within gates, as did the other Forms. The gates were closed and locked, instead of standing wide open as they generally did on a half-holiday; and the juniors observed that some of the Sixth Form prefects were strolling about in rather a pointed way, and guessed that they were on the watch. Probably it was a distasteful task for most of the prefects, excepting Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, who found pleasure in it. Carthew was quite entertained when he caught Jones minor attempting to climb the wall in a secluded corner, and hauled him back and gave him six with his ashplant and sent him howling away. Distasteful or otherwise, the prefects had their task to carry out; they had the head-

master's orders. Some of them confided to one another that they were getting "fed-up"; but this they did not think of confiding to the Head.

Morny's declared intention of deserting Rookwood caused intense excitement among his Form-fellows. Morny was a fellow of his word, and few of the Fourth doubted that he would do as he had threatened if he could. And most of the other members of the Form were only watching for an opportunity to get out of school bounds. The Fourth Form was seething with rebellion from end to end.

Jimmy Silver looked for Mornington after dinner, and found him sauntering under the beeches, obviously on the look-out for a chance of bolting. Carthew of the Sixth had a special eye on him at a little distance.

Morny greeted the captain of the Fourth with a mocking grin.

"Just the man I want to see!" he exclaimed. "Are you on?"

"On what?" asked Jimmy.

"Help me to collar Carthew and up-end him, and we'll clear together—what?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, old chap!" said Jimmy. "Look here, Morny, this won't do. You can't clear off."

"I'm jolly well goin' to!"

"What will your guardian say?"

"Blessed if I know—and I'm quite certain I don't care," answered Morny coolly. "I dare say I can square it with him. From what I hear, Greely is goin' to run Manor House School as a sort of second Rookwood, but the fees are goin' to be lower. That will appeal to my guardian—he hates spendin' money on me."

"We're bound to stick to the old ship," urged Jimmy.

"Then we want a new skipper!" grinned Morny.

"The Head's a bit of a Tartar at times," Jimmy conceded. "It's rather thick gating all the lower Forms. All the same——"

"You can talk till you're black in the face, old bean; but I can tell you that by tea-time there won't be half a dozen of the Fourth left in the school, and I shall be the first to get goin'."

"It will mean jolly serious trouble when you come back."

"I'm not comin' back."

"How do you know Mr. Greely will take you in?"

Mornington chuckled.

"It's no secret that the Head of the giddy new school is keen to get hold of Rookwood chaps. He'll be glad."

"But the Head can fetch you back," urged Jimmy. "It's running away from school, and the Head——"

"I'm not so sure he can. Anyhow, he can't if my guardian backs me up," said Mornington. "Besides, didn't the Beak say that any fellow who went over to the Manor House would be sacked? Well, if a fellow's sacked he can't be fetched back, can he?"

"Look here, Morny, you're in the wrong," said Jimmy Silver abruptly. "I know the Head is piling it on too thick; I don't deny that. But we've no quarrel with Dicky Dalton, and you got what you asked for when you ragged him in class."

Valentine Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Dicky Dalton ought to stand up for his Form against the Beak's tyranny," he answered. "I'm done with him! You can hang on here, Jimmy Silver, and take all the lickings and gatings the Beak cares to hand out. I'm fed-up, and I'm goin', and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Jimmy compressed his lips.

"Does it occur to you that I'm captain of the Fourth?" he asked.

"If you want us to remember that, you'd better take the lead," answered Mornington carelessly.

"A captain's bizney isn't to go where he's shoved, but to lead in the way he believes right," said Jimmy. "And I can tell you this, Morny—you're not going to break bounds to-day!"

Mornington's eyes flashed.

"Who's goin' to stop me?" he demanded.

"I am, if necessary," answered Jimmy Silver coolly. "I'm jolly well going to keep an eye on you, and if you bolt I shall jolly well yank you back. So that's that!"

Mornington snapped his fingers.

"That for you!" he answered, and he turned his back on the captain of the Fourth and walked away.

Jimmy Silver breathed hard and deep. He was strongly tempted to stride after Morny and grasp him by the collar and bang his head on the nearest beech. But he controlled his wrath. As he stood with a frowning brow, Carthew of the Sixth came along, with a sneering grin on his face. From a distance he had had his eye on the two juniors.

"Plotting together—what?" said Carthew. "Mind, don't let me catch you trying to get out of bounds this afternoon, Silver! I know what you're after, you young sweep!"

"I'm not thinking of anything of the kind!" snapped Jimmy Silver irritably.

"Don't tell untruths, Silver," said Carthew. "I'm warning you to take care, that's all."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"What?" howled the prefect.

"Coke!" snapped Jimmy.

"Take two hundred lines, Silver, and go into your Form-room at once and write them out."

Jimmy Silver looked at Carthew. Doubtless the bully of the Sixth believed that he had been planning with Morny to break bounds; but really it was hard on Jimmy, after quarrelling with Mornington in the cause of law and order, to be pounced upon by a suspicious prefect as an aider and abettor of rebellion. He faced Carthew with gleaming eyes and his fists clenched, and the prefect backed away a step. Then with the corner of his eye, as it were, Jimmy Silver saw Morny

turn back towards the spot and approach at a run.

Morny was coming to the rescue, cheerily anticipative of a tussle with Carthew of the Sixth.

That recalled Jimmy's good resolutions.

"Very well, Carthew!" he said, with a meekness that surprised the bully of the Sixth.

He walked away hastily towards the House, leaving Carthew grinning after him. Mornington shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

While Jimmy Silver—nobly setting an example of obedience to the powers that were—was grinding out lines in the Form-room, Valentine Mornington and a crowd of the Fourth were busy in other ways.

CHAPTER XX.

Jimmy Silver Puts His Foot Down!

"FATHEAD!"

Thus Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell looked in at the Fourth Form Room, where Jimmy Silver was writing his lines. Raby and Newcome looked in also, grinning.

"Ass!" went on Lovell.

"What's the row now, duffer?" asked Jimmy Silver, rather gruffly.

Having sat in the dusky old Form-room for a considerable time that sunny afternoon, grinding out lines, Uncle James of Rookwood was not in his usual equable temper. He was wondering a little whether it was worth while, after all, to set himself up in opposition to the Form as a champion of law and order. Certainly the result to himself had not been beneficial, so far.

"Lines!" said Lovell. "Lines from Carthew! There isn't a fellow in the Fourth who wouldn't have lent you a hand to duck Carthew in the fountain if you'd given the word!"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy crossly. "We're not going to begin ducking prefects. I tell you the Fourth are not going to follow the Fifth."

Lovell grinned.

"They've done it," he answered.

"How's that, ass?"

"You've been so jolly busy with lines for Carthew that you don't know what's happened," chuckled Lovell. "If you'd been in the quad ten minutes ago——"

"Well, I wasn't, ass! What's happened?" demanded Jimmy.

"Morny's happened," said Lovell. "Morny and five or six chaps collared Carthew, and ran him into the woodshed and locked him there."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then they cleared," said Lovell; "and I'd jolly well have cleared with them, only——"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

His face was set and grim, and there was a gleam in his eyes.

"Morny's gone?" he asked.

"Clean gone, and half a dozen of the Fourth with him," said Raby. "The rest are only looking for chances to bunk. Even Tubby doesn't mean to be gated for nothing. The fact is, Jimmy, the Head's put up the backs of the whole school, and you can't stop it."

"Let's follow," said Newcome. "After all, we're not going to be gated if Morny isn't. Our study never takes a back seat."

"Hear, hear!" said Lovell heartily.

The three juniors looked at their leader. But the expression on Silver's face was not promising.

"Look here, Jimmy," exclaimed Lovell, "you're on the wrong track, old man. What have you got by backing up the Head? A gating like the rest of us, and two hundred lines extra."

"Never mind that," said Jimmy Silver. "I warned Mornington not to go and I told him that if he went I should yank him back. That's what I'm jolly well going to do!"

"Look here——" roared Lovell.

"I'm standing by Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm going after Mornington to fetch him back. You fellows can please yourselves."

And, leaving his lines unfinished, Jimmy Silver walked out of the Form-room with a grim face.

Lovell & Co. looked at one another.

"Now Jimmy's got his back up," sighed Raby. "I suppose we're going to back him up. Come on!"

"I suppose so!" grunted Newcome.

"I've a jolly good mind——" began Lovell hotly.

"Oh, come on!"

The three juniors hurried after Jimmy Silver, and overtook him as he was going out into the quad.

Whatsoever might betide, the Fistical Four were to remain united. But Jimmy Silver's loyal followers were nearer to mutiny than they had ever been before. For once they quite failed to share the views of their great leader, Uncle James of Rookwood.

Carthew of the Sixth was coming into the House as they left it. Carthew looked rather dusty and untidy, and quite furious. Apparently he had escaped from the woodshed into which he had been dumped by Morny and his comrades. He paused as he saw Jimmy.

"Silver, have you done your lines?"

"Find out!" snapped Jimmy.

"Silver, I tell you——"

Jimmy Silver walked on unheeding. He had no time to waste in argument with the bully of the Sixth.

Carthew glared after him, but did not follow. He went into the House to make his report to the Head.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were grinning as he walked across the quad with the captain of the Fourth. Jimmy was backing up the Head, and standing up for law and order; but he seemed to be gathering considerable trouble in his law-abiding career.

"We're going out?" asked Lovell, as they stopped at the school wall in a secluded corner.

"I'm going after Morny!" answered Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"What about bounds?"

"Oh, cheese it! I'm going to fetch Morny back into bounds!"

"Suppose he won't come?"

"I'll make him!"

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver clambered up the wall

with the aid of a beech trunk that grew adjacent to it. There was a shout, and Neville of the Sixth came rushing up.

"Silver, stop! Come back at once!"

Jimmy Silver dropped on the outer side of the wall. His comrades were following him fast. Neville came up breathlessly in time to catch Arthur Edward Lovell by the ankle as he clambered up, last of the four.

"Come down, Lovell!" he shouted.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell.

"You young rascal, you know the Head's orders——"

"Blow the Head!"

"What? Come down!" shouted the prefect, tugging at Lovell's ankle.

"Oh, scissors!" gasped Lovell. "Lend a hand, you chaps! The silly idiot will have me down in a minute."

Lovell clung desperately to the wall while Neville tugged at his ankle. Newcome had already joined Jimmy Silver in the road; but Raby was astride of the wall. Fortunately—or unfortunately—George Raby had an apple in his pocket. He grabbed it out and hurled it down at Neville of the Sixth.

"Ow!"

Neville gave a wild howl as the apple caught him in the eye.

He let go Lovell, and Arthur Edward whisked up to the top of the wall in a twinkling.

"Good man!" he gasped.

"We've done it now!" grinned Raby.

"Come on!"

The two juniors dropped into the road, leaving Neville of the Sixth on the inner side of the wall rubbing his damaged eye in anguish. Jimmy Silver had already started at a trot towards Coombe, and his comrades followed him.

Jimmy, for once in a way, was really angry and determined to bring the mutineer of the Fourth to book. He was quite resolved that Valentine Mornington should return to Rookwood, even if he had to carry him there. And though the sympathies of his comrades were rather with the rebel, they intended to back up their leader.

There was no doubt of the direction Morny & Co. had taken; they were heading, of course, for Manor House School. The Fistical Four went down Coombe Lane at a rapid run. Half-way to the new school they sighted a group of juniors sauntering along cheerily, and recognised Mornington, Peele, Gower, Lattrey, Jones minor, and Tubby Muffin.

"There they are!" grinned Lovell.

"Come on!"

Jimmy Silver ran on, and came up with Morny & Co. who stopped and looked round.

"Hallo, you fellows comin' along, too?" asked Peele cheerily. "Good!"

"Good men!" chuckled Mornington. "Jolly glad to see you! Take my tip and stay on at Manor House when you're there!"

"I'm goin' to," said Peele.

"Mornington!" Jimmy Silver's voice was hard and sharp. "I warned you——"

"Did you?" yawned Morny.

"Yes. Now you've got to come back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Lovell.

"Jimmy's little joke," said Morny. "You're no end funny, Jimmy Silver, when you're doing your heavy uncle turn! Keep it up!"

"Will you come back?" asked Jimmy quietly.

"Not quite!"

"I mean business, Mornington."

"So do I."

"You've got to come back to Rookwood."

"Rats!"

"Look here," began Gower. "What are you buttin' in for, Jimmy Silver? I suppose we can do as we like?"

"That's your little mistake," answered Jimmy. "You can't! I warned Mornington not to break bounds this afternoon——"

"Couldn't mind your own bizney, could you, old bean?" asked Mornington.

"Well, I think this is my business."

said the captain of the Fourth. "I may be mistaken, but there it is. Will you come back?"

"No."

"Then I shall have to make you."

"You're welcome to try!" said Mornington, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Well, you're asking for it," said Jimmy Silver. "You can go back before a scrap, or after a scrap, just as you like. But you're going back."

"After, please!" said Mornington mockingly.

"Here goes, then!"

And Jimmy Silver, with his hands up, advanced on the dandy of the Fourth. Mornington met him more than halfway; and in a moment they were fighting.

Lovell & Co. looked on grimly. There was no doubt that they were out of sympathy with their leader; but they were still loyal. But for their presence, Peele & Co. undoubtedly would have joined in the fray, and Jimmy Silver would have had the ragging of his life. But the Co. were there to see fair play.

But when Peele & Co. backed away from the spot and resumed their route to Manor House School, leaving Mornington to it, Lovell and his comrades did not intervene. The deserter; disappeared in the distance, while Jimmy Silver and Mornington were still fighting.

They paused at last, breathless both showing serious signs of damage.

"Will you come back?" panted Jimmy.

"No!"

"Then come on, you rotter!"

"Come on, you silly ass!" retorted Mornington.

And they closed again, fighting fiercely.

CHAPTER 27.

The Limit!

"WHAT!"

The voice of the headmaster of Rookwood was like the rumble of thunder. His eyes almost

scintillated as he fixed them on Carthew.

"What! Am I to understand, Carthew, that a number of the Fourth Form boys have gone out of bounds in spite of my strict orders?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"The prefects were instructed to prevent anything of the kind!" snapped the Head.

"I—I did my best, sir. I was collared——"

"What?"

"Collared, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"What do you mean, Carthew? Cannot you, a Sixth Form boy of Rookwood, speak English?" Really it looked as if the Head's wrath was turning on the hapless Carthew, as the nearest victim.

"I—I mean, sir," stuttered Carthew,

"I—I was seized, sir——"

"If you mean that you were seized, Carthew, you should say that you were seized. You should not use absurd slangy expressions in making a report to your headmaster!"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Carthew. "I—I mean——"

Carthew began to wish that he had not been so very keen on the performance of his prefect's duties that afternoon.

"You were seized——"

"Yes, sir. Mornington and some more of the Fourth collared me—I mean seized me—and chucked me——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, pitched me into the wood-shed, sir, and locked the door on me. I couldn't get out till old Mack heard me shouting, and came——"

"Bless my soul! And the boys——"

"They're gone, sir. I saw them from the window of the wood-shed. Mornington was the leader!"

The Head breathed hard. He seemed astonished as well as angry at this disregard of his strict orders, though anyone at Rookwood could have told him that there was nothing to be surprised at.

"And Silver, too," went on Carthew. "I gave Silver lines for—for imperti-

nence, but he has not written them. He left the Form-room again without permission, and I think he has gone off with his friends."

"Silver is head boy of the Fourth," said Dr. Chisholm. "If he has indeed set a lawless example by disregarding my orders, he shall receive a public flogging. But are you sure that he has gone?"

"I'm not sure, but I think——"

"What you think on such a serious matter, Carthew, is of little consequence," said the Head severely. "A prefect should report facts, not suppositions, to his headmaster."

"I—I mean——" stammered Carthew. "I'm certain he was planning it with Mornington. At least, I think——"

"Enough! At all events, it appears certain that Mornington of the Fourth Form has gone out of school bounds. You are certain of this; you do not merely think so?" snapped the Head.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"Very good! I shall take that matter in hand myself. In the meantime, you may ascertain whether Silver is still within the walls of Rookwood."

"Very well, sir."

Dr. Chisholm hurried from his study. Carthew looked after him, with quite a savage expression on his face. And he did not proceed to ascertain whether Jimmy Silver was still within the walls of Rookwood. He proceeded to his own study to console himself with a cigarette. If this was the sort of thanks a prefect received for backing up the headmaster, Carthew had had enough, and a little to spare.

In a very few minutes Dr. Chisholm was issuing forth from the House in hat and coat. The expression on his face caught the attention of a good many fellows in the quad. Smythe of the Shell, as he looked at the Head's grim countenance, thanked his lucky stars that he had thought better of a little scheme he had formed for breaking bounds that afternoon.

"Neville!" The Head almost ran into Neville, as he hurried out of the House.

Neville of the Sixth was coming in with one hand to his eye. "Neville, what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, I've had a bung in the eye!" gasped Neville.

"A what?"

"I—I mean——"

"It is astonishing to me," said Dr. Chisholm, "that Sixth Form seniors in a school like Rookwood cannot express themselves in good English."

Neville breathed hard. It was not only the Lower School of Rookwood who found the Head rather trying in these days.

"I mean, some juniors were getting over the wall, sir, and I caught one of them, and I had an apple bunged—I mean chucked—thrown in my eye, sir. I'm afraid I'm going to have a black eye. Wow!"

"Their names?" snapped the Head.

"Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Silver!"

Dr. Chisholm hurried on. He swept away towards the gates, with a hundred pairs of eyes turned on him. His wrath was almost at boiling point. Not only Mornington, well known to be a reckless fellow, but Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth and head of his Form, had joined, apparently, in this defiance of authority. The Fourth were following the rebellious example of the Fifth. Even fags of the Lower School were daring to lift the heel against constituted authority. But this new rebellion was to be repressed ruthlessly, before it had time to spread. A striking example should be made of the rebels of the Fourth.

Dr. Chisholm strode along Coombe Lane at a speed to which he was little accustomed, and which indeed was scarcely in keeping with his majestic dignity.

He was quite certain of the direction taken by the breakers of bounds—they were going, of course, to Mr. Greely's new school—visiting Manor House School for no better reason than that it had been placed out of bounds by their headmaster. Mr. Greely, of course—iniquitous Mr. Greely—would

welcome them there—glad to foment and foster trouble in the school from which he had been dismissed. Indeed, knowing what they had to expect on return to Rookwood, it was probable that the rebel juniors might stay there, allowed to do so by the iniquitous Horace Greely, as the Fifth had been allowed to stay. That, at least, would be frustrated by the headmaster's prompt pursuit—at least, he trusted so.

As a matter of fact the Head's pursuit would have been a good deal too late, but for the circumstance that Jimmy Silver had gone out of bounds with precisely the same object in view. The Head, hurrying along the Coombe Road towards Manor House School, came in sight of five Rookwood juniors—two of whom appeared to be engaged in a desperate fight, while the other three were looking on, with their hands in their pockets.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

He swept on.

Jimmy Silver and Mornington were much too hotly engaged to have eyes for anything but one another. And Lovell and Raby and Newcome were watching the fight, and certainly not thinking of their headmaster.

Dr. Chisholm approached the spot at a rapid stride, quite unobserved by the Fourth Formers. If anything had been needed to give the finishing touch to his wrath, the sight of that "scrap" on the Coombe Road would have done it. Not content with breaking bounds, and defying their headmaster, these young rascals were fighting together—a display of hooliganism that all Hampshire might have witnessed if all Hampshire had happened to pass that way.

"Boys!"

The juniors were quite unaware of the Head's approach till they heard his voice. Then they jumped.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell.

"The Head!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"The jolly old Beak!" gasped Mornington.

"Cease this at once!" thundered the Head. "How dare you! Have you no respect for the reputation of your school? Have you no sense of decency? How dare you fight like—like ruffians, on the public road! Silver, you are head of your Form, and chiefly to blame. You, at least, should know better than this."

The two combatants separated. They blinked at the Head—Jimmy Silver in dismay; Mornington grinning.

Both of them were damaged. Their noses streamed crimson, and their eyes winked and blinked. Both were untidy and breathless, and certainly neither of them looked a credit to his school at that moment. And undoubtedly it could not be said that Jimmy Silver looked just then like a champion of law and order.

"This is disgraceful!" thundered the Head.

Jimmy dabbed his nose.

"You are out of bounds!" continued Dr. Chisholm. "All of you will be severely punished. You must learn that the commands of your headmaster must be obeyed."

"We—xe—" stammered Lovell. He glared at Jimmy Silver. This was what came of backing up the captain of the Form in support of law and order!

"You—you see, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

Dr. Chisholm raised his hand.

"It is useless to offer excuses, Silver. Are you, or are you not, out of school bounds in disregard of my strict orders?"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Enough! Every boy who has left Rookwood this afternoon will be flogged," said the Head sternly.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

"But you, Silver, will be more severely dealt with!" said the Head grimly. "As head boy of your Form you are expected to support proper authority, and to set an example of obedience and discipline. Silver, I shall have to consider whether I can allow you to remain at Rookwood at all. Sorry as I shall be to expel you from

the school, I fear that you have left me no other resource."

"I—I—" stuttered Jimmy helplessly.

"Silence!"

"If you'll let me explain!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I will not hear a word from you, Silver, when I have actually found you out of bounds, fighting another Rookwood boy on a public road, and setting an example of wilful disobedience and rebellion to your Form. Not another word!"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath.

"Follow me!" said the Head.

"Follow your leader!" murmured Mornington.

Dr. Chisholm turned. The juniors exchanged glances. The spell of the Head's authority was still upon them, and they followed—even Mornington. They followed with lagging steps, but they followed.

The Head glanced round once, and frowned at the dark faces behind him. Then he strode on towards Rookwood. As he turned a corner of the lane, five juniors came to a halt.

"Fed up, yet?" grinned Mornington.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked expressively at their leader.

"I'm not going to be flogged!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with deep emphasis. "You can jolly well suit yourself, Jimmy; but it's not good enough for me. I'm going to Manor House School, and I'm going to ask Mr. Greely to take me in, and I'm going to write to my father. So that's that!"

"Same here," said Raby.

"And here!" said Newcome.

"Come on!" said Mornington cheerily. "Don't be an ass, Silver! Do you want to walk back to Rookwood to be sacked?"

Jimmy breathed hard.

"No!" he said. "It's the limit!"

"Then we're off?" demanded Lovell.

"Yes."

"Good egg!"

The Head's voice was heard calling across an intervening hawthorn hedge.

"Silver! Mornington! Do not lag behind! Follow me at once!"

But answer there came none!

Jimmy Silver & Co. had left the road, and were scudding across a footpath towards Manor House School and refuge. When Dr. Chisholm, in lofty wrath, came striding back for them, they had vanished. The Head looked this way, and that way, like Moses of old; but he saw nothing more of Jimmy Silver & Co.

And Rookwood saw nothing more of them that day. Jimmy Silver & Co. were gone from Rookwood, and in spite of watchful prefects, a good many more of the Fourth followed the way they had gone. And whether they would ever return was a matter that was still on the knees of the gods.

CHAPTER 28.

At Manor House School!

"IT'S a lark, anyhow!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

Raby and Newcome nodded.

They agreed that it was a lark, at least.

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful.

The rising-bell had clanged out in the summer morning, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had turned out of their dormitory, and turned out into the early sunshine.

But it was not in the old quadrangle of Rookwood School that they were sauntering while they waited for the breakfast-bell.

The grey old tower of Rookwood was in sight against the blue sky far away across fields and meadows and woods. It was in the Close of the Manor House School that the Fistical Four walked and talked—still rather surprised to find themselves there.

It was a strange state of affairs.

"I don't know what our people will

say," remarked Jimmy Silver. "They will have to agree to our staying here."

"Oh, that will be all right."

"We can fix that," said Raby.

"Especially the fellows who are going to be bunked if they go back to Rookwood," chuckled Newcome.

"The fact is, the Head went too far, and he went over the limit," said Lovell. "Now he's down and out, and I hope he likes it. Hallo, Hansom!"

Hansom of the Fifth came strolling along with Lumsden and Talboys of the same Form.

Lovell greeted Hansom of the Fifth quite cheerily and cordially, feeling that in the present extraordinary state of affairs all old grudges ought to be forgotten.

That was unusually thoughtful of Arthur Edward. Unfortunately Hansom of the Fifth did not share his unusual thoughtfulness.

Hansom stared at the Classical juniors loftily and disdainfully. Hansom never could forget that he was a senior, captain of a senior Form, and of immensely more importance than mere fags.

"You fags here!" he exclaimed.

"Here we are," said Lovell. "All in the same boat now, Hansom, old bean."

Hansom frowned.

"Well, if you think you're going to be as cheeky here as you were at Rookwood you're making a mistake!" he said.

"Eh?"

"You don't address the Fifth as 'old bean,' my son," said Hansom. "That will help you to remember it."

"Oh!" roared Lovell, in surprise and wrath, as Hansom knocked his hat off and then walked on, laughing with Lumsden and Talboys.

Lovell fielded his hat and glared after Hansom. Evidently that lordly youth was as "Fifth-Formy" at the Manor House as ever he had been at Rookwood.

"By gum!" gasped Lovell. "Does

that cheeky ass think we're going to stand that? Back me up, you chaps!"

Lovell rushed after the Fifth Formers.

Crash!

Hansom's hat went flying from his head under a sudden smite.

It dropped to the ground, and Lovell promptly jumped on it.

Crunch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, what—what, you cheeky fag! You—you—" Words failed Edward Hansom in his wrath, and he fairly hurled himself on Lovell.

Four juniors promptly collared him together, and Hansom sat down on the ground with a bump. Talboys and Lumsden rushed to the rescue, and so did Mornington and Oswald and Conroy and several more Fourth Form fellows.

In a few seconds there was a terrific mix-up. Five or six Fifth Formers came speeding up—and more of the Fourth. The breakfast-bell rang, but it rang unheeded.

And Horace Greely, headmaster of the new school, looking out of the big doorway, stared—stared blankly at the sight of a considerable portion of his new school mixed up in a wild and whirling combat.

CHAPTER 29.

Something Like a Shindy!

HORACE GREELY stared.

He could scarcely believe his eyes.

For long, long years, Mr. Greely had been a Form-master at Rookwood School, and all the time he had been secretly persuaded that his proper vocation was that of headmaster. He was, in his own opinion, a gentleman by the hand of Nature "marked, quoted, and signed" to be chief—in fact, monarch of all he surveyed. He had never been satisfied with Dr. Chisholm's methods. He had never doubted that in his

hands Rookwood School would have been managed in an entirely superior way.

Now that, owing to Sir George Hansom's generosity, he had his chance, he was convinced that his superior methods would be seen to full advantage. Often and often there had been trouble at Rookwood. There was never going to be any trouble at Manor House School. Under the majestic presidency of Horace Greely, affairs would proceed on the even tenor of their way. The Head of Manor House School would inspire an awe, a respect, such as Dr. Chisholm had never inspired—never could inspire.

Some such agreeable reflection was in Mr. Greely's mind as he stepped out of the House that sunny morning for a breath of fresh air before breakfast.

And as he stepped forth he beheld that terrific shindy, and he stared at it blankly.

Shindies had occurred at Rookwood. Form rows and raggings had happened there. But Rookwood had seldom seen a shindy on the present scale.

Mr. Greely blinked, and blinked again, unwilling to trust the evidence of his eyes.

Hansom & Co. outnumbered by the warlike Fourth, had received reinforcements—nearly all the Fifth were mixed up in the scrap now. But more and more of the Fourth had rushed up—and some of the Third and Second had joined in the fray—others were dribbling lost hats about, with shrieks of laughter.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Greely.

He strode upon the scene with thunder on his brow. This certainly was not the beginning he had planned for Manor House School.

"Boys," he thundered, "cease this at once! I say, cease this uproar—this disorderly uproar immediately."

Mr. Greely's command should have been obeyed instantly. To hear should

have been to obey. But it wasn't. The combatants undoubtedly heard, for Mr. Greely's booming voice was audible from one end of the Close to the other. But they did not heed.

"Give them socks!" roared Mornington.

"Down with the Fifth!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh! My eye! Wow-wow!"

"Gerroff!"

"Go it, you fellows!"

Mr. Greely waved his hands in wild command.

"Cease this at once!" he boomed. "Do you hear? Do you dare to disregard your headmaster? Hansom, I address you specially, Hansom, as I have made you captain of the school! Hansom! Boy!"

Edward Hansom ought to have heeded his new headmaster, if any fellow ought to have done so. For that wholesale secession from Rookwood had been started, in the first place, by Hansom's reckless enthusiasm in the cause of the dismissed Mr. Greely, and it was Hansom's father whose wealth had founded the new school.

But Hansom was wildly excited.

Moreover, the reins of discipline having been relaxed were not easy to tighten again. Hansom, having "kicked" against the authority of his old headmaster, was by no means disposed to "kow-tow" to his new headmaster. And, further, Hansom was of opinion that as his father was the proprietor of Manor House School, he—Edward—could do pretty well what he liked there. Indeed, he had already told Fifth Form fellows that he wouldn't stand much "side" from Don Pomposo, who would jolly soon find, if he put on side, that Hansom's pater could sack a headmaster as easily as he could appoint one!

Such were the disrespectful views held by Hansom of the Fifth—unknown to Horace Greely!

And Hansom was wild now. His nose streamed red, his necktie was jerked

out, his hair was like a mop. Lovell had held his ears and banged his nose on the hard earth, and Hansom was just getting to close quarters with Lovell when Mr. Greely hurled stern commands at him.

Hansom did not heed those commands.

He rushed at Lovell.

"Hansom!" roared Mr. Greely, in a formidable voice.

He rushed forward and grasped Hansom by the shoulder.

"Leggo!"

Edward Hansom shook the detaining hand off, and rushed at Lovell and clutched him.

They rolled over together almost at Mr. Greely's feet, punching and pommelling with terrific vim.

"Bless my soul! Hansom—Lovell! Boys!" shrieked Mr. Greely. "This is—is disgraceful! Cease at once! Do you hear me? Boys, I command you! Hansom, Lumsden— Yarooooop!"

Mr. Greely wound up with a roar, as five or six fellows crashed into him, and he sat down suddenly on the ground.

Hansom was still pommelling Lovell, and Jimmy Silver had jumped to his chum's aid. Hansom was dragged off by the hair and ears, with a series of fiendish howls.

Mr. Greely staggered up.

His wrath was at white heat now. Hansom, appointed captain of Manor House School, ought to have been quelling the riot, instead of which he was the leading spirit in the disturbance. Mr. Greely plunged at him and grabbed him again, and this time he gripped him by the collar with a relentless grip that was not to be shaken off.

"Leggo!" roared Hansom.

"You young rascal——"

"Leggo, I tell you! I'm going to smash them!"

"Hansom, I shall flog you for this!" roared Mr. Greely. "Boys, cease this at once! Cease, I tell you!"

Hansom wriggled, but Mr. Greely's

grasp was too powerful for him. He was a prisoner.

"Every boy here will be caned!" thundered Mr. Greely. "Hansom, I shall flog you before all the school for this!"

"You jolly well won't!" hooted Hansom.

"What! What!"

"Let go my collar!"

"Chuck it, Don Pomposo!" came a voice from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fray was petering out now—Hansom, its leading spirit, being a prisoner in his headmaster's grasp, and all the other fellows in a very breathless state. The two parties drew off, glaring at one another, though pommelling was still going on here and there.

"Into the House, all of you!" exclaimed Mr. Greely. "You are late for breakfast! Go in at once. Hansom, come with me!"

"Let go my collar!" yelled Hansom.

Instead of letting go, Mr. Greely tightened his grip, and marched Edward Hansom off towards the House.

"Let him go!" shouted Lumsden.

"Chuck it, old Pomposo!"

"Get off the grass, Greely!"

Mr. Greely's face was crimson, but he turned a deaf ear to those disrespectful shouts.

It was borne in upon his majestic mind that his authority was very far from unquestioned in Manor House School, that the fellows did not recognise in him, by any means, the "divinity that doth hedge a king."

Hansom was the worst of the lot, that was clear; and he was going to make an example of Hansom. The public flogging of Hansom would show all the school that Mr. Greely was not to be trifled with—that he was not to be rebelled against like Dr. Chisholm, at Rookwood.

Hansom, still wriggling, was marched into the house.

Mr. Greely marched him on, with an iron grip on his collar, into an empty study, and there released him. He took the key from the lock.

"Hansom, I shall lock you in this room, since you do not know how to behave yourself," said Mr. Greely sternly. "This is, for the present, the punishment-room, and you are in disgrace, Hansom."

Hansom snorted.

"I'm jolly well not going to be locked in."

"Boy!"

"I didn't come here for this, I can tell you!" exclaimed Hansom.

"You came here to respect your headmaster's authority, Hansom," boomed Mr. Greely, purple with indignation.

"Did I?" snorted Hansom. "Look here, I'm not going to be flogged, that's too jolly thick. Might as well be with Dr. Chisholm, if it comes to that!"

"You will be flogged in public, Hansom, with the utmost severity."

"My pater will have something to say about that!" snorted Hansom.

"What! How dare you, Hansom!" Mr. Greely fairly gasped with wrath. "Do you suppose for one moment that Sir George Hansom will dream of interfering with my authority as headmaster of Manor House School?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Silence, you insolent boy!"

Mr. Greely rolled out, locking the door after him, leaving Hansom of the Fifth a prisoner, with a flogging in prospect. Rookwood's rival—Manor House School—was making rather an exciting start.

CHAPTER 30.

A Rift in the Lute!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. breakfasted with good appetites and in cheery spirits. Perhaps the tussle with the Fifth had improved both their appetites and their spirits. Undoubtedly Manor House School was rather a

change from Rookwood. Lovell declared that it was going to me "Liberty Hall," and it looked as if Lovell was right so far. It was quite certain that the fellows had not the awe of Mr. Greely that they had felt towards their old headmaster; and Mr. Greely's authority, founded on rebellion, naturally could not be so secure as that of the headmaster of Rookwood, founded on habit, and custom, and immemorial tradition. That was a trifling point which Horace Greeling, perhaps, had overlooked.

Mr. Greely was not quite so cheery over his breakfast as the heroes of the Fourth.

Hansom's words worried him a little, lingering in his mind.

Sir George Hansom had been generosity itself in his dealings with his old friend and tutor; he had stood by him loyally and generously when he was unjustly dismissed from Rookwood. But there had already been one or two little jars.

That determination and decision of character which had made Sir George so prompt to act in the founding of Manor House School made him a little difficult to pull with when there was a difference of opinion. And Mr. Greely had his own views, and was very positive about them.

Sir George's view seemed to be that Mr. Greely should play up to him, as it were. While Mr. Greely's view was that Sir George should be a sort of Polonius behind the curtain, not presuming to interfere in matters which Mr. Greely could manage so much better than he could.

Now there was trouble about Hansom.

A senior fellow, who had been appointed captain of the school, and who took a leading part in a disorderly riot, instead of quelling the same, had to be taught the elements of discipline if there was to be law and order at the Manor House at all.

That was quite certain.

Hansom could not possibly remain

captain of the Manor House, and Hansom had to be punished.

Surely it was impossible that Sir George, as a sensible man, would dream of interfering with his new headmaster.

Impossible as it ought to have been, Mr. Greely was troubled with lingering doubts.

Unfortunately, the baronet was on the spot.

As founder of the Manor House School, proprietor of the estate upon which it stood, generous provider of all the necessary funds, Sir George considered his presence, for some time, a necessary thing. He had put off many important engagements in order to see the Manor House safely through its infancy, as it were.

Mr. Greely, much as he respected his kind friend and patron, did not see eye to eye with him on this point, and would, indeed, have been overjoyed to see Sir George take the train for London.

This, however, he could hardly suggest.

It was only with great reluctance that he realised that Sir George was a thorn in his side. Having founded the school and set Mr. Greely going, Sir George was now really superfluous, from Mr. Greely's point of view; he had, as it were, outlived his usefulness. But the baronet did not understand it at all, and obviously it would have been a very delicate business to point it out to him.

Mr. Greely did not enjoy his breakfast so much as usual. He was rather glad that Sir George was breakfasting in his room. It gave him time to think.

After breakfast Mr. Greely was so busy that he forgot, for a time, the unpleasant affair of Edward Hansom, who remained locked in the punishment-room, in a state of seething wrath and indignation.

The arrival of the Rookwood Fourth had given Mr. Greely great satisfaction, troublesome as the outcome had been. It was a great accession of numbers to the school. Arrangements had to be

made with the boys' parents, of course, and intervention from Dr. Chisholm was to be expected; but Mr. Greely was prepared for that. Sir George had already engaged several masters, in consultation with Mr. Greely, ignoring, or ignorant of the fact that Mr. Greely had expected that matter to be left entirely in his hands. However, the masters were there, and Jimmy Silver & Co. found a Form-master ready for them, and the Fourth went in to class as if they had been at Rookwood.

They were not wholly pleased. Peele & Co. and Tubby Muffin had hoped to slack; other fellows had been thinking of cricket.

However, they went in to class with more or less submission. And the contingents of the Second and Third were also disposed of.

With the Fifth it was different.

They were in a riotous mood when they went to their Form-room, boiling with indignation on Hansom's account.

Lumsden had already suggested clearing out of Manor House and marching home to Rookwood as a lesson to "Don Pomposo."

That suggestion might have been acted upon could the Fifth Formers have depended on a cordial reception from Dr. Chisholm. But there was very much doubt on that point.

Mr. Greely found that he had an angry and excited Form to deal with.

"Where's Hansom, sir?" asked Lumsden, as Mr. Greely rolled majestically in.

"Hansom is locked in the punishment-room, Lumsden. Go to your place."

"We think, sir——"

"You need not tell me what you think, Lumsden," said Mr. Greely, with crushing dignity.

"All the same, sir——"

"Silence!"

Mr. Greely rolled ponderously to his desk, and the Fifth Formers exchanged glances.

It was then that the imposing figure

of Sir George Hansom appeared in the doorway of the Form-room.

Sir George was bright and cheerful that sunny morning, ignorant, so far, of the trouble that had arisen in the new school.

He was looking into the Fifth Form room to give Mr. Greely a cheery greeting, and a kind nod to the Fifth, and perhaps to make a comment or two, and one or two suggestions. Mr. Greely simply hated anybody butting into his Form-room; he had found it hard to tolerate, when Dr. Chisholm had sometimes done so at Rookwood. But Dr. Chisholm, at all events, had been headmaster there, with the duty of supervision to perform; and Sir George Hansom was "butting" into matters he did not understand, and which really did not concern him at all—so far as Horace Greely could see. And this was an especially awkward moment for meeting the father of Hansom of the Fifth!

"Good-morning — good-morning!" said Sir George breezily. "Hard at it already, what—what?"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Greely.

"Where is Edward? Edward late for class, what?" said Sir George, glancing over the Fifth. "This will never do—never! I must speak to Edward! You must not allow Edward to slack, Mr. Greely—my son must be as amenable to discipline as any other fellow here, what?"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Greely dryly.

"Well, well, where is Edward?"

The Fifth began to grin.

"Lumsden, I shall leave you in charge of the class for a few minutes," said Mr. Greely hastily.

"Yes, sir," said Lumsden, hardly suppressing a chuckle.

Sir George Hansom looked surprised, as Mr. Greely drew him out of the Form-room. Horace Greely did not desire to make that very awkward explanation in the presence of the grinning Fifth.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Greely?"

asked Sir George, as he paced down the corridor with the new headmaster.

"I am sorry to say, yes."

"Well, what is it?"

Mr. Greely coughed.

"A mere matter of discipline, Mr. Greely. I think I heard something like an uproar before I came down. Have the young rascals been kicking over the traces, what?"

"Something of the kind, sir," said Mr. Greely.

"And my son was concerned in it?"

"I regret to say, yes."

"Well, well, boys will be boys," said Sir George. "I will speak to Edward on this subject. He must toe the line like the rest. Where is he?"

"I have found it necessary to lock him in the punishment-room."

"Oh!"

"It is my intention to administer a flogging."

"Oh!"

"Hansom unfortunately appears to have an impression, Sir George, that as your son, he is entitled to disregard discipline," said Mr. Greely. "You, of course, would not approve of this."

"Certainly not. But—come, come, Mr. Greely! Only a few days ago my son was appointed captain of the school."

"I fear that I must cancel that appointment."

"Indeed!" said Sir George Hansom coldly.

"Yes, indeed, Sir George!"

The two gentlemen walked on side by side, in silence for some minutes. Both were feeling deeply pained.

Sir George Hansom was beginning to wonder whether Dr. Chisholm, after all, had had some justification for his drastic treatment of Horace Greely—obviously a self-willed and tactless man.

Mr. Greely was beginning to wonder whether he had acted wisely, after all, in refusing Dr. Chisholm's offer of reconciliation, in order to accept a headmastership from Sir George Hansom—

who also was a factless and self-willed man.

"This is very awkward!" said Sir George, at last.

"I agree."

"I had better see my son," said the baronet abruptly.

"It is, of course, very unusual for a boy's parent to intervene personally in such a matter," remarked Mr. Greely.

Sir George flushed.

"I must see my son, Mr. Greely."

Mr. Greely flushed.

"If you insist, Sir George, I am bound to remember that I received my appointment at your hands, and—"

"I do not desire that to weigh with you in the very least, Mr. Greely. I am bound to give you a perfectly free hand as headmaster of the Manor House. Nevertheless——"

"Your interview with Hansom will, I fear, strengthen his belief that he is not amenable to discipline like the other boys."

"I do not think so, Mr. Greely."

"I fear so."

"I do not fear so."

Mr. Greely breathed hard.

"We seem to take different opinions," he said.

"Unfortunately, yes," assented Sir George.

In grim silence Mr. Greely handed the key of the punishment-room to the baronet, and with the briefest of bows, walked away to his Form-room.

CHAPTER II.

Unexpected!

"THE Head!"

Arthur Edward Lovell uttered that exclamation.

He was not referring to Horace Greely, headmaster of the Manor House. Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood, came in at the gates, and proceeded with a slow and stately stride towards the House.

"The Beak!" ejaculated Mornington.

Tubby Muffin gave a squeak.

"He's after us, you fellows."

"Let him come after us, if he likes," said Cyril Peele. "He can't touch us! The Beak can go and eat coke!"

"Let's give him a howl!" said Gower.

"Shut up, Gower!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver sharply.

"Rats!"

"Cheese it, you cad!"

Classes were over at the Manor House. The Close swarmed with the Rookwood fellows who had joined up at Mr. Greely's new school. Among them was Hansom of the Fifth.

Hansom was looking quite pleased with himself.

There had been no flogging.

Exactly what had transpired between Mr. Greely and the baronet, the fellows did not know; but they knew that Mr. Greely had climbed down. It was possible that Sir George was beginning to share his son's view that "Don Pomposo" was a pompous ass.

Apparently the baronet had put his foot down, in the firm opinion that cancelling Hansom's captaincy, and flogging him, would be a decidedly bad beginning at Manor House School. Putting his foot down seemed a perfectly natural proceeding to the masterful old gentleman, in the circumstances. But undoubtedly it was a grief and a grievance to Horace Greely, and made him simply yearn for the hour when the gates would close behind the founder of the new school. On the other hand, this little difficulty had convinced Sir George that his presence was more than ever required at the new school which he had founded.

Quite a crowd of fellows gathered round to look at Dr. Chisholm, as he proceeded to the House.

The Head of Rookwood did not seem to observe them. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, as he walked on, slow and stately.

Mr. Greely, from his study window, observed him, and started.

Mr. Greely had retired to his study in a grim mood, full of resentment and a sense of helplessness. He was prepared to be wrathful with anybody just then, as he could not venture to be wrathful with his kind friend and patron, Sir George. To Dr. Chisholm, at least, he could say what he thought; and his brow was grim when the headmaster of Rookwood was shown into his study.

The two masters looked at one another.

"Pray be seated, sir!" said Mr. Greely, with grim courtesy.

"Thank you, I will stand."

"As you please, sir."

"This interview need not last more than a few minutes, Mr. Greely."

"As a matter of fact, my time is of value, Dr. Chisholm."

"I have called with reference to the boys who have left Rookwood and taken refuge here."

"No doubt."

"These boys must return to Rookwood."

"These boys now belong to the Manor House, Dr. Chisholm, and will remain here."

"The boys have, in point of fact, run away from school, Mr. Greely, and if they do not return, the law will be invoked."

"You are welcome to invoke it, sir."

"The parents of the boys—"

"The parents of the boys will give their decision in the matter, Dr. Chisholm, and I trust that it will be in my favour."

"You are determined, then, to keep on this unhappy dispute, Mr. Greely?"

"There is no dispute, sir," said Horace Greely. "I am headmaster of the Manor House. You are headmaster of Rookwood. I decline to enter into any dispute."

Dr. Chisholm paused.

As a matter of fact, the Head of Rookwood had had time to reflect, and, as generally happened with the obstinate old gentleman after due reflection, he regretted a hastily and inconsiderate

action. So now he was unusually patient with Horace Greely.

"I have already expressed, Mr. Greely, my regret for the unfortunate misunderstanding which led to your dismissal from Rookwood School. That dismissal I offered to rescind, and my offer is still open. You are welcome to return to Rookwood in all honour."

Mr. Greely felt an inward twinge.

The Head had done him wrong, and he had justly resented it; but certainly the Head had made all the amends in his power, and this was a great concession from so lofty a gentleman. And Mr. Greely's headmastership—with Sir George Hansom putting his foot down—did not seem so dazzling as it had seemed earlier.

For a moment, Horace Greely wavered.

But it was only for a moment. After all, Sir George Hansom would soon be gone, then he would be master in his own house, monarch of all he surveyed in his new school.

"I cannot see my way to accept your offer, sir," he said stiffly.

Dr. Chisholm bowed.

"That is as seems best to you, Mr. Greely; at all events, I trust there is no personal ill-feeling, now that I have made all the amends in my power."

"None at all, sir, none at all," said Mr. Greely, sincerely enough. "I deeply regret that there was any disagreement. But I am now committed to my new career."

"Quite so! I will say no more. But, in the matter of my boys who have come here, I am unable, of course, to let the matter rest where it is," said Dr. Chisholm.

"You will take any measures that seem to you proper, sir," said Mr. Greely, truculent again. "On my part, I shall do the same. If a legal question must be decided in the courts, I am prepared."

The Head of Rookwood made a deprecating gesture.

"I trust it will not come to that, Mr.

Greely. For a few days, at least, I shall allow the matter to rest where it is, in the hope that it may be arranged without public scandal and gossip. I have too much respect for your character not to feel that my boys are perfectly safe in your charge."

"You are very good, sir," said Mr. Greely, melting again.

"That is all I have to say, sir," said Dr. Chisholm, and he held out his hand gravely.

Mr. Greely shook hands with his former chief.

He walked as far as the House doorway with Dr. Chisholm, and stood there, with a mixture of feelings, watching the stately gentleman progress along the path to the gates. And, all of a sudden, he had the startling sight of Dr. Chisholm's silk-hat flying off—knocked from his head by a flying tennis-ball.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Greely.

Dr. Chisholm staggered, in his surprise, clutching at his flying hat, and fell on his august knees.

Mr. Greely, with a purple face, rushed down the steps.

"Who threw that ball?" he thundered.

There was a buzz among the fellows in the Close.

"What disrespectful young scoundrel dared to throw that ball?" roared Mr. Greely.

Dr. Chisholm picked himself up.

His face was flushed, but he preserved his dignity.

"Thank you," he said quietly, as Jimmy Silver rushed up with his recaptured hat.

There was a big dent in the hat. Dr. Chisholm smoothed it, with adequate calmness, and set it upon his head again.

"Dr. Chisholm!" gasped Mr. Greely, scarlet with rage and mortification. "A thousand apologies! I cannot say how—how I regret— I am sure you will understand that I am deeply shocked! I—I—"

"Quite so, Mr. Greely. Good-afternoon."

The Head of Rookwood sailed majestically out of gates. And then Mr. Greely, with a deadly glare, turned on the crowd of fellows in the Close.

"Who threw that ball? The young rascal will be instantly flogged—flogged with the greatest severity! Who was it?"

CHAPTER 32.

Out of Hand!

"ECHO answers 'who?'" murmured Valentine Mornington, and some of the juniors grinned.

But really, it was not a grinning matter. The action had been an outrageous one, and Mr. Greely was deeply enraged. The incident reflected deep discredit on Manor House School, on Horace Greely's headmastership. The culprit was "for it" as soon as Mr. Greely discovered him.

But he did not seem easy to discover.

"Was it you, Lovell?" thundered Mr. Greely.

"Certainly not!" snapped Lovell indignantly.

"Mornington——"

"Oh, sir!" said Mornington.

"Answer me directly, Mornington! Say yes or no."

"Yes or no!" said Morny, at once.

"What, what?" The exasperated Head of Manor House School could not realise that Morny had the astounding impudence to pull his leg at that critical moment. "What did you say, Mornington?"

"Yes or no, sir," answered Mornington brightly.

"What do you mean, Mornington?"

"Only to be obedient, sir," said Morny meekly. "You told me to say 'Yes or no,' sir. So I've said it! I'm trying to set an example of obedience to these fellows, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Greely was purple.

"You—you dare to bandy words with me, Mornington! I take that as an admission that you were guilty of this heinous act of insolence and disrespect to Dr. Chisholm. Mornington, follow me into the House."

Mr. Greely stalked away, bursting with wrath.

"Dear me!" said Morny, with a yawn.

"Was it you, Morny?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Not at all. It was somebody behind those oaks yonder—I saw the ball whizz," said Morny calmly. "I dare say Peele could tell us who it was."

"How should I know?" demanded Cyril Peele.

"Well, you sneaked out from behind the oaks a few seconds after the ball knocked off the beak's hat," grinned Mornington.

Peele gritted his teeth.

"You can tell Greely that, if you like. I shall deny it."

"My dear man, I'm not goin' to tell Greely anythin'. I'm not even goin' to see the good gentleman."

"You'd better go, Morny," urged Jimmy Silver. "Greely ordered you to follow him."

"Bother Greely!"

"You'd no right to pull his silly old leg when he was asking you a question," said Putty of the Fourth.

"He'd no right to ask me such a question. I'm not the chap to knock off a master's hat with a tennis-ball."

"All the same——" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats!"

Valentine Mornington walked away with his hands in his pockets. Mr. Greely, staring round from the House to make sure that Morny was following him, observed the dandy of the Fourth disappearing in the distance, sauntering coolly with his hands in his pockets.

"Mornington!" thundered Mr. Greely.

Morny did not even glance round.

"Hansom!"

"Hallo!" said Hansom, glancing at Mr. Greely cheerfully. His victory had made Hansom of the Fifth more independent than ever. It was inconceivable that he ever would have answered "Hallo!" to Dr. Chisholm at Rookwood. But he answered "Hallo!" to Mr. Greely as if that was quite the proper mode of address to a headmaster.

Mr. Greely suppressed his wrath. He did not want another argument with Sir George Hansom.

"Go and fetch Mornington here at once, Hansom."

"Oh! Right-ho, sir!" said Hansom cheerfully. He was more than ready to lend a hand in keeping cheeky Fourth-Formers in their places. The more the Fourth were licked the better it was for them and for the world in general, according to the view taken by the Fifth.

Hansom bore down on the dandy of the Fourth. Several of the Fourth gathered round Morny at once. It looked as if the morning's scrap between the Fourth and the Fifth was to be repeated in the afternoon. Somehow or other—Mr. Horace Greely did not know how—he had failed to impress his new school with a proper sense of his authority. It was quite possible that a ponderous gentleman who was well suited to be a Form-master lacked the necessary qualities of a headmaster. But that was an explanation that did not occur to Horace Greely for a moment.

He strode hurriedly upon the scene, anxious to prevent another "shindy."

"Stand back, Hansom——"

"You told me to fetch him, sir!" grunted Hansom.

"And now I tell you to stand back!" snapped Mr. Greely sharply. "Leave Mornington to me."

"Well, if you don't know your own mind, sir——" said Hansom.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Greely.

Hansom shrugged his shoulders. He was not in the least afraid of Horace

Greely, and he seemed to desire that fact to be observed by all observers.

In the peculiar circumstances it was undoubtedly awkward for Mr. Greely to deal with Hansom as that reckless and unreflecting youth deserved. He concentrated his attention upon Morny.

"Mornington, I ordered you to follow me to the House! Muffin, fetch a cane from my study at once!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tubby Muffin.

"Am I goin' to be caned, 'sir?" yawned Mornington.

"You are, you unruly young ruffian! You have dared to insult Dr. Chisholm, a guest within these walls——"

"By leaving Rookwood and comin' here, sir, do you mean?" inquired Morny in his silkiest tones.

Mr. Greely choked.

"I do not mean that, Mornington."

"Oh, I thought perhaps you did, sir!" said Morny cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! I shall cane you with the utmost severity, Mornington, for having assaulted Dr. Chisholm by knocking off his hat!"

"But I didn't do it, sir."

"You have admitted that you did by your prevaricating answers when I questioned you——"

"Not at all, sir. That was only your little mistake," said the dandy of the Fourth coolly. "The fact is, sir, you rather jump to conclusions."

"Muffin! Hurry yourself, sir!" shouted Mr. Greely, as Tubby came rolling from the House with the cane.

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Tubby and he hurried up and handed the cane to Horace Greely.

"Hold out your hand, Mornington!"

Mornington did not remove his hands from his pockets.

"You hear me, boy?"

"I'm not deaf, sir."

"It you'll let me speak, sir——" interposed Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, Silver!"

"It wasn't Mornington threw the ball,

sir," persisted Jimmy. "He was standing quite near me at the time."

"Nonsense!"

"I assure you, sir——"

"Silence!"

Mr. Greely was not in a mood to listen to reason. He had been deeply humiliated by the insult offered to his late chief, and the offender had to be punished. That he had, so to speak, got the wrong pig by the ear was a little circumstance he was too angry and excited to trouble about. Morny, at least, had been disobedient, and undoubtedly impertinent. Mr. Greely flourished the cane.

"Mornington, I command you——"

"Dear me!" said Mornington.

That was too much for Mr. Greely. He fairly jumped at Mornington and grasped him by the collar.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The cane rang on Morny's shoulders.

"Whoop!" roared Mornington.

"Leggo, you rotter! Oh, my hat! Yarooooop! Rescue, you fellows! Leggo, you priceless old ass! Do you hear?"

If anything was needed to make Horace Greely boil over, that would have done it. The headmaster of Manor House School was actually addressed as a priceless old ass!

Mr. Greely laid on the cane as though he were beating a carpet.

Valentine Mornington writhed and wriggled and yelled. There was a sudden howl from Mr. Greely as the junior hacked his shins.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!" howled the startled Mr. Greely, and in his anguish he released Mornington.

That reckless youth darted away at once. He scudded to the school wall. Mr. Greely was very quickly after him; but, with a desperate clamber, Mornington reached the top of the wall.

There he sat, with his feet pulled up out of Mr. Greely's reach, and looked down on the enraged headmaster of the Manor House. The whole crowd of fellows followed and stood staring on

at the scene in breathless excitement. "Mornington, come down at once!" roared Mr. Greely, brandishing the cane.

"Bow-wow!"

"Boy!"

"Man!" retorted Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The next boy who laughs will be flogged!" roared Mr. Greely. "Mornington, I shall make an example of you!"

"First catch your hare, sir!" said Mornington coolly. "The fact is, Horace, old man, I'm fed-up with you!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You were no great shakes as a Form-master at Rockwood, I believe," said Mornington cheerily; "and as a headmaster, old bean, you cut no ice whatever. You can't keep your jolly old Fifth in order, and when it comes to the Fourth you're not even an also ran; you're nowhere at all!"

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

Mr. Greely choked with wrath.

"You—you young rascal—you—you—I—I——"

"Take your time, sir," said Mornington. "It's a pleasure to listen to you; but don't stutter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I will—I will—I will flog you!" gasped Mr. Greely, almost incoherent with rage. "You—you insolent young blackguard——"

"You won't flog me, old pippin!" answered Mornington. "I'm fed-up with you, as I said before. If I'm goin' to be caned I may as well be caned by my own headmaster. I'm goin' back to Rockwood!"

"Mornington, I order you to descend at once from that wall!" boomed Mr. Greely.

"I'm goin'! Good-bye, old bean!" said Mornington, slipping over to the outside of the wall.

"Come back!" thundered Mr. Greely.

"Rats!"

"I command you——"

"More rats! I'm goin' back to Rock-

wood. Shall I tell the Beak that you other fellows are comin'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any message from you, Greely, old man?"

Mr. Greely did not answer. He made a rush towards the gates, evidently with the intention of cutting off Mornington's retreat in the road.

"Time I was gone!" remarked Mornington, with a nod and a smile to the grinning crowd of fellows. "You chaps had better follow my example. Greely's no good. His giddy school's no good! Ta-ta!"

Mornington dropped from the wall and vanished.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"What larks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Greely catches him——" murmured Raby.

"Greely won't!" grinned Lovell.

Lovell was right. Mr. Greely didn't. A few minutes later the Head of Manor House School came striding in again, alone. Evidently he had failed to catch the elusive Mornington.

Mr. Greely glared at the crowd of chuckling Fourth Formers.

"All Fourth Form boys will go into their Form-room at once for an hour's detention!" he boomed.

"What?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I will maintain discipline in this school!" thundered Mr. Greely. "Go at once! At once, I say!"

And the enraged Mr. Greely looked so dangerous that the Fourth Form fellows marched off, shepherded into the house by Horace Greely, cane in hand.

Mr. Greely thoughtfully provided them with a detention task and left them breathing deep with wrath.

The detention task did not occupy the attention of the Fourth Formers, however. Even Tubby Muffin was rebellious.

"We're not standing this," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Why, we

kicked because the Beak was too high-handed at Rookwood. We're not standing this from a cheap imitation Beak."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No jolly fear!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly.

And the Fourth Formers marched out again.

From his study windows, ten minutes later, Horace Greely had a view of them in the Close. He grasped his cane and stepped to the door, then he paused and laid down the cane again. Mr. Greely really did not know what to do, and in the end he did nothing. Which was not an augury of success in Mr. Greely's career as a headmaster.

CHAPTER 23.

Morny Drops In!

"O H, gad!"

Valentine Mornington of the Fourth Form at Rookwood lodged quickly.

He had just time to dodge.

Normally, at that hour in the afternoon the Rookwood Fourth would have been in class with their Form-master, Mr. Dalton.

But just as present matters were not quite normal at Rookwood School. They were, in fact, quite abnormal.

The Fourth Form Room was silent and deserted. Not a fellow belonging to the Classical Fourth was within the walls of the old school—with the single exception of Valentine Mornington.

And Morny was only just within the walls. He had, in fact, just dropped in, having climbed the school wall from the road outside. He dropped between the wall and a big beech-tree, and as he did so, he heard the sound of footsteps and the murmur of voices on the gravel path on the other side of the tree; and, recognising the well-known voice of Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, Morny breathed an ejaculation under his breath and dodged instantly into cover behind the beech.

"The jolly old Head!" he murmured. "Might have dropped on his jolly old toes, by gad!"

And Morny grinned.

He listened while he grinned, wondering whether the Head had heard him drop. But there was no alarm; and after a few moments Mornington peered cautiously round the big, gnarled trunk.

Two masters of Rookwood were pacing slowly along the gravel path. One was Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood; the other, Mr. Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth Form. Both of them looked very grave.

The Head was speaking. Deep in discussion, the two masters had not noted the slight sound made by Morny in dropping from the wall.

"I am somewhat nonplussed, Mr. Dalton. The state of affairs is very unfortunate—most unfortunate."

"Quite so, sir."

"I should be glad—only too glad—for the dispute to be adjusted amicably," resumed the Head. "The fact that the fault was mine in the first place ties my hands to some extent. I have called on Mr. Greely and informed him that my boys must return to Rookwood; I have told him that I will give him a few days to consider the matter."

"A very good idea, sir."

"If you can make any suggestion, Mr. Dalton, with a view to terminating this unhappy state of affairs I—"

The Head paused.

The two masters had come to a halt and were standing under the branches of the beech, not two yards from Valentine Mornington, who kept close behind the big trunk.

"Certainly, sir," said Richard Dalton. "I should suggest offering a free pardon to all the boys who have gone over to the Manor House, on condition that they return to Rookwood."

"Hem!"

"Some of them fear expulsion from the school, others severe punishment,"

said the Fourth Form master. "This gives them no choice but to throw in their lot with Mr. Greely and to use persuasion with their parents. An assurance that the whole matter would be forgiven and forgotten would, I am sure, do much."

"Hem!"

The Head was clearly in a chastened mood, and did not seem quite prepared to go this length. There was a long pause.

"But I have actually expelled Hansom of the Fifth, Mr. Dalton," he said at last.

"That was a very severe measure, sir; unjustified, in my opinion."

"Mr. Dalton!" exclaimed the Head, in stately surprise.

"You have asked me to speak, sir," said the Fourth Form master composedly. "I am bound to speak frankly if at all. Hansom of the Fifth most certainly is a headstrong and unthinking boy; but his father had been saved from severe injury by Mr. Greely, and Mr. Greely was dismissed—unjustly, as you acknowledge. Certainly he should not have rebelled against his headmaster, but there is much justification. I think that Hansom of the Fifth should be freely pardoned with the rest, if his father will consent to his return to Rookwood."

There was another long pause.

Mornington wondered whether a thunderstorm was about to burst upon the devoted head of Richard Dalton.

But when the Head spoke again his voice was very quiet.

"And Silver of the Fourth, Mr. Dalton—of your Form. He left Rookwood against my special command—almost in my presence—"

"I can only repeat what I have said, sir—a complete pardon all round seems to me the only satisfactory ending to the present state of affairs. It may lead to the peaceable return of the absent boys to Rookwood—or it may not. I hope that it may."

Another long pause.

"I have great faith in your judgment, Mr. Dalton," said the Head at last. "You are the only master at Rookwood whom I could have consulted in the matter. Neither can I forget that the whole trouble began in a fault of my own. I shall act on your advice."

"I am sure you will not regret it, sir," said Richard Dalton earnestly.

"I trust not. The boys at the Manor House shall, therefore, be informed that if they return without delay all shall be forgotten and forgiven," said the Head. "I have offered to allow Mr. Greely to return in all honour if he should so decide; I could not do less. The boys, at all events, must return—and your suggestion shall be tried."

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir."

Mr. Dalton was not the only person who was glad to hear the Head say so. His gladness was shared by Valentine Mornington.

Morny had returned already from the new school, and his intention had been to see his Form-master alone first and make his peace before coming under the eyes of Dr. Chisholm. That intention he changed now.

With a cheery face, the dandy of the Fourth stepped out from behind the beech, and raised his hat to the headmaster.

Dr. Chisholm stared at him.

"Please I've come back, sir!" said Mornington meekly.

"What?"

"Fed-up with Manor House School, sir!" said Morny. "I've come back to Rookwood. Lots of the fellows will come back when they know there isn't going to be a row, sir."

Mr. Dalton suppressed a smile. The Head frowned.

"P'raps you wouldn't mind my tellin' you somethin', sir," went on Morny, unabashed. "About Jimmy Silver! When he cleared out of Rookwood he wasn't up against you, sir; he came to fetch me back and make me toe the line. He was standin' up for law and order and so on when you dropped on

him, sir, and told him he was goin' to be sacked for breakin' bounds."

Dr. Chisholm started.

The crimson came into his cheeks.

This was a fresh enlightenment for him. Evidently it was not only in the case of Mr. Greely that he had been hasty.

"Bless my soul!" he said at last. "Is—is that the truth, Mornington?"

"Mr. Dalton will tell you that I am not a liar, sir, if you ask him," said Mornington, shrugging his shoulders.

"I have no doubt whatever of Mornington's statement, Dr. Chisholm," said the master of the Fourth. "I have never doubted that there was some explanation of Silver's action unknown to you."

The Head bit his lip hard.

"You may go, Mornington! You are pardoned!"

"Thank you, sir," said Morny cheerily.

And he sauntered away towards the House.

Dr. Chisholm looked at Mr. Dalton.

"I have acted hastily," he said. "I have been unjust. Mr. Dalton, your advice is good; I am grateful for it. Will you convey to the boys at the Manor House that all will be forgiven and forgotten if they return to Rookwood?"

"Gladly, sir!"

And Dr. Chisholm walked away, deep in thought, leaving the master of the Fourth with a very cheerful face. At last there seemed a hope, at least, that the split in the school would be closed, the breach healed, and that Rookwood might once more resume the even tenor of its way.

CHAPTER 24.

The High Hand!

"COLLAR him!"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

Morning classes were over at Manor House School, and Jimmy was strolling along a secluded path under the old oak-trees with his hands in his

pockets and a very thoughtful expression on his face. Suddenly his reflections were interrupted by that shout from Hansom of the Fifth and a rush of footsteps.

Jimmy Silver was collared the next moment, and he came down on the grass under the oaks with a bump.

He was in the hands of Lumsden and Talboys of the Fifth, and Edward Hansom, captain of that Form, stood and grinned down at him.

"Landed our fish, by gad!" grinned Hansom.

"You cheeky ass!" shouted Jimmy Silver, struggling in the grasp of the two seniors. "Let go! Do you hear?"

Hansom chuckled.

"My dear man, you're goin' to have a little lesson," he explained. "I'm goin' to teach you. Turn him over!"

Hansom had an ashplant under his arm, for all the world as if he were a Rookwood prefect. He slipped it down into his hand in quite the prefect style. Then he flourished it in the air, rather more like a fag than a prefect.

Jimmy, resisting desperately, was rolled over, with his face in the grass. Hansom flourished the ashplant, and brought it down with great vim.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Hansom was laying it on with vigour.

"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy Silver with all the force of his lungs. "Lovell! Raby! Newcome! Rescue!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Jimmy Silver's chums were not within hearing. The ashplant whacked and whacked, while Jimmy struggled and yelled.

"Bless my soul! What—what—what——"

Mr. Greely came up.

"What — what — what ——" exclaimed Mr. Greely. "Hansom, what are you doing? Stop this at once."

Hansom glanced at him with a cheery smile.

"Only givin' a cheeky fag six, sir," he answered.

"Really, Hansom——"

Whack!

The ashplant came down again.

"Hansom," thundered Mr. Greely, "stop this at once! Do you hear me? I command you!"

"Better not interfere, sir," said Hansom.

"What—what?"

"You see, sir, I'm captain of the school, and I don't need any advice. I know what to do and how to do it."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Greely. "Hansom, you are an insolent boy! You are no longer captain of the school! Do you hear?"

"My father will have somethin' to say about that!" retorted Hansom.

"Silence, you young rascal! Another word, and I will flog you, as you deserve!"

"I don't think!"

"What—what!" stuttered Mr. Greely.

"You jolly well won't, and that's that!" said Hansom independently. "I didn't come here to be flogged, I can jolly well tell you. I could have got that from Dr. Chisholm—a real headmaster—if I'd wanted it. Bosh! Come on, you fellows!"

Hansom & Co. walked away, leaving Mr. Greely spluttering.

Jimmy Silver picked himself up, wriggling.

"Thank you, sir!" he said breathlessly.

Mr. Greely glared at him. He had been bound to intervene; but his intervention had led to fresh difficulties; there was more trouble in prospect with Hansom's father. Rather unreasonably, but perhaps naturally, his wrath turned on Jimmy.

"Silver, you have been insolent to Hansom, I have no doubt. Take five hundred lines."

"What?" gasped Jimmy.

"Go!"

Jimmy Silver went.

Mr. Greely, greatly perturbed, paced under the oak-trees, more worried and perplexed than ever.

Jimmy Silver found his comrades in

the Close, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared at him as he came up, wriggling. Hansom had laid on the ashplant not wisely, but too well, and Jimmy was feeling the effects of it very severely.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

Jimmy explained.

"By gum! We'll jolly well rag Hansom for this!" exclaimed Raby indignantly.

"We jolly well will!" said Newcome. And the Fistical Four went in to dinner, not at all satisfied with Manor House School or things generally.

CHAPTER XL

Horrid for Hansom!

SIR GEORGE HANSOM stared. He rubbed his eyes and stared again.

Sir George had lunched with Mr. Greely—a rather grim and silent lunch. Both gentlemen had matters on their minds, of which they did not care to speak, yet which had to be spoken of sooner or later.

After lunch, the baronet took a walk in the grounds of the Manor House, and his footsteps took him along the path under the oaks, where, a short time before, Edward Hansom had exercised, not wisely but too well, his authority as captain of the school.

A startling sight suddenly met his astonished gaze.

A weird figure was hopping along the path. For the moment Sir George did not recognise it.

The figure had a blackened face; ink and soot had been rubbed over it. A fool's cap adorned its head. Its hands were tied behind its back, and its leg was tied up, bent at the knee. The weird figure was, therefore, hopping on one leg, not at all gracefully.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Sir George. He stared blankly at the strange object.

"Oh, let me loose, dad!" gasped the weird figure.

Sir George jumped almost clear of the ground.

"Edward!" he said faintly.

"Ow! Oh, dear!"

Hansom of the Fifth lurched as he hopped, and brought up against an oak. He leaned on the trunk, spluttering ink and soot.

"Edward!" gasped Sir George. "You—my son! What—what—what is the cause of this? What has happened?"

"Ow! Those cheeky fags!" spluttered the hapless Hansom. "Silver and Lovell, and a whole gang of the Fourth! Ow! They collared me—groogh!—and did this—Wow-ow! Look at me! Oooooch!"

And he spluttered more soot and ink.

The baronet stood dumbfounded.

"I—I say, untie me, father, will you?" groaned Hansom. "I've been ragged, you know! Ow! I'm simply filthy! Wow! Have you got a penknife about you? Ow! Oh, dear! I'll smash 'em! Groogh!"

In amazed silence, Sir George Hansom took out a penknife, opened it, and cut the cords that tied up his hopeful son.

His face was crimson with wrath and indignation.

"Go and clean yourself at once, Edward!" he said, in a subdued voice.

"That's what I jolly well want!" groaned Hansom.

And once freed from his bonds, he cut across at a run towards the House, anxious to get into a bath-room without delay.

A roar of laughter greeted him as he appeared in the Close.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's Hansom!"

"Looks handsome—what?" roared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where did you get that face, Hansom?"

"Give him some soap, somebody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom's face was scarlet under the soot and ink. The Close was crowded with fellows, and they were all roaring with laughter; even the Fifth Form fellows yelled with the rest.

"You—you—you young scoundrel!" panted Hansom; and he charged at Jimmy Silver & Co.

Bump!

Hansom of the Fifth sprawled on the ground.

Forth from the shade of the oak-trees came Sir George Hansom, red with rage, like a lion from his lair.

"You young rascals!" he thundered.

"Hallo, here's the old bird!" exclaimed Lovell disrespectfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell your darling boy to go and get a wash, old bean!" yelled Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a scattering of the juniors as Sir George strode up. He grasped his hapless son, and pulled him to his feet.

"Go in at once, Edward!"

"Ow! All right! Ow!"

Hansom ran for the House. In the doorway he encountered Mr. Greely, and encountered a stare of wrathful astonishment.

"Wh—what—who is that?"

"Me!" spluttered Hansom, breathlessly and ungrammatically.

"What? Who? Hansom! Is it Hansom?"

"Yes; let me pass——"

"How dare you, Hansom? How dare you appear in public in this state—in this disgusting, this revolting state?" roared Mr. Greely, justly incensed. "Is this a new example of your insolence, sir? How dare you?"

He grasped Hansom by the shoulder and shook him.

"You silly old fool!" gasped Hansom. "Do you think I did it myself?"

"What—what—what—what did you call me, Hansom?"

"Let go, you footling ass!"

Hansom was enraged, as well as Mr. Greely, and he did not measure his words.

Mr. Greely stared at him.

He let go, and dealt Hansom a box on the ear that sent him spinning.

"Whooop!" roared the Fifth-Former.

"You insolent young rascal——"

"You old dummy!" yelled Hansom.

"Upon my word! I—I——" Mr. Greely's wrath overflowed; he forgot the existence of his kind friend and patron, and would not have cared, had he remembered it. He crowded on Hansom of the Fifth, boxing his ears right and left.

"Ow, ow, ow!" yelled Hansom, dodging frantically. "You old ass—yaroo!—you thumping chump—oh, my hat! Keep off, you giddy old lunatic! Whoop!"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

"Mr. Greely!" It was Sir George Hansom's voice in the doorway. "Horace Greely! You forget yourself, sir!"

Mr. Greely suddenly left off boxing Hansom's ears.

"Go!" he breathed.

Hansom of the Fifth dodged away, only too glad to escape.

Mr. Greely looked at Sir George, breathing deep. Sir George looked at Mr. Greely, his eyes glittering with anger. Behind Sir George, Jimmy Silver & Co., and a crowd of other fellows swarmed. Fortunately both gentlemen remembered that something was due to appearances, and they restrained the hot words on their lips.

"K-k-k-kindly step into my study. Sir George!" gasped Mr. Greely.

"I will do so, sir!" snorted Sir George.

And a door closed on the two angry gentlemen, concealing them from the intensely interested gaze of Manor House School.

CHAPTER XX.

Marching Orders!

"IT'S Dicky's list!"

"Mr. Dalton—by Jove! Let's see what Dicky has to say."

Jimmy Silver opened the letter.

Not only his own comrades, but a crowd of the Fourth Form fellows gathered round Jimmy as he opened the letter from Richard Dalton under

the trees in the close. They all wanted to know what the master of the Rookwood Fourth had to say.

Jimmy glanced at the letter and whistled.

"My hat! This is all right!"

"Read it out!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Lend me your giddy ears!" grinned Jimmy.

And he read out the letter to a breathless crowd:

"Dear Silver,— I am sure that you will understand that the present state of affairs cannot possibly be allowed to continue. I am convinced, too, that you are loyal to your old school, and wish to see an end to the present unhappy dispute. Dr. Chisholm authorises me to say that every Rookwood boy who returns to the school will be freely pardoned; no reference whatever will be made to what has happened; all will

BEST BOOKS FOR SEPTEMBER!

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

No. 227 and 228.

"THE TRAIL OF THE TRIKE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

"SEVEN BOYS IN A BOAT!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

*Make a Note of the Date They
Are On Sale:*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th.

*But Don't Leave it To Chance
—Give Your Order in Advance!*

be forgotten and forgiven. In these circumstances, I am sure that you will see that it is your duty, as well as your best interest, to return at once, and use your influence with your Form-fellows to induce them to do the same. Please make this generally known to all Rookwood boys now at the Manor House. I know that I can rely upon you.

"Your Form-master,
"RICHARD DALTON."

"That's the goods, and no mistake!" said Putty of the Fourth.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

"I know I'm jolly well fed-up with Greely, and all the Hansom family, old and young!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I'm going back!"

"Same here!"

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's what we wanted—Dicky Dalton must have been talking sense to the Head!"

"Must have given the old scout a shock!" grinned Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Dicky!" said Lovell heartily. "We're going back, of course. Shove that letter on the notice-board, Jimmy, and let everybody read it. The Fifth can do as they jolly well like; but I fancy that old Greely will lose his Fourth and his Third and his Second, what that's known!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin eagerly. "Let's get off, we can cut classes here, and get to Rookwood too late for classes there! See!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going!" said Jimmy Silver. "The Head's come round, and that's all we wanted! We're not bound to stand by Greely—a pompous ass who doesn't know how to manage a school, and gives a fellow five hundred lines for being licked by a swanking Fifth-Form chump! I'm jolly well fed-up with Greely."

"Hear, hear!"

Jimmy Silver walked into the House, the letter in his hand.

He proceeded to affix it in a prominent place on the school notice-board.

In a few minutes a crowd of fellows were reading it; in ten minutes, not a fellow at the Manor House was ignorant that Dr. Chisholm was offering an amnesty to all fellows who returned to the school. The fact that Jimmy Silver & Co. were accepting the offer had a great effect on the junior contingent. Where "Uncle James" of Rookwood led, the Lower School were accustomed to follow; and Valentine Mornington, who had been the leader of the desertion, was already gone—the first to go. On all sides fellows were getting ready to clear out of the Manor House—and even some of the Fifth seemed in a doubtful mood.

Hansom of the Fifth, in a newly-swept and garnished state, but still showing signs of ink and soot about his ears and hair, was the last to arrive on the scene and read the letter from Mr. Dalton.

Hansom gave a snort.

He was by no means disposed to leave the new school, where he regarded himself rather as monarch of all he surveyed, and return to law and order and discipline at Rookwood.

"Rot!" he announced.

"After all, there's somethin' in it," ventured Talboys. "The Head will let you come back with us, Hansom, old bean. That's all right, you know."

"Rot!" repeated Hansom. "We're getting a better time here than at Rookwood."

"Yes," said Lumsden. "But——"

"Rot, I tell you!"

Hansom jerked the letter down from the board.

"Let that letter alone, you cheeky cad!" roared Lovell indignantly.

"You cheeky young sweep——"

"Roll him over!" shouted Raby.

There was a rush of the juniors. Hansom of the Fifth went sprawling.

and the letter was recaptured and stuck on the board again.

"Bump him!" roared Lovell.

Lumsden and Talboys were shoved aside, and the juniors collared Edward Hansom, and proceeded to bump him hard. By the time they had finished with Hansom of the Fifth, that youth was too breathless to give utterance to his thoughts; but possibly he was thinking that, after all, he was not getting a better time at the Manor House than he had had at Rookwood.

Leaving Hansom for dead, as it were, Jimmy Silver & Co. marched away, and turned out of the school gates in a body. They had done with Hansom of the Fifth, done with the Manor House, and done with Mr. Greely. And as the crowd marched out cheering, other juniors who had not yet made up their minds, made them up quite promptly, and joined up, and not a junior was left within the walls of the Manor House. And even a few of the Fifth—possibly not wholly satisfied with Hansom's manners and customs as captain of the school—followed the crowd. And in cheery spirits, Jimmy Silver led his army back to Rookwood.

CHAPTER 37.

Homeward Bound!

"**R**EALLY, Sir George——"

"Really, sir——"

"The time has come, sir, to speak out, I think."

"I fully agree with you, Mr. Greely."

Mr. Greely breathed hard and deep.

He stood by his desk, in his study, and Sir George Hansom, also standing, faced him.

Both the gentlemen were angry; both were sorry to be angry; both realised that matters had come to a head.

"It seems," said Mr. Greely, his voice trembling a little, "that you have not complete confidence in me as headmaster of the Manor House, Sir George."

"I am sorry to say that I cannot

think you have fully justified the confidence I placed in you, Mr. Greely."

"I admit nothing of the kind. I repeat, nothing of the kind!" boomed Horace Greely. "To carry on as headmaster, and at the same time submit to the insolence of a young rascal, is impossible, sir—impossible."

"Are you characterising my son as a young rascal?"

"The term is, perhaps, too strong; but a thoughtless, reckless, unruly, presumptuous young fool——"

"Mr. Greely!"

"Sir George!"

"I find you, sir, boxing my son's ears!" said Sir George. "Such a form of punishment——"

"I confess that I had lost my temper, provoked by Edward Hansom's unparalleled insolence——"

"Headmasters do not lose their tempers, Mr. Greely, when they possess a proper sense of the fitness of things."

"Your son, sir, would drive an archangel to lose his temper."

"My son—who stood up for you when you were dismissed from Rookwood, and defied his headmaster on your account!" exclaimed the baronet indignantly.

"I do not forget it, sir—I do not forget it! But it has dawned upon my mind that Edward Hansom's defiance of Dr. Chisholm at Rookwood was of a piece with his defiance of me here! Of a piece, sir!" repeated Mr. Greely. "The boy is reckless, unruly, presumptuous—faults that I naturally expected his father to check——"

"And which his father would check, sir, if he could perceive them as clearly as you appear to do!" snorted Sir George. "But he does not, sir—he does not."

"A headmaster, sir, cannot submit to constant interference in the management of his school——"

"The founder of a school, sir, is bound to satisfy himself that his headmaster is competent to fill his position, sir."

"Sir George!"

"Mr. Greely!"

"I have no alternative, Sir George, but to administer a flogging to Edward Hansom, if he is to remain in this school."

"If!" ejaculated Sir George. "If—if my son is to remain in the school which I have founded, and to which I have appointed you headmaster. Was I mistaken, Mr. Greely, in believing your dismissal from Rookwood unjust? Had Dr. Chisholm grounds of complaint in your obstinacy of temper, your blindness to all opinions but your own—"

"So it has come to this!" said Mr. Greely. "This is the outcome of my high hopes—this—" He choked. "Sir George, if I am to remain headmaster of Manor House, I insist, without question, upon a free hand. I insist upon that, sir, as a *sine qua non*."

"We need not prolong this discussion, sir," snorted Sir George. "It is undignified, and it is unprofitable. I will only say, that if you remain headmaster of the Manor House, I shall expect you to institute better order in the school, and to make it impossible, sir, impossible, for my son, the captain of the school, to be ragged, and blackened with soot, sir, by a mob of Lower boys. Think over it, sir—think over it."

With that, Sir George Hansom quitted the study, closing the door behind him with a bang.

Mr. Greely stood for some minutes staring at the closed door, trembling with anger and resentment.

Then he whirled round, strode to his desk, and grabbed up the telephone receiver.

He almost shouted a number into the transmitter. He jammed the receiver to his ear, and listened impatiently. A cool, calm voice came through.

"Well?"

"Is that Dr. Chisholm, of Rookwood School?" asked Mr. Greely.

"Dr. Chisholm is speaking. Mr. Greely, I think—"

"Yes, sir! Dr. Chisholm, yesterday you called on me; you offered to let bygones be bygones—"

"I spoke with sincerity, Mr. Greely. I learned too late that I had treated you with injustice. I regretted it, and regret it now."

"Thank you, sir," gasped Mr. Greely. "Sir! You offered me re-instatement at Rookwood—"

"Reinstatement in your old position here, in all honour, Mr. Greely," said the calm voice. "I could offer you no less, if you cared to accept it."

"Is that offer still open, sir?"

"Certainly."

"Dr. Chisholm! I will not deny that I resented, deeply, the injustice of my dismissal. But since that time I fear that I have also been guilty of faults towards you, for which I ask your pardon."

"Granted, Mr. Greely, granted. My only wish is to let bygones be bygones."

"Then I accept your offer, sir."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Greely," said the headmaster of Rookwood cordially. "I shall be happy to welcome you back to the school."

"To-day, sir—this afternoon—"

"The sooner the better, Mr. Greely."

"Then I shall see you very soon, sir."

"Very good. And the boys—"

"Undoubtedly the boys will return with me, sir. If—if—"

"You will assure them from me, Mr. Greely, that all offences are pardoned and forgotten, if they return with you."

"You relieve my mind very much, sir! I make no doubt that all the boys will return, when I give them your generous message, sir."

"Very good."

Mr. Greely jammed the receiver back on the hook. He was feeling better. From his study window, he saw Sir George Hansom's car come round, and the baronet step into it. Mr. Greely eyed him grimly. Sir George was going to Latcham on some business connected with a supply of school maps—a business which might very well have been left to the headmaster. Sir George was welcome to take it in hand now. By the time he returned, Mr. Greely intended to

have shaken the dust of the Manor House from his feet for ever.

He spent some little time in preparations for departure; he left a note on his table for Sir George Hansom. Then he sallied forth to announce his decision to the school. He found Hansom of the Fifth lounging by the door, and called to him.

The Fifth-Former gave him a rather hostile look.

"Hansom! Call the school together in Hall—I have an address to make to all the boys."

Hansom grinned.

"They're gone, sir."

"What?"

"All the fags have cleared off, sir, and some of the Fifth. There aren't a dozen fellows left here."

"Bless my soul!"

"Buck up, sir!" said Hansom consolingly. "I'm standing by you, with my friends—so long as you don't come it too strong, you know."

"No more insolence, Hansom!" said Mr. Greely sternly. "Call the Fifth into the Form-room. It is important."

"Oh, all right!" yawned Hansom.

Mr. Greely rolled into the Fourth Form-room, and in a few minutes the Fifth came in, lounging carelessly, but curious to hear what their headmaster had to say. What he had to say rather surprised them.

"Boys!" said Mr. Greely. "I have accepted an offer from Dr. Chisholm to resume my former position at Rookwood School. I am leaving Manor House immediately."

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Hansom. "Isn't that rather letting my pater down?"

"Silence, Hansom! Boys, Dr. Chisholm offers a free pardon to all Rookwood boys who return with me. I trust that you will all return. Many of the boys, it appears, are already gone. The rest may come with me."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lumsden.

"What a giddy surprise!" murmured Talboys.

"Jolly good idea!" said Brown major.

"It was a lark while it lasted, but I'm ready to go back, for one."

"Follow me!" said Mr. Greely.

"Come on, Hansom."

Hansom of the Fifth looked dismayed and perplexed.

"I can't go without askin' my pater, anyhow," he said. "He—he mayn't let me go! Good gad! What a let-down! You fellows get off with old Greely, if you like. I'm bound to wait for my pater."

Soon afterwards, Mr. Horace Greely was sailing away for Rookwood, lofty and majestic, like a galleon under full sail, and the Fifth Form sauntered after him. Hansom of the Fifth was the only Rookwood fellow who remained within the walls of the Manor House.

Not in a happy mood, Hansom wandered about the deserted school, waiting for his father's return. Two or three of Sir George's recently-engaged masters were wandering about, too, in a state of perplexity, and exchanging wondering and tart observations. Form-masters were there, and Form-rooms, but no Forms. Manor House School seemed to have "fizzled" out as suddenly as it had come into existence. Long before his pater's car came hooting up the drive, Hansom was "fed-up" with it, and longing to be at Rookwood with his comrades.

Sir George descended from the car.

He almost jumped when Hansom explained what had happened. Scarcely able to believe what he heard, Sir George strode to Mr. Greely's study. Mr. Greely was not there, but his letter was on the table, addressed to Sir George, and the baronet grabbed it up and read it.

He snorted.

"The ass! The man's an ass!"

"We all thought him a bit of an ass at Rookwood, dad," said Hansom. "Pompous old ass, you know."

"He resigns his position here—the position I created for him!" snorted Sir George. "He goes back to Rookwood! If he was going back to Rook-

wood, why in thunder could he not have gone before I had taken such trouble on his behalf? I am disappointed in Horace Greely."

Another snort!

"I shall not forget that he was my old tutor, and is my friend," said the baronet, more calmly. "I shall not forget that he has done me services. But I shall never be tempted again to think of placing him in a position of responsibility! I will appoint a new headmaster; the school shall carry on. It shall become the most famous of Public schools, and you shall be captain, my boy——"

"I'd rather go back to Rookwood, along with my friends, dad."

"What!"

"After all, old Greely isn't bad as a Form-master," said Hansom.

There was a long pause.

Sir George nodded at last.

"Perhaps you are right!" he said. "It was chiefly for Mr. Greely's sake that I founded this school—to do him justice! Huh! I have already had an offer for the property—a handsome offer. I shall accept it. I will take you over to Rookwood in the car, Edward."

Rookwood School was having a rather excited time that day.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had marched in, and Mornington greeted them at the gates with a grin on his face. Mr. Dalton greeted them more seriously. A little later Mr. Greely arrived with the Fifth, and was shown into the Head's study at once, and the hatchet was buried in a cordial handshake. Then—last but not least—a motor-car came buzzing in, and Hansom of the Fifth descended from it with his father.

Rookwood was itself again.

Jimmy Silver & Co. rejoiced, glad, like the rest of the school, that the trouble was over. And before Sir George Hansom left, he shook hands quite cordially with Mr. Greely, both the worthy gentlemen feeling their old friendship revive, now that they were happily released from the strain of tolerating one another at close quarters.

The next day Rookwood was the Rookwood of old, and Mr. Greely boomed majestically in the Fifth Form Room; and Hansom of the Fifth was very careful not to cheek the Fifth Form-master of Rookwood as he had cheeked the headmaster of the Manor House.

As for the Manor House itself, it was sold shortly afterwards, and turned into a sanatorium, and was heard of no more as Rookwood's rival.



**You've Enjoyed Reading
This Book—Now Get
Its Companion! It's a
Winner, Too!**

Once you get your nose buried in this ripping book-length story of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars, you won't take it out again till you reach the last line. Read how the Famous Five "jape" Loder, the rascally prefect, and share their fun and adventures!



**See
It
At
Your
News-
agent's
Shop!**

On Sale Now

Price 4d.